

Orange County Public Schools Executive Summary

An Investigation of the Academic Impact of the Freshman Transition Course at One Urban Central Florida High School

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) estimates that nearly 7,000 students drop out of school each school day. A review of literature relevant to the effects of high school dropout found that student outcomes of the ninth grade year served as significant early warning signs for dropping out of school. The purpose of this research was to identify the extent to which a high school freshman transition program at a large central Florida urban high school aligned with research based recommendations for successful intervention programs and to determine the extent to which the intervention impacted persistence to the tenth grade, on-track-to-graduation status, and academic success as measured by two state accountability assessments.

The research employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Documents relevant to the program such as a course syllabus, teacher meeting minutes, and phone-call logs were collected and analyzed for research based themes. Students in the program at the target school were compared quantitatively to students in a demographically and socioeconomically similar high school and a historical cohort of students who attended the target school prior to the implementation of the intervention. The impact of the course was statistically significant for persistence to the tenth grade ($p < .001$), on-track to graduation status ($p < .001$), and academic success ($p < .05$). Statistical significance for academic success favored the Algebra 1 EOC over FCAT Reading. These findings will help school-level and district administrators design research-based transition interventions which encourage academic success and persistence toward graduation for at-risk youth.

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