**BACKGROUND**

East Catholic High School is a regional, college-preparatory high school. Its current enrollment is 680 students. East Catholic has implemented a Summer Bridge Program as a means to accommodate academically at-risk students and transition them into their freshman year in order to strengthen retention rates.

**CURRENT STUDY**

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this action research project was to examine the efficacy of East Catholic High School's Summer Bridge Program by assessing student academic success the semester following the program, and by surveying key stakeholder perceptions of the current program.

**Research Questions**

- What is the academic success of those students that attended the Summer Bridge Program?
- Do students that attended outperform those that did not attend throughout the first semester?
- What is the perception of the Summer Bridge Program’s efficacy according to the stakeholders?

**METHOD**

Three original survey instruments and grade data for the first semester from two school years were used in this mixed-method study. Data from the surveys of students and teachers was analyzed using both a quantitative and qualitative approach to measure the perception of each stakeholder. The grade data from the first semester of 2010 and 2011 were compared among students that attended and those invited through the use of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

**FINDINGS**

**Summary of Findings for Parent, Student, and Teacher Surveys**

After reviewing and analyzing surveys, it is clear that perceptions about the East Catholic High School Summer Bridge Program were positive. Student perceptions suggested the need to improve exposure to the campus, whereas the parent and teacher surveys were positive with no notable disparity.

**Comparison of Student Performance in the First Semester**

The results of the grade data from the SBP participants and invitees showed that there was no statistically significant difference between SBP participants’ and invitees’ scores over the course of the first semester. The mean observed difference across the categories was within 1.5 points. This demonstrates the grade parity of the two groups of students, neither group separated from the other academically as measured by comparing grades.

**Specific Findings of the Parent, Student, and Teacher Surveys**

When students were asked about the greatest benefit of the SBP, one student commented, “I was able to review all the things that I forgot over the summer. I was able to remember all of them again, because of all the things that we went over.”

The student survey also references social interaction as a benefit of the program. One student stated, “On Freshman Orientation I felt more confident because I went to the Summer Bridge Program.”

When parents were asked about the greatest benefit of the SBP one parent responded that, “My biggest fear every summer it that (my student) will lose (their) focus and slide back academically, but this program kept (them) in school mode.”

When asked about the helpfulness of the SBP staff and whether the SBP was a good introduction to East Catholic High School, parents produced responses with identical 100% agreement.

**DISCUSSION AND EXTENSION**

There are many factors that should be considered by a school community when deciding to create a bridge program. Students who attended the East Catholic High School Summer Bridge Program felt as though they performed better through the first semester following their attendance, a perception that was supported by both their parents and teachers. The validity of the data related to academic scores was unavoidably affected by the fact that there was no pre/post-test given during program. In addition, there were different teachers teaching in the program over the course of this two-year study. Two possible modifications in a future study would be to create a pre/post-test for students that attend or are invited to the Summer Bridge Program and to project out teacher participation in the program from year to year and statistically track students individually. Overall, the study revealed a 100% retention rate for students attending the program and positive stakeholder perception of the program.