The study examined how effective a middle school alternative program was in improving student test scores and student outlook on education, since a significant amount of money was being invested in the program. The state assessment in communication arts and mathematics was used as the measure for success. Student test scores were compared to determine if there was a growth in scores from one academic year to the next. Additionally, the student’s test scores in the program were compared to a group of similar students from one academic year to the next. Focus group interviews, interviews, and questionnaires were conducted to determine the student’s outlook on education.

Students in the program were found to not have statically increased their test scores in communication arts or mathematics and their scores did not improve more than a group of similar peers. However, students in the program did have slightly larger gains in their test scores than their peers. Through the interviews and questionnaires it was found students had developed a strong positive connection with their teacher and friends and had developed some interests at school. Nevertheless, the students were still struggling academically, were angry towards their teachers that were not part of the program, and felt bullied at school.

There are some implications that arose from the research. Educators need to continue to identify at-risk students earlier, eliminate retention programs, promote an environment that allows positive connections to develop, develop transition programs, and develop career counseling programs in middle school.