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## Assessing transitions from elementary to middle school for students with mild to moderate disabilities

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Assessing Transitions from Elementary to Middle School  
for Students with Mild to Moderate Disabilities

Jonathan Stowers

California State University Monterey Bay

Action Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of  
Arts in Education

California State University Monterey Bay

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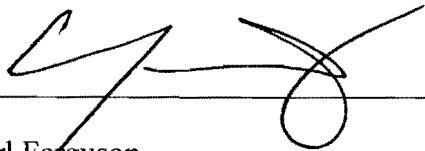
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Assessing Transitions from Elementary to Middle School  
for Students with Mild to Moderate Disabilities

by

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Approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee



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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this action research was to explore the perceptions of parents, teachers, and students with mild to moderate disabilities who participated in the transition process from elementary to middle school. Sixth grade students, parents, resource teachers, and general education teachers completed questionnaires and were interviewed about the academic, procedural, social and emotional issues associated with the transition process. Questionnaire and interview results indicated that there is higher concern in regards to the transition process among general education teachers and parents, and less concern among students and the special education teachers. Additionally, results indicated students, teachers, and parents all have concerns regarding the lack of organizational skills and technology in the middle school classroom. Additionally, student questionnaires indicated one potential solution to the process could include having an older mentor student assigned to each incoming middle school student in order to facilitate a smoother transition.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

School transition planning for students leaving elementary school and entering middle school often falls on the shoulders of parents to deal with the associated issues related to this significant change in a student's life. For students with mild to moderate disabilities the issues are more complicated, requiring a clear and direct communication with all stakeholders. Interestingly, though there are more complications for transitions for students with mild to moderate disabilities from elementary to middle school, there does not seem to be a specific focus on this population of students (Forgan & Vaughn, 2000). Transition plans without thoroughness and proper implementation fail to bring success to these students with special needs. There is much useful information that these students, their parents, and teachers can utilize in making the transition plans. Furthermore, parents and teachers of students with disabilities are in the best position to model transitions for students (Spencer, 2005).

Transitions and change are often more difficult for students with mild to moderate disabilities (Detwiler, 2008). With this in mind, to best meet their needs and ultimately create a fulfilling future for these students, effective programs and strategies must be in place to comfortably transition them from one building to another and to positively engage them in the new school setting. Without doubt, collaborating across schools can create opportunities for teachers and staff to learn about one another's curricular requirements, program offerings, and expectations for students easing the way for a more seamless transition (Schumacher, 2008). More importantly, it is essential to involve families in these transitions and to ensure that lines of



communication are open and supportive. Transition planning is not a one-shot endeavor. Educators must continually make an assertive effort to maintain conversations with families and students regarding their expectations, concerns, and questions. It is essential that educators provide pertinent information that is understandable so families can support smooth transitions to middle school for their children.

The goal of this study was to identify what the instructional needs of mild to moderate special education students were and what they struggle with in their transition from elementary to middle school. A case study analysis to identify and pinpoint issues related to transition from elementary to middle school for students with mild to moderate disabilities provided an in depth and more cogent understanding of the complexities involved with this significant change. Interviews with four students, their parents, and their case managers helped to determine the particular expectations each middle school has for their incoming students. There were anticipated differences between parents', students', and teachers' views of the transition process, as well as in what the students were expected to do. This will enhance the middle school resource teachers' ability to adapt and improve the transition procedures to more adequately address the transition needs.

### **Problem Statement**

Research centering on transition of students with mild to moderate disabilities, from one environment to another, continues to be a burgeoning field of study (Spencer, 2005). However, the majority of the research revolves around transitioning from high school to work or post-secondary education (Dixon, Devos, & Davis, 2008). Though each transition presents major challenges for students and their families, there have only been limited studies for students with

mild to moderate disabilities transitioning from elementary to middle school (Kinney, 2006). According to Dillon (2008) there is a real need for effective transition programs for students moving from elementary school into middle school, and that the programs need to involve all concerned parties. Unfortunately, the transition process can limit the amount of information that is gathered on a student in order to serve them best. Transition meetings often focus more on making sure that the current IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals are applicable to the sixth grade standards and that the suggested services blend with the middle school schedule. Consequently, some of the broader areas of transition, such as understanding middle school expectations, are ignored. The particular needs of the students and their concerns are often not addressed. Therefore, there is a need to explore and examine the practices and their effectiveness of this transitioning period for students with mild to moderate disabilities to better understand the potential pitfalls, as well provide salient information for educators to ensue a clear and identified process.

### **Purpose of study**

It is imperative for schools to examine the transition practices for special education student in order to ensure effective transitions between elementary and middle school. Teachers must remain diligent in properly evaluating and enacting modifications to strengthen the transition programs in their schools. The purpose of this study was to identify the areas in which students with mild to moderate disabilities struggle in their transition to middle school. What do the middle school instructional staff perceive as necessary for success?

In education, there is rarely a focus on the transition process as a means to facilitate successful adjustment to the many components of a school transition. Many times parents and

educators question how beneficial the transition programs are to the students and what changes might be made to improve the program's effectiveness. Transitions for students from elementary to middle school begin in April with teachers setting up transition meetings, which are often difficult for them to schedule.

### **Research Questions**

Specifically, this research addressed the current perceptions of students, teachers, and parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school by addressing these questions:

- What is the perception of students of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What is the perception of teachers of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What is the perception of parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school?

### **Theoretical Model**

The study of transitions for all special education students has been a pressing issue in special education since the principle of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in PL 94-142, the "Education for All Handicapped Children Act", in which full participation of all students with disabilities became a requirement. In 1990, it was renamed to "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (IDEA).

Early research in the area of transitions often revolved around students with moderate to severe disabilities (Martin, 1991). While early research in special education dealt more on the continuum of options for students, several of the most influential thinkers in furthering research

and theory around improving transitions were Douglas Fuchs, Robert Gaylord-Ross, Wayne Sailor, and Donna Schumacher. This early research in the 1980's and 1990's has evolved as program options for children with disabilities has improved and the focus of developing a thorough transition plan for the IEP has become essential in meeting individual educational needs.

Of the many researchers, Gaylor-Ross was on the forefront in evaluating the way special education students transitioned to a new environment, such as a place of employment (Gaylord-Ross, 1986). Similar to Gaylord-Ross's research, the main premise for Sailor's study on post-secondary transition was in post-secondary transitions and developing systems for success in gainful employment and focusing on the social and communication skills necessary (Sailor, 1990). According to Sailor, "If school success is measured at all in "outcome" goals (e.g., college admission, gainful employment), then schools must be concerned with the types of skills that a child must develop while in elementary and secondary schools in order to achieve them" (p.23).

As the full continuum of programs developed for special education students, Donna Schumacher began to outline concerns as she looked at various transitions among students in the mild to moderate population in the early 1990's. Schumacher directed her study on transitions on the stresses that transitions can create on students and offers some outlining solutions of how to curtail those by preparing the students effectively for the transitions (Schumacher,1998).

Douglas Fuchs' focus led to a variety of studies in transenvironmental programming and curriculum-based-measurement through implementing and preparing students to transition successfully. Results of the studies revealed that an experimental group of students with mild to

moderate disabilities who were in the general education setting for math, improved their scores, opposed to those that stayed in special education math. Through time-series analysis and transenvironmental programming, students who were tracked and had a thorough transition plan, demonstrated success academically (Fuchs,1993).

Conducting studies on how we can minimize the stresses students face in transitions from one school environment to the next still needs to be on the forefront of how special education teachers and staff can endorse a successful transition strategy, no matter the disability.

### **Researcher Background**

As a sixth grade resource teacher in the Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD), I have had the opportunity to participate in the transition process of fifth grade special education students moving from elementary school to middle school. This experience has caused me to question the student benefit of the district's practices, as well as to contemplate how we might enhance the effectiveness of these transitions. I have taught special education at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This has allowed me to view the numerous transitions of special education students with a vast range of disabilities.

### **Definition of Terms**

- **Special Education:** Special education means specially designed instruction, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

<http://nichcy.org/schoolage/iep/iepcontents/specialeducation#definition>

- Services offered to children who possess one or more of the following disabilities: specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic

impairments, visual impairments, autism, combined deafness and blindness, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments.

<http://www.ldonline.org/glossary>

- **Learning Disabilities:** A disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. It may also be referred to as a learning disorder or a learning difference.

<http://www.ldonline.org/glossary>

- **Transition:** means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:
  - (A) is designed to be a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;
  - (B) is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests;
  - (C) includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

(See "Definitions" in Section 1401, Wrightslaw: Special Education Law, 2nd Edition, page 56)

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/trans.index.htm>

- **Mild to Moderate:** A student that generally spends all or part of their time in regular classrooms, but may also receive special education for part of the day in resource rooms or in self-contained classrooms within the school. Most mild/moderate students have learning disabilities, communication disorders, or emotional and behavioral disorders. Some students may have intellectual disabilities, high-functioning autism, or disabilities caused by traumatic brain injury.

<http://education.byu.edu/cpse/postbac/description.html>

- **IEP:** Individual Education Plan. It is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting.

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CTopicalBrief%2C10%2C>

- **Special Education Student:** A student that has an individual education plan as a result of a learning disability.
- **Transition plan:** A plan for a special education student that is moving from one environment to the next. The transition plan includes supports and outlines services that will benefit the student.
- **Case manager:** A case manager is an educator, teacher, or professional who organizes and coordinates special education and other supports for a student.
- **Push-in:** A service option for special education students that go into the general education classroom.
- **Pull-out:** Pull-out is a service option for a special education student that is pulled out of the general education setting for a smaller group setting. A pull-out model where special

education students receive instruction outside the regular classroom from a special education teacher.



## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

This literature review will summarize research on issues related to transitions faced by students moving from elementary to middle school. It is structured around the following themes: concerns about transitions and strategies for improving transitions.

The elementary to middle/junior high school transition is associated with a variety of negative effects on adolescents. Meeting academic, procedural, social and emotional needs during transitions from elementary to middle school is necessary to facilitate a successful transition adjustment to a new school environment. Transitions at this age can be especially challenging, as they involve a new and often larger school personnel, a student population change, compounded by the numerous developmental changes students are undergoing at this stage in their lives. Specifically, this is why the research in this study addressed the current perceptions of students, teachers, and parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school through addressing these questions:

- . What is the perception of students of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- . What is the perception of teachers of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- . What is the perception of parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school?

Since the passage of PL 94-142, transition for students with mild to moderate disabilities has increased in importance as students with all disabilities participate in meaningful ways in school

and community (D. Fuchs et al., 1992, 1993; D. Fuchs et al., 1996). “Unfortunately, it seems that when P.L. 94-142 was written, many believed that all that was necessary to ensure movement up the cascade was to state in the regulations accompanying the legislation that such movement should occur” (L. Fuchs, D. Fuchs, & Bishop, 1992).

These transition difficulties are even further accentuated for special education students, each with his own particular needs. This led to the purpose of this study, which was to identify the areas in which students with mild to moderate disabilities struggle in their transition to middle school.

What do the middle school instructional staff perceive as necessary for success? Additionally, it will be beneficial to determine the particular academic expectations each middle school has for their incoming special education students, thus to make it a successful transition.

### **Concerns About Transitions**

Commonly known as the cascade of services (E. Deno, 1970; Reynolds, 1962), the least restrictive environment includes a continuum of placement options for special education students, that includes the general education classroom. Transitions occur in all educational settings and the transitions often present difficulties for the students.

Students’ and parents’ top concerns about school transition focus on academic, procedural, and social and emotional factors. Academic concerns focus on coping with increased homework and more difficult courses. Procedural concerns involve navigating around and dealing with a larger school environment, as well as multiple classes taught by different teachers. Social concerns include fitting in and making new friends, getting along with peers, and coping with bullies or older students. As outlined by Maute (1991), studies showed many of the same student concerns about grades, friends, getting lost, and bullies. Some of the unique concerns

relate to expectations and to the difficulty of homework. A loss in sense of belonging and increased feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and social isolation contribute to the emotional concerns involved in transitions (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Major events in life often create stresses. Environments need to be responsive to new groups in order to minimize the stresses created. Students provide insight into their concerns by comments and behaviors they display. For example, in a study that asked students about their worries, the responses were as follows: (1) getting to class on time, (2) finding lockers, (3) keeping up with “materials”, (4) finding lunchrooms and bathrooms, (5) getting on the right bus to go home, (6) getting through the crowded halls, and (7) remembering which class to go to next (Schumacher, 1994; Weldy, 1991). Other studies added student safety as prominent among the concerns (Anderman et al., 1994; Arowosafe et al., 1992; Odegaard & Heath, 1992).

The significance of peer status to academic functioning has correlation in both the elementary and middle school settings (Wentzel, 2009). The elementary to middle school transition has been found to have a negative impact on various adolescent achievements (Alspaugh, 1998), such as decreased motivation and increases in psychological distress (Anderman, Maehr, Martin, & Midgley, 1991). There is a positive relationship between students' peer acceptance and academic achievement, as well as a positive outlook on the new school, classwork, and having a new teacher (Osterman, 2000).

As a result of a school environment change, student perceptions of their quality of life in school declined, as well (Diemert, 1992). Meeting student social needs during transitions from elementary to a middle school is imperative. For example, one survey of 23 students found that the top six out of the top eleven concerns pertained to social adjustment, and the additional top

two were procedural (Diemert,1992). Waggoner (1994) discovered that students who had come from team concept school settings in elementary school demonstrated a stronger sense of confidence and comfort than those who came from a self-contained classroom. Another survey of 171 sixth graders (Waggoner, 1994) found that “sixty-six percent of all students surveyed believed they would be better prepared if they had more than one sixth grade teacher” (p. 274). This supports the idea that student adjustment results from more than just fear of transitions.

A study by Akos (2004) outlined various perceptions and fears of students in transition, although most of the transition research has very little input from parents and students (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A child’s view is not always accurately perceived, and there are diverse perceptions about which issues in transition seem to be the most important (Arowosafe, Schumakar, & Irvin, 1998). Teachers’ perceptions can be more limited than those of students and parents due to the limited amount of time spent with the student. Weldy (1991) reported on a three-year school transition program in which five small groups of teachers identified 20 challenges faced by sixth grade elementary students making the transition to a middle school. However, there was no raw data identifying the actual concerns or their prevalence. It appears that it can be difficult to adequately assess and prioritize concerns in transition planning.

Many mild to moderate students are pulled out of the classroom for a significant amount of their school day in elementary. Many educators are unwilling to accommodate special education students (L. Fuchs, D. Fuchs, & Bishop, 1992).

When P.L. 94-142 was written, it was a common belief that students would move up the cascade smoothly as educators would prepare students for reintegration into the general education classroom. What was not considered was that some special educators’ would fail to adequately

prepare students for reintegration in helping strengthen academic performance and improving school behavior (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). The transitions from one school environment to the next are similar to that of a student going from a resource classroom back into the general education classroom.

It is vital to understand what teachers list as challenges for students, as well. One study indicated teachers' concern over the ability of students to navigate school (getting lost and having lockers) and the social environment (Akos, 2004). Others identified concerns including reduced parent involvement, more teachers, no recess, more peer pressure, students accepting responsibility for their own actions, unrealistic parent expectations, changing physical development, and lack of basic skills (Weldy, 1991).

Although student concerns in transitioning have been shown to be prominent, it must be noted that two studies (Akos, 2002; Odegaard & Heath, 1992) found that there are aspects of transitioning to middle school that are attractive to kids. These included their optimism in meeting new peers and establishing new friends, increased freedom and independence, having their own lockers, having multiple teachers and participating in sports.

A reintegration process that has done research in the area of transitioning students is called transenvironmental programming (TP). "TP focuses on environmental issues and skills critical for success in the next setting up the cascade" (D. Fuchs, Dempsey, Roberts, & Kintsch, 1995). Similarly to how it's vital for teachers to look at the factors that affect the transition process from one school environment to another, transenvironmental programming helps focus teachers' attention primarily upon behavioral expectations and logistical issues. Since there is a need for academic excellence and emphasis on the preparation for the rigor in a new environment,

transenvironmental programming was supplemented by curriculum-based-measurement (CBM; S. Deno, 1985). This provided teachers with academic progress data as valid measures of student achievement help facilitate teachers in evaluating best practices. The CBM-enhanced the TP process.

In order to most seamlessly transition elementary school students with disabilities to middle school, students with disabilities, their parents, and teachers must be provided useful information (Spencer, 2005). The IEP team members must closely evaluate factors relevant to the particular needs of each special education student when establishing the transition plan.

### **Strategies for Improving Transition**

Research has suggested a number of strategies for addressing the challenges facing students with disabilities and their families (Carter, Clark, Cushing, & Craig, 2005). While each strategy needs to be tailored to the specific needs of the student and to the realities of the school system, transition teams can still make use of many of them. For example, transition planning can be initiated as early as fourth grade by prioritizing instructional needs into the students' Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Further, collaborating across schools can create opportunities for teachers and staff to learn about one another's curricular requirements, program offerings, and expectations for students. This can include preparing students early by offering orientation activities, "middle school ambassador" programs, and multiple opportunities for students to visit their future school. Schools also can establish a mutually acceptable vehicle for communicating regularly with family members in order to encourage ongoing communication with students by both educators and family members. Opportunities should be provided for students to discuss

their school experiences, such as opening a locker, finding classrooms, finding the restroom, and keeping track of assignments (ibid).

Another strategy would be to develop peer support programs for students with disabilities by providing opportunities to interact with their general education peers and address concerns about students with disabilities becoming increasingly isolated from their peers. For example, in one shadow program, fifth graders shadowed sixth graders for a day to familiarize themselves with the school schedule and layout (Ferguson & Bulach, 1994). The students who participated reported lower anxiety levels, fewer problems finding facilities and were more socially adjusted to middle school than those who did not participate (ibid). These forms of activities can help support school involvement and encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities. School transitions can be most usefully thought of as a temporary insecurity that pose both challenges and opportunities. Different types of transition programming and strategies may be needed in order to facilitate successful adjustment to the separate, but interrelated concerns about academic, procedural, social and emotional factors (ibid). To this end, there have been useful transition suggestions such as the following guidelines for planning transition programs (Weldy, 1991):

- provide several activities that will involve students, parents, teachers, and staff from both schools in the transition process;
- establish a transition protocol that can be easily replicated and updated annually with little effort;
- establish a timeline for the transition process;

- ensure that guidance counselors and special education teachers from each school meet to share information;
- encourage teachers from receiving schools to visit the sending schools to initiate personal contacts.

Osterman (2000) builds on this list with further suggestion, including:

- 1) A year before students come, have them come shadow a student in the middle school for a half day;
- 2) Let elementary students tell middle school students about the current school year and how their year has gone;
- 3) Empathize with students;
- 4) Understand the characteristics of the age group;
- 5) Focus on the positive;
- 6) Build hope.

In addition to these transition suggestions, transenvironmental programming looked at its impact that it had in the treatment groups of their human subjects. Teachers did an ecological survey in which they identified discrepancies between the resource room and mainstream classroom and then they planned interventions for each discrepancy. By adding curriculum-based-measurement (CBM) to the TP process, the study indicated that it brought the academic, behavioral, and logistical factors into a better balance. “Results suggest that special educators using TP who receive CBM information about their students’ academic progress are more likely to plan and implement interventions in preparation for students’ transition than are those special educators who do not receive this information” (Fuchs, Dempsey, Kintsch, & Roberts, 1995).



Central to the planning was gathering information on identifying differences between classrooms. This benefited teachers as they were able to use this information to plan how to make the two environments similar, in order to make the transition to the new environment for reintegration successful. This study led to the conclusion that increased attention and academic preparation can help lead to smoother transition. In order for a successful transition to occur, the academic, procedural, and behavioral factors must all be addressed in order to give adequate academic preparation for students.

By implementing clearly defined strategies and tailoring them to each students' needs, success in the transition process can be guided, monitored, and enhanced. Transition activities may be helpful in selecting or creating a transition plan to best suit a community. With various strategies, one can address the current limitations of the transition process. Understanding that school staff already bears a considerable workload, it can be anticipated that designing a transition plan with minimum collaboration with school administration, teachers, and counselors will potentially be unsuccessful. On the other hand, there can be great success in transitions with ample collaboration from the teachers (or previous school) who share concerns and with whom there has been established a productive working relationship (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Osterman (2000) outlined that team building, cooperative learning, and various modifications in smaller environments would also help in handling the social and academic aspects of a transition. For example, some schools develop learning communities within their school (Paige, Neuman, & D'Amico, 2001). "Belonging is one of the primary concerns for new middle-level students; addressing it is crucial for a successful transition" (Wormelli, 2011; p.48).

Dillon (2008) also reviewed best practices in making sure that kids have someone to sit with at lunch, know what to bring to class, which teacher is the most strict, and get answers about unknowns. This helps take anxieties away. “It’s a process, not a prescription,” says Ken Borland, Millcreek (PA) Township School District’s assistant supervisor of administrative service (ibid; p. 18).

The U.S. Army has numerous elementary and secondary military schools that deal with a plethora of transitions yearly. They have proven strategies that can help all schools develop plans to make transitions rewarding, and that are school-managed, student-led, and are grounded in research to meet the needs of various young students. These strategies have eased student transitions, so students don’t feel threatened when someone shares an experience with them. The program’s goal is to provide each student with a peer outlook, valued information, immediate support, and assistance in these three key areas:

- What do I need to know about the academic requirements at this school?
- Whom will I meet? i.e. How will I make friends? What about my relationships?
- How do I find my way around?

The program is staffed by volunteers supervised by teachers, counselors, or other staff who work with incoming and outgoing students in the three vital areas for the student: 1) Academics; 2) Relationships with other students, faculty, and staff; 3) The campus, community, and local culture. Students feel at home and welcome in this forum. It helps them become accepted in their new community as quickly as possible. There have been various suggestions proposed to ensure a thorough and successful transition for students. Moving from elementary to middle school is an exciting time for the majority of students, who tend to feel a sense of accomplishment in

leaving early years behind and earning a new future, but the excitement can be overshadowed by fear of uncertainty (Spencer, 2005). Students with disabilities tend to have even heightened concern. Transition research deals a lot with the effects of making the transition from elementary to middle school smoothly, but most research does not consider the varied needs of special education students (Forgan & Vaughn, 2000).

It has been suggested that parents and teachers of students with disabilities have provided positive transition program models in schools (Spencer, 2005). Over the course of the last 30 years, substantially separate programs have been in place for students with IEPs (Neubert & Moon, 2001). These programs have focused on providing employment training and the life skills necessary for a student with a disability to progress to the various higher education settings. However, not all schools are providing their special education students with these programs. Very few schools are offering transition programs that most effectively transition their students from one educational environment to another.

### **Summary**

Academic, procedural, social and emotional components must be carefully examined to confidently transition special education students to middle school. Various types of transition programming may be necessary in order to improve and expedite successful adjustment to a new school. It is essential to involve families in transitions and to ensure that lines of communication are open and supportive. Transition planning is not a one-shot endeavor. Educators must always make a forthright effort to maintain conversations with students and their families regarding expectations, concerns, and questions. It is essential that educators provide special education students the necessary building blocks for smooth transitions to middle school.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the areas in which students with mild to moderate disabilities struggle in their transition to middle school by researching the current state of transitional practice from elementary to middle school. Additionally, the research and interviews helped to determine the particular academic expectations each middle school has for their incoming students by doing a case study with four students, their parents, a general education teacher, and their case managers. It was important to examine what will prepare students for middle school and what we need to do to make sure the students will be successful. Because of the differences in the instructional environments, it's important to look at the differences in the two environments and what happens academically, socially, and emotionally for students. This was accomplished by conducting a case study with four students, their parents, and their case managers. Statistically, this researcher anticipated that there will be differences between parents', students', and teachers' views of the transition process, as well as in what the students are expected to do.

This information should be beneficial to school counselors, school psychologists, special education teachers, and other school personnel. This researcher believed it will assist in helping professional develop proactive interventions that will enable students and their families to negotiate their new school environment successfully and to reduce insecurities and problems that arise from this change.

#### Why this researcher chose the plan of action

Having worked with special education students since high school, this researcher has witnessed voids in the transition process of students moving from one building to the next. Beyond addressing the student's particular disability in his/her IEP meeting, rarely is anything discussed and put in place to assist the student in making a smooth transition to the next level. A back to school night for the entire student body is helpful but fails to meet more specialized needs of those with disabilities. As a middle school special education teacher for several years now, this researcher has frequently witnessed the student frustration in the transition in areas such as academic instruction, homework load, opening lockers, moving from class to class, managing a number of textbooks, making friends, and standing in a long lunch line. Prior to settling on my thesis topic, this researcher discussed concerns with special education coworkers who viewed similar student frustrations.

### **Research Questions**

Thus, to effectively evaluate the current limitations of the transition process from elementary to middle school, the following research questions were addressed:

- What was the perception of students of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What was the perception of teachers of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What was the perception of parents of the transition process from elementary to middle?

### **Overall Research Design**

This researcher chose a case study approach, which included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data was derived from the responses obtained from the questionnaires and surveys which were developed in consultation with my thesis advisor.

### **Specific Research Plan**

This researcher used an inquiry approach by gathering data with four families, students, and teachers at two schools. In using this approach, this researcher identified problems with the transition to middle school by working collaboratively with the two chosen special education teachers at the middle school levels in order to do sampling from parents and students regarding the transitions process to middle school. This researcher also used a survey and interview with the participating case managers.

### **Setting**

The two middle schools that were targeted draw from 16 feeder elementary schools. The schools are primarily located in a diverse community in central California. The two middle schools serve grades 6-8; school number one has 963 students and school number two has 825 students. The following described the demographics of the schools where the research is being held. School one is a middle school in which the API score to meet the growth target was not achieved. The API score to meet the growth target was 790 and the score this past year was 785, the school schedule is standard, and it has students in grades 6-8. In this middle school, the demographics were 14% GATE students, 20% English learners, 17% was reclassified as English proficient, and the migrant education program participants were just 1%. Forty-seven percent of the school qualified for free/reduced price lunch and the special education population within the

past two years was at 17%. The overall average parent education based on the 90% who responded was: 6% attending graduate school, 24% college, 26% some college, 32% high school graduates, and 12% are not a high school graduate. The student ethnicity ratio for this middle school was 39% Hispanic/Latino, 30% White, 11% Asian, 11% Filipino, 5% African American, 3% with two or more ethnicities, and 1% Pacific Islander.

School two was a middle school that also had difficulty meeting its API growth target. Its growth target was 762 and its current score was 758. This middle school schedule was also under a standard schedule with grades 6-8. This school consisted of 11% GATE students, 25% English learners, 23% have been reclassified as English, and 3% are Migrant education program participants. 61% are eligible for free/reduced price lunch, and the numbers for special education are at 19%. The parent's average education from the 84% that responded was 2% attended graduate school, 18% being college graduates, 25% attended some college, 28% are high school graduates, and 17% are not a high school graduate. The ethnicity ratio was also very diverse in school two with 44% being Hispanic, 18% White, 16% Asian, 10% Filipino, 5% African American, 2% two or more, and 2% being Pacific Islander.

### **Participants**

For evaluation of the transition from elementary to middle school, the participants included two sixth grade students from two of the middle schools, a parent of each of these students, and their special education and general education teacher. The student sample of four students consisted of two boys and two girls with various special education disabilities and was as ethnically diverse as possible.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

This researcher contacted two sixth grade resource specialists at the two-targeted middle schools in the district to ask their cooperation in selecting students for the case study. All student surveys were numbered in an effort to connect the specific student to his/her survey. Each of the two middle schools were assigned a letter (A or B) and each student a number (1, 2, 3, or 4). Once the participating students were identified, parents were contacted by telephone to explain the research and solicit their cooperation. Then, after securing the written parent permission slips, the special education teacher administered the questionnaire to his/her students. Completed questionnaires were collected by the special education teachers. Parent questionnaires were sent home in sealed envelopes with the students. When the parents completed the questionnaires, the students returned them to the school resource specialist. Teachers completed their version of the questionnaire during a prep period or a set time after school. No incentives were given for student participation in the study; however, the researcher awarded a student incentive of a Jamba Juice gift card to the students who returned their permission slip and parent questionnaire.

### **Data Sources/Instruments**

This researcher then developed student, parent, resource teacher, and general education questionnaires in consultation with faculty at CSUMB. The items on the questionnaires were based on various concerns witnessed over the years, as well as concerns found in research. Following the administration of all the questionnaires, interviews of each student, a parent, their special education teacher, one general education teacher from each site, were analyzed to gain understanding of their survey responses.



Analyses were organized according to the four areas of possible concern identified in the research: academic, procedural, social, and emotional factors.

Students, parents, and teachers were provided several types of questions on their questionnaire. All study participants responded to a number of statements involving possible transition concerns. Choices from multiple responses reflected the degree to which each questions was a concern.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaires were analyzed and coded by a former Master of Arts graduate from California State Monterey Bay, in order to develop concern categories. Inter-rater reliability was established to be sure the results were reliable and consistent. The researcher sent the data and themes developed from the surveys and questionnaires out to two judges to see if the results established were useful. For classifying the concerns and outlining what was happening in elementary that was not in middle school, distinct categorical coding was primarily used.

## Chapter 4

### Results

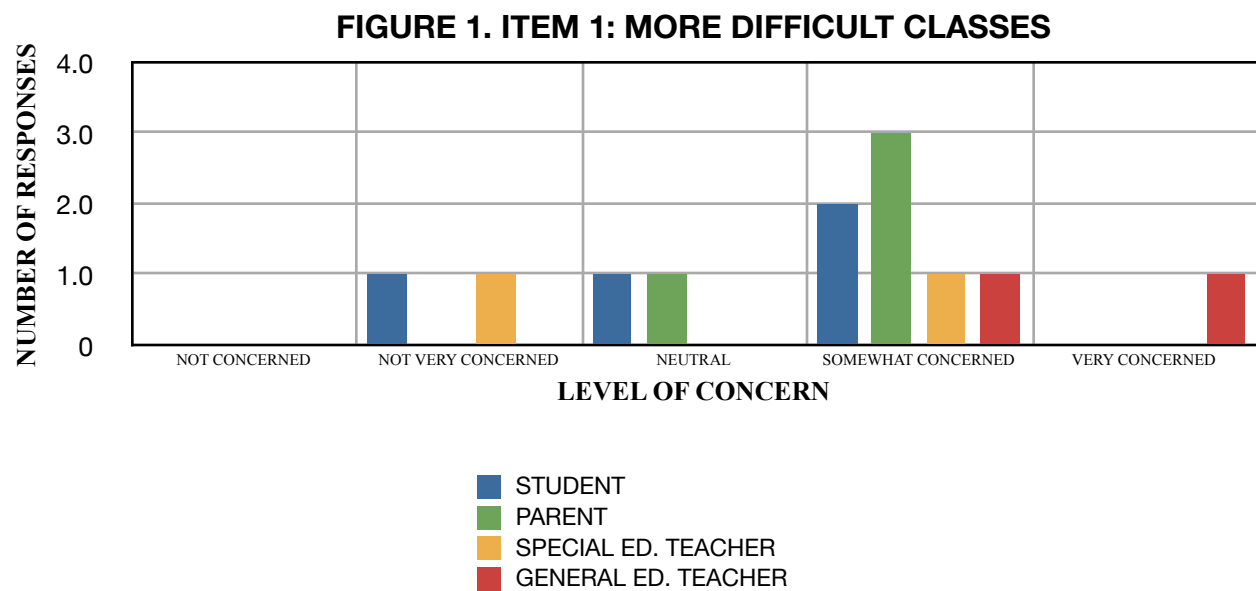
Throughout the action research project, the researcher gathered data from the questionnaires and interviews for the sake of assessing the perceptions of students with mild to moderate learning disabilities in their transition from elementary to middle school. Four students, a parent of each of the students, two resource specialists, and two general education teachers all provided feedback.

Data were collected and analyzed for results and developing concern categories among the responses. The student, parent, resource teacher, and general education teachers looked academic, procedural, social, and emotional categories, with a total of thirty-three categories for concern. The goal of this was to identify the perception of the transition and the concerns coming into middle school. With a five point rating scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree, it was designed to develop themes. The interview questions for the student, teachers, and parents all focused on their perception in detail. The results of the questionnaires are shown graphically in charts below. Additionally, the results of the open-ended questions are represented in common themes and summarized to represent various issues.

The following were the questionnaire response items. Students, parents, special education teachers, and the general education teachers were asked to mark the level of concern they had in the areas with regard to moving from elementary to middle school with 1 being “Not Concerned”, 2 being “Not Very Concerned”, 3 being “Neutral”, 4 being “Somewhat Concerned” and 5 being “Very Concerned”. The researcher’s purpose was to assess the transitions from elementary to middle school for students with mild to moderate learning disabilities.

**Academic**

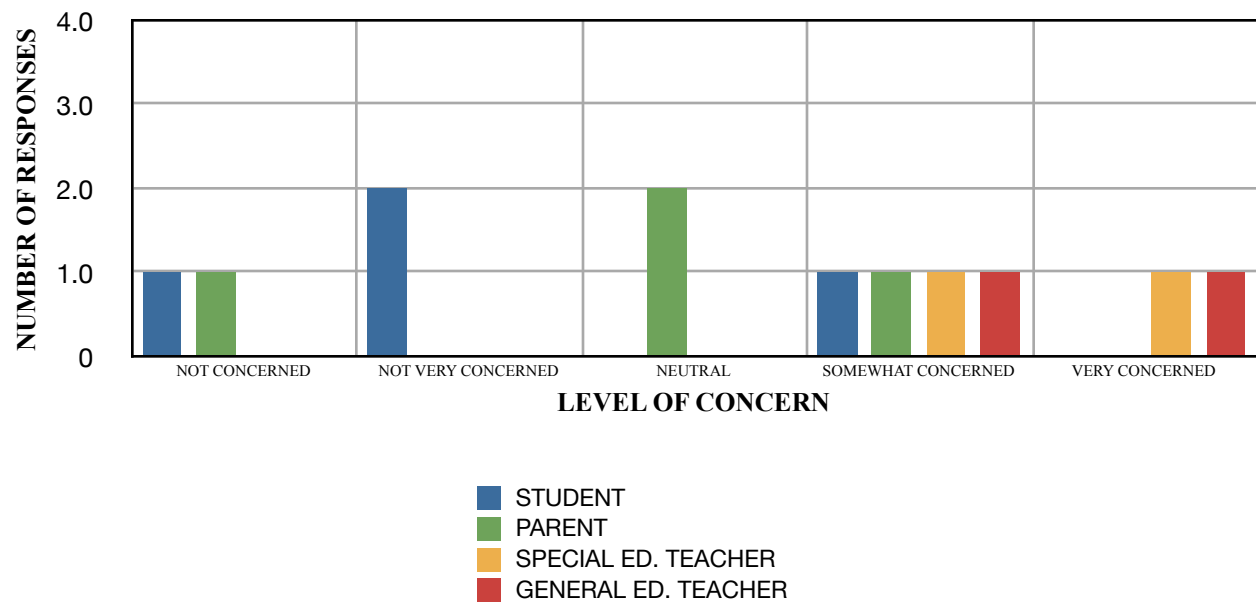
Questionnaire #1: More difficult classes. Students responses were one was not very concerned, one neutral and three somewhat concerned. Parents responses were one was neutral, and 3 somewhat concerned. Special Education Teacher were responses were one was not very concerned and the other was somewhat concerned. General Education Teacher responses were one teacher was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned.



Comments from the questionnaires were that school B has many class options to match student ability.

Questionnaire #2: Class schedule. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one not very concerned, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, two were neutral, and one was somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were one teacher was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned.

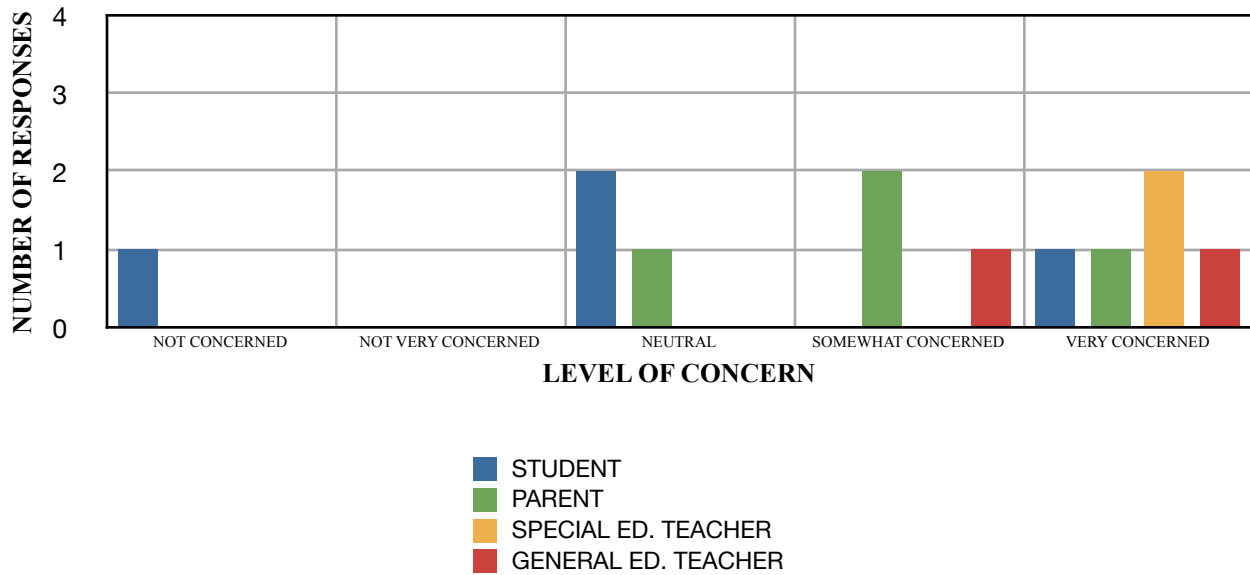
**FIGURE 2. ITEM 2: CLASS SCHEDULE**



Comments from the questionnaires were that many class options make scheduling harder.

Questionnaire #3: Homework. Student responses were one student was not concerned, two neutral, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one was neutral, two somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses found both very concerned. General education teacher responses were was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned.

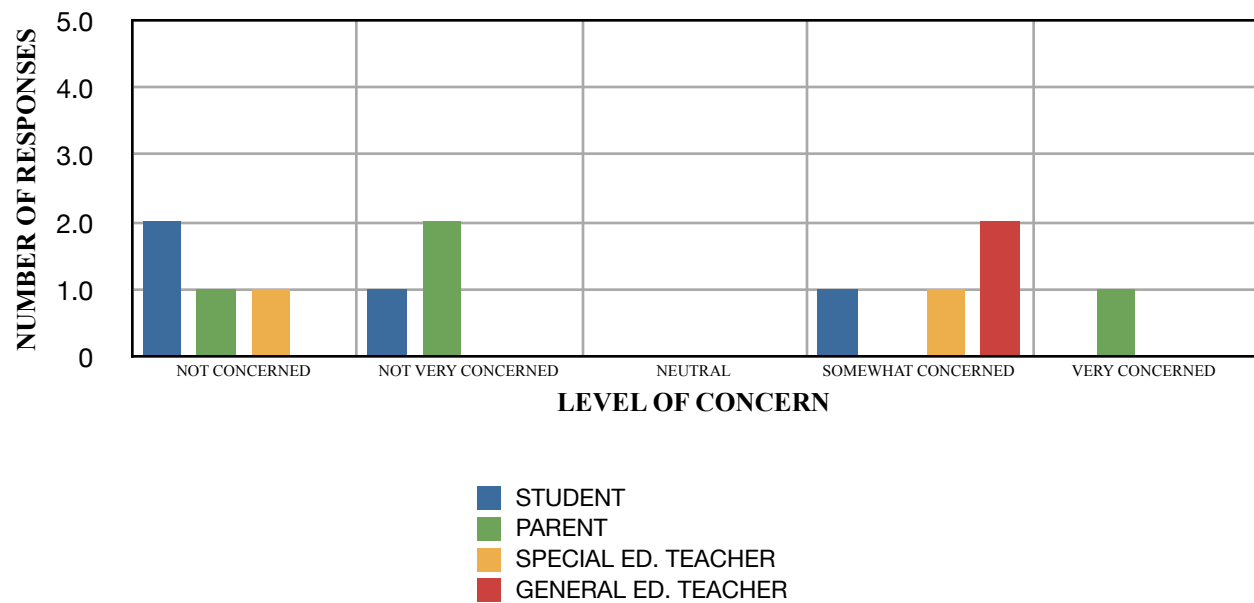
**FIGURE 3. ITEM 3: HOMEWORK**



Comments from the questionnaires were that Special education teacher B reported most students earn low grades because they do not do homework or attempt to do the homework. Student B2 reported that there was a lot more homework in 6th grade.

Questionnaire #4: Number of teachers. Student responses were that two students were not concerned, one not very concerned, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one parent was not concerned, two not very concerned, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one special education teacher was not concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General Education Teacher responses were that both of the general education teachers were somewhat concerned.

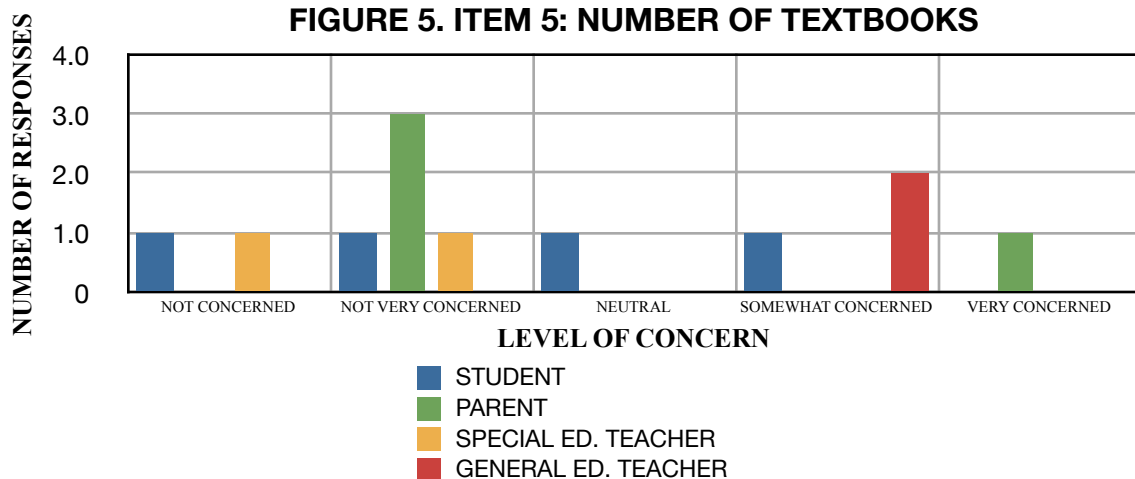
**FIGURE 4. ITEM 4: NUMBER OF TEACHERS**



There were no additional comments from the questionnaires.

Questionnaire #5: Number of textbooks. Student responses indicated one was not concerned, one was not very concerned, one neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Parent responses were two parents were not concerned and two not very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was not very concerned. General education teacher responses were that both of the teachers were somewhat concerned.

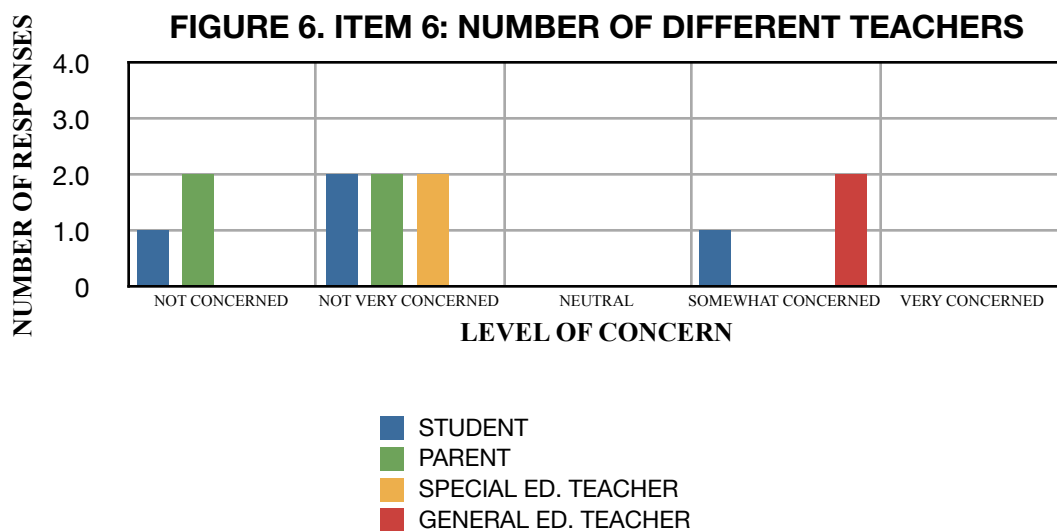
**FIGURE 5. ITEM 5: NUMBER OF TEXTBOOKS**



Comments from the questionnaires were that school B does not have lockers. The additional

comment was that students get a set of textbooks to take home and leave them there for the year.

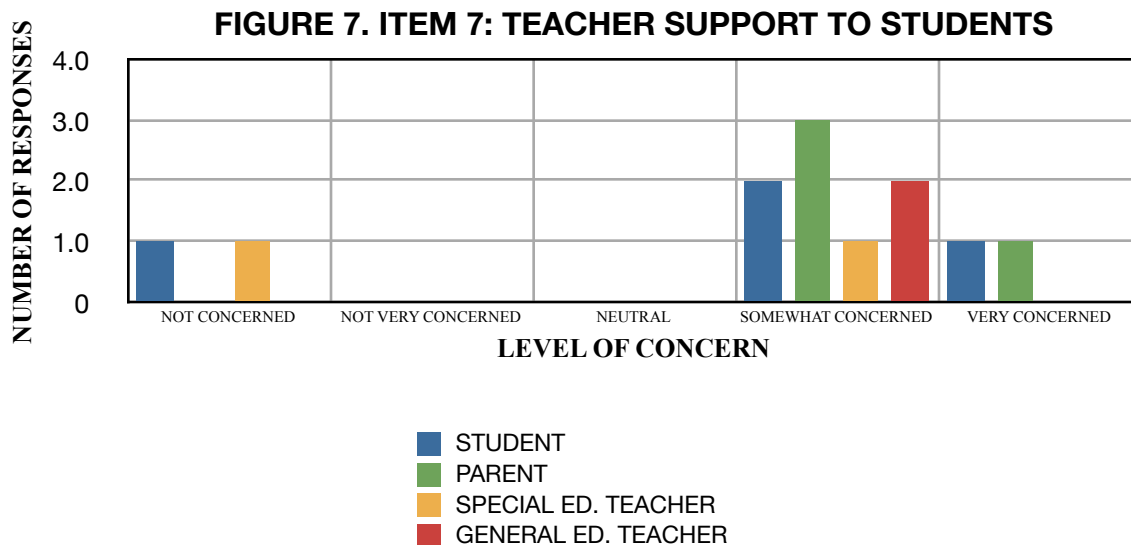
Questionnaire #6: Number of different teachers. Student responses were two were not concerned, two not very concerned, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were two parents were not concerned and two were not very concerned. Special education teacher responses were that both of the teachers were not very concerned. General education teacher responses were both general education teachers were somewhat concerned.



There were no additional comments from the questionnaires.

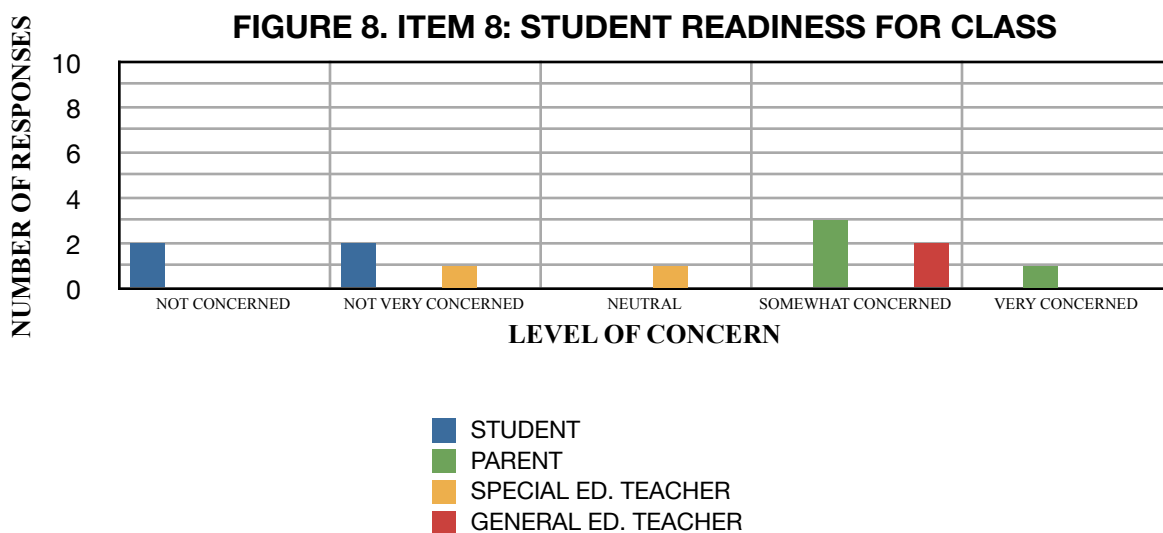
Questionnaire #7: Teacher support to student. Student responses were one student was not concerned, two somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were three parents were somewhat concerned, and one was very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was somewhat concerned.

General education teacher responses were that both were somewhat concerned.



Comments from the questionnaires were that special education teacher “B” reported an effort to match incoming 6th graders with the appropriate teacher.

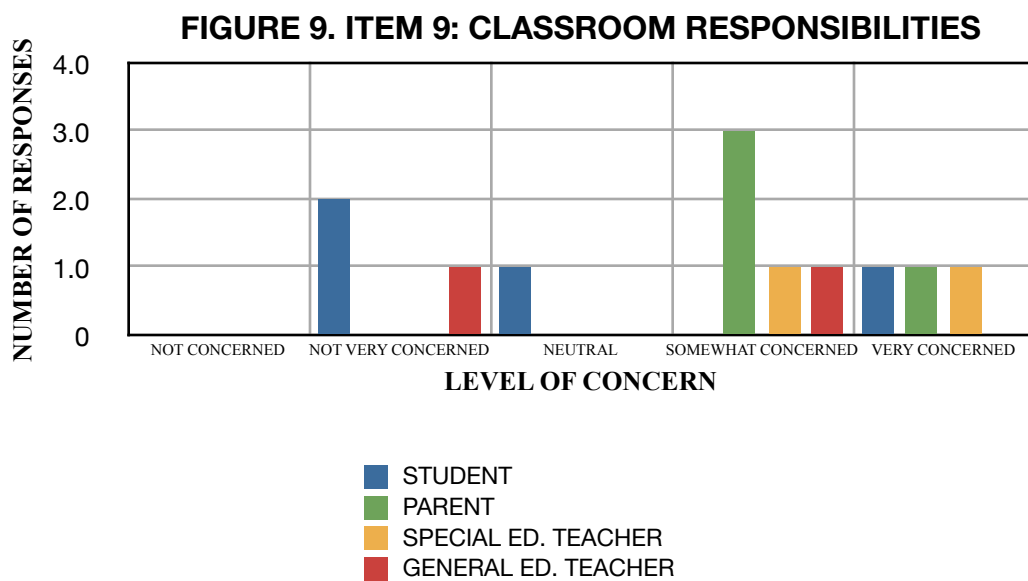
Questionnaire #8: Student readiness for each class. Student responses were two students were not concerned and two were not very concerned. Parent responses were three parents were somewhat concerned and one was very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was not very concerned. General education teacher responses were that both general education teachers were somewhat concerned.





Comments from the questionnaires were that school B reported lots of class options (SDC, RSP, General education). Student “B2” reported that it was a little hard to remember each class to go to.

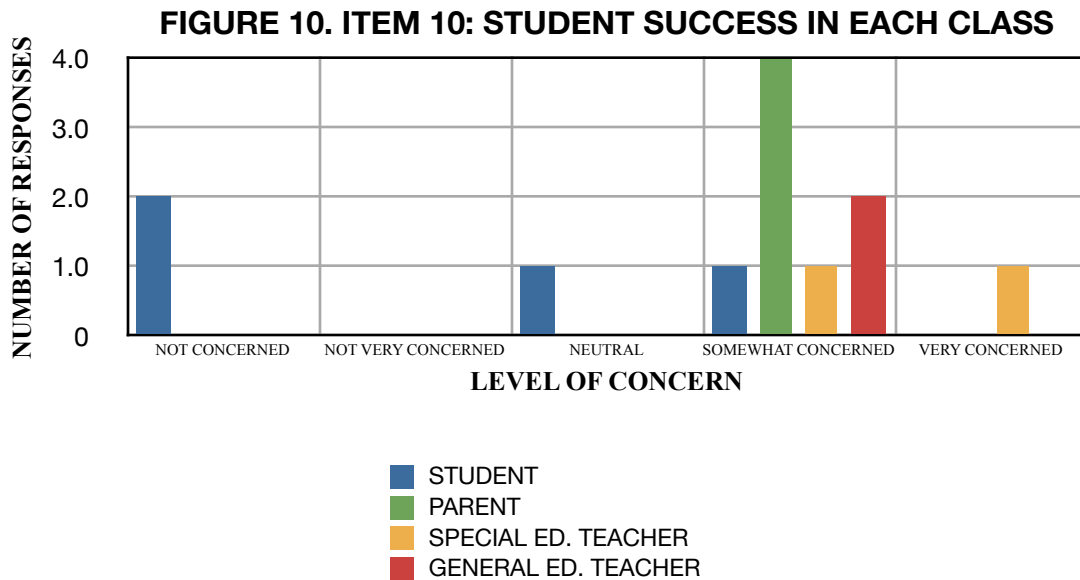
Questionnaire #9: Classroom responsibilities. Student responses were two were not very concerned, one neutral, and one very concerned. Parent responses were three were somewhat concerned and one was very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were that one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned.



Comments from the questionnaires were that School B special education teacher reported that students do not bring materials or do their homework.

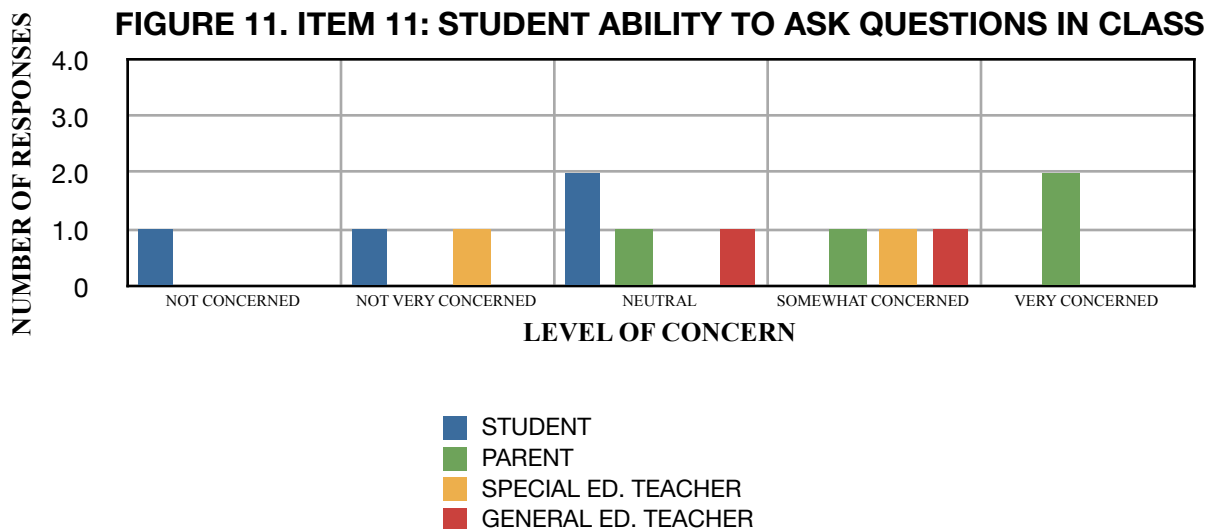
Questionnaire #10: Student success in each class. Student responses were two students were not concerned, one neutral, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were the four parents were somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was somewhat concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were

two were somewhat concerned.



Comments from the questionnaires were that school B special education teacher reported student success depends totally on motivation - readiness and homework completion. Parent “B2” reported they were worried that their child does not complete classroom work.

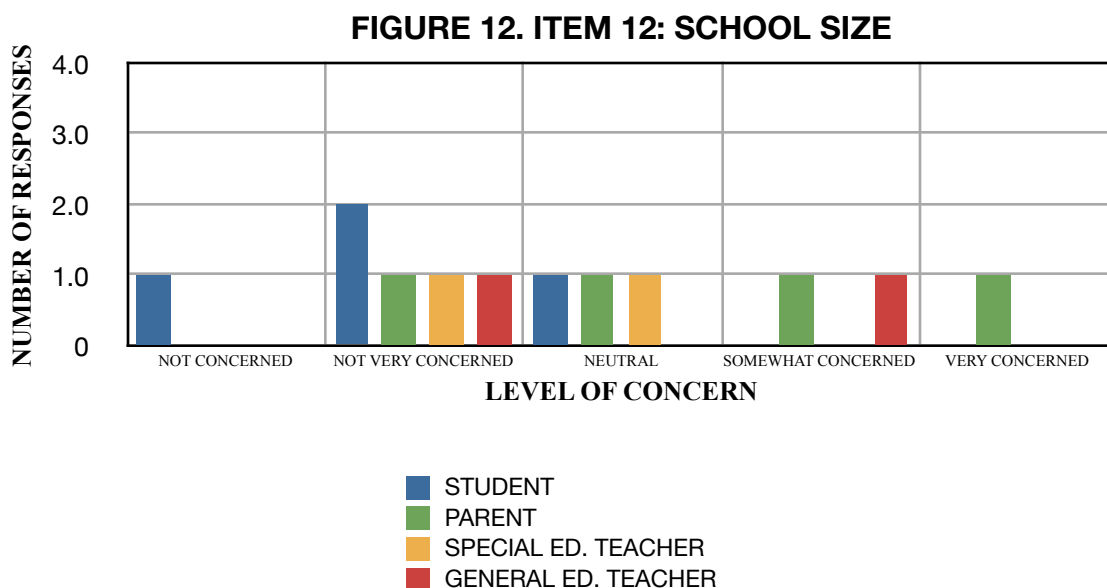
Questionnaire #11: Student ability to ask questions in each class. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one was not very concerned, and two were neutral. Parent responses were one was neutral, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were one was somewhat concerned and one was neutral.



No additional comments from the questionnaires were found.

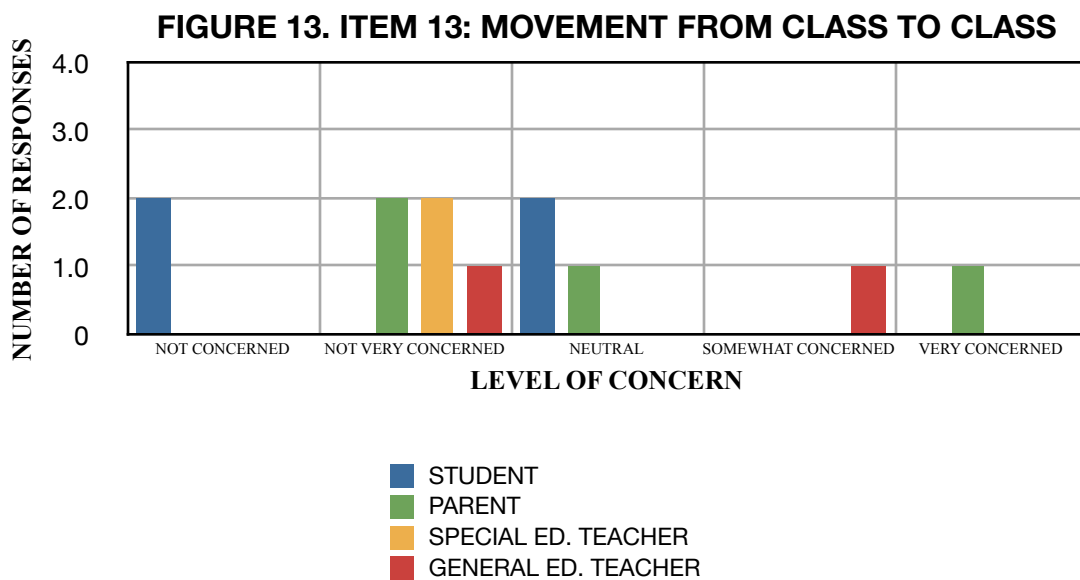
**Procedural**

Questionnaire #12: School size. Student responses were one was not concerned, two not very concerned, and one neutral. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, one neutral, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses were that both of the special education teachers were not very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned.



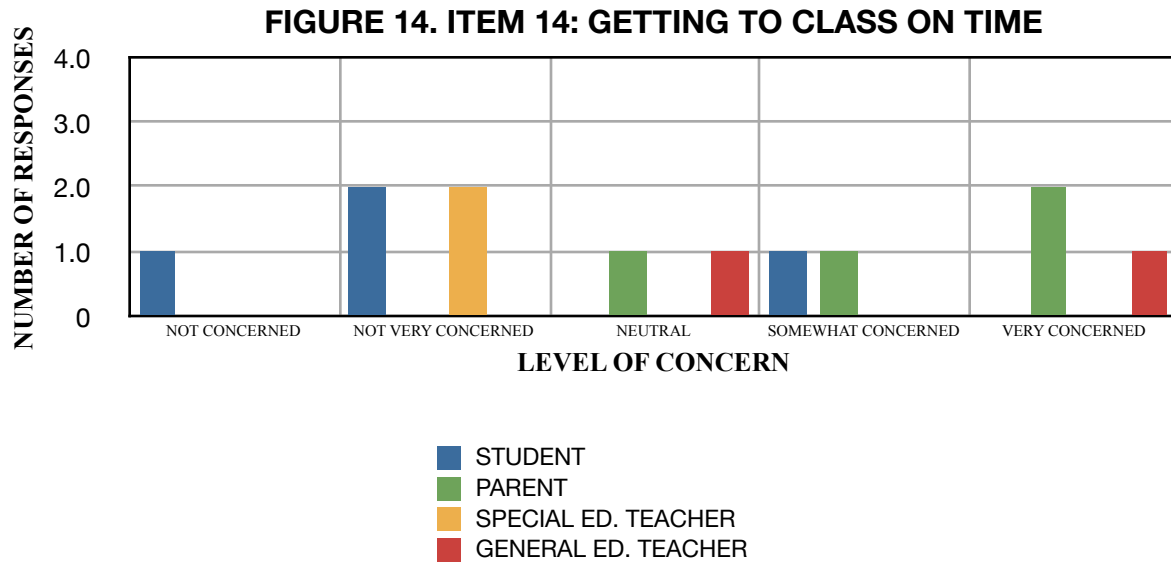
There were no additional comments from the questionnaires.

Questionnaire #13: Movement from class to class. Student responses were two students were not concerned and two were neutral. Parent responses were two parents were not very concerned, one neutral, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses were that both were not very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned.



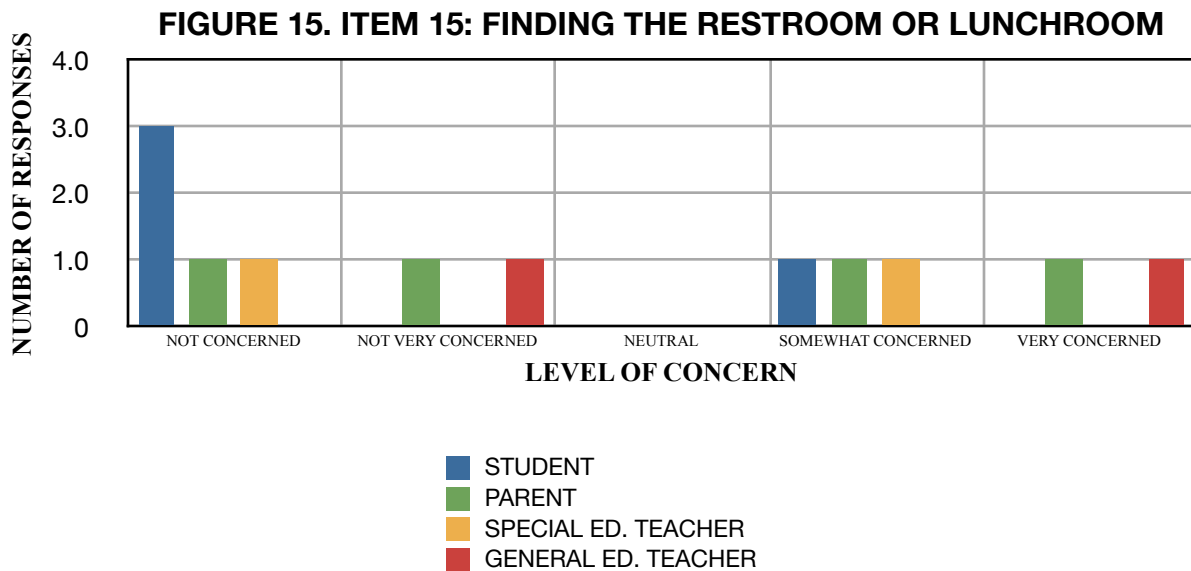
Comments from the questionnaires were that student “B2” reported they really do not have time to go to the bathroom in between classes.

Questionnaire #14: Getting to class on time. Student responses were one student was not concerned, two not very concerned, and one somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one parent was neutral, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were both were not very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was very concerned.



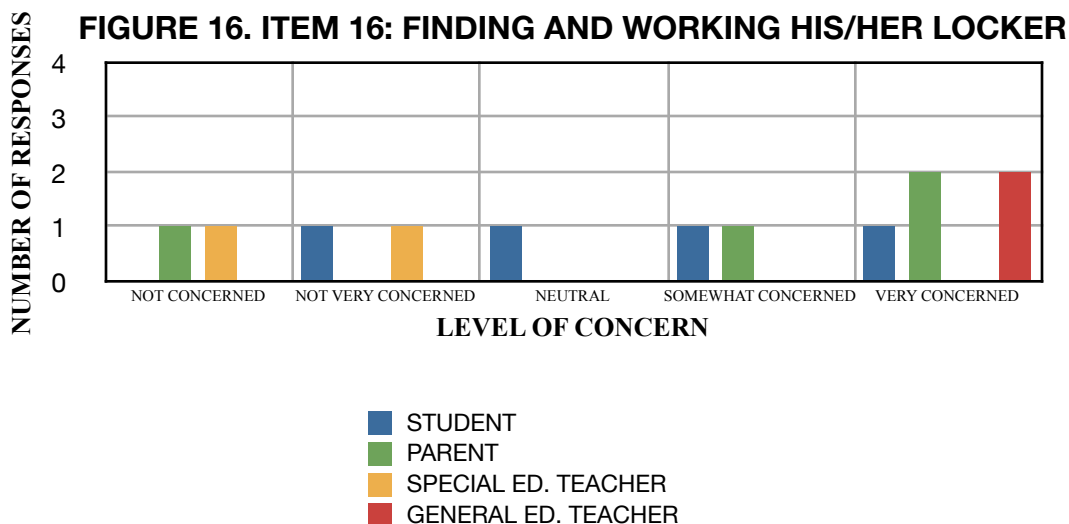
No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #15: Finding the restroom or lunchroom. Student responses were three students were not concerned, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one parent was not concerned, one not very concerned, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was not very concerned. General education teacher responses were that both were very concerned.



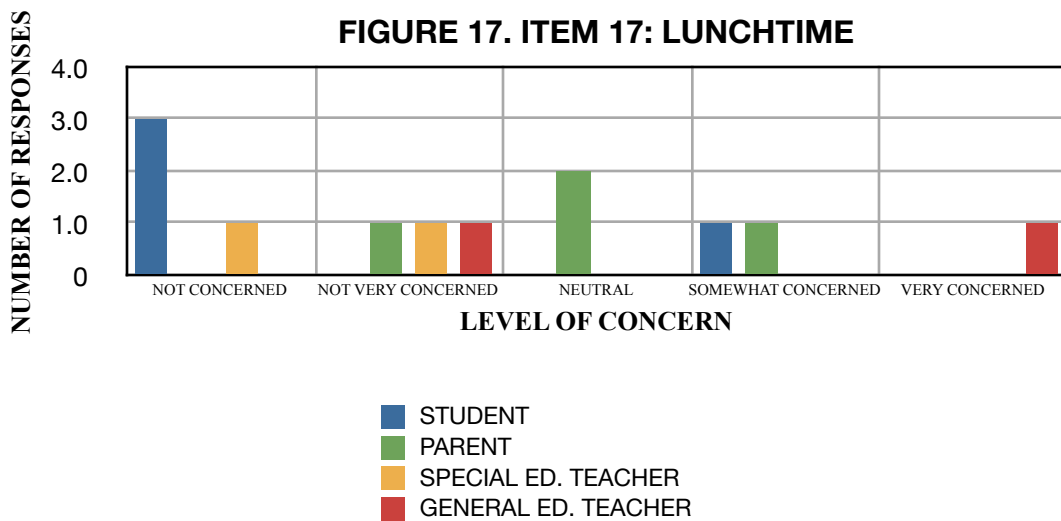
No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #16: Finding and working his/her locker. Student responses were one was not very concerned, one neutral, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was not very concerned. General education teacher responses were both were very concerned.



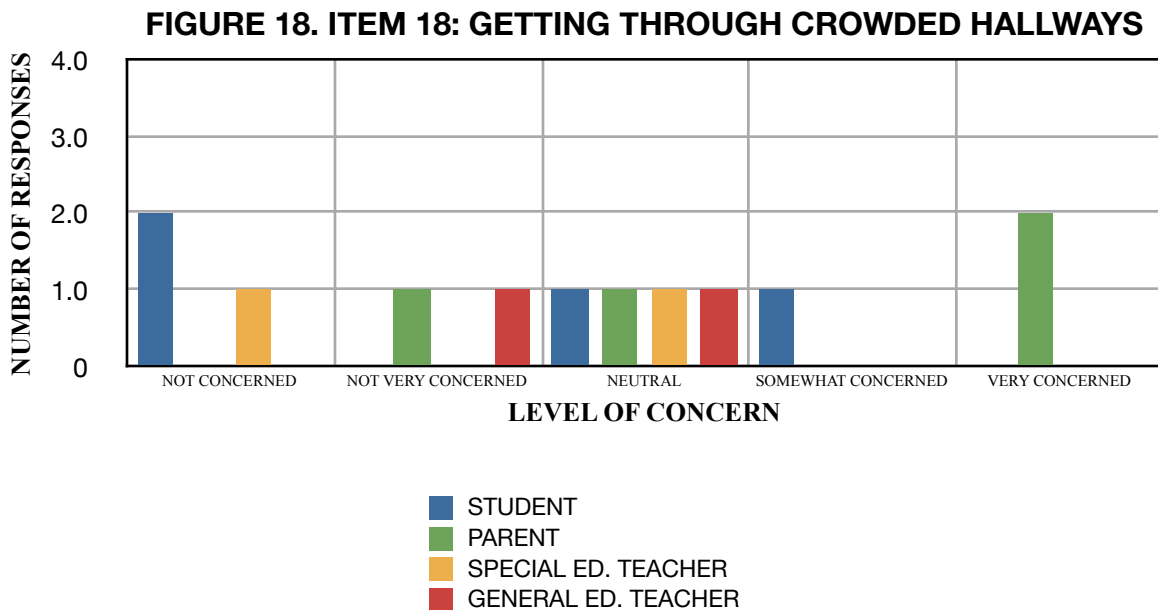
No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #17: Lunchtime. In response to the item, three students were not concerned and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was very concerned.



Responses from the questionnaires were that general education teacher B reported a concern about the lack of interactions with others in regards to having the opportunity to eat and play with former friends from 5th grade.

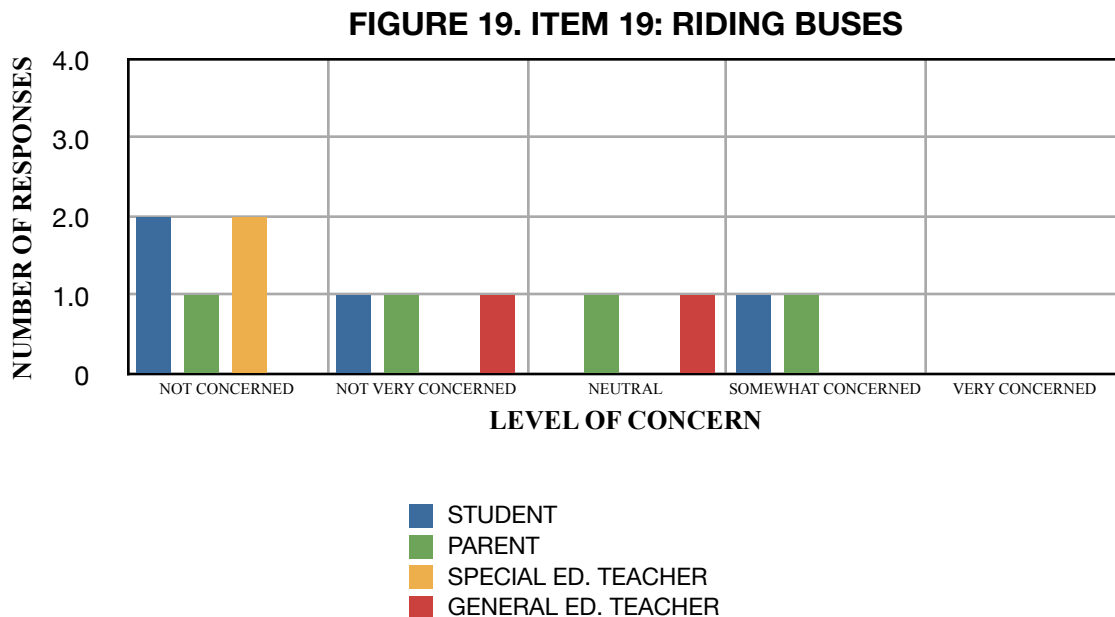
Questionnaire #18: Getting through crowded hallways. Student responses were two students were not concerned, one neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, one was neutral, and two were very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was neutral. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was neutral.



No additional comments from the questionnaires were found.

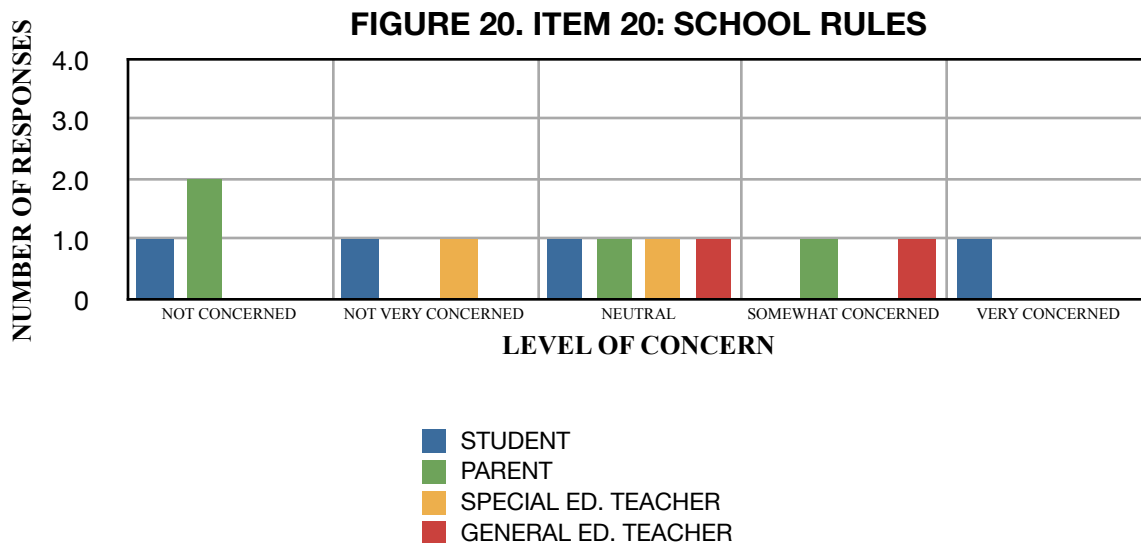
Questionnaire #19: Riding buses. Student responses were two students were not concerned, one was not very concerned, and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, one not very concerned, one neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were that both were not concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was neutral.





Responses from the questionnaires were that parent “B2” reported being worried that their child would not make it to lunch on time.

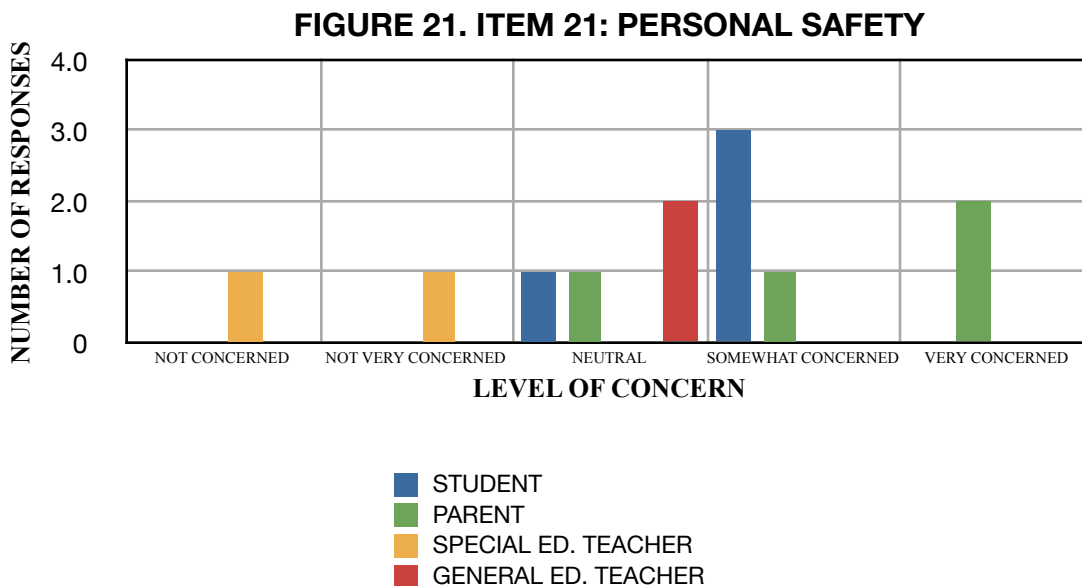
Questionnaire #20: School rules. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one not very concerned, one neutral, and one very concerned. Parent responses were two parents were not concerned, one neutral, and one was somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was neutral. General education teacher responses were one was somewhat concerned and one very concerned.



No additional comments from the questionnaires were found.

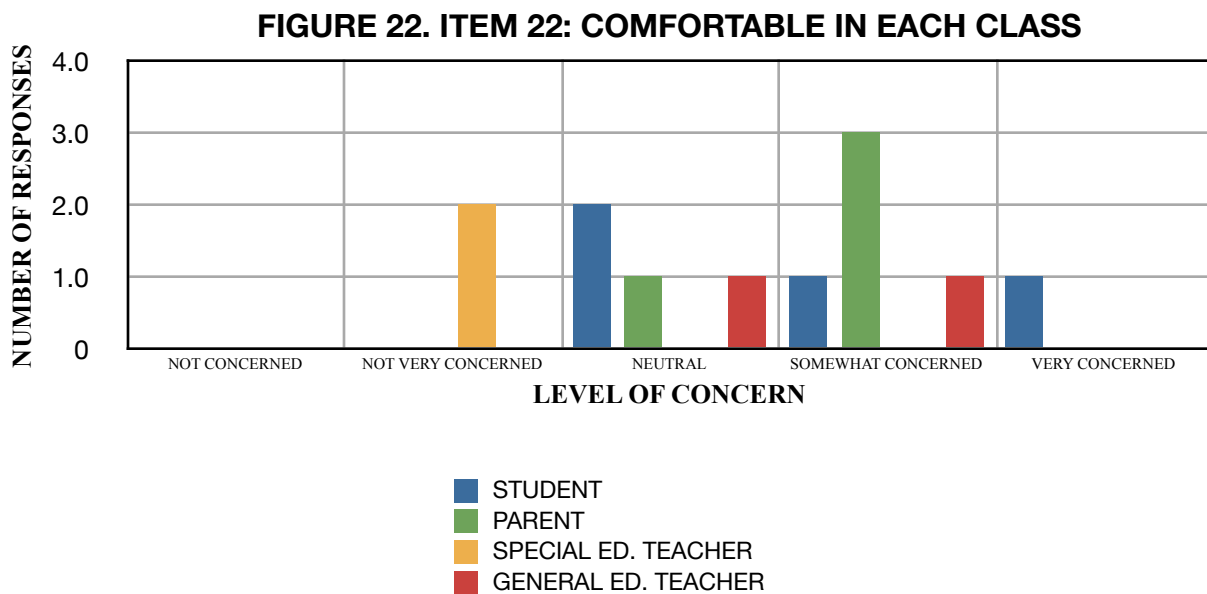
**Social**

Questionnaire #21: Personal safety. Student responses were one was neutral and three were somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was neutral, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was not very concerned. General education teacher responses were both neutral.



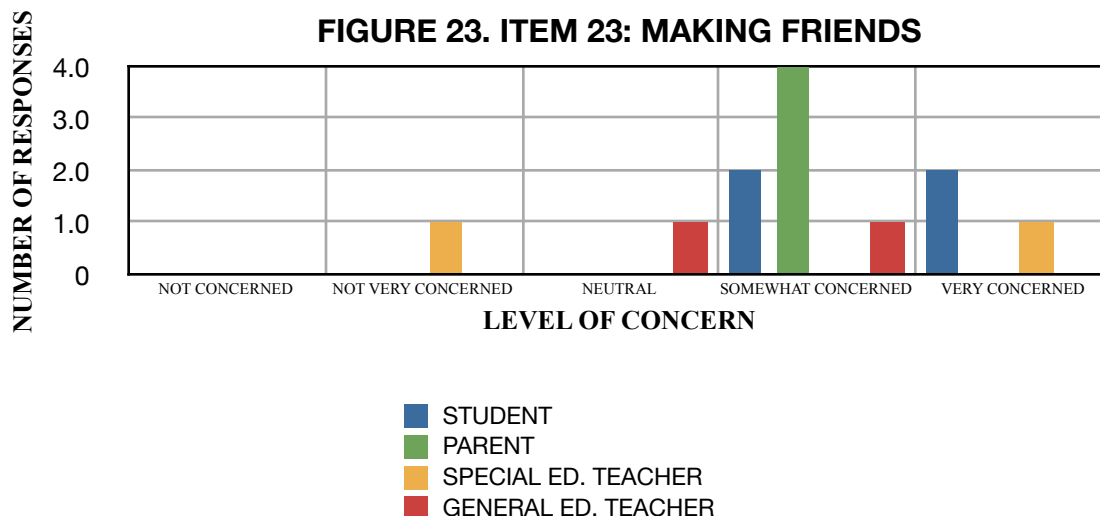
Comments from the questionnaires were that student B2 reported there should be a place to leave backpacks at lunch.

Questionnaire #22: Comfortable in each class. Student responses were two were neutral, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one parent was neutral and three were somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was neutral and one was somewhat concerned.



No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

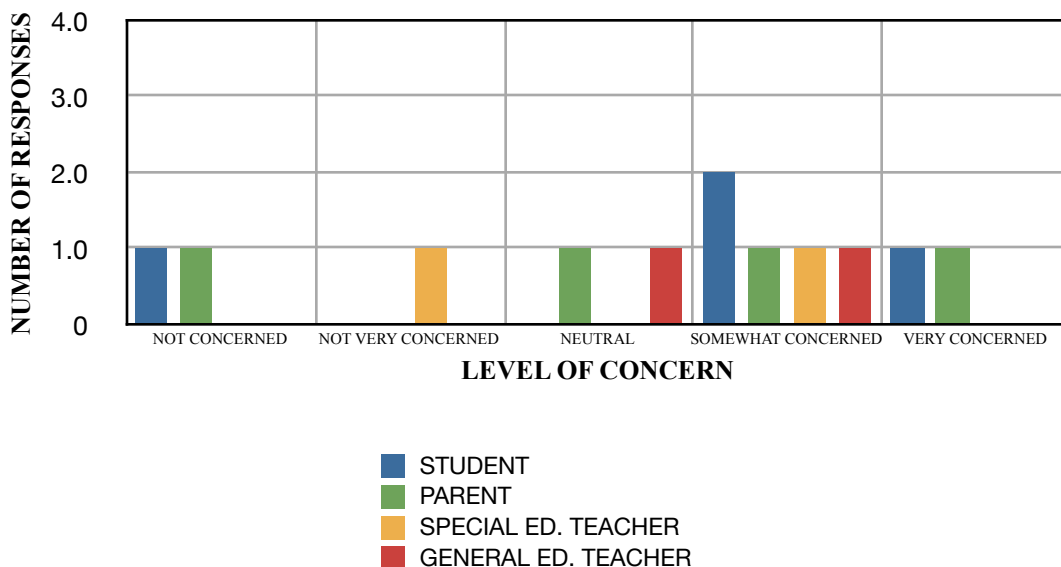
Questionnaire #23: Making friends. Student responses were two were neutral and two were very concerned. Parent responses were that four were somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was neutral and one was somewhat concerned.



Responses from the questionnaires were that parent B2 reported their child is shy and does not like to go up to people.

Questionnaire #24: Not having friends in his/her classes. Student responses were one student was not concerned, two were somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one parent was not concerned, one neutral, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher questionnaire responses were one was neutral and one was somewhat concerned.

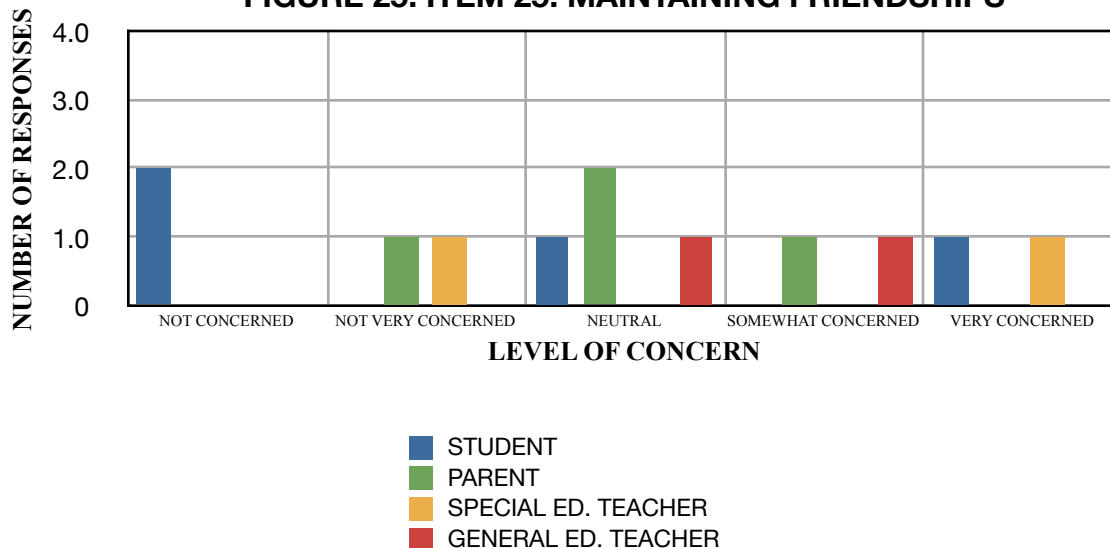
**FIGURE 24. ITEM 24: NOT HAVING FRIENDS IN HIS/HER CLASS**



No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #25: Maintaining friendships. Student responses were two students were not concerned, one was neutral, and one was very concerned. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was neutral and one was somewhat concerned.

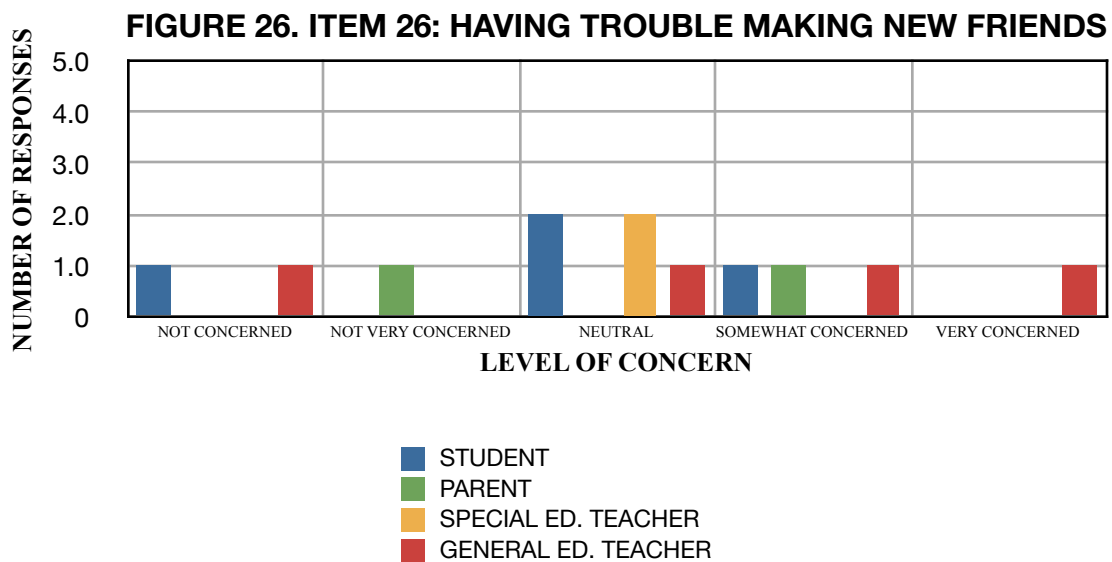
**FIGURE 25. ITEM 25: MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIPS**



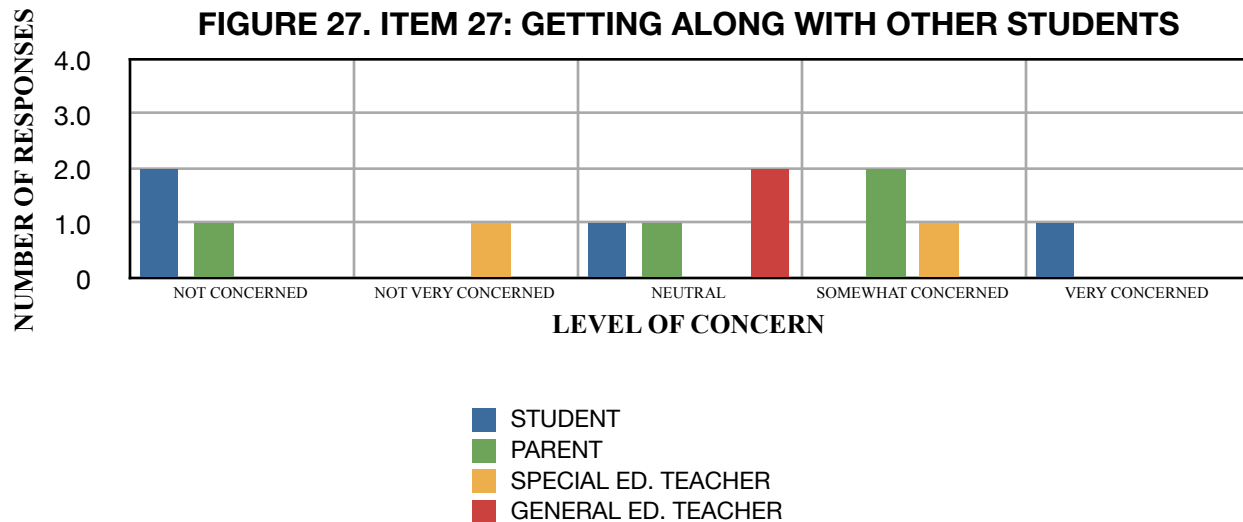
No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #26: Having trouble making new friends. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one neutral, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one not very concerned, two neutral, and one was somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were both neutral.

No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

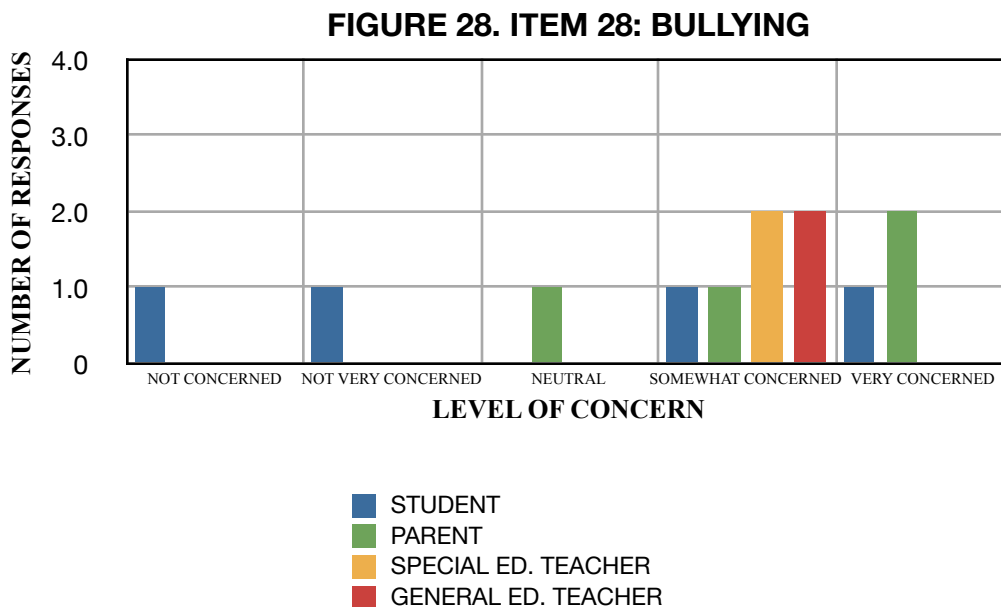


Questionnaire #27: Getting along with other students. Student responses were two not concerned, one neutral, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, one was neutral, and two somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses both were neutral.



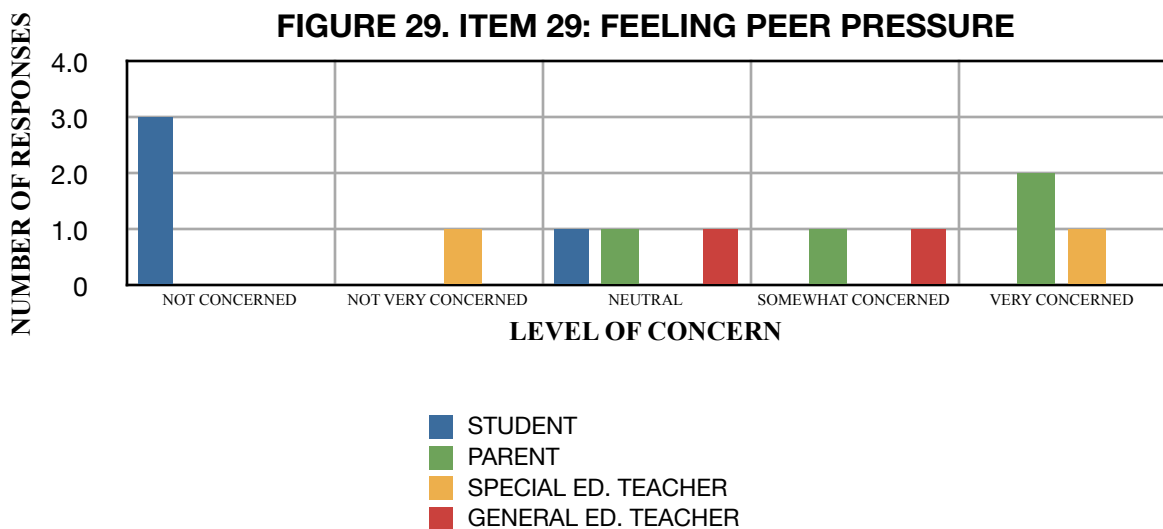
No additional comments from the questionnaires were noted.

Questionnaire #28: Bullying. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one not very concerned, one somewhat concerned, and one very concerned. Parent responses were one was neutral, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were both somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were also both somewhat concerned.



Comments responses from the questionnaires were that parent “B2” reported their child was bullied in 5th grade and that they were “concerned the girls would continue to do it when she was in 6th grade.”

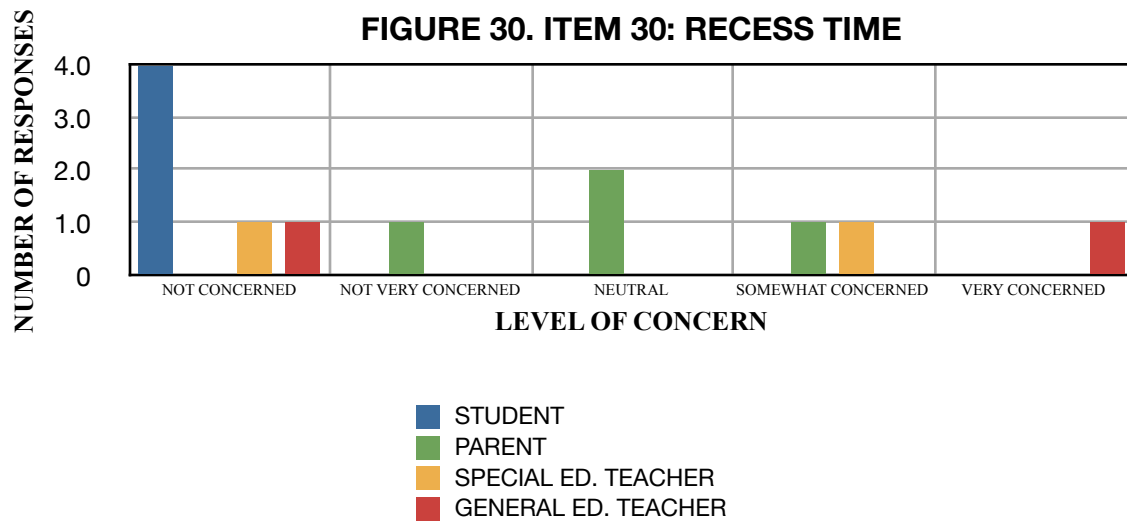
Questionnaire #29: Feeling peer pressure. Student responses were three students were not concerned and one was neutral. Parent responses were one was neutral, one somewhat concerned, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were one was neutral and one somewhat concerned.



No additional comments from the questionnaires were found.

Questionnaire #30: Recess time. All student responses showed no concern. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were one was not concerned, and one very concerned.

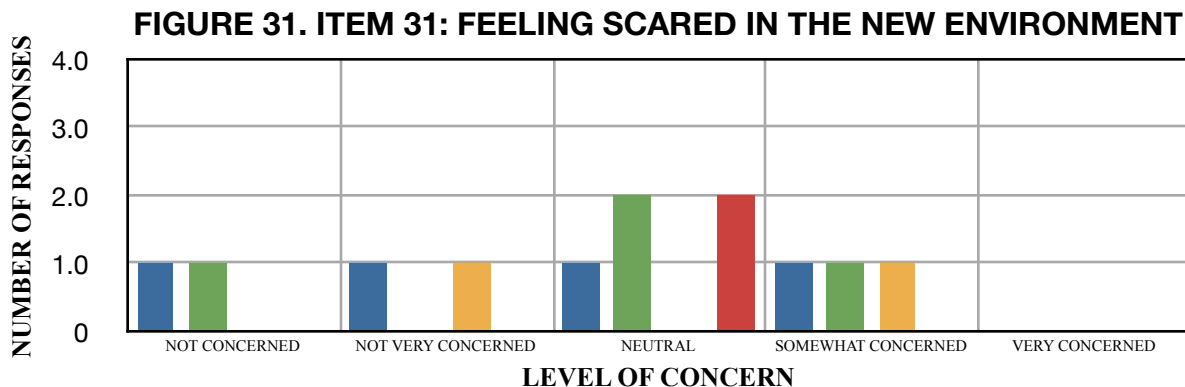




Responses from the questionnaires were that school B special education teacher reported students were disappointed to learn there is no recess; but they learn to adjust.

**Emotional**

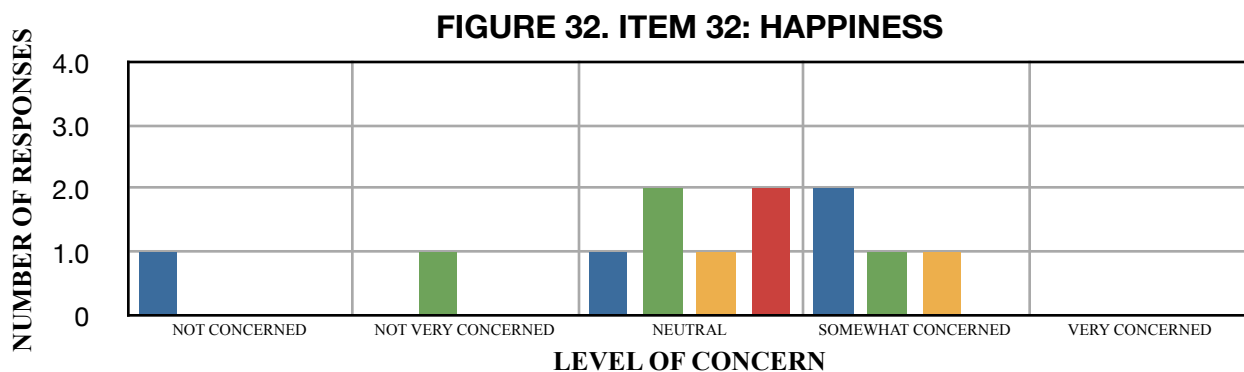
Questionnaire #31: Feeling scared in the new environment. Student responses were one student was not concerned, one not very concerned, one neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was not very concerned and one was somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were both neutral.



■ STUDENT  
■ PARENT  
■ SPECIAL ED. TEACHER  
■ GENERAL ED. TEACHER

Responses from the questionnaires were that parent “B2” reported their child liked to be by themselves a lot when scared.

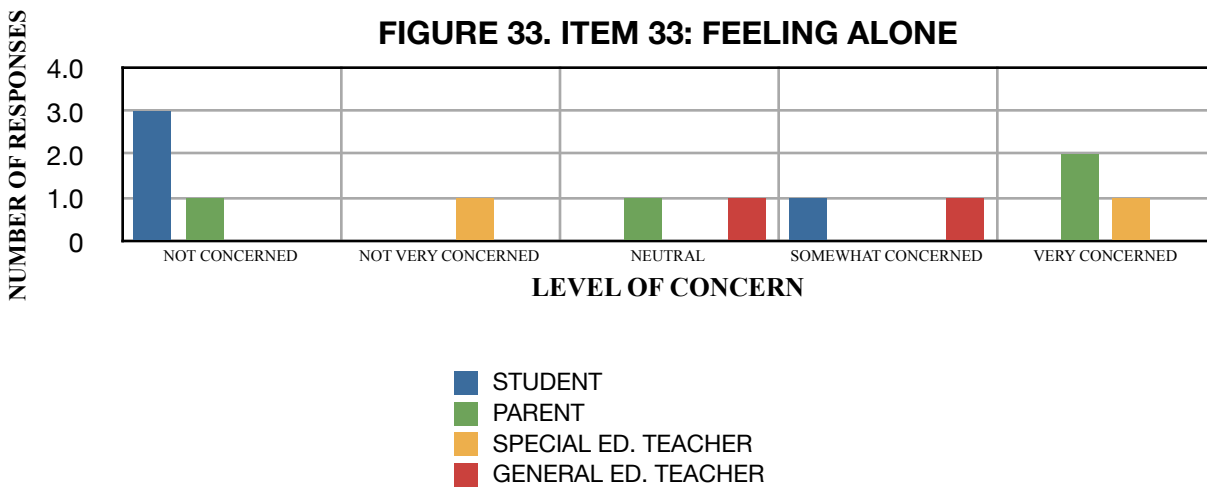
Questionnaire #32: Happiness. Student responses were one was not concerned, one neutral, and two somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not very concerned, two neutral, and one somewhat concerned. Special education teacher responses were one was neutral and one somewhat concerned. General education teacher responses were both neutral.



■ STUDENT  
■ PARENT  
■ SPECIAL ED. TEACHER  
■ GENERAL ED. TEACHER

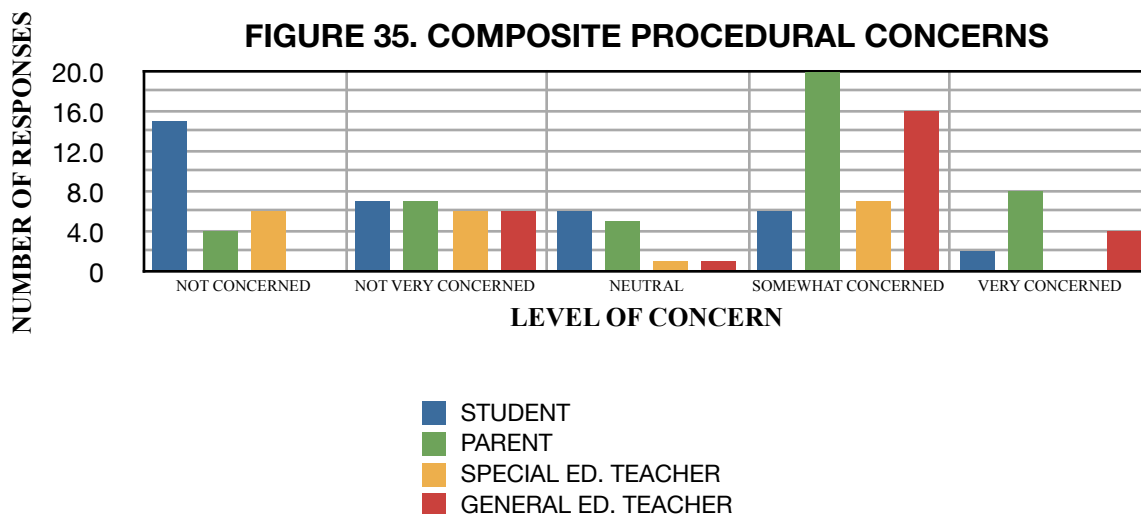
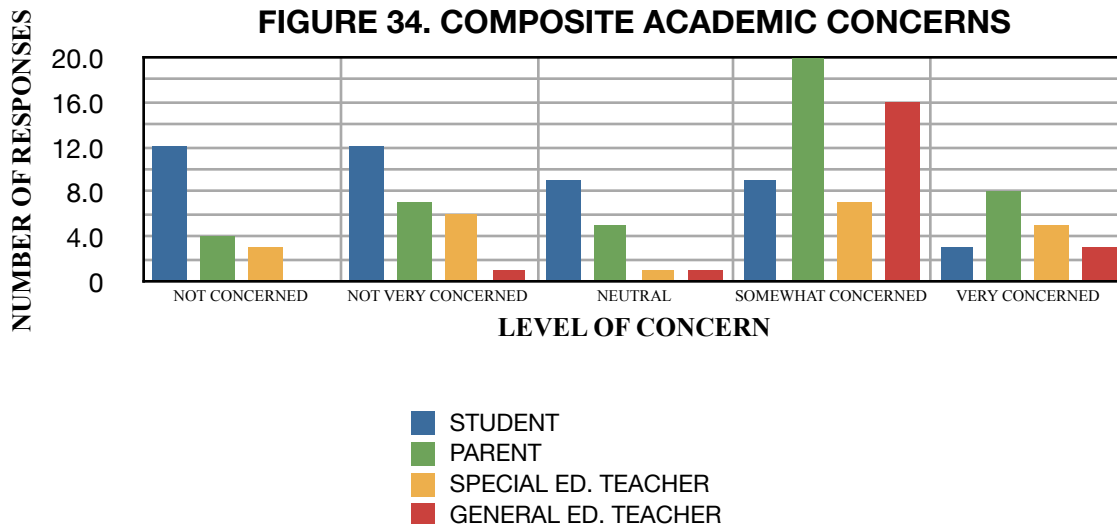
Comments from the questionnaires were that school B special education teacher reported a goal to have all students be happy and come to school.

Questionnaire #33: Feeling alone. Student responses were three students were not concerned and one was somewhat concerned. Parent responses were one was not concerned, one neutral, and two very concerned. Special education teacher responses were one not very concerned and one very concerned. General education teacher responses were one was neutral and one was somewhat concerned.

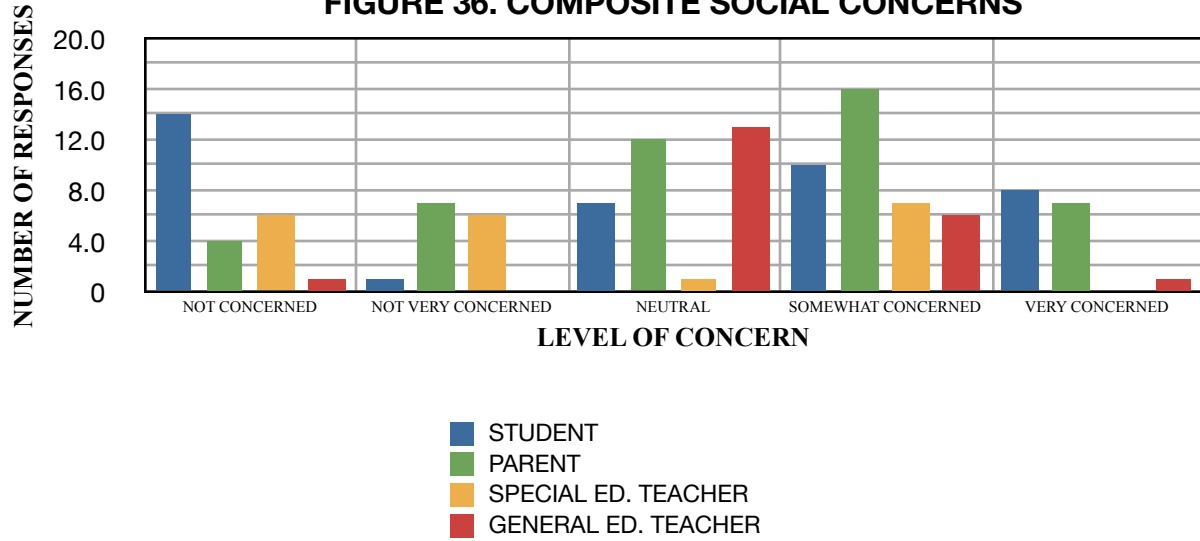


Comments from the questionnaires were that parent “B2” reported their child often made comments as a fifth grader that she would hang out by herself during recess and lunch. The parent was worried she would be a loner in middle school.

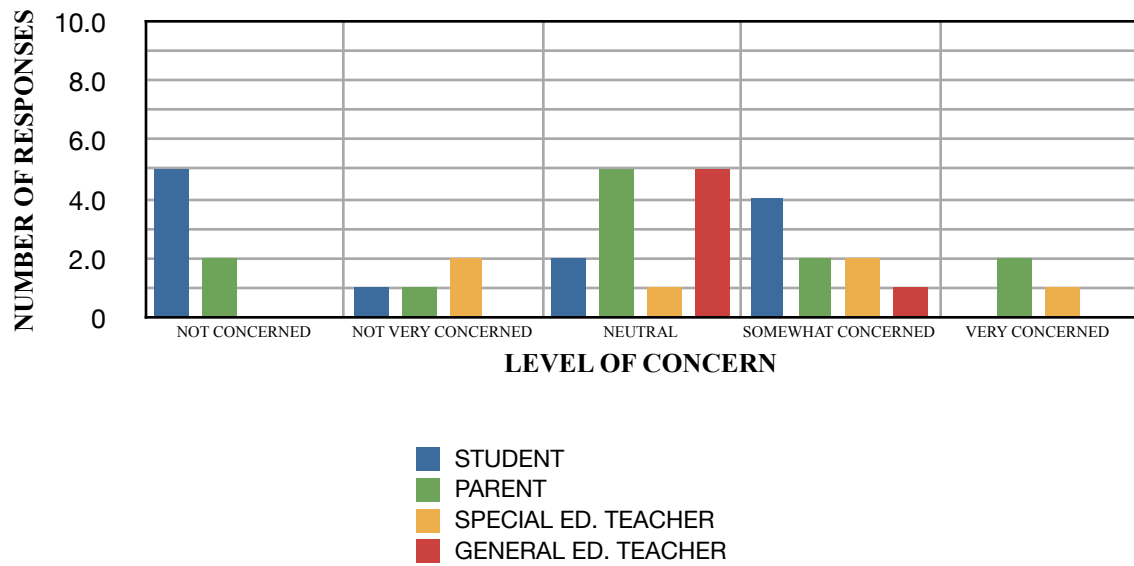
In summary of the responses, the chart below shows the various levels of concern in total of the 33 items on the questionnaire:

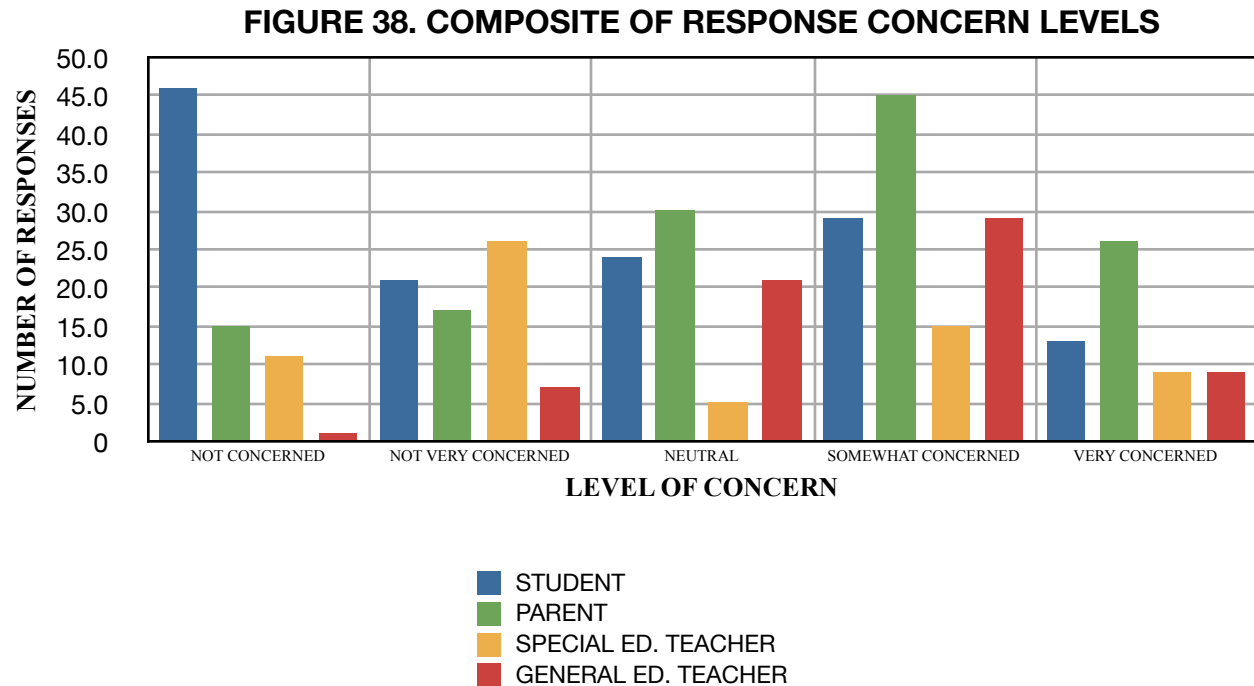


**FIGURE 36. COMPOSITE SOCIAL CONCERNS**



**FIGURE 37. COMPOSITE EMOTIONAL CONCERNS**





When the responses were totaled for “not concerned”, there was a mean of 18.25 with a standard deviation of 16.8, meaning there was more variability in the category. For the response, “not very concerned”, there was a mean of 17.75 and a standard deviation of 8.1. For “neutral”, there was a mean of 20 with standard deviation of 10.7. For “somewhat concerned”, there was a mean of 29.5 with a standard deviation of 12.3, deviating from the mean by 2 standard deviations. This category, along with the not concerned category experienced the most variability across the categories in this research. Lastly, for “very concerned”, there was a mean 14.25 and standard deviation of 8.1. These results indicated that there was no significant from the mean, except for the category of “somewhat concerned”. The parent group and general education teachers found more concern in the various items. It should be noted that there was a significant number of 46 “Not Concerned” for student responses.

The following responses reflect information gathered from the open-ended questions and interviews in the case studies. Grouped together are the student and his/her parent. Following

that is the information gathered from the participating teachers. The information gathered assisted in developing the common themes more fully.

**Student and parent A1.** Student “A1” referenced that the increased homework load and the amount of textbooks have made it a difficult transition to the middle school. This student reported that they have a love for school and that having an older mentor would help with the transition from elementary to middle school. Similarly, this student’s parent, “A1”, referenced the amount of textbooks and that tablets or CD’s would be beneficial. Additionally, the parent reported that turning in homework and a lack of organization affect the progress of student “A1”.

**Student and parent A2.** Student “A2” mentioned that middle school is easy, but did reference the large textbooks that must be carried around, a fear of the longer periods, difficulties with tests, and that teachers didn’t do much to prepare students for the transition. Parent “A2” specified that her student was not reading at grade level, was overwhelmed and falling through the cracks, and that the homework load was not spread out evenly amongst the classes. Additionally, this student’s parent would like to see more support by the special education department daily through building organization skills, handling difficult situation skills, and implementing an orientation for just the special education students before school gets started.

**Student and parent B3.** Student “B3” referred to the lack of assistance from general education teachers when the instruction is not understood. This student and his parent indicated that teachers expect the students to be less teacher-dependent. Results indicated that student “B3” would like more assistance with breaking down the instruction in the general education classroom and specified that the transition could be improved through more orientation activities and information relayed from teachers at the elementary to the middle school. Parent “B3”

reported that the campus visit before the transition was a benefit, but students and parents would benefit from a school orientation video and assistance with the increased homework that is given.

**Student and parent B4.** Student “B4” specified that the increased homework load, the amount of teachers, and no field trips made for a difficult middle school transition. Also indicated was the fact that the only additional supports as far as technology was receiving a calculator. This student’s parent, “B4”, reported there is too much homework, many heavy textbooks in a culture of tablets, and that it would be beneficial for the classes to spread out the workload given. Additionally, the parent recommended that the student stay in the general education class more as the student is pulled out often and then can not participate thoroughly in group assignments.

**General education teacher A.** Issues outlined by general education teacher “A”, were the organizational component of students being able to write down assignments and completing assignments. An interesting comment specified was an inconsistent grading system between elementary and middle school and this comes into play when students are trying to understand what their grade means. Socially, fitting in among students is a consistent reported concern. Procedurally, finding classes was an outlined concern.

**General education teacher B.** General education teacher “B” believed the academic rigor and increased homework are a difficulty for students when they first arrive at middle school. When projects that are assigned with due dates several weeks away, students appear to have a difficult time prioritizing and planning for the project. Many of the special education students appear to have difficulties with the expected independence in the classroom, as it is an adjustment. The teacher reported that students have a lack of confidence and that it is important



to help build that in the classroom and at home. Furthermore, teacher “B” reported that by teaching organization and a nightly routine, students have the potential to eventually become accustomed to the increased amount of homework given. There really is no solution for students who fail. Furthermore, the lack of computers for students is a concern, as having more would help students experience more success in accessing the curriculum.

**Special education teacher A.** Special education teacher “A” reported that the students have a lack of maturity concerning the social skills needed to adjust to middle school. Many students come to middle school with difficulties in their organizational skills, such as writing down assignments, prioritizing them, and keeping track of whether assignments were completed. Furthermore, it was reported that a lack of technology in the classroom, as well as special education students being considered in the master schedule, all have negative affects on the student’s success, as demonstrated in the open-ended questions and interviews.

**Special education teacher B.** Special Education teacher “B” specified in the that many students enter middle school with limited reading and math skills and need basic concepts introduced again. The increased rigor of homework, lack of technology, and minimal support at home for students is an observed difficulty in the transition. Further, it was reported that special education students do very little homework and need to learn how to take the personal responsibility in adjusting to middle school. A common theme among many of the parents, teachers, and students was also outlined in that students need support with organization and writing assignments down in a planner. One pertinent recommendation was to have increased data and a more thorough profile on each student from the elementary school.

Overall, results indicated that students, parents, and general education teachers are more

concerned on the items, while special education teachers were less concerned about the academic, procedural, social, and emotional issues that students face in the transition from elementary to middle school.

### **Common Themes**

The surveys, questionnaires, and interview notes were analyzed for common themes. Based on all of the responses, three major concern themes were identified. These were the need for organization strategies, assistance with textbooks, and the need for an older mentor student.

The first major theme that emerged from the data analysis from the students, parents, and teachers was that organizational skills need to be taught and developed as students have difficulties in tracking assignment due dates, keeping up with homework, and keeping track of deadlines for assignments that are weeks from being due. One major component of the organizational skills reported by the students was the difficulty of transporting textbooks from home to school.

The second major theme that emerged from the student surveys, interviews, and questionnaires identified the potential benefit of having an older mentor student assigned to each student in order to help facilitate a smoother transition to the middle school and build their sense of community within the school. The student surveys and questionnaires reflected that bullying was a concern going into middle school.

The third theme identified in the surveys was that of limited technology to support the students in this modern age, where we must have typing and computers skills in the workplace to succeed. Student “A2” mentioned that all that is given in the classroom is a calculator. Student “A1” stated that there are no computers in his classroom. Similarly, general education teacher

“B” reflected a similar sentiment in their interview and questionnaire stating, “I have a document camera, a teacher laptop, and a projector.” Additionally, general education teacher “A” stated that there are no student computers and that they only have a teacher laptop and a projector. Special education teacher “A” stated that the paraeducators could use more computers in the classrooms to help assist students. Special education teacher “B” stated that she has three PC’s in her classroom, but only one has innovative software to help with the learning disabilities that she faces day to day.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The goal of this study was to identify the instructional needs and concerns of special education students with mild to moderate disabilities in the transition process from elementary to middle school. A case study analysis took place to identify and pinpoint issues related to the transition for these students in order to provide an in-depth and more cogent understanding of the complexities involved with this significant change. Interviews with the four students, a parent of each, their general education teachers, and their case managers determined the particular expectations each middle school had for their incoming students.

It was initially anticipated that there would be differences between parents', students', and teachers' views of the transition process, as well as in what the students are expected to do. While this was certain as detailed in the results, data did show that the students had less concerns on key academic and procedural issues in the transition. Throughout the common themes developed, it was demonstrated that schools can enhance the middle school resource teachers' ability to adapt and improve the transition procedures to more adequately address the transition needs. Additionally, the general education teachers's perceptions of the transition highlighted more concern in all of the categories.

### Summary of Results

**Categories related to transition.** The following categories describe the various areas of concern regarding the transition from elementary to middle school from the open-ended questions and interviews. In the previous chapter, data was summarized in order to develop the common themes. Students face academic, procedural, social, and emotional hurdles in the

transition and this affects their progress as they enter middle school. The following results synthesize the data and responses from the students, their parents, the general education teachers, and the special education teachers.

**Academic.** From the student surveys and questionnaires, results indicate that there was an increased amount of textbooks to keep track of, the rate at which material is covered is increased in middle school, students must be less teacher dependent through receiving less help, and the grading system is not consistent between elementary and middle school. Both the general education and special education teachers recommended a more thorough reading intervention program for students that are below grade level in reading. The general education teachers referenced that when students are receiving low grades, they do not fully understand their performance as they are familiar with a score system rather than grades. As the academic demands increase, students appear to be looking for more interventions beyond those received from their special education teacher. In regard to the following question, “Instructionally, what is different in the middle school compared to elementary?”, parent “B4” reported, “I feel that teachers are pushing her to get a lot of work done after class and it frustrates her.”

**Procedural.** One resource that school “A” has is the pirate camp, which is a day where incoming 6th graders meet their teachers, get a tour of the campus, play games, and eat lunch a week before school starts. School “B” has a day field trip where students acclimate to the environment and learn where things are on campus. When assessing the transitions procedurally, organizational skills, less help with classwork and homework, and help with routines for the kids was a suggestion for improvement identified by all participants. An additional suggestion was to have the special education students have a day to themselves to get to know each other and

navigate the campus and lockers before everyone else.

**Social.** Student questionnaires indicated one potential solution to adjusting socially could include having an older mentor student assigned to each incoming middle school student in order to facilitate a smoother transition. Students, staff, parents, and teachers all agree that bullying worries students and make them uneasy. Students and parents indicated that the social factors in the transition were of greatest concern of the four categories. This is an issue to needs to continue to be addressed.

**Emotional.** In middle school fitting in and being accepted is a primary concern of students. While it was not addressed in the open-ended questions, two out of the four students were concerned about their happiness as they made the transition to middle school.

As examined in the methodology and in the literature review, the research questions addressed the current perceptions of students, teachers, and parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school through addressing these questions:

- What is the perception of students of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What is the perception of teachers of the transition process from elementary to middle school?
- What is the perception of parents of the transition process from elementary to middle school?

As evidenced in the data results in chapter four, it is clear that a comprehensive view of the perceptions of students, teachers, and parents resulted in a definitive assessment of their

transition. In order for a successful transition to occur, the academic, procedural, and behavioral factors must all be addressed in order to give adequate academic preparation for students.

### **Limitations**

The research was not without limitations. These limitations must be considered in synthesizing and summarizing the greatest difficulties experienced in the transition. They also are factors needing attention in further research studies.

This researcher had originally intended to administer the questionnaires in the spring with a follow up evaluation in the fall, after students had been in the middle school for about six months. However, since numerous circumstances prevented this, the research process needed to be altered. Thus, the questionnaires were administered a number of months after the transition occurred, possibly affecting the responses.

A limited data set also presented a major limitation. The data gathered does not necessarily reflect the perception of all special education students with mild to moderate disabilities, their families and teachers. The sample size was small thus limiting the generalizability of the results. Although input was received from a parent, a general education teacher, as well as the special education teacher of each, their responses reflected the needs of just that one student. Thus, one does not get the full gamut of feedback that would most effectively address the transition needs for all students with mild to moderate disabilities. However, group data could also lack generalizability due to each child's specific disability impacting the transition perceptions, process and adjustment.

Whether the student and parent already had a family member in the middle school was another potential limitation affecting responses. Two of the families in the study had a child who

previously made the transition to middle school. Thus, their prior experience could have had an impact on their reported perceptions.

### **Implications**

The results of this study suggest the need for a more thorough transition plan and process in order to help assist students with mild to moderate disabilities in the transition from elementary to middle school. This study allowed the participants to assess the perceptions of the transition and give valuable input on the level of concern revolved around the transition. Students, parents, general education teachers, and special education teachers had varying level of concerns in the academic, procedural, social, and emotional categories. This research is a stepping stone in developing a more thorough transition for students.

It is essential for school transition planning for students leaving elementary school and entering middle school. While educators are faced with increased demands yearly to accommodate students, often we leave a lot of pressure on the shoulders of parents to deal with the associated issues related to this significant change in a student's life. It was encouraging to see that both of the middle schools in this case study have a day where students come to the campus to acclimate to the environment. This day focused on where everything is on campus, what the rules are, and they were able to meet their 6th grade teachers. This is just a stepping stone to what transition could look like for students.

Transition plans without thoroughness and proper implementation fail to bring success to these students with special needs in regards the academic rigor that is expected once kids make the transition to middle school. Often, the first few weeks in the new school environment are a big transition with the organizational component of homework and textbooks, and the increased



rigor of the class schedule, homework, and instruction style. There was very useful information that these students, their parents, and teachers outlined in the surveys, interviews, and open-ended questions.

Increased attention and academic preparation can help lead to smoother transition. In order for a successful transition to occur, the academic, procedural, and behavioral factors must all be addressed in order to give adequate academic preparation for students. By implementing clearly defined strategies and tailoring them to each students' needs, success in the transition process can be guided, monitored, and enhanced. With various strategies, one can address the current limitations of the transition process. There can be great success in transitions with ample collaboration from the teachers (or previous school) who share concerns and with whom there has been established a productive working relationship (Akos & Galassi, 2004). "Belonging is one of the primary concerns for new middle-level students; addressing it is crucial for a successful transition" (Wormelli, 2011).

As a result of this research, it would be benefit the school district for students, teachers, and parents to have increased technology in the classroom so that students can access the curriculum in a facet of ways. As reported by students and a parent, carrying textbooks from school to home is a difficulty. An increase and vision for tablets district-wide will not only create buy-in with students, but can assist parents and teachers in facilitating students to be organized in typing assignments, using a calendar, and planning for future assignments.

Parents and teachers all reported organization as being a major concern. If tablet integration started in elementary with a commitment to using the same calendar and to-do list for students nightly, students could be prepared for the increased demands of organization that is

required for middle school. This would require training and a commitment for the elementary and middle schools to align best practices in organization. This has great potential for promoting a smoother transition in regard to organization and expectations academically.

Student questionnaires indicated one potential solution to adjusting to the transition to middle school could include having an older mentor student assigned to each incoming middle school student in order to facilitate a smoother transition. This could be very beneficial to students as they are learning to become less teacher dependent and interact more with their peers in building a learning community.

Similar to the findings in the literature review, it was indicated that students face various academic, procedural, social, and emotional difficulties in the transition. The academic concerns students had reflected that there is a need to either ease into the new instructional styles with the various teachers students have and for students to be exposed to becoming less teacher-dependent sooner than when they arrive to middle school.

Further research is needed to develop a comprehensive transition process for the mild to moderate special education students from elementary to middle school. In order to best address the spectrum of students' varying needs in this process, it would be beneficial for all mild to moderate students to complete the questionnaire in the spring and then again after six weeks in the middle school. This way, all disabilities in this special education spectrum would be identified. Then, based on the findings, a thorough, comprehensive plan of transition strategies could be created to address the transition needs.

## **Conclusions**

Educators are called to create and maintain an environment for student learning. In order for this learning to occur, it is pertinent for educators to work collaboratively with colleagues and families to maintain positive relationships to most effectively invest and make a positive influence in the students' lives. Setting high expectations for each student and actively engaging them in learning activities doesn't always build the framework for maximizing their learning outcomes (Akos, 2004).

Teachers must continually assess the needs of their students and the techniques used in the classroom. This process may become even further complicated by the particular needs of a student's disability. School A and B both had some of the necessary supports in place for students to transition well. The students who participated reported lower anxiety levels, fewer problems finding facilities and what to expect. These forms of activities can help support school involvement and encourage students to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Many of the special education and general education teachers' open-ended responses and interviews reflected this in their responses. Different types of transition programming and strategies may be needed in order to facilitate successful adjustment to the separate, but interrelated concerns about academic, procedural, social and emotional factors. To this end, there have been useful transition suggestions such as transenvironmental programming. The findings in this study, derived from questionnaires and open-ended questions, indicated that it would be beneficial to provide several activities that will involve students, parents, teachers, and staff from both schools in the transition process and establish a transition protocol that can be easily replicated and updated annually with little effort through establishing a timeline for the

transition process. Central to the planning would be gathering information on identifying differences between classrooms in the elementary and middle school settings. This would benefit teachers as they could use this information to plan how to make the two environments similar in order for students to better integrate to the new environment.

The findings from this study reflected the research outlined in the literature review in that there are more than social and emotional issues that students face in their transition. The academic and procedural component presents challenges that must be addressed in order for student's to experience success. Students could benefit from being instructed on how to organize class notes, write down assignments, and to plan for deadlines. Having an older mentor student to help socially and academically could be an asset for the entire school as it would build comradery amongst the older and younger students.

Implementing a more thorough transition plan and addressing the concerns students with mild to moderate disabilities experience is a challenge I intend to address. It is the district's special education department's duty to proactively prepare our students for a successful school experience. Through assessing the academic, procedural, social, and emotional concerns in this study, these data can be used as a building block to implement programs that start in the elementary that support students with the expectations in middle school. Using foundations such as transenvironmental programming and curriculum-based measurement, as outlined in Chapter Two, could lay a foundation for bringing academic, procedural, behavioral, social/emotional factors into a better balance.

Academic, procedural, social and emotional components must be carefully examined to confidently transition special education students to middle school. Various types of transition

programming may be necessary in order to improve and expedite successful adjustment to a new school. It is essential to involve families in transitions and to ensure that lines of communication are open and supportive. Educators must always make a forthright effort to maintain conversations with students and their families regarding expectations, concerns, and questions. It is essential that educators provide special education students the necessary building blocks for smooth transitions to middle school.

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Appendix A  
6TH GRADE RESOURCE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Knowing your student as you do, please mark the level of concern you believe your student has in the following areas in regards to moving from the elementary to middle school. Since your student will be completing a similar survey, please do not discuss this with the student prior to completing it. Thank you.

<b>1</b> Not Concerned	<b>2</b> Not Very Concerned	<b>3</b> Neutral	<b>4</b> Somewhat Concerned	<b>5</b> Very Concerned
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**ACADEMIC:**

More difficult classes			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Class schedule			1	2	3	4	5
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Comment:

Homework			1	2	3	4	5
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Comment:

Number of teachers			1	2	3	4	5
--------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of textbooks			1	2	3	4	5
---------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of different teachers			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Teacher support to student			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Student readiness for each class			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

## Appendix A

Classwork responsibilities

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student success in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student ability to ask questions in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **PROCEDURAL:**

School size

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Movement from class to class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting to class on time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding the restroom or lunchroom

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding and working his/her locker

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Lunchtime

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting through crowded hallways

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix A

Riding buses

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

School rules

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

### **SOCIAL**

Personal safety

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Comfortable in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Making friends

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Not having friends in his/her classes

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Maintaining friendships

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Having trouble making new friends

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting along with other students

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix A

Bullying

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling peer pressure

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Recess time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **EMOTIONAL**

Feeling scared in the all environment

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Happiness

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling alone

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

What is it that will get students prepared for middle school and what do we need to do to make sure the students will be successful:

Instructionally, what is different in the middle school compared to elementary?

The biggest fears my students verbalize about moving to the middle school are:

## Appendix A

What is the rigor of the homework load given in middle school and how can student be better prepared for the amount given?

How much are students pulled out of the general education classroom for resource support?

What supports such as technology and paraprofessionals do you have in the classroom?

The largest hurdles I personally see special education students having in transitioning to middle school are:

The ways I feel the students are most prepared for the middle school are:

The ways I feel the students are least prepared for the middle school are:

The ways you and/or the school have prepared the students for the transition to middle school are:



## Appendix A

How do you collect data about the instructional IEP goals?

What are the support services that kids receive at middle school as far as occupational therapy, school psychology, and speech and language?

Suggestions I have for improving the process of transitioning special education students to the middle school:

Any further comments, observations or insights you have regarding transitioning students with mild to moderate disabilities from elementary to middle school:

Knowing your child as you do, please mark the level of concern you believe your child has in the following areas in regards to moving from the elementary to middle school. Since your child will be completing a similar survey, please do not discuss this with your child prior to completing it. Thank you.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Not Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Neutral	Somewhat Concerned	Very Concerned

**ACADEMIC:**

More difficult classes	1	2	3	4	5
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Class schedule	1	2	3	4	5
----------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Homework	1	2	3	4	5
----------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of teachers	1	2	3	4	5
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of textbooks	1	2	3	4	5
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of different teachers	1	2	3	4	5
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Teacher support to student	1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Student readiness for each class:	1	2	3	4	5
-----------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

## Appendix B

Classwork responsibilities 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student success in each class 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student ability to ask questions in each class 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **PROCEDURAL:**

School size 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Movement from class to class 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting to class on time 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding the restroom or lunchroom 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding and working his/her locker 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Lunchtime 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting through crowded hallways 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix B

Riding buses 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

School rules 1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

### **SOCIAL**

Personal safety 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Comfortable in each class 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Making friends 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Not having friends in his/her classes 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Maintaining friendships 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Having trouble making new friends 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting along with other students 1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix B

Bullying 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

Feeling peer pressure 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

Recess time 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

### **EMOTIONAL**

Feeling scared in the new environment 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

Happiness 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

Feeling alone 1    2    3    4    5  
Comment:

How much harder is the homework at middle school for you compared to elementary?

What is different in the instructional environment?

What is the difference between the textbooks from elementary to middle school?

## Appendix B

Were you prepared for the longer periods of instruction at middle school?

What supports such as technology or help do you have in the classroom?

How much were you pulled out of class to the resource room in Elementary and how much now?

What is the biggest difference between elementary from middle school?

Concerns or fears I had about middle school because of what I had heard from teachers, parents or older students:

The ways I felt most prepared for the middle school are:

The ways I felt least prepared for the middle school were:

Ways my school/teachers prepared me for the transition to middle school are:

Suggestions I have to transitions to the middle school:

Knowing your students as you do, please mark the level of concern you believe your students have in the following areas in regards to moving from the elementary to middle school. Thank you.

<b>1</b> Not Concerned	<b>2</b> Not Very Concerned	<b>3</b> Neutral	<b>4</b> Somewhat Concerned	<b>5</b> Very Concerned
---------------------------	--------------------------------	---------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------

**ACADEMIC:**

More difficult classes			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Class schedule			1	2	3	4	5
----------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Homework			1	2	3	4	5
----------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of teachers			1	2	3	4	5
--------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of textbooks			1	2	3	4	5
---------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of different teachers			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Teacher support to student			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Student readiness for each class			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

## Appendix C

Classwork responsibilities

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student success in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student ability to ask questions in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **PROCEDURAL:**

School size

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Movement from class to class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting to class on time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding the restroom or lunchroom

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding and working his/her locker

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Lunchtime

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting through crowded hallways

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:



## Appendix C

Riding buses

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

School rules

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

### **SOCIAL**

Personal safety

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Comfortable in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Making friends

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Not having friends in his/her classes

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Maintaining friendships

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Having trouble making new friends

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting along with other students

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix C

Bullying

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling peer pressure

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Recess time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **EMOTIONAL**

Feeling scared in the all environment

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Happiness

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling alone

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

What is it that will get students prepared for middle school and what do we need to do to make sure the students will be successful?

Instructionally, what is different in the middle school compared to elementary?

The biggest fears my students verbalize about moving to the middle school are:

## Appendix C

What is the rigor of the homework load given in middle school and how can student be better prepared for the amount given?

How much are students pulled out of the general education classroom for resource support?

What supports such as technology and paraprofessionals do you have in the classroom?

The largest hurdles I personally see special education students having in transitioning to middle school are:

The ways I feel the students are most prepared for the middle school are:

The ways I feel the students are least prepared for the middle school are:

The ways you and/or the school have prepared the students for the transition to middle school are:

## Appendix C

Suggestions I have for improving the process of transitioning special education students to the middle school:

Any further comments, observations or insights you have regarding transitioning students with mild to moderate disabilities from elementary to middle school:

Appendix D  
SPRING PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Knowing your child as you do, please mark the level of concern you believe your child has in the following areas in regards to moving from the elementary to middle school. Since your child will be completing a similar survey, please do not discuss this with your child prior to completing it. Thank you.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Not Concerned	Not Very Concerned	Neutral	Somewhat Concerned	Very Concerned

**ACADEMIC:**

More difficult classes			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Class schedule			1	2	3	4	5
----------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Homework			1	2	3	4	5
----------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of teachers			1	2	3	4	5
--------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of textbooks			1	2	3	4	5
---------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Number of different teachers			1	2	3	4	5
------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Teacher support to student			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

Student readiness for each class			1	2	3	4	5
----------------------------------	--	--	---	---	---	---	---

Comment:

## Appendix D

Classwork responsibilities

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student success in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Student ability to ask questions in each class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **PROCEDURAL:**

School size

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Movement from class to class

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting to class on time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding the restroom or lunchroom

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Finding and working his/her locker

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Lunchtime

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting through crowded hallways

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix D

Riding buses

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

School rules

1 2 3 4 5

Comments:

### **SOCIAL**

Personal safety

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Comfortable in each class

1 2 3 4 5

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1 2 3 4 5

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Not having friends in his/her classes

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Maintaining friendships

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Having trouble making new friends

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Getting along with other students

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

## Appendix D

Bullying

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling peer pressure

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Recess time

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

### **EMOTIONAL**

Feeling scared in the new environment

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Happyness

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

Feeling alone

1 2 3 4 5

Comment:

The ways your child was most prepared for the middle school was:

What is the difference between the rigor of the homework in elementary and middle school?

The ways your child was least prepared academically for the middle school were:

Ways the school/teachers have prepared my child for the transition to middle school are:



## Appendix D

As a parent, my biggest concern for my child moving to the middle school was:

Instructionally, what is different in the middle school compared to elementary?

The biggest fears my students verbalized about moving to the middle school are:

What is the rigor of the homework load given in middle school and how can student be better prepared for the amount given?

How much are students pulled out of the general education classroom for resource support?

The largest hurdles I personally see special education students having in transitioning to middle school are:

The ways I feel the students are most prepared for the middle school are:

## Appendix D

The ways I feel the students are least prepared for the middle school are:

The ways you and/or the school have prepared the students for the transition to middle school are:

What are the support services that kids receive at middle school as far as occupational therapy, school psychology, and speech and language?

Suggestions I have for improving the process of transitioning special education students to the middle school:

Any further comments, observations or insights you have regarding transitioning students with mild to moderate disabilities from elementary to middle school:

Concerns or fears I have about my child moving to middle school because of what I had heard from teachers, other parents or older students: