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High School Dual Enrollment Teachers' Perceptions of Student College Readiness

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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MS, Walden University 2015

MS, Drexel University 2010

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Students graduating from high school are entering college unprepared for college-level academic readiness expectations. High school dual enrollment programs were established throughout the country to help address the lack of college readiness skills among students entering college. Empirical literature presented in this study demonstrates that dual enrollment programs do prepare students for college; however, a gap exists in understanding how these programs are able to accomplish this preparation. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college. The conceptual framework was based on Conley's work related to college readiness. Ten participants, who had a minimum of 1 year experience teaching in dual enrollment programs, were interviewed. Interview data were hand coded using a priori codes and in vivo coding to conduct a thematic analysis of the data. The results showed that high school dual enrollment teachers are aware of their responsibility to teach their students college readiness skills and use similar language in expressing what college readiness means. Because this study is unique, the results act as an impetus for new research exploring this topic to further develop and expand dual enrollment programs. The findings of this study can be used to support social change through adding to the body of research that already exists, opening new avenues for further research, and encourage the expansion of dual enrollment programs so that more students can have this advantage when they start college.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Students coming into college are not ready for college-level expectations, both academically and nonacademically, which leads to many students dropping out early in their college careers (Lile et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2019). A tradition of having graduated from high school no longer indicates that a high school graduate is college ready. For more than a decade, educators and other experts have tried to pinpoint why high school graduates are not prepared for college and why they lack college readiness skills (Lansing et al., 2017). Simply stated, these high school graduates are not being provided with the tools in high school to prepare them for college. One solution to this problem is dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to take credit-bearing college classes while still in high school. Dual enrollment programs have proven to help high school students develop better college-ready skills than high school graduates who did not participate in dual enrollment programs (Allen et al., 2020; Bowers & Foley, 2018; D'Anna et al., 2019; Hunter & Wilson, 2019; Latino et al., 2020; Taylor & Yan, 2018). However, there is a lack of evidence on how dual enrollment programs provide high school students with college readiness skills. If this could be determined, the results would enhance understanding of why other high school graduates are not college ready and possibly help both high school and college stakeholders find methods of helping all high school students find success in college.

In this chapter, I provide a background of the literature on college readiness and dual enrollment, providing the gap explored in this study before transitioning into a description of the problem as it exists within current literature. I then note the purpose of

the study and how it will address the problem. The research question of the study is presented, followed by a description of the conceptual framework, which is also explained as it regards the nature of the study, including the methodology used to collect and analyze the data gathered. I define keywords and concepts used to inform the study. The chapter also includes a discussion of the assumptions made about this study as well as the scope and delimitations of the research question and research population. Finally, I describe the study's limitations as well as how the study will contribute to and advance higher education knowledge.

Background

Multiple researchers have noted that there is a significant problem with high school students being college ready (Conley, 2018, Fina et al., 2018; Knight & Duncheon, 2020; Lile et al., 2018; McCormick & Hafner, 2017; Mokher & Jacobson, 2019; Savitz-Romer & Rowan-Kenyon, 2020; Schrynemakers et al., 2019; Townsley & Varga, 2018; van Rooij & Jansen, 2018; Wilson & Lowry, 2017; Woods et al., 2019). The lack of college readiness, in turn, affects the national push for a more educated workforce in the United States, especially as more jobs require a college degree than ever before (Hackmann et al., 2017; Zeiser et al., 2021). In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which Brown et al. (2019) described as a "strongly supported, bipartisan act that focuses on preparing all students for success in college and careers" (p. 86). The ESSA indicated explicitly that high school dual enrollment programs should be used to promote college and career readiness in high school students (Malin et al., 2017). Current research in the field of education has demonstrated that high

school students who participate in dual enrollment programs exhibit greater college readiness skills and success in higher education than students who do not participate in these programs (Allen et al., 2020; Arnold et al., 2017; Blankenberger et al., 2017; Bowers & Foley, 2018; D'Anna et al., 2019; Grubb et al., 2017; Hunter & Wilson, 2019; Latino et al., 2020; Taylor & Yan, 2018).

While studies have shown that participation in dual enrollment programs helps prepare high school students for college expectations, there is little research on how these programs accomplish this. One assumption that can be made is that those teaching dual enrollment classes can work with students to provide this readiness. However, there is a lack of research on those that teach dual enrollment. This is the gap in the literature that I explored in this study through gathering the perspectives of dual enrollment teachers on how dual enrollment programs help students to be prepared for college. Learning more about these teachers' perspectives can help high schools and colleges determine what should be done to help dual enrollment students and other high school students prepare for college. If some of the practices of dual enrollment teachers can be followed in other high school classes, then the conversation between high schools and higher learning institutions could become more coherent regarding how to prepare students to succeed in college, thereby contributing to filling the need for a more educated workforce in the United States.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was that many high school students are not academically prepared for college (Lile et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2019). Lack of

academic preparedness has contributed to low college completion rates at community colleges (Grubb et al., 2017; Lile et al., 2018; Wilson & Lowry, 2017). Many community colleges nationwide have dual enrollment programs, which are considered ideal platforms for preparing high school students for college rigor and expectations (Grubb et al., 2017; Woods et al., 2018). Researchers of dual enrollment programs found that students who participate in these programs were more likely to enroll in college full-time, had greater persistence throughout their college careers, had higher grade point averages (GPAs), and were less likely to require remediation upon entering college (An & Taylor, 2015; Lile et al., 2018).

Despite the plethora of literature supporting dual enrollment as a vehicle for college readiness, van Rooij and Jansen (2018) reported that "little research focuses specifically on how teachers prepare students for postsecondary education" (p. 11). van Rooij and Jansen also identified a need to investigate high school teachers' beliefs and their perceptions of students' college readiness. Duncheon and Muñoz (2019) noted that while there has been plenty of research regarding the success of dual enrollment students who transitioned into college, there is little research on the perceptions of dual enrollment high school teachers. The call for more research on dual enrollment teachers is also supported by McWain (2018) and Garcia et al. (2020). Lile et al. (2018) indicated that secondary education teachers and staff who support high school dual enrollment programs help the students feel more confident and competent in their future roles as college students, which lends evidence that more research needs to be conducted to better understand these supporting roles.

van Rooij and Jansen (2018) wrote that within academic research, little attention had been paid to the period of time before the transition from high school to college despite evidence demonstrating that failure to successfully transition during this period of time leads to early college dropout and even delays entering college. It is during this phase, before high school graduation, where dual enrollment programs are intended to contribute to college readiness (Lile et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2019). The gap identified in the literature that the current study addressed is the lack of research into how dual enrollment high school teachers perceive the usefulness of dual enrollment programs in preparing participating students for college.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college. I sought to inform stakeholders of the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how these programs help students prepare for college to aid them when making decisions regarding the future of dual enrollment programs.

Research Question

The following research question was explored in this study: What are high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college?

Conceptual Framework

I framed this study with Conley's work on college readiness coupled with the transfer of learning theory. In work on college readiness, Conley (2003) determined that there was a significant difference between a student successfully graduating from high school and being eligible for college and a student being academically ready for college. Later, Conley divided college readiness into four strategies that serve as college readiness indicators: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills (2014). Conley's work has been used in multiple studies to determine if high school students are ready for college (An & Taylor, 2015; Grubb et al., 2017; Schrynemakers et al., 2019; van Rooij & Jansen, 2018). In the current study, I used Conley's four strategies to define and measure college readiness, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Closely aligned to Conley's strategies is the transfer of learning theory. Transfer of learning involves applying information, strategies, and skills previously learned to a new situation. Haskell (2001) called transfer of learning "the very foundation of learning, thinking, and problem-solving" (p. xiii) and noted that transfer of learning is the purpose of all education, whether in a school or vocational setting. In the 1970s, transfer of learning became part of cognitive approaches in education (Cox, 1997; Day & Goldstone, 2012). The relationship between Conley's concept of students learning college readiness skills in high school and transferring those skills to college will be discussed further and in more detail in Chapter 2.

I used both Conley's college readiness strategies and the nature of the transfer of learning theory to construct the interview questions (see Appendix) for this study. Through interlacing these concepts with the research question addressed in this study, I found that the themes generated from participant interviews correlated with Conley's strategies and that transfer of learning was the purpose of teaching college readiness skills in dual enrollment classrooms. I will discuss this in further detail in Chapter 3.

Nature of the Study

The primary purpose of a qualitative study is to "understand how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon" (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 7). The current study was basic qualitative in nature, which Merriam and Grenier called an interpretive and descriptive qualitative study. Caelli et al. (2003) referred to basic qualitative research as a method that does not fit into previously preestablished qualitative approaches. They defined a basic qualitative method "as that which is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies" (p. 2). The current study was not based on an established theoretical framework because I did not examine that which defines a culture or look at a single case of a phenomenon and was not concerned with the process of lived experiences (see Percy et al., 2015). Rather, I focused specifically on the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers to add to what is already known and established about how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college success. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) wrote that "we need to employ many perspectives, hear many voices, before we can achieve deep understandings of social phenomena" (p. 1054). This

is what I intended to develop from this research study, a new perspective focusing on the voices of high school dual enrollment teachers on the phenomena of dual enrollment success.

In examining the topic of dual enrollment and college readiness, what is known is that dual enrollment programs help high school students develop college readiness skills. What is not known is how. A basic qualitative approach allowed me to delve deeper into the phenomenon through the lens of high school dual enrollment teachers, focusing on the teachers' outward perceptions, based on their experiences, into why dual enrollment programs are successful.

Definitions

The terms and concepts used in this study included:

Academic rigor: The challenging nature of coursework, homework, assignments, and classes. The purpose of having academically rigorous curricula is that students are expected to use higher-level thinking skills, such as critical thinking, reading, writing, and problem solving, which require a deeper level of thinking and learning (Rigor, 2014).

College readiness: For this study, I used Conley's (2014) definition of college readiness that defines college-ready students as "Students who are ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate degree, a certificate, or career pathway-oriented-training programs without the need for remedial or developmental course work" (p. 51). Participation in dual enrollment programs at the high school level provides students with the opportunity to learn college readiness skills before high school graduation.

Dual enrollment/dual credit/concurrent enrollment: The process by which high school students are also enrolled in college credit-bearing courses while still in high school (Duncheon & Relles, 2020). This study focused primarily on dual enrollment/dual credit/concurrent enrollment programs (also known by other state-specific terms) as a method to increase college readiness skills in high school students.

Dual enrollment students: Students who are taking dual enrollment classes on their high school campus and are taught by high school teachers as opposed to taking classes on college campuses taught by college faculty (Garcia et al., 2020).

Dual enrollment teachers: Just as dual enrollment opportunities vary by name, dual enrollment teachers can either be high school teachers or college faculty. The current study focused on dual enrollment teachers who are also high school teachers and not college faculty (see Education Commission of the States, 2019c).

Perception: In qualitative research, perceptual information is used to understand participants' experiences, usually through the participants' own words, as uncovered in interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Remediation: The process that some first-year college students participate in if they do not test into college-level mathematics or English classes. Also called developmental education, remedial classes do not carry college credits (Shields & O'Dwyer, 2017).

Transfer of learning: Used in reference to the transfer of learning's simplest concept: Students can transfer what they have learned in one situation to a new situation, which is the fundamental building block of education (Bransford et al., 2000; Haskell,

2001). Specifically, dual enrollment students can transfer what they have learned through participation in dual enrollment programs to the college environment.

Assumptions

The assumptions of a study should be identified and discussed as a method of validating data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Both of my assumptions concerned the participants in the qualitative study. My primary assumption was that all participants would answer the interview questions honestly. There should have been no reason why participants would not honestly answer the interview questions because I kept the information confidential and protected the participants' identities. There should not have been fear of retaliation for the participants' honest answers. I also assumed that the participants in this study were participating of their own free will and graciousness. There were no rewards or incentives offered for people to participate in this study, so the motivation for participation was entirely voluntary and based on an interest in helping to further scholarship. These two assumptions are essential to clarify so there can be no doubt about the honesty or motivation of those who participated in the study.

Scope and Delimitations

As indicated with the research question, I explored the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs promote college readiness skills in this study. I targeted high school dual enrollment teachers at six local high schools where dual enrollment programs exist. Only high school dual enrollment teachers could provide insight into understanding how dual enrollment classes prepare high school students for college. I was specifically looking for high school teachers'

perspectives because they are the primary teachers responsible for teaching dual enrollment content at these high schools. Hence, this study did not include any college faculty teaching dual enrollment content. Additionally, I focused on dual enrollment classes taught on high school campuses, not on college campuses. The high schools used in this study held dual enrollment classes only on high school campuses.

Transferability of the data and results will occur easily because most states have at least some dual enrollment classes taught on high school campuses. By using the data of dual enrollment teachers at six different high schools, the results should be able to be generalizable to the population.

Limitations

An overall limitation of qualitative research is generalizability. In qualitative research, it can be challenging to generalize a study that focuses on a small subgroup of participants to the greater population; therefore, qualitative research focuses on transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) indicated that transferability in qualitative research occurs when the work is read by other professionals who may see that the same study and processes could be applied to their situation. I hope that the current research results will be of interest to stakeholders of other dual enrollment programs, who could potentially use the results in their institutions. Another possible limitation to this study involved the recruitment of participants. Specific to this study, potential barriers included access to local high schools and dual enrollment teachers. Finally, as an employee of the college granting credit for the dual enrollment program, establishing objectivity could have been a challenge.

To counter these limitations, I made connections with the dual enrollment counselor at the college and explained the purpose of this study. The counselor then helped provide access to the dual enrollment counselors at the local high schools and the dual enrollment teachers. Because I had no contact with dual enrollment students at the college or the high school dual enrollment teachers, I felt that I could be objective in conducting this study.

Significance

This study's originality stemmed from researching teachers' perspectives related to the value of dual enrollment programs on college readiness rather than students or administrators. Teachers' perceptions on this topic had not been studied and having filled a gap in the literature may enhance understanding of how dual enrollment programs contribute to college readiness. Thus, this study will help inform those charged with overseeing and implementing dual enrollment programs regarding how participation in dual enrollment may contribute to college readiness. This study may also contribute to positive social change by encouraging the continuing development of dual enrollment programs. The more high school students that can access and go through these programs, the better prepared the students will be for college.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the study examining high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions of how dual enrollment programs successfully prepare high school students for college. Throughout the chapter, the problem of high school graduates not being college ready, and the consequences thereof, were described. I provided this

study's purpose and its implications on possible social change in how high schools and colleges communicate to better prepare high school students for college expectations. I also presented previous research on this problem, which stated that one solution is dual enrollment programs, and provided the research question addressed in the study. The chapter also included information on the conceptual framework used to study this problem and how this aligned with the nature of the study. The key terms and definitions that readers will need to understand this study were provided. I also described my assumptions going into the study regarding participants and their involvement in the study. The chapter also contains a discussion of the scope of the study, including why I chose to focus on high school dual enrollment teachers, information on this population, and how the findings related to this specific population can be generalized for transferability. Limitations and biases were presented, and the significance of the study was discussed. In the next chapter, I will provide a more in-depth examination of how I researched this problem; the conceptual framework used in the study; and an exhaustive literature review of previous research on college readiness, dual enrollment, and dual enrollment teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

High school students transitioning into college are not academically prepared for college-level work (Conley, 2018; Harrington & Rogalski, 2020; Lile et al., 2018; Woods et al., 2019). This lack of college readiness by high school students coincides with a national push for more college-educated people in the workforce and greater college access (Conley, 2018; Knight & Duncheon, 2020; Latino et al., 2020). Scholastic Aptitude Tests (College Board, 2019) and American College Testing (2019) scores revealed that only about half of graduating high school students achieve scores needed to meet college entry requirements. The transition from high school to college is an essential component to future academic success, and as van Rooij and Jansen (2018) noted, helping students make this transition "must be an explicit focus of secondary education" (p. 9).

High school dual enrollment programs are a way to help high school students gain college credits while in high school and prepare students for the rigor and expectations of college. Edmunds et al. (2022) wrote that "the intent of dual enrollment is to increase students' readiness for postsecondary education, thereby facilitating the transition to college" (p. 1). Researchers have found that high school students who participate in dual enrollment programs are more likely to succeed in their first year of college, have greater persistence throughout their college career, have higher GPAs, and are less likely to need remediation when entering college (An & Taylor, 2015; Blankenberger et al., 2017; Grubb et al., 2017; Jagesic et al., 2022; Lile et al., 2018). Although there have been many studies on whether dual enrollment programs help prepare high school students for

college, there is a gap in the research on the high school teachers who are responsible for teaching college-level content in the high school setting concerning how they perceive the usefulness of dual enrollment programs in preparing participating students for college (Burdick & Greer, 2017; Duncheon & Muñoz, 2019; Garcia et al., 2020; McWain, 2018; Phelps & Chan, 2016; Russo, 2020; van Rooij & Jansen, 2018). The current study helped to bridge this gap.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs support college readiness. I sought to add to the body of knowledge on college readiness and dual enrollment programs as well as inform stakeholders making decisions regarding the future of dual enrollment programs.

In the remainder of this chapter, I review the literature search strategy I employed as I sought articles for my study, describing the iterative search process used to conduct multiple search strings across numerous databases. I then explain the conceptual framework for the study, which consisted of Conley's work on college readiness supplemented with the transfer of learning theory. An exhaustive literature review of the related key concepts of the study follows. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the major themes in the literature and a description of how the study filled a gap in the literature regarding dual enrollment and college readiness.

Literature Search Strategy

I used ERIC, Academic Search Complete, EBSCO's Education Source, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Journals, and Science Direct to conduct the literature review.

Google Scholar and Walden University's Thoreau, an EBSCO platform, which are search engines that search across multiple databases, were also used.

Search Terms

As I conducted searches, I used multiple search strings and employed Boolean operators, such as AND, OR, and NOT, to form various combinations of words and phrases. For example, for *dual enrollment* AND *college readiness*, I searched for results that included both terms. However, to find articles that encompassed all the phrases used to mean dual enrollment, I combined them with OR to indicate that I wanted results for all those phrases. The Boolean operator NOT was used to indicate a term or phrase I did not want to appear in my results; however, I rarely used this Boolean operator in my searches. When using a phrase, such as dual enrollment, I searched both *dual enrollment* and *"dual enrollment"* to locate all research pertaining to my search. Using the quotation marks around a phrase, I signaled for the search engine to find both words combined as a phrase within my searches. In the EBSCO (2019) databases, I used the feature "Apply equivalent subjects," which signaled the database to search for synonyms or mapped vocabulary for my search terms. Additionally, I used the asterisk symbol to widen a search when I had a term that could have the same beginning but different endings. For example, searching for *student**, signaled the search engine to find both student and students. I often limited my search in databases to articles published within the past 5 years in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals. Table 1 shows some of the research terms and search strings used. The table's headings represent the major search terms I employed, followed by the subsequent search strings I used across multiple databases.

Table 1

Research Terms and Search Strings Used

Conley	Dual Enrollment	College Readiness	High School Teachers
• David Conley (author search) • AND college readiness • AND dual enrollment • AND high school students • AND college success • AND high school	• OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit OR early college credit • AND high school • AND high school student* • AND college readiness OR college preparedness • AND high school AND college readiness • AND transfer of learning OR transfer of knowledge • AND high school teachers • AND every student succeeds act • AND rigor • AND college success • AND college • AND state policies • AND federal government • AND US Dept of Education • AND history	• OR college preparedness OR academic readiness • AND high school student* AND success • AND high school • AND high school students • AND critical thinking skills • Julie Edmunds (author search) • AND non-academic tools • AND high school rigor • AND noncognitive skills	• OR educators OR instructors • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit • AND college readiness or college preparedness • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit AND training • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit AND rigor • AND college readiness AND expectations • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit AND perceptions
• OR secondary education • AND college preparation • AND college preparatory classes • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit OR early college credit • AND higher order thinking skills • AND knowledge transfer • AND transition to college • AND college expectations	• OR higher education • AND remedial classes OR remediation • AND preparatory courses • AND transition from high school • AND success • students AND remediation • going cultures • AND higher order thinking skills • AND expectations • AND attitude • AND academic expectations • AND rigor • AND roles of students • AND noncognitive skills	• OR knowledge transfer • AND education • AND high school students • AND higher order thinking skills • AND history • AND constructivism • AND threshold concepts	• AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit • AND expectations AND high school students • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit AND rigor • AND dual enrollment OR concurrent enrollment OR dual credit AND perceptions

Iterative Search Process

The search process was ongoing and repetitive, especially as I continued to search for more sources and any new sources that emerged while working on the study. Throughout the process, I repeatedly used the search terms above in different databases, overlapping to prevent missing any articles relevant to the study. For example, the search string *high school dual enrollment teachers* was used in EBSCO, Google Scholar, and Academic Search Complete. I used this same strategy for almost all the search terms, using multiple databases for each. Sometimes more complex search strings were used, such as *dual enrollment* AND *college readiness* AND *high school teachers*, to try to catch any outlying articles. At other times, broader search strings were employed, such as simply *dual enrollment* OR *learning theory*, to narrow the results using tools within the databases. I would describe this process as iterative and an ebb-and-flow-type process as I searched through each search term to saturation.

Another method I used was to group synonyms within my searches. For example, dual enrollment programs are also referred to as concurrent enrollment or dual credit programs. Different states have different names for these programs that are state-specific. In 24 of the 50 states in the United States, these programs are called dual enrollment (Education Commission of the States, 2019a). The remaining states vary from concurrent enrollment and dual credit to other specific programs offered through the individual state, such as Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options and Massachusetts' Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnerships (Education Commission of the States, 2019a).

The area with the least research was high school teachers of dual enrollment classes. This lack of research on high school dual enrollment teachers provided a rationale for focusing on this area in the current study. I found some information on high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions of program rigor and how dual enrollment teachers perceive state mandates on dual enrollment but little else.

Conceptual Framework

I aligned this study with Conley's work on college readiness and the transfer of learning theory, which is closely related to college readiness. In addition to presenting Conley's definition of college readiness, in this section I synthesize the work of researchers that relates to college readiness as well as describe how the concept of college readiness has been applied in previous research and how the current study benefitted from the college-readiness framework.

Conley's College Readiness

In 1998, Conley (2003) began work on college readiness after being named the director of a research project called Standards for Success. The primary research question driving the project was: "What must students know and be able to do in order to succeed in entry-level university courses?" (p. 8). In the same study, Conley concluded that there needs to be a straightforward connection between high school and college expectations and noted a significant difference between a student being eligible for college and a student being academically prepared for college. The traditional standard of graduating from high school as an indication of college readiness no longer applies because some students entering college are underprepared, and many require remediation upon entering

college. Using Conley's work involves first understanding what college readiness means and then examining the four strategies that indicate what a college-ready student is.

Definition of College Readiness

Conley (2014) noted that it is critical to define college and career readiness before delving deeper into understanding the relationships involved. This definition went through several iterations as Conley incorporated trends in higher education, such as the national push to reduce remediation, which included non-credit-bearing courses, also called developmental courses. If students need remediation upon entering college, then they are not college ready, despite having a high school diploma. Conley's (2018) final iteration of the definition of college readiness emerged as states began to develop common core standards that included college and career readiness. Conley's (2014) updated definition of college readiness was: "Students who are ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to a baccalaureate degree, a certificate, or career pathway-oriented-training programs without the need for remedial or developmental course work" (p. 51). A salient argument for using Conley's definition is that there is a flexibility that reflected the changes in educational forces over time. To meet this definition, Conley developed four college readiness strategies, which are discussed in the following subsection.

College Readiness Strategies

Conley's (2018) work on college readiness introduced a model with four specific strategies that contribute to a student's success leaving high school and entering college: cognitive, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition of knowledge

and skills. When combined, these four strategies are what a student must transfer from high school to college to be ready for higher education's unique challenges. If students can learn these strategies throughout high school and transfer that learning to their first year of college, they will have the tools leading to academic success. Following are brief descriptions of each strategy.

Strategy 1: Cognitive. The first of Conley's four strategies is cognitive. According to Conley (2010), the information used to develop this strategy came directly from research and was identified by college instructors as crucial to a college student's first year of college. Students must appropriately research a problem, evaluate research, incorporate the research through interpretation and analysis, formulate a cohesive argument and/or explanation of the problem, and successfully communicate the research findings with precision and accuracy (Conley, 2008).

Strategy 2: Content Knowledge. The second strategy of Conley's model is content knowledge, which Conley (2014) explained as "what it takes for students to learn important content effectively and efficiency" (p. 64). Content knowledge starts with students having knowledge and understanding of the basics of all subject areas so that when they go to college, they can build on that knowledge (Conley, 2012). Essential to successful content knowledge is students' attitude toward learning, which can either produce positive or negative transfer between high school and college and between subjects (Conley, 2014). If students do not believe that what they are learning is important to their own career goals, it hinders learning and making connections. A

college-ready student should approach new learning with an attitude that will enhance the learning experience.

Strategy 3: Learning Skills and Techniques. Conley's (2012) third strategy, learning skills and techniques, is divided into two parts: student ownership of learning and specific learning techniques. Ownership of learning centers around the idea that a student has the freedom to learn outside of what is taught in the classroom, thus providing the opportunity for more in-depth learning. Examples of ownership include goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, help seeking, progress monitoring, and self-efficacy (Conley, 2014; Conley & French, 2014). Ownership differs between high school and college students in that high school work is more guided, and college work is less guided. Students who do not understand the inherent differences in ownership between high school and college may have a more challenging time successfully transitioning between the two.

The second part of this strategy involves the skills that students need to be successful learners and techniques that help students navigate the challenges of the college experience. These skills include, but are not limited to, time management, study skills, test taking, note taking, and technology proficiency (Conley, 2014), all of which successful college students should be able to apply to their scholarship.

Strategy 4: Transition Knowledge and Skills. While the other strategies focus on academic knowledge and context, this strategy involves awareness of the administrative aspects of college readiness in what Conley (2014) referred to as "the five aspects of key transitional skills" (p. 87), which are contextual, procedural, financial,

cultural, and personal knowledge. Part of this strategy involves students being aware of how higher education functions regarding admissions, financial aid, resources, and knowing what other opportunities are available within the institution (Conley, 2010). Armed with this knowledge, students who transition from high school to college can better cope with the issues they will face in college (Conley, 2014).

Current Use of Conley's College Readiness Strategies

Conley's four college readiness strategies have been used to determine if students meet the criteria necessary for college (An & Taylor, 2015; Grubb et al., 2017; Schrynemakers et al., 2019; van Rooij & Jansen, 2018). In one study, An and Taylor (2015) used Conley's four strategies to determine whether dual enrollment students exhibited greater college readiness skills than students who had not participated in dual enrollment classes. In another study, Schrynemakers et al. (2019) used Conley's definition of college readiness as their theoretical framework when conducting a study of community college faculty's interpretation of academic success in students' first year of college. In examining the disconnect between high school teachers and college instructors, van Rooij and Jansen (2018) used Conley's college readiness strategies because Conley's strategies focus specifically on what high school students need to successfully transition to college. van Rooij and Jansen used Conley's strategies to "investigate what factors secondary school teachers…believe are important for students to be successful" (p. 11) as they enter higher education. What van Rooij and Jansen found coincides with Conley's argument: there needs to be a stronger connection between high

schools and higher education institutions to help students successfully transfer from high school to college.

Transfer of Learning and Conley's College Readiness Strategies

The transfer of learning theory, initially developed by Thorndike and Woodworth (1901), aligns with Conley's strategies. At the foundation of the transfer of learning theory, students can transfer knowledge from one activity to another (Hajian, 2019). If high school students learn the strategies set out by Conley, then they can transfer what they have learned to the college environment. Haskell (2001) and Bransford et al. (2000) indicated that transfer of learning is the fundamental purpose of the education system, with the desire that students transfer learning from class to class, year to year, and beyond. Students start in kindergarten and move forward through other grades by transferring the previous year's learning to what they are currently being taught. Bransford et al. wrote "all new learning involves transfer" (p. 78). The theory of transfer of learning is essential as high school students cross the threshold into college. Conley's strategies are meant to be learned before college to align high school and college experiences better and promote college readiness. Transfer must occur because transfer of learning is at the foundation of education (Haskell, 2001) and the psychology of learning (Bransford et al., 2000; Ellis, 1965). High school students need to be given the tools to be successful, as prescribed by Conley, so that this transfer may occur and the students are ready for the challenges of college (Bransford et al., 2000; Knight & Duncheon, 2020).

Conley's Strategies and Present Study

Conley's strategies on college readiness provides a foundation for the essential skills high school students need to transition to college. Referred to frequently in researching college readiness, Conley's work is a standard among higher education professionals. Research in dual enrollment programs almost exclusively reports that these programs help students to develop skills that they can transfer to their first year of college and beyond (Blankenberger et al., 2017; Grubb et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2018; Taylor & Yan, 2018; Wang et al., 2015).

When studying dual enrollment and its effects on college readiness, many researchers use Conley's work to make sense of the indicators of college readiness through his definition and four strategies (An & Taylor, 2015; Cram & Béjar, 2019; Grubb et al., 2017; Lile et al., 2018; Witkowsky & Clayton, 2019). Using Conley's four strategies as predictors of college success, I will explore how high school teachers of dual enrollment programs perceive these programs as contributing to high school students' readiness for college.

Literature Review

In this section, I provide an in-depth discussion of college readiness and dual enrollment. Dual enrollment programs lead to college readiness success (Blankenberger et al., 2017; Grubb et al., 2017; Jagesic et al., 2022; Morgan et al., 2018; Taylor & Yan, 2018; Wang et al., 2015). But what is not known is how these programs lead to college readiness success. In fact, Day et al. (2020) noted that "studies have concluded that dual enrollment improves student achievements and success, but none have included the how

aspect of why this phenomenon is occurring" (p. 3). I begin with college readiness, followed by dual enrollment, and finish with a discussion of what factors might be contributing to the success of dual enrollment programs in supporting college readiness.

College Readiness

There is a prevalent issue in higher education—while high school graduates have satisfied the requirements to receive a high school diploma, many graduates are not ready for college success. According to Royster et al. (2015), graduating from high school means that a person is adequately prepared for college, but that is not always true. Fina et al. (2018) indicated that meeting the benchmark of a high school diploma was not an indicator of students having the knowledge and skills to succeed in college. The issue is that this divide between high school and college coincides with a national push for more college-educated people in the workforce and a trend that includes greater college access (Morgan et al., 2018). The federal government has reinforced this push for a more educated workforce in passing legislation such as the ESSA of 2015. The ESSA requires, by law, "that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017, para. 9). The lack of college readiness among some students graduating from high school combined with the need for a more college-educated workforce presents a perplexing problem that can neither be overlooked nor easily addressed.

In examining college readiness, it is important to understand why students are not ready for college after completing high school. In a study of high school students and their postsecondary education, Morgan et al. (2018) indicated that when high school

students are presented with rigorous coursework, they have greater postsecondary success. Similarly, Jagesic et al. (2022) noted that “exposure to college-level material in high school can help prepare students for college-level work” (p. 135). However, An and Taylor (2015), Conley (2003), and Woods et al. (2018) all cited a lack of academic rigor as a reason for high school students not being academically prepared for college. This lack of rigor is backed by the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) as one of the reasons for the Common Core Standards, stating that high schools “have not set consistently rigorous goals for students” (para 1). Woods et al. noted that the lack of rigor of high school coursework is an example of the disconnect between secondary and postsecondary institutions and contributes to the lack of college readiness found in high school graduates entering college. A student’s GPA in high school, long held to be a standard for college acceptance (Townsley & Varga, 2018; Woods et al., 2018), cannot compare to the knowledge and skills represented in a college student’s GPA. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, even the tests conducted by the American College Testing and the Scholastic Aptitude Tests, which are traditional college entrance exams (Fina et al., 2018), demonstrate that some high school students are not prepared for the academic rigors of college (American College Testing, 2019; College Board, 2019).

Schrynemakers et al. (2019) conducted a study of community college faculty to determine what they saw as vital to students’ academic success and college readiness over five years. The results of Schrynemakers et al.'s study indicated that faculty viewed college-level reading and writing skills as “very important or essential” (p. 18) to students’ academic success in college. The results indicated that faculty saw a decline in

college readiness skills over 5 years, citing weaker reading and study skills (Schrynemakers et al., 2019). In a study exploring how college students felt high school English classes prepared them for college-level reading and writing, McCormick and Hafner (2017) found that many participants indicated that their high school English classes had not prepared them for college-level writing. Furthermore, McCormick and Hafner discovered that students who participated in college preparatory courses, such as dual enrollment, transitioned from high school to college more successfully than those who had not. After studying high school students' transcription data, Woods et al. (2018) noted that there is not only a lack of alignment in what skills and knowledge are needed to transfer successfully from secondary to postsecondary education but also that "basic high school coursework is not sufficient preparation for passing introductory courses" (p. 190) at the community college level.

It has long been determined that college readiness is not only about academic skills but also noncognitive skills that are needed to navigate the college experience (An & Taylor, 2015; Bowman et al., 2019; Cram & Béjar, 2019; Morgan et al., 2018; Villares & Brigman, 2019). Studies indicated that a problem many college students had was that they did not understand college expectations and therefore, could not thrive in the college environment (Karp et al., 2017). There is a significant need for students entering college to be given the academic tools needed for success and the non-academic tools, such as behaviors and attitudes necessary to traverse the threshold of higher education, which increases students' self-efficacy and confidence (Bickerstaff et al., 2017). Karp and Bork (2014) posited the question, "How can students live up to behavioral expectations they do

not know exist?" (p. 3). Without being given the tools for college success in high school, even students who excel in high school are not necessarily ready for college (Bickerstaff et al., 2017; Fina et al., 2018; Karp et al., 2017).

Dual Enrollment

A solution to academic readiness issues is dual enrollment programs (Latino et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Phelps & Chan, 2016; Witkowsky & Clayton, 2019). Dual enrollment programs expose students to the curricular rigor expected in a college class, addressing one of the cited reasons that high school graduates are not college-ready (Morgan et al., 2018). In a study of high school dual enrollment teachers, Ferguson et al. (2015) found that most participants felt that their dual enrollment classes had the same, if not higher, rigor as classes taught on the college campus. Also, the teachers reported that their students were able to achieve at higher levels than the students they taught who were not in dual enrollment classes (Ferguson et al., 2015). Researchers, such as Latino et al. (2020), found that students who had participated in programs such as dual enrollment in high school played an important role in higher first-year GPAs. Furthermore, Latino et al. indicated that dual enrollment programs prepare high school students not only academically but also with the noncognitive areas that are important to college success. Savitz-Romer and Rowan-Kenyon (2020) defined noncognitive skills as "the range of behaviors, mindsets, and developmental skills" (p. 6), and Bowman et al. (2019) identified four essential noncognitive areas associated with students' success in college: academic self-efficacy, time management, self-discipline, and grit.

Dual enrollment programs, as we know them, have existed since the 1970s when Syracuse University, at the request of local high schools, created Project Advance, which is the model that most dual enrollment programs use today (Edmunds & Squires, 2016). The core idea behind Project Advance was to offer high school seniors the chance to earn college credits as a concurrent program to their high school curriculum (Edmunds & Squires, 2016). In 1976, California was the first to initiate a state-wide dual enrollment program, with other states slowly adapting policies over the next 30 years (Mokher & McLendon, 2009). By 2019, 50 states had dual enrollment policies (Education Commission of the States, 2019a). The reason states have adopted these policies is a result of national initiatives to increase the number of people with college degrees. In the early 2000s, dual enrollment programs began to gain greater traction as national attention turned to the lack of college completion rates among students in the United States. It was believed that one of the reasons traditional college-aged students were unable to complete college degree programs was because of the disconnect between secondary and postsecondary education systems, thus prompting attention to how educators could make the transition from high school to college more successful for students through various interventions at the high school level (Edmunds et al., 2020). Dual enrollment programs seemed to meet this need as they can help high school students prepare for college expectations and gain college credits while in high school, making the path to completion shorter and less expensive (Allen et al., 2020; Day et al., 2020; Garcia et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2020; Witkowsky & Clayton, 2019).

On a national level, policymakers were advised of these programs and their policies and benefits. As a result, states that operated dual enrollment programs began to examine their policies to determine how they could make the programs more successful for more students (Garcia et al., 2020; Zinth & Taylor, 2019). In 2013, President Barrack Obama announced his administration's plan to make college more affordable and accessible to all Americans. Within Obama's plan was a call for institutions of higher education to adopt "promising practices that we know offer breakthroughs on cost, quality, or both – or create something better" (The White House, 2013, para. 11), naming high school dual enrollment as one of those promising practices.

Dual enrollment programs are vehicles to help high school students gain college credits while in high school and prepare students for college rigor and expectations (Bowers & Foley, 2018; Latino et al., 2020; Lile et al., 2018; Taylor & Yan, 2018). These programs are credited through local institutions of higher education, usually community colleges (Duncheon, 2020). Dual enrollment programs allow students to take both high school and college classes simultaneously (Duncheon & Relles, 2020). By the end of their senior year of high school, students could graduate from high school and possibly have earned up to an associate degree (Duncheon, 2020). A benefit of participation in dual enrollment programs is that high school students are being exposed to the higher education experience and may become acclimated to college while still in high school (Allen et al., 2020). Witkowsky and Clayton (2019) studied high school counselors' perspectives on dual enrollment. They found that high school counselors felt that dual enrollment participation provided high school students with opportunities to explore their

potential field of study, increased students' confidence in their abilities to complete college-level work and helped prepare students for the vital transition to college. Azimzadeh et al. (2015) studied dual enrollment students' perspectives on participating in dual enrollment classes. Findings showed that students felt participation in dual enrollment programs gave them greater confidence in their collegiate abilities, positively influenced their desire to attend college, helped them manage their time, and saved them money (Azimzadeh et al., 2015).

Studies (Allen et al., 2020; Arnold et al., 2017; Blankenberger et al., 2017; Bowers & Foley, 2018; D'Anna et al., 2019; Grubb et al., 2017; Hunter & Wilson, 2019; Latino et al., 2020; Taylor & Yan, 2018) conducted on students who participated in dual enrollment programs and subsequently attended college provided indicators that dual enrollment programs help prepare students for college success. These studies compared college students who participated in dual enrollment programs in high school with college students who had not participated in high school dual enrollment programs. In fact, Blankenberger et al. (2017) determined that participation in high school dual enrollment programs was a factor in whether a student obtained a bachelor's degree compared to college students who had not participated in high school dual enrollment programs. Similarly, Grubb et al. (2017) found that college students who participated in high school dual enrollment programs were more likely to complete a degree program than non-dual enrollment participants. Grubb et al. determined that the dual enrollment students needed less remediation upon entering college. Likewise, Taylor and Yan (2018) concluded that participation in high school dual enrollment programs correlated with

higher retention rates in college, and Wang et al. (2015) found a similar correlation with academic momentum. While these studies sought to find a connection between high school dual enrollment programs and college success, they did not indicate how dual enrollment programs prepared high school students for college beyond what An and Taylor (2015) called "academic proxies" (p. 3)—completion rates, graduation rates, and the need for remediation. Later in this chapter, I provide a discussion on what factors might account for the connection between dual enrollment programs and college readiness, in addition to "academic proxies."

An and Taylor (2015) were determined to test how dual enrollment programs prepared high school students regarding college readiness. Using Conley's four college readiness strategies—cognitive, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transitional knowledge and skills—An and Taylor found that college students who participated in dual enrollment programs in high school accelerated in three out of Conley's four strategies. The one area that dual enrollment students did not score higher than students who did not participate in dual enrollment was Conley's fourth strategy, transition knowledge and skills. This indicated that the students lacked knowledge about the institution of higher education they went to, as well as the skills to navigate that specific institution. In a study of 25,187 public high school students, Taylor and Yan (2018) found that participation in dual enrollment programs were predictors of future college success, confirming what many other researchers have concluded: dual enrollment participation is a method of promoting college readiness in high school students.

Dual Enrollment and College Readiness

The research described in the previous two sections indicates that dual enrollment participation promotes college readiness in high school students. However, there is a lack of research on how dual enrollment instructors promote college readiness. At least three topics warrant further discussion—how dual enrollment instructors promote college readiness, who teaches dual enrollment courses and what credentials are required, and the role of collaboration between high schools and colleges.

High School Teachers and College Readiness

Lansing et al. (2017) conducted a study of high school teachers who had been involved in a deliberate attempt to address the gap between high school and higher education in Florida. The researchers' purpose was to explore the high school teachers' response to the reform being implemented. Lansing et al. found that the high school teachers wanted to enhance college readiness skills in their students by supporting a stronger alliance between high school and colleges. Programs such as dual enrollment, where students are exposed to the college environment while in high school, would be an ideal opportunity for high school teachers and college faculty to collaborate on increasing college readiness among high school students. Similarly, Williams et al. (2018) found that high school teachers emphasized the need for better communication and collaboration between high school teachers, college instructors, and administrators, particularly regarding curricular issues. In evaluating a program meant to increase the access to dual enrollment programs to disadvantaged populations, Edmunds et al. (2022)

found that part of the success of the program was due to an emphasis on the high school classroom being an impetus for providing college readiness skills.

These studies confirm that high school teachers can influence high school students at the right time and place to promote college readiness among their students. Dual enrollment teachers are in the ideal location and time to prepare high school students for college expectations, but their ability to do so many be limited because of the competing pressure of being caught between the norms, policies, cultures, and meaning of academic freedom versus accountability that separate secondary and postsecondary education systems (Duncheon & Relles, 2020; Fukuda & Hopper-Moore, 2016; McWain, 2018). For example, Duncheon and Muñoz (2019) studied how high school early college teachers conceptualized college readiness. What Duncheon and Muñoz found was that the high school teachers had various perspectives on what defines college readiness and that there was "no coherent, shared definition across or within schools" (p. 470), which could conflict with the definitions within the higher education setting.

Despite the issues faced by dual enrollment instructors, Hanson et al. (2015) noted in their study that dual enrollment teachers felt that participation in dual enrollment courses did help prepare high school students for college by exposing them to personal and academic gains. The high school dual enrollment teachers in the study by Hanson et al. felt that dual enrollment students learned essential skills such as time management, problem solving, and study skills. The evidence is that even without a cohesive definition of college readiness and despite many conflicts in the transitional space between secondary and postsecondary educational systems, most dual enrollment teachers are still

able to help their students learn college readiness skills, as demonstrated by the many studies included in the sections above that report that dual enrollment students find success in college.

From the above discussion, one could conclude that dual enrollment teachers themselves are solely responsible for the success seen between dual enrollment programs and college readiness. However, additional considerations are in order and will be discussed below. I hope to discover even more ways that high school dual enrollment teachers contribute to college readiness in my study.

Dual Enrollment Instructors, Locations, and Credentials

According to Duncheon and Relles (2020), one reason for the lack of research on how dual enrollment programs increase college readiness is that dual enrollment programs across the United States are so varied. While the Obama-era policies put dual enrollment in the forefront to increase the number of people with higher education credentials, these policies vary in their development and implementation because they are state-driven. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019), there are four places where dual enrollment programs are offered—on high school campuses (80%), on college campuses (17%), online (8%), and at another high school (6%). In most states, dual enrollment programs are offered either at high school or postsecondary institutions; however, some states provide online access (Education Commission of the States, 2019b). Some studies reported that where dual enrollment is taught can affect students' future college success. Day et al. (2020) studied high school students taking dual enrollment classes on high school and college campuses. The students who took classes

on the college campuses reported higher self-motivation and self-regulation, leading Day et al. to conclude that these students were “more satisfied, more independent, and more responsible” (p. 15).

Just as policies regarding where dual enrollment programs take place varies from state to state, so too do the policies about who can teach dual enrollment (Horn et al., 2018). Dual enrollment classes on a college campus are taught by college faculty, and the high school students are usually mixed with college students. Classes taught on high school campuses are taught either by high school teachers or college faculty, traditionally determined by state policies. In some states, those high school teachers must have specific credentials to teach dual enrollment classes. As shown in Table 2, there are four main types of qualifications for high school dual enrollment teachers. Eight states do not have specific qualifications in their state dual enrollment policies, which according to Horn et al., is because the dual enrollment courses are taught exclusively by college faculty at the postsecondary institution granting the credits. While Table 2 does demonstrate the credentials dual enrollment teachers need to have, the policies themselves are not always clear. For example, Louisiana’s dual enrollment policy indicates that those who teach dual enrollment classes should have the equivalent qualifications of a college adjunct, but it is up to the high schools to assess the qualifications of those teachers and not the college granting the credits (Education Commission of the States, 2019b). Conversely, New Mexico also indicates that high school dual enrollment instructors must have the same qualifications as a college adjunct,

but it is the responsibility of the postsecondary institution granting credit to approve the dual enrollment instructors (Education Commission of the States, 2019b).

Table 2

State Qualifications for Dual Enrollment Instructors

Qualifications	States
No specific qualifications for dual enrollment instructors	Alaska / California / Connecticut / District of Columbia / Georgia / Hawaii / Nevada / New York / Wisconsin
Dual enrollment instructors must have a master's degree in the subject they are teaching	Arkansas / Illinois / Mississippi / Missouri / New Jersey / North Dakota / South Dakota / Texas / Virginia
Dual enrollment instructors must have the same qualifications as an adjunct faculty member	Alabama / Delaware / Florida / Idaho / Illinois / Iowa / Louisiana / Maryland / Missouri / Montana / Nebraska / New Mexico / Oklahoma / Oregon / Pennsylvania / Rhode Island / Utah / Washington / West Virginia / Wyoming
Other: includes states with policies that either have specific criteria that do not match the other two types of qualifications, or the policies indicate that the qualifications of high school dual enrollment teachers are determined on a local level by the secondary and/or postsecondary institutions involved.	Arizona / Colorado / Indiana / Kansas / Kentucky / Maine / Massachusetts / Michigan / Minnesota / New Hampshire / North Carolina / Ohio / South Carolina / Tennessee / Vermont

Note. Adapted from *Dual Enrollment – All State Profiles*, Education Commission of the States, 2019 (http://ecs.force.com/mbdata/mbprofall2?Rep=DE19A). Adapted from *Increasing the Supply of Qualified High School Teachers For Dual Enrollment Programs: An Overview of State and Regional Accreditor Policies: Policy Report* by A. S. Horns, J. L. Parks, J. D. Zinth, and L. Sisneros, Midwestern Higher Education Compact, 2018.

The state policy in New Jersey is especially confusing because it indicates that college faculty members should teach college courses for high school students, but "district staff with a minimum of a master's degree may also be included" (Horn et al., 2018, p. 22).

Various state policies leave much to interpretation by individual school districts, which means there exists the possibility of a lack of consistency on the local level. It is this lack of consistency that critics point to as a reason that some colleges will not accept transferred dual enrollment credits, which is coupled with skepticism about high school dual enrollment teachers being equipped to teach the rigor of and appropriately evaluate college-level work (Duncheon & Relles, 2020; Gewertz, 2016; Russo, 2020). Yet, as previously stated, the research into dual enrollment programs demonstrates that the programs successfully help high school students transition to college. Hence, the conclusion must be that those teaching dual enrollment classes are doing something within their classrooms to teach college readiness. In my study, I hope to discover what makes dual enrollment programs such an established positive contributor to college readiness and amplify the voices of these high school dual enrollment teachers.

High School and Higher Education Collaboration

A third factor to consider regarding how dual enrollment programs contribute to college readiness is the collaboration between high schools and colleges. In conducting a study of high school teachers and college faculty, Mokher and Jacobson (2019) highlighted that collaboration between high schools and colleges to promote and advance college readiness, while ideal, is difficult to accomplish. These authors discovered three underlying themes that prevented collaboration between high schools and colleges. First, there were difficulties in establishing roles and identities between high school and college faculty; second, both high school and college faculty members faced different external demands, which affected focus; and finally, there was an issue in determining the

objectives and goals of curricula and standards. Research by Russo (2020) indicated that high school dual enrollment teachers felt that while representing a college curriculum, there was limited engagement with the college, which led the high school dual enrollment teachers to question their own curricular choices because they were unsure of the alignment with college faculty teaching the same content. According to Russo, interviewed high school dual enrollment teachers "felt a strong sense of isolation from the college" (p. 100), which led them to wonder if they were adequately preparing their students for college. Since dual enrollment is meant to help increase college readiness among high school students, this is a serious cause for concern.

From the research, there seems to be a common theme, where high school dual enrollment teachers are not included in the conversation about what they can do to help align their teaching with what is happening on college campuses, leaving these high school dual enrollment teachers uncertain if they are adequately preparing their students for success in higher education (Duncheon & Relles, 2020; McWain, 2018; Russo, 2020). Furthermore, Williams et al. (2018) noted that it was important that there be more communication and collaboration between high school teachers and their counterparts in higher education to better support the transition between high school and college, a sentiment echoed by other researchers (Lansing et al., 2017). So, while dual enrollment programs help bridge high school and college for students, that same bridge is nonexistent for dual enrollment teachers. And yet, as previously stated, studies demonstrate that these dual enrollment programs work to increase college readiness among students who participate.

Of the three factors discussed above (i.e., teacher delivery, credentials and location, and institution collaboration), how teachers deliver dual enrollment courses, despite their obstacles, might be most responsible for the success of dual enrollment programs toward college readiness. However, as Witkowsky and Clayton (2019) alluded to in their research, dual enrollment programs' success cannot be attributed to a single factor. In my research, I will further explore the role that dual enrollment teachers play in the process of making dual enrollment programs successful in promoting college readiness skills in their students.

Conclusion

As there is pressure for an increase in college completion, studies such as those described in this chapter demonstrate gaps in the literature between high school completion and entry into college. This gap has prompted a more significant discussion regarding what college readiness means and how high school students may acquire college readiness skills before high school graduation. Dual enrollment programs offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credits and experience college rigor. Students who have participated in dual enrollment programs demonstrated the benefits of these programs in higher college GPAs, completion rates, and better preparation for college coursework.

In this chapter, I provided an in-depth discussion of the two critical variables in my study—college readiness and dual enrollment. Furthermore, I explored some of the factors that likely contribute to the success of dual enrollment programs toward college readiness. There is a paucity of research related to how dual enrollment programs provide

high school students with college readiness skills. By exploring the perceptions of those who teach high school dual enrollment programs, I will address a gap that will contribute to the body of knowledge of how these programs contribute to the college readiness skills of high school students who participate in them.

In Chapter 3, I explain the design of my qualitative study in greater detail, presenting the rationale for the chosen design. I also present my role in the research as an individual gathering and analyzing data. Details of the methodology I employed to identify the high school dual enrollment teachers recruited to participate will be explained. Additionally, I identify the data collection instrument and its source, detailing how this instrument will align to the purpose of examining the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs promote college readiness in the students who participate in dual enrollment programs.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college. I sought to inform stakeholders of the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how these programs help students prepare for college for use when making decisions regarding the future of dual enrollment programs.

In this chapter, I discuss basic qualitative research frameworks and detail how this framework appropriately supported answering the research question of the study. I review my own positionality as the researcher and explain how I located and recruited high school dual enrollment teachers to participate in the study. A discussion of the interview process used to collect data follows. I also describe the coding process implemented to create categories and themes from the data collected. Finally, the trustworthiness of and ethical considerations in the study are addressed.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question driving this study was: What are high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college? I chose a basic qualitative framework (also known as a generic qualitative framework) because it supported the purpose of this inquiry into the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding the lived experience of high school dual enrollment teachers. A qualitative framework was appropriate for this study because I sought to "contextualize and reflect the meaning" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 2) that high

school dual enrollment teachers made of their experiences teaching dual enrollment classes. Qualitative researchers seek insight in a way that quantitative researchers do not, allowing the researcher to create meaning from lived experiences of people, which cannot be quantified the same way that numerical data can. Ravitch and Carl described qualitative research as being "based on methodological pursuit of understanding the ways that people see, view, approach, and experience the world and make meaning of their experiences as well as specific phenomena within it" (p. 7). Because I investigated the experiences and perceptions of people, things that cannot easily be quantified, a qualitative framework was the most suitable choice to explore the research question guiding this study.

Basic qualitative research provides a freedom from the restrictive natures of the traditional qualitative frameworks, and as defined by Caelli et al. (2003), "is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies" (p. 2). The epistemology of a basic qualitative study aligns with that of social constructivism (see Kahlke, 2014), which again supported answering the research question because the participants shared their reality based on the constructs of their experiences teaching dual enrollment classes. Merriam (2009) indicated that a basic qualitative study is one that focuses on three areas: "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). These focuses supported what I wanted to achieve with my research question because I sought to discover the constructs and applied

meaning that high school dual enrollment teachers prescribed to the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs to teach students college readiness skills.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is critical. The researcher takes on the role of the instrument used to collect and analyze data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). As such, it is important that the researcher maintains reflexivity throughout the process to preserve the integrity and the ethos of qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Throughout the qualitative researcher process, I maintained checks and balances in the form of an iterative process through which I managed research-generated data sources (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I achieved this by keeping a researcher journal to record reflexive writing throughout the research process as well as note taking during interviews. The purpose of this was to keep me focused and record my thoughts and ideas throughout the process, and this practice helped me to maintain alignment (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

I have worked in the library at the community college granting the local dual enrollment programs college credit since 2004. I have also taught information literacy classes and first-year experience seminars where critical thinking, problem solving, and information literacy skills are key components to students achieving their learning outcomes. I have seen firsthand that there is a gap between what is learned at high school and what is expected at college, which is what led my desire to study college readiness.

Because of my position with the college, I am in many ways an “insider,” but because I do not work with the dual enrollment program and have never met or

associated with the dual enrollment teachers, I am also an "outsider" (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). It was important throughout this study that I practiced reflexivity so that I could acknowledge and understand my own positionality and ensure that my own values, beliefs, and assumptions did not color my research or my study results (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because the dual enrollment programs are conducted at the high schools and not at the college, I do not work within the actual environment of the high schools, which also helped me to maintain a distance from the programs themselves.

Methodology

In the first two chapters, I identified the gap in the existing research and provided the *why* of the study, discussing the rationale for why such a study needs to be conducted. In this section, I address the *how* by describing the methods used to put together a realistic approach to conduct the study, gather data, and find meaning in that data.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

The criteria that I used for recruiting participants was that they were currently employed as high school teachers and taught dual enrollment classes for at least 1 year. One of the guiding principles to determining how many research participants I needed to recruit is saturation, which is when "continued data collection produces no new information or insights into the phenomenon" being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199). I planned to have between nine and 12 participants and was able to conduct interviews with 10 high school dual enrollment teachers. I felt I had reached saturation at eight because my participants began to refer to similar themes and ideas from interview

to interview, and there were not any new discoveries from the teachers' responses (see Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

After receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; Approval Number 10-11-21-0453995) to proceed with my research, I began my recruitment process by contacting the superintendents of each of the six school districts from which I wanted to recruit participants. I emailed each of the superintendents and explained the study, outlined what I was asking them for, and requested, if they agreed, to return a letter of cooperation that was attached to the email. As each letter of cooperation was returned, I forwarded them on to IRB, who gave me approval to proceed at each site. The initial plan was to ask the superintendents to provide a list of their dual enrollment teachers, but I sensed a little pushback to this because it seemed they wanted to be responsible for disseminating the flyer. Due to this pushback, I filed a "Consent to Change" form with IRB in October 2021, outlining that I would rely on the high schools disseminating the recruitment flyer rather than asking for teachers' email addresses. After receiving consent for this change from IRB, the superintendents were asked to put me in touch with the appropriate person at the high schools to discuss having my recruitment flyer emailed to the dual enrollment teachers at each school. Both the recruitment flyer and the consent form included information on the purpose and intent of the study as well as what participation would involve. I created a consent form in JotForm, and at the bottom of the form was a submit button, which when clicked, took participants to SignUpGenius, where I had created a virtual signup sheet where teachers could indicate a time and day for their interviews.

In the beginning, this method worked fine; however, I also asked participants to recruit other dual enrollment teachers around them to participate in the study. One teacher let me know that others wanted to sign up, but the times on SignUpGenius did not work for most of the teachers. That was when I realized that the way to recruit more participants was to offer interviews during school hours. Making this change and asking for others to recruit within their own schools helped to get additional participants.

I also had a chance to talk to high school counselors from most of the high schools at an event and asked them to recruit for me as well. I found out that not all the high schools had shared the flyer with the dual enrollment teachers. Through these various techniques, both saturation and enough interviews to satisfy my original intent were achieved.

Instrumentation

I, as the researcher, was the instrument for this study because I created the interview questions and vetted them through my doctoral committee faculty, obtained verbal and nonverbal data from participants, and coded and interpreted the data obtained (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). As such, there were ethical considerations regarding the validity of the data collected and how those data were interpreted. Shenton (2004) offered 14 ways that researchers could achieve credibility when conducting a study. Of these, I engaged in the following: site triangulation, as I recruited participants from six different high schools; “peer scrutiny of the research project” (p. 67) with my dissertation committee; and a reflective commentary, where I recorded reflexive writing through a researcher journal. I

was unaware of any contextual or cultural issues that would affect my own position as the instrument for this study.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

To collect data to address my research question, I conducted one-on-one, semistructured, telephone interviews with the study participants. Interviews allowed me to gather data from high school dual enrollment teachers that I could not have captured or observed in any other way because the study was based on the perceptions of the teachers (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using the conceptual framework of Conley's college readiness strategies and my research question as a guide, I created open-ended interview questions and follow-up questions that were reviewed before use with my dissertation committee to determine that they were objective and nonleading (see Appendix). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that interviews are the main type of data collection in qualitative studies since "they provide deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized data" (p. 146). Conducting semistructured interviews, versus scripted interviews, allowed me to interact with participants using guiding questions, while also allowing the interviews to be directed by the participants' responses. This flexibility helped me determine when modification of the interview questions was needed. I practiced my interview techniques and questions with several people who had backgrounds in education, which helped me to refine both my interview skills and the interview questions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data gathered during practice interviews were not included in this study, and the practice interviewees were not study participants.

To record each telephone interview, I used Otter.ai., an application that allowed me to record from my phone. The recording was then uploaded to their website, which also provided a transcription service. I listened through each interview to check (and often fix) the transcription to ensure that the information on the transcripts was accurate.

Qualitative research requires that I used an approach to analyzing and codifying data in a way that accounted for the unique perspectives, backgrounds, and cultural understanding of experiences that the participants presented. In qualitative research, it is necessary to disassemble gathered data and determine a method of making sense of that data in a meaningful way (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). One method of doing this is through coding data to allow for thematic analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaȁna, 2016). Codes allow researchers to assign symbolic meaning to data, which can then be organized and analyzed for deeper meaning and interpretation (Saldaȁna, 2016). Saldaȁna compared a code to the name of a book or poem, in that it is encapsulating a way to easily understand the content. Codes are as unique as researchers themselves in that there is no standardized method, and code development is dependent on the research focus (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Coding is a multilevel process where I went through the interview transcripts and my own observations several times, each time delving deeper into the data. This is where the codes can be synthesized to create almost umbrella-like categories that the codes can fall under (see Saldaȁna, 2016). From categories, themes may be developed. Connelly and Peltzer (2016) identified themes as being “developed by reviewing categories and subcategories and identifying links between categories and therefore concepts” (p. 52).

Saldaȁna was careful to note that themes are an outcome of coding. Developing codes and themes is what gave my study overall meaning from the data collected (see Connelly & Peltzer, 2016).

One approach to coding is a priori coding, which is a form of deductive coding, in which codes are established based on prior research, the theoretical framework, and research questions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaȁna, 2016). Because my theoretical framework involved Conley's four college readiness strategies, I used a priori coding based on those four strategies (see Table 3). I hand coded the data because I felt that I could capture more inclusive meaning than a computer program could. I created an Excel spreadsheet in which I initially included the umbrella codes, demonstrated as "Labels" on Table 3. Then for each of those codes, I created a subcode, many of which are found on Table 3 under "Keywords/Concepts." Using multiple colors, I essentially checked off when a participant referred to the subcodes; the colors represented which questions the subcodes were part of. Specifically, a blue "x" was used for subcodes that came up when I asked about a teacher's own definition of college readiness, and a red "x" for when they were describing what college readiness skills they teach their dual enrollment students. This allowed me to determine if the skills they saw as valuable to college readiness were the same as the skills they were teaching their students. Finally, a black "x" was used to note when a subcode was mentioned but not in response to those questions. Each subcode in the spreadsheet also had its umbrella code in a column, so I could sort this data by umbrella codes to see trends and outliers.

Table 3

A Priori Codes Developed from Conley's College Readiness Strategies

	Label	Definition	Keywords/concepts
Code 1	Cognitive strategies	Students must appropriately research a problem, evaluate research, incorporate the research through interpretation and analysis, formulate a cohesive argument and/or explanation of the problem, and successfully communicate the research findings with precision and accuracy (Conley, 2008).	Accuracy, analyzing, collecting, communicating, confirming, constructing, evaluating, identifying, interpreting, monitoring, organizing concepts, precision, problem solving, researching, strategizing
Code 2	Content knowledge	Content knowledge starts with students having knowledge and understanding of the basics of all subject areas so that when they go to college, they can build on that knowledge (Conley, 2012). Essential to successful content knowledge is students' attitude toward learning, which can either produce positive or negative transfer between high school and college and between subjects (Conley, 2014).	Attribution, basic knowledge of subject, challenging, effort, linking ideas, structure of knowledge, technical knowledge and skills, valuing
Code 3	Learning skills and techniques	This strategy has two components: 1. Student ownership of learning which includes goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, help-seeking, progress monitoring, and self-efficacy (Conley, 2014; Conley & French, 2014). 2. Skills that students need to be	Collaborative learning, extrinsic motivation, goal setting, help-seeking, intrinsic motivation, memorization/recall, motivation, note taking skills, organization, ownership, persistence, progress monitoring, self-awareness, self-efficacy, strategic reading, technology, test taking skills, time management

		successful learners and techniques that help students navigate the challenges of the college experience. These skills include, but are not limited to, time management, study skills, test-taking, note-taking, and technology proficiency (Conley, 2014).	
Code 4	Transition knowledge and skills	This strategy involves awareness of the administrative aspects of college readiness in what Conley (2014) refers to as "the five aspects of key transitional skills" (p. 87), which are contextual, procedural, financial, cultural, and personal knowledge. Part of this strategy involves students being aware of how higher education functions regarding admissions, financial aid, resources, and knowing what other opportunities are available within the institution (Conley, 2010).	Admissions processes, aspirations, college norms, contextual awareness, expectations, financial awareness, institutional choice, norms/cultural awareness, self-advocacy, tuition/financial aid

I also used inductive coding as I went through the data to find additional categories and themes that emerged, which allowed me to capture anything outside of the preestablished a priori codes. Inductive coding, specifically in vivo coding, "uses the participants' words to label data" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 249) rather than codes I had created. Used together, the a priori and in vivo codes allowed me to analyze data for emergent commonalities and themes throughout the interviews conducted. In the Excel spreadsheet, I listed each question then wrote the teachers' responses next to the question

to further explore, find, and develop additional themes throughout the responses. I also used my researcher journal to record initial thoughts or themes, problem solve, and reflect on my own critical thinking journey throughout the process (see Saldaṅa, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

It would be impossible to discuss conducting a study without addressing trustworthiness. Connelly (2016) indicated that trustworthiness is needed to provide confidence not only in the study but also in the data being reported. In discussing trustworthiness, I acknowledge that I am aware of the issues of trustworthiness and conducted this study and interpreted the data honestly and ethically. As Amankwaa (2016) pointed out, "anything perceived as being of low or no value is also perceived as being worthless, unreliable, or invalid" (p. 121). I wanted this study to be valid and have value so that it is worthy of filling an identified gap in the research literature and can be added to the existing body of research on dual enrollment. As such, there are four areas generally used to determine trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (see Lincoln & Guba, 2007).

Credibility

Credibility is a form of internal validity where a researcher needs to demonstrate that the measures used were accurate and that the results mirror reality (Shenton, 2004). Also, the data needs to be accurately reflected within the study (see Given & Saumure, 2008). To establish credibility, I engaged in peer debriefing, which is meant to "'keep the inquirer honest'" (Lincoln & Guba, 2007, p. 19).

Transferability

Transferability is a form of external validity. Transferability refers to the how the study can be applied to "broader contexts while still maintaining their context-specific richness" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). This is different from transferability or generalizability as found in quantitative research, where it is applied to how well the study's population is representative of the whole population. In qualitative research, the contexts are specific, and each study tends to be unique, so the results cannot be said to be representative of an entire population (Shenton, 2004). Rather, transferability relied on my ability to provide sufficient information from the six different high schools about the setting and methods so that it may be replicated in similar situations (see Franklin & Ballan, 2001).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is centered around the changing nature of research design (Toma, 2011). Unlike quantitative research, where the research design is static, the research design in qualitative research is more fluid and apt to change as dictated by the data itself. Proving dependability relied on me accurately reporting in detail these changes and the rationale behind the changes (see Shenton, 2004). I did this throughout the process by engaging in reflective writing to document changes to ensure accuracy in the end.

Confirmability

Similarly, in terms of confirmability, my reflexive practices through the research process allowed me to maintain a professional distance from the research and prevented

my own biases from tainting the data collection and analysis process. Confirmability considers the various biases that researchers bring with them into a project (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the research process, reflexivity allows researchers to acknowledge their biases and confront them to allow for better objectivity while collecting and analyzing data (Shenton, 2004). Through acknowledging and facing biases within the study, I let my readers know that this was part of the process and ensures trustworthiness and validity in the research.

Ethical Procedures

In any type of research, there will be ethical considerations. However, in qualitative research, the ethical challenges are specific because the research subjects are humans. I have twice taken the online course offered by the National Institutes of Health, which deals specifically with this area of concern. In the past, there have been several studies done with little to no regard to the human population being studied (such as the Tuskegee study; Hardicre, 2014), which is what brought the ethical considerations in all forms of research to the forefront.

Aluwihare-Samaranayake (2012) noted that in qualitative research, it is important to recognize that two interconnected worlds are involved: that of the researcher and that of the participant. In both these worlds, contends Aluwihare-Samaranayake, there are ethical challenges, and only through developing a critical consciousness can both worlds work together. Three of these challenges include protecting privacy, minimizing harm, and respecting the shared experience of others.

Protecting the privacy of participants, as indicated by Ravitch and Carl (2016), is really the least that a researcher can do after asking a participant to give up their time and information. Ogden (2008b) noted that privacy is "a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (p. 681). Confidentiality should be discussed with the participants prior to data gathering, with researchers being open and honest about their intentions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To protect the privacy of the teachers participating in my study, I have maintained secured records to prevent any violations of my participants' information and to maintain confidentiality. Everything has been coded, including the participants, to maintain this protection. Hard copies of all research data are contained in a locked cabinet in my home office that only I have access to. My personal laptop, where I store digital data, is not shared with anyone and is password protected. As per Walden University guidelines, I will keep all records, physical and digital, for 5 years before destroying them.

"First do no harm" is an old phrase used in the medical field that has translated into all research areas. The premise is that it is a researcher's "duty to avoid, prevent, or limit harm to others" (Ogden, 2008, p. 379). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that this is one of the essential roles of IRBs and that the idea of "harm" can take numerous forms. It is important to keep in mind that sometimes the subject area is something of a sensitive nature, which can cause harm that is not visible to the naked eye but rather is emotional or psychological. Ogden indicated that it is the responsibility of researchers to do all that they can to make sure that participants are aware of potential harm through their participation and "to develop strategies either to minimize the harm as they occur or to

remedy them afterwards" (p. 380). For example, if a researcher is engaged in research about a subject area that might cause psychological harm, they can offer to provide counseling afterward to help mitigate that harm. My study was not of a sensitive area, and there was no potential for physical or psychological harm to my participants.

Qualitative researchers must also be respectful of the experiences that participants share with them. Much of qualitative research data collection involves gathering the experiences and perspectives of others and their lives. These experiences, as shared with a researcher, are not something for the researcher to critique, but rather these experiences should be used to compare to other participants' experiences (Boylorn, 2008). Ravitch and Carl (2016) explained that the participant is the expert on their own lived experience and that the researcher needs to respect this as part of an ethical necessity. They also warned to be careful of having a deficit orientation while engaging in qualitative data gathering where participants' experiences play a central role.

The ethics of a qualitative study need to be a constant consideration throughout the entire process and should be anticipated if possible (Creswell, 2013). The fluidity of qualitative research can make this anticipation difficult, but there are some general ethical rules that all qualitative researchers should follow. Carpenter (2018) summarized them in the following way:

1. Maximizes benefits – research should be done without exclusion and in an exhaustive manner;
2. Respecting rights –treat others with respect, help them to maintain their dignity and their autonomy;

3. Ensuring inclusivity – similar to the first, all voices should be heard while maintaining confidentiality;
4. Research with integrity – report data honestly, without manipulation, and use this data to improve the lives of those being researched.

It was my responsibility to create opportunities for reflection throughout the process to maintain the ethical considerations of my research. Additionally, the time spent on reflection during this process kept my thoughts and actions deliberate.

Conclusion

Unlike the previous two chapters, this chapter allowed me to demonstrate how I proceeded through the data gathering and analysis process. I discussed that I used a basic qualitative design and detailed how this design allowed me to focus on high school dual enrollment teacher's perceptions and even opinions regarding how dual enrollment programs provide college readiness skills. My position in relation to my study and considerations that were established and used to demonstrate any bias my study could reveal were described. I delved into the methodology used to conduct this study, including how I used a purposefully selective method to recruit participants and how participants were contacted. Within this chapter was a description of how I used one-on-one, semi structured interviews to gather data from my participants, followed by how I transcribed them, and then used Saldaňa's coding methods to hand code the data to find themes within the data collected. I also addressed trustworthiness because it is vital that I acknowledge and address how I provided rigor to my study, as well as the responsibility I

carried as the researcher. In the next chapter, I present a summary of the data collected and the results of that data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the perspectives of high school dual enrollment teachers on how dual enrollment programs help prepare high school students for college. The research question guiding this study was: What are the high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college?

In this chapter, I examine the demographics of the teachers who participated in this study before describing the data collection techniques, an analysis of the data, and the trustworthiness of this study. Finally, I present the results of the study, including detailed information about how data were collected and the findings.

Setting

For this study, I recruited participants from six different public high schools in a rural area of a state located in the mid-Atlantic and northeastern regions of the United States. Each high school was sent a recruitment flyer to disseminate to their dual enrollment instructors. The recruited sample consisted of 10 participants from four of the six high schools. Because of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic concerns, I decided early on to gather data from a distance through interviews. My original intent was to conduct the interviews over the Zoom platform, but I was informed by Walden University IRB that I could not record videos of the interviews, only audio. Because of this, it made more sense to conduct the interviews with my cell phone where I could use the Otter.ai application to record the phone calls. The participants selected the days and times of the interviews. The 10 participants represented nine different subject areas. Table 4 indicates which schools

the participants came from and what subject they taught. To protect the identity of the schools and the participants, the schools are labeled 1-6 and the participants are labeled A-J. The first interview took place on March 13, 2022, and the last was held on May 10, 2022. Out of the 10 interviews, six were conducted during school hours.

Table 4

Breakdown of Participation by School

High School	Participants and Subject Taught
1	I – History
2	
3	A – Statistics
	B – Mathematics
	C – Physics
	E – English
4	
5	J – Chemistry
6	D – Anatomy
	F – Business
	G – Social sciences
	H – Mathematics

My first communication with the designated public high schools was an email to the superintendents of the school districts. Most of the superintendents directed me to work with the high school principals after being given permission to conduct the study. At first, I relied on the high school principals to disseminate the recruitment flyers. Getting participants to volunteer, however, seemed to be going slowly. At this point, I asked those teachers I had interviewed to reach out to other dual enrollment teachers at their high school to participate. I also spoke to the dual enrollment coordinator at the college I work at and asked them to send out the flyer to their contacts at the high

schools. Both methods helped to recruit more participants, although it still took a 3-month period to get enough volunteers.

Demographics

The participants of this study were all high school dual enrollment teachers who taught dual enrollment classes for at least the last 2 years. The participants had been teaching between 5–28 years, and, more specifically, taught dual enrollment classes between 5–18 years. Between the participants, the average time teaching was 16.4 years, and the average time teaching dual enrollment classes was 9.3 years. Sixty percent of the participants were female.

Data Collection

I interviewed all 10 participants once over the phone. Each interview lasted between 38–55 minutes, depending on how in depth the participant answered the questions. The interviews were recorded using an application called Otter.ai that is both a phone application, which allowed me to record a phone call, and a website where I had the recordings roughly transcribed. After Otter.ai transcribed the interviews, I went back through each interview while listening to the audio recording to ensure that the data transcribed were accurate. Once each interview was properly transcribed, I downloaded each as a Microsoft Word document.

Data Analysis

As each interview was completed, I went through the transcriptions to begin to look for keywords/concepts as identified in Table 3. I created a spreadsheet in Excel where I could add an “x” mark when the a priori keywords/concepts were discussed in

the interviews. The "x" marks were in one of three colors: blue for when the keyword/concept was identified as a college readiness skill by the participant, red when the keyword/concept was identified as something the participant taught students in their classrooms, and black for when the concept/keyword was mentioned outside of those two areas. I did this to identify the context in which the keyword/concept was used and which keywords/concepts were used more frequently by the participants before aligning those keywords/concepts with the umbrella a priori codes (see Table 3). This process of using a priori codes allowed me to determine which of my a priori codes were used more frequently to gain a better understanding of what the participants felt was most important regarding college readiness skills.

In the second round of coding, I focused on greater depth to determine when a participant was referring to a keyword/concept without using the terminology I had previously defined for my a priori codes. For each keyword/concept, I created an additional spreadsheet where I defined what that keyword/concept referred to regarding college readiness and then included synonyms and antonyms for each. This allowed me to delve deeper into the data. For example, one participant indicated that students who are college ready need to have self-reliance, resilience, and self-awareness. While self-reliance and self-awareness are two of the keywords/concepts identified, resilience was not; however, persistence was. For that keyword/concept, I included the synonyms of endurance, grit, perseverance, tenacity, follow through, and resilience; therefore, I included a blue "x" next to persistence from this data.

For my third round of coding, I copied each participant's answers to the interview questions in a continuous Word document, using the exact wording and phrasing presented by the participants as part of the in vivo coding method. I went through and reviewed these several times, looking for overreaching themes. I identified four overreaching themes about the high school dual enrollment teachers' perceptions regarding dual enrollment programs and college readiness that were relevant to the research question.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As stated in the previous chapter, for the validity of this study, I needed to demonstrate actions taken on my part as the researcher to address trustworthiness. Through every stage of this study, I engaged in peer debriefing with other students and peers in the education field, which lends to the credibility of the study. I also kept a researcher journal where I wrote out my thoughts while I worked on this study. Once I started interviewing, I summarized each interview in my journal and then reflected on the experience. For example, on March 13, 2022, I wrote, "Had my first interview today. This participant teaches AP statistics, which is also a dual enrollment class." This reflexive writing kept me focused and allowed for the dependability of the study. Additionally, the reflexive writing contributes to the confirmability of the study because it helped my objectivity when gathering data and was where I confronted any bias that presented itself. Because this study was conducted among high school dual enrollment teachers from four different high schools representing various disciplines, the results of the data can be transferred to other similar situations.

Results

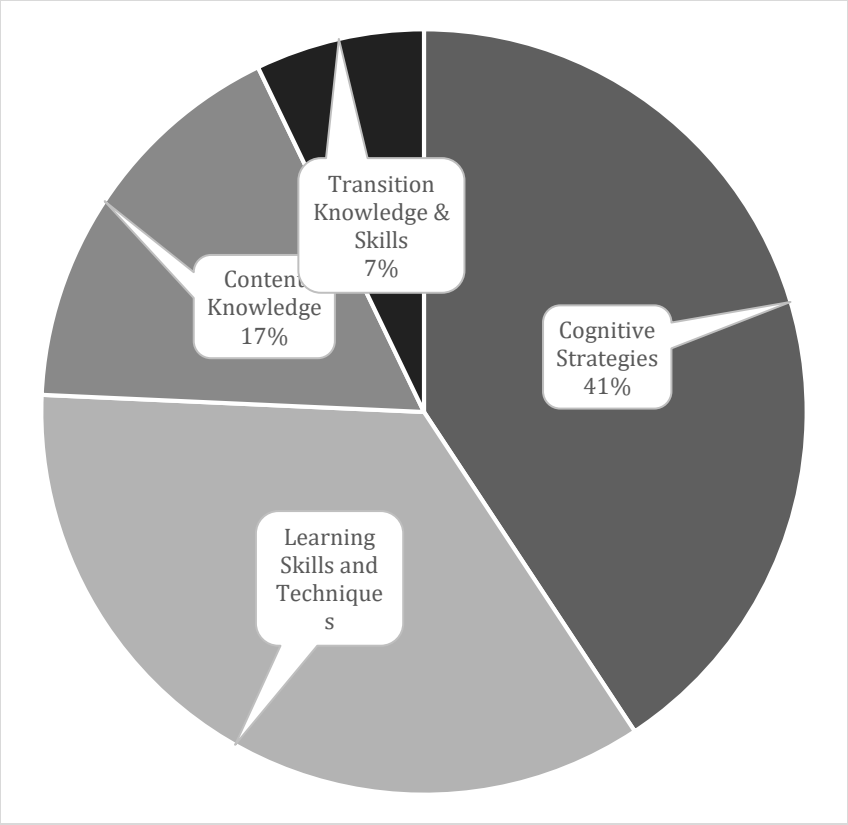
Having described my coding process and the trustworthiness of the procedures followed, I now discuss the results of the data collected. The results are based on the research question framed by Conley's four strategies of college readiness.

Four Strategies of College Readiness

I used Conley's four strategies of college readiness, as discussed in Chapter 2, as a priori codes: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills. I used these four strategies as a priori codes for alignment and to have a basis for what I wanted to learn from the data to address the research question. Each a priori code was broken down into keywords/concepts that are part of the strategies. To gain a better understanding of the frequency of each a priori code: 41% of those keyword/concept identified were from cognitive strategies, 35% from learning skills and techniques, 17% from content knowledge, and 7% from transition knowledge and skills. Figure 1 visually demonstrates the frequency of the a priori codes.

Figure 1

Breakdown of A Priori Codes Used by Participants



Cognitive strategies, as identified as the a priori code with the most frequency, is also the strategy most identified by college instructors as crucial to a college student's first year of college (see Conley, 2010). This supports the research problem as being a set of skills that high school dual enrollment teachers address with their dually enrolled high school students. Participant J noted, "I try to challenge them with…problem solving and critical thinking skills to build up confidence," which is an accurate description of how Conley (2008) identified this strategy.

The area that had the least frequency, transition knowledge and skills, is not surprising because An and Taylor (2015) identified this as the only strategy in which high

school dual enrollment students going to college did not excel in. The assumption would also be that high school counselors are the people who work with high school students for this strategy and not something that is normally discussed in the classroom.

After looking at the four college readiness strategies overall, I then examined the frequency of the keyword/concepts. In total, there were 49 keywords/concepts, which also served as subcodes, as shown in Table 3. Under the umbrella code of cognitive, there were 15 subcodes: content knowledge had eight, learning skills had 16, and transition knowledge and skills had 10. The participants altogether identified 39 of the subcodes. Table 5 indicates which subcodes were mentioned for each umbrella code and which were not.

Table 5

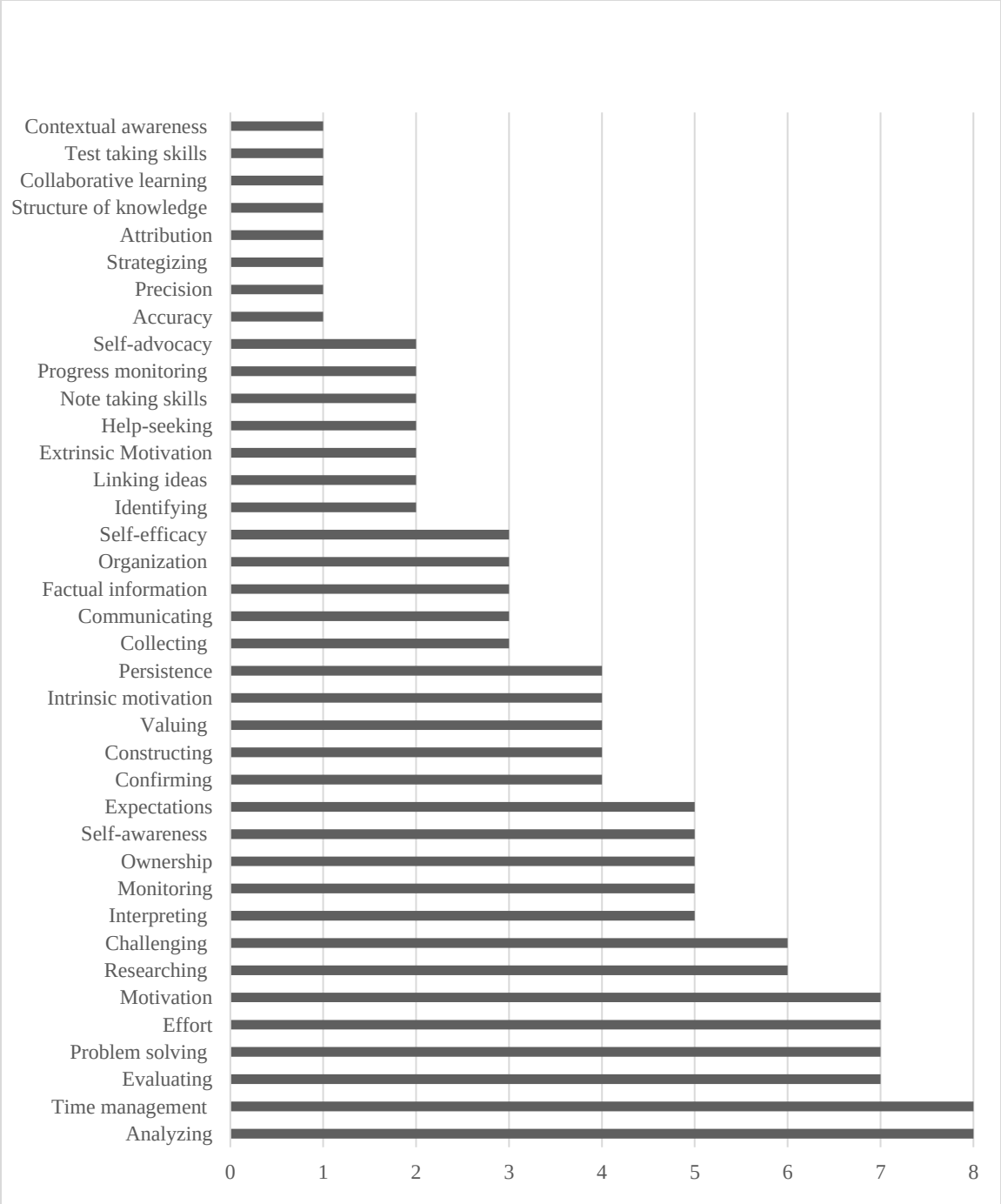
A Priori Subcodes Participants Identified and Did Not Identify

A Priori Codes	Subcodes Identified	Subcodes Not Identified
Cognitive	Accuracy	Organizing concepts
	Collecting	
	Communicating	
	Confirming	
	Constructing	
	Evaluating	
	Identifying	
	Interpreting	
	Monitoring	
	Precision	
	Problem solving	
	Researching	
	Strategizing	
	Analyzing	
Content knowledge	Attribution	Technical knowledge and skills
	Challenging	
	Effort	
	Factual information	
	Linking ideas	
	Structure of knowledge	
	Valuing	
Learning skills and techniques	Collaborative learning	Goal setting
	Extrinsic motivation	Memorization/recall
	Help seeking	Strategic reading
	Intrinsic motivation	Technology
	Motivation	
	Note-taking skills	
	Organization	
	Ownership	
	Persistence	
	Progress monitoring	
	Self-awareness	
	Self-efficacy	
	Test-taking skills	
	Time management	
Transition knowledge and skills	Contextual awareness	Admissions processes
	Expectations	Aspirations
	Self-advocacy	College norms
		Financial awareness
		Institutional choice
		Norms/cultural awareness
		Tuition/financial aid

When the participants were asked what college readiness skills they thought a person needed to be successful in college, they identified 28 of the subcodes. Figure 2 demonstrates how frequently specific subcodes were used. The subcodes with the highest frequency were analyzing (i.e., cognitive strategy) and time management (i.e., learning skills and techniques). Time management was prevalent throughout the interviews, especially in what the participants tried to teach their students. Participant D mentioned that "time management is integral because [students] don't quite grasp how to take the time they do have and divvy it up in a productive way." Several participants indicated that time management was easier to teach than other college readiness skills. To teach time management, some participants make clear expectations at the beginning of a class, giving students information about what assignments were required and whey they were due. Participant I explained how they introduced time management into their classroom, "I list work, say when it's due and you either keep up with that yourself and do it, or you don't and that ends up hurting you." Then Participant I indicated that students would quickly pick up on the system and the skill of time management.

Figure 2

Frequency of Subcategories



Dual Enrollment Classes

When asked what participants did different in dual enrollment classrooms to support college readiness skills, it was clear that the teachers understood that college credit-bearing classes needed to enforce college readiness skills. Participants included examples of how they accomplished this. Participant A proffered that as the semester goes on, they remove notes from PowerPoint slides so that students must learn to take their own notes but does this slowly so that the students adjust to the change. A lot of participants indicated that they tried to remove "the crutches" that high schools give students, in ways such as not providing study guides, not writing notes on the board for students to record, and giving students hard due dates. Participant D expressed concern about the amount of "hand holding" that took place, saying,

> I just feel sometimes that there's so many crutches and hand holding…I just get so nervous because we're holding them [students] so tightly that by the time they go somewhere it's just going to be so much of a greater shock.

Responding to the question of whether dual enrollment classes provided high school students with college readiness skills, many participants discussed the rigor of the dual enrollment classes. Participant A noted that "the expectations and the pace of the classes give students an idea of what will be expected in college." Participants mentioned that the classes were challenging for students, which is a in vivo theme that will be discussed later. Participant D felt that dual enrollment classes prepared students for college, as indicated by correspondence with former students. "I feel like I've had conversations with past students that have felt they did pick up somethings…in a dual

enrollment class that has helped to transfer over to college." Participant I noted that "it's as close as we get to reality anymore."

The final question that I asked participants was how dual enrollment programs could improve to prepare high school students for college. Table 6 demonstrates how participants responded to this question.

Table 6

Responses to How Dual Enrollment Programs Can Improve

Participant	How do you think dual enrollment programs can better prepare high school students for college?
A	More access to dual enrollment classes for all students
B	More access to dual enrollment classes for all students
C	More exposure to the college environment
D	More access to dual enrollment classes for all students
E	Did not specifically answer the question
F	More exposure to the college environment
G	More emphasis on independent learning, such as that found in the college environment
H	More emphasis on self-awareness and teaching students how to advocate for themselves
I	More resources for the teachers
J	More exposure for the teachers to college counterparts

Participant E mistakenly noted that the College Board was responsible for the content of the dual enrollment classes they taught and was confused about the accreditation process. Participant B clarified their response having said,

> I think as an educational system a lot of the students who could really benefit from a dual enrollment class, from essentially challenging themselves to strive for

a higher academic level. They're oftentimes getting caught in those general level classes and they're never moving out of them.

College Readiness Skills

In asking about teachers' thoughts about high school students' level of college readiness, participants' answers were surprising and interesting. Participant B said, "it's dropped tremendously" while Participant C said that students are "in very, very bad shape." Participant D estimated that they could "whip a good 40%–50% [of their students] into college readiness shape." Participant D went so far as to say "I don't feel like we're doing a super amazing job" of preparing students for college. Participant G felt that at the "beginning of the year, it's not good" but that by the end of their dual enrollment class, "the majority of them that complete my dual credit classes I feel are prepared." Only Participant J felt that "kids who graduate here I do think they're college ready academically" but then added "I think what they're not prepared for are the social aspects of college."

During the interview process, Question 9 asked, "in what ways are dual enrollment students more prepared for college than non-dual enrollment students?" Participants cited aspects such as students understanding the level of rigor in a college class because they have been challenged in a dual enrollment class, which is another in vivo theme that will be covered later in this chapter. Other areas such a confidence, critical thinking skills, motivation, and stronger writing skills were mentioned numerous times. Participant J elaborated, "I think that's the biggest difference, the confidence and the ability to get through rough patches."

Themes

In addition to using a priori coding, I also used an inductive coding process, in vivo coding. This allowed me to find additional themes that emerged from examining the participants' own words and find commonality. In reviewing the text of all the interviews, I found four themes that emerged across them: challenge, motivation, higher order thinking skills, and control.

Table 7

Participants' Responses Based on Identified Themes

Theme	Participants' Responses
Challenge	80%
Motivation	80%
Higher order thinking skills	90%
Control/freedom	100%

Challenge

Most of the participants in my study indicated that one of the main differences between dual enrollment classes and non-dual enrollment classes was the level of challenge, or rigor (see Table 7). This counters many arguments that have been made that dual enrollment classes lack rigor. Participant G identified that students' "writing skills are better than student who did not take rigorous classes." These teachers were very aware that they had a responsibility to make the classes more challenging than other high school classes. They identified that they made their tests harder, they expect more of the students, and they delve deeper into the material than they would in other high school

classes. “My argument is [that] kids become way too comfortable and familiar with the assessment process,” Participant J noted. “So, from my standpoint, and I tell them this, I try to get them out of their comfort zone by taking what I know they know and making them apply it on a test.” Participant A made sure that their students understood the expectations and pace of the classes to “give students an idea of what will be expected in college.” Rising to the challenge of presenting high school students with college-level expectations and work enforced the idea that dual enrollment teachers are qualified for these roles.

Motivation

While 80% of the participants discussed motivation, this concept was mentioned so many times that it was one of the most obvious themes. However, the way motivation was discussed varied. Many teachers identified that overall, students had a severe lack of motivation. Participant I said, “I don’t see a lot of motivation” in high school students and that “they’re really washed out because they lack any interest.” Echoing this, Participant B noted that they do not assign big projects to their non-dual enrollment students because “they definitely don’t have the desire to put the time in that would be required for a legitimate research project.” This limits non-dual enrollment students from experiencing what is expected in college.

Another way that motivation was referred to by the participants was that for most dual enrollment classes, students must choose to be in that class. Just the act of picking and registering for a dual enrollment class indicated that students were motivated to be challenged and earn college credits. In addressing the question about what is different or

special about dual enrollment classes, Participant E focused specifically on the motivation of the students. “They have to be recommended to take the class…so, you already know that they have to have that motivation to be in the class.” This is confirmed by Participant B who noted “You’re dealing with students who are a little more motivated simply because they’re taking the class itself…you’re going to be dealing with students who are a little more academically motivated.” This is reinforced by Participant D who said that students “had to choose to be in here…it feels kind of nice to get a group of students who want to be here.”

Finally, extrinsic motivation was part of these conversations. Many students, the participants felt, were driven by their grades and their class rank, and standing. Participant E referred to this as being “grade grubby.” This type of motivation would normally be ideal for students as it drives them to strive for better results each time. However, several teachers indicated that the opposite could be true. Participant F reflected that “some of the high achievers are not as well prepared as they think they are” and that when students who are used to getting good grades do not get the grades expected, they give up. Similarly, Participant A noted that many dual enrollment students “are motivated by grades, but when they are faced with a bad grade, they are not as resilient in bouncing back.” Not being used to failure, these students often lack the grit or perseverance to rally after an unexpected bad grade.

Higher Order Thinking Skills

It was not surprising that 90% of the participants in my study mentioned higher order thinking skills. This is an essential part of Conley’s first strategy, cognitive

strategies, which includes the ability to research a problem, evaluate research, incorporate the research through interpretation and analysis, formulate a cohesive argument and/or explanation of the problem, and successfully communicate the research findings with precision and accuracy (Conley, 2008). Skills such as problem solving, evaluating sources, being able to properly analyze sources, rhetorical analysis, persuading, and academic communication were mentioned several times. Participant E asked students to "create an argument when you're persuading someone who's even against what you want to say." Participant G tried to model how to "be a critical consumer of media and understand where to go for academic research" and had students bring in any sources outside of the ones provided in class to ensure that students were using reputable resources for class. In Participant B's classes, the assignments they are giving out "require a higher level of writing and communication" and feels that they have more opportunities to work with students and "help them learn how to do something more at a higher academic or a college readiness level." This is like Participant D, who did not provide students with study guides but instead encouraged students to do that themselves. "You have to be able to decipher important information and I am here. Ask me for help, to clarify things," which allowed students to operate with a higher level of thinking skills, but with that safety net.

Control Versus Freedom

A final theme that wove through the interviews was completely unexpected. The dichotomous relationship between freedom and control forced me to ask myself, are

freedom and control really the same thing? Every participant spoke of freedom or control, or sometimes both in their interviews. Their responses were also polarizing.

Control was mostly mentioned in how teachers felt limited in what they could do with their dual enrollment classes as many of the classes are also Advance Placement (AP) classes and therefore, outcomes are predetermined by both the college curriculum and the College Board. Eight out of the 10 participants mentioned the restraints of teaching their dual enrollment classes because of the AP expectations that are part of the class. Participant J, who was a chemistry teacher, noted, "AP every year removes and removes and removes and now there's very little mathematics…they've really bastardized that test to the point now where it's memorization and wordsmithing." They note that this affects how they give tests because the tests need to match what will be on the AP examination at the end of the semester so that students are prepared for it. "The AP to me…it's taken some of the challenge away from dual enrollment." This was reflected in various parts of my interviews. Participant C indicated that they preferred to teach non-AP classes because "with AP you're really constrained to a very, very tight curriculum." While I knew that most of the dual enrollment classes at these high schools were also AP classes, I had not realized how that added an extra constraint to what teachers tried to accomplish in their classes. Participant E noted that students "have to take a national test. So, I have to prepare them for their tests. If they are not prepared" for a test they have paid for "they're going to fail it." This is an added stressor for teachers who are already teaching a college-level class, with college-level student outcomes and materials.

Conversely, six of the 10 participants mentioned freedom. A few participants discussed freedom in terms of their experiences in non-AP classes. Participant C related that in their non-AP classes, they can spend a lot more time on experimental learning where they would allow students to think of experiments to test something and they "didn't have a pre-planned thing. The whole idea is they see an observation and make a new idea. And then they've got to test the idea." However, the additional constraints of AP on their advanced classes meant that they could not use this type of learning in their dual enrollment classes.

Other participants spoke of freedom as it pertained to their dual enrollment students in many ways, from freedom in their classrooms to teaching students how to learn independently. Participant C noted that they give their students a lot of freedom in the class once they have completed their work. "I give them a lot of freedom" letting them even leave the classroom at times and

> a lot of kids fall flat on their feet because of it. But you know I'd rather they fall flat in public education then when they're paying $75,000 for their education. And so, I think allowing them that latitude to make their own decisions and feel the consequences of those decisions is definitely one way I think [my classes] prepares them for college.

Another form of freedom mentioned regarded that dual enrollment students were given more independence and individual responsibility. "I definitely want more responsibility on students…I really push more individual responsibility" noted Participant D, who went on to describe how they do not "seek out people who were absent, they got to come talk

to me about it." Participant H really laid down independence on their students in the form of developing self-confidence and authority.

> I try to teach them "you're adults." Now you can buy a house, get married, conceivably have children. You need to say it with authority so that you're not sketchy. If my kids don't sound confident, then they sound like they can be taken advantage of.

The dichotomous relationship of control and freedom across these 10 interviews was revealing in the struggle of what dual enrollment teachers need to accomplish, as posited against the freedom the participants wanted their students to have. The idea of a student experiencing freedom in high school and being allowed to fail and recover relates directly to college readiness skills. Throughout my interviews and the data, I constantly went back to what Participant D relayed about the "crutches and hand holding" that happened among high school students. With high school students taking college classes at their high schools, it would make sense to allow the students more freedom, but at the same time everyone on a high school campus has some form of control that prevents true freedom.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to relate the findings of my study in such a way that focused on addressing my research question. In this chapter I discussed the setting of my study and the demographics of my participants. I described my data collection process including how participants were recruited, how data was collected, and how interviews were recorded. Following the data collection discussion, I presented how

trustworthiness was addressed in my study. This was followed by how I analyzed data, first using a priori codes and what that process revealed about the perceptions of high school dual enrollment regarding dual enrollment programs and college readiness. This was followed with the overreaching themes developed through the inductive process of in vivo coding, which were challenge, motivation, higher order thinking skills, and control/freedom.

In the next chapter, I will provide an interpretation of my findings. I will also discuss the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research. Finally, I will look at how this study contributed to positive social change and provide suggestions for future practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to gain insight into the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college. I sought to inform stakeholders of the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers regarding how these programs help students prepare for college to use when making decisions regarding the future of dual enrollment programs.

What I found through this study is that while high school dual enrollment teachers may use different methods, they are aware and focused on what they do to promote college readiness skills in their dual enrollment classes. Through the use of a priori codes in data analysis, it was clear that the participants logically focused more on two of Conley's college readiness strategies: cognitive strategies and learning skills and techniques. The reason that this is logical is that these two strategies focused on higher order thinking skills, which are needed for students to be successful in college, and the actual skills, such as note and test taking, which are also vital to college success. Through in vivo coding, I was able to develop four themes based on the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Table 9 displays how often these themes were used in the interviews. The participants noted that the dual enrollment classes should be, and were, challenging for students. Motivation was something that the teachers perceived as being important to student success. Higher order thinking skills were also frequently mentioned by the dual enrollment teachers as both what students need to learn and what they teach their students. The fourth theme, control/freedom, was an interesting component to the

data because it was portrayed as the push-and-pull of the constraints of both being a teacher and a student in high school.

In the rest of this chapter, I focus on my interpretation of the findings followed by the limitations of the study. I then make recommendations for future research and discuss the implications of the findings with an emphasis on how this study contributes to positive social change and future practice.

Interpretation of Findings

In Chapter 1, I posited an assumption that because previous studies demonstrated that dual enrollment programs helped establish college readiness skills, it could be assumed that those teaching dual enrollment classes were the impetus for the students to learn necessary college readiness skills. The research question addressed in this study was created to gather the perceptions of high school dual enrollment teachers on how well dual enrollment programs prepared high school students regarding college readiness. Throughout this process, I delved deeply into both dual enrollment and college readiness. I aligned the study to the conceptual framework of Conley's college readiness strategies and the theory of transfer of learning. The findings supported previous research about dual enrollment students and college readiness but had the added depth of specifically gathering and interpreting the perspectives of those teaching dual enrollment classes in high school.

This study answered a call for more research into high school dual enrollment teachers as put forth by Duncheon and Muñoz (2019), Garcia et al. (2020), Lile et al. (2018), McWain (2018), and van Rooij and Jansen (2018). Through this study, I further

developed the data in the field of education by identifying and filling this gap in the literature.

Conley and Transfer of Learning

In Chapters 1 and 2, I discussed how both Conley's college readiness strategies and definition of college readiness were used in previous studies to identify what skills students need to be successful in college (An & Taylor, 2015; Grubb et al., 2017; Schrynemakers et al., 2019; van Rooij & Jansen, 2018). The current study findings further support the use of Conley's strategies because I discovered that many of the high school dual enrollment teachers spoke about these strategies and the words/concepts associated with them. Participants perceived that analyzing, time management, evaluating, and problem solving were the top four words/concepts they used either to describe college readiness itself or to describe what they attempted to teach in their classrooms. This finding supports those of Hanson et al. (2015) where high school dual enrollment teachers felt that dual enrollment students learned essential skills such as time management, problem solving, and study skills.

Transfer of learning is fundamental in building upon previous knowledge to incorporate new knowledge and new learning. It was the expectations of the participants in this study that their students would transfer the college readiness skills they learned in high school to college. Several participants related hearing back from students when they were in college, thanking them for teaching college readiness skills because it had helped them be more successful in their academic pursuits. Students who have participated in dual enrollment classes are more successful on average than their peers who did not

participate in dual enrollment classes (Allen et al., 2020; Bowers & Foley, 2018; D'Anna et al., 2019; Hunter & Wilson, 2019; Latino et al., 2020; Taylor & Yan, 2018).

College Readiness

It has been argued that high school teachers should focus on how to transition students from high school to college (van Rooij & Jansen, 2018). The participants in the current study were aware of college readiness skills and taught these skills in their classrooms. These teachers consciously made efforts to develop these skills, whether through not offering class notes or allowing students the freedom to manage their time. As many researchers have noted, without being given the tools for college success in high school, even students who excel in high school are not necessarily prepared for college (Bickerstaff et al., 2017; Fina et al., 2018; Karp et al., 2017).

The findings of this study suggest that high school dual enrollment teachers are aware of their responsibility to teach students college readiness skills. The participants were also aware of the rigor that they must maintain in their dual enrollment classes because they are teaching college-level material and have higher expectations for their students to perform as college students. This supports the findings of Morgan et al. (2018) who reported that more rigorous coursework in high school correlated with greater postsecondary success. The current study results also support the research of Lansing et al. (2017) who found that high school teachers have a desire to help their students be more college ready and will do so when given the tools. The participants of the current study genuinely wanted to help their students be successful and confirmed that they have the ability to influence their students even beyond high school.

Dual Enrollment

Researchers indicated that students who participate in dual enrollment programs are better prepared than non-dual enrollment students for higher education achievements (Allen et al., 2020; Arnold et al., 2017; Blankenberger et al., 2017; Bowers & Foley, 2018; D'Anna et al., 2019; Grubb et al., 2017; Hunter & Wilson, 2019; Latino et al., 2020; Taylor & Yan, 2018). The current study revealed that high school dual enrollment teachers perceived this to be true. It was generally acknowledged that dual enrollment classrooms offered students the opportunity to get the experience of college-level expectations and work but also allowed students to have a safety net if they failed. This supports the findings of Hanson et al. (2015) in that dual enrollment teachers felt that these programs positively helped high school students prepare for college.

The current study findings also suggest that the way dual enrollment programs provide students with college readiness skills is centered on what happens in the individual classrooms, placing the onus of building college readiness skills on the dual enrollment teachers. It is what happens in the classrooms that prepare dual enrollment students to be more successful in college than their non-dual enrollment peers.

An additional finding in this study was realized in response to the final interview question I asked participants, calling on them to discuss how dual enrollment programs can better prepare students for college. Many of the participants responded that they felt that dual enrollment participation should be expanded by offering the opportunity to more students. Since many of the dual enrollment classes they taught were also AP classes, they could identify that there was a distinct disadvantage to students who might benefit

from dual enrollment classes even though the students did not qualify for the AP classes. This finding coincides with much of the most recent discourse on dual enrollment because more studies are being conducted demonstrating the socioeconomic and racial divide between those who are given the opportunity to participate in dual enrollment and those who are not (Edmunds et al., 2022; Latino et al., 2020; Moreno et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2021). While this was not a focus within the current study, it should be considered in dual enrollment studies moving forward.

Limitations of the Study

An overall limitation of qualitative research is generalizability. In qualitative research, it can be challenging to generalize a study that focuses on a small subgroup of participants to the greater population; therefore, qualitative research focuses on transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Bloomberg and Volpe indicated that transferability in qualitative research occurs when the work is read by other professionals who may see that the same study and processes could be applied to their situation. Transferability of the current study's data and results will occur easily because most states have at least some dual enrollment classes taught on high school campuses. However, rather than getting participants from six different high schools as was my initial plan, I was only able to interview participants from four high schools. While this tightened the pool of participants and the diverse nature of their experiences, saturation was reached with the 10 participants of this study. The results of this study will still be transferrable to educators across the county who are involved in dual enrollment programs.

Recommendations

This study should not be the only study on the perceptions of dual enrollment teachers. Dual enrollment teachers offer a plethora of knowledge that can only enhance the findings of this study because the teachers of dual enrollment classes can offer unique insight into how dual enrollment programs prepare high school students for college and career success. A larger study similar to the current one would provide further transferability of the current study results and have a greater impact on the discipline. In addition, studies that explore other areas of dual enrollment from the perspectives of dual enrollment teachers should be considered.

Implications

At Walden University, there is a very distinct vision that runs throughout all aspects of the university: positive social change. Students are expected to become positive social change agents, making positive contributions to their communities, whether those contributions are large or small. This study is part of this vision in that it may help inform decisions made about dual enrollment programs, classes, and teachers. The current study findings can encourage the continuing development of these programs as well as acknowledge and support those who teach dual enrollment classes. It is not an easy job to teach high school students about expectations, responsibilities, and maturity in a regular classroom, much less a classroom where students are conducting college-level work. Existing state policies, as explored in Chapter 2, about who can teach dual enrollment classes should be examined and updated to allow dual enrollment programs to expand and provide more offerings to more students.

Conclusion

With high school students not being prepared for college-level work coupled with the demands of a more global, competitive workforce, there is a greater need than ever before to try to enhance high school learning with college and workforce readiness skills. Dual enrollment programs offer a chance to do exactly that, providing students with the opportunity to experience college while still within the safety of their high school environment. The skills students need to be ready for college have been clearly outlined and acknowledged. The participants in this study have a clear understanding of what it takes to be successful in college and work diligently on incorporating that into their dual enrollment curriculum while at the same time maintaining the expectations of a college class. It is necessary to provide high school teachers with a voice in the discussion about dual enrollment programs because they are the only source from within the classroom environment who can shed light into how dual enrollment programs encourage and instill college readiness skills in high school students. This study should be considered a component of that conversation because I have focused on these high school dual enrollment teachers and provided insight into these classrooms. This study should only be the tipping point and lead to more studies about the dual enrollment classroom so that there is more data on what can be done to enhance student learning and so that this information can be shared among multiple institutions across the country.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. How many years have you been teaching?
    a. How did you decide that you wanted to be a teacher?
    b. How did your education prepare you for teaching?
2. How many years have you been teaching dual enrollment classes?
    a. What motivated you to teach dual enrollment classes?
    b. What is special or different about teaching dual enrollment classes?
3. How would you describe college readiness?
4. What are your thoughts about high school students' level of college readiness?
5. From your experience, how do dual enrollment classes provide high school students with college readiness skills?
6. In your dual enrollment classes, what college readiness skills do you promote?
    a. What skills are most easily attained?
    b. What skills are challenging to teach?
7. Tell me what skills you believe a student needs to possess in order to be prepared for college.
    a. How do you assess that a student is prepared?
    b. What teaching methods/strategies that you use best facilitate student acquisition of college readiness skills?
8. What, if anything, do you do differently in your dual enrollment classes than do you do in your non-dual enrollment classes?
    a. Give me an example of what you do differently?
    b. What teaching methods are successful for all students?
9. In what ways are dual enrollment students more prepared for college than your non-dual enrollment students?
10. How do you think dual enrollment programs can better prepare high school students for college?