

Do Teacher Advisement Programs Affect Student Achievement?

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ABSTRACT

Although education has been a part of all cultures since the beginning of existence, it is constantly evolving. As educators seek to instill in their students the significance of lifelong learning, they also seek opportunities to learn and improve. Greater pressures and demands than ever before are being placed on educators. When Handley High School failed to meet state expectations, educators sought solutions. After much time and research, a Teacher Advisement Program (TAP) and a Get on Track (GOT) program were implemented. This study examines the effectiveness on academic achievement of these programs by reviewing Alabama High School Graduation Exam passage rates, reviewing graduation rates, and conducting student and faculty surveys. After reviewing data, a direct correlation between the programs implemented at Handley High School and student achievement cannot be established. The study does suggest some positive outcomes of the TAP/GOT efforts that merit future exploration. The research from this study will aid in future developments of the two programs. This study is a continuation of previous studies regarding implementation of teacher advisement programs in other school districts and will serve as a guide to schools seeking to implement such programs. As schools continue to seek opportunities to enhance academic achievement and student success, advisement programs might increase in popularity.

An Introduction

Since the beginning of human existence, education has been a part of all cultures. However, studies differ about the beginnings of formal education and literacy. Some parts of the world still have a literacy rate below 60 percent (The world fact book, n.d.). Over many decades, education evolved into the systematic structure we know today. Education stakeholders constantly seek opportunities to improve education and student achievement.

One of the most recent and widely known initiatives to improve student achievement was passed in 2001 under the George W. Bush administration. The act, known as No Child Left Behind ([NCLB, 2008]), requires many new provisions that make schools more accountable for the progress of their students. Under the act, schools across the nation are required to meet many criteria in order to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Some of the criteria includes increased standardized test scores and improved graduation rates. Schools who do not meet AYP are subject to decreased federal funding and other reprimands. Schools have implemented many new programs and curriculum requirements to ensure students perform at acceptable levels.

In order for public Alabama high schools to achieve AYP, they must demonstrate an acceptable pass rate on the Alabama High School Graduation Exam (AHSGE) as well as maintain an acceptable graduation rate. Standards are increased each year. In 2006, Handley High School fell below the acceptable

graduation rate due to failed AHSGE and drop-out numbers. This brought awareness that some of the students were slipping through the cracks and innovative thinking was necessary to promote achievement.

Handley High School is considered a city school although it is located in rural Randolph County. The city has a population of approximately 6,500. The high school currently houses 467 students in grades 9-12. Handley High School operates as a Title I school, because 61% of its student population qualifies for free or reduced lunches. Many of the students come from single-parent or multi-dwelling homes and live in poverty. Many students have no access to technology outside of school. The school curriculum is set-up on a trimester system. This system serves students well in that they are easily able to obtain the required credits necessary for graduation. One of the greatest disadvantages to the trimester system is that it is almost impossible for the guidance counselor to conduct guidance units and advisement sessions with all students. Some of the counselor's responsibilities include one-on-one counseling, test coordination, and development of class schedules for all 467 students.

In order to help Handley High School meet AYP criteria, leadership team members including the counselor, assistant principal, principal, and department chairmen brainstormed ideas. Thus, the idea of a teacher advisement program evolved. Team members visited other schools with similar programs in place and reviewed current research. The program implemented at Handley High School is a small-scale program due to limited personnel to assist with planning and limited funds to cover costs. The program, implemented nearly four years ago, was met with some opposition by faculty members. Some faculty members have since embraced the program while others need to approach it with more enthusiasm. The researcher will evaluate the program to see if student achievement has improved, remained the same, or declined. When referring to student achievement, the researcher includes AHSGE passage rates, promotion/retention, and graduation rates.

Teacher advisement programs were first introduced in middle schools. One of the first programs was introduced in South Carolina during the 1996-1997 school year. The program was implemented after a grant was received from the South Carolina State Department of Education. Many schools have implemented similar programs.

After briefly reviewing literature focused on teacher advisement programs, it appears that that these programs do greatly impact students (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). One might be interested to see what components these programs include and to what extent they impact student achievement.

The teacher advisement programs currently in place at Handley High School include a summer transition program for incoming freshmen (GOT: Get On Track) as well as an advisement program (TAP: Teacher Advisement Program) for all students dependent upon grade level. Each advisor is assigned 18-25 students. The programs include mentoring, guidance lessons, graduation requirements, grade and transcript reviews. More importantly, advisor programs provide every student with a resource and offer an opportunity for students and advisors to build relationships. These relationships provide nurture and support as students work throughout high school. The researcher will analyze the impact of the current advisement programs by reviewing literature, including previous studies, on the topic. Research includes a review of data including passage rates on the AHSGE, promotion/retention, and graduation/drop-out rates collected from the school system over the past four years as well as interviews from students and teachers who have participated in the program. One of the main concerns with the current program is

lack of designated time for students and advisors to meet. Students and advisors meet monthly for 30 minutes, but advisors are available at other times to meet with students.

Research will determine whether teacher advisement programs affect academic achievement in a high school setting. To determine the effectiveness of teacher advisement programs, the researcher will carefully analyze data from graduation/drop-out rates, promotion/retention numbers, and grades from the 2006-2011 school years. If graduation and promotion rates have increased and drop-out and retention rates have decreased since the implementation of teacher advisement programs, one will determine that teacher advisement programs do significantly impact student achievement. Research findings will be used to refine the current teacher advisory program at Handley High School to ensure they have optimal impact on student achievement.

Do teacher advisement programs affect student achievement? If so, teacher advisement programs might be the greatest missing factor in student achievement. Student achievement is the ultimate priority for American school systems, and all schools look for ways to continuously improve achievement. If research concludes that teacher advisory programs are effective, more schools should seek to implement such programs.

Because of terminology used in the Review of the Literature, a list of defined terms is given below.

Review of the Literature

Teacher Advisory Program, Adviser-Advisee Program, Personal Enrichment Program, and Academic Advising are all different titles to one simple concept: A student development program which helps students mature from young adolescents to curious, confident young adults (Jones & Tittle, 2004). Programs may vary from one school to another to accommodate school specific challenges; however, they all focus on major developmental tasks such as academic success, career exploration, decision-making, and interpersonal efficacy (Jervis & Rapp, 2007).

Academic advising has been part of the American educational system since the beginning of higher education; only in the past four decades of American collegiate history has academic advising begun to have a more defined role in the students' educational journey. Until recently, academic advising has largely been an amenity only available to students seeking a college degree. With the enactment of NCLB came a plethora of changes to educational programs in order to facilitate the advancement of all students. It was at this time educators considered, on a national scale, academic advising in lower level education to all students; not just those who are college bound. Some schools had already implemented pilot advisory programs in their middle and high schools such as Pasco County, Florida, in the 1984-85 school year, after which four additional schools in the county have implemented and/or received a grant for implementation of student advisory programs. (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). In fact, most case studies available today were implemented in the early 1980's and have developed over time into indispensable programs for the educational institutions into which they were implemented. Looking in on these schools that have taken the advisory program step decades ago has spurred national attention to its effectiveness and is beginning to be studied on a much larger scope than ever before.

Teachers are inherently advisors. Students need at least one adult in the school who knows their stories, appreciates their achievements, and will answer their questions about everything from what to expect on a driver's test to what to wear on a first job interview (Jones & Tittle, 2004). Jervis and Rapp (2007) describe the advisor as an information disseminator, a friendly listener, and a student advocate.

Advisory programs must involve the entirety of educators and administrators in a school due to the student teacher ratio in many schools. When teachers participate with counselors in guiding and advising students, the system gives students a greater sense of belonging to something that has meaning in their lives and to their future (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Teachers, counselors, principals, and students can jointly plan and conduct an advisory program that is simple and effective (Jones & Tittle, 2004). The teacher advisory program implemented in Pasco County, Florida is led by a 5-10 member steering committee which is comprised of teachers, counselors, administrators and at least one student representative (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). "The human touch in guidance and advisement is important...students need attention, acknowledgement and praise as they prepare for the future" (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009, p. 8).

The challenges for teachers are to find the right combination of strategies to reinforce teaching methods and support personal and professional development (Jones & Tittle, 2004). Teachers teach according to lessons planned to achieve defined learning outcomes and students are expected to perform and demonstrate competency in a variety of subjects. The frustrations are apparent, because in this system, teachers have the most contact with either the bright students or the problem kids who demand attention. "Generally, we hope the rest of the students can take care of themselves, and we move through the school years wishing for some simple change that gives us the time to appreciate each child and assure no student falls through the cracks" (Jones & Tittle, 2004, p. 1). In case studies throughout the country, advisory programs have many common elements. In Missouri, advisory coordinator Gaye Sharp said, "Baseline data revealed that student and teacher perceptions varied greatly on several issues, including students' sense of belonging and the preparation of students for post-high school pursuits." (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009, p. 1).

Despite the good intentions of Advisory Programs, the implementation efforts have been met with many challenges. Pasco County, Florida reported 25% of teachers had serious concerns about the program; expressing concerns over inadequate qualifications to be a counselor or advisor, the amount of time that would be required for advisement and record keeping, as well as the compensation for extra preparation (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). Teachers eventually understood that advising is different than counseling and softened to the idea of advisory programs.

"It is important to appreciate the difference between the two roles. Counseling is a therapeutic approach to assisting people in dealing with their concerns. Individuals practicing counseling must have specialized training in counseling and should be licensed by their state and/or national boards. In contrast, advice is a recommended opinion. Giving advice is a way of offering suggestions, usually from a wiser or more highly trained person to one considered to need guidance. Advice may be given in a structured program or in a casual friend-to-friend manner. It is important to recognize that advice can be offered by anyone, regardless of age. The most effective suggestions often come from our peers whether we are 12 or 50 years old." (Jones & Tittle, 2004, p. 12)

Student resistance, specifically seniors, dampened enthusiasm for the program along with the infrequency of advisory meetings (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). When Swansea High School was laying out the road map for their advisory program, they did not underestimate the role that parents played in their children's education. As a result, they scheduled an annual advising night for parents of eighth-graders. During this time, parents and their children met with school representatives to develop a four-year program of study to extend learning beyond high school (Hostetler, 2008). Parents received Career

Paths, a booklet that describes the three pathways: college preparatory, tech preparatory and dual prep, as well as a publication that outlined required classes (Hostetler, 2008).

Advisory programs for at-risk students were the start of a greater movement in education. In high-minority schools like West Point High School in Mississippi, where school dropout percentages were above normal, great strides were made to give students better opportunities for success in further education and careers by revitalized guidance programs, more Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and emphasis on graduation and student recognition programs (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Henry County High School, Tennessee, adapted the Legend of the Starfish. The message is: Although millions of starfish wash up on beaches around the world, saving just one by tossing it back into the ocean “makes a difference to that one” (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009, p. 9). At-risk students’ names were written on cards and taped to a wall where teachers and administrators would initial if they knew the student personally or had previous connections with the student outside of a normal classroom setting. Students with no initials by their names entered the Starfish program. The student is assigned a mentor of the same gender that keeps up with the student’s attendance, behavior, and academic progress and checks with him or her at least once a week to see if help was needed to stay afloat (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). This program is different because it is discrete. It is important for the student to not feel singled out.

An innovative advisory program created in Horry County Schools in South Carolina makes it possible for over-age, at-risk students to graduate from high school in three years with the marketable skill employers are seeking (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). The connect program creates a nurturing environment for students who have struggled in the past and are in danger of dropping out of school (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009).

The implementation of advisory programs has advanced through the decades to include and affect a wider number of students than the original concept accounted for. Originally, the programs were used for under-achieving, disabled, and delinquent students in need of extra help or intervention. In some of these cases, it was realized the problem could be prevented by widening the scope of advisement to all students before any specific problem arose. “School leaders realized it was time to create a new climate that teachers and students owned. The key to acceptance of the changes was recognizing that students had to be ready to face the future – ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century” (Phillips, 2009, p. 2).

Schools that have enacted these programs have done so in different ways, but they all aim to place a larger ownership in the students’ hands concerning their own education and future as well as that of their peers. In Lee’s Summit High School in Missouri they have a freshman transition day in which recruited and trained student mentors host an orientation breakfast for new students twice a year. Freshmen and sophomores meet in advisory groups each week; juniors and seniors have additional opportunities known as privileges and interventions that are linked to their academic achievement (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Increasing a sense of belongingness to newly arriving students is believed to prevent behavioral and academic delinquencies by assigning the new students a trained upper classman mentor. To further strengthen the advisory program’s success, and in turn the students’, meeting times with teacher advisors are highly regular. While some schools schedule teachers and students to meet in groups daily, others schedule advisory groups only twice a semester. Jones & Tittle, 2004, propose the ideal amount is 30 minute sessions twice a week, which is a level of frequency that supports the group to build familiar relationships and frames the group as a refreshing

break during the week. Though schools have varying times and conditions in which advisory groups are held, Pasco County found that their initial bi-weekly meetings lacked continuity and were too infrequent for bonding between the advisor and advisee to grow strong (Jervis & Rapp, 2007).

There are programs introduced for each grade level that appropriately coincide with educational and vocational strides in the students' educational maturation. Career Preparation in grades 9 through 12 involves students matching their interests to their plans for postsecondary education and careers. Students participate in work-based learning transition programs as they prepare to enter the work force (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Simply showing up, passing a test, and going home is no longer the minimum requirement for passing in some schools. In Kentucky, students are expected to declare a career major at the end of the eighth grade and review and revise their majors each year. Along with required and recommended courses, the career paths include clubs and organizations, work-based learning experiences, and weekly advisory meetings to discuss progress, goals, and which clubs would best enhance a particular students career goals; every teacher leads a club or organization, and student participation is 100% (Phillips, 2009). Students are expected to maintain a passing grade in advanced curricula while learning more basic and common functions that will be required of them after graduation. For example, at Lees Summit High, students fill out job applications in the ninth grade and participate in job shadowing experiences in the tenth grade. They use persuasive writing in a letter to the business or industry where they did job shadowing to ask for work-based learning opportunities in the eleventh grade and complete resumes in the twelfth grade (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Hedgesville High School in West Virginia gives students a clear picture of their qualities, skills, values, and personality traits via testing to aid students in choosing productive and satisfying careers. Three separate tests are used: one for ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades.

Western Area Career and Technology Center in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, has shown success with a process developed by High Schools That Work (HSTW) and is considered a key practice on guidance and advisement called Portfolio Development. Similar to signing a contract, starting in tenth grade, students sign a portfolio agreement and develop career objectives with related short and long-term goals, including plans for further education and careers after high school. At this level, students write reflective pieces on selected career-related assignments and accomplishments to include in the portfolio (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Once in eleventh grade, students add a completed job application, a resume, a cover letter, and a thank-you letter to the portfolio. They complete and reflect on a mock interview and add more examples of career-related assignments and assessments with accompanying reflective entries. (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). In completion to their portfolio, twelfth graders refine their career objectives and their short and long term goals, update their resumes, and identify awards and/or career certifications they have earned and then they describe their post-graduation plans (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). The portfolio is reviewed by advisors and suggestions are made for improvements. They are used in parent-teacher conferences, career days, job interviews, work-based learning experiences, and college applications and interviews. Director of Vocational Education Joseph Iannetti (pg. 5) said, "Although many students are hesitant when they are assigned the portfolio project, they express their gratitude and feel a sense of accomplishment when it is done" (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009. P.5).

Real life experiences and scenarios that students have never considered are being presented in order to enhance the student's perception of the importance of these advisory programs. Swansea High School in South Carolina requires 9th graders participate in a 90 minute class called Freshman Focus, in which they are graded as they would be in any other class. Here they play "The Real Game" and exercise on

calculating the cost of raising a family and the level of income needed in a variety of career paths (Rabon, 2001). A change in societal norms also must usher a change in education. Many vocational programs such as home economics and industrial sewing programs were eliminated and replaced with health occupations and industrial technology (Rabon, 2001) in order to ensure the educational system is current and consistent with preparing its vocational students appropriately for real life. Remaining current on education is equally important for teachers which is why the school district at Lee Summit High School offers professional development throughout the year to equip administrators, teachers, and counselors to assist students in making wise choices related to further education and careers. All certified personnel also have access to graduate courses to build guidance and advisory knowledge and skills (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009). Corbin High School leaders and teachers believe that student performance is tied to teacher performance and view professional development as an essential component of school improvement and the key to improving teacher performance (Phillips, 2009). Teachers and leaders agree that becoming and remaining highly organized in their approach to professional learning and development has been essential in improving teaching practices (Phillips, 2009).

Change can improve a situation if it is needed and if those involved recognize it as a necessity. There is no one size fits all program, and simply implementing a new practice does not guarantee immediate success (Phillips, 2009). Building willingness and bringing about improvements can be done by shared leadership through departments, committees, and planning teams, a commitment to improved literacy, and the decision of teachers to accept no less than the best from themselves and their students (Phillips, 2009). For years, many educational institutions have been run in an authoritarian manor: I say; you do, from administrator to teacher and from teacher to student. Corbin High School leaders and teachers summarized before and after principles and much of what changed was the dismissal of the authoritarian environment. They went from Teacher-Centered instruction, decisions made by one, top-down instruction, structure to meet school requirements to student-centered instruction, all stakeholders providing a voice in decisions, shared leadership with teacher and staff, and school structured to address student learning needs and interests (Phillips, 2009). Schools cannot implement advisory programs without help. The integral parts of advisory programs are district support, funds for professional development, and raising graduation requirements beyond state requirements among other things (Phillips, 2009).

Success is building upon success, and each new advisory program seems to be more comprehensive than those which preceded it (Jervis & Rapp, 2007). By consistently raising the expectations and guiding each individual student appropriately based on that students' specific goal, Corbin High School has managed to graduate 99% of its student body with 32 credits, containing college preparatory classes, and surpassing the state requirement of 27 credits (Phillips, 2009). Students are making better career choices as a result of advisory programs. Many students are choosing to attend technical colleges for two years where they are more likely to be successful rather than enter a four-year college where a larger percentage of students drop out (Southern Regional Education Board, 2009).

There is still progress to be made as some schools see problem areas in writing and literacy. Some of the challenges include maintaining momentum by helping students and parents see the benefits of high-level educational and career studies, strengthening connections with the community by student job shadowing programs, aligning the curriculum from high school through four years of postsecondary education, offering staff development programs that support changes at the school, and developing a single high-caliber program of study leading to any postsecondary option (Hostetler, 2008).

As students adapt to the program as a structured opportunity to discuss their concerns about school and their lives, there should be fewer discipline problems occurring during the school year (Jones & Tittle, 2004). Throughout all of these schools, the overall success of advisory programs is evident, but this is still a relatively new concept for secondary education and has limited research.

Here are some key findings from the literature (Hostetler, 2008; Jervis & Rapp, 2007; Jones & Tittle, 2004; Phillips, 2009; Rabon, 2001; Southern Regional Education Board, 2009-2010).

- Teacher advisement programs vary among schools.
- Teacher advisement programs usually focus on developmental tasks such as academic success or career exploration.
- Academic advising has previously been available only to students seeking college degrees.
- The implementation of teacher advisement programs usually provides many challenges.
- Schools have varying times and conditions for advisement programs.
- Schools need help and support to implement affective advisory programs.

Methodology

The educational effectiveness of teacher advisement programs is a widely debated issue among education professionals. To find what is best for our students, we must study the effects of teacher advisory programs and determine the best interest of all students involved.

The current student population of Handley High School is approximately 467 students. Of the total 54% are Caucasian, 43% are African American, 2% are Hispanic and 1% is Asian.

The Teacher Advisement Program (TAP) was first implemented during the 2008-2009 school year. There are 24 homeroom student advisors. The program was structured so that each homeroom adviser is assigned students based on their last name. The first teacher is given all 9th grade students whose last names begin with the letters A-F. The next advisor is given all 9th grade students whose last names begin with the letters F-M. Students in each grade level are divided equally among 6 homeroom advisers. Each adviser is assigned a group of 18 to 25 students. The advisor remains with his/her group of advisees until the group graduates. Advisers meet with their students for 10 minutes each morning.

In addition to the morning meetings, advisors meet with their students once a month for 30 minutes. Teacher Advisement Program meetings are scheduled during the summer, and advisers are given a meeting schedule for the entire year. This reduces the number of interferences and canceled meetings.

All advisers are given a tabbed notebook that contains demographical information on each student. Other tabs include: purpose of TAP/training information, monthly meetings, and announcements. Each month, the lesson, handouts, announcements, and all other materials necessary for the implementation of the lesson are placed in the advisers' school mailboxes. Holes are carefully punched in each lesson and handout so the adviser can place the copy in the notebook for future reference. The school counselor does all preparation for the meetings including the development of lessons

During the meetings, the students are given an introspective lesson or task prepared by the guidance counselor: The freshmen are taught about their grade point average and learn about transcripts; sophomores focus on good study skills; juniors begin thinking about their career options, and seniors

focus on graduation and immediate future prospects. Lessons are designed to meet the age-group and needs of the students.

At the end of each school year, the guidance counselors from Handley High School and Handley Middle School, the principals from both schools, and the Get On Track adviser meet to select students for the summer advisement program. Students are selected based on signs of emotional, social, and academic weakness. Students must be students who are at-risk for failure or drop-out due to emotional, social, and academic weakness. However, they must possess the potential for success. The group will include no more than 12 students. The advisor will plan and implement a four-week summer program with the students. The advisor will provide academic and social support. Students work on academics through web-based programs. The advisor provides lessons on confidence, social skills, and other relevant issues to the particular group. The students participate in fun activities that provide learning experiences. The summer program advisor designs and implements lessons in conjunction with the middle and high school counselors.

In order to discern the effectiveness of teacher advisory programs, there will be use of standardized testing as well as board and state approved teaching methods and tools. It is important not to compromise the educational development of any child in an effort to learn how to educate them more effectively. Data including GPA's, percentage of students that pass the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, and dropout rates will be analyzed against pre TAP and post TAP.

Data will be collected from the annual Superintendent's Report as well as student data collections. Graduation, drop-out, and AHSGE passage rates will be considered for each senior class from the past 5 years (2006-2011). This data will be compared from the years prior to TAP to the years after the implementation of the program. The program was implemented in during the 2009-2010 school year. Any significant positive changes, higher graduation rates, decreased drop-out rates, and increased passage rates on AHSGE will indicate a positive effect on student achievement.

For the at-risk students in the summer advisement program, grades from Handley Middle School, grades from Handley High School, graduation rates, drop-out rates, and AHSGE rates will be analyzed to determine if the program produced higher success rates. This information will come from the annual Superintendent's Report and school data collections. Any positive change, including higher grades, lower drop-out rates, and increased passage rates on the AHSGE will indicate the program has been effective and produced positive results on student achievement. The program was implemented in the 2007 school year.

The qualitative research will include questionnaires given to both the teachers and students upon beginning and ending each group year. They will be asked direct questions but will also be asked to provide a description of their perceived education enhancement by the TAP program.

Results

The data shows that at least 23% of the students surveyed believe their grades have improved as a result of the TAP program. Thirteen percent of the teachers surveyed believe their advisement students are more successful academically because of the TAP program. In addition, 20% of the teachers believe the TAP program has played a role in the increased graduation rate. Teachers claim they now have an opportunity to play a more active role in students' academic success.

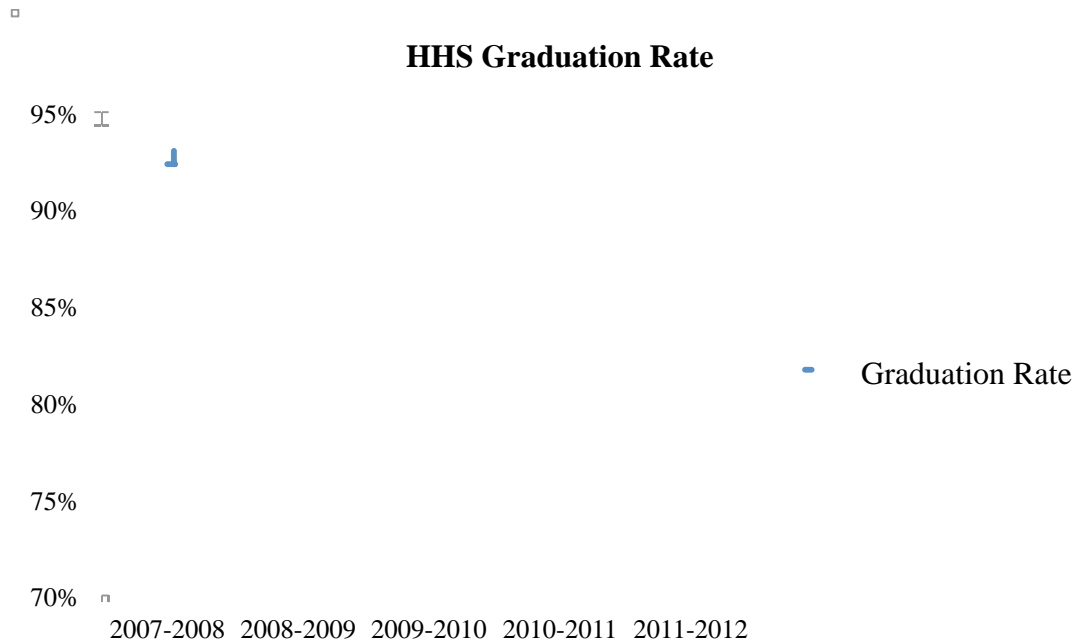
Overall graduation rate is calculated using the total number of eligible graduates. To be eligible for graduation, students must pass all five parts (Reading, Math, Language, Social Studies, Biology) of the AHSGE as well as complete 26 Carnegie units of coursework. The required units are determined by the state. The only exceptions to passing all parts of the AHSGE are determined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Graduation rates and exam passage rates include IDEA students and all members of the student population (See Appendix A).

Students who participated in the summer transition advisory program (GOT) showed evidence of high school success by being on track to graduate on their expected graduation date. To date, thirty-seven students have participated in the GOT program. Four students have since moved out of state. Of the remaining thirty-four students who were considered at risk upon entry to high school during their 9th grade school year, all are currently enrolled at Handley High School, thus evidencing a 0% drop-out rate. Approximately 65% of the students who have participated in the program showed signs of academic achievement through grades and AHSGE passage rates. During the first year of the GOT program, eight students participated. All eight students are eligible for graduation this year. According to one student, the program, "Definitely prepared me for high school. The support was invaluable, and I believe the program did help me to be successful in high school."

Conclusion/Discussion

Because the TAP program at HHS is relatively new, it does still need some work. One of the goals of the research is to determine whether students and teachers believe this program has merit and worth. Since its implementation, graduation rates have increased and drop-out rates have decreased. Handley High School is no longer in school improvement. Although the response to the surveys was not as great as desired, they did provide valuable feedback. According to the results, it is inconclusive as to whether the advisement programs have a significant direct impact on academic achievement. However, most teachers and students concur that the program is beneficial. The impact of the TAP and GOT programs on academic achievement is possibly indirect; meaning the students and teachers do not see the impact their relationships have on academic achievement. When students feel supported and cared for, they tend to work harder. Because of the relationships built with the TAP and GOT programs, students work harder to please those who have a vested interest in them. The lessons provided through the monthly TAP meetings include career and future goals. Students do not realize that while they are working on the monthly TAP activities and planning for the future, they are inadvertently increasing their motivation to achieve more academically.

Appendix A



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