


**Study of the Impact of a Tailored  
Education Environment (Freshman  
Academy) on Urban High School Students'  
Academic Achievement and Truancy Rates**

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**Outline**

- ❖ Small Learning Communities (SLC)
- ❖ Background
- ❖ Method
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Discussion/Future Research
- ❖ Contact Information




## Small Learning Communities

- ❖ What are they?
  - ❖ Small environments, sometimes specialized, that has a small teacher: student ratio and have student centered curriculums.
  - ❖ Any separately defined, individualized learning unit within a larger school setting.



## Small Learning Communities

- ❖ Forms of SLC's
  - ❖ Career Academies (specialty)
    - ❖ Prepare students for both college and careers
  - ❖ Grade-level Academies
    - ❖ Freshman, Sophomore, etc....
  - ❖ Looping
    - ❖ Discussed later



## Small Learning Communities

- ❖ What the research show?
  - ❖ SLC's support academic achievement
  - ❖ Students enrolled in SLC's do better in:
    - ❖ Higher-Order thinking skills
    - ❖ Subject-area achievement
    - ❖ Grades
    - ❖ Test scores

Cotton, 1996



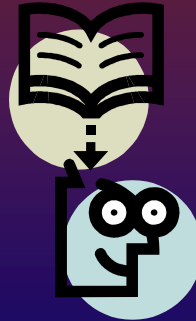
## Small Learning Communities

- ❖ Attitudes and behaviors are more positive
- ❖ Low incidence of negative social behavior such as:
  - ❖ Truancy
  - ❖ Classroom disruption
  - ❖ Vandalism
  - ❖ Aggressive behavior
  - ❖ Theft



## Small Learning Communities

- ❖ Lower Drop-Out rates
- ❖ Increased attendance rates
- ❖ Safer




## Background

- ❖ Problem
  - ❖ Widening achievement gap
  - ❖ Rising drop-out rates
    - ❖ Middle school
    - ❖ African American/Hispanic American
- ❖ Proposed Solutions
  - ❖ Small Learning Communities (SLC)
    - ❖ Freshman Academy



## Freshman Academy

- ❖ Defined
  - ❖ Tailored, self-sustaining educational environment for freshman students.
- ❖ Benefits
  - ❖ Core curriculum integration
  - ❖ Student generated extra-curricular activities
  - ❖ Low drop out rate
    - ❖ 8% vs. 24% (Newton-Reents, 2002)
    - ❖ 3.74% vs. 6.39% (McAndrew & Anderson, 2002)



## Freshman Academy

- ❖ Benefits cont'd
  - ❖ Fewer discipline issues (Cotton, 1996)
  - ❖ Easier middle school – high school transition
    - ❖ Develop secondary level work skills
    - ❖ Positive attitude development (school/self)
  - ❖ Lower teacher turnover (Bolton, 2002)
  - ❖ Easier to form meaningful relationships
    - ❖ Student-to student
    - ❖ Student-to-teacher



## Limiting Factors of Large Learning Environments

- ❖ Impersonal
- ❖ Pedagogically stifling
- ❖ Few strong teacher-student relationships (Daynes, 2003)
- ❖ Academic achievement- school size correlation among minority students (Cotton, 1996)



## Method

- ❖ Population
  - ❖ n=214
    - ❖ Freshman Academy: n=200
    - ❖ Control Group: n=14
- ❖ Procedure
  - ❖ Collected data for 18 weeks
    - ❖ Truancy (weekly)
    - ❖ Criterion Referenced Test (wk 9 & 18)
      - ❖ Algebra, Biology, World History, English



## Feeder School Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) Scores

❖ Feeder School	Math	Reading
❖ School 1	22%	89%
❖ School 2	4%	49%
❖ School 3	7%	58%

❖ Note: A score of 70 or above on a scale of 100 is proficient



## Academic Outcomes

Subject	P value
Algebra	.008
World History	.003
English	.003
Biology	.052



## Truancy Outcomes


Group	Possible Days	Days Missed	Percentage
Freshman Academy	18,832	483	2.46%
Control	18,832	593	3.15%

The number of days required for each school district to complete as mandated by the State Education Department is 180 days. The number of days measured in the study is from the first semester only. The number of days on roll during the study (first semester) is 88. Therefore, the total number of days available to the study participants is 18,832.




## Discussion

- ❖ Results support current literature about SLCs.
- ❖ Proliferation of SLCs by NCLB Act.
- ❖ Positive predictors for minority students
  - ❖ Academics
  - ❖ School attendance
  - ❖ Community outlook
- ❖ P[.052] – Biology
  - ❖ Tutoring for all students



## Interventions of the Freshman Academy

- ❖ Students who are achieving less than 70% in any core class are mandated to attend “Saturday School” and After School Tutoring.
- ❖ Mandatory participation in an extracurricular activity.
  - ❖ Student generated activities
  - ❖ Teacher - responsive



## Other Types Of Small Learning Communities

- ❖ Looping
  - ❖ Continuous learning or progress, persisting groups, multi-year grouping, teacher/student progression
  - ❖ Students stay with same teacher for 2-5 yrs.
  - ❖ Advantages:
    - ❖ Long-term relationship with teacher is beneficial
      - ❖ Socially
      - ❖ Academically
    - ❖ Build on previous knowledge comfortably

## Looping

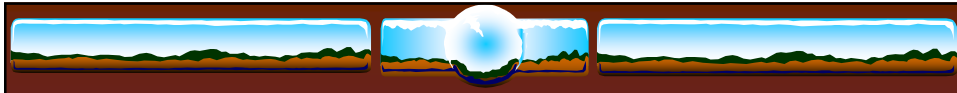
### ❖ Disadvantages

- ❖ Student could acquire weak teacher
- ❖ Bad student/teacher relationship
- ❖ Could be a staffing nightmare



## Future Research

- ❖ Future studies of SLCs combined with cultural specific pedagogy
  - ❖ Delivery methods
    - ❖ speakers
  - ❖ Instructional materials
    - ❖ Books
    - ❖ examples
  - ❖ Activities
    - ❖ Parental involvement in learning/teaching



## Longitudinal Goals:

- ❖ Additional long-term measurements of this study are to determine the correlation between the Academy and the following:
  - ❖ **Phase 2:** Drop Out Rates of students participating in
  - ❖ **Phase 3:** Motivation levels of students participating in Academy
  - ❖ **Phase 4:** Negative Discipline Encounters of students participating in Academy
  - ❖ **Phase 5:** Special Education Referral of students participating in Academy



## Contact Information

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