2021

# College Readiness of Freshman Students from Inner-City Schools

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College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Shanitra J. Jones Barnes

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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M.A., University of West Alabama, 2011

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

A problem that exists in higher education is that many students are not college and career ready. Many students enter college without being academically prepared to succeed. The purpose of this study was to explore the academic college readiness barriers and supports of freshmen college students from a Midwestern inner-city college. The conceptual framework of this study was Bourdieu's social capital theory. The research questions address what college freshmen who graduated from inner-city public high schools perceive to be the barriers and necessary supports to reaching their academic goals. The basic interpretive research design was used to investigate the problem of inner-city students not being college ready. The participants of this qualitative study were 10 college freshmen at a local community college who were recent graduates of Knowles inner-city public-schools. In-depth, semi structured interviews were held with participants and data analysis involved exploring themes and patterns in the data. Participants revealed the supports to reaching their academic goals were meaningful relationships, financial literacy, and college preparedness. Participants further stated the barriers to reaching their academic goals were time management, teacher low expectations/inconsistency, and continuous student personal needs while pursuing higher education. The positive social change expected from this study is that educational leaders develop policies and actions to enable more inner-city students to gain and apply enough college readiness skills to experience greater success in college.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my children Zion, Heaven, and Kalani. Thank you for your patience with mommy and having an understanding spirit especially during the times when mommy was busy writing and working on this big project, and could not play games for long hours, or let you go outside and play unsupervised, take you to the movie theater, or out to dinner, an amusement park, or whatever else we enjoyed doing to spend precious time together.  Even when we were on vacations, you always found time to help mommy write with a little bit of quiet.  You have always loved mommy unconditionally, and I am so grateful that my loving God chose me to be your mom.  You three saw the tears and the frustration of mommy while on the path to complete this project and how many times I wanted to give up, but we made it.  You all are the greatest blessings to my life, and this project is small in comparison to the abundant things you will accomplish in your lives. Love you to the moon and back and then much more!

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge the people that have been there with me along this entire long process. Of course, I will thank "mama's babies" again. The love of my life Anthony, for always encouraging me and pushing me to be greater in your very "unique" way. The best mother a daughter can have in this life – Mama, I owe my life to you for everything you are to me and my children. My wonderful sister Denise, who has always played several roles in my life from best friend, $2^{nd}$ mama, bodyguard, etc. My little brother Johnny, for just being you – all the time! All the family and friends that have encouraged me throughout my time working on this project who are far too numerous to count or call by name individually. And of course, my wonderful support team of committee members, Dr. Candace Adams, Dr. Sydney Parent, and Dr. Elizabeth Warren for helping to make my dream a reality. Thank you, thank you, and thank you! God-bless you all!

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Section 1: The Problem

**The Local Problem**

A problem that exists in higher education is that many students are not college and career ready. The problem at a Midwestern Community College (pseudonym) is too many students enter without being academically prepared to succeed. To be college-ready, high school students need to have a set of skills, knowledge, and behaviors upon graduation and entering their freshmen year of college to find success. There is much work to be done in inner-city public educational systems in order to better support students with college readiness.

One way to measure college readiness is by using the ACT. Many students who are from local inner-city high schools are not ready for college, as shown in low ACT scores. Many of the students from Knowles City Public Schools (pseudonym) who pursue postsecondary degrees after high school decide to stay in the city and transition to Midwestern Community College. A liaison support position could be created in order to have someone work as the connection between the school district and the local community college to help support college readiness. The national average ACT score is 20.8 (ACT, 2018). In 2018, 34,000 graduates in Missouri took the ACT, and the average composite score for students who took the ACT the first time was 17.6, and the average composite score for multiple times was 22.6 (Missouri ACT, 2018). Since the ACT is a college and career readiness assessment, it will be beneficial for inner city students to make a higher score to suggest that they are academically prepared to succeed. When

students score low on college readiness assessments, it often indicates that college success will be a significant challenge.

Another way to measure college readiness is with the use of the ACCUPLACER to measure if students are literate in reading, writing, and mathematics. Being college ready saves students a lot of money and time by not having to take developmental classes that may not count toward their degree. Based on information from Midwest Community College's website, fall 2012 cohort data for developmental course/retention of first-time degree-seeking students is shown in Table 1 (MCCKC, 2018).

Table 1

*Fall 2012 Cohort Data for Developmental Course/Retention of First Time Degree Seeking Students*

| | |
|---|---|
| Sample Size | 185 |
| One Developmental Course | 61% |
| Two or More Developmental Courses | 33% |
| Graduated | 6% |
| Persistence/Retention Rate from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 | 46% |

Retention of students and working to meet the needs of students are areas of focus for many higher education institutions. Nationally, two-thirds of community college enrollees test below college readiness in the areas of math and English (Achieving the Dream, 2019). Although students enroll in the community college with the hopes of succeeding and earning a degree, unfortunately, 72% of the students do not graduate even

within eight years (Achieving the Dream, 2019). College readiness is essential because many students lack literacy skills, do not have steady study habits, and engage in behavioral patterns that are not productive (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). For these reasons and others, many college students struggle to complete their college degrees.

According to Tierney and Duncheon (2015), a disadvantage for students, schools, and families in America is the fact that there are no national models of college readiness. Without a clear roadmap for college readiness, many students will fail in their transition to higher learning. Malin and Hackmann (2017) suggested that schools should provide equal access to high-quality learning experiences and career pathways for all students, which can only occur under strong leadership which should starts at the state education department level, and include school district administration, school administration, and classroom teacher leaders. All students, especially first-generation low-income students, benefit from having a network of support from counselors, mentors, and older peers that go alongside to help them reach their academic goals (Tierney & Duncheon, 2015). The focus of this study will be on students who graduated from inner-city schools before going into college.

Despite having school counselors, college advisors, and other support personnel in most of the schools, students from inner-city Midwestern high schools are still experiencing low success in terms of college graduation as measured by the GEARUP college access program in Iowa from a study of 17,605 students (Bowman, Kim, Ingleby, Ford, & Sibaouih, 2018). Enrollment in college and persistence in college are two different things. It is more important for students to be prepared to finish college, instead

of just saying that they went to college. The burden is not only on students themselves, but higher educational institutions also face obstacles while working to meet the needs of struggling students. College readiness affects students from inner-city areas in the Midwest and professors may face challenges while working to support these students in college. Students without necessary college readiness skills will experience more challenges while striving to succeed in college. A possible source of this problem is the lack of academic readiness caused by the high school instruction.

## Rationale

The purpose of this study is to explore college readiness barriers and supports of freshmen college students from a Midwestern inner-city college. This study will support and provide strategies that can be implemented by secondary schools and higher education institutions to help prepare more students for college. This study will further enhance and support learning and college success, especially for first-year college students who graduated from inner-city high schools. Often, decisions are made top-down, and students appear to have no voice regarding best educational practices, policies, procedures, and programming. This topic is vital because all students, no matter where they graduated from, should be granted equal opportunities to succeed. The issue remains that many students are not college and career ready after graduating from public schools, and this topic needs immediate attention and action.

Students in the Midwest, regardless of background experiences can benefit from extra support from their communities and schools to ensure they have the adequate skills to succeed in higher education. Many inner-city students from public schools are not

prepared for college because they exhibit low literacy, have poor study habits, lack

motivation, and engage in behaviors that are not conducive to learning and growth

(Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). Students must be prepared to succeed before and during their

pursuit of earning a postsecondary degree.

It is essential for students in the Midwest to have exemplary educators displaying

respectful discipline that is positive/structured, and also have quality parent, teacher, and

community supports. These supports include well-established cultural norms, intensive

data-driven decision making, high attendance, and behavioral expectations (Caruthers &

Poos, 2015; Johnson et al., 2017). There are benefits to schools offering a curriculum of

high academic standards that include clear academic goals, extended school days and

years, and increased mathematics and reading instructional time. With these types of

supports and programs in place for students, they can reap abundant benefits, which may

help in making the transition to college better.

There are many supports present in urban schools such as school counselors,

college advisors, parents, teachers, coaches, administrators, community supports, and

college access providers.  There are also barriers present in urban schools that may hinder

both teaching and learning success, such as inadequate instruction and preparation, lack

of parental assistance and support, and lack of other support systems and resources (An,

2013; Cunningham & Smothers, 2014; Kim, 2012; Malone, 2015; Rao, Lozano, & Taani,

2014). The purpose and intent of this study was to focus on the need to further support

students in urban education with college and career readiness.

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic goals:* An educational objective that a person sets for him/herself, which can change over time based on a person's interests, access to education, career, and financial status (McQuerrey, 2018).

*Barrier:* An obstacle or situation that may hinder an individual from moving on and progressing to complete an academic goal (Diehl, 2014).

*College readiness:* For this paper, college readiness means a high school student has the set of skills, knowledge, and behaviors upon graduation and entering their freshmen year of college to find success (Wignall, 2016).

*Developmental courses:* Students are placed in developmental courses to help improve academic skills for college-level work (Flink, 2017).

*Motivation:* The willingness and effort of a student to work hard or exhibit indifference (Tyner & Petrilli, 2018).

*Retained:* A student not meeting academic progress/expectations and having to repeat classes and/or a grade level in college: therefore, at risk of not graduating on time or at all (Tyner & Petrilli, 2018).

*Self-efficacy:* A student's confidence to perform a task (Fong & Krause, 2013).

*Support:* Assistance in the form of a person or system that helps a student during the learning process (Plotner, 2015).

**Significance of the Study**

This study may improve educational practices in higher educational institutions for college students who are graduates of inner-city high schools in the Midwest.  The

local problem is significant in specific schools that were further studied. The outcome and benefits of this study can positively affect students, administrators, and college professors. This study will also suggest strategies, resources, or interventions to help strengthen college readiness for first-year college students in the Midwest.

College readiness is difficult to define, and the use of simple metrics will not make the concept easier to understand (Holles, 2016). There is a false assumption that good, smart, at the top of their class, students will succeed in college because they had high ACT scores and GPAs in high school (National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). That is not necessarily true because one out of ten students at highly selective institutions is unready for college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Since there is no way to determine with certainty which students will not require support to succeed in college, offering all students some extra support will not hinder them during their pursuit of college readiness and academic success (Malin & Hackman, 2017). Universities and colleges all over the United States are offering remediation courses, developmental courses, orientation courses, and additional student support services to help students transition more smoothly into college. Some students may require every support program available to help them progress, and other students may require one or none.

Aiding students with college readiness skills benefits everyone in the long run. Conley (2012) indicated there are four keys to college and career readiness, and they are "cognitive strategies, content knowledge, transitional knowledge/skills, and learning skills and techniques" (p. 2). These concepts helped inform the investigation by

engaging the researcher in concepts to discuss during interview sessions.  One of the ideas that drove this study was to create positive change by impacting students from struggling schools and districts in the Midwest with an effort to support students with college readiness further.  This study provides insights that can be used by other inner-city schools and districts throughout the United States.

This study can aid college and university faculty and staff in their support and encouragement of first-year students who graduated from inner-city high schools. Having support people and systems in place to assist students in reaching their higher education goals despite the odds, obstacles, or struggles they may face is advantageous. McDonald and Farrell (2012) suggested that educational institutions create more supportive and caring learning environments.  Specialized programming and individualized curriculum options are also principal in meeting the needs of diverse learners, so everyone can be successful in college (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). Regarding educational reform and positive social change, a paradigm shift in education may lead to change from the focus of what educators are teaching, to those whom they are teaching, with an individual focus on all students' diverse needs (Hlinka, 2017).  The conversation for improving public education will not cease for the sake of society and our world at large.

## Research Questions

Many students are leaving secondary education and entering colleges and universities unprepared to succeed, which creates a problem at the college level. Researchers have demonstrated that students who graduated from inner-city public high

schools are not college and career ready (Bowman, Kim, Ingleby, Ford, & Sibaouih, 2018).  Administrators, teachers, school counselors, college advisors, parents, college access providers, community leaders, legislators, higher educational institutions, and other educational stakeholders are always looking for ways to strengthen the quality of education for students (Tierney & Duncheon, 2015).  Many students can identify in detail the factors that supported their college and career readiness at the high school level and the issues that may have deterred their learning progression (Friedmann, Kurlaender, & Ommeren, 2016).  One purpose of this study was to explore the barriers (obstacles, challenges, or roadblocks) to academic success for freshmen college students from a Midwestern inner-city college.  The other purpose of this study was to explore the supports (people, processes, actions, or things) to academic success for freshmen college students from a Midwestern inner-city college.  The guiding research questions used to examine the problem in this study are as follows:

RQ1. What do first-year college students who graduated from inner-city public high schools perceive to be the barriers to reaching their academic goals?

RQ2. What do first-year college students who graduated from inner-city public high schools perceive to be necessary supports for enabling them to reach their academic goals?

**Review of the Literature**

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework chosen for this study was Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory.  The social capital theory explains how a person's social position can

influence the development of human capital, which is measured by a student's level of education (Rogosic & Baranovic, 2016). Human capital is not only measured by education but also encompasses individual values, competencies, experiences, and attitudes (Garaum, Morley, Gunnigle, & Collins, 2001). Key people and figures in a student's life have the resources and power to encourage and invest in students' futures, which can pay off in the end in a significant way for everyone involved. Therefore, the social capital theory is used to support high school administrators/counselors and higher education institutions with preparing inner-city students with college readiness. Bourdieu's social capital theory emphasizes the importance of lasting relationships. Social capital can be perceived as a bank model, meaning if there are no deposits, then there can be no withdrawals. Creating genuine relationships at the higher education level can be more of a challenge. However, the investment and benefits will be worth the demanding work, time, and energy spent during the process.

The influence of social capital helps to ensure that supports are in place to help students with college choice, transitioning to college, and retention in college. It is more important for students to graduate with a college degree instead of just being able to say that they were accepted to or attended some prestigious and/or big-name college (Tovar, 2015). Forming strong relationships with students creates an investment into their future, which further helps those in supporting roles assist students with the critical task of best-fit college selection. The social networks and interpersonal relationships created should be efficient enough that students have someone to help them compile a college list, research, and select their best-fit college. Students can take note of their dream school,

target, and reach school and then make the best decision based on information that they receive regarding acceptances and financial aid packages (Princeton Review, n.d.). Ultimately, the goal for students is to graduate from college. Relationships play a crucial role in student success because all people can benefit from having caring people around to encourage, support, and walk alongside.

Institutional agents are the school counselors, college advisors, parents, teachers, coaches, middle-class family members, administrators, community leaders/organizations, clergy, social workers, various college access providers, college faculty/staff, and other college-going youth in the community (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Institutional support enables students to become functional, contributing members of society, who can effectively manage stress, and exercise necessary control over their lives and futures Even when life is tough, disorderly, and stressful for students, their futures still depend on them, and what they choose to do with their lives: students have to believe in themselves (Obama, 2018). Furthermore, competent educators and other critical educational stakeholders have a responsibility to teach, motivate, inspire, encourage, uplift, direct, advocate, and assist students along their career paths (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Educating others does not cost anything but genuine love (Uusiautti & Maatta, 2014). The social capital theory relates and connects to this study because the framework encompasses supporting students regarding college and career readiness on an individual level because success will look different for each student.

**Review of the Broader Problem**

The literature review encompasses sources that have been selected, reviewed, and utilized to cite essential information from scholarly articles, research publications, and peer-reviewed articles.  Most of the primary research is recent within the past five years.  Primary search engines used were the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Source, ProQuest, Google Search, local school district websites, college websites, national and state education data websites

The search included a fusion of the terms/phrases that are as follows: *Knowles School District, student self-efficacy, lack of academic readiness, college and career readiness, perceptions, developmental education, student decision making, school support personnel,* and *financial hardships for students.*

The literature review is in five parts: (a) Knowles City Public Schools; (b) student self-efficacy; (c) need for strategies, programs, and interventions to support academic readiness; (d) student decision making; and (e) student financial hardships.  The literature review first provides an overview of Knowles City Public Schools' college and career readiness challenges from the past, which includes policies and procedures in place currently to bring about effective change.  The second part of the work includes student self-efficacy, which is a critical predictor of the future success of students.  The third part pertains to the need for best practices, strategies, programs, and interventions to support students on their paths to college and career success.  The fourth section discusses why student decision making is crucial, and there is an emphasis on the need for essential

support personnel to help further guide and direct students.  The last and fifth part of the literature review includes discussion on the financial hardships of students.

**Knowles City Public Schools**

Knowles City Public Schools has experienced a lot of turmoil, controversy, and even negative press in comparison to other school districts (Cooper, 2012).  Even with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, there was still much separation between black and white students in Knowles City Public Schools and unequal treatment between the two groups about school conditions and resources allocated for teaching the students (Poos, 2016).  After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968, there were riots in the city because the district Superintendent James Hazlett denied the request to close schools in honor of Dr. King's memorial service on April 9, 1968 (Poos, 2016).  Students walked out of school and marched alongside their parents and civil rights leaders in response to the decision not to close all the schools, as well as the decision not to open an integrated middle school for both black and white students to attend school together (Poos, 2016).  By the time the riots ended on April 11, 1968, six black people had died, and 36 other individuals were injured (Poos, 2016).  The school district and the city had indeed been shaken up by many tragic events.

Knowles City Public Schools was once a booming district at but has struggled significantly in the past fifty-plus years.  According to Poos (2016), the most robust enrollment for Knowles City Public Schools was back in the school year of 1967-1968, where 74,997 students attended.  Many schools have since closed, teachers have been laid off, students moved on to suburban districts, charter schools, private schools, parochial

schools, and as of the 2019-2020 school year, the district enrollment was down to 15,568 children (KCPS, 2020). Knowles City Public Schools lost accreditation in 2012 and is provisionally accredited currently awaiting approval to be fully accredited again based on reliable data indicating that the district is heading in the right direction (KCPS, 2020). Since this urban school district is continuing to improve in all areas, hopefully there will be a significant increase in college readiness. The Knowles City Public Schools demographic information is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*2019/2020 Knowles City Public Schools Demographic Information*

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 15,568 |
| Black | 57% |
| Hispanic | 28% |
| White | 9% |
| Another Race | 6% |
| Free/Reduced Meals | 100% |
| Attendance Rate | 84% |

_____

*2019/2020 Knowles City Public Schools Demographic Information*

| | |
|---|---|
| Graduation Rate | 65.3% |
| Languages Spoken in Home | 1/5 something other than English |
| Student to Teacher Ratio | 24:1 |

Knowles City Public Schools appears to be learning and growing from the past with intentional focus on the future which helps support high school gradautes with their transition to the local Midwest Community College and other universities.  The district has a well-developed current plan to assist students on their paths to academic success, which went into effect in 2018 and will last through the year 2023 (KCPS, 2020).  The strategic plan is a community-wide commitment to student learning and success, which is an all hands-on deck approach (KCPS, 2020).  With the right plan and people in place this district will flourish again, with the added benefit of college and career readiness for students.

Yet and still, more research is needed to understand recent high school graduates' perceptions of what high schools may have done to assist them in being college-ready. Knowles City Public Schools has struggled for many decades and as previously

mentioned are still working through issues. This study will help to remedy the situation that many students are not college and career ready upon high school graduation. This study gives recent high school graduates of the Knowles City Public Schools a voice because they were not on the outside looking in with all the top-down suggestions but experienced the district entirely for themselves. Student voices in research can yield valuable information when examining school design in support of college readiness (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). The rationale for this study is to ensure that more high school graduates are college-ready and on their paths to success at a much quicker pace – without wasting precious time in remediation classes and programs – feeling less than successful.

**Student Self-efficacy**

When it comes to college readiness, self-efficacy is an area where students can exhibit personal struggles. Student self-efficacy is a powerful tool for students because faith in themselves will push them to strive harder. Baier, Markman, and Pernice-Duca (2016) found that student self-efficacy prepared with mentorship adds significant benefit to a student persisting in college past the first semester. Mentors are people who have the power to influence young people to achieve their dreams and not give up when things get complicated because their hard work will pay off. Of the 237 first-time college students examined, self-efficacy and perception of mentorship was a more significant predictor of intent to persist in college rather than GPA, socioeconomic status, or ACT (Baier, Markman, & Pernice-Duca, 2016). The school counselor guidance programming should focus on individual student goal setting and postsecondary education, which helps to

enhance student self-efficacy (Martinez, Baker, & Young, 2017). This is true for especially first-generation low-income students of color from low performing high schools found in their study of 163 ninth-grade students.

Many students dream of being great and wanting to make a positive impact on the world but have no clue where to start. Career cruising for majors coupled with academic advising sessions significantly impacts students perceived self-efficacy in a study of 73 full-time freshmen (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). Participants completed the Career Decision Self-Efficacy-Short Form (CDSF-SF), which was comprised of five subscales to measure accurate self-appraisal, gathering technical information, goal selection, planning for the future, and problem-solving (Cunningham & Smothers, 2014). Some students need more time to research and engage with their future majors in order to increase their confidence in what they can and want to achieve.

Without being able to reflect on where they have come from, it can be hard for students to clearly see where they are going. Forty-nine college students who wrote weekly journal entries about their mastery experiences that entail past successes and failures demonstrated strong self-efficacy and perseverance (Fong & Krause, 2014). These types of students will continue to strive to accomplish their academic goals despite adversity, trials, obstacles, circumstances, challenges, and setbacks. Students with self-efficacy are resilient and will keep pushing toward the mark of their college and career success. Underprepared college students should be encouraged and supported with tackling their academic and transitional issues during their first year, by participating in various early interventions, academic advising, tutoring sessions, financial assistance, and

counseling programs to further persist (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015).  Data collected from a study of 3,213 students indicated that high school GPA and first-semester college GPA were significant predictors of college persistence, more than an ACT composite score (Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015).  When students believe in themselves, they can truly accomplish anything.

**Student Decision Making**

Most students will need a community of support to help them along the way in life, especially when it comes to preparation for college and support in college.  Bowman (2014) suggested that educational institutions strive to create experiences that are inclusive to the openness to diversity challenge (ODC) model.  This model helps students be more successful in college because they will experience different things, unique people, diverse lifestyles, and various perspectives and thought processes/patterns that differ from their own.  Bowman's (2014) study of the ODC model with 8,475 first-year students at 46 universities, found a positive association with student engagement, first-year college grade point average, and first-to-second year retention (Bowman, 2014).  Diversity trainings and diversity experiences are a plus in all fields today so supporting students in this way is vital before they graduate and move on to begin their careers.

Undecided students can face a lot of struggle without the support of essential people in their lives.  Bullock-Yowell, McConnell, and Schedin (2014) suggested that advisers and other student advocates understand the specific and unique characteristics of students who are undecided on their majors.  Really getting to know these students helps to effectively advise them and meet their various needs and concerns.  Bullock-Yowell et

al., found in their study of differences between undecided college students (83) and decided peers (143); that undecided students have lower career decision-making self-efficacy, experience negative career thinking, and career decision-making difficulty. Without a declared degree plan it is hard for a student to finish a specific requirement when it is unclear where the student is going or working towards.

It is helpful for universities to offer career exploration courses for undecided students, address any negative career thoughts, and collaborate with students to help set small attainable tasks/goals. These strategies help boost a student's sense of personal accomplishment (Bullock-Yowell et al., 2014). Jung (2013) suggested that while in discussions with students, educators and parents should focus on the exciting and enjoyable aspects of the university experience. Those topics engage students more when they are contemplating university entrance and may be looking for an out not to go to college anyway.

Interviews, questionnaires, and surveys are also good tools to use with undecided students. Rehfus and Sickinger (2015) suggested using the Career Construction Interview – Short Form (CCI-SF) intervention to help facilitate student self-understanding and career exploration for students struggling with career decision making. The CCI-SF intervention tool helps students to explore their life themes, develop personal meaning, and broaden their understanding of future career options (Rehfus & Sickinger, 2015). Essential support personnel, program models, and other career tools previously mentioned, not only aids student individual growth and development for

college and career decision making, but helps students become more aware of their life meaning and purpose.

**Need for Strategies, Programs, and Interventions to Support Academic Readiness**

To effectively reach students in preparation for college readiness and to address any academic deficits, programs, and interventions should be in place to assist students before and during college. An (2013) found in a study of 15,630 first-year freshmen that students who participated in dual enrollment classes and programs performed better in college than students who did not participate. McDonald and Farrell (2012) found from focus group interviews with 31 disadvantaged students enrolled in an Early College High School (ECHS) program, that these programs help students adjust faster to college-level work and aids to strengthen their college identity as well. Students should be encouraged to enroll in dual program options because they give students more confidence in themselves to succeed.

K-12 intervention programs should constantly be reviewed to examine ways that strengthen the bridge to higher education for underrepresented students who exhibit academic promise (Contreras, 2011). Contreras (2011) suggested the importance of high schools keeping in constant communication with parents both verbally and written. This helps to deter students from dropping out and encourages college enrollment. Students are less likely to fall through the cracks of the education system when there are effective communication and collaboration among all educational stakeholders. Contreras also suggested that students who are multicultural and multilingual be afforded safe spaces in school communities where they can feel comfortable speaking their native language

among peers.  Peer-to-peer support networks are essential programs where all students can rely on one another (Contreras, 2011).  This allows students to support each other in any shared academic, personal, and social challenges in preparation for college.

Students should be provided with access to role models and mentors who can serve as an inspirational and motivation tools.  Role models and mentors remind students that they were once in their shoes and struggles, and they made it out by not giving up on their dreams.  Students should be exposed to extracurricular activities that support the academic curriculum, enhance leadership skills, and nurture a student's academic potential (Contreras, 2011).  Role models, mentors, and a student's involvement in extracurricular activities are vital support systems that help frame and construct a student's confidence, while they are striving closer to complete their goals.

Community organizations and university partnerships are essential because students can participate in activities and programs which include public speaking opportunities, debates, summer enrichment activities, volunteering, tutoring, academic boot camps, and college visits (Contreras, 2011).  According to DeAngelo and Franke (2016), if the United States wants to increase degree attainment, it will depend on the success in helping prepare students who are less academically ready and more likely to stop attending college.  College retention was examined in a nationally represented study of 210,056 full-time, first-time freshmen students at 356 four-year colleges and universities and it suggested that college readiness support start in elementary education (DeAngelo & Franke, 2016).  If public education systems wait until the secondary school

level to begin college readiness, it is far too late and schools risk having to play catch up with students.  That becomes more unnecessary stress for students, schools, and parents.

Higher education enrollments are higher than ever with more growth from racial and ethnic minorities, students of low social-economic status, first-generation college students, and non-traditional-aged students (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015).  Educators have to provide extra support to these students to help increase graduation rates.  Dunston and Wilkins (2015) published a synthesis of various reports on postsecondary students' preparedness for college-level work. College instructors can support students by providing study strategies, test-taking tips, offering individual meetings with students to answer questions, and explain complex concepts further (Dunston & Wilkins, 2015). Dunston and Wilkins suggested that educators scaffold instruction and choose textbooks and curriculum that are relevant to students' lives.  This enables students to rely on their background experiences and make connections with new information.

Venezia and Jaeger (2013) emphasized the importance of helping students select their right institutional fit, especially students who are low income and first-generation college students.  When helping to select a student's right institutional fit many things need to be considered.  These considerations include; cost, location, size, student-faculty ratio, and counseling/advising services.  The student body composition is also important to take note of (racial, ethnic, religious background, and/or single-gender institutions) opportunities.  It is always best practice to make informed decisions based on what is in the best interest of each student in order to help them find their institutional best fit. Knowledge and research go a very long way in the process.

It is never too early to begin college readiness with students. Radcliffe and Bos (2013) proposed strategies that teachers of middle school students can increase college readiness by inviting college students into their classrooms to have them share with the middle school students about many of the attractions of attending college. The college students can work with students to help the adolescent students set 10 to 20-year life goals (Radcliffe & Bos, 2013. Lack of academic readiness is a significant problem for many students from inner-city schools, and these are just a few practical strategies, options, programs, and interventions to support students on their paths to college and career success. This is in no way inclusive because many educators across the world are continually seeking ways to improve education (college and career readiness) for all.

**Student Financial Hardships**

Pursuing higher education is a beautiful thing, but many students have other significant factors that inhibit their ability to attend, such as money issues. Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2016) discussed in their article institutional practices implemented by college leaders that address financial hardships regarding food and housing for low-income college students. Money issues adversely affects student learning and their commitment to education, especially when students are hungry or homeless. Broton and Goldrick-Rab suggested that college leaders support students by changing financial aid due dates, create short-term interest-free loan programs, hire counselors with social work experience, work with local food pantries, housing agencies, and free tax-preparation professionals. These programs and interventions can be referred to as social-safety net resources. It is also suggested that federal and state policies be changed to increase food

stamp benefits for college students and extend the free school lunch program to students in college (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Hopefully, soon, college will be a more afforded option for all students who want to pursue higher education.

Tuition increases impact enrollment at public colleges and universities. Most tuition increases at public colleges and universities are due to poor economic conditions and substantial state budget cuts (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011). This is essential when speaking with a student who is looking for a way out of making college an option due to college affordability and their lack of confidence in college readiness skills. Data were collected on all U.S four-year colleges and universities from 1991 to 2006 showed the impact on enrollment when there was a financial hardship for students (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2011). Radcliffe and Bos (2013) suggested the importance of hosting financial aid nights and workshops for students to apply for scholarships, complete college applications/tasks, and complete the Free Application for Federal and Student Financial Aid (FAFSA). To reach more people, financial aid events for students and families should be hosted at multiple venues, in differing formats, and various languages as well.

The problem remains that students are entering college unprepared to succeed Many factors come into play, such as struggling school districts, student self-efficacy, student decision making, student support personnel, programs to support academic readiness, and student financial hardships, which were all addressed in this section. There were still many other barriers and supports that students who graduated from inner-city schools experienced worth exploring in this study. The results of this study will help more students who graduate from inner-city public schools be successful in college.

**Implications**

This study explored how college freshmen who graduated from inner-city public high schools perceived the barriers and supports they experienced in high school to reaching their academic goals. The researcher was able to identify ways for high school administrators/counselors, and college faculty/staff to work with students, assisting them from high school to college completion. The positive change expected from this study is for there to be the application of more inner-city students exhibiting and applying enough college readiness skills in order to experience greater success in college. The project developed from this study is a three-day professional development program for high school administrators/counselors, and faculty/staff at higher educational institutions. The professional development program will further assist educators with increased support for first-year college students who are graduates of inner-city high schools.

**Summary**

Section 1 encompassed an array of information. The problem of the lack of college readiness for students who are graduates of inner-city high schools was explained, followed by the rationale and purpose of this study. Next, key terms were defined, and the significance of this study was also described with much information provided about how studying the problem is of use to the local educational setting.

The literature review offered an overview of the Knowles City Public Schools' college and career readiness challenges from the past, which included policies and procedures in place to bring about effective change. Student self-efficacy was discussed in the next part, which has been shown as a critical predictor of the future success of

students.  The third section discussed student decision making being vital and indispensable with emphasis placed on the need for necessary support personnel to help further guide and direct students.  The fourth section pertained to the need for best practices, strategies, programs, and interventions to support students on their paths to college and career success.  The last and fifth part of the literature review included a discussion regarding financial hardships of college students.  The gap in the literature review displayed the need to further support students who graduated from inner-city public schools during their process of reaching their academic goals.   More notably, the focus was on obtaining a student perspective on how to experience success in college for students coming from inner-city secondary schools.

In Section 2, the methodology, basic interpretive design, participants, and data analysis of this study will be addressed. The next topic to be examined will be what college freshmen who graduated from inner-city public high schools identify as the barriers and supports experienced in high school to achieving college-ready skills.  In Section 3, the project of this study is introduced with a rationale for selecting the project is discussed.  The project will be described in detail, how it will be implemented, and how it will be evaluated for usefulness in secondary schools and at the college level. Section 4 will be the reflections and conclusions section, which will include strengths and limitations of this study, alternative approaches to the problem, and discussion on how the researcher developed as a scholar, project developer, and agent of social change.  In closing, there will be a discussion regarding directions for future research.  There is

justification for this study because, in America, there are no national models of college

readiness to support students, schools, and families, which can be quite overwhelming.

Section 2: The Methodology

**Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

For this study, a basic interpretive research design was used to investigate the problem of inner-city students not being college ready. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advise that this approach is the most common of qualitative research methods. According to Merriam and Tisdell, individual people construct reality and interpret their world each day during interactions with their social world. Merriam and Tisdell explained that with the basic interpretive research design, researchers do not find knowledge. Instead, knowledge is constructed through interpretation. Merriam and Tisdell suggested that constructivism is another term that can be used to refer to a qualitative study. According to Merriam and Tisdell, there is no single, observable reality, but there are multiple realities/interpretations of experience or phenomenon. The overall purpose of the basic interpretive research design is to understand how individuals make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The primary interpretive research design was utilized for interviews and document analysis, which was limited to creating profiles for participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also mentioned that data analysis involves discovering reoccurring themes and patterns in the participant's data and then interpreting the participants' understanding of the phenomenon at the center of the study. Aborisade (2013) wrote that qualitative methods provide a depth of investigation that helps researchers best get to the root of their subject of inquiry. While using the basic interpretive research design, themes, and patterns were discovered and interpreted from

the participants' responses to the research questions related to the problem of college readiness.

The case study approach was the next best option for this study, but the basic interpretive approach was more suitable for this study and particular inquiry. Stake (1995) suggested that a well-developed case study requires the researcher to have patience, be able to reflect, and see another person's point of view to understand how the participants see things. Case study research allows the researchers to go into depth and gain rich detail while studying the phenomenon at the center of the research (Heatherington, 2013). Case study research can represent the case in a very authentic way, in its unique way, while at the same time allowing giving the participants a voice in the research (Heatherington, 2013). Heatherington (2013) indicated that a case study is a research approach among others that aids in the investigation of complex systems in education that affords productive potential. Harland (2014) wrote that with the case study, the unexpected should develop, and at that time, there is a grand opportunity to contribute to knowledge, theory, and practice. The case study allows the researcher to reconstruct the case history with a small number of participants, and to investigate the topic in far greater detail than a study with many participants. A case study is not appropriate for this study as a case study usually focuses on a single person or entity and incorporates a wide variety of data sources (Suter, 2012).

Ethnography seeks to understand and describe individual differences in people and cultures (Forsey, Breidenstein, Kruger, & Roch, 2015). Ethnography primarily focuses on both human society and culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Narratives are

stories using student voices in written, spoken, or visual form to detail their individual lives (Foster, 2017). Narratives are how we share our daily lives since back in ancient times with cave drawings extending to contemporary times through outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Phenomenology describes a lived experience of a phenomenon, which includes authentic details and feelings of living as a member of a minority or oppressed group of people (Brown & Bright, 2017). Examples may include but are not limited to women, gays, Muslims, African Americans, and the elderly. Grounded theory is another qualitative research design approach where after data are collected, analysis and development of patterns, themes, and theories occur by putting together all the pieces to form a complete picture of the participant's experiences (Battle, 2017). A theory emerges and forms from the grounded data – thus the name grounded theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For this study, the basic interpretive research design was the best approach to investigate the problem of inner-city students not being college ready.

The basic interpretive research design was used to gather pertinent information regarding the identified barriers and supports experienced in high school by college freshman who graduated from inner-city public schools. The research design helped the researcher go more in-depth and made further logical connections to the social capital theory conceptual framework. The results of this study include a project with emphasis structured on helping high school counselors, principals, and college faculty/staff support students. This study is especially helpful for freshmen college students who graduated from Knowles City Public Schools. This basic interpretive research design approach

aided to address the research questions in this study by having thorough information gathered to ascertain the college readiness needs of students from Knowles City Public Schools. The Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval number for this study is 10-29-19-0519476.

## Participants

The participants of this qualitative study were ten college freshmen at a local community college who were recent graduates of Knowles inner-city public schools. Having a few participants allowed the researcher to have a more in-depth inquiry per individual (Aborisade, 2013). Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2015) discussed information power, which is a concept that proposes that the more information the sample holds, the fewer participants are needed, especially when the aim of the study is narrow. Creswell (2012) also referenced data saturation in qualitative research, which is a tool suggesting that the data are saturated when there is an adequate amount of quality data collected. No further information is needed for insight. Having fewer participants does not automatically make for data saturation because the quality of data is essential, and a researcher may stop collecting data when redundancy (themes and patterns) are identified in data analysis (Creswell, 2012).

Participants were invited to participate from Midwestern Community College's COLL 100 class, which is a first-year seminar – one credit hour class. Eligibility for participation in the study only included students who graduated from Knowles City Public Schools. The course is a mandatory course for all students, no matter if they are enrolled in a degree or certification program. The course is designed to support students

with a smoother transition to college life, assist in student retention and degree attainment, increase the use of student services, improve grade point averages, and increase the percentage of students remaining eligible for financial assistance (Birkel, 2011). The COLL 100 experience has a low student to faculty ratio to better meet student needs and is available in different durations to work around student schedules. In a given semester, there are around 15 sections, and students may elect to enroll in an eight-week option with more extended sessions, or a 16-week option with shorter sessions, or a four-day intensive course during intersession (Birkel, 2011).

First, I was granted permission through Midwestern Community College's administration, appropriate college officials, and their IRB to conduct my study. Next, I received Walden IRB approval. Then, I obtained email addresses of all COLL 100 faculty to inform them that I was granted permission to speak with their students briefly before and after class. As an added benefit to my study, several of the community college administrators and faculty passed out my research fliers on campus and through student emails for eligible students to contact me. COLL 100 is a course designed to help students adjust to the Midwestern Community College's community, develop a better understanding of the learning process, and acquire essential academic survival skills (Birkel, 2011).

The introductory email sent to potential participants explained the study's research purposes, underlined participant confidentiality, and requested an email reply, phone call, or text message to me if they agreed to participate in the study. The email also included information about the opportunity for students to schedule an interview

with me that fit their schedule.  There was no need for a random selection of at least 10 -

15 students from those who were interested in my study because there were not many

participants to select from.  For this reason and as initially planned, I did not have to use

an Excel spreadsheet to paste formula in the formula bar to assist with random name

selections.

I met with participants individually, first, to obtain their written agreement to

participate, and, second, to conduct the initial interview.  Any student who graduated

from the researcher's high school and was a prior student of the researcher's, according

to the last name (M-Z), were not included in this study.  There were a few of my previous

students who desired to be a part of this study, though they understood why they could

not after I explained.  This process was put in place to avoid any biases, errors in

research, and to maintain validity.

All participants were 18 and older and signed an informed consent form before

participating in the study.  According to Girvan and Savage (2012), informed consent is

one of the most critical ethical practices in research involving humans so that there is

open and honest communication between the researcher and study participant.

Participants were informed that they would in no way be identified individually in the

results of the study, and their personal information would not be shared with anyone.

Participants who were unable to meet for a face-to-face interview could have

elected to engage in a phone interview.   Face-to-face interview participants were also

encouraged to choose a location that was comfortable for them to participate in the

interview.  Suggestions included a local coffee shop, public library, or the conference

room designated for me to conduct my research interviews in the social sciences department within in the Humanities building on campus.  Some participants scheduled on-campus interviews with me, and they had to be rescheduled off-campus due to the colleges being closed due to dangerous cold weather days.  Then later, the college was closed right before spring break due to the coronavirus pandemic in the United States.  The coronavirus started in China at the end of the year 2019 and made its way to America by early 2020.  The coronavirus is better known as COVID19 because it originated in the year of 2019.

Participants were all advised that although the desire was for them to follow through with the entire research process and study, they would in no way be penalized or obligated to do so, especially with life circumstances and events being unforeseen.  Initially, the participant response by email was low, so the researcher met in person with five of the COLL 100 sections.  This was made possible because a couple of faculty members invited me into their classrooms to briefly explain my study, invite participation, and allowed me to leave printed copies explaining my study with informed consent forms as well.  My purpose was to ensure that students did not feel pressured to participate in this study.  Students who wished to volunteer were asked to contact the researcher via email, phone, or text message.

A researcher-participant working relationship was established from the start of the interviews.  I expected to develop a rapport with the participants and to establish trust and confidentiality as a foundation before moving on.  Furthermore, it was of the utmost importance that the participants had a clear understanding regarding the study's structure

and how the interviews would be conducted.  I did not work at Midwestern Community College and therefore, did not have any influence, effect, or power over any of the research participants.

## Data Collection

### Possible Types and Sources of Information or Data

The types of sources of information and data includes interview protocol and audiotapes of the ten interviews.  Data were collected and were pertinent to, first, the barriers students perceived that they encountered toward reaching their academic goals, and second, what they perceived to be the necessary supports in reaching their academic goals.  For this project study, in-depth, semistructured interviews were utilized because it is a style that falls in between a conversational interview and the structured interview style, which allows researchers to collect data in a more detailed and flexible manner (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012).   The interviews were conducted with ten college freshman who are recent graduates of an inner-city public school.  The interview protocol was researcher produced (see Appendix B).  To ensure validity, interview questions flowed from research questions and the review of the literature.  The interview protocol was reviewed by the assigned study committee members to make sure that the research questions were logical and addressed what needed to be addressed.

Relevant background information was collected from each of the participants. Other information included data regarding if the students participated in any Advanced Placement (A.P.) classes, dual enrollments, college preparatory classes/programming,

and grade point averages (GPA).  This background information was used in preparing detailed descriptions for each of the participants relative to college and career readiness.

To ensure the credibility of data from interview sessions, member checks were conducted with the participants through narrative accuracy checks (Thomas, 2017). Member checks involve participants review of the preliminary findings.  Participants were given their interview transcript to review which was verbatim to establish the trustworthiness of data, so they can confirm or deny statements reflecting their views, feelings, and experiences, which is the most common procedure of member checks (Thomas, 2017).  All participants will be furnished with a copy of the complete report once the committee approves it.  I took brief notes to ask any further clarifying questions, and record what might not be evidenced through the recording.  Participant attitude, level of comfort shown by the participant, confusion, and any other pertinent information are essential because detailed field notes help contribute to the success of an overall research project (Neimark, 2012).

Data collection procedures and interview protocol included the following: (a) audio recordings, (b) verbatim transcripts made from the audio recordings, (c) audio recordings destroyed by the researcher after verbatim transcripts were prepared, (d) access to transcripts by the researcher, researcher's committee chair, and methodologist, and (e) verbatim transcripts kept in locked storage with access by the researcher only for five years after dissertation approval - after which the researcher will destroy them.  All participants were asked to provide demographic information.   This included gender, racial/ethnic background, where they were born, languages spoken in the home, overall

high school grade point average, what school they graduated from, and how many high

schools they attended during their high school career. Many students and families are

transient in the Knowles City Public Schools. They have to move around quite frequently

from place to place, and home to home, which is why the Students in Transition (SIT)

program is available to support further students and families (KCPS, 2020). The

interview protocol, which contains questions for collecting demographic data and the

focusing questions for the semistructured interview, is contained in Appendix B.

### Data Analysis

Bishop-Clark and Dietz-Uhler (2012) indicated that no matter what type of

qualitative data a researcher has, there are some necessary steps that a researcher needs to

take. A qualitative researcher should (a) spend time getting to know the data, (b) be

mindful of the research question(s), (c) look for categories or themes in the data, (d)

examine the data for patterns and connections between themes and categories, and (e)

interpret and explain the data. Coding was used to analyze/summarize topics and themes

connected that revealed predominant patterns and intricate interrelations across the

qualitative data (Pokorny et al., 2018).

There was a five-step process to analyze the data: compiling, disassembling,

reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2017). Compiling

means to put the data in usable form to find meaningful answers to research questions,

and disassembling the data involves taking data apart and creating meaningful groupings

(Castleberry & Nolen, 2017). Reassembling involves connecting the codes and

categories to create themes, which is a patterned response or meaning, and interpreting

involves making analytical conclusions from the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2017).

Concluding in qualitative research is usually not generalizable, so readers should assess

how research findings can be transferred and applied to their practice (Castleberry &

Nolen, 2017).

Stake (1995) wrote that researchers have a need to be accurate in their

measurements but also the desire to be consistent when interpreting those same

measurements. According to Stake, researchers should be so thorough and detailed in

their study's uncontestable descriptions that no matter who observed or recorded, the data

would report similar accounts of information. I did not throw out any discrepant cases or

data that may have included contradictions. Discrepant information may have allowed

me to go deeper into the study about the research questions to uncover the unexpected,

which could have been quite enjoyable. The information would have been kept as a

source of comparison during data analysis.

I did not seek to use the method of triangulation. Though, member checks were

utilized to help ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the participant's responses

(Thomas, 2017). Member checks involve participants review of the preliminary findings.

Participants were given their interview transcript so they can confirm or deny statements

reflecting their views, feelings, and experiences. Data were then coded and transferred to

a spreadsheet to identify any shared connections and themes by using the Nvivo

qualitative coding software. Nvivo is a useful tool that offers visual data analysis and

assists in the creation of reports (Phillips & Lu, 2018).

**Data Analysis Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore college readiness barriers and supports of freshmen college students from a Midwestern inner-city college. Data was collected using a basic qualitative research design. First, data were collected for research question number one regarding the barrier's students perceived that they encountered toward reaching their academic goals. Then, data were collected for research question number two about what students perceived to be the necessary supports in reaching their academic goals. For this project study, in-depth, semistructured interviews were utilized. The interviews were conducted with ten college freshman who were recent graduates of an inner-city public school. The interview protocol was researcher produced. To ensure validity, interview questions flowed from research questions and the review of the literature. The interview protocol was reviewed by the assigned study committee members to make sure that the research questions were logical and addressed what needed to be addressed. All ten interviews were conducted over one month.

Relevant background information was collected from each of the participants. Other information included data regarding if the students participated in any Advanced Placement (A.P.) classes, dual enrollments, college preparatory classes/programming, and grade point averages (GPA). This background information was used in preparing detailed descriptions for each of the participants relative to college and career readiness.

All participants were 18 and older and signed an informed consent form at the time of the interview. To protect the confidentiality of my participants, everyone was assigned a pseudonym. For the purposes of this research study they will be referred to as

Participant A through J. The demographic information of the participants included one Caucasian male, one Caucasian female, two African American females, two Hispanic females, and four African American males. Most the participants reported that they did not take any A.P. classes, dual enrollment classes, or college preparatory classes, and had average to below average GPA's while in high school.

To ensure the credibility of data from interview sessions member checks were conducted with the participants through narrative accuracy checks (Thomas, 2017). Participants were given their interview transcript to review which was verbatim to establish the trustworthiness of data, so they can confirm or deny statements reflecting their views, feelings, and experiences. All participants were furnished a copy of the complete report. I took brief notes to ask any further clarifying questions, and record what might not be evidenced through the recording. Participant attitude, level of comfort shown by the participant, confusion, and any other pertinent information was also noted as needed. Each interview was between 45 minutes to an hour. Data collection procedures and interview protocol included the following:

1. Audio recordings of the interview sessions with participants.

2. Verbatim transcripts made from the audio recordings.

3. Audio recordings destroyed by the researcher after verbatim transcripts were prepared.

4. Access to transcripts by researcher, researcher's committee chair, and methodologist.

5. Verbatim transcripts kept in locked storage with access by the researcher only

for three years after dissertation approval - after which the researcher will

destroy them.

All participants were asked to provide demographic information. The requested information included gender, racial/ethnic background, where they were born, languages spoken in the home, overall high school grade point average, what school they graduated from, and how many high schools they attended during their high school career. All data was coded and transferred to a spreadsheet to identify any shared connections and themes by using the Nvivo qualitative coding software.

Time management was a theme that was salient in the data that stood out in the findings for most of the participant's data in an obvious way. It was something noticeable throughout the interview sessions as well. There were not any discrepant cases that needed to be handled in this study because all ten cases fell within the major coded themes that emerged from within the data.

**Summary of Outcomes**

Through data analysis, six thematic relationships emerged that aligned with the research questions. Participant comments were extracted from the coded transcripts (see Table 1). There were three themes from research question number one regarding barriers experienced by high school students in preparation for reaching their academic goals and they include (a) time management; (b) teacher low expectations/inconsistency, and (c) higher education continuous needs. Participants indicated that time management is an essential skill that needs to be taught in high school that will transfer to the collegiate level and save students from numerous academic challenges later as noted in prior studies

(Burrus, Jackson, Holtzman, & Roberts, 2017; Gordanier, Hauk, & Sankaran, 2019; Hensley, Wolters, Won, & Brady, 2018; Strom, Strom, & Sindel-Arrington, 2016). Participants indicated that the impact of teachers having high expectations and consistent teaching practices versus low expectations and inconsistent teaching practices went a long way in supporting student success as noted in prior studies (McDonald et al., 2016; Rojas & Liou, 2017; Scales, Pekel, Sethi, Chamberlain, & Van Boekel, 2020). Participants also indicated that to help with retention and graduation rates, higher educational institutions need to continually offer effective programs and supports to further engage students academically and support their ongoing and changing needs as noted in prior research studies (Holcombe & Kezar, 2019; Koch, Dirsch-Weigand, Awolin, Pinkleman, & Hampe, 2017; Kuh, 2018; Mah & Ifenthaler, 2018; Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2017; Murphy, 2017; Roy, Bradecich, Dayne, & Luna, 2018).

There were three themes from research question number two regarding supports experienced by high school students in preparation for reaching their academic goals and they include (a) meaningful relationships, (b) financial literacy, and (c) college preparedness. Participants indicated that when they had meaningful relationships with their teachers it greatly impacted their academic success in a positive way as noted in prior research studies (Martin & Collie, 2019; Meyers, Rowell, Wells, & Smith, 2019; Scales et al., 2020; Schudde, 2019; Shores & Smith, 2018). Participants suggested that financial literacy programs are another benefit to them in their pursuits of financial freedom, instead of having a struggling future career based off of financial mistakes as noted in previous studies (Agnello, Laney, & Lucey, 2019; Blue & Grootenboer, 2019;

Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019; Jacobsen & Correia, 2019).  Participants indicated that college preparedness reigns supreme to aid in student transitions from high school to college, in pursuit of reaching their highest potential, as noted in prior research studies (Deslonde & Becerra, 2019; Flennaugh et al., 2017; Ghazzawi, Lee, & Cho, 2019; Greathouse Holman, Kupczynski, Mundy, & Williams, 2017; Holles, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Rodriquez et al., 2017).  The interview protocol, which contains questions for collecting demographic data and the focusing questions from the semistructured interview, is contained in the Appendix B.  The Appendix sections also includes the research Letter of Consent and Partner Site IRB approval letter.

The conceptual framework used for this study was Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory.  The social capital theory explains how a person's social position can influence the development of human capital, which is measured by a student's level of education (Rogosic & Baranovic, 2016).  Human capital is not only measured by education but also encompasses individual values, competencies, experiences, and attitudes (Garaum, Morley, Gunnigle, & Collins, 2001).  Key people and figures in a student's life have the resources and power to encourage and invest in students' futures, which can pay off in the end in a significant way for everyone involved (Bourdieu, 1986).

The social capital theory was the conceptual foundation used for this project study in effort to support high school administrators and secondary counselors with helping prepare inner-city students with college readiness.  Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory emphasizes the importance of lasting relationships.  Social capital can be perceived as a bank model, whereas if nothing is put in, nothing can be taken out.

Creating genuine relationships at the higher education level can be more of a challenge. However, the investment and benefits will be worth the demanding work, time, and energy spent during the process (Bourdieu, 1986).

Institutional agents are the school counselors, college advisors, parents, teachers, middle-class family members, administrators, community leaders/organizations, coaches, clergy, social workers, various college access providers, college faculty/staff, and another college-going youth in the community (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

**Description of the Project Deliverable as Outcome of Results**

The project deliverable based on my findings is a professional development program for high school administrators, school counselors, and college administrators/faculty. The purpose of the professional development project is to offer sessions for educators in high schools and higher education institutions to further support students graduating from inner-city public schools with college readiness. The project consists of three full days of training sessions. The outcome of this project is to have more educators to be better equipped and able to support inner-city students with college preparation. The description of the project will be further explained in Section 3.

In Section 2, the methodology, basic interpretive design, participants, data analysis, and the results of this study was addressed regarding what college freshmen who graduated from inner-city public high schools identified as the barriers and supports experienced in high school to achieving college-ready skills. In Section 3, the project of this study is introduced with a rationale for selecting the project is discussed. The project will be described in detail, how it will be implemented, and how it will be evaluated for

usefulness in secondary schools and at the college level. Section 4 will be the reflections and conclusions section which will include strengths and limitations of this study, alternative approaches to the problem, and discussion on how the researcher developed as a scholar, project developer, an agent of social change. In closing, there will be a discussion regarding directions for future research.

Table 3

*Review of Themes*

| Time Management |
| --- |

According to Participant A:

> Aiming to get my work done on the due date because, you know, high school teachers like they will extend the due date as long as possible. Like, you know, if you don't get your homework done, like they'll be like, oh, it's fine. Turn it in next week and next week comes up. It's fine turn it in next week. And they just keep extending that due date. So, it's like it made me slack off a lot on homework and not care much about it. And I'm just like, oh, you know, like they're going to extend the date. When I came to college because like, you know, here, like when it's done, it has to be done. I feel like high school doesn't give as much work as college does. Like college, in college, the work is not hard. But it's a lot. So, like, you know, high school, like they give us assignments here and there, but they aren't strict about them and like. Same thing. The due dates, they're not strict about that. Homework. They never give it. So, like here, it's just like a huge, huge

change. Because here, like I get here the 1ST day and I go back home with work,

homework already. And they say, you know, read this chapter because next class,

we are going to talk about it. And then next class, you guys are going to have a

little quiz over it or something like that. So, like, you know, it's just like the work

is very different. Like here it's a lot more and more disciplined. You have to do it.

High school isn't giving me, it didn't give me as much work, so I wasn't worrying

about it. But now here, like, I'm constantly thinking like over and over again, like.

And it's in my head like all the time, like, OK, I need to do this assignment. I

need to do this assignment. Like, when am I gonna do this? And it is just a lot of

work? So, it's just me trying to get it all in control to where I can do it and manage

my time.

According to Participant B: "I struggled with procrastination and being overwhelmed

with some things, and time management."

Participant C stated:

Making study time a priority is a challenge. In college, everything is on me. I

don't have a it's not a lot of structure to say hey you have to do this at a certain

amount of time. It's pretty much all on me, now. So just trying to keep everything

in in its proper order. Scheduling study time, social time. These types of things

are something that I definitely wasn't ready for and I'm still trying to get adjusted

to. So, it's time management. Time management is definitely the biggest

challenge for me. And like I said, you got to be able to do the work. So, you have

to be able to put the study time in.

Participant D:

Jones: Did you learn how to organize your time and tasks?

Participant D: "No! That is why it took me so long to graduate!"

Participant F stated:

> Time Management was just a big challenge, so I struggled a lot, and I struggled
>
> with depression a lot through high school. So, my attendance dropped and that's
>
> kind of where I struggled. It was getting to class and then being able to get the
>
> work done. Actually, my teachers were actually very kind. And like, I didn't
>
> have to finish all of the assignments and like, they didn't put in all the grades that
>
> I had missed. But I mean, I was also struggling with health issues at the time.
>
> And I am so like, it was valid reasoning. But coming to college and having to
>
> make sure I get here all the time and coming to class and doing all the work on
>
> time, not being able to turn stuff in late. And that's a big struggle for me because I
>
> was babied from my high school teachers. Which at first in like my freshman and
>
> sophomore year, it was frustrating for me because I was always that overachiever.
>
> I was like, oh, my God, just give me the hard stuff. But then my junior and senior
>
> year, I just started to take advantage of that. I was like, alright, I'm just gonna sit
>
> back, I'm just going to wait and turn in everything last minute. Even last semester
>
> in college, like I struggled, and I actually struggled with getting here. And I
>
> missed quite a few classes. There was an entire essay that I didn't get turned in
>
> and it dropped me from a 92 percent in my class to a 79. And I ended up with a B
>
> in that class for the semester. So that was a bit of a bummer. But you know, this

semester I'm doing a little better. But you know, it's only February. So, I got to keep it up.

Participant G stated:

My biggest struggle so like, it would be like I don't have class every single day. So like, it's real hard to be like, OK, like I have class these days, but I don't have class these days and keep track of that. Like I don't know how to explain it. Time management. Yeah. Time management is way off. Like they did not prepare me for that at all. Like in high school I had class every single day. Eight classes, five days a week. Whereas like now I can have class on Saturday if I wanted to. To me that's a big adjustment.

Participant I stated:

Some of my challenges… I mean just like when I was in high school, it was mainly like, I guess because it was just my mom, my sister, and I. Like transportation was hard because my mom had to like, take me, and just take my sister, and my other little sister. And we all went to like different schools, for like different things. So she just had the transportation issue and I couldn't make it to school all the time because I didn't have a ride. I wasn't able to get a ride. But it just mostly me.

Jones: How did you overcome some of those challenges? Did you just have to hope and pray that you had a ride on certain days?

Participant I stated:

> Yeah. And like emailing certain instructors or work around their schedule or like
>
> my schedule to either be there early or to turn in work faster than others could.
>
> So, it was a lot of pressure. But like I think it was good because I had really bad
>
> issues with time management then. So now I feel like it's like way better.

Section 3: The Project

**Introduction**

In this study, I focused on the college readiness of freshmen students from inner-city public schools regarding what they perceived as the barriers and supports to reaching their academic goals.  This study's finding suggested the need for a three-day professional development program to assist high school administrators/counselors and college faculty/staff in supporting students from inner-city public schools with college readiness.  The program goals are to:

- Educate participants regarding the importance of developing meaningful relationships with students while offering proactive tips.

- Educate participants regarding the importance of having high expectations for students and always being consistent.

- Educate participants on how to assist students with college preparedness.

- Educate participants on the importance of financial literacy and ways to help students be financially literate.

- Educate participants on the importance of time management and ways to teach students time management strategies.

-  Educate participants on effective ways higher educational institutions are continuing to support students with various areas of need.

**Rationale**

The three-day professional development program will benefit this study in several ways.  There were three themes about barriers experienced by high school students in

preparation for reaching their academic goals, and they included: (a) time management, (b) teacher low expectations/inconsistency, and (c) higher education continuous student needs. The professional development program will assist participants in helping students in high school with time management techniques/skills. The program emphasizes the need for teachers to keep high expectations for their students with rigor and consistency. Lastly, the professional development program demonstrates the need for supports that continue into higher education for students to successfully continue on their paths to degree attainment and reaching their career goals.

There were three themes about supports experienced by high school students in preparation for reaching their academic goals, and they included: (a) meaningful relationships, (b) financial literacy, and (c) college preparedness. The professional development program will also guide participants in creating meaningful relationships with students, help them teach students financial literacy, and assist with student college preparedness.

## Review of the Literature

The literature review encompasses sources that have been selected, reviewed, and utilized to cite essential information from scholarly articles, research publications, and peer-reviewed articles. Most of the primary Research is recent within the past five years. Primary search engines used were the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) and Education Source. The search included a fusion of the terms/phrases that are as follows: *professional development, teacher-student relationships, teacher empathy, academic success, time management high school, time management, and college*

*students, high teacher expectations, low teacher expectations, teacher inconsistency, college preparedness, financial literacy, higher education student needs,* and *higher education student supports.*

The literature review is organized into seven parts that are as follows: (a) professional development, (b) meaningful relationships, (c) financial literacy, (d) college preparedness, (e) time management, (f) teacher low expectations/inconsistency, and (g) higher education continuous student needs. The literature review first provides information regarding the benefit of professional development for teachers and staff to help them better support student success. The second section emphasizes the importance of students having meaningful relationships with others that support them, encourages them, and helps them flourish. Financial literacy is discussed in the third part, which benefits individual students but also has the transforming power of impacting their communities. The fourth section focuses on college preparedness and pertains to best practices, strategies, programs, and interventions to support students on their paths to college and career success. Time management is crucial and is discussed in the fifth part with an emphasis on the need for essential support personnel to help further guide and direct students in this area. The sixth section discusses high teacher expectations, which has been shown as a critical predictor of the future success of students. The last and seventh part of the literature review includes a discussion regarding higher education institutional practices that have been implemented by college leaders to address the growing needs of college students.

**Professional Development**

The professional development/training curriculum and materials are appropriate to address the problem and findings of the study. This genre is the most beneficial in effort to assist educators in preparing students from inner-city high schools with college readiness skills. Educators desire to facilitate the learning process for students effectively but may feel unprepared to do so. Not everything an educator needs to excel in their role is taught in college classes. Educators must continuously participate in professional development to stay abreast of current and active research practices that will help aid students to succeed. Educators appreciate professional development opportunities that are self-initiated and offer sessions to collaborate with peers and colleagues (MacPhail et al., 2019).

Professional development planning should focus on the fact that teachers come from differing backgrounds and experiences but will have the same expectations after accepting a teaching position/role, which is a contradiction (MacPhail et al., 2019). It can seem like setting a new teacher up for failure, to begin with. Effective professional development training and programs should incorporate reflection, collaboration, and classroom research (Canaran & Mirici, 2019). Students need strong teachers, and it is unfair to make teachers feel incapable, incompetent, and ineffective by having expectations of them that are unfamiliar. To better equip teachers with supporting students with college readiness, teachers and educators need opportunities to further develop with professional training.

Teachers should be willing and ready to engage in various professional development opportunities as they arise to further develop themselves as individuals and

perfect their craft, for the benefit of students. Professional development should not be something else on the to do list or dreaded. Professional development is a learning community of educators who love what they do and enjoy learning from one another. Currently, in a global pandemic, asynchronous virtual conversations during professional development sessions are great practices (Callahan, 2017). Especially, now, when educators are unable to meet face to face in large groups in effort to keep the COVID19 virus from spreading. Professional development also has better outcomes when there are multi-tiered supports which include follow-up sessions with feedback and discussion of pertinent data throughout the school year (Grasley-Boy, Gage, & MacSuga-Gage, 2019).

**Meaningful Relationships**

Meaningful relationships students have with teachers can be paramount and can certainly play a key role in students' academic motivation, performance, and engagement as shown in a study of 1,274 middle and high school students from three different schools (Scales et al., 2020). When teachers are trauma-informed, empathetic, and take the time to get to know and care about their student's backgrounds and experiences, relationships unquestionably form and mature significantly (Meyers et al., 2019). These teachers communicate with students by showing them that they understand their positive or negative emotions, cognitions, and behaviors (Meyers et al., 2019). Empathetic teachers have pronounced relationships with their students, are often superb listeners with intention, are boundary setters for students, and are powerful advocates when referring students for professional services (Meyers et al., 2019). According to Scales et al. (2020), trust is developed and built-in student-teacher relationships when teachers

respond to the needs of their students.  Trust is developed especially when teachers are honest about their mistakes and can genuinely apologize for something, they did wrong. Teacher-student relationships greatly benefit when teachers change their behavior positively towards students when students demonstrate a change in work effort (Scales et al., 2020).  Students desire strong relationships with their teachers because they can motivate them.

When it comes to student academic development, positive teacher-student relationships greatly outweigh the negative from a study of 2,079 students from 18 high schools (Martin & Collie, 2019).  Martin and Collie (2019) encouraged schools to work hard in unison to increase the number of positive teacher-student relationships across all academic areas and subjects.  Teacher-student relationships can be both rewarding and challenging (Shores & Smith, 2018).  Strong teacher-student relationships help to decrease high school dropout rates and improve college preparation (Shores & Smith, 2018).  From a national longitudinal study of first-year students at community colleges, student experiences of engaging with faculty about academic matters improved short and long term outcomes for students regarding (academic achievement, retention, degree attainment, and transfer to a four-year college) because relationships matter even at the higher educational level (Schudde, 2019).

**Financial Literacy**

Students are desiring more ways to be financially literate as more and more students are burdened with financial debt starting right out of high school when they are legal age to sign binding contracts such as personal loans and credit cards (Hagadorn &

Lahousse, 2019). The decisions that they make have the potential to bring long-term negative consequences on student's futures (Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019). Many students feel unprepared to make personal critical financial decisions, and the need for financial literacy programs is a must (Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019). Many students are even finding it hard to help fuel the economy by obtaining a car and home loans after college because they are saddled with large amounts of debt and low paying careers (Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019). Research also shows that black students are much more likely to borrow student loan debt at a much higher amount than their white peers from the same low socioeconomic status group (Chan et al., 2019). Student loan debt is 2$^{nd}$ to mortgages as the two most significant sources of consumer debt, and more educational institutions are offering financial education programs for students to become self-sufficient, financially informed, contributors to society (Hagadorn, & Lahousse, 2019).

Agnello, Laney, and Lucey (2019) wrote that K-12 teachers should engage students with financial literacy by using folktales, myths, parables, and fables to discuss values and dynamics that silhouette financial choices. Attitudes towards money can be discussed in classroom conversations regarding "hoarding, greed, wise use, abuse, accumulation, sharing, generosity, circulating, privilege, worship of wealth, etc." (Agnello et al., 2019, p. 205). Students can even create their own stories as extension activities (Agnello et al., 2019). Blue and Grootenboer (2019) indicated that financial education should benefit the individual's needs but also a society with attention towards care, compassion, and concern for others.

In a study of 198 students from a small liberal arts college in Virginia, more than half the students gave themselves a D when it comes to managing money. They, therefore, reported needing help in that area as well as investing and budgeting (Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019).  Only 32% of the students reported that they track their spending often (Hagadorn & Lahousse, 2019).  According to Hagadorn and Lahousse (2019), students desire financial programming that is listed from most wanted to least that includes; classroom instruction, one-on-one support, computer-based instruction/online videos, workshops, webpages, email blasts, and newsletters.  Jacobsen and Correia (2019) found from a survey taken by undergraduate students at a large public university that students who are not business majors are not confident in their financial literacy, and report to have not taken previous personal finance courses/curriculum that helped them learn basic financial concepts.  Jacobsen and Correia (2019) suggested that educational institutions elaborate on the importance of students taken financial literacy classes even if it is not a part of their degree program and will only be counted as an elective.

**College Preparedness'**

A California central school district is focusing on major efforts to help all students but especially low-income and minority students with access to college (Deslonde & Becerra, 2019).  Some of the efforts include "funding college applications, advance placement costs, international baccalaureate fees, college course tuition and books through dual enrollment, and using college and graduation tracking tools such as *Naviance*" (Deslonde & Becerra, 2019, p. 21).  The school district also suggests offering on-going professional development opportunities to school counselors and teachers

throughout the school year (Deslonde & Becerra, 2019).  Some of the barriers the school district administrators face regarding college readiness is limited funding to hire highly qualified teachers, inequity in resources, and limited decision-making regarding instruction/curriculum (Deslonde & Becerra, 2019).  Most decisions are made at the central office without consideration that there is no one size fit all approach for the various school populations across the district.

Johnson (2017) proposed that school counselors utilize the CARE model to address socioeconomic disparities and to help prepare students from poverty with college and career preparation.  The CARE model focuses on four areas, which include a) cultivating relationships, b) acknowledging realities, c) removing barriers, and d) expanding strengths (Johnson, 2017).  In a study of urban African American high school students regarding college preparedness, students revealed barriers should serve as inadequate resources, tracking, lack of A.P. courses, and poor teachers (Flennaugh et al., 2017).  Students reported that teachers did not seem to care about them, had given up on them, subscribed to racial hierarchies, and perceived them as low achievers (Flennaugh et al., 2017).  Other programs to support student college preparedness are university outreach programs that support underserved students and gives them experiential learning opportunities in areas such as business education and increases their desire to want to attend college (Ghazzawi et al., 2019).

First-year students at a top U.S. engineering school said in their transitions from high school to college, they had to learn to study, manage time, manage finances, and balance school and life responsibilities (Holles, 2016).  Challenging classes like Calculus

and Chemistry were classes set up to weed out students. However, through the problematic shifts to college, students indicated that their support systems and relationships were the keys to overcoming their struggles (Holles, 2016). According to Greathouse Holman, Kupczynski, Mundy, and Williams (2017), career technical education programs prepare students for college, career, trade, or vocational schools with hands-on experiences, giving them career-specific talents, and competencies to apply public speaking skills, reasoning, and judgment. Rodriquez et al., (2017) wrote that when students transition to college, they have to understand syllabus policies, deadlines, classroom management regarding expected college behaviors such as critical inquiry, frequent writing, informational literacy, and collaborative learning no matter what the decided major of study.

**Time Management**

Time management is an issue for students in high school which transfers to college and some universities are referring students to Student Success Centers after a month of classes when their academic performance falls below 70%. Their attendance rate falls below 75% (Gordanier, Hauk, & Sankaran, 2019). Students are then offered optional services of study skill workshops, time management, mentoring, advising, and academic tutoring where results due to intervention show student score improvements (Gordanier, Hauk, & Sankaran, 2019). According to Gordanier, Hauk, and Sankaran (2019), there were significant gains in performance for those students who entered college with below average placement scores in math. This is especially helpful because

the U.S. News report indicates that only one out of three first-year students are successful continuing into their sophomore year (Gordanier, Hauk, & Sankaran, 2019).

A study of 240 junior high school students who took a time management poll showed that even adolescent students struggle with setting priorities and scheduling (Strom, Strom, & Sindel-Arrington, 2016). Students require more support from families and schools to become more active about making decisions regarding the use of their time. Another study of 149 ninth-grade students from a private northeast United States high school who participated in a five-week time management intervention program showed high ratings for the students in the treatment group in comparison to the control group (Burrus, Jackson, Holtzman, & Roberts, 2017). The intervention program consisted of time management assessments, feedback, action plans, and five weekly homework assignments, which all benefited the students in a positive way (Burrus, Jackson, Holtzman, & Roberts, 2017). According to a study by Hensley, Wolters, Won, and Brady (2018), students who were on academic probation in college scored lower on goal-setting and prioritizing measures and high on procrastination in comparison to their more academically successful peers. Hensley, Wolters, Won, and Brady (2018) suggest that students on academic probation could benefit from programs and coursework that focus on self-regulated learning strategies. It will be helpful if further practical time management skills can be taught in high schools to save college students from numerous academic problems later.

**Teacher Low Expectations/Inconsistency**

According to Scales, Pekel, Sethi, Chamberlain, and Van Boekel (2020), students thrive when teachers have high expectations for them versus low expectations and persistently help students imagine various excellent possibilities for their futures. These teachers are always consistent in their practices by giving students no shortcuts, always helping students do well, and discover new ideas/things of interest (Scales, Pekel, Sethi, Chamberlain, & Van Boekel, 2020). These teachers also help students take charge in important tasks and decisions, help students learn from their mistakes, listens to students, respects students, and helps students take responsibility and ownership for their learning (Scales, Pekel, Sethi, Chamberlain, & Van Boekel, 2020). Even teachers who have sympathy for their students based on markers of struggle such as sexism, classism, racism, etcetera, do not feel sorry for their students and lower their expectations and therefore hinder academic achievement (Rojas & Liou, 2017). Quality teachers have personal commitments to be effective in their instruction and to ensure all students succeed with equitable learning opportunities (Rojas & Liou, 2017).

According to Rojas and Liou (2017), teaching is an act of love that places a high value on student's identities and cultural backgrounds. No matter what a student's circumstance is, high-quality teachers, present consistent, rigorous instruction and deep-rooted faith that students can develop a solid sense of intellectual capacity, meet college expectations, and be prepared for life after high school (Rojas & Liou, 2017). A study of 84 teachers who participated in a high expectation teacher intervention program revealed that teachers changed their best teaching practices to include more flexible/beneficial

student groupings, mostly in the areas of mathematics and reading (McDonald et al., 2016). Teachers developed positive classroom learning environments where students had choices in learning activities for deeper engagement, and teachers developed better support systems to aid students with individual goal setting to heighten student motivation (McDonald et al., 2016).

**Higher Education Continuous Student Needs**

To be successful in college, students need dedicated one-on-one dual support services by professionals whose expertise is to ease student stress by addressing academic/learning needs and mental health needs (Murphy, 2017). Roy, Bradecich, Dayne, and Luna (2018) indicate that student-parents are a growing population on college campuses around the United States. There is a mounting need for emotional support, reliable childcare, and clarification of student support services and resources available to student-parents in need of assistance (Roy, Bradecich, Dayne, & Luna, 2018). According to Kuh (2018), college graduates are expected to enter the workplace exhibiting many behaviors and "soft skills" such as curiosity, resilience, self-regulation, conscientiousness, flexibility, the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, have generosity, empathy, emotional intelligence, active listening and communication skills, and collaborative problem-solving skills.

Many students enter college without feeling prepared for academic writing and exhibit low confidence in research skills, so this is an area where educational institutions can further support students (Mah, & Ifenthaler, 2018). A study of 1000 first-year students who engaged in interdisciplinary study projects fulfilled their basic

psychological needs of "competence, relatedness, and autonomy" (Koch, Dirsch-Weigand, Awolin, Pinkleman, & Hampe, 2017).  A California State University magnifies the importance of supporting first-generation, low-income, and underserved minority students by establishing relationships known as a "unified community of supports" which includes students, faculty, and staff – working together, side-by-side, through integrated STEM programs, interventions, and seamless learning environments (Holcombe & Kezar, 2019).  Universities are engaging in initiatives to make curricula relevant to students by offering diversity training across campuses for everyone, funding mini projects for students, encouraging peer-to-peer supports, and soliciting internships for students that help with networking and entrance into professional careers (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2017).  These are all great programs, supports, and practices for higher institutions to engage students academically and support their needs.

This literature review discussed the impact of effective professional development for educators and six critical themes for supporting inner-city students with college readiness, and they include 1) Meaningful Relationships; 2) Financial Literacy; 3) College Preparedness; 4) Time Management; 5) Teacher low expectations/inconsistency, and 6) Higher Education Continuous Student Needs. These are all ways to better support students from inner-city public schools with college readiness.  This is in no way an exhaustive list.  Quality educators will continue to work with students, listen to students, engage with students, and advocate for students during times of change.  There will be more opportunities and proactive ways for educational institutions and educational stakeholders to support students along their academic pursuits further.

**Project Description**

The purpose of the professional development project is to offer sessions for educators in high schools and higher education institutions to further support students graduating from inner-city public schools with college readiness. The project consists of three full days of training sessions to support educators and further develop them in the area of preparing students for college. The outcome of this project is to have more educators to be better equipped and able to support inner-city students with college preparation.

The three-day agenda is listed below, which also included needed materials and resources. Appendix A section of this study will include the project PowerPoint presentation, activity handout, and the project evaluation form to be completed by participants at the end of the 3rd day of the program.

**Three Day College Readiness Professional Development Agenda**

**Day 1**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Registration/Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:45 Overview of three-day P.D. program

Introductions

Establish Three Professional Meeting Norms as a Group (Meetings will start on time, Respect one another, Be open-minded, etc.)

8:45-9:00 Ice Breaker – Candy Game (Relationships)

9:00-10:00 Meaningful Relationships with Students Session

10:00-10:30 Small Group/Large Group Discussion – Best practices to build relationships and connect with students

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 Teacher-High Expectations/Inconsistency

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 Small group and then large group discussion regarding one teacher/counselor/school staff member who always believed in them, when they did not believe in themselves – Always kept high expectations – gave no shortcuts

1:15-2:15 Paper/pencil reflection – Who has been the greatest positive influence on your life? How has this person been influential?  Write you message on the cardstock paper in the middle of your table. If the person you chose is still living, please present your handwritten note to them ☺

A few people can share out if they desire…

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Whole Group discussion about all the meaningful people in student's lives – what those relationships look like?

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, adjournment

**Day 2**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:40 Overview of day 2 of P.D. session, Review of Previous Day

8:40-9:00 Warm-up – Two Truths and a Lie – (Still Building Relationships)

9:00-10:00 College Preparedness' Session 1

10:00-10:30 Small group/large group discussion – What college/career activity from your high school experience was the most beneficial and stands out to this day?  If not you, then maybe a child or grandchild's experience that you can think of?

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 College Preparedness' Session 2

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 Activity – choose a new career outside of education – imagine being age 17/18 again - research three schools online – dream, target, safety schools – complete worksheet in Appendix A

1:15-2:15 Activity – 4 Corners (Poster board) – Sticky notes – what supports would you need to be successful while pursuing your career? 1)Parent 2) High School 3) College 4) Friends/Other….

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Small group/large group discussion:  Why did you choose your college/career?

What if anything made your decision easier during that time in your life?

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, adjournment

**Day 3**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:40 Overview of day 3 of P.D. session, Review of Previous 2 Days

8:40-9:00 Warm-up – Paper Airplanes – (More About Relationships)

9:00-10:00 Financial Literacy Session

10:00-10:30 Small group/large group discussion:  Best financial advice ever received in

high school? College?  Life?

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 Time Management Session

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 – Small group/large group discussion - Best time management tool/strategies

that have changed and helped manage your life?

1:15-2:15 Higher Education Continuous Needs Session 1

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Higher Education Continuous Needs Session 2

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, questions, evaluations, adjournment

**Resources Needed/Existing Supports**

The resources needed for the project include a presenter laptop, smartboard, Wi-Fi connection, office space for a maximum of 30 people, round tables to seat at most five or six people, chart paper, pens, markers, teacher-laptops, bags of starburst candies, bowl for candy, pack of multi-colored paper, index cards, sticky notes, a stack of cardstock paper, ACT college comparison worksheet, coffee, creamer, stir sticks, sugar, water, cups, various breakfast snack bars. The existing supports include the fact that effective educators are committed to being lifelong learners, readily, and willing to collaborate to better improve their craft for the benefit of student success. Many educators will gladly take advantage of this opportunity to support college and career readiness for students from inner-city public schools.

**Potential Barriers/Solutions**

The barriers to the project would be Wi-Fi connectivity issues at the location of the training. A solution would be to arrive at least an hour before the session starts to solve for any connection problems and seek the help of a tech support person. Another barrier would be the fact that the professional development program is three full days, so having high school administrators, school counselors, and higher education faculty/staff out of the buildings for that amount of time can be challenging. If high school teachers can come to the professional development program in place of their school administrators or school counselors, affording teacher substitutes for three days can be expensive. Having the professional development training scheduled far in advance may help to alleviate some of the issues with participant registration and scheduling conflicts.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Facilitator, District Administrators, and Participants**

I, as the researcher and professional development facilitator, will make sure that the training information is shared and distributed at both the district level and building level to encourage early registration and for planning purposes. District administrators will identify the location and room assignments for the training and provide audio/visual equipment with tech support as needed. I will facilitate the training, monitor collaborate sessions, and collect and analyze evaluation data. Participants will fully engage in the professional development sessions/activities/discussions, respect each other's ideas and thoughts, keep an open mind, and be prepared/committed to attend the duration of the professional development program for three full days.

<div align="center"><strong>Project Evaluation Plan</strong></div>

The project evaluation will be goal-based and will occur at the end of the three-day training. This is the chosen method to collect data regarding if participant professional needs were met throughout the training. The program goals are to: educate participants regarding the importance of developing meaningful relationships with students and offer proactive tips; educate participants regarding the importance of having high expectations for students and always being consistent; educate participants on how to assist students with college preparedness; educate participants on the importance of financial literacy and ways to help students be financially literate; educate participants on the importance of time management and ways to teach students time management strategies; and lastly educate participants on effective ways higher educational

institutions are continuing to support students with various areas of need. At the end of day, three participants will complete a paper/pencil evaluation form to give feedback on the professional development program. The overall evaluation goals are to ascertain if program goals were accomplished, professional development needs were met, and if there is anything, further participants felt they needed/should be changed from the sessions (Appendix A). Stakeholders in the evaluation are district administrators, teachers, school counselors, college advisors, parents, college access providers, city legislators, and higher educational institutions.

### Project Implications

The positive change expected from this study is for there to be the application of more inner-city students exhibiting and applying enough college readiness skills in order to experience greater success in college. The professional development program will further assist educators with increased support for first-year college students who are graduates of inner-city high schools.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

**Project Strengths and Limitations**

According to Tierney and Duncheon (2015), a disadvantage for students, schools, and families in America is the fact that there are no national models of college readiness. Without a clear roadmap for college readiness, many students will fail in their transition to higher learning. The strength of this project is the fact that it focuses on aiding educators with supporting students with college readiness, especially students graduating from public inner-city schools. So, this project can act as a guide to support students with college readiness. A limitation of this project is the fact that the professional development program is three full days and having high school administrators, school counselors, and higher education faculty/staff out of the buildings for that amount of time can be challenging.

**Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

The professional development program is set up to be a more informal and intimate type setting to allow for more personal collaboration and networking, so a limited number of participants can sign up – no more than 30. Another approach to this project would include a conference type setting where more educators could attend, and then each participant would rotate through sessions throughout the day. I would need to train a few people to help support my project and help facilitate sessions throughout the day. An alternative approach to the problem would be getting high school teachers to work together to create a college-going/career ready atmosphere of support in all subjects to support students with college readiness.

**Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

The data collected from this study will assist educational stakeholders with valuable information from students' first-hand accounts regarding their perceived supports and struggles with college readiness, to assist future students more proactively with college readiness. After reviewing my study's finding, I began to ponder the best way to address the college readiness problem. The policy recommendation with a detail position paper was a great idea. However, I decided it would be more beneficial for me to personally/face to face reach educators with key information I collected from my study, so we could collaborate and discuss best practices.

I feel as though I have grown over the past six-plus years as a leader while working on this doctorate program. Things were challenging at times, but a strong leader never gives up, and effective educators are always going to keep pushing for what is in the best interest of their students. As a counselor, I love my students and want nothing less than the best for them. If I can help with positive social change for them, I will do it again in a heartbeat. Change can be hard and scary at times, but no one can expect to get different results in anything by doing the same thing over and over, which is truly insanity at its best.

I have grown as an educator and scholar in my research skills which always seemed like a daunting task to begin with. I have grown in the area of project development and evaluation because I have never done anything like this on this scale, primarily alone. I have worked on project development/evaluation in professional learning communities and other various educational groups/teams prior. This was a task

utterly unfamiliar to me before I started this process. I am a much more confident practitioner in the field of education, and I am grateful for this experience. If I can do this level of research, I can do more, all for the benefit of students, teachers, schools, families, and communities.

## Reflection on the Importance of the Work

This work is crucial, and the need has always been there. As a graduate of an inner-city public school myself, I know about my struggles during my freshman year at a midsize university and how I wanted to give up but decided I could not for the life in me. Many of my peers decided to give up after our freshman year in college, and they did. There were many other of my peers who decided not to even think about pursuing higher education because we had not been prepared to come from the schools we had graduated from. Although college is not for everyone, anyone who desires to go, and wants to work hard should be afforded those opportunities with equity. This work is essential because it will be a blessing for students who are graduates of inner-city public schools not to feel the pressure of walking into their first college class and being an ocean's width behind everyone else. I learned throughout this work how to be an active agent of positive change for students, starting with my local community and hoping to branch off from there.

## Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The positive change expected from this study is for there to be the application of more inner-city students exhibiting and applying sufficient college readiness skills in order to experience greater success in college. A challenge for me was not able to pull a

report and generate hard data for my results. As a previous special education teacher, I collected and analyzed many data on my students, especially during times of re-evaluation. For this study though, collecting and analyzing data from interview sessions was like a new world and new language to me. Everything seemed foreign. It was tedious having to take the time to go through the processes of finding meaning, themes, and patterns in my interview data which was quite overwhelming and different. However, I enjoyed the process: especially what I learned from the procedure, and it became easier with time. Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory and framework for this study stresses the importance of relationships and how pouring into someone else's life positively impacts that individual but also dramatically impacts the entire human race. Such a simple concept, yet a fantastic concept that needs to be referred to often, especially in today's time with the coronavirus epidemic uprooting the whole world. As people, we must care for one another and invest in one another. This study could not have been completed at a better time in history. Future research could include a qualitative study regarding what high school teachers perceive they need, to be more effective in supporting students with college/career readiness.

## Conclusion

College readiness and support of students are topics that will always be near and dear to my heart. I am grateful to have had this journey. This experience allowed me to grow as a practitioner while fulfilling my passion for advocating for my students and millions of other students around the world that I will not be blessed to meet in person. I have always loved my students like they are my very own, and I always pray that my

biological children have educators in their lives that love them the same. I am hopeful

that this study will be of great use to all educational stakeholders who are in supporting

roles for students, especially those from inner-city public schools. Our students will

benefit, and our world will too, as each of the students will go on individually to do even

greater things!

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    college-readiness/

Appendix A: The Project

**Three Day College Readiness Professional Development Agenda**

Program goals are to…

- Educate participants regarding the importance of developing meaningful relationships with students while offering proactive tips.

- Educate participants regarding the importance of having high expectations for students and always being consistent.

- Educate participants on how to assist students with college preparedness.

- Educate participants on the importance of financial literacy and ways to help students be financially literate.

- Educate participants on the importance of time management and ways to teach students time management strategies.

-  Educate participants on effective ways higher educational institutions are continuing to support students with various areas of need.

**Day 1**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Registration/Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:45 Overview of three-day P.D. program

Introductions

Establish Three Professional Meeting Norms as a Group (Meetings will start on time, Respect one another, Be open-minded, etc.)

8:45-9:00 Ice Breaker – Candy Game (Relationships)

9:00-10:00 Meaningful Relationships with Students Session

10:00-10:30 Small group/Large Group Discussion – Best practices to build relationships and connect with students

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 Small group then large group discussion regarding one teacher/counselor/school staff member who always believed in them, when they didn't believe in themselves – Always kept high expectations – gave no shortcuts

1:15-2:15 Paper/pencil reflection – Who has been the greatest positive influence on your life? How has this person been influential?  Write you message on the cardstock paper in the middle of your table. If the person you chose is still leaving please present your handwritten note to them ☺

A few people can share out if they desire…

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Whole Group discussion about all the meaningful people in student's lives – what those relationships look like?

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, adjournment

**Day 2**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:40 Overview of day 2 of P.D. session, Review of Previous Day

8:40-9:00 Warm-up – Two Truths and a Lie – (Still Building Relationships)

9:00-10:00 College Preparedness' Session 1

10:00-10:30 Small group/large group discussion – What college/career activity from your high school experience was the most beneficial and stands out to this day? If not you, then maybe a child or grandchild's experience that you can think of?

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 College Preparedness' Session 2

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 Activity – choose a new career outside of education – imagine being age 17/18 again - research three schools online – dream, target, safety schools – complete worksheet in Appendix A

1:15-2:15 Activity – 4 Corners (Poster board) – Sticky notes – what supports would you need to be successful while pursuing your career? 1)Parent 2) High School 3) College 4) Friends/Other….

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Small group/large group discussion:  Why did you choose your college/career?

What if anything made your decision easier during that time in your life?

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, adjournment

**Day 3**

8:00-8:30

Welcome

Educator Sign-in

Light Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 8:40 Overview of day 3 of P.D. session, Review of Previous 2 Days

8:40-9:00 Warm-up – Paper Airplanes – (More About Relationships)

9:00-10:00 Financial Literacy Session

10:00-10:30 Small group/large group discussion:  Best financial advice ever received in

high school? College?  Life?

10:30-10:45 Morning Break/Networking

10:45-11:45 Time Management Session

11:45 – 12:45 Lunch on your own

12:45-1:15 – Small group/large group discussion - Best time management tool/strategies

that have changed and helped manage your life?

1:15-2:15 Higher Education Continuous Needs Session 1

2:15-2:30 Afternoon Break/Networking

2:30-3:00 Higher Education Continuous Needs Session 2

3:00-3:30 Wrap up, review, questions, evaluations, adjournment

**Resources Needed**

The resources needed for the project include a presenter laptop, smartboard, Wi-Fi connection, office space for a maximum of 30 people, round tables to seat at most five or six people, chart paper, pens, markers, teacher-laptops, bags of starburst candies, bowl for candy, pack of multi-colored paper, index cards, sticky notes, stack of cardstock paper, ACT college comparison worksheet, coffee, creamer, stir sticks, sugar, water, cups, various breakfast snack bars.

An Educator's Workshop:
College Readiness for Inner-City
Public-School Students

BY: SHANITRA JONES BARNES, ED.D.

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Program
Overview
(No matter
what we will
have fun!!!)

- Educate participants regarding the importance of developing meaningful relationships with students while offering proactive tips.
- Educate participants regarding the importance of having high expectations for students and always being consistent.
- Educate participants on how to assist students with college preparedness.
- Educate participants on the importance of financial literacy and ways to help students be financially literate.
- Educate participants on the importance of time management and ways to teach students time management strategies.
- Educate participants on effective ways higher educational institutions are continuing to support students with various areas of need.

---

Introductions

NAME

POSITION

SCHOOL/DISTRICT

Let's work together and establish three agreed upon professional meeting norms for the next three days….

1.
2.
3.

Suggestions: (Meetings will start on time, respect one another, Be open-minded, etc.)

A BOWL OF STARBURST IS COMING AROUND. PLEASE TAKE AS MANY AS YOU LIKE…

Ice Breaker!!! Get some candy!!!

Please share in your groups the following information based on the colors you chose….
Favorite Book (red), vacation spot (orange), food (pink), tv show (red)

Meaningful Relationships with Students

Teachers play a key role in students' academic motivation, performance, and engagement

When teachers are trauma informed, empathetic, and take the time to really get to know and care about their student's background and experiences, relationships unquestionably form and mature significantly

Meaningful Relationships with Students

Teachers communicate with students by showing them that they understand their positive or negative emotions, cognitions, and/or behaviors.

Empathetic teachers have pronounced relationships with their students and are often shown to be superb listeners with intention, are boundary setters for students (which offers structure), and are powerful advocates when referring students for professional services



Meaningful Relationships with Students

Trust is developed and built in student-teacher relationships when teachers respond to the needs of their students, and especially when teachers are honest about their mistakes and can genuinely apologize about something they did wrong.

Students desire strong relationships with their teachers because they are able to motivate them - the benefit is that teachers change their behavior positively towards students when students demonstrate a change in work effort.



Meaningful Relationships with Students

When it comes to student academic development positive teacher-student relationships greatly outweigh the negative across all subjects.

Teacher-student relationships can be both rewarding and challenging.

- Choose a handful of volunteers to share out to facilitate large group discussion….

Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency

▶ Rigorous instruction (challenging the student's ability to think).

▶ Students thrive when teachers have high expectations for them versus low expectations and persistently help students imagine various wonderful possibilities for their futures



## Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency

- Teachers are always consistent in their practices giving students no shortcuts, always helping students do well, discover new ideas and things of interest.
- Help students take charge in important tasks and decisions, help students learn from their mistakes, listens to students, respects students, and helps students take responsibility and ownership for their learning.
- Even teachers who have sympathy for their students based on markers of struggle such as sexism, classism, racism, etc., do not feel sorry for their students and lower their expectations and therefore hinder academic achievement.



## Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency
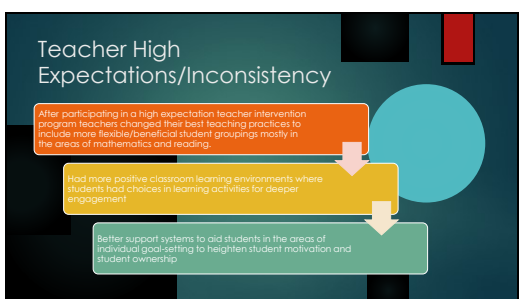
Quality teachers have personal commitments to be effective in their instruction and to ensure all students succeed with equitable learning opportunities.

Teaching is an act of love that places high value on student's identities and cultural backgrounds.

Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency

No matter what a student's circumstance is, high quality teachers present consistent rigorous instruction and deep-rooted faith that students can develop a solid sense of intellectual capacity, meet college expectations, and be prepared for life after high school.

# Teacher High Expectations/Inconsistency

After participating in a high expectation teacher intervention program teachers changed their best teaching practices to include more flexible/beneficial student groupings mostly in the areas of mathematics and reading.

Had more positive classroom learning environments where students had choices in learning activities for deeper engagement
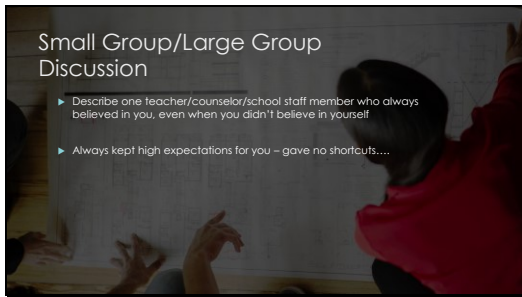
Better support systems to aid students in the areas of individual goal-setting to heighten student motivation and student ownership

Lunch Break!!! Enjoy!!!

A few people can share out if they desire…
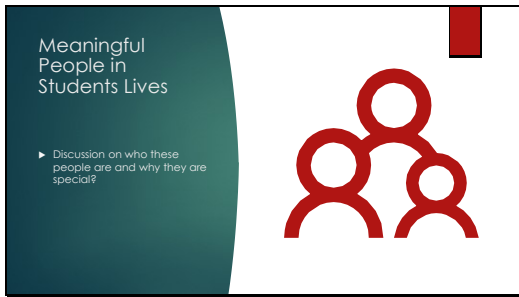
Ensure discussion also mentions key people like coaches, cafeteria staff, security guards, bus drivers, custodians, neighbors, church leaders, etc.…

Begin wrap, review, and adjournment….
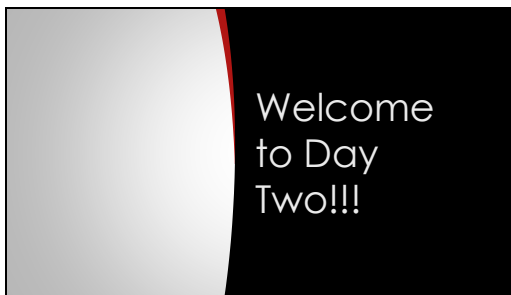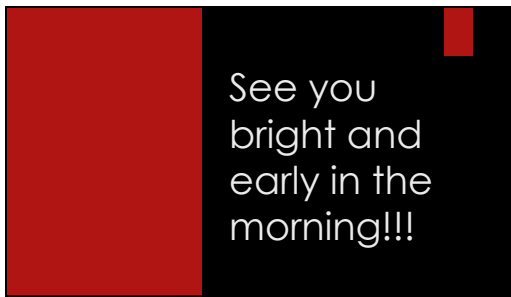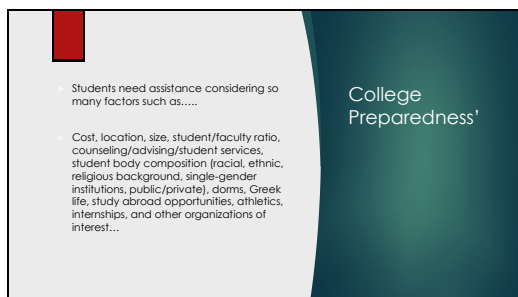
College Preparedness' Session 1
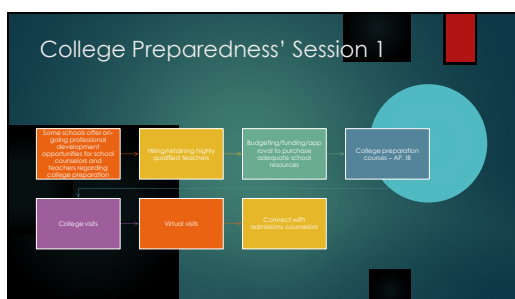


College Preparedness'
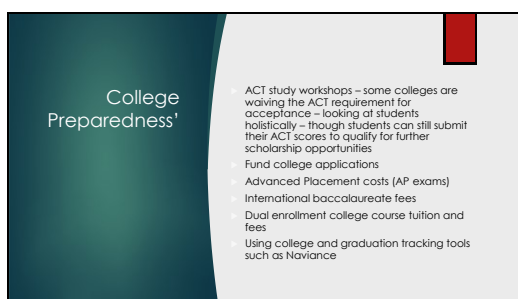
Students can compile a college list, research, and select their best-fit college after taking note of their dream schools, target schools, and safety schools, with the information they receive regarding acceptances and financial packages

College Preparedness'

- Students need assistance considering so many factors such as…..
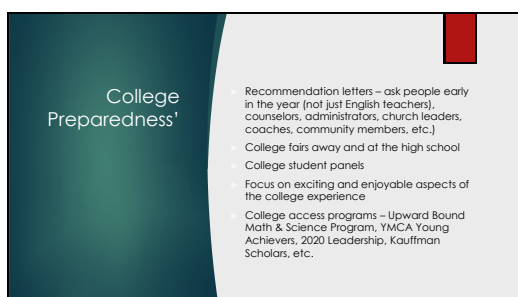
- Cost, location, size, student/faculty ratio, counseling/advising/student services, student body composition (racial, ethnic, religious background, single-gender institutions, public/private), dorms, Greek life, study abroad opportunities, athletics, internships, and other organizations of interest…



College Preparedness'

- ACT study workshops – some colleges are waiving the ACT requirement for acceptance – looking at students holistically – though students can still submit their ACT scores to qualify for further scholarship opportunities
- Fund college applications
- Advanced Placement costs (AP exams)
- International baccalaureate fees
- Dual enrollment college course tuition and fees
- Using college and graduation tracking tools such as Naviance



College Preparedness'

- Recommendation letters – ask people early in the year (not just English teachers), counselors, administrators, church leaders, coaches, community members, etc.)
- College fairs away and at the high school
- College student panels
- Focus on exciting and enjoyable aspects of the college experience
- College access programs – Upward Bound Math & Science Program, YMCA Young Achievers, 2020 Leadership, Kauffman Scholars, etc.

College Preparedness'

University outreach programs in various academic fields such as business, education, pre-med, pre-law, etc.

Financial aid application process training/workshops – at various locations, times, language supports available….

College Preparedness'

- A+ scholarship informed – qualify for $10,000 – US citizen/permanent resident, enter into written agreement with high school prior to graduation, attend designated A+ school 2 years prior to graduation, overall GPA of 2.5 or higher, cumulative attendance of 95%, 50+ hours unpaid mentoring/tutoring (25% may include job shadowing) prior to graduation, maintain good citizenship record and avoid unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol, and achieved a score of proficient or advanced on Algebra End of Course (EOC) exam/or ACT math score of at least 17

College Preparedness'

- Extracurricular activities – build student confidence – more likely to be involved on college campus later – transfers to career
- Public speaking opportunities (debates)
- Summer Enrichment Activities
- Academic Boot Camps
- Scholarship/Essay writing workshops
- Constant parent/school communication/collaboration
- Hybrid courses utilizing technology (face to face and online)

## College Preparedness'

- Graduation project/thesis
- Writing components (full lab reports, essays, research papers) in all courses
- Different testing strategies/formats (multiple choice, true/false, online, scantron testing, short answer, essay, matching, fill-in-the-blank, open book, oral testing, etc.)

## College Preparedness'

- Career technical education programs/certificates prepare students for college, career, trade, or vocational schools with hands on experiences, giving them career specific talents (relevancy)
- Competencies to apply public speaking skills – STEM careers (especially women)
- less career jumping
- less likely to get into the student loan debt/crisis of this country

## College Preparedness'

College Preparedness'

TECHNOLOGY TRAINING FOR
ELECTRONIC PRESENTATIONS
(POWERPOINT, PREZI, ETC)

STRUCTURED AND ENFORCED
ATTENDANCE POLICIES

LEARN STUDY SKILLS, MANAGE TIME,
MANAGE FINANCES, BALANCE
SCHOOL AND LIFE RESPONSIBILITIES



Small group/large group discussion

▶ Discuss in your small group and then we will share out....

▶ What college/career activity from your high school experience was the most beneficial and stands out to this day? If not you, then maybe a child or grandchild's experience that you can think of?



Morning Break/Networking

College Preparedness' Session 2

- When students transition to college, they have to understand syllabus policies and deadlines

- Have classroom management regarding expected college behaviors such as critical inquiry, frequent writing, informational literacy, and collaborative learning no matter what the decided major of study.

College Preparedness'

Career cruising – interest inventories

Career exploration classes

Guidance Curriculum starting with freshman year

4-year graduation plans/revised at least once a year

College Preparedness'

Individual goal setting activities – month, year, 5 years, 10 years, 20 years

Weekly journal entries (trials, obstacles, circumstances, challenges, setbacks, past successes, failures...)

*Resilience is a benefit on student's future paths

High School & Colleges Need to Prepare Students for the Workplace (Soft Skills).......

Leadership – build teams, influence, assess, motivate, encourage people, and accommodate their needs, and discipline

Teamwork – partnership/collaboration (team/department/division) working together to accomplish the company's goals

High School & Colleges Need to Prepare Students for the Workplace (Soft Skills).......

Communication skills – verbal (speak clearly and concisely) – nonverbal (project positive body language and facial expressions) – written (text messages, reports, other documents) – visual (pictures and visual aids) – active listening (listen to and hear what others are saying)

Problem Solving skills – find answers to pressing problems and convey workable solutions

High School & Colleges Need to Prepare Students for the Workplace (Soft Skills).......

Work Ethic – companies do not want to spend time micromanaging employees – self-regulation, be punctual, meet deadlines, error-free work

Flexibility/Adaptability – adapt to drastic changes, resilient, and be able/willing to handle different tasks/responsibilities outside of area of expertise
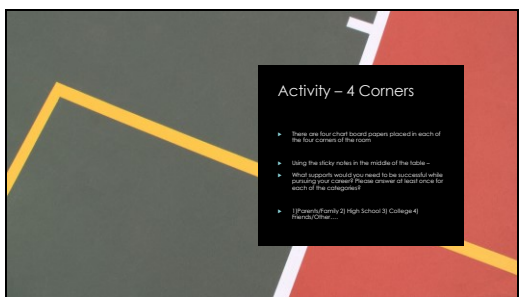
High School & Colleges Need to Prepare Students for the Workplace (Soft Skills).......

Interpersonal Skills – people skills (maintain relationships, build rapport, give and receive constructive criticism, respect for diversity)

Other soft skills include curiosity, conscientiousness/thoroughness, and have generosity, empathy, emotional intelligence, etc....



LUNCH TIME?

Activity: Starting over and going back to college ☺

Choose a new career outside of education – imagine being age 17/18 again - research three schools online – dream, target, safety schools

Complete ACT College Comparison Worksheet

Afternoon Break/Networking



After discussion: Wrap up, review, adjournment
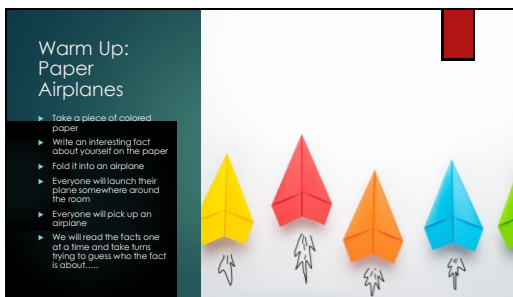
Paper airplane game – Pass out various colors of paper to each person – everyone writes an interesting fact about themselves on the paper – fold into airplane – everybody launches their plane somewhere around room – everyone picks up one of the airplanes – one by one reads the fact and takes turns guessing who the fact is about…. Learn new things about each other – which indeed transfers to our students (building relationships)

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**Financial Literacy**

Students who are not business majors are not confident in their financial literacy

Some educators reinforce financial literacy concepts through their courses, particularly in Corporate Finance and Personal Finance programs at the university

Attempt to incorporate financial literacy concepts into their curriculum through their courses

**Small group/large group discussion**

Please discuss in small group and then we will share out…

Best financial advice ever received in high school? College? Life?

**Morning Break/Networking**

**Time Management Session (School and Home both encouraging students)**

- Master schedule of the week by day and hour – use different colors to track assignments and due dates by subject
- Day Agenda – track upcoming assignments, TV, and computer time – instead of wasted hours in front of screen can spend time working on assignments
- Schedule study in short bursts (for every 30 minutes of schoolwork – get a 10-15-minute break to recharge). Longer than this and students' minds will wander to something else

**Time Management**

- Eliminate distractions – turn off cell phones and sign out of social media
- Set goals for each study session – how many pages of book report/essay
- How many math questions to complete
- Break assignments into smaller chunks

**Time Management**

1. Start working on assignments early – teach students and help them review master schedule and agenda – do not wait until last minute to start working on assignments and then students stress trying to complete them

2. Start assignments early in the day or right after school because as the evening goes the student has less time and energy

3. Work on one assignment at a time – full attention to one task will help students complete them more efficiently and effectively

Time Management

Encourage students to get 8-10 hours a sleep per night

High school students need a homework cut off time and bedtime

Time management is an issue for students in high school which transfers to college. Some universities are referring students to Student Success Centers after a month of classes when their academic performance falls below 70% and their attendance rate falls below 75%





Small group/large group discussion

Please discuss in small group and then we will share out....

Best time management tool/strategies that have changed and helped manage your life?

**Higher Education Continuous Student Needs**

Many students enter college without feeling prepared for academic writing

Exhibit low confidence in research skills so this is an area where educational institutions can further support students

## Higher Education Continuous Student Needs

- Students engaged in interdisciplinary study projects - fulfilled their basic psychological needs of "competence, relatedness, and autonomy"

- Colleges/universities are funding mini projects for students, encouraging peer-to-peer supports, and soliciting internships for students that helps them network and enter professional careers

Afternoon Break/Networking

Wrap up, review, questions, evaluations, adjournment

## *ACT College Comparison Worksheet (handout)*

| COLLEGE NAME | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Location**<br>—distance from home | | | |
| **Size** —<br>enrollment<br>—physical size of campus | | | |
| **Environment**<br>—type of school (2- or 4-year) —<br>school setting (urban, rural)<br>—location & size of nearest city<br>—co-ed, male, female —<br>religious affiliation | | | |
| **Admission Requirements**<br>—deadline<br>—tests required<br>—average test scores, GPA,<br>rank<br>—notification | | | |
| **Academics**<br>—your major offered<br>—special requirements —<br>accreditation<br>—student-faculty ratio —<br>typical class size | | | |
| **College Expenses**<br>—tuition, room and board —<br>estimated total budget<br>—application fee, deposits | | | |
| **Financial Aid**<br>—deadline<br>—required forms<br>—percentage receiving aid<br>—scholarships | | | |
| **Housing**<br>—residence hall requirement<br>—food plan | | | |
| **Facilities**<br>—academic<br>—recreational<br>—other | | | |
| **Activities**<br>—clubs, organizations —<br>Greek life<br>—athletics, intramurals<br>—other | | | |
| **Campus Visits**<br>—when<br>—special opportunities | | | |

College Readiness Professional Development Feedback Survey

* Please identify your position/title

_____

My attendance at this professional development was determined by local needs.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

The presenter was knowledgeable and effective.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

The strategies used by the presenter were appropriate in helping me attain the goals of this professional development experience.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

The professional development offered sufficient and appropriate opportunity for networking.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

I will continue to learn about this topic as part of my professional development.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

My local administration will support me in the implementation/use of this information and training.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

The handouts and materials were adequate and useful.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

I gained knowledge and skills to implement this professional development into my job.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

This professional development provided me with research-based strategies to assist students in meeting academic standards.
- o Strongly agree
- o Agree
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree
- o Not Applicable

As a result of this professional development experience, I will use my new knowledge and skills in the following ways.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To continue learning about this topic I need the following,
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol and Questions

The researcher will focus the start of the interview on putting the participant at ease by being polite, friendly, and sincere. The researcher will meet the participant with a smile and handshake while telling him/her what a pleasure it is to meet them. The researcher will try to establish a common ground by engaging in small talk about the weather or the person's day. The researcher will thank the participant for his/her time and remind the participant about the purpose of the interview.

The researcher expects the interview to last between 30 – 45 minutes. The interview will include four phases. The first phase will help build the participant profile using demographic information. The second phase will address student barriers in high school to reaching academic success. The third phase will address supports in high school for reaching academic success. The fourth phase will include middle ground questions and any extra information the participant may want to add at the end of the interview.

Phase 1

Name, gender, racial/ethnic background, where they were born, languages spoken in the home, overall grade point average in high school, how many high schools attended throughout duration of high school career, advanced classes, and subjects taken.

Phase 2

Interview questions to address barriers to reaching academic goals include….

1.  Have you faced any challenges in your high school program that made it difficult for you while you were trying to reach your academic goals? How did you overcome those challenges?

2.  What were your academic weaknesses?

3.  Did anyone or anything help you address your academic weaknesses?

4.  What would you change about your high school experience in preparation to reaching you academic goals?

5.  Why did you want to go to college?

6.  What is the biggest struggle you are facing in your transition from high school to college?

7.  Do you have any difficulty financing your college expenses and personal living expenses? If so, how are you addressing them?

Phase 3

Interview questions to address supports to reaching academic goals include….

8.  Describe any experiences you had in your high school program that stand out as very important in helping you meet your college and career goals.

9.  Who has been the greatest positive influence on you in life? How has that person been influential?

10. During your high school experience did you learn how to organize your time and tasks? If yes, please explain.

11. During your high school experience did you learn helpful study strategies? If yes, please explain.

12. During your high school experience did you receive assistance in preparation for college level work in the areas of writing, critical reading, or analysis of text?  If yes, please explain.

13.  During your high school experience did you learn how to understand your academic strengths and weaknesses?  If yes, please explain.

14.  During your high school experience did you learn the importance of not giving up and sticking through difficult subjects?  What stands out in your mind?  Please explain….

15. During your high school experience did you learn how to work with other students, and form a bond with a trusted adult or mentor who could guide you and help with college and career advice?  What stands out in your mind?  Please explain….

16. During your high school experience did you improve your attitude towards school, gain skills to succeed in college-level courses, understand the college application process and deadlines, college requirements, costs of college, college financial aid process, and learn about the support services and resources available to you at college?  What stands out in your mind?  Please explain….

Phase 4

Middle ground questions:

17. Do you feel like you were prepared for college?

If no…. What is it about your college experience so far that you were not prepared for?

18.  What could you have done to have been better prepared?

19. When did you first receive advice from your school on the proper courses to take to gain admission to college? $8^{th}$, $9^{th}$, $10^{th}$, $11^{th}$, $12^{th}$, or did you not receive any advice?

20. Do you have any challenges at school and/or home?

21. What is the college doing to meet these challenges?

22. What kind of support do you think you need?

23. Do you have any final thoughts that you would like to share?