

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“EFFECTS OF THE S.T.O.W. AWAY TRANSITION PROGRAM ON EARLY  
ADOLESCENTS’ SELF-PERCEPTION AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  
DURING THE PROGRESSION FROM ELEMENTARY TO MIDDLE SCHOOL”

By

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### Statement of the Problem

Although much of the general literature on middle schools suggests the importance of helping elementary students make the transition to middle school, little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of transition practices for the average middle school student. In early 2002, the nation’s leading educational organizations, the National Middle School Association (NMSA)(2002) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP):

[I]ssued a call to action to schools with an emphasis on the specific steps principals, teachers, counselors, and parents should take during this challenging period of transition that for some may be associated with a decline in academic achievement, performance motivation, and self-perception.

This study was designed to demonstrate that during the transition to middle school, students who participate in a multidimensional transition program entitled *S.T.O.W. Away* (Student Transition and Orientation Workshop) report the same or more positive self-perceptions as reported on Harter's (1985) Self-perception Profile for Children, and higher grade-point average increases, after the transition than 5th grade students who experience fewer transition activities.

### Procedure

This study sought to determine the effects of transition activities on the self-perception and academic achievement of 55 early adolescent students moving from 5th grade in an elementary school to 6th grade in a middle school. The study yielded quantitative and qualitative data. The study followed a pretest/posttest experimental design. The participants participated in prescribed transition activities intended to facilitate the transition to grade 6. The control group received no additional transition preparation. The self-perception of the students was measured using Harter's (1985) Self-perception Profile for Children prior to and after the transition. Randomly selected participants were also interviewed prior to, as well as after, the transition. The participants' grade point averages from fifth and sixth grade were obtained and analyzed.

### Results

Examination of self-perception subscales and grade point averages revealed that, on the whole, students in the treatment group fared better during the elementary-to-middle school transition, indicating that a comprehensive transition program will increase students' self-perception. The research is inconclusive as to whether transition programs assist in producing increased academic achievement scores in middle school.