Shifting Locus of Control to Improve School Satisfaction Through Teacher - High School Student Mentoring

by

Ruby R. Alvarado Hernandez

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Molly Ott, Chair
Adam Hartley
David Schauer

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to research the effects of a student-staff mentoring relationship on high school students' locus of control, life/school satisfaction and ultimately their academics as determined by their grades. Participants consisted of a small cohort of 10th grade high school students at a public charter, college preparatory high school in inner city Phoenix, Arizona. Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions and Bandura's social cognitive theory provide the models of behavior to improve school satisfaction, motivation and overall well being. A mixed method, action research design was used to study how a 9-week mentoring program facilitated by the dean of students impacted the students' locus of control, satisfaction, and academic achievement. Participants completed pre and post test measures using a modified Trice College Success Survey that measured external-internal locus of control and the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) used to measure life satisfaction and sub-constructs of satisfaction including family, friends, school, living environment and self. Post intervention a smaller sample of students were interviewed, field notes were also compiled and analyzed using a social constructionist point of view to gather insight on how students create their own knowledge and how that connects to their behaviors and attitudes that affect their success. Among the key findings was that students indicated a preference for the type of individualized attention that the mentoring program introduced to support them academically. Quantitative analyses of the survey data did not indicate a significant shift from external to internal locus of control or an improvement in life or school satisfaction, however further research should be conducted to implement a longer intervention period with similar intervention components.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my ever supportive and patient husband, Ruben and to my babies, Alyssa and Nicolas. As a first generation college student I could not have done this without the love and support, of my mom, grandmother Becky and grandfather Benito (may they both rest in peace), who were not only role models of hard work and perseverance but were always advocates of furthering my education. Si se puede!

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

National Context and Statement of the Problem

"If they can conceive it and believe it, they can achieve it. " -Jesse Jackson

Can a student's attitudes towards school affect their academic achievement? Research is limited about the relationship between students' perceptions of and satisfaction with school and their scholastic outcomes, particularly as it pertains to students in primary and secondary education. However, beyond education, there is a significant body of research supporting the "happy-productive worker hypothesis" (Suldo, Riley, & Shaffer, 2006, p.569). This refers to the assumption that employees who are content with their jobs and workplaces will be higher performing in comparison to "unhappy" workers. Applying the idea to school settings, all else being equal, a "happy-productive" student should be higher performing in the classroom compared to their less satisfied peers. And if a student's attitudes can affect their academic achievement, what can be done to positively shift a student's perceptions about school, essentially to make them more satisfied and ultimately more academically successful?

It is important that school satisfaction be at a high level because it is a significant component of a student's general life satisfaction as they spend a substantial amount of time at school. Research suggests that school satisfaction influences high school students' academic success (Bordwine & Huebner, 2010). Satisfied students also have lower levels of internalizing emotions such as negative emotions, anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation (Bordwine & Huebner, 2010). These internalized emotions have been

connected to school dissatisfaction and poor academic achievement (Bordwine & Huebner, 2010). Among middle school students, lower levels of school satisfaction are associated with aggressive and withdrawal behaviors in the classroom (Bordwine & Huebner, 2010). In 1990, the U.S. Department of Education reported school dissatisfaction as a main reason youth drop out of school (1990).

This study focuses on one likely important factor that may improve students' attitudes towards school: their locus of control. Often children and specifically adolescents do not feel they have much control over the stressors in their lives, particularly in school (Wiklund, Malmgren-Olsson, Ohman, Bergstrom, & Fjellman-Wiklund, 2012). Feeling out of control in itself can lead to stress, anxiety and even depression and ultimately a reduced sense of life and school satisfaction. Adolescents today experience considerable anxiety, especially pertaining to school-related pressures. For example, the number of students seeking crisis counseling at East Carolina University (ECU) is "skyrocketing". In 2016, ECU reported a 16 percent increase in students receiving counseling over the last two years, and mental health crises experienced by students were up 52 percent. The main complaint was anxiety, a shift from depression in previous years (Donaldson James, 2016). This is not an isolated trend either, a 2015 survey from the Center for Collegiate Mental Health at Pennsylvania State University discovered half of all students who seek counseling services at over 340 colleges in the country are experiencing anxiety.

As previously mentioned a higher level of internal locus of control has been linked to higher academic achievement and motivation (Kang, Chang, Chen, & Greenberger, 2013). These students are also more likely to work hard while those

students who may have more of an external locus of control are less likely to work as hard, as they often feel others are the reason for their lower achievement. Students with lower locus of control may also believe their hard work or achievements will not be recognized (Locus of Control, 2013).

This research studied the efficacy of one school-based intervention – a mentoring program – designed to assist high school students in recognizing they do have a means to control certain stressors and aspects of their lives. Not only was the intervention designed to reduce stress and anxiety, but it was also intended to increase school satisfaction and ultimately academic achievement. A key component of the mentoring program was goal setting facilitated by the school's dean of students, as well as provide consistent, positive feedback to students about their academic progress and performance. The primary motivation behind the intervention was to aid students in shifting from an external to more of an internal locus of control.

Local and Personal Context

XYZ School is a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade college preparatory charter school that is affiliated with a local university. The school opened in 2009 as a result of a local district school closing their doors and the university looking to expand its P-20 focus. Many students from the previous school remained while the school also enrolled many other students. The school maintains less than a 1% dropout rate. At the time this study occurred, in 2018-19, there were approximately 1100 students PK-12 with a significant waiting list for all grades. Because XYZ is a charter school, students come from a wide variety of cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds, socioeconomic levels and a range of areas in the Phoenix, Arizona metropolitan area. Students are not required to

complete an entrance exam and is open enrollment to any student regardless of academic ability.

The curriculum from elementary to high school is a Cambridge Curriculum (an international curriculum established by Cambridge University, UK, focusing on promoting critical thinking, in-depth analysis, and strong writing skills). If students attain certain exit exam scores on their Cambridge exams, they can be awarded a Grand Canyon Diploma as early as the end of a student's sophomore year. This diploma allows students to not only to be official high school graduates but also to attend classes at the community college and statewide university level, while not requiring a full 22 high school credit hours be completed.

The school opened its doors to high school students in 2011 with its inaugural freshman class. Every year after a high school grade level was added, resulting in the first graduating class occurring in 2015. The high school is currently limited to a little over 400 students. Many of the students are first generation high school graduates, others are first generation immigrants to the United States with English not being their first language, while others have parents who work at the state capital, hold or have held state or local government positions, professors or staff at one of the local universities and many other professions that require a degree. These students begin as a cohort of freshman (9^{th} grade) and have a daily "capstone" class with the same teacher for their high school career. This is designed to teach students to work with others, to create a supportive peer environment as well as to create a positive and supportive student-teacher relationship.

At the time this study occurred, I was the Dean of Students at XYZ. In this role, I was primarily responsible for holding students accountable for discipline issues, for all students between grades K-12. Prior to assuming this position in 2017, I was a school counselor with XYZ since 2011. I initially worked with elementary level students in grades K-5. The 2014-2015 school year was the first year I worked directly with 9th - 12th grade students as their school counselor. While I had worked the previous year (2013-2014) with high school students for a few months, the 2014-2015 year was the first year I was solely responsible for the social/emotional needs of the students. By the 2014-2015 academic year, most of the high school students had become familiar with me and began to independently seek me out for counseling services and parents were contacting me with concerns at higher rates as well, in comparison to previous years.

The concerns the students as well as parents brought to me often centered on anxiety or panic attacks, as well as a need for organizational assistance. While working with students to ascertain what the antecedent to their anxiety was, students often spoke about teachers or parents causing it. I attempted to help them understand that they had control over how they reacted to these individuals that were the source of their anxiety. In addition, I often sat with students and assisted them in making weekly academic plans based on what they were missing or what they needed to improve on. Students often became overwhelmed with the amount of classwork and would be stunned into inactivity. After constructing a plan, however, they would feel as if completion of assignments were feasible. I also reached out to parents to inform them of my concerns. Parent feedback to the student and myself varied from positive and grateful to negative and defensive. Students who were more supported by parents, even only verbally to myself as the

counselor, showed more improvement than those students whose parents were not as amicable to the idea of their student speaking to a counselor.

While there seemed to be a slight trend in students being dissatisfied with school in the 2014-2015 academic year, particularly with the 11th and 12th grade students, it seemed to intensify during the subsequent school year. It was unclear to me and my colleagues why issues were occurring more frequently, particularly among 9th-12th grade students. By the spring 2016 semester I took the time to informally reach out to teachers and staff members, including the academic counselor and the college going advisor. While they agreed not all students were suffering from anxiety or dissatisfaction of the school and staff, they did share my observations that the number of students with these complaints was increasing. I became even more concerned because the 9th grade students, who had just begun their high school journey, were particularly verbose about their issues. These issues involved feelings of reduced control, disorganization, and anxiety/panic attacks, which were occurring multiple times a week with multiple students by the end of the spring semester. I continued to support the students by giving them coping strategies, practicing these strategies to reduce anxiety, continued assistance with organization and weekly planning and reaching out to teachers and parents to ensure they were being supportive in whatever ways they could, including, but not limited to, outside counseling, psychiatric services, behavioral plans in the classroom and additional supports.

In fall of 2017 I surveyed a group of 15 high school seniors at XYZ using a survey constructed to provide information on how students perceive support from both teachers and parents as well as how they manage their stress and how these experiences

may affect their overall sentiment about school. The survey consisted of 3 sub-constructs, stress management (4 items), support – from school and home (5 items), and overall sentiment of support and school engagement (3 items). Students were asked to respond to the questions using a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (value of 6) to strongly disagree (value of 1), as well as providing demographic data such as gender, age and grades. Specifically for grades, students were asked to provide information about their grades in relation to their most recent report card, ranging from the options of A's (value of 6), A's and B's, A's-B's-C's, Mostly B's and C's, and finally all over the place (value of 1). I found a positive correlation between students enjoying school and their grades, although the relationship was not statistically significant, likely due to the small number of participants.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how mentoring with an emphasis on goal setting and positive reinforcement impacted high school students' locus of control, satisfaction with school, and academic outcomes. I worked closely with a 10^{th} grade capstone class by mentoring and guiding them to create academic goals and actions plans for 9 weeks, while also providing positive feedback to students from other teachers and staff members. The mentoring program that I implemented is described in detail in Chapter 3. In brief, it involved working with students on a weekly basis, assisting them in making daily and weekly goals to complete missing assignments and/or goals focused on bringing up lower grades. In addition, I provided positive feedback gathered from teachers on a weekly basis. And finally, I created relationships with students that not only included talking about the importance of their academics, but also showing an

interest in them, their likes and dislikes, their learning, organization and planning styles and supporting them in their endeavors.

My hypothesis is that the mentoring relationship would cause students to shift from an external academic locus of control to an internal locus of control and this would increase their school satisfaction levels and ultimately their academic achievement and attendance. Holt, Bry and Johnson's (2008) research of 9th grade, urban minority adolescents and adult mentors indicated students who received mentoring were more likely than a control group to not enter the discipline system. In addition, students exhibited a stronger sense of belonging and students were less likely to experience a decline in perceived teacher support and decision-making. "The presence of meaningful relationships with adults significantly bolsters school achievement… and satisfaction with life…" (Settersten & Ray, 2010, p.33). From this research, and previously noted research, it is my contention that creating an environment where students feel supported, motivated to learn, have a higher self–esteem and higher levels of school satisfaction may have lower levels of anxiety, depression and other psychosocial diagnoses. We may be able to accomplish this by ensuring students are frequently experiencing positive emotions, and this can be done through goal setting and positive reinforcement facilitated by a strong, mentoring student/teacher relationship.

Research Questions

Drawing from my observations about the school context as well as the findings from previous studies as described above, this action research project addressed the following research questions:

1. How and to what extent is locus of control associated with high school students' overall life satisfaction?
2. with academic performance/grades?
3. How does a mentoring relationship with teachers impact students' locus of control, life satisfaction, and academic performance?

Definition of Relevant Terms

Locus of Control – a common psychological term referring to how strongly people believe they have control over the events in their lives (Rotter, 1966). In terms of education, locus of control can refer to how students perceive their academic success or failure in school.

School Satisfaction – a subjective perception of a student's overall contentedness towards the school setting in which he or she is enrolled

Mentoring – A one on one relationship between a youth and older person who is established, and built up over a period of time for the purposes of providing consistent support, guidance and concrete help as the younger person goes through challenging or difficult periods of life (Lopez, 2012).

Title I School – A U.S. Department of Education designation given to schools that have 40% or more of their students who are low-income. This provides the school with additional funds to support academic achievement, particularly for those students who are more likely to fail state exams

First Generation – A student who will be the first in their family to attend college

Anxiety – heightened arousal and avoidance of social stimuli (White, 2013)

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the local and national contexts of my problem of practice. It described national trends of depression and anxiety that college campuses are seeing, that can be attributed to connections between life satisfaction and self-esteem, locus of control and externalizing and internalizing behavior problems as well as anxiety being moderately correlated with school satisfaction (Baker et al., 2010).

In Chapter Two, I discuss research, linking locus of control with anxiety and school satisfaction and academic motivation. Second, Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, and Bandura's social cognitive theory will be discussed in terms of models that have proven effective with students to improve school satisfaction, motivation and overall well being.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the method used during the research cycle. It will include specific information about the study participants, my role as the researcher, the innovation employed, survey instruments and data collection methods, as well as information regarding validity.

Chapter Four discusses the quantitative and qualitative data results gathered using a mixed methods action research design to help determine the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Descriptive statistics for the three primary constructs of students' satisfaction, locus of control and academic performance are provided, both before and after the innovation. And inferential statistics are reviewed to further determine correlations and effectiveness.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the results based on the four research questions as well as additional results gathered through student interviews and my field notes. I then consider implications of the project for practice, in terms of how the findings can help teachers and school professionals more effectively work with students to further support their academic goals. I also discuss several implications of the project for further research, and I conclude by identifying several limitations of the study as well as personal lessons learned.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXISTING RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

In this chapter, I discuss research linking locus of control with school satisfaction and academic success. I also summarize studies pertaining to how intentional learning environments that encompass the primary dimensions of the intervention (i.e., mentoring, praise, and goal-setting) may affect students' locus of control. Second, the theoretical perspectives of Bandura and his social learning and social cognitive theories will be examined, particularly in terms of how environment and personal beliefs shape behaviors. Lastly, Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions will be discussed in terms of models that have proven effective with students to improve school satisfaction, motivation and overall well being.

Locus of Control

Rotter (1966) defined locus of control (LOC) as "the degree to which the individual perceives that the reward follows from, or is contingent upon, his own behavior or attributes versus the degree to which he feels the reward is controlled by forces outside of himself and may occur independently of his own actions" (p.1). Essentially, if a person has a more external LOC trait they will believe things are being done to them, with no control over the situations. People with an internal LOC believe they do maintain control over a situation and thus are personally responsible for what happens to them. As summarized in the below section, a considerable body of research has examined the relationship between locus of control and students' outcomes, including

grades, satisfaction, and social/emotional well-being, as well as antecedents of locus of control, including intentional learning environments, goal-setting, support and praise, and mentoring.

Locus of control and students' outcomes.

Research has shown that an adolescent's locus of control mediates the relationship between negative life experiences and school satisfaction (Huebner, Ash & Laughlin, 2001). Cauce, Hannah and Sargent (1992) found evidence that an internal LOC for "school successes was positively related with general, school, and physical competence, and negatively related to anxiety" (p.795). Cauce, et al. (1992) also noted school supports created a stress buffer for these students who were more externally focused.

Locus of control and grades.

Stipek and Weisz (1981) found an internal locus of control is a positive predictor of grades. Research by Yong (1994) shows gifted children are more likely to have an internal locus of control. Ferrer and Krantz (1987) note this may be due to these children being more able to delay gratification, control impulses and regulate their attention. This increased internal locus of control also is related to a higher level of "resilience" and higher academic success regardless of socioeconomic status and minority demographics. Other studies have found that an external locus of control is associated with poor academic achievement (Stipek & Weisz, 1981).

What explains why individuals with an internal LOC have higher levels of school achievement in comparison to those with an external LOC (Au, 2014; Bursik & Martin, 2006; Lynch et al., 2002; Strayhorn, 2010)? One explanation is that these individuals

believe they have more control over their learning (Nunn & Nunn, 1993). Chubb, Fertman and Ross (2007) saw relationships between academic success and internal locus of control. Karaman and Watson's (2017) research indicated locus of control and life satisfaction explained achievement motivation amongst their participants. Similarly, Albert and Dahling's (2016) results indicated that there might be a relationship between learning goal orientations (LGO) and an internal LOC. Learning goal orientations refers to individuals not only learning about a topic but becoming competent in said topic (Dweck, 1986). When internal LOC was high, there was a stronger positive relationship between LGO and academic self-concept. This positive academic self-concept had a positive effect on GPA one year later (Albert & Dahling, 2016).

Locus of control, satisfaction and social/emotional well-being.

Beyond grades, a number of studies have examined the relationship between locus of control and other school-related outcomes. It is associated with leadership behaviors; McCullough, Ashbridge and Pegg (1994) found adolescent leaders on a school campus exhibited a high internal locus of control (LOC). It also contributes to an individual's psychosocial attitudes and emotions. An external locus of control is associated with childhood anxiety (Nunn, 1999) and depression (McCauley, Mitchell, Burke, & Moss, 1988). Chubb, Fertman and Ross's (2007) research shows positive relationships among low self-esteem, low life satisfaction, loneliness, anxiety, resentment, irritability, and depression. They also saw relationships between high self-esteem and internal locus of control. Cauce, et al. (1992) also noted weakened school performance often precedes depression, conduct disorders, and antisocial aggression.

Ultimately, locus of control affects not only school satisfaction, but school achievement, potential leadership traits and various social emotional issues, such as anxiety, self-esteem, depression and aggression. As discussed, an internal locus of control has a more positive effect on academic efficacy and school satisfaction. Locus of control can change over time through varied experiences that are reinforced frequently and consistently and certain behaviors will result in a particular outcome (Norwicki & Strickland, 1973; Rotter, 1966). More specifically when a connection is made between behavior and consequences, locus of control can become more internal (Chubb, Fertman & Ross, 1997). Kim, Omizo and Andrea's (1998) research indicated change in self-esteem and a shift to an internal locus of control was possible through strong, consistent, and positive experiences in a group setting.

Intentional learning environments and students' locus of control.

A considerable body of research examines factors that impact students' locus of control. Of particular relevance to the present study, Larsen's (2015) research underscores the importance of intentional learning environments. These environments actively engage the students. They focus on student-centered instruction, deeper learning, real-world connections, cross-curricular techniques, and problem-solving skills. These intentional learning strategies allow students to take ownership of the learning process (read, more of an internal LOC) and ultimately to focus on greater self-efficacy. In this section, I focus on three key dimensions of an intentional learning environment that are at the center of the study's intervention and may contribute to the development of an internal LOC: goal-setting, praise from teachers, and mentoring.

Goal-setting.

Having students establish long-term goals can largely impact a student's ability to change their mindset (Larsen, 2015). Rivera (2009) discussed the importance of goal setting when working with Latino and low-income students to help establish a pattern of delaying gratification, while also increasing internal locus of control of students. The practice of goal setting and recognizing these shorter-term milestones by both teachers and parents can create a sense of personal control. Hoppe, Prokop and Rau (2018) found "students who participated in the *goal setting* perceived a higher level of *control* and in turn *control* predicted *engagement*" (p.193). Ashton (1986) also developed an intervention to increase students' internality (LOC). This intervention included providing students with information about LOC, an analysis of autobiographical writing, goal setting exercises and various discussions on case histories. Students, improved on increasing their internal LOC through this training.

By empowering students to create their own goals, rather than being assigned tasks by their instructor students had more "self control" rather than feeling as if they were being forced to complete assignment tasks.

Support and praise.

One area particularly of interest for the purpose of this research is the use of praise by teachers. More specifically praise should focus on accomplishing a task, while emphasizing students' efforts rather than their abilities. It is through this specific use of praise students' motivation to learn is impacted (Crow & Small, 2011; Dweck 2000; Hitz & Driscoll 1989). Hung, Badejo and Bennett saw a similar pattern in a Texas charter, high school. Students reported being "motivated through support, assistance, and

encouragement they received from their teachers" (p.28, 2014). Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan (1991) also recognized the use of verbal praise and positive feedback increase internal motivation in students. Bastidas Arteaga, (2006) recognized this increased internal motivation shows a correlation with how quickly and readily students learn. Kelly in his 2002 research found 8th graders who indicated a more external locus of control reacted most positively to encouraging statements such as, "Coming in for tutoring is paying off." Albert and Dahling's (2016) research on learning goal orientations and locus of control indicated change in these two concepts was possible "through strong, consistent, positive experiences" in order to create a positive academic self-concept (p.247). This is similar to what Bandura and Frederickson's research have indicated in terms of positive reinforcement and positive emotions.

Mentoring.

DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) found relationships with non-familial, school personnel (such as counselors or teachers) could create positive change in students. This relationship can be formal, with specific guidelines and meetings or informal where students simply have a positive relationship with a school staff person and can reach out to them for academic and/or emotional support.

Holt, Bry, and Johnson (2008) utilized the Achievement Mentoring Program. The Achievement Mentoring Program is adapted from Bry's Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (BMRP). Mentors, comprised of teachers and staff, were paired with freshman high school students to speak with them on a weekly basis on various topics, such as upcoming assignments, how to problem solve regarding any academic issues, practice positive behaviors such as organizing notebooks and finally following up

with students regarding any concerns about attendance, grades or discipline. In addition to all this mentors were also instructed to learn more about future plans or goals of the student and to reach out to parents to provide information on the students' positive behavior. Students noted feelings of school belonging and no discipline referrals throughout the mentoring intervention period. Researchers also noted fewer declines in decision-making. While there were not statistically significant changes in grades they did improve. Researchers also indicated that this limited change in grades could be because the time of the relationships were limited to five months and longitudinal studies show more significant changes in grades and attendance with similar mentoring programs (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008).

Casey (2000) discusses how a focus on academics is not the only component to educational success, but a mentor must also guide the student in preparation for adulthood. Casey (2000) adds that mentorships can lead to personal growth, increase cognitive ability, support relating to adults and can increase attention span. Dubois and Silverthorn's (2005) research indicate students' relationships with teachers and guidance counselors result in the most change in students, compared to mentoring relationships with family members. Students were more likely to complete high school and engage in health promoting behaviors, as a result of these non-familial mentors.

Greene and Ollendick's (1993) research also supports a mentoring system between school personnel and students to create a positive academic environment that includes guidance and feedback. School belonging can increase as a result of a directed mentorship program with non-familial teachers and counselors and a reduction in discipline referrals (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008). Erickson, McDonald and Elder (2009)

found having an adult mentor, even informally, can improve academic performance in high school and overall educational attainment, regardless of socioeconomic status or other disadvantages. Cavazos and Cavazos (2010), studied college students and their high school experiences and found these students who were primarily Latino, were positively influenced by mentors. Specifically, teachers were determined to be mentors by simply providing positive praise and high academic expectations towards these students.

Theoretical Perspectives

Two key psycho-social theories help to inform how school leaders and teachers can help students shift from an external locus of control to a more internal locus of control, ultimately improving their satisfaction as well as academic outcomes. I will first discuss Bandura's social cognitive theory, which will provide insight to the reason for the intervention in terms of a need to change the behaviors for the students at XYZ School. I will then review Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions and how an emphasis on positive emotions can broaden thought-actions and build an individual's personal resources.

Social Learning Theory/Social Cognitive Theory.

Albert Bandura's body of research intersects behaviorism and cognitive psychology. More specifically Bandura's theories and research discuss how the environment and personal beliefs can influence individuals' behaviors. Bandura's seminal contribution on the topic is his social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), which he subsequently expanded upon and renamed social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Both emphasize the importance of creating personal beliefs in what someone believes they can

accomplish. Bandura argued that behaviors and behavioral patterns are influenced by three interacting factors: the environment, behaviors, and personal self-efficacy.

Behavioral Determinants. Bandura's theories hypothesize that people learn through direct experience or by observing the behaviors of others. Reinforcement plays a role in this learning process. Reinforcement refers to any stimulus that encourages a particular behavior to increase or strengthen. This can occur not only by directly providing a stimulus to an individual, such as verbal praise, "You are really focused on your work today," but it also has a social component and can occur through individuals witnessing how others are reinforced. Reinforcement in social learning theory refers to an individual being aware of certain potential stimuli and what behaviors may be reinforced. This in turn lets individuals know what is expected of them. Applying the concept of reinforcement to the intervention at the center of this study, I incorporated praise and positive feedback in the student/teacher mentoring relationship. Not only did I as their mentor engage in positive verbal reinforcement, but I also communicated with teachers for them to provide weekly positive feedback to the students.

In addition to reinforcement, Bandura's social cognitive theory has several other propositions as to how and where learning can occur. Modeling, which refers to acquiring knowledge directly from observing another's behaviors, is another primary mechanism that produces learning. Specifically, Bandura argued that modeled behavior is more likely to continue when it is rewarded and others are showing similar behaviors. Bandura (1971) quotes the old adage, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," and it was anticipated that this sentiment would be personified in my students upon implementation of my intervention. Positive academic and social/emotional behaviors was modeled by

myself, as their mentor and by their peers in everyday social interactions, while being reinforced positively by written notes provided to students weekly by teachers. These modeling opportunities included short and long term academic goal setting and positive reinforcement by multiple teachers. For example, students developed short terms plans for raising their grades or completing assignments as individuals, but because this occurred in a classroom setting students were able to model the behaviors they saw from their peers. But these opportunities for change were not only limited to a one on one interaction; if other students see this behavior, and they note the rewards being garnered by these students, the anticipation would be students will model the more appropriate behaviors. It is predicted this modeling of appropriate behaviors will create a healthy social contagion. Often times students will feed off the negativity of each other, but it is possible to see this occur positively.

Bandura's social learning theory identifies the features of individuals who others are most likely to model. High status, prestige, and power are characteristics that lead to others modeling one's behaviors according to Bandura (1971). Over one fourth of students are failing one course or more at any one time in the academic year at XYZ School, including almost half of the freshman class at any point in the academic year. With so many students failing courses at any one time, it is possible students are modeling ineffective academic skills if they believe low achievement contributes to their peers maintaining high status, prestige, and power. This is not absolute as the observer needs to have some desire to express these modeled behaviors, but they are important characteristics to be aware of. Applying this concept to the present study, I anticipated having students model to their peers behaviors and actions aligned with the intervention,

in terms of goal-setting, reframing thoughts and how to communicate with teachers. Teachers were also encouraged to give positive verbal reinforcement in classes, as well as the capstone teacher providing positive reinforcement in class when recognized.

Environment. Environment refers to the social setting and interactions individuals have with one another and how the individual is responding to the setting and interactions with others. The environment can affect responses, cognitively and/or behaviorally; more about this reciprocal triadic relationship will be discussed below (Bandura, 1991). In a school setting, this is particularly important to make note of due to the frequent interactions with peers and adults. If there is not a nurturing, supportive, caring environment, this could negatively affect students and their behaviors, both academically and social/emotionally.

Self Efficacy. An individual's *personal* beliefs about his or her ability to perform a given behavior, or the concept of self-efficacy, also influence behaviors. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a certain goal (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura, self-efficacy beliefs strongly influence a person's decision to initiate and continue with said behavior (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Because self-efficacy is specific to a particular goal, students may need to acquire self-efficacy towards a certain goal such as good grades in a specific class. For instance, a student may show an affinity towards self-efficacy in English but this self-efficacy may not translate to a math course. Pintrich and Schunk's (1996) research based on social cognitive theory determined a student's personal perception of their ability was more integral to their academic achievement than their actual intellectual ability.

Reciprocal Triadic Relationships. According to SCT, each of the three determinants described above interact with one another to influence behavior. Specific to behaviors in school, "social cognitive theory would suggest that an intervention in a student's educational environment could influence their academic trajectory, given the relationships among the environmental, personal, and behavioral domains," (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008, p. 299). According to Bandura, social cognitive theory accounts for academic achievement, engagement, and learning by way of a "triadic reciprocality" or reciprocal interactions among personal (i.e., cognitive, affective, biological), behavioral, and environmental influences (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008). For instance, if a student begins to submit assignments on time (behavior) and receives positive praise (reinforcement) from their capstone teacher (environment), this may increase a student's self-esteem (personal) and they may begin seeking tutoring or more assistance to better understand their assignments. The end goal would then be improved academics and behavior. The reverse may also be true if a student does not feel supported by teachers and this may continue a cycle of a lack of motivation.

Broaden-and-Build Theory.

Frederickson's (2004) broaden and build theory references how emotions can determine the behaviors that follow. For instance, if a student is given a particular assignment and has an initial emotion of fear of failure, they are less likely to be motivated to do well and complete the task to the best of their ability. The theory suggests both positive and negative emotions have long-lasting consequences by directly affecting individual development, skills, and social resources. More specifically, positive emotions "(i) broaden people's attention and thinking; (ii) undo lingering negative

emotional arousal; (iii) fuel psychological resilience; (iv) build consequential personal resources; (v) trigger upward spirals towards greater well-being in the future; and (vi) seed human flourishing" (Frederickson, 2004, p. 1375). These are all skills students and adults need to be highly successful and more social/emotionally sound. When individuals do not have a wealth of positive emotions they can become "stuck" – limited in how they react to situations. If a person's reactions are limited, and if they are limited in their positive emotions, they may not reach their full potential.

Garland, et al. (2010) note positive emotions can create an "upward spiral" and negative emotions can create a "downward spiral". This downward spiral can include "defensive behavior, focus on threat, and feelings of inefficacy, these self destructive, vicious cycles can lead to impoverished life experiences, and potentially, devastating psychopathology" (p. 860). The researchers further conclude interventions centered on fostering positive emotions may remediate clinical disorders because of a shift in more resilient behaviors. The more people can broaden and increase their positive emotions, while reducing their negative emotions, the more likely they are to succeed and achieve their goals, while also creating loftier goals.

A number of studies have substantiated the premises of Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory. Particular to the context of education, Bordwine and Huebner (2010) studied how frequent positive emotions can improve school satisfaction and improve behavior and psychological resources. Bordwine and Huebner (2010) operationalized emotions in terms of affect, defined as "a moderately stable characteristic that reflects individual differences in positive or negative emotional experiences" (p. 351). Findings suggest, "frequent positive emotions serve to facilitate students' approach coping

behaviors, which in turn facilitate satisfaction with their schooling experiences" (p. 349). The study results suggest that one way to create improved school satisfaction is to increase the positive affect of a student by facilitating more frequent positive emotions. This potentially could be done in the classroom between a teacher and student.

Implications of Theories and Existing Research

There is research showing a variety of means of moving students from a more external locus of control to a more internal locus of control. Once students have a more internal locus of control and more positive emotions the more likely we are to see a positive correlation with improved academics (Stipek and Weisz ,1981; Yong, 1994; Ferrer and Krantz, 1987; Au, 2014; Bursik & Martin, 2006; Lynch et al., 2002; Strayhorn, 2010; Nunn & Nunn, 1993; Chubb, Fertman and Ross, 2007; Karaman and Watson, 2017). But these traits do not only affect academics, they can also improve a student's well being, encourage more motivation, improve school and life satisfaction and reduce the potential for psychological diagnosis such as anxiety and depression (Nunn, 1999; McCauley, Mitchell, Burke, & Moss, 1988; Chubb, Fertman and Ross, 2007; Cauce, et al.,1992; Norwicki & Strickland, 1973; Rotter, 1966; Kim, Omizo and Andrea, 1998).

While shifting an external LOC to an internal LOC can be a lengthy process, there is sufficient data indicating it is possible (Norwicki & Strickland, 1973; Rotter, 1966; Chubb, Fertman & Ross, 1997). Ideally teachers who work with students throughout their four years of high school will be able to implement the intervention model and will potentially see more long-term effects and more significant changes in LOC. This will not only create positive academic changes in students, but also social/emotionally and

potentially in teachers as well as they may feel more effective in their teachings, overall. Hence, change may not only create positive results for students, but for teachers and even parents if a student is more satisfied in an environment where they spend a majority of their time.

Chapter 3

METHOD

Chapter 3 details the methods used in this research project. Information is provided on the research setting and participants. I will explain my positionality as the researcher within this action research model. Specifics will be provided for the innovation, as well as to why the innovation was chosen. The quantitative and qualitative instruments and data collection procedures and analysis will also be detailed. Finally, potential limitations in the research design will be reviewed as well as the project timeline for the study.

Setting

The research took place in a K-12th grade charter school located in central Phoenix, Arizona. Students attend XYZ School from various areas throughout the Phoenix metropolitan area, inner city and suburban areas. The school is closely related to a state university and is centered on its mission that all students can be college ready. The school is completing its 10th year of existence and will be graduating its 5th cohort in the 2018-2019 academic year. There are approximately 1100 students and of these, approximately 355 students are enrolled in the high school's 9th-12th grade. The student population is over 70% Hispanic, 20% white, 5% African American and 5% other. Many students and/or their parents are undocumented and/or are English Language Learners (ELL) – English being their second language.

In terms of its program of study, XYZ School is a Cambridge School. The Cambridge curriculum is an international curriculum preparing students for university courses. Through the use of the Cambridge curriculum and the State of Arizona, students

can graduate with a Grand Canyon Diploma as early as the end of their sophomore year and can enroll in university courses by their junior year of high school. Other high schools often test students or accept only a subset into their Cambridge program, but XYZ School has all students participate in the curriculum with the opportunity to test in various subjects throughout their high school career.

One of the attributes of XYZ School of particular relevance to the current study is that it provides all high school students with a capstone class and dedicated capstone teacher. Students attend the capstone class on a daily basis over the entire four years of high school. Overall, the capstone's intent is to encourage students to dedicate the time to search career interests and university programs, focus on social emotional areas, such as bullying and personal safety, prepare for college entrance exams, and most importantly create a place for students to work together and with a teacher to encourage a "family" within a large context. The capstone teacher ideally follows a cohort of students through their four years of high school.

Participants

Participants for this study included one cohort of sixteen 10th grade students, 7 males and 9 females (Table 1). In the 2018-19 academic year, XYZ School had 5 cohorts per grade level, for a total of 93 10th graders. I selected this particular cohort, for a couple of different reasons. Tenth grade students were selected largely because of the large number of them failing courses throughout the 2017-2018 academic year. This cohort of students was failing courses at a higher rate than in previous years. The specific classroom of 10th grade students was selected because it was a possibility that at least three of the other 10th grade capstone course teachers would be leaving or moving

positions to another school site from the 2017-2018 academic year to the 2018-2019 academic year. In addition, because this innovation would be a new means of supporting students, I did not want to burden a new capstone teacher with additional duties or a deviation from what they were trying to accomplish with a new class, while also trying to establish a relationship with an entire cohort of students. Finally, the capstone teacher I selected had previously followed a capstone class through to graduation, and I was confident that she would provide constructive feedback to me regarding what was most effective and what was not. In comparison, one other capstone teacher remaining was new to our school and our capstone model. At the time of my study, my selected teacher had taught for over five years and demonstrated a proactive approach to working with students.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Participants

	All High School Students (368)		10th Grade Students (94)		Study Participants (n=16)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Male	174	47.2	42	44.7	7	43.8
Female	194	52.7	52	55.3	9	56.2
Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic/Latino	212	57.6	61	64.9	11	68.8
White	85	23.1	16	17.0	1	6.3
Black/African American	41	11.1	10	10.6	2	12.5
American Indian	17	4.6	2	2.1	1	6.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	3.5	5	5.3	1	6.3

Research Design

An action research design guides this study. Mertler (2009) discusses the action research model and its importance with educators to determine potential solutions to a

variety of problems of practice in a K-12th grade environment. The action research model is intentional and begins with a problem of practice (i.e., the concern the educator is considering), collecting data (i.e., quantitatively and/or qualitatively and/or mixed methods), analyzing and interpreting this data and ultimately developing a plan of action. Once a plan is created and implemented, the model of gathering, analyzing and interpreting data continues, and plans for improvement continue to be implemented and modified as needed. The intent is to create a model where educators can make ongoing changes themselves to be more effective in their current practice.

I have had the opportunity to create and facilitate several cycles of action research building to this current cycle culminating in this action research dissertation, which I describe in more detail in the next section. Based on these cycles my problem of practice has evolved as has my research questions and ultimately the model of intervention I am implementing. These changes were a result of various interviews and surveys with teachers, counselors, administrators and students and ongoing day-to-day interactions with my school community.

Based on my previous cycles of research, interviewing and surveying students, it was clear a mixed-methods research design would provide me with the most useful and complete information for this cycle of research and future cycles. Specifically an explanatory mixed-methods design was employed for this cycle of research. An explanatory mixed methods model is often used to help researchers more fully explain the quantitative data being gathered with gathering qualitative data to best explain the quantitative results. Because this intervention cycle was only 9 weeks, minimal in time, the additional qualitative data in conjunction with the quantitative survey data proved

instrumental in providing a more complete picture of the innovation results. Ultimately, the qualitative data was collected to "corroborate, refute, or expand on the initial findings from the quantitative date" (Suizzo, Jackson, Pahlke, McClain, Marroquin, Blondeau, & Hong, 2016, p.350).

Both qualitative and quantitative data are important, as I was not merely looking for an improvement in grades, but school satisfaction and a clearer sense of control over students' actions. Gathering both forms of data allowed for a triangulation of the data gathered. As discussed in more detail below, quantitative data such as grades, as well as survey information from Trice's Locus of Control Survey and the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale Items (MSLSS) was gathered. The survey data helped provide information about the effectiveness of the intervention, but qualitative data in the form of interviews with students regarding their feedback to the intervention provided additional information that may not have been as evident in this quantitative data and/or information to support the data gathered. Ultimately, this provided me with additional support to the research findings.

In terms of the qualitative portion of the project, using a social constructionist point of view to gather insight on how students create their own knowledge and how that connects to their behaviors and attitudes that affect their success is critical. "Social constructionists… emphasize the idea that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings," (Crotty, 1998, p.54). In my conversations with teachers, parents, and students everyone has a different perspective as to why students are struggling with academics and social/emotional issues. In addition, my students' learning environment is unique to many. They are in a K-12, Title I, college preparatory school, which has

students from all walks of life. Their culture, ethnicities and socio-economic standing all affect their subjective reality. While the adults and individuals around them may have their perspectives on what is causing a student to exhibit particular behaviors, it is only through the intentional gathering of information from these students that I can help support them through their constructed reality. Information gathered directly from the students and their social constructs helped create a narrative of the effectiveness of the intervention and future iterations of this action research.

Previous Cycles of Research Completed

Several cycles of research were completed to assist in gathering information about the problem of practice determined at the start of this doctoral program. Cycle 1 occurred in spring, 2017. This research included a quantitative survey to provide information on student's school satisfaction, their organizational skills, praise and reinforcement in the classroom and at home, and anxiety students may be experiencing. Cycle 1 also included two teacher interviews to gather additional information about their viewpoint in regards to students' anxiety, organization and praise or reinforcement in the classroom they are providing as teachers. Additional information about student's school satisfaction and their view of school support factors were gathered in the most recent cycle that took place in fall, 2017.

Cycle 1 – Is there a cause for concern?

The goal for this cycle of research was to better understand the extent to which students and teachers had concerns regarding anxiety, organization and school satisfaction. I interviewed two teachers and surveyed 14 students. Survey results and interviews provided supportive data that both groups see student satisfaction as an

ongoing issue at XYZ school (Table 2). The findings align with the anecdotal data I have from myself, in my previous position as the school counselor, as well as informal and formal discussions with teachers and administrators in cycle 0, before and throughout this process, and indicate a continued need for support for an intervention for students.

Table 2
Cycle 1 Survey Results

	I am organized	I handle academic stress well	I feel anxious	I enjoy coming to school	I feel supported by teachers	My teachers recognize hard work	I often feel over-whelmed	I feel connected	I know what to do	I do not know who to go to
Mean	3.92	2.57	4.07	3.07	3.64	3.64	4.14	2.50	4.29	3.36
Median	4.00	2.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.50	4.50	3.00	5.00	3.50

Data indicate a consistent theme of students not handling academic stress well, as well as feeling anxious and overwhelmed at school. Students were asked if they handle academic stress well; over 71% state they slightly disagree to strongly disagree. Over 57% of students feel anxious at least once a week and 57% feel overwhelmed at school.

While over half of the 10th grade students surveyed indicated consistent patterns of anxiety and stress, over half the students felt organized and maybe more importantly feel supported by teachers. More than 70% of students also stated they do know what to do when they need support or help.

There were some concerns that arose during Cycle 1, including the anonymity of student survey responses in future cycles. Coding surveys to align with students' grades and attendance may result in students not being authentic in their survey response. This is something I was intentional about in working with students and their parents to assure them that their information was protected and they should be comfortable in being as honest as possible in their responses and comments. Second, the database system in my school's network was limited as to how I can collect GPA information. It did require me to pull each student record individually and to then calculate individual GPAs. This is not a difficult task, but not one I anticipated being an issue. Third, while not necessarily a concern, it is something I need to be aware of in future cycles of research. When I asked teachers what positive reinforcement they use in the classroom, they were limited in what was shared. This indicated a need to give teachers the skills to positively reinforce behaviors in the classroom and/or my intention to seek positive feedback from them to use during my one on one mentoring meetings. However, this would have added an additional intervention strategy to this research that was not the direct focus. Future

cycles of research, as noted below, should take this into consideration.

Interviews with graduating seniors.

Cycle 1 included quantitative data from students in the form of a survey and qualitative data from teachers. The following semester students were interviewed to provide information about students' perceptions of teacher and parental support, as well as their viewpoint on school satisfaction. Major findings from all three students, John, Ethan and Rebecca (names have been changed) include the recognition of teachers who go above and beyond, academic assistance outside of the class period, effective means of recognition by both staff and families and the overall positive environment of the school. Teachers "going above and beyond" include teachers who on their planning periods go into an individual student's class to check on them. John stated:

> Thing is, Mr. D, that's the teacher that's always spying on me in other classes ... and I appreciate it, 'cause he'll be, "Oh, you did good in this class." And he's, "I like how you work in that class." And then, when I go to his class, he's like, "How come you didn't work the same in this class and that class?" And I just like how he's so devoted for me to be the same…. He wants me to act like all my classes are core classes. That's how he wants me to act. I just appreciate him always trying to be on my case about that. (Anonymous, John. Personal interview. 16 November 2017.)

One of the other students discussed how teachers assist beyond their own course, with college essays and scholarships as well. Rebecca said, "He always offers to help. And the first ... the first two, I guess, scholarship things that I applied to, the Joaquin Bustoz and QuestBridge, he was the one who revised my essays and told me about the

programs. Now I just go to him." In addition to teachers supporting beyond the classroom, students voiced appreciation when teachers push them to do better. Ethan mentioned, "She will push me more than I realize, and looking back now, I do realize that she does. It's like my second mom. That's what I call her, my second mom."

All three students also discussed the importance of tutoring, both before and after school and during lunch as being a significant academic support. John said, "The library and after school, when teachers stay a little extra or a little bit after, ... help me a lot." When discussing further how teachers support and help students, John and Rebecca discussed the importance of teachers speaking one on one with students when there is an issue and not "calling students out in class." Ethan also had concerns about some teachers, "Sometimes I feel like they don't really care, but I know that we go here to XYZ and they should care, but I don't know. That's the vibe that I get from them."

When asked how teachers and families recognize their work as students all three students mentioned the importance of verbal praise over tangible rewards. Ethan feels supported by his family based on this verbal praise. "We would talk about it during dinnertime. You just feel the excitement that we talk about, and how all, 'Good job. Good job. You make me so happy.'" Unfortunately, John and Rebecca did not necessarily receive this verbal praise from family. However they both acknowledged how it is encouraging when teachers provide this praise. John said "They always acknowledge me about ... there's a certain teacher that's always telling me when I'm doing good, 'Oh, you did good today.'"

When asked to identify changes that would improve their experiences, the participants made three suggestions. One, was the importance of different teaching styles

as a means of supporting students, Ethan said in regards to how teachers can further support students, “Maybe teach a different style, because I know sometimes I don't really fully grasp it, and that's when I have to go in after school or ask a peer.” Rebecca had concerns about the redundancy in the teaching of particular classes, “I feel like we relearn the same stuff most of the time. Sometimes it's a little more in-depth, but a lot of times, I feel like I'm just redoing what I've already done.” And finally, John discussed how the length of the school day is difficult for students, “It's that our time is a lot more than other high schools. We get out at four. The time is a big one, 'cause then when you go home, a lot of people leave late due to their parents living far and stuff. By the time I get home, I don't want to do homework, I want to go to sleep.”

Ultimately, all three students appreciate the relationships and collaborative environment on campus, where many of the students have known each other for years. John stated “What I enjoy most, I think it's, I want to say the atmosphere. Even though some days are bad, some days are good, but the atmosphere is cool.” Rebecca discussed, “I enjoy collaborating with other people, because I like hearing new ideas and different perspectives.” And finally when asked what Ethan likes best about school he said, “The connections that I make. Friendships and teacher relationships….”

Study Innovations

The purpose of the innovation that is at the center of this project was to implement a program for teachers to more systematically *mentor* and *praise* students, as well as assist them in *goal-setting*, in order to promote an internalized locus of control among high school students at XYZ School. As mentioned, in Chapter 2, research shows locus of control can change over time through varied experiences that are reinforced

frequently and consistently. Certain behaviors will result in a particular outcome and when a connection is made between behavior and consequences, locus of control can become more internal (Norwicki & Strickland, 1973; Rotter, 1966; Chubb, Fertman & Ross, 1997). The innovation consisted of three components: mentoring, praise, and goal-setting. How I implemented each over the 9-week period is described below, primarily through a one hour, weekly meeting that I had with all 16 of the 10th grade student participants during the time dedicated in their schedule to their capstone course. The first two weeks approximately 15 minutes were spent at the start of the class with me introducing students to the topic of the day, however as time progressed I saw the need for more one on one instruction with the students. Starting in week three only 5-10 minutes were spent at the start of class introducing the weekly topic and then for the remainder of the time, I moved around the room and had individual conversations. While I spoke with individual students, the rest of the participants worked on creating their goals and started the assignments they needed to complete for the day or the week to come.

I started each conversation with students asking how the last week had gone at school and at home. I also asked if they had upcoming plans, how previously scheduled plans had gone, and as the weeks progressed I was able to ask more specific questions in relation to the students' lives. Following this brief discussion I showed students their lowest grade and we discussed specifically any missing assignments or assignments that could possibly be resubmitted. If this was not an option, we discussed tutoring options and scheduled when the student could attend those sessions. Students were also encouraged to reach out to teachers either in person or via email to discuss any concerns

they were having in class, the email would be sent out within the capstone period or a day and time scheduled for the student to meet with the teacher was documented. Time was also spent encouraging students on improvement in grades, organization and/or attendance. Table 3 details the weekly discussions that started the class session, as well as items that were specifically discussed with each individual student as I walked from table to table and student to student. The capstone teacher did remain in the room while I worked with students and also assisted students when requested by the student or myself. All sessions with students occurred during this weekly sessions.

In terms of how the three overarching components described above were implemented, first, the *mentoring* portion is based on the Achievement Mentoring Program designed by Holt, Bry, and Johnson (2008), which is a model where behaviors are reinforced frequently and consistently through the support of an experienced mentor. In the Achievement Mentoring Program, mentors, comprised of teachers and staff, were paired with freshman high school students to speak with them on a weekly basis on various topics, such as upcoming assignments, how to problem solve regarding any academic issues, practice positive behaviors such as organizing notebooks and finally following up with students regarding any concerns about attendance, grades or discipline. In addition to all this mentors were also instructed to learn more about future plans or goals of the student and to reach out to parents to provide information on the students' positive behavior. This model, as previously discussed, was closely followed in this action research cycle. The one difference in my cycle of research was using myself as the mentor, this did not require recruitment or training.

In addition to the main points discussed and illustrated in table 3, I spoke with students about what was going well and what they were struggling with. We also discussed upcoming events such as the holidays or spirit days at school and various conversations to improve the one on one relationship with each student. If students were doing well academically, A's and B's, students were asked if they had any upcoming projects to prepare for or if there was anything specific they felt they needed assistance with. All students were provided positive feedback and encouraged to continue to work on hard on the goals they had created for themselves. Finally, if it was noted that several students were struggling in a class or with a particular assignment and one or two students had done well, or had a grasp of what was being asked, I stopped the one on one conversations with students and brought up a group discussion about the assignment and how they could help one another or how they could approach the teacher with concerns. This appeared particularly effective in helping the students not feel isolated and gave them the opportunity to receive help from other students.

For the *praise* portion of the innovation, on a weekly basis I provided written praise to each student for a new teacher each week, examples of these statements gathered from teachers can be reviewed in Appendix E. I met with 1-2 teachers a week with a list of students and asked them to provide me positive feedback on each student. Each teacher was asked to note one positive thing the student accomplished that week in their class, as well as to gather information about upcoming assignments. Second, I shared this positive statement with the student in the form of small slips of paper. I congratulated the students on the positive statements, particularly emphasizing the positive comment if it was from a teacher they particularly struggled with. I publicly

recognized students who have shown positive improvements academically and/or behaviorally. For instance, a student had been behind of several online math assignments and she completed the missing assignments from one week to the next. At the table she sat at with 4 other students, I recognized her hard work by saying I was proud of how hard she worked that last week and asked how she was able to get them all done. When she noted she went in for tutoring several times, I noted with the other students who had the same teacher at the table with her, how willing he had been to work with her and ensuring she caught up on her assignments without penalty.

In terms of the *goal-setting* portion of the innovation, I worked with the students on goal setting, how to speak to a teacher or parent, or organization and time management. I also discussed student's attendance (absences and tardies) if it was a concern, such as tardies to a particular class or a large number of absences and grades. There was only one student with significant tardies at the start of the quarter, this was discussed in length and reminders were provided throughout the quarter. One student missed several school days due to illness, and we established a plan to assist him in completing any missing assignments, as part of his weekly goal setting. During each of the 9 meetings, I walked from student to student with the school information system page open to the students' current grades for that week. I helped them investigate each grade to determine what assignments were missing or what assignments the student struggled with. Our student information system allows us to see the average grade per class, and then allows us to open up the grade to view missing assignments, graded assignments and upcoming assignments. Based on this information, the student and I then discussed what assignment(s) should be focused on for the next week, this could be a missing

assignment, upcoming assignment or resubmitting an assignment if allowed by a teacher. I emphasized working on assignments that could be completed in a timely manner or assignments that were worth the most points, as these assignments could most positively or negatively affect a student's grade. The goal sheet in Appendix C was used to help students organize themselves, as well as their planners and/or phone calendars if the students preferred using that as a means of organization.

While I was the primary implementer of the innovation, the students' capstone teacher also played an important role. I met with the capstone teacher prior to the start of the semester to familiarize her with the innovation and her role in it. I was responsible for implementing the Achievement *Mentoring* Program with her students. I was also responsible for tracking the *support and praise* her students received from teachers, as stated above by using the Excel sheet in Appendix F. In terms of *goal-setting*, the teacher was responsible for starting the tracking document for each student, with grades and missing assignments for class that had the lowest grades and/or D's and/or F's (Appendix C). I then went from student to student to specifically ask what they wanted to improve on and what their plan would be to improve the grades in those classes (Appendix C). This also included guidance about what assignments and classes should be prioritized as well as helping students create a meaningful, doable timeline to accomplish tasks. Finally, I was responsible for administering the survey instruments (Appendices A and B) that students completed as part of this study.

Table 3
Weekly Intervention Breakdown

Week 0	• Students were given an overview of the intervention • Students were provided the MSLSS and Trice's Questionnaire to complete in class • Student's were provided pizza as a thank you for their participation
Week 1	• Discussed the weekly grade sheets to be used and expectations of students, including how they should be detailed in what and how assignments needs to be completed to raise grades • Discussed the importance of their planner and how they should document what assignments they would be completing in the planner for the week to come
Week 2	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student to see how they completed their weekly grade check (noted they were not completing with much information)
Week 3	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students

	• Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize
Week 4	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Revisited the importance of using planners and brought an example in of what it should include and could look like
Week 5	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Focused on the importance of getting caught up in classes as progress reports would be coming out the following week. • Students who were failing one or

	more classes were instructed to go to tutoring at least 2-3 times in the weeks left of the semester. Days and times were written down for when students could/would attend tutoring
Week 6	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Students who were failing one or more classes were instructed to go to tutoring at least 2-3 times in the weeks left of the semester. Days and times were written down for when students could/would attend tutoring
Week 7	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Students who were failing one or more classes were instructed to

	go to tutoring at least 2-3 times in the weeks left of the semester. Days and times were written down for when students could/would attend tutoring
Week 8	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Students who were failing one or more classes were instructed to go to tutoring at least 2-3 times in the weeks left of the semester. Days and times were written down for when students could/would attend tutoring
Week 9	• Met with individual teachers to gather positive feedback on students • Shared this feedback with students • Walked from student to student with the school grading system open to speak directly to assignments missing and guiding students how to prioritize • Students who were failing one or more classes were instructed to go to tutoring at least 2-3 times in the weeks left of the semester. Days and times were written

	down for when students could/would attend tutoring
Week 10	• I thanked the students for their participation and support • Students were provided the MSLSS and Trice's Questionnaire to complete in class • Students were provided pizza as a thank you for their participation

Instruments and Data Collection Procedures

As previously discussed I used an explanatory mixed methods model. Quantitative data were collected in the following areas both pre and post intervention in the form of the two surveys (Appendices A and B), as well as information on students' grades. Qualitative data were collected to help support or provide additional information regarding the results obtained quantitatively. A detailed explanation of both is provided below.

Quantitative data sources.

Quantitative data was the main source of information regarding the intervention's effectiveness. Demographic information was gathered using the school information system. This information is self-reported identification per the student enrollment packet, this is historically completed by parents. To measure *satisfaction*, I used Dr. Scott Huebner's Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale Items (MSLSS) (Appendix B). According to its author, "the MSLSS was designed to provide a multidimensional profile of children's life satisfaction judgments. Such differentiated assessments are

expected to enable more focused diagnostic, prevention, and intervention effort. … Specifically, the MSLSS was designed to (a) provide a profile of children's satisfaction with important, specific domains (e.g., school, family, friends) in their lives; (b) assess their general overall life satisfaction; (c) demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties (e.g., acceptable subscale reliability); (d) reveal a replicable factor structure indicating the meaningfulness of the five dimensions; and (e) be used effectively with children across a wide range of age (grades 3-12) and ability levels (e.g., children with mild developmental disabilities through gifted children)" (Huebner, 2001, p.2). The MSLSS has been used in other studies that examine how students' experiences and emotions influence their satisfaction, including Bordwine and Huebner (2010) in their study of how students' affect influences coping skills and school satisfaction.

This scale consists of 40 questions measured on a 6-point Likert agreement scale. The individual items combine into five overarching constructs. Constructs in the survey include 7 questions in relation to family, 9 questions related to friends, 8 questions for the school construct, 9 questions associated with the students living environment, and 7 questions correlated to the self construct. Family statements include, "I enjoy being at home with my family" and "My family gets along well together. Friends statements comprise, "My friends treat me well" and "My friends are nice to me." School examples are, "I look forward to going to school" and "I like being in school." Living environment questions are, "I like where I live" and "I wish I lived in a different house." Finally, self-statements include, "I think I am good looking" and "Most people like me." The full set of MSLSS items used in this study to measure satisfaction are provided in Appendix B.

To measure *locus of* control, I used a modified use of Trice's Academic Locus of Control Scale for College Students (Appendix A). The original Trice scale was a 28-item true-false format test of beliefs in personal control over academic outcomes. I kept all items as written originally, but I modified the true-false response option to a 5-point Likert agreement scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree". All 28 items measure the single construct of locus of control.

The more that participants agree with items on the instrument (or indicate them as being true), the more of a tendency they have to exhibit an external locus of control. The original scale scored items between a scale of 0-13 to indicate an internal locus of control and 14-28 to indicate an external locus of control. The original survey and scoring key are included in Appendix D. Because I modified the response options to Likert scales, rather than binary true/false response to the statements, I amended how "internal" vs. "external" locus of control was measured. Scores ranging from 28-84 indicated an external locus of control and scores ranging from 85-140 indicated an internal locus of control. Statements 1, 3, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18, 25, 28 rate internal locus of control and statements 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 rate external locus of control. Due to a Likert scale being used and these statements being considered "external" in nature, I was required to reverse score these statements. Scores were added up to determine if a student has an internal or external locus of control.

The Trice instrument has high test-retest reliability and scores significantly correlate with measures of generalized locus of control and achievement motivation (Trice, 1985). While this scale was developed for college students many of the questions

reference general academic locus of control. I received approval to use the Trice survey instrument from its publisher, Ashton Price.

In addition to the satisfaction and locus of control scales explained above, as previously mentioned, to quantitatively capture *academic achievement,* I collected students' cumulative GPA at the end of the 1st quarter of 2018, October 2018 and again at the end of the fall 2018 semester in December 2018.

Qualitative data sources.

Interviews were conducted post intervention with a small sample of four students, from the cohort class (Appendix E). The students were randomly selected based on availability of the student to the schedule of the researcher and for those showed improvement through the intervention as well as interviews with students who may not have shown improvement. Questions focused on the research questions, how students felt in terms of school support and school satisfaction, and how the weekly sessions supported or did not support them throughout the semester.

Role of the Researcher

At the time this study occurred, I had worked at XYZ School for almost eight years. I originally held the position of counselor and for most recent two years I was the dean of students. This position includes working with all students K-12th grade to ensure the safety of students through a school wide discipline plan. Prior to my counseling role at XYZ School I was the statewide bullying prevention coordinator and have worked in and with schools in various capacities over the last 20 years, mostly dedicated to counseling, student support and case management duties.

Within the last 3-4 years prior to the study, I experienced and witnessed an escalation of anxiety in students where most students feel they have little to no control over their day-to-day lives. Others are often blamed for their anxiety or their behaviors. In addition, students are struggling academically with over half of our freshman classes having a GPA below a 3.0. Discipline concerns have also increased particularly within the last year or two. Working in a school dedicated to ensuring every student can graduate from college, these behaviors and grades are concerning as they are hindering our students' options in the future.

Data Analysis

Quantitative procedures.

Students were randomly assigned a coded number to match the pre and post data of the MSLSS and Trice's Academic Locus of Control. This also occurred with the students GPAs. Pre and post data was entered into SPSS and analyzed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis of the constructs, correlations and t-tests. To address research question 1, the association between locus of control and overall life satisfaction, I conducted a paired samples correlation between the pre and post administrations of the MSLSS and Trice's Locus of Control. To address research question 2, how locus of control is associated with academic performance/grades I conducted a paired samples correlation between Trice's Locus of Control survey pre-intervention and 1st quarter GPAs. A paired samples correlation was also conducted post intervention between Trice's Locus of Control survey and 2nd quarter GPAs. To address research question 3, life satisfaction associated with academic performance/grades I conducted a paired samples correlation between the MSLSS pre intervention and 1st quarter GPA and with

the MSLSS post intervention and 2nd quarter GPAs. I also conducted correlations between the MSLSS school sub-construct pre intervention and 1st quarter GPA and the MSLSS school sub-construct post intervention and 2nd quarter GPA. To address research question 4, how does a mentoring relationship impact students' locus of control, life satisfaction, and academic performance I conducted a paired samples correlation between the MSLSS pre and post, the MSLSS school sub-construct pre and post, Trice's Locus of Control pre and post, and 1st quarter and 2nd quarter GPAs. I also conducted t-tests pre and post intervention for the MSLSS, MSLSS school construct, Trice's Locus of Control and 1st and 2nd quarter GPAs to help determine if there was an impact of the intervention on these measures.

Qualitative Procedures.

I used descriptive coding to capture general topics from the student interviews and general notes I took after each session. Line by line coding was used for the four interviews conducted with students and the general notes taken following discussions with teachers when gathering positive feedback and notes taken following the weekly sessions. Following the line by line coding, core themes were gathered and assessed, these included attention, support, academics and accountability as well as core themes related to the terms of the research questions. Finally themes were determined including information specific to the research questions and additional information that may be useful to further research. These themes included the effectiveness of one-on-one support, organization, positive feedback and written planning.

Limitations and Threats to Validity

A number of limitations and associated threats to validity – in other words the overall soundness and quality of the research – must be considered. One limitation is the implementation of the intervention by an administrator, specifically someone students may see as one of the disciplinarians on campus. While the original plan was to have the school counselor implement the intervention, my previous role, the long-term goal of this intervention was to have teachers comfortable with initiating such an intervention. Previously having held the position of counselor students were very open in their conversations with me about a variety of topics. However, I have had students state to me in my new position, that they do not feel comfortable sharing certain things, because they are afraid they are going to get in trouble or that I would have to share information with the principal. At the start of the intervention, I emphasized my role as their mentor was to assist them and support them academically and in any other way I could. Initially my conversations with most of the students who were not familiar with me were more formal, as weeks progressed students became more talkative and appeared more open to speaking with me, even joking or asking how my week had been going. Throughout the intervention period there were also no behavioral incidences with any of the classroom students, which may have adversely affected my relationships with the students as they would have then seen me as the disciplinarian versus their mentor.

The initial goal of this intervention was to provide one on one mentoring meetings with students, however because of my role change, and limited time available to meet with individual students, this was not possible. This then required a full classroom implementation that had its limitations. Providing students with a mentor that could

spend more time to meet with an individual student and work very directly with them is an ideal situation, however this is rarely possible, as detailed in this intervention. A one on one mentoring session would allow for a mentor to provide additional direct support to students in their goal setting and also allow for more time to create a meaningful relationship. It would also allow the student an opportunity to share more information as to what has been working effectively for them and what has not in terms of their study habits, goal setting, organizational skills and more. Implementing the intervention as completed in this cycle of research limited my conversations with students to a few minutes per each student and this provided limited time and opportunity to provide more direct support to students that were struggling in multiple classes.

"The maturation threat to internal validity comes about when certain events internal to the research subjects may be responsible for the differences on the dependent variable" (Smith & Glass, 1987, p.128). Maturation may have affected the validity of this research due to the natural learning of academic skills and experiences of students throughout the school year, without direct instruction through this specific intervention. Student maturation could have been a factor in positive changes from the spring to the fall 2018 semester. Or it could have been a negative factor from one quarter to the other. Our specific campus had a number of issues that came up throughout the first semester that may have negatively impacted students, such as the possibility of losing our site location.

A second validity concern could be attrition. The capstone course had 19 students enrolled, but I received permission from only 16 to participate. Given that 16 is a small

sample size, even adding three more students could have made a statistically or practically significant difference in the findings reported here.

A final concern for validity is the Hawthorne Effect. The Hawthorne Effect occurs when individuals change their behavior(s) because they know they are being observed (Smith & Glass, 1987). Having an administrator in their capstone class weekly, monitoring their week-to-week academic behaviors while reviewing their weekly goals and reaching out to other teachers for specific reinforcement could have affected students' behavior and/or responses to the survey or interviews. For example, students may have wanted to provide positive feedback about my intervention to ensure that if they had any disciplinary issues I would see them in a more positive light should a consequence be required. In addition, students may have been hesitant to share concerns about teaching styles or teachers, due to my position as an administrator. This could be because they feared I would share information with a specific teacher or that I would discount what their concerns were. Someone in a different position, such as a counselor or an outside volunteer mentor might evoke unedited statements or concerns.

Project Timeline

The implementation of this project occurred between September 2018-December 2018. The first step was to organize the logistics of the innovation. I met with the participants' capstone teacher to schedule one day per week (Wednesday) when I would meet with students, which was previously scheduled as their "homework/study hall day". She was provided the tracking sheet (see Appendix C) and was comfortable with completing it for each student, as she had a similar model already in place. Prior to my intervention the capstone teacher had created a half sheet document to assist students

in noting their current weekly grades, providing some indication on what they should focus their time on attention on during their study hall day in her class. She completed the sheet for the student with current weekly grades and highlighted those grades that were a D or below.

The next step was to get participants' informed consent to participate. At the end of the 1st quarter, I first met with the entire class to inform them that they would be asked to participate in the study, their parent/guardian would be required to give permission, they would participate in the intervention, and they would take pre and post surveys as well as some students would be interviewed. Since all were under the age of 18, I also needed parents' approval. XYZ School meets with students and parents multiple times throughout the school year to hold one on one parent teacher conferences, also knows as ILPs (Individualized Learning Plans). It was at these individually scheduled meetings that parents were provided information about this research and asked to sign the consent forms for research and intervention after the 1st quarter, before fall break in October 2018.

The actual mentoring program lasted a total of 9 weeks and consisted of weekly one hour meetings with the group of students on Wednesdays from October 2018 through December 2018. In addition to the student meetings, I met with individual teachers to inform them about my upcoming intervention and that I would be reaching out to them to gather positive feedback about students and their classroom behavior and work completion. Teachers were informed that I would be randomly touching base with them, during their planning periods, throughout the semester to gather this feedback. I created an Excel spreadsheet with the names of students and a list of teachers each student had

(Appendix F). When speaking with the individual teachers for feedback I inquired about multiple students at a time. Teachers were only spoken with once as students have seven teachers. In terms of participant incentives, I provided students with pizza during the first week of the intervention and the last week as a thank you for their participation. All students participated in the pizza party, regardless if they submitted a permission slip or not.

In regards to data collection, I administered the pre-surveys and collected each student's cumulative GPA at the start of the second quarter, following fall break in mid October 2018. After the intervention ended, in early December 2018, I again administered the MSLSS and Trice's Locus of Control survey and collected end-of-quarter cumulative GPAs. In December 2018, the week before the winter break, I conducted 4 interviews with students, to gather information about their experiences with the intervention. Beginning in January 2019 analysis of the data began, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Table 4

Timeline and Steps of the Study

Timeframe	Action Steps	Procedures
September/October 2018	• Recruitment of all participants for the project • Student pre-intervention surveys • Teacher Training • Classroom explanation • Gather GPA/Attendance/ Behavior Pre-Data	•Consent forms and letters distributed and collected •Data collected • Student surveys collected • Pull reports from school online system and code per student
October - December 2018	• Teacher will ensure students complete the weekly grade check and follow the model provided • I will meet with her weekly to determine what is going well or not	• Teacher will maintain an ongoing document of interactions with students • I will maintain an ongoing journal of concerns and positive experiences
December 2018	• Student post-intervention surveys • Qualitative data gathered	• Conduct qualitative interviews • Conduct qualitative analysis • Conduct quantitative analysis

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Introduction

A nine-week intervention of goal setting and positive reinforcement was conducted to determine the potential impact on high school students' locus of control, satisfaction with school, and academic outcomes. This was conducted by an administrator who mentored and guided students to create weekly academic goals and actions plans, while also providing positive feedback to students. The research questions addressed by the study include:

1. How and to what extent is locus of control associated with high school students' overall life satisfaction?
2. How is locus of control associated with academic performance/grades?
3. How is life satisfaction associated with academic performance/grades?
4. How does a mentoring relationship with teachers impact students' locus of control, life satisfaction, and academic performance?

A mixed methods, action research design was used to determine the effectiveness of the mentoring program. The results of this research are discussed in this chapter. I begin by providing an overview of the descriptive statistics for the three primary constructs at the center of this study collected from the pre- and post-test surveys, students' satisfaction (i.e., the MSLSS), locus of control (i.e., Trice's Locus of Control Instrument) and academic performance (i.e., GPA), both before and after the innovation. After explaining the descriptive survey results, I address each research question drawing from both quantitative findings as well as the qualitative data results in the forms of

student interviews and researcher notes. At the conclusion of the chapter, a summary of findings is provided.

Descriptive Statistics: Locus of Control, Life Satisfaction, and Academic Performance

Table 5 provides the descriptive analysis for all survey items of the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) in the pre- and post-surveys. The MSLSS asks students to respond to statements regarding thoughts about their satisfaction in life that they have had over the last several weeks. Students select a number from 1 to 6 indicating if they strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) with a statement. Students were reassured there are no right or wrong answers and that all answers would remain confidential. The MSLSS has five subscales: family, friends, school, living environment and self.

Reviewing means for the pre and posttests for each sub-construct, satisfaction in each sub-construct lowered slightly pre to post test. Students are most satisfied with their friends and least satisfied with school in the pre and posttests. The greatest reduction pretest to posttest was in the family sub-construct and the least reduction was amongst friends. Overall the total scores lowered as well from an average of 4.44 pretest to an average of 4.28 posttest. In the pretest students responded most satisfied to having a good time with friends, note the statement is actually 'I have a bad time with friends' but it is reversed scored. The statement, 'My friends are mean to me' which is also reverse scored, scored the highest in the posttest of any statement.

Table 5
Descriptive analysis for MSLSS - individual items – by sub-construct

Items	N	Pretest mean	SD	n	Posttest mean	SD
Family						
I like spending time with my parents	15	5.07	.88	15	4.60	1.35
My family is better than most	15	4.40	1.30	15	4.07	1.53
I enjoy being at home with my family	15	5.13	.74	14	4.71	1.20
My family gets along well together	15	4.40	1.24	15	4.20	1.42
My parents treat me fairly	15	4.73	1.28	14	4.50	1.35
Members of my family talk nicely to one another	15	4.53	1.50	15	4.33	1.11
My parents and I do fun things together	15	4.93	.88	15	4.40	1.60
Friends						
My friends are nice to me	15	5.33	.72	15	5.07	.80
I have a bad time with my friends	14	5.64	.84	15	5.33	1.05
My friends are great	15	5.33	.72	15	5.07	.88
My friends will help me if I need it	15	5.07	.80	15	5.40	.63
My friends treat me well	15	5.07	.70	15	5.20	.68
My friends are mean to me	15	5.53	.64	15	5.47	.74
I wish I had different friends	15	5.13	1.55	15	5.33	1.11
I have a lot of fun with my friends	15	5.20	1.01	15	5.27	.70
I have enough friends	15	4.67	1.54	15	4.53	1.64

Items	N	Pretest mean	SD	n	Posttest mean	SD
School						
I feel bad at school	15	4.20	1.27	14	3.86	1.35
I learn a lot at school	14	4.86	.86	14	4.29	.91
There are many things about school I don't like	15	2.53	1.19	15	2.53	1.19
I wish I didn't have to go to school	15	3.07	1.62	15	3.27	1.39
I look forward to going to school	15	3.73	1.49	15	3.73	1.49
I like being in school	15	3.53	1.64	15	3.27	1.34
School is interesting	15	3.67	1.50	15	3.40	1.40
I enjoy school activities	15	4.2	.86	15	4.27	1.28
Living Environment						
There are lots of fun things to do where I live	15	4.00	1.60	15	3.87	1.51
I wish I lived in a different house	14	4.13	1.46	15	4.20	1.47
I like my neighborhood	15	4.00	1.69	15	3.87	2.00
I wish I lived somewhere else	15	3.71	1.49	15	3.13	1.69
I wish there were different people in my neighborhood	15	3.53	1.51	15	3.47	1.85
I like where I live	15	4.33	1.60	15	3.93	1.79
This town is filled with mean people	15	4.53	1.06	15	4.33	1.05
My family's house is nice	15	4.47	1.36	15	4.47	1.13
I like my neighbors	15	3.87	1.55	15	3.60	1.68

Items	N	Pretest mean	SD	n	Posttest mean	SD
Self						
I am fun to be around	15	4.73	.80	15	4.6	.99
There are lots of things I can do well	15	4.73	.96	15	4.53	1.41
I think I am good looking	15	3.53	1.36	15	3.07	1.28
I like myself	15	4.73	.96	15	4.47	1.55
Most people like me	15	4.13	1.50	15	4.2	1.37
I am a nice person	15	4.67	.98	15	4.67	1.29
I like to try new things	15	4.53	1.19	15	4.73	.96

Trice's High School Success Survey was modified from a true/false format to a scale of 1 to 6 indicating if students strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with each statement. Table 6 shows the descriptive analysis for individual items. Students reported the most internal locus of control pretest and posttest when responding to the reverse scored statement, 'For some courses it is not important to go to class', possibly indicating students understand the importance of attending to class to do well academically in that class. In the pretest students responded in a more external locus of control state to the statement, 'At least once, I have taken a course because it was easy to get a good grade." In the posttest students responded in a more external locus of control state to the statement, 'What I learn is more determined by high school and course requirements than by what I want to learn.' Overall, the average score from pretest to posttest lowered from 3.18 to 3.09, indicating a slight movement from internal locus of control to external locus of control.

Table 6
Descriptive analysis for individual items for Trice's Locus of Control

Items	n	Pretest mean	SD	n	Posttest mean	SD
HS grades reflect effort out into class	15	3.87	.92	15	3.20	1.32
I came to ASU Prep because it was expected	14	2.36	1.15	15	2.73	1.22
Largely determined my career goals	14	3.57	1.34	15	3.53	1.55
Knack for writing	14	3.14	1.41	15	3.60	.91
Took a course because it was an easy grade	15	2.20	.68	15	2.60	1.50
Teachers make an early impression you cannot change	15	2.87	1.25	15	3.00	1.00
Some subjects you will never do well in	15	2.87	1.55	15	2.80	1.32
Some students get free rides in high school classes	15	3.4	1.35	15	3.33	1.11
There is nothing I can do to improve my situation	15	3.13	1.35	15	3.27	1.39
I never feel really hopeless	15	3.67	.90	15	3.33	1.18
I would never allow social activities to affect my studies	15	3.00	1.07	15	2.60	1.30
There are many more important things for me than getting good grades	14	3.79	1.12	15	3.20	1.15
Studying everyday is important	15	3.00	.93	15	2.93	1.03
For some courses it is not important to go to class	15	4.13	1.06	15	4.20	.86
I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life	14	3.86	1.10	15	3.20	1.27
I am a good writer	15	2.53	1.25	15	2.60	1.30
Doing work on time is always important to me	15	4.07	.88	15	3.93	.88
What I learn is determined by requirements	15	2.53	1.06	15	2.07	.88
I spend a lot of time making decisions	15	3.27	1.03	15	3.2	1.26
I am easily distracted	15	2.40	1.24	15	2.27	1.03
I can be easily talked out of studying	15	3.13	1.36	15	3.20	1.26
I get depressed sometimes	15	3.33	1.35	15	3.00	.93
Things will probably go wrong for me sometime	15	2.73	1.39	15	2.73	1.38
I keep changing my mind about my career goals	15	2.93	1.44	15	3.20	1.42
Items	n	Pretest	SD	n	Posttest	SD

I will someday make a real contribution to the world	15	3.60	1.18	15	3.87	.83
Social activity impaired my academic performance	15	2.60	1.24	15	2.47	1.19
I would like to graduate from high school	15	3.53	1.13	15	3.53	1.19
I plan well and stick to my plans	15	3.40	1.18	15	2.87	1.13

The next phase of my descriptive analysis was to analyze the extent to which the individual items listed above collectively represent the larger constructs of locus of control and life satisfaction. I ran a reliability analysis for the items that comprised locus of control on the pre-test, locus of control on the post-test, for the overall MSLSS as well as just for items pertaining to school satisfaction on both pre- and post-test. Table 7 illustrates the reliability analysis conducted for all survey instruments. I found the overall MSLSS pre and post coefficients high, over 0.90. Takovel and Dennick (2011) note when the coefficient alpha is between 0.70 and 1.0 there is a high level of reliability, internal consistency. The MSLSS School Construct pre and post coefficients were high as well at 0.91 and 0.89 respectively. Finally, the coefficient for Trice's Locus of Control pretest was high at 0.78, however the posttest was 0.52 indicating a poor level of reliability. The higher coefficients could indicate redundancy in the items and/or it could indicate the Likert scales did not allow for the participants to make a clear choice between mildly, moderately and strongly. The lower Trice posttest coefficient could be due to, "a low number of questions, poor inter-relatedness between items or heterogeneous constructs," (Takovel & Dennick, 2011).

Table 7
Coefficient Alpha Estimates of Internal Consistency (n=15)

Survey	Construct Items	Coefficient Alpha
MSLSS Pre	Items 1-40	0.91
MSLSS Post	Items 1-40	0.94
MSLSS Pre – School Construct	Items 3, 6, 9, 13, 20, 22, 25, 26	0.91
MSLSS Post – School Construct	Items 3, 6, 9, 13, 20, 22, 25, 26	0.89
Trice's Locus of Control – Pre		0.78
Trice's Locus of Control - Post		0.52

Trice's Locus of Control is calculated by creating a sum of the individual responses. Individual scores were totaled and could range from a score of 28 to 140. Lower scores indicate a more external locus of control and higher scores indicate a more internal locus of control. The following tables provide pre- and post-test survey and GPA data. GPAs were calculated on a 4.0, unweighted scale. GPAs were calculated based on the end of 1st quarter and again at the end of the 2nd quarter grading period. According to Table 8 student life satisfaction marginally decreased, locus of control might slightly shifted externally, and student GPA also decreased pretest to posttest.

Table 8
Descriptive analysis of MSLSS, Trice's Locus of Control and Student GPAs

Scale		Pre-Test			Post-Test	
Satisfaction	N	mean	SD	n	mean	SD
MSLSS	15	4.44	.61	15	4.28	.64
Locus of Control						
Trice's Locus of Control [a]	15	87.67	13.75	15	86.67	9.16
Academics						
GPA	16	2.85	.93	16	2.57	1.20

[a] Trice Locus of Control calculated as the sum of the individual items on the scale

Relationships Among Locus of Control, Life Satisfaction, and Academic Performance

The first three research questions guiding this study considered how and to what extent is locus of control was associated with high school students' overall life satisfaction as well as academic performance, and also how life satisfaction was associated with academic performance. In terms of the quantitative results that address these questions, Table 9 provides information on the correlations of the complete MSLSS, MSLSS – school sub-construct, Trice's High School Success Survey and GPAs.

Locus of control and life satisfaction.

There was a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between the MSLSS pre- and post-tests (r = .76) and the MSLSS school sub-construct pre- and post-tests (r = . 81). There was not a statistically significant correlation between Trice's Locus of Control pretest and posttest. There was not a statistically significant correlation between MSLSS and Locus of Control pretest. However, there was a statistically significant, moderately positive correlation between life satisfaction and locus of control post-test (r = .68).

Locus of control and academic performance.

Locus of control is a common psychological term referring to how strongly people believe they have control over the events in their lives (Rotter, 1966). In terms of education, locus of control can refer to how students perceive their academic success or failure in school. Students throughout the intervention noted the individualized attention and emphasis on what they were missing or needed to focus on allowed for students to be intentional about what needed to be completed. The journal notes of the researcher also indicated students did not make externally related comments towards the teachers, because work was not completed. There were comments made in terms of not understanding what one teacher in particular was asking for, this was consistent across the classroom with a specific science teacher, but they then worked together in small groups to help determine how one student was able to successful in that class.

In review of research question, "How is locus of control associated with academic performance/grades?" the individualized attention allowed students to focus on the assignments and classes they needed to emphasize in the week to come. David stated, "You kind of like guided us like what to do. You told me, try to email him with Mr. R. Like email him to see if I could do any extra work or something." David also discussed being more organized and able to keep up with his schoolwork. When Octavio was asked if he was more confident in his academic skills in comparison to the start of the semester or last academic year he stated, "Yes, definitely. I feel more productive in school." Steve responded that because of the one on one attention, it seemed more consistent and "a little but more on me," in terms of ensuring the work was completed. Steve also discussed, "When you came in and checked, you came around us and looked at our

lowest classes and told us we need to get something done or have us explain to you what was going on. It helped because it kept reminding me that "Yeah I did something, or hey I need to do something right when I get home."

Angie stated, "…what you were doing with us, showing us our grades and what you need to do, make sure you do it, making us be more organized and that actually helped me because one day I got home and I just started organizing everything. I put it in a folder saying I need to finish this and I need to do this and I need to start making notes on everything to make sure I would do it." She also added, "Because every day I write what I did in class and what I have to do. With that, I actually do my work now. I always did, but I do it with time. I don't leave it until the last minute…. So yeah, I actually do my work with time. I don't procrastinate a lot anymore… I actually improved with my organization and doing my work and keeping track of stuff.

Life satisfaction and academic performance.

There is a statistically significant, moderately positive correlation between the school sub-construct post-test and 2nd quarter GPAs (r = .62). There was not a statistically significant correlation between the MSLSS pretest and 1st quarter GPA nor between the MSLSS posttest and 2nd quarter GPA. There was not a statistically significant correlation between Trice's Locus of Control Pre and 1st quarter.

School Satisfaction is a subjective perception of a student's overall contentedness towards the school setting in which he or she is enrolled. The research question, "How is school satisfaction associated with academic performance/grades?" asks is there a relationship between school satisfaction and academic performance/grades. When interviewing students, students appreciated reading the positive comments teachers

provided them, but it does not appear to have had a direct effect on their school satisfaction. Octavio stated, "It was pretty cool to know what they thought about me," but he did not think it helped him in any way. David mentioned, it did not really help him either as he, "already knew my relationship," with the teacher. Steven on the other hand did state, "when you gave us the whole notes our teachers wrote down, it helped me realize that it's not entirely bad…. That it made me feel like I can salvage something from it, and it was just nice to look at. Nice to know what my teachers are thinking of me." Angie said, "I think that was a really nice thing because sometimes people think their teachers hate us. I got really nice comments from my teachers. I was like oh, they do like me. So, yeah. I don't know. It just felt good."

Table 9
Paired Sample Correlations

Scale			
Satisfaction	n	Correlation	Sig
MSLSS – Pre and Post	14	.76	.001
MSLSS Pre and 1st Quarter GPA	15	.09	.76
MSLSS Post and 2nd Quarter GPA	15	.15	.59
MSLSS – School Construct Pre and Post	12	.81	.002
School Satisfaction Construct Pre and 1st Quarter GPA	14	.23	.40
School Satisfaction Construct Post and 2nd Quarter GPA	13	.62	.02
Locus of Control			
Trice's Locus of Control Pre and Post	14	.49	.075
Trice's Locus of Control Pre and 1st Quarter GPA	14	.23	.40
Trice's Locus of Control Post and 2nd Quarter GPA	13	.62	.02
Satisfaction and Locus of Control			
MSLSS and Trice's Locus of Control Pre	15	.50	.06
MSLSS and Trice's Locus of Control Post	15	.68	.005
GPA			
1st Quarter GPA and 2nd Quarter GPA	16	.97	.000

Impact of Mentoring on Locus of Control, Life Satisfaction, and Academic Performance

Focusing on the mentoring program itself, I combined analyses of the quantitative survey data with qualitative responses from the student interviews to better understand how the innovation influenced students' outcomes. In terms of the quantitative results, Table 10 indicates the results of paired sample t-tests, which show whether there is a significant difference from pre- to post-test on students' self-reported satisfaction (i.e., full MSLSS and MSLSS – school sub-construct), self-reported locus of control (i.e., Trice's High School Success Survey) and academic performance (i.e., GPA). There was not a statistically significant difference between the MSLSS pre and post, MSLSS School Construct pre and post, or Trice's Locus of Control. There was a statistically significant difference between participants' 1st Quarter and 2nd Quarter GPAs, although the latter was lower than the former.

Table 10
T-tests

Scale				
Satisfaction	Mean Difference	SD	T	Sig. (2-Tailed)
MSLSS – Pre and Post	.096	.43	.83	.42
MSLSS – School Construct Pre and Post	.10	.60	.60	.56
Locus of Control				
Trice's Locus of Control Pre and Post	.214	12.56	.064	.95
GPA				
1st Quarter GPA and 2nd Quarter GPA	.29	.38	3.02	.009

Shifting to the qualitative interviews with four participating student related to their experiences with the mentoring program and how it impacted their locus of control, life/school satisfaction and academic performance, I coded students' experiences with the mentoring program into four primary themes. The first two captured how the program had a positive impact on the students in relation to the three constructs of locus of control, life/school satisfaction and academic performance, including: 1) "1-on-1", or the need for individualized attention when assisting students on how to be effective and complete assignments in class, and 2) "Organization," or how students' improved their organization of time and their classwork in terms of folders, backpacks, etc. The second two themes refer to aspects of the program that, while intended to be helpful, had less of an impact according to the students' self reported feedback. I coded these as: 1) "Positive Comments," in other words, students appreciated teachers positive comments but it may not have improved their relationship with teachers. The positive comments component of the intervention was intended to most strongly impact a student's life/school satisfaction. The second theme that appears to be have been least impactful was 2) "Written Planning." Written planning refers to students being encouraged to use physical planners to improve their time management and organization, and the key constructs of locus of control and academic performance, however, most students did not find this as an effective strategy. In the remainder of this section, I explore each theme in more detail.

"One-on-One." Prior to the intervention period, the classroom teacher provided students with individual forms she created and partially completed for them with information about their lowest grades, students were then asked to complete the form by adding

missing assignments for those classes and how they would bring up their grade. Despite this process students continued to struggle with their grades and reducing the number of missing assignments. While the intervention started in providing larger classroom instruction similar to the classroom teacher, I also walked from student to student to provide individual attention and support for al students. All four students interviewed stated this method of support was preferred in contrast to the classroom teacher's previous academic support. This one on one support was intended to support the three constructs of locus of control, life/school satisfaction and academic performance.

Attention and support. Students were asked which method of working with them was the most effective, in terms of allowing the students the time to review their own grades and assignments to determine what needed to be emphasized in the week to come versus a more intentional process of walking student to student to discuss areas that were deficient or missing assignments. All students interviewed preferred the one on one intervention within the larger classroom environment to the classroom teacher's method of providing a sheet of paper with their lowest grades to then have them determine what they needed to do to bring their grade up. One example was David who stated, "I think you did help because I didn't really ... like Miss X she just let us be. She told us you have to do this and that. But you were more one on one with us. You kind of like guided us like what to do. You told me, try to email him with Mr. R. Like email him to see if I could do any extra work or something."

Accountability. Steve stated, "Because it would be I would get a homework assignment, and I wouldn't remember it until eight o'clock at night and I would be rushing to get it done, whereas sometimes when you ask me it's I just remember I need to

do grades. I got to get a homework assignment from Miss G. or my reading." Students accounts and reactions during the intervention period were consistent with this statement as well, where students every week shared with me that they had in fact reached out to a teacher last week, or completed the assignments we had discussed completing the previous week. The accountability piece of the one on one individualized attention qualitatively proved to be effective both through the interviews and the researcher notes.

Organization. Supporting students in terms of their organizational skills and how to manage their time was an integral component to improving the three constructs of locus of control, life/school satisfaction and academic performance. All four students who were interviewed mentioned that among the most helpful aspects of the intervention was the intentionality of guiding the students in what needed to be accomplished in the next week, based on missing assignments and assignments with low grades.

As previously mentioned, Angie said, "…what you were doing with us, showing us our grades and what you need to do, make sure you do it, making us be more organized and that actually helped me because one day I got home and I just started organizing everything. Steve also discussed, "When you came in and checked, you came around us and looked at our lowest classes and told us we need to get something done or have us explain to you what was going on. It helped because it kept reminding me that "yeah I did something, or hey I need to do something right when I get home."

Two of the four students interviewed also mentioned being more organized, Angie stated, " … making us be more organized and that actually helped me because one day I got home and I just started organizing everything. I put it in a folder saying I need to finish this and I need to do this and I need to start making notes on everything to make

sure I would do it…. Because every day I write what I did in class and what I have to do. With that, I actually do my work now. I always did, but I do it with time. I don't leave it until the last minute."

Positive comments. Students were provided positive feedback from various teachers throughout the intervention period that was gathered by the researcher on a weekly basis. The goal of these positive comments was to improve the student's school and life satisfaction constructs. Students in previous research cycles stated the teachers who were supportive, encouraged them to do well. In contrast, students had a negative outlook towards particular teachers and/or their classes who were not as helpful or compassionate. The four interviewed students agreed it was nice to see positive comments from their teachers, but there were mixed reactions as to how it may or may not have effected their work completion and/or grades. Steve stated, "You came in during halfway through first and my grades started to pick up after that, and when you gave us the whole notes our teachers wrote down, it helped me realize that it's not entirely bad. That it made me feel like I can salvage something from it, and it was just nice to look at. Nice to know what my teachers are thinking of me." Angie stated, "First, I think that was a really nice thing because sometimes people think their teachers hate us. I got really nice comments from my teachers. I was like oh, they do like me. So, yeah. I don't know. It just felt good."

Written planning. Written planning was integrated into the intervention not only to assist students with organization, but also to give them the skills and knowledge to take control of their academic classes and assignments. Ultimately to most strongly impact the student's locus of control. Although one student indicated during the interview that

writing things down helped organize her and helped her complete assignments ahead of time, the other three interviews stated this was the least effective component of the intervention. Two students specifically mentioned the least helpful component was guiding students to write down upcoming assignments or what they would be working on in the days to come. Students said they only wrote things down because they were instructed to and rarely went back to review what was to be done, David stated, "I just wrote it down to just do it…. I just didn't really pay much attention to it."

This was also indicated in the researcher notes as few students would fill out their planners throughout the week and would only do it when asked to. Several students preferred using their phones for reminders and others did not use anything unless directed to. Research notes also indicated students who wrote down assignments to complete or follow up on appeared to be students who were most effective and had fewer incomplete or missing assignments, and this resulted in improved grades.

Directions for Future Cycles of Action Research

The intent of this research was to support students through mentoring and goal setting, to encourage the internality of locus of control and improve school and life satisfaction as well as academic achievement. Although results of the quantitative analyses did not show positive statistically significant changes in the primary constructs of interest, students did share information that could assist in further action research cycles. Students were also asked what would they like to see integrated or changed during their capstone period to help them be more successful. Their feedback, as discussed below, could be integrated through the mentoring sessions, changes to class

requirements, additional emphasis on organization skills and how technology positively and negatively effects student work completion.

Octavio discussed how capstone is another class with more work to complete and it only added to the stress. Focusing on how to manage stress in capstone would also be more helpful. Students also added the planners they were given at the start of they year had mixed effectiveness. Half of the students interviewed mentioned the planners helped them to become more organized but others like Steve mentioned, "I didn't write a whole lot in my planner. I just got stuff down in my phone."

Students also discussed how having someone work with him or her one on one more consistently throughout the week at least twice a week would be more helpful. Angie discussed how she, "learned a lot because you were super chill with us." Despite the positive comments from teachers not showing any qualitative support towards locus of control or school satisfaction it is possible this one on one relationship in a larger group setting did support learning. Students post intervention have also mentioned missing the time I spent coming into the classroom to support the students academically on a number of occasions.

Finally, students, as noted in the researcher's journal entries frequently mentioned being distracted by technology, games and their phones. When Angie was asked about how the researcher could have been more helpful she stated, "I think that's up to me. I'm always okay ... for example, right now I need to turn in my history project that's due before. And I'm still working on it. But that's really because I'm always on my phone. I get home late and I want to be on my phone. Then I start doing my work at, I don't know, 8:30 PM…. That's (phone) my main distraction."

Summary of Findings

Analyses of the quantitative data in relation to the four research questions indicate there is a statistically significant, moderate correlation between the school satisfaction sub-construct and students' 2nd quarter grades. There was also a statistically significant, positive correlation between locus of control and students' 2nd quarter grades. Life satisfaction and locus of control was also statistically significant and positively correlated following the intervention period. And finally, there was a strong relationship between students' 1st and 2nd quarter GPAs. However, life satisfaction and grades were not significantly associated with one another in the data collected pre and/or post intervention. Nor were there any positive statistically significant changes in students' locus of control, satisfaction, or GPA from before the mentoring program to after.

Analysis of the qualitative data relative to school satisfaction indicated students positively responded to the intervention of working individually with each student, rather than whole classroom instruction. Students also discussed this one on one intervention improved their relationship with me, as the staff member, they were working with. The positive reinforcement from teachers did not necessarily change a student's satisfaction with school or their relationship with the teacher, but the reinforcement was received positively. Based on the information shared from students about the positive reinforcement statements from teachers and the one on one relationship with the researcher, this could be an indication that ongoing relationships must be created and developed between student and teacher/mentor. In relation to locus of control students discussed how the intervention kept them accountable and organized. They also discussed how more frequent sessions, more than once a week, could help them organize

and complete work in a more timely fashion. In relation to the academic performance of students, students improved their organization of classwork, assignments and time with the assistance of the intervention. Students shared this was because of consistent weekly check-ins and holding them accountable. And finally, while planning was not a direct emphasis of this research, students frequently mentioned the use of pen and paper planners was the least effective method of organization for them.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to help determine an effective means of working with high school students in order to support their academic accomplishments as well as also to increase their overall school and ultimately life satisfaction. More specifically, students at XYZ School, a Title I, inner city Phoenix school, experienced a decline in grades over the several years prior to this project, and various academic supports were instituted by school administrators and teachers to improve outcomes. Anecdotally, the most effective intervention seemed to have been one on one meetings between school professionals and students on a weekly to bi-weekly basis, with the purpose of assisting students in their daily and weekly assignments.

The intervention of research that is at the center of this dissertation's cycle of research builds on these anecdotal observations, as well as the data collected from previous iterations and the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2. This phase of the project consisted of me working with a cohort of students as their mentor in a classroom environment. Originally, I intended to provide just one-on-one mentoring, but with a change in my professional position from school counselor to dean of students at XYZ School, this would have been very difficult to do with a limited amount of time available to meet with 16 students individually weekly. I selected one 10^{th} grade classroom, and I entered the classroom one day weekly over the course of 9 weeks to work with the sixteen students directly. Settersten and Ray's (2010) research indicated, "the presence of meaningful relationships with adults significantly bolsters school

achievement… and satisfaction with life…" (p.33). I provided one-on-one assistance to aid students with organizing their time and establishing manageable daily and weekly academic goals. Whole class discussions were also had regarding organization, goal setting, upcoming midterms and the like. As previously discussed in chapter 1, students with lower locus of control may also believe their hard work or achievements will not be recognized (Locus of Control, 2013). So in addition to the mentoring the students received from me, they were also provided positive feedback from a variety of teachers.

Four research questions guided the implementation of the mentoring relationship and the study of its impact:

1. How and to what extent is locus of control associated with high school students' overall life satisfaction?
2. How is locus of control associated with academic performance/grades?
3. How is life satisfaction associated with academic performance/grades?
4. How does a mentoring relationship with teachers impact students' locus of control, life satisfaction, and academic performance?

I collected several types of data to address these research questions and better understand how well the intervention worked. First and second quarter grade point averages were calculated, students completed the MSLSS and Trice's High School Success Survey (modified) pre and post intervention, four students interviews were conducted and research field notes were coded.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a summary of the results based on the four research questions as well as additional results gathered through student interviews and my field notes. I then consider implications of the project for practice, in terms of how

the findings can help teachers and school professionals more effectively work with students to further support their academic goals. I also discuss several implications of the project for further research, and I conclude by identifying several limitations of the study as well as personal lessons learned.

Discussion of Results

The results of the study were mixed in terms of how mentoring students impacted their locus of control, satisfaction, and grades. The quantitative data indicated no statistically significant positive effects, although the qualitative findings suggested positive change in students' sense of emotional, mental, social and academic support from their teacher and mentor. In this section, I discuss the key results organized by research question.

In terms of the first research question, "how and to what extent is locus of control associated with high school students' overall life satisfaction?", I found a statistically significant, strong, positive correlation between a students' locus of control and life satisfaction in the post survey data and a strong, positive correlation in the pre survey data. Research has shown that an adolescent's locus of control, when students believe they have control in their lives, can help mediate the relationship between negative life experiences and school satisfaction (Huebner, Ash & Laughlin, 2001). Hence, when a student has a more internal locus of control there is relationship with positive life and school satisfaction and student's can better mitigate negative life experiences. The qualitative data reinforces this finding. Steve mentioned in our interview, "It seemed a little bit more consistent and a little bit more on me…. You came in … and my grades started to pick up after that, and when you gave us the whole notes our teachers wrote

down, it helped me realize that it's not entirely bad." For researchers this information can support the need for additional research in the classroom focused on locus of control and life/school satisfaction. In addition, if teachers are given the skills on how to support a shift in locus of control this could positively affect a student's life and school satisfaction, which could have far reaching effects into anxiety, depression and academic improvement. Areas of skills teachers K-12 could emphasize with students to support enhanced internal locus of control could be goal setting and organization from a young age. Emphasizing the skills students can learn and complete consistently could guide students' personal perception of their affinity towards academic achievement. Starting at a young age with these skills will strengthen students' beliefs in their ability to achieve a certain goal, also known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Based on social cognitive theory a student's personal perception of their ability is more important than their actual intellectual ability and providing students with concrete skills to improve their personal perception could be one integral component (Pinitrich & Schunk, 1996).

The second research question asked, "how is locus of control associated with academic performance/grades?". I found a weak positive correlation between Trice's Locus of Control and students' 1st quarter GPAs. However, there was a stronger, statistically significant positive correlation between students' locus of control after the innovation and their 2nd quarter GPAs. This indicates that after going through the mentoring program, having a more internal locus was associated with higher levels of academic achievement. From a qualitative standpoint, students were asked if they felt more confident in their academic skills following the intervention, Octavio said he did feel more confident in his academic skills because he felt, "more productive in school."

Angie discussed, "…showing us our grades and what you need to do, make sure you do it, making us be more organized and that actually helped me because one day I got home and I just started organizing everything. I put it in a folder saying I need to finish this and I need to do this and I need to start making notes on everything to make sure I would do it…. Now, I do have good grades. My grades are not bad, but I know I could do better. So I would put more effort and stuff because like I said, I don't procrastinate a lot, but I still do sometimes."

The mixed quantitative results could be an indication of a small sample size, or the Likert scale used for Trice's Locus of Control instrument may not be reliable and should only be used in a true/false format as Trice's instrument is traditionally used. Previous research has shown positive correlations between locus of control and academic performance, however, Trice's instrument may not be the most reliable measure for high school students and additional research may be necessary to determine if it is effective with a younger age group and/or a Likert scale should not be used with this instrument. . Teachers should note there was a positive correlation between students' locus of control and their GPAs, indicating the importance of emphasizing a shift of locus of control through a variety of means that could include, positive reinforcement, goal setting, planning/organization, mentoring and relationship building. Changes in learning goal orientations and locus of control can occur through "strong, consistent, positive experiences" (Albert & Dahling's, 2016, p. 247). These positive experiences can be enhanced through the mentoring relationship and by providing positive reinforcement, goal setting and planning. This is similar to what Bandura and Frederickson's research have indicated in terms of positive reinforcement and positive emotions.

Examining the relationship between life satisfaction and academic performance/grades, the third research question, I observed a positive correlation between life satisfaction and GPAs pre and post-innovation. However, there was a stronger, positive correlation between students' school satisfaction and their 2nd quarter GPAs. Other studies have found that school satisfaction influences high school students' academic success (Bordwine & Huebner, 2010), and these findings substantiate that relationship. The interviews similarly showed a connection between satisfaction and students' self-reported sense of academic accomplishments. For example, Angie discussed how, she "learned a lot because [I was] super chill with [them].… I really liked it. I feel comfortable…. I actually wanted to do things." The interviews suggest the positive relationships created between myself and the students over the nine week intervention period positively affected students school satisfaction and overtime may positively affect their overall life satisfaction. This aligns with the research completed by Cavazos and Cavazos (2010), who found students who were primarily Latino, were positively influenced by mentors.

The final research question focused on the impact of the innovation directly, and asked, "How does a mentoring relationship with teachers impact students' locus of control, life satisfaction, and academic performance?" Settersten and Ray (2010) discuss how "[t]he presence of meaningful relationships with adults significantly bolsters school achievement… and satisfaction with life…" (p.33). In terms of the quantitative results, there was no statistically significant change in students' attitudes before and after the mentoring program. One reason for this could be due to the small sample size. There were only 16 student students who participated in this cycle of research and a larger more

diverse sample size might be required to show more significant changes. A second possible reason for the lack of statistically significant changes could be the short 9-week intervention period. Holt, Bry, and Johnson (2008) noted longitudinal studies showed more significant changes in grades with similar mentoring programs. Finally the intervention may have been ineffective because of how the mentoring program was implemented. Perhaps a classroom format is not the most effective means with this population and having a more one on one relationship, outside of the classroom would be more effective.

Where academic performance was concerned, a statistically significant difference was observed in the scores for 1st quarter GPAs and 2nd quarter. However, the mean GPAs lowered from the end of the 1st quarter to the end of the 2nd quarter of the year. This could be an indication of 2nd quarter coursework becoming more difficult and grades as a whole school declining. Historically, 1st quarter classes spend a substantial amount of time focused on previous year topics and skills. However, in the 2nd quarter of the school year, new concepts are being taught and often times extracurricular activities start to dominate the time of students. Finally, the 2nd quarter also ends at the time of the holiday season. Students around this time start to lose focus in addition to having family stressors that can often accompany that time of year that could negatively impact their GPAs.

Although the quantitative results suggested that the mentoring program did not have its desired effect on locus of control, grades, or satisfaction, the qualitative findings offered a more nuanced picture. Where locus of control is concerned, in the interviews, students shared how they felt my mentoring relationship with them assisted them in being

more organized and in completing work in a more timely fashion. There was mention from students in in-field notes regarding how students were frustrated with one particular teacher and his directions and unclear class assignments, and this seemed to be a pervasive concern by all students. However, these externally related comments were limited to the one teacher; beyond this one anomaly students clearly accepted responsibility for their grades and their completed or uncompleted assignments. Indicating a move towards a more internal locus of control, despite the quantitative results showing minimal changes in the students' locus of control. Changing locus of control can take a substantial amount of time, Nowicki et al.'s (2004) study spent three years using a social learning-based intervention to move students to a more internal locus of control with good results. Limitations of this study will be discussed in further detail and will strongly emphasize the time limitation of this study in creating significant change in a short period of time.

Where academic performance is concerned, interviews with students also indicated they did feel more in control of the completion of their work and their grades, in comparison to previous action research phases, where students often shared concerns as to how teachers overwhelm them with work or are unwilling to help them. Despite students having ongoing concerns about one teacher in particular, most students took full ownership of not keeping up to date with coursework or submitting items in a timely manner.

In terms of life satisfaction, however, the interviews were consistent with the quantitative findings suggesting little to no change in terms of school or life satisfaction from the start of the quarter to the end of the quarter. Students appreciated receiving

positive feedback from teachers, but there was no indication that the positive reinforcement directly effected their life or school satisfaction. Ash and Huebner (2001) note life satisfaction reports are sensitive to changes in an individual's environment and this could account for the limited changes. Students were surveyed at the end of the quarter when finals and final projects are due, in additional to final opportunities to complete missing assignments, so the sheer timing of the pre and post surveys could have had an impact on the results.

Students did provide significant positive feedback to the mentoring intervention and the manner in which it was delivered, particularly in comparison with how their classroom teacher would typically ask them to do grade checks. Students preferred how I went from person to person, pulling up grades for each class, noting missing assignments, discussing test corrections to be turned in and the like. Although students can do that on their own there was a level of increased accountability when someone was speaking with them about what was going well and what could be improved on. Assisting students with establishing manageable goals, within a short time period also helped the students to stay focused and feel accomplished.

Implications for Practice

Action research helps educators to determine potential solutions to a variety of problems of practice in an educational environment (Mertler, 2009), in this specific instance, a K-12 environment. The action research approach creates a model for educators to make ongoing changes and be more effective in their current practice. The problem of practice for this action research iteration was to help determine the most effective means of supporting high school students through a dedicated capstone class, by

intentionally providing mentoring and goal-setting to shift students' locus of control from more external to internal with the purpose of improving not only their school satisfaction but their academics as well. Action research allowed for a problem of practice to be determined by exploring various concerns at XYZ School that not only affected this researcher's job duties, but also impacted students and teachers. Action research also provided an opportunity to investigate various aspects of the problem of practice through multiple research cycles that included quantitative and qualitative research, not only with students but also with teachers and various support staff. This cycle of research may have shown mixed results but there was some indication, primarily through the qualitative results, that mentoring, goal-setting and positive reinforcement could create more internality of locus of control, improve life and school satisfaction and ultimately academics. Future cycles of research should include exploring how to create a one-on-one mentoring experience, establishing meaningful relationships between student and teacher in all classrooms, intentional teaching of organizational skills and academic goal-setting and finally teaching students means in which to help minimize distractions, particularly in terms of electronic devices and video games.

Through this iteration of research creating a one-on-one mentoring experience in a large class environment proved effective in assisting students to improve their academics, improve their life and school satisfaction and shift their locus of control from external to more internal. Students at XYZ School in grades 9-12 have always had a dedicated class to help guide them navigate through high school, provide college-going supportive activities, enrichment opportunities, time to catch up on missed work and to create a sense of family and belonging with in a larger context. This class has been a

class that can vary in its structure and curriculum based on the teacher of record, because of this flexibility some teachers have been more effective than others in assisting students and creating an environment of learning and belonging. Providing teachers with specific guidelines on how to support students, create relationships, assist student in creating weekly or daily goals based on their academic needs and how to effectively provide positive praise would be essential implications for practice.

Establishing individual relationships with students individually was also integral to the mentoring process, and something that school professionals creating mentoring programs in other settings should emphasize. Students discussed in the interviews how they preferred my method of working with them because it seemed as if I really cared and they liked how we interacted. Professional development to support teachers in learning the most effective means of creating meaningful relationships with students should be further explored. This training should also take into account multicultural differences, economic disparity and trauma-informed training. Through student interviews and field notes, students' felt more connected to me as the researcher by working with them one-on-one even in the whole class environment. They appreciated the one-on-one discussions to work individually with them and ask what had been going well that week, what needed to still be accomplished and what steps needed to be taken in the week to come to be successful in accomplishing their weekly academic goals.

In my one-on-one discussions with students there was little to no negative discussions regarding grades or what they had yet to complete, the emphasis was on what they needed to do to improve their grades. The discussions with individual students focused first on what was going well, perhaps it was improvement in a grade, a smaller

number of missing assignments, or improved attendance. The discussion then moved on to the class with the lowest grade and we discussed what could be done to improve the grade. This could include turning in a missing assignment, if there was more than one, we discussed the missing assignment that was worth the most points or the assignment(s) that were almost completed. When discussing the assignments we created a goal or timeline when the student would complete parts or the entire assignment. Core requirement classes were prioritized. As the weeks we progressed I became more familiar with the students and asked probing questions regarding their job, extracurricular or family responsibilities. For instance, if a student's concern was often finding time after basketball practice, then we set aside time during lunch or before school when the student could go in for tutoring. Becoming more aware of students responsibilities and priorities also afforded me the opportunity to ask students questions about how more personal things were going, for example how did a family event go or asking if they were feeling better after being out sick for several days. Angie stated how she liked how I was "super chill with [them]". Although we discussed what needed to be accomplished for academic success, there was still an intentional emphasis on relationship building that included a "chill" personality while also showing an interest in each student.

In previous practice the teacher of record provided students with their grade checks and asked students to write down what they needed to do and then to begin work on it. This however was not effective for most students. Speaking with students individually, even in a classroom environment, helped the students focus on the most pressing assignments and classes. Having previously been the school counselor, I had a unique perspective in working with students in comparison to most teachers. In addition,

previous cycles of research also afforded me the knowledge on the concerns and caveats students have been encountering over the last few years. Sharing this information school wide with teachers, support staff and administrators would be an integral starting point in future professional development sessions supporting effective student to teacher relationships.

Students were also provided positive feedback from teachers with the intention to help improve their school and life satisfaction, however students indicated through the interviews that they did not feel as if these positive remarks made any substantial difference towards the individual classes or their school/life satisfaction. Nonetheless, students did mention it was nice to hear what their teachers thought about them, often not realizing teachers had these positive sentiments towards them. Indicating students need to hear more of this on a more consistent basis. In addition, there were instances where several teachers had a difficult time providing any positive feedback for particular students or with one teacher, could not even remember students' names to provide positive feedback for those students who had been in his class for over 12 weeks. Feedback may not have been seen as successful or helpful for the students, but this could be because it was not consistently, directly provided by teachers. Teachers also focused on more trait based reinforcement rather than specific classroom behaviors, for example one teacher commented on a student's outgoing personality trait rather than her willingness to help others in the classroom. Praise should focus on accomplishing a task, while emphasizing students' efforts rather than their abilities. This specific use of praise impacts students' motivation to learn (Crow & Small, 2011; Dweck 2000; Hitz &

Driscoll 1989). Further coaching for teachers could focus on the components of effective verbal positive reinforcement.

A key component to the intervention was mentoring and instructing students in creating short-term (within 7 days) and long-term (8 days or longer) goals in relation to their academic needs. To do this, students were instructed initially to write down what they would be working on each day at home or at school to complete class assignments. It was highly encouraged to use their school planners or the sheets provided at the start of each intervention session. During the academic year when this study was conducted, students were provided planners to help them coordinate their academic assignments and extracurricular activities. Most students did not use them regularly and after two-three weeks of impressing the importance of the use of these planners, most students did not use them regularly. All teachers should be provided with information as to how best to integrate the use of planners in their classroom to help support the organization of students. If students prefer to use other means of organization, such as their phone calendar and/or phone reminders, teachers would also encourage this. Without the consistency in class to class and teacher to teacher, students simply did not appreciate the importance of writing down what was to be completed in each class to help schedule their time more effectively. Additional professional development and scheduled time in each class period to use the planners would be an essential organizational tool for students.

Students also struggled with overall organization of their backpack and classwork. Many students often times had completed assignments in their backpack and either could not find them or would forget to turn them in upon completion. Teachers should provide students with specific means of organizing their classwork for that class in terms of

folders or binders and have frequent check-ins with the students to determine if they are organized for their specific class. These are skills that must be learned and finding the most effective way to teach students these skills is a task for each to teacher to support.

An important lesson from this study is the importance of reducing distractions in the classroom. Students discussed how electronics, specifically phones and video games often distracted them from completing work in a timely manner. Often times phones are a distraction in the classroom despite clear school rules regarding the limited use of phones in the classroom, it would be suggested for alternatives to be provided to teachers as to how to reduce the use of cell phones in the classroom. Reaching out to parents and students at the beginning of the school year to provide clear information as to the school's policy on cell phone use would also assist in the reduction of these distractions. Parent meetings regarding the limiting of cell phones and video games could also support the reduced use of these electronics outside of the school day.

Mentoring programs in large group or class sizes, versus more traditional one-on-one settings similar to the model in this research would also be suggested. Originally I intended to meet one on one with students who were most in need of academic support, as the school counselor. However, a change in roles required me to enter the classroom and work with students in a classroom format. As schools continue to be plagued with larger class sizes and a limited number of student support staff such as counselors, social workers and college going advisors we must seek additional means of supporting students in large group settings while still provide a sense of individualized instruction and positive interactions beyond the conventional student-teacher model. Providing teachers with the skills necessary to mentor students while also being their instructor is essential to

the teaching model to support students. As mentioned, this must include professional development centered on relationship building that takes into account multicultural differences, economic disparity and trauma-informed training. It should also include information regarding how to teach students to prioritize and organize their time to support short-term academic goals and finally should include how to provide effective positive praise and reinforcement.

This cycle of research indicated a positive correlation between locus of control and life/school satisfaction. Although this cycle of research largely emphasized the relationship between student and teacher, what are additional ways we can create a school structure that supports an internal locus of control? Unfortunately, due to prescribed curriculums, state testing, federal mandates, limited funding and the like, this can and does often lead to a rigid school structure that lacks a student and teacher's ability to feel in control of their academic career and classrooms, respectively. Providing students with more elective options, choices in curriculum and potentially alternative staffing structures could be steps in a positive direction to shift students and teachers locus of control internally, as they provided with more options and not "forced" or prescribed a set curriculum and environment they feel they have no control over. And when teachers feel more in control, perhaps students will as well.

Finally, working in a K-12 environment I would be remiss to not discuss how this study impacts a K-5, 6-8 environment. Relationships can be very different in a traditional K-5 environment as students receive instruction from a much smaller number of instructors, often only one. The nature of this class structure naturally creates an opportunity for a strong relationship between student and teacher. However, if that

relationship is already in place, can that relationship be strengthened by providing the teacher with the skills to provide effective positive praise and to support K-8 teachers in how to teach goal setting, organizing and planning starting with our youngest students. Focusing on professional development with these staff members in a K-5 environment would emphasize effective positive praise, goal setting and organizing and planning, in relation to a student's developmental level. Teaching a kindergartner how to set academic goals will look significantly different in comparison to teaching a 5th grader this same skill. However, some areas would continue to remain consistent K-8, in terms of encouraging daily planning, organizing classwork in a manner that is effective for the student and consistent, positive praise.

Implications for Research

Research results were mixed and minimal in statistical significance, this could indicate the need for a larger population sample that could include students in grades 9-12, at a minimum. In review of the research prior to this action research phase, research conducted with larger sample sizes tended to show more results between locus of control, school/life satisfaction and academics. Most researchers also had different culturally diverse samples. For instance, Huebner, Ash & Laughlin's research regarding correlations between locus of control, school satisfaction and life experiences was primarily between Caucasian (n=110) and African American (n=39) students (2001). They did note correlations between locus of control, school satisfaction and life experiences. Kim, Omizo and Dandrea provided group support to 30 Native Hawaiians and showed mixed results over a 10 session, 8 week, intervention period with an emphasis on culturally consonant group counseling, locus of control and self esteem

(1998). Hoppe, Prokop and Rau (2018) sample size of 97 students found those "who participated in the *goal setting* perceived a higher level of *control* and in turn *control* predicted *engagement*" (p.193). Over 50% of students at XYZ School are eligible for free/reduced lunch and 59% of students, 212, are Hispanic, which could have impacted their experience with the mentoring. Additional research is needed to examine the effect of this type of intervention on a different population of students, in terms of race, ethnicity and socio-economic status. As mentioned, mentoring research is often conducted on students most at-risk because they are underrepresented or because of their socio-economic status, extending the project to a variety of ethnic and socio-economic groups would provide additional information as to the true success of mentoring programs. Expanding the sample size beyond those most at-risk and to additional grade levels would provide generalized information as to the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

For students to significantly change the internality of their locus of control, research has shown this change could take years to occur (Nowicki et al., 2004). A longitudinal study following students through the first year of college and beyond who had undergone a similar mentoring intervention would be an important component to further research as long term changes may not be evident until years later (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2008). The initial phases of this action research project began with the intent to reduce anxiety and stress in 10th grade students. If a mentoring relationship could shift a student's locus of control to ultimately help reduce anxiety as well as to aid them in their academics, a longitudinal study could help determine if these learned skills would continue into young adulthood and beyond. A 2015 survey from the Center for

Collegiate Mental Health at Pennsylvania State University (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2016) discovered half of all students who seek counseling services at over 340 colleges in the country are experiencing anxiety. If mentoring relationships in high school and perhaps in earlier grade levels could have lasting effects, perhaps more training and emphasis could be placed on the importance of these types of relationships in a K-12 environment.

Further research is required to determine what components would be necessary in this training of mentors/teachers and how to most effectively monitor the mentor's effectiveness. Having never undergone specific mentor training myself, I have provided countless one-on-one counseling sessions and small group counseling sessions to students who are experiencing stress and anxiety due to various reasons. Many teachers do not feel comfortable in that role and do not know how to facilitate more of a mentoring relationship, versus a conventional teacher-student relationship. Research would also need to be gathered if it is appropriate for all teachers to be trained to mentor students when there is not a vested interest in being their mentor. Should this be limited to those who have a true interest, or would it be most effective for all teachers to learn the skills and attempt to provide a mentoring relationship to some degree?

This study offers several methodological considerations for future research that investigates the impact of mentoring on locus of control, satisfaction, and academic performance. The mixed methods design was critical, and I would recommend that in the future, researchers use even more qualitative data would provide not only a narrative of the quantitative data to support it, but may also provide additional data that is not available through surveys. Adolescent students in particular may not have a clear

understanding of what questions are asking and may not feel comfortable asking, this was noted on one of the completed surveys where a student wrote in "WDYM" – "what do you mean" in relation to two of Trice's survey questions in the post survey, "I never feel really hopeless – there is always something I can do to improve my situation" and "I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it." Students also left some responses blank on the surveys as well. There was no pattern as to which questions, as some dealt with academics, self, and others family. Statements skipped include "I have largely determined my own career goals"; "There are many more important things for me than getting good grades"; "Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try"; "I came to ASU Prep because it was expected of me" all from Trice's survey. "I learn a lot at school" was skipped twice, "My parents treat me fairly" and "I enjoy being home with my family" were both skipped once from the MSLSS. In addition, when there is an abbreviated timeline to complete research, particularly on concepts such as locus of control and life satisfaction, qualitative research could provide more detailed information than the limited changes in quantitative data gathered. As previously mentioned if a researcher was to use Trice's instrument I would suggest not using the Likert scale, but rather using the instrument in its original true/false format. In addition, using the MSLSS would be suggested, however, using one of the sub-constructs such as school satisfaction would be sufficient, rather than using the entire instrument. Finally, the interview protocol would be modified, to include questions more specific to locus of control and school and life satisfaction. This would also require students to be provided information in the class

setting on the definition of locus of control and what an external versus an internal locus of control means.

Further research could also include examining locus of control in teachers. If internal locus of control is associated with achievement in students, as indicated in this research, would this also be true for teachers? And if it is, how can administrators support teachers in shifting locus of control and could this potentially lead to a shift in school structure as previously discussed. As part of this research, information could be gathered in regards to teachers' perceptions of their roles. For instance, to what extent does a teacher's perception of their role with students, instructor versus mentor, correlate with locus of control and/or work satisfaction and/or student academic achievement.

Because of potential changes in the school schedule next year that may include removing capstone, continuing to find ways to support students academically in a variety of means must continue to be emphasized. If I am able to continue with a new cycle of research, I would focus on the effectiveness of professional development sessions with all teachers in grades 9-12 on establishing student to teacher relationships and the frequency of effective, positive reinforcement. Data would be gathered by interviewing students and teachers as well as gathering quantitative research using the school construct of the MSLSS, Trice's original locus of control instrument and student GPAs. I would also gather data at the start of the academic year, at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. Future cycles would also include more specific recruitment and training of mentors to work with students who are most in need of academic supports.

Limitations

There are several limitations that must be taken into account when reviewing the results of this study. One is the limited timeframe during which the intervention was implemented. The intervention was limited to one meeting a week over a 9-week period, which is the equivalent of one school quarter. I would suggest for future research cycles to be more longitudinal in nature, or at a minimum for an entire semester or academic year. As previously discussed, for students to significantly change the internality of their locus of control, research has shown this change could take years to occur (Nowicki et al., 2004). Although I observed small changes in students' outcomes over the course of the project, for long lasting and more pervasive changes to be seen, a longer, consistent intervention would need to take place to truly determine if the intervention would have more significant effects.

As their mentor and also an administrator, my professional role could have had an impact on the results of the research. Perhaps students saw me as more of an administrator rather than a mentor. This could have impacted the results positively or negatively based on their impression of my position and the purpose behind my research and interest in their academic improvement. In addition to this, a small group of students prior to this research period had been to see me in my disciplinary role and this could have also impacted our mentoring relationship. Field notes did not indicate any specific concern that my professional role affected any of the students and our mentoring relationship but it should be noted.

Another limitation was the small sample size, sixteen students, as well as being limited to one grade level, 10th grade, and one specific capstone class. The class was

specifically chosen because of the teacher having taught the course prior to this cohort of students and this too could positively or negatively impact the research results. Further research should be conducted beyond this grade level to determine if further positive change could be seen in grade levels beyond 10th grade and even through the younger primary grades.

Parents provided permission for the students to participate and this could be a limitation as well. Students were given the option to not participate despite parental approval but students may not have felt comfortable refusing to participate. There was no indication of this per student reports but it was clear some students were more comfortable with the support in comparison to others.

Finally, students who receive special education services were often missing from the capstone class and received assistance on academics from our special education teacher and aids outside of the classroom. This applied to only two students but in a sample size of sixteen this could have an effect on the results. When the students were in the classroom they participated and received the same intervention as the other students.

Lessons Learned

It has been many years since I have conducted research of any kind. Prior to my current employment I helped facilitate the completion of pre and post surveys in a program I coordinated, however, the survey had been previously developed, a template report created and SPSS syntax and reports created to complete the analysis of these surveys in the same manner for each individual school who was a part of the program. I was able to trouble shoot and make changes as necessary, but had never created a research plan of my own. Prior to this program, I was certain my previous research

experience would simplify the development of my own action research plan, however this was not the case. While I was familiar with general concepts, creating a research plan from the beginning proved to be a challenge. As I complete this final step, I can also see how I can go back and improve the next iteration of this current research plan.

As mentioned, I was much more comfortable with the quantitative component of research entering this program. I did have some experience in qualitative research as a graduate assistant; however, I preferred the clear results provided using quantitative research. After this iteration of research, I can see how qualitative research can provide not only a narrative to quantitative results but provide information, particularly in small sample sizes that would not be as notable otherwise. In addition to the importance of qualitative research the varying methods of organizing, coding and quantifying the qualitative data through online programs is something I need to continue to practice using and integrating in future research iterations.

Having switched professional roles recently within my place of employment, I noted how difficult it would be to continue the type of research I was hoping to complete at the start of this program. Although I had hoped to work with students in an individual setting, because of my change in experience I had to become flexible. At first this was disappointing and frustrating, however, with any plan it is important to be flexible, particularly in the education field. Often times schedules and priorities can change and emergencies arise – both personal and professional, but it is important to be flexible and learn to adapt to the changes to continue to move forward and create change based on data rather than anecdotal information.

Finally, unfortunately not all coworkers or peers are going to be supportive of change or the intention of your research. Change can be hard and despite best efforts to have the support of peers that is not always going to occur. Although various iterations of this research have occurred over the last three years, many peers still did not understand why a change in capstone was needed, or how as teachers we can continue to support students in ways beyond our specific subject areas. Having been in education over twenty years in various roles, mostly student support roles, it was difficult to understand how some teachers would not embrace solid research indicating how they could better support students through small classroom changes, such as positive reinforcement, individualized student attention and improved means of organization, but there are teachers who either believe they are doing this effectively or do not feel as those lessons are within their purview.

Conclusion

One major finding of this action research was the association between locus of control and life satisfaction with student GPAs. Although the mentoring relationship with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and goal setting, in a short time period, did not make a substantial change to these attitudes, further research should be conducted to determine if there are other interventions to be attempted to help support changing life and/or school satisfaction and/or locus of control. This could include a longer intervention period, coaching teachers in the most effective means of verbal positive reinforcement, different means of teaching students goal setting and/or in relationship building with students.

A second finding, essential to the daily workings of students and teachers, is students preferring one on one attention to help support them through areas of academic struggle and would like to see it happen more frequently and consistently. As students mature, from my observations, there seems to be an assumption by teachers and parents that students need less and help and can complete more on their own. However, after conducting many iterations of action research with students and teachers and reviewing the related literature on this topic, I believe many students are unprepared to deal with academic stressors and the required organization of their time to more effectively manage these stressors. Schools and parents must work together to offer additional support to provide students with the skills needed to succeed academically and ultimately socially and emotionally.

Education continues to receive funding cuts, particular in terms of support services for students, this includes reduced counselors, social workers, and curriculum for social emotional learning and life skills and much more. Further research seeking the most effective means of supporting students with current resources and limited external funds, is necessary. Additional research emphasizing teacher-student relationships and the importance of creating a one-on-one environment even in a large classroom setting should also be stressed. And finally, focusing on only academic achievement and not the whole student is a disservice not only to the student but the school environment. Systemic, consistent change is needed to support our students throughout their educational journey, P-20.

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Appendix A

Trice's High School Success Survey (modified)

Trice's High School Success Survey (modified)

Please answer each question below according to the following options:

Circle **1** if you **STONGLY DISAGREE** with the sentence (false)
Circle **2** if you **MILDLY DISAGREE** with the sentence
Circle 3 if you **NEITHER AGREE nor DISAGREE** with the sentence
Circle **4** if you **MILDLY AGREE** with the sentence
Circle **5** if you **Strongly AGREE** with the sentence (true)

High School grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes.	1	2	3	4	5
I came to ASU Preparatory Academy because it was expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5
I have largely determined my own career goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try.	1	2	3	4	5
At least once, I have taken a course because it was easy to get a good grade.	1	2	3	4	5
Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression.	1	2	3	4	5
There are some subjects in which I could never do well.	1	2	3	4	5
Some students, such as student leaders and athletes, get free rides in high school classes.	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes feel that there is nothing I can do to improve my situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I never feel really hopeless—there is always something I can do to improve my situation.	1	2	3	4	5
I would never allow social activities to affect my studies.	1	2	3	4	5
There are many more important things for me than getting good grades.	1	2	3	4	5
Studying every day is important.	1	2	3	4	5
For some courses it is not important to go to class.	1	2	3	4	5
I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life.	1	2	3	4	5
I am a good writer.	1	2	3	4	5

Doing work on time is always important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
What I learn is more determined by high school and course requirements than by what I want to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
I have been known to spend a lot of time making decisions which others do not take seriously.	1	2	3	4	5
I am easily distracted.	1	2	3	4	5
I can be easily talked out of studying.	1	2	3	4	5
I get depressed sometimes and then there is no way I can accomplish what I know I should be doing.	1	2	3	4	5
Things will probably go wrong for me some time in the near future.	1	2	3	4	5
I keep changing my mind about my career goals.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it.	1	2	3	4	5
There has been at least one instance in school where social activity impaired my academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
I would like to graduate from high school, but there are more important things in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
I plan well and I stick to my plans.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

MULTIDIMENSIONAL STUDENTS' LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE (MSLSS)

Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale[1]

We would like to know what thoughts about life you've had during the past several weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time. Here are some questions that ask you to indicate your satisfaction with life. Circle the number (from 1 to 6) next to each statement that indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. It is important to know what you REALLY think, so please answer the question the way you really feel, not how you think you should. This in NOT a test. There are NO right or wrong answers. Your answers will NOT affect your grades, and no one will be told your answers.

		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Family	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I enjoy being at home with my family.						
2	My family gets along well together.						
3	I like spending time with my parents.						
4	My parents and I doing fun things together.						
5	My family is better than most.						
6	Members of my family talk nicely to one another.						
7	My parents treat me fairly.						

[1] Source: Huebner, S (2001); Manual for the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. Available online at https://ww2.cas.sc.edu/psyc/sites/default/files/directory_files/huebslssmanual_0.pdf

		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Friends	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
8	My friends treat me well.						
9	My friends are nice to me.						
10	I wish I had different friends.*						
11	My friends are mean to me.*						
12	My friends are great						
13	I have a bad time with my friends.*						
14	I have a lot of fun with my friends.						
15	I have enough friends.						
16	My friends will help me if I need it.						

		1	2	3	4	5	6
	School	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
17	I look forward to going to school.						
18	I like being in school.						
19	School is interesting.						
20	I wish I didn't have to go to school.*						
21	There are many things about school I don't like.*						
22	I enjoy school activities.						
23	I learn a lot at school.						
24	I feel bad at school.*						

		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Living Environment	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
25	I like where I live.						
26	I wish there were different people in my neighborhood.*						
27	I wish I lived in a different house.*						
28	I wish I lived somewhere else.*						
29	I like my neighborhood.						
30	I like my neighbors.						
31	This town is filled with mean people.*						
32	My family's house is nice.						
33	There are lots of fun things to do where I live.						

		1	2	3	4	5	6
	Self	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
34	I think I am good looking.						
35	I am fun to be around.						
36	I am a nice person.						
37	Most people like me.						
38	There are lots of things I can do well.						
39	I like to try new things.						
40	I like myself.						

Appendix C

Weekly Grade Checks

Name_____ Date _____

WEEKLY GRADE CHECKS

Let's make your grades reflect how intelligent and capable you are!

Fill out this plan for at least two classes you want to see an improvement in while focusing your attention in the class(es) with the lowest grade(s).

Indicate which of the following you will utilize to help you raise your grades.

	☐ **Turning in work on time**	☐**Peer Tutoring**	☐**Managing time more effectively**
☐**Meeting with Counselor**	☐**Talking with Teachers Regularly**	☐ **Homework Club**	☐**Weekly Progress Checks**
☐**Studying at Lunch Time**	☐**Using New Study Techniques**	☐**Arriving on Time**	☐**Making up missed assignments**
☐**Attending Classes**	☐**Using New Organizational Skills**	☐ **Study Groups**	☐ **Other:**_____

Class Teacher	Current %	Goal %
Assignments with low score 1._____ 2._____ 3._____ 4._____	**When** I can retake/ work on/fix it (Date/Time) 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____	**I have talked to the teacher about how I can raise my grade**. _____ **Teacher initials** **OR [ ]** **Check here if:** I have sent an email to the teacher about how to raise my grade and cc'ed my Capstone teacher..

Class Teacher	Current %	Goal %
Assignments with low score 1. _____ 2._____ 3._____ 4._____	**When** I can retake/ work on/fix it (Date/Time) 1. _____ 2. _____ 3._____ 4. _____	**I have talked to the teacher about how I can raise my grade**. _____ _ **Teacher initials** **OR [ ]** **Check here if:** I have sent an email to the teacher about how to raise my grade and cc'ed my Capstone teacher..

****This paper needs to be returned by _____, 2018 to _____.**

Student's Comments:	**Capstone Teacher Comments:**

Appendix D

Trice's College Success Survey

Trice's College Success Survey

Directions: Answer T for True or F for False to each statement.

____ 1. College grades most often reflect the effort you put into classes. I*

____ 2. I came to college because it was expected of me. E

____ 3. I have largely determined my own career goals. I

____ 4. Some people have a knack for writing, while others will never write well no matter how hard they try. E

____ 5. At least once, I have taken a course because it was easy to get a good grade. E

____ 6. Professors sometimes make an early impression of you and then no matter what you do, you cannot change that impression. E

____ 7. There are some subjects in which I could never do well. E

____ 8. Some students, such as student leaders and athletes, get free rides in college classes. E

____ 9. I sometimes feel that there is nothing I can do to improve my situation. E

____ 10. I never feel really hopeless-there is always something I can do to improve my situation. I

____ 11. I would never allow social activities to affect my studies. I

____ 12. There are many more important things for me than getting good grades. E

____ 13. Studying every day is important. I

____ 14. For some courses it is not important to go to class. E

____ 15. I consider myself highly motivated to achieve success in life. I

____ 16. I am a good writer. I

____ 17. Doing work on time is always important to me. E

____ 18. What I learn is more determined by college and course requirements than by what I want to learn. I

____ 19. I have been known to spend a lot of time making decisions which others do not take seriously. E

____ 20. I am easily distracted. E

____ 21. I can be easily talked out of studying. E

____ 22. I get depressed sometimes and then there is no way I can accomplish what I know I should be doing. E

____ 23. Things will probably go wrong for me sometime in the near future. E

____ 24. I keep changing my mind about my career goals. E

____ 25. I feel I will someday make a real contribution to the world if I work hard at it. I

____ 26. There has been at least one instance in school where social activity impaired my academic performance. E

____ 27. I would like to graduate from college, but there are more important things in my life. E

____ 28. I plan well and stick to my plans. I

Scoring: Circle the answers that match your own answers. Add up the number of matches. 1)F 2)T 3)F 4)T 5)T 6)T 7)T 8)T 9)T 10)F 11)F 12)T 13)F 14)T 15)F 16)F 17)T 18)F 19)T 20)T 21)T 22)T 23)T 24)T 25)F 26)T 27)T 28)F

Total = _____

Interpretation of score:
If your score is between 0 and 13, your locus of control is INTERNAL If your score is between 14 and 28, your locus of control is EXTERNAL

*Letters at end of statements added to indicate if the statement is referencing internal or external locus of control

Appendix E

Interview Questions – Post Intervention

Interview Questions

Post Intervention

1. Would you have preferred your capstone teacher leading the classroom discussion on completing your weekly goals or did you like Mrs. Alvarado coming in and leading the discussions? Why?
2. What did you find the most helpful with the support I provided?
3. What did you find the least helpful?
4. If you could change anything about this process what would it be?
5. Is this something you would like to see continued throughout the school year?
6. Do you feel more confident academically? In what ways?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about this process?

Appendix F

Positive Comments from Teachers

Positive Comments from Teachers

2	Very detail oriented, does it really well	Willing to challenge ideas, not judgmental on preconceived notions	Determined to make the kite fly that they were working on, determined to make something work	Super friendly, when he tries he does well and is capable of doing work	When he is interested he is very engaged, enjoys group activities, will participate
5	Helps a lot, knows ways to lead others without being boastful	Positive all the time, doesn't let herself get down even when she is being challenged, good at explaining things to help others	Phenomenal artist and worker, great writer, puts a lot of thought on her projects	Wonderful human being, over the top, observant, excels	Works hard, admires how hard she is trying to work thru topics that are hard for her
13	Very respectful	Very bright, when challenged able to excel	Respectful, gets along well with others, good team player	Takes feedback well and attempts to correct errors, always positive	Always respectful, tries his best
8	Wants to please, detail oriented	Wonderful student to have, gets other students to settle down, good role model, focuses on her own art work, asks insightful questions, overall wonderful student	Hardest working student he has, not an exaggeration	Participates, engaged always contributes	Taking greater accountability for her work, asking questions, standing out

7	The ability to be a leader	A good day is a great day with him, can get a lot of work done when focused, great conversationalist	Has a ton of artistic potential, very respectful of his elders, wants the best for himself and his peers, is a considerate student	Good sense of humor	Thoughtful, classroom discussion participant, engaged
1	Worked really hard to learn the topic. Doing awesome and holding the section all by herself	Creative	Incredibly smart, completes work as needed, asks questions to further her knowledge and helps others to help them understand.	Great student, works well with classmates, helps others who need help, very positive	Phenomenal writer, great attitude to class and helpful to peers
16	Puts in extra effort, constantly thinks, knows how to overcome challenges and learns from failure	Great work ethic, positive attitude, rock star, always helps others	Most dedicated student, the time she puts in is impressive to follow through as a writer, pleased with her work and her desire to become a better writer. Also the only one to follow thru on the honors contract	Last few classes, stepping up, talking more and asking more questions, good questions, personally accountable for making sure she understands	Hard worker, reliable, very thoughtful, puts in effort

9	Outstanding student, able to help students that are struggling, willing to help in any way	Naturally quick at understanding concepts	Incredibly smart, great student, independent, doesn't need a lot of direction to be successful, a good thinker	When on task, fully engaged and works hard. Completes all work on time.	Appreciates she is consistent with her homework and assignments, turns things in in time, participates, part of the group
12	Good spirit and attitude	Doing really well, works well with his friends, picks up on things quickly and has a strong memory	Has a lot of artistic skill, art comes naturally to him, does a really great job in art, is doing better at accepting critique and putting those suggestions to use	Perseverant, advocates for himself regularly	Enjoy him as a student, will ask for help when he needs it, honest, self advocates
17	Genuinely good student, thoughtful of social and cultural issues	Great student, very smart, probably the best grade in her class, appreciate all her efforts and she always does her best, her best is awesome	A great amount of art talent, spirited	Cannot find a negative thing to say about her, she is everything a teacher wants in a student	Very intelligent, understands more than most students but still asks questions to ensure she completely understands it, hard worker, going places because of her work ethic, good kid

3	Hard working, focused	Great positive attitude to class, hard worker, works well with others	Goes above and beyond, spends her own time after school, always asks for feedback, polite	Tries her absolute best	She says she is not good at math and is completely wrong
18	Good sense of reality, pass what people are putting up	Improved attendance	Works well with the teacher one on one	Tries to contribute thoughtfully	Always participating, understands why things are important
10	Peppy, good spirit,	Social young lady, communicates well with others, stays on top of assignments, asks questions about her work	Helpful student, likes to help peers, improved the performance of students around her	Always engaged, dependable	Last class the light bulb turned on, got excited about understanding something, asking questions, makes sure she understands something, happy to see her getting excited about understanding hard things
19	Inquisitive, always asking questions and moving forward	So polite, always has a smile on her face, is interested in school and learning	Performs to expectations, sweet kid	Incredibly kind to others, she participates a lot in class, pushers herself to improve, despite coming in late she caught up and does an amazing job	Great ideas, attempts to add to them and better her work

14	Works really well with others always asks for help when he needs it	Always reaching out to others to help or inquire	Great student, helps other, fun, appropriate sense of humor, knows when to joke and when to be serious	Kind to classmates, loyal friend, branching out of his regular bubble, expands his interests in a positive way	Hard worker, engaged, always contributes
11	Quiet, but sociable, extreme effort - works hard outside of school	Does well with independent work, very respectful, great job listening and taking notes	Very hard worker, takes feedback well	Improved over the years, impressive Spanish skills	Always on time, puts his best effort forward
6	Goal oriented	Outspoken, communicates with teachers, makes sure she turns in all of her work	Very bright, does her best, works really hard in class	Amazing how optimistic she is	Contributes thoughtfully to classroom discussion, diligent and hardworking
4	Clear set of aspirations in mind	Very sweet, soft spoken, personality in the classroom	Has great perseverance, no matter how hard something is, she never gives up	Positive interactions, hard working, dependable	Brilliant young lady, thoughtful, kind, willingness to elaborate and ensure she understands every detail is impressive, willing to help pothers, humble about her grasp of the subject

15	Always on time, persistent	Pleasure to have in class, respectful, asks for help and works well one to one	Art may be his calling, a ton of artistic talent, art comes naturally, puts a lot of time and effort into his work, takes feedback well and applies it, works really well in the class	Tries hard even when it's not easy, respectful, polite	Kind, respectful young man, sweet heart, very nice and considerate to others, does well with areas he is familiar with