2016

Perceptions of Community College Students and Faculty on Persistence in Developmental Reading

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Walden University
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Project Study Submitted in Fulfillment

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Abstract

Attrition for entry-level, non-traditional college students taking developmental reading courses is a concern for higher education institutions. Students need to complete basic developmental reading courses in order to progress in their vocational or collegiate studies. This phenomenological study followed a social constructivist approach to attempt to understand what developmental reading students and faculty experience regarding persistence. The key research question examined the perceptions and understandings of college students and faculty involved in college entry level, non-traditional developmental reading classes regarding the factors impacting student persistence at a local community college. Using interviews, surveys, and participant journals, data were collected from 3 non-traditional, developmental reading students, who were over 24 years of age, and 3 of their instructors. Interview data were transcribed and all data were analyzed using open coding and thematic analysis. The themes discovered from both student and instructor perspectives were that student-centered instruction, experiential learning, and critical reflection were all methods for improving developmental reading student persistence. Implications for positive social change include providing research findings to the local site that might be used to improve student retention in developmental reading courses.

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Dedication

I dedicate this Doctoral dissertation to Dr. George McMeen, who was my committee chair for most of this ever challenging and surprising journey. There is no reservation in sharing that without his continued support and counsel I could not have completed this process.

Acknowledgments

I thank the university school library media specialists who helped with this research for their participation, the university dissertation editors for their advice and feedback, my current chair and committee members for their support, patience, and guidance during and through immeasurable challenges, fellow doctoral students—those who have completed this process, those in the midst of the process, and those just beginning—for their support, feedback, and friendship. I thank my friends as well who have shared their doctoral woes, who have positively expected completion from me, who have been my peer reviewers, and who gave me their enthusiastic support.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

This phenomenological qualitative study explored and described the perspectives of students in and faculty involved in college entry level, non-traditional developmental reading classes regarding the factors impacting student persistence or attrition at a local community college. This section includes the larger national and global problem in addition to a specific focus on the same problem within a large community college in Oregon and explains the rationale for this project study by examining surrounding research.

Definition of the Problem

Attrition for entry-level college students has been drawing increased attention from scholars and practitioners in adult education as noted by researchers (Bahr, 2012; Crowther, Maclachlan, & Tett, 2010; Sabatini, Shore, Holtzman, & Scarborough, 2011) as well as "the Obama administration, state legislatures, community colleges, and major education philanthropies" (Collins, 2013, p.84). Specifically for this study, developmental education with its high level of attrition is "one of the most difficult issues facing community colleges" (Crisp, & Delgado, 2014, p. 99). Although studies have shown the importance of entry-level college students' persistence in their collegiate studies, very few studies have studied the perspectives of these students (Crowther et al., 2010) or the faculty who teach them (Eady, Herrington, & Jones, 2010) regarding reasons for persistence and attrition. From 2007-2010, the attrition rate for all developmental literacy courses taught at Kaplan University online was 54% (Kaplan Higher Education Corporation, 2011). Instructors teaching in developmental classrooms of a local community college found similarly high attrition rates (47% over two years) and the same

challenges to students in developmental reading courses who were often not being adequately prepared to complete their course work (Perlman, 2011).

The United States National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) suggested, along with Brothen, and Wambach (2012), that adult education programs assess core reading abilities of adult low-literacy learners in order to plan appropriate instruction (Mellard, Fall, & Mark 2009, p. 975). Mellard, Fall, and Woods (2010) posited that "adult literacy interventions often rely on models of reading validated for children or adult populations with a broad range of reading abilities" and that "such models do not fully satisfy the need for intervention research and development" (p. 154). Further, Fine, Duggan, and Braddy (2009) stated that "remediation of incoming college freshman students is a national concern because remediated students are at higher risk of failing to complete their degrees" (p. 433). Current research does not answer the question as to why these students do not persist to success (Ashby, Sadera, & McNary, 2011; Daiek, Dixon, & Talbert, 2012)). To better address this problem, low-literacy was investigated in this study as a factor in attrition for students enrolled in entry-level developmental reading courses at the community college research site.

This study also investigated other factors contributing to persistence, completing coursework, and attrition or non-persistence for students at a community college in the Pacific Northwest. Attrition may be influenced by the factor of "low-literacy" as defined by NIFL and by the Computer-adaptive Placement, Assessment, and Support System (COMPASS) literacy proficiency exam that the college administers (ACT, 2012). Attrition or persistence may be influenced by situational, cultural, or other personal factors. This study examined the low-literacy factor and other personal factors that contribute to college entry level attrition and

persistence for non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at the community college research site.

Students who do not complete their developmental reading courses will not complete their college degrees or vocational goals (Fine et al., 2009). Research (Crowther et al., 2010) shows that society will potentially suffer from the resulting attrition including issues related to negative economic, health, family, and societal outcomes.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The problem experienced at a local community college in the Pacific Northwest is high student attrition in the institution's developmental reading courses. The college has three campuses and two extension sites with more than 38,000 students. The community college is a business and liberal arts transition for high school students to university studies. As with all community colleges in Oregon, students have the option to earn a transferrable Associate of Arts degree to any state university. This liberal arts degree allows students to finish their chosen bachelor's degree at a state university. Further, the community college is a venue for many students to learn a vocation such as health care, early childhood education, or bookkeeping. The ability to read effectively is an important, required skill for work preparedness, for collegiate studies, and for everyday life choices such as shopping. Crowther et al. (2010) said that knowing how to read effectively makes a difference in employment and life enjoyment for students and their families.

The students who come to this community college are looking to improve their lives through better jobs or careers. As Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) pointed out, adults are

most interested in learning that which is relevant to their personal lives, noting that "situational influences prior to the learning event could include anything from cultural influences to learning theory" (p. 153). The community college wanted a better picture of what barriers exist that keep students from being successful. Therefore I addressed the following question: What key factors contribute to persistence and attrition for non-traditional students in developmental reading courses? Knowing the key factors contributing to persistence and attrition can be useful to the community college to help students overcome the barriers causing attrition and to provide positive learning experiences to maximize student achievement.

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine student and instructor perceptions of what influences persistence and attrition for students in entry-level developmental reading courses at a local community college in the Pacific Northwest. Studying students in developmental reading courses and the instructors who teach them at the local community college was the best approach in identifying factors in their personal and school lives that contribute to college entry level persistence and attrition. Statistically, attrition in developmental courses appeared at one of the regional community colleges at 47% (Perlman, 2011); at Kaplan University online, where I formerly taught and first noticed the problem, attrition was identified at 54% (Kaplan Higher Education Corporation, 2011). Further, in a recent study of adult basic education (ABE) sstudents' reading skills, attrition was identified at 38% (Alamprese, MacArthur, Price, & Knight, 2011). Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu,., & Dunleavy (2007) reported that according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), approximately 130 million Americans (43%) were essentially unable to achieve success in using basic reading skills and of these 43%, one third have low literacy skills.

The local site, a community college in the Pacific Northwest, was suited for understanding individual perspectives of students and faculty via questionnaires, interviews, journals, and surveys that were used to gather evidence and data in this study. The availability and use of in person student and faculty populations at this campus provided more comprehensively detailed and richly described information for this study. Findings can be used by the community college administration and personnel to support similar future students toward persistence in these courses. Persistence in the developmental reading courses will have the potential to improve student achievement of personal goals such as earning a college degree or learning a new vocation. The implications for a future, local workforce would be better trained workers that can maintain a steady "better-than-minimum-wage" job, provide for themselves and/or their families in a better manner, and not only survive on a subsistent level (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). These workers would move beyond survival mode to sharing mode; they would contribute to the community and society generally by sharing volunteer time, money, or both (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). In other words, these future workers would become part of positive social change.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

According to Baer, Kutner, & Sabatini (2009), the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) Supplemental Studies directed by the United States (U.S.) Department of Education reported that almost half of the U.S. population cannot read well enough to complete everyday tasks much less study for a new career or vocation. Mellard et al. (2010) concluded that “adults with low literacy skills by definition have not achieved reading abilities consistent with what extant models of reading predict for mature readers” (p. 163) and posited that research

was needed to inform curriculum developers on matching reader profiles with instructional practices (Mellard et al., 2009; Sternberg, 2010). Learning student and faculty perceptions regarding factors contributing to attrition and persistence revealed more than the expected skill patterns of adult learners in developmental reading courses, but important affective factors affecting student persistence which can then be used in future curriculum development toward student success.

Miller, Esposito, and McCardle (2011) described low-literacy skills as insubstantial and that the level of these skills "serve as a significant impediment to employment, to access health-related information, to full civic engagement, and to support the learning needs of children and youth" (p. 88). Miller et al. (2011) posited that those students who achieve the use of basic literacy skills are still "insufficiently prepared for many of today's employment demands, let alone the technically demanding jobs anticipated in the coming decades" (p. 88). Crowther et al. (2010) also stated that research has shown "high costs to productivity, community and family life" (p. 663) for low literate adult learners.

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address the adult literacy problem by addressing major factors affecting attrition in developmental reading courses at college entry level. The goals of improved adult literacy will be to prepare more adults for success in life and to increase the number of academically prepared students seeking a college education if they choose this path.

Definitions

The following definitions are operative for this study:

ABE (Adult Basic Education): Adult basic education refers to the teaching and learning of skills needed by adults with low-literacy in order that they are successful in everyday life, such as making health care choices, and in employment demands (Miller et al., 2011). The students are adults with low-literacy who read at a level significantly below what is considered age-appropriate for life success (Pickard, 2013; Sabatini et al., 2011).

Adult functional literacy: Adult functional literacy refers to the set of skills required to carry out everyday life tasks in order to successfully function in society to achieve goals and increase knowledge (Baer et al., 2009; Pickard, 2013; Rabusicova & Oplatkova, 2010; White, 2011a, 2011b).

Adult low-literacy: Adult low-literacy refers to a level of literacy skills that are simple, concrete, often below basic literacy skills required for life challenges, and which make adults insufficiently prepared to meet employment demands (Crowther et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2011; Pickard, 2013).

Attrition: Attrition is the loss of students in courses over a term of instruction or "the rate at which students leave programs" (Pickard, 2013, p. 115). It is usually presented in research, internal reports, and literature as a percentage of the student population beginning the course(s) at a particular institution that attrit, drop out, by course end. In other words, attrition is non-completion of a course of study (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Bahr, 2012).

Developmental reading: Developmental reading (a.k.a. postsecondary remediation) in this study refers to courses in colleges and universities designed to prepare students with better reading skills to be successful in everyday living and in their college courses (Bahr, 2012). These

courses vary in levels such as below basic literacy: Title II (akin to Title I in elementary education) courses, or ABE courses. To succeed in collegiate learning, basic reading courses covering materials either missed or never learned by adults as children are needed.

Native and Non-native learners: For this study, native adult learners are U.S. born learners who have knowledge and experience of U.S. spoken and/or English reading. Non-native adult learners are those learners who were born outside of the U.S. and have their primary language as one other than English (Binder, Snyder, Ardoin, & Morris, 2011). Non-native learners may or may not have experience in reading their primary language which can affect learning reading in the second language such as English (Binder et al., 2011; Krashen, 1991, 1982).

Non-traditional students: Non-traditional students will be defined in this study as those adult students age 25 years and older. This age group generally includes those adults who have other factors in their lives beyond low-literacy which may contribute to attrition (Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Persistence: Persistence is the opposite of attrition in that students in courses over a term remain to successfully complete instruction (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Barbatis, 2010). According to Pickard (2013), persistence is defined as "the ways students continue in one or more adult literacy programs or complete their goals." (p. 115)

Significance

In an article on global literacy, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2007) stated that one out of five people globally were illiterate and that 27 nations demonstrated mass illiteracy. The article also highlighted the organization's belief in

the positive effects of literacy such as individual self-worth, socioeconomic worth, and social integrity. Fostering and spreading worldwide basic literacy is one of UNESCO's (2007) main goals toward improving individuals' functioning within society and societies' roles in global exchange, including communication, politics, economics, health, and human welfare.

A high occurrence in low literacy among adults in the U.S. was found in the most current report (Baer et al., 2009) on the 2003 NAAL Supplemental Studies directed by the U.S. Department of Education which is a factor of great concern nationally, statewide, and locally. The purpose of this project study is to discover key factors that contribute to persistence and attrition.Learning these key factors can assist the discernment necessary for instructional improvements. In turn, instructional improvements may assist nontraditional adult students in overcoming low-literacy and in becoming successful in their collegiate and vocational studies. Students' success in school studies has become an Oregon state concern, prompting the creation of a state-wide task force: the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB, 2011). Recent legislative laws have been designed to make the educational system more efficient and effective toward achieving student success.

The Oregon Legislature established the OEIB by passing Senate Bill 909 in June 2011, in the hopes of ensuring student success in reaching the educational outcomes established for the state. The Senate Bill's goal is improved educational success for students from pre-K through university level, termed "P-20" by the bill. Ensuring that students in the state of Oregon become proficient in literacy and other subjects will lead to their ability to be successful in life and in society.

This project study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on attrition, persistence, and nontraditional adult students by ascertaining student and faculty perspectives of factors contributing to persistence in or attrition from basic literacy courses, specifically in developmental reading. Learning these factors may support a future model or framework in some educational venues and can be used in developing new teaching practices toward improving student success.

The study's main significance is its potential to bring awareness to the factors contributing to attrition from basic literacy courses, which has led to the challenge of a large population of illiterate adults in the state of Oregon, the U.S., and globally. Understanding factors that either hinder or help low literate, nontraditional adult students persist in these courses can facilitate improved teaching practices toward more successful literacy learning and academic performance for this student population.

Guiding/Research Question

Past research on persistence and attrition in adult education, especially for adults with low-literacy, has indicated a need for future interventions and having these interventions serve the needs of this learner population. Meeting the needs of these learners enables them to meet their educational, personal, family, and community goals (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). There has been insufficient research to ascertain the perspectives of the learners or the faculty who teach the adult developmental courses. This study will add to the body of research to aid in creating new interventions that match learner needs. The study was specifically focused on the perspectives of college entry level, nontraditional, adult developmental reading students and the faculty who teach the developmental reading courses.

The overall guiding research question for this qualitative study was: How will learning nontraditional student and faculty perspectives on persistence and attrition in adult developmental reading courses best meet the needs of the local community college in increasing persistence and success in these courses for future students? Two specific research questions related to adult learning and community guide the study:

RQ1: What impact does adult low literacy have on attrition of college entry level, nontraditional adult students in developmental reading courses at a local community college?

RQ2: What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, nontraditional adult students in developmental reading courses?

Review of the Literature

Understanding adult literacy can be problematic due to its complex definitions and descriptions. These differing ways of viewing and researching adult literacy provide a complexity which often proves difficult for researchers in finding solutions to the local, national, and global issues of attrition from adult literacy courses. Certain major themes found in the literature pointed to similar populations, theories, results, implications, and suggestions for both current implementation within a curriculum and for future research.

Saturation had been reached in the initial literature review using the search terms of *functional adult literacy, functional literacy, adult basic education, adult low literacy, developmental adult literacy, adult developmental literacy, adult literacy, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities,* and *reading* as well as combinations of these search terms as Boolean functions. At first, the Boolean functions, including author names, did not turn up any literature for review; however, a few articles were uncovered during a later, follow-up literature review.

During both searches, the articles located were limited in number based upon currency. The very rare literature for review located in regard to this study was found by the following search terms and designations.

Functional Literacy

According to Baer et al. (2009), the 2003 NAAL was mainly designed to measure the functional literacy of adults in the U. S.. White (Cromley, 2011; White, 2011a, 2011b) interpreted the main assessment of adults for functional literacy. There were two component assessments used during the NAAL study which involved the Fluency Addition to NAAL (FAN) and the Adult Literacy Supplemental Assessment (ALSA) whose results were reported in the Baer et al. (2009) report. After examining data from this national assessment, White (2011) developed a theory of functional literacy, the text-task-respondent (TTR) theory (Cromley, 2011; White, 2011a, 2011b), which was based on three components of functional literacy. Her research identified seven evidence-based skills for successful literacy performance and the skills necessary for fulfilling cognitive and linguistic demands in everyday life (White, 2011a).

In regard to daily life, there was a growing instructor use of integrating the learning of basic functional literacy skills into classrooms, such as art and music, which are transferrable to life outside the classroom (Andrelchik, 2015; Benedict, 2012). Hamilton & Pitt (2011) deemed that literacy is a functional skill framed by the need to assist learners in gaining the skills necessary to function within the workplace or the larger surrounding community. Researchers defined functional literacy as basic decoding skills needed for survival according to the World Bank. This definition took a shift to sociocultural literacy defined by UNESCO as literacy learning within differing contexts that is learned for personal and social empowerment reasons

(MacArthur, Konold, Glutting, & Alamprese, 2012; Wickens & Sandlin, 2007). These definitions will be addressed later in this study.

An unusual qualitative study was used to assess the lives of people with inadequate functional literacy skills (Rabusicova & Oplatkova, 2010). The researchers created a hypothetical model of what an individual with inadequate literacy skills would look like. They searched for a person who fit the most rigorous of descriptions within this model. The participant in the study highly exhibited the factors the researchers wanted to explore: age, gender, parental education, achievements and job history, school years, family life, and life style. The main characteristic that the participant in this study (Rabusicova & Oplatkova, 2010) was that she seemed to lack goals and expectatons based on her lack of self-worth, self-confidence.

The study presented the participant's coping strategies for her low literacy in the achievement of everyday tasks. Some of the conclusions of this study that are important to note were: (a) people with inadequate functional literacy do not acknowledge reading skills acquired in school as being important, (b) people with inadequate functional literacy have a negative self-image, (c) people with inadequate functional literacy use failure avoidance strategies, and (d) people with inadequate functional literacy usually experience a series of unskilled worker jobs or manual labor (Rabusicova & Oplatkova, 2010, p.48).

There is no contradictory evidence in the literature that I have found regarding functional literacy. These studies state that there are many people who can function in society at a certain level using coping skills, but they cannot perform at a level required for maintaining those jobs or careers that would place them in a better living situation or enable them to participate satisfactorily in society (Boltzmann, Russeler, Zheng, Munte, 2013).

Educators need to make a difference in adult literacy in order to create social change for the better. Better self-understanding and confidence, better knowledge of the world and skills inherent for life success are all greatly needed locally and globally for students to propel through barriers to a new, better level of living.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

ABE is an avenue of learning for low-literacy adults who require schooling to learn basic reading skills such as decoding, fluency, phonological connections to reading, and comprehension in order to function well in life and school (Binder, Snyder, Ardoin, & Morris, 2011; Miller et al., 2011; Sabatini et al., 2011). Some of the personal reasons for low-literate learners in taking courses at a college is to aquire better jobs or for personal reasons such as reading the Bible or helping children with their schoolwork (Miller et al., 2011). Adults who participate in ABE courses resemble the Below Basic group in the NAAL report (Baer et al., 2009). These adult students are more diverse and disadvantaged as a population in terms of age, race/ethnicity, place of birth, and education (Sabatini et al., 2011), learning disabilities and health concerns (Miller et al., 2011), and native or non-native language learning (Binder et al., 2011).

With the latter factor of native or non-native language learning, some researchers found significant differences between literacy success (Alamprese et al., 2011; Eady et al., 2010; Miller et al., 2011) based mainly upon socio-economic, geographic, and cultural factors. MacArthur et al. (2012) also found differences in phonological connections to reading for non-native learners. Weak phonological skills appears to be consistent with adults and children with reading problems, but these same students have comparatively better comprehension (MacArthur et al., 2012). However, Binder et al. (2011) found no significant differences between native and non-

native readers in areas of decoding based on adults' abilities to use orthographic (spelling) skills to read. These same researchers similarily found a positive correlation between good phonological skills and being able to read well. Using the sound/reading correlation was found to be positive in much of the literature on literacy. According to Binder & Lee (2012), resilient readers are poor at decoding, but have good comprehension. Other ABE students studied (Binder & Lee, 2012) included those who were good at decoding , but have poor comprehension. Both of these groups had better orthographic and fluency skills than the unskilled readers. Some of the suggested future uses and research of findings in the literature on ABE were: (a) to find more evidence needed as to attrition interventions (Alamprese et al., 2011; Binder et al., 2011; Miller et al., 2011), and (b) to inform future curriculum design and instructional practices (Eady et al., 2010).

Other Factors Related to Adult Low-Literacy

Previously in the ABE section of the literature review, learning disabilities were mentioned as a factor in adult low-literacy (Miller et al., 2011). This learning disabilites factor, or cause, was labeled adult intellectual disabilities. It includes both learning disabilities as well as functional disabilities, such as a lack of skills for independent living and employment (Moni, Jobling, Morgan, & Lloyd, 2011). Moni et al. (2011) and Gerber (2012) found that teaching and learning for this population of adults only contributed to their capacity for independent living and retaining employment skills. The literacy courses discovered by Gerber (2012) indicated that planned curriculum was no more than that of basic adult education courses. Moni et al.(2011) noted a common misperception regarding adults with intellectual disabilities not being able to become literate. They found to the contrary that research suggests that adults with intellectual

disabilities can develop literacy skills and that continued literacy learning contributed to the learners' quality of life.

Much of literacy and any learning is dependent upon what prior knowledge each learner brings to the learning environment (Dewey, 1938; Knowles et al., 2005), as we have seen in the case of adults with intellectual disabilites. Prior knowledge combined with current circumstances, such as low income, can predict interactions between learners and instructors within literacy contexts (Santamaria & de la Mata, 2012). According to Santamaria & de la Mata (2012), research results revealed that instructional practices were affected by participants' literacy levels in relation to learning for a population of women, ages 40-45 years. There are factors beyond learning and intellectual disabilities that affect literacy learning (Morgan, Moni, & Cuskelly, 2013). Competence in literacy is more than the simple skills of reading and writing; literacy allows individuals to successfully participate in society (Morgan et al., 2013; Santamaria & de la Mata, 2012). The success of these students may also depend "on how well they can advocate for themselves and access social supports" (Reed, Weiser, Cummings, & Shapiro, 2013, p. 198).

The perspectives of faculty teaching literacy courses must be analyzed in addition to the perspectives of learners. Both in practice and in research, faculty have been asked to evaluate how and why students learn. In one study, instructors used assessment data to develop cognitive and social-humanist teaching strategies for literacy learning (Muth, 2011). The development of new teaching and learning strategies by instructors in this study (Muth, 2011) has implications, such as newly created curriculum, for future professional development. Muth (2011) posited that the differences in defining literacy made a differnece in how cognitive and social-humanist

approaches were integrated into a framework for teaching, such as using case studies and experiential activities for transformative learning. How literacy is defined is a complex dilemma for researchers and practitioners and affects the development of teaching models, strategies, and activities for successful literacy learning by adults.

Adults with Low-Literacy

Literate adults are anticipated to effectively complete literacy tasks in order to successfully achieve personal and employment goals as well as contribute to society (Lott & O'Dell, 2014). Lott & O'Dell (2014) contended that low-literacy is "a hindrance to an individual's perception of college readiness" (p.22) and thus impacts their ability to learn in current adult literacy classrooms. Mellard et al. (2009, 2010, 2011) stated that curricular interventions aimed to assist low-literacy adult learners in successful literacy learning have been suggested via matching improved curricular and instructional models with these learners' needs and skills. Shaw & Disney (2013) suggested that instruction of these low-literate adults needs to address "the specific literacy profiles of each learner" (p.150). Crowther et al. (2010) and Mellard et al. (2010) have posited that current models for teaching literacy, which are mainly used for children, do not meet the intervention needs of adults with low literacy. Knowles et al. (2005) and Shaw & Disney (2013) state that although low-literate adults may function in a way similar to less mature readers, they bring more life experience to learning, which gives them more strategies to combine their language comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge with reading comprehension (Mellard et al., 2010). Instructors and developers of curricula are challenged by this population of adults and that affects how they create and provide ways for improving their students' word reading and reading comprehension skills. Matching learners' reading skills

levels, learning styles, and thinking styles with instructional practices are in order for educational best practices (Mellard et al., 2009, 2011; Sternberg, 2010).

Differentiated instruction has shown success in improving learner outcomes by matching learners' needs with different types of instruction. Mellard et al. (2009) noted that differentiated instruction could be used to determine teaching methods unique to differing types of adult literacy learners. Further, research was recommended to enlighten how literacy learner profiles interrelate with instructional approaches (Mellard et al., 2009). Mellard et al. (2009) speculated that improved learner matches with curriculum could lead to increased program completion or persisitence.

Oral reading fluency (ORF) is another area of instructor concern for successful instructional practices (Mellard et al., 2011). According to Mellard et al, (2011), ORF is much overlooked in reading assessment and instruction for adults. In support of Mellard et al. (2011), a connection between oral language and successful reading has been previously suggested by other research (Binder et al., 2011; Binder, Tighe, Kaftanski, Qi, & Ardoin, 2013). A possible solution is to use a 2-minute oral reading assessment for grouping low-literacy adult learners in order to decide each students' requisite instructional needs and for monitoring their progress (Mellard et al., 2011). Mellard et al. (2011) suggested future research for improved curricular and instructional models as interventions that match the skills of low-literacy adult learners. However, in another study by Mellard et al. (2010), the authors stated that low-literacy adults' language comprehension was not strongly linked to reading comprehension and suggested teaching toward metacognition, which in this case is how readers think about their reading. Mellard et al. (2010) also speculated that interventions which motivated reflective thinking could

aid this population and those students with disabilities. Crowther et al. (2010) agreed with Mellard et al. (2010) that reflective thinking could ameliorate reading deficiencies for those with disabilities.

Motivating reflective thinking by students toward metacognition and transformative learning was proven useful in all areas of teaching and learning (Brookfield, 2010; Crowther et al., 2010; Knowles et al., 2005; Muth, 2011), but seemed like an especially sound theory for adults with low-literacy (Crowther et al., 2010). Crowther et al. (2010) discussed the relationship between adult literacy learners' attitudes toward learning and persistence in adult literacy courses. Instructional practices which empasized learners' strengths were most effective in helping adult literacy learners to gain better self-efficacy as well as succeed in making changes which positively affected their lives. These adults with low-literacy were able to persist in their courses and achieve the goals they had set for themselves (Crowther et al., 2010).

Crowther et al.'s (2010) qualitative study pointed out some major factors in instruction that enabled these learners to achieve better confidence, self-efficacy, and persistence in order to complete their courses: (a) accessible venues of learning, (b) flexibile learning schedules,; (c) available drop-in tutoring sessions, (d) available group work, and (e) available 'safe' counseling. Learners were considered co-producers of meaning and used real, relevant, and personally meaningful methods in their learning following constructivist, experiential theory. New self identities were formed and the low-literacy adult learners changed their disposition toward learning and thereby achieved their learning goals (Crowther et al., 2010). The most successful of all practices used in this study was instructors engaging learners based on their stengths and not their weaknesses (Crowther et al., 2010), much like Sternberg recommended (2009, 2010).

Sternberg (2009,2010) basically suggested that instruction match learners' "thinking styles" and that this matching will help learners to both gain confidence through using their strengths and to build on their weaknesses in order to overcome them. The struggles, as defined by Sternberg (2009, 2010), of these adult learners also lead to transformative learning (Brookfield, 2010; Crowther et al., 2010; Knowles et al., 2005). Crowther et al. (2010) suggested that better instructional interventions and strategies are required so that low literacy does not take its toll on society and the family lives of these adults who come to literacy learning to make positive changes in their lives.

Implications

For a purely qualitative study such as this one, a social constructivist, interpretive, or naturalistic approach was best (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). According to Lodico et al. (2010), all adults construct reality according to personal experiences so that the researcher must do their best to understand these "complex and often multiple realities from the perspectives of the participants" (p. 8). Constructivist theories promoting societal security, individual effectiveness in society, self-directed learning, and experiential learning are best for identifying literacy and personal factors contributing to learning persistence or attrition for these nontraditional students in developmental reading courses at a regional community college. Related theories for andragogical and constructivist literacy teaching and learning are those of Knowles et al. (2005), Brookfield (2010), and Dewey (1938). I believe that a new literacy learning model or new teaching strategies is/are needed for teaching certain student populations prior to collegiate study and for ameliorating entry level college attrition by improving persistence among low-literacy entry level college students.

Thinking upon new strategies along with my constructivist tendencies led me in the direction for this research study. This study began with investigating what may work at the entry college level for developmental reading students. Strategies were required to encompass reflective, critical thinking as expounded by Brookfield (2010) where learning becomes a personal experience that promotes learners' metacognitive and transformative growth. The strategies also needed to encompass a process for providing ways for learners to use their own initiative in order to learn more profoundly (Knowles et al., 2005). Student-centered, experiential learning and critically reflective thinking can be methods toward ameliorating the literacy dilemma. Mellard et al. (2009) speculated that "improved learner matches with instructional methods and curriculum would increase retention and program completion" (p. 990). Therefore a literacy learning model which encompasses the use of thinking styles (Sternberg, 2009, 2010) to match learners' abilities with the curriculum may have advantages. Students who are given opportunities to learn by exhibiting their strengths and by adjusting for their weaknesses achieve more literacy learning success. The model can be changed according to learning circumstances with students' varied, complex, diverse issues in mind. Other possible project deliverables are student questionnaires, tips for student success, and/or ways of ameliorating the factors leading to attrition as learned from the findings of the research.

Summary

Attrition for adult college entry level students, especially those who are of low-literacy in developmental reading courses, is incredibly high locally, nationally, and globally (Baer et al., 2009; Kaplan Higher Education Corporation, 2011; Kutner et al., 2007; Nielson, 2012; OEIB, 2011; Perlman, 2011; Wickens & Sandlin, 2007). It is imperative that researchers,

administrators, faculty instructors discover new methods, models, or instructional practices for improving adult literacy and for ameliorating any non-literacy factors that contribute to attrition from developmental classes. Teaching reading skills for the 21st century requires new methods, new activities, and new ways of "doing" so that reflective thinking and transformative learning can take place at the level where most adults grasp opportunities and achieve their goals. Experiential and empirical knowledge must be used by learning programs for producing a greater number of literate adults. Only then will students leave school with greater literacy skills.

The subsequent sections of the project study begin with section 2 which contains the methodology for the study including the design of the research, data collection techniques, data analysis processes, and findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The project study examined two phenomena. The first was the perspectives of low-literacy adult learners regarding factors contributing to their own persistence or attrition within developmental reading courses at a local community college. The second was the perspectives of the instructors of the students in these courses. This section includes the research design, methodology, and findings for this study.

Research Design and Approach

Examining what students comprehend in their own learning is important (Brookfield, 2010; Schnee, 2014). Collecting their perceptions via interviews and journaling in order to capture a concentrated quantity of results was the best approach for data collection in this study. The overall study was a phenomenological research design grounded in a constructivist paradigm. The study was phenomenological in that the research looked "closely at an individual's interpretation of his or her experiences" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 270). The intention was to discover and describe the perspectives of adult literacy learners regarding what factors affect their persisting in developmental reading courses and what factors affect their dropping out. I also asked the instructors of developmental reading courses their perspectives regarding students' reasons for attrition or persistence.

This study was conducted to determine the potential causes of either persistence or attrition in collegiate level developmental reading courses. Learning these perspectives helped to answer the two guiding research questions for this study:

1. What impact may adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college; and
2. What other factors besides adult low-literacy may influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Participants

The research participants of this qualitative study were entry level, nontraditional community college students who were required to enroll in remediation type courses to obtain literacy skills and their instructors who teach the required literacy courses. Nontraditional students defined for this study were those aged 25 years and older. Three students and three faculty in the developmental reading courses were the participants of this study. I used a small sample in order to gain a deeper, narrower understanding toward answering of the research questions. I had one method for recruiting students and another for faculty which I will discuss sequentially.

There were six available developmental reading classrooms at the time the study was conducted to which I spoke. I presented information on the study and explained ethical considerations such as confidentiality of participant information and the protection of participants' rights. Invitations to participate forms and consent forms, which included a short demographic survey link, were distributed to all students present. Potential participants were requested to contact the researcher via email if interested in participating in the study. When contacted by agreeing participants, a short initial interview date and time for meeting was

established between the participant and researcher. The final number of nontraditional developmental reading students participating in the study was three (after a fourth dropped out of school entirely). The study was not able to use an interpretive purposeful sampling approach of maximum variation due to lack of participants meeting the nontraditional definition. In addition, no demographic surveys were completed by possible participants. The three participants were able to provide comprehensive, richly described findings through the process of interviews, journals, and member check surveys. This representative, but not purposeful, sampling was not intended for use in generalizing to a larger population but, as Glesne (2011) suggested, was used to "cut across some range of variation. . . [to search for] common patterns" (p. 45).

A short meeting was conducted with the four current faculty teaching developmental reading courses at the research site to describe the study, their proposed part in the study, confidentiality of participant information and protection of rights, and to disseminate invitations to participate and consent forms. The study began with four faculty consenting to participate; however, shortly thereafter one faculty participant withdrew due to personal reasons, leaving three faculty participants remaining for the duration of the study.

Initial interview dates and times were established with all three participating students and three faculty to determine common themes or factors they perceived as affecting student persistence or attrition. A comfortable researcher-participant working relationship developed during the interviews (three for each participant for a total of 18 interviews) and carried forward into discussions of journal entries. Debriefing interviews with those student participants who did not persist to complete the course were intended, but the only person who dropped the reading course left the school altogether and refused a debriefing interview. The loss of the debriefing

interview, and its possible illuminating information, regarding what factors led this student to "drop" was of strong interest to this researcher because the anwers to the debriefing questions could have proven valuable to the study. According to ethical parameters, participants were told they could leave the study at any time, but there was no further loss of the remaining three participating students and three faculty participants The study had a total of six participants that Lodico et al. (2010) deemed as appropriate for this phenomenological design toward the discovery of narrow yet deep, comprehensive findings.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, procedures in data collection were developed for covering both field and ethical issues which include confidentiality and safe storage of documented materials for five years. Surveys were only used as member checks (see Appendix F for member check surveys) to ascertain my researcher understanding of participants' answers to questions. These member checks were formatively designed based on the information gleaned during interviews and in participant journals. Structured interview questionnaires (see Appendices C and D respectively for copies of faculty and student interview questionnaire protocols) were planned (Lodico et al., 2010) after IRB approval (number 06-27-13-0231126), and finalized prior to use in the study.

Interviews and Surveys

For this qualitative design, I used separate interview protocols for student and faculty participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the fall school term (2013) being studied. Thirty minute initial interviews of entry level, consenting nontraditional developmental reading students were conducted to begin collecting information on what the students perceived as factors related

to their learning to read. These interviews were part of creating member check surveys, that checked researcher understanding in order to alleviate bias, along with questions for more comprehensive, 30 minute to 1-hour interviews conducted in the middle and at the end of the study (see Appendix D for student interview protocols and Appendix F for member check surveys). The study focused intently on the human experiences and perceptions of adult learners and relied heavily on interviews as the most unbiased way to understand what the experiences mean to participants (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 271).

Data Collection Phases

Faculty	Students
Present study to faculty; deliver Invitation to Participate and Faculty Consent Form for their consideration.	Present study to possible student participants; distribute Invitations to Participate and Student Consent Forms for their consideration.
Faculty to contact researcher with their choice to participate or not; set time for first interview.	Students to contact researcher with their choice to participate or not; set time for first interview.
Conduct initial interview; collect Faculty Consent Form and distribute journal. Set time for second interview.	Conduct initial interview; collect Student Consent Form and distribute journal. Set time for second interview.
Conduct second interview and collect journal. Set time for third interview; arrange for researcher to return journal to faculty member.	Conduct second interview and collect journal. Set time for third interview; arrange for researcher to return journal to faculty member.
Email a short member check survey using Survey Monkey for participant completion.	Email a short member check survey using Survey Monkey for participant completion.
Conduct third interview and collect journal.	Conduct third interview and collect journal.
Email a short member check survey using Survey Monkey for participant completion.	Email a short member check survey using Survey Monkey for participant completion.

The initial data collection phase also included short, 30 minute minimum interviews and member check surveys with faculty participants who teach the developmental reading courses at the local community college. Two other comprehensive, 30 minute to 1-hour minimum interviews were held with faculty in the middle and at the end of the study (see Appendix C for faculty interview protocols and Appendix F for member check surveys).

Journals

As Glesne (2011) suggested, journals were distributed to student and faculty participants to write, draw, or use in any other way to express their immediate thoughts on how they were learning or what was being learned, what worked best, and what did not work well in the developmental reading courses. Journal entries provided further written evidence of what factors student and faculty participants perceived as affecting student persistence or tendency toward attrition (see Appendix E for journal prompts). Journals were collected twice, once in the middle of research and once at the end for coding and discerning themes. The coding and themes of the journals and interviews were compared for triangulation of data toward establishment of research validity.

Also as Glesne (2011) suggested, a separate researcher reflective journal was kept to document my thoughts on the meaning of participant perceptions, the corresponding coding, and any further questions that I may need to ask participants, as member checks, regarding accurate capturing of the qualitative data. All coding, themes, and additional notes were entered into an Atlas-ti qualitative software database. Since I was not employed at the research site, maintaining a researcher journal was used to ensure objectivity as much as feasible in order to further ensure that any researcher bias had little influence on the study results.

Data Analysis

Summary

Data analysis was grounded in the identification of recurring themes that emerged from the data. For the interviews, thematic coding was used beginning with open coding. The initial themes were further analyzed to identify "*families*" in the Atlas-ti program or developing patterns of relationships between the categories identified through the coding leading to an understanding of the multifaceted associations between the beliefs, experiences, and perspectives of the participants. Learning the codes, themes, and categories or families informed further data analysis.

Feedback or questions from me for clarifying researcher understanding of participants' meaning, member checks, were made if necessary. As the researcher, I considered some factors as possibilities for attrition prior to actual data collection. Some plausible reasons could have been due to learning disabilities, not knowing their learning styles, being a non-native English speaker, and other affective variables. The actual findings about the individual perceptions of these students as to their own levels of literacy skills included: (a) how they learned these skills, and (b) what they thought might be reasons they missed learning some skills. Reasons taking place in the current developmental reading courses that the participants felt contributed to either learning or not learning the college level coursework were noted as factors toward persistence or attrition as described by the student and faculty participants. Other factors that may impact their lives and persistence in their courses were also noted. These included: factors such as their health, socioeconomic status, work schedules, and family concerns.

Supported Details

In collaboration with the student and faculty participants, interviews and other data collection instruments were updated to capture the most important information and, as Creswell (2012) suggested, to build a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants. Both member checks of understanding and peer debriefing of my determinations in thematic coding were utilized for best research practices and credibility.

I used Creswell's (2009, 2012) suggestions for analyzing, grouping, and coding collected data from participants. Interviews and journals were initially read to gain a general sense of meaning. Following Creswell's (2009) eight steps for the "systematic process of analyzing textual data" (p. 186), codes were assigned after reading through interview transcripts, audio-recordings transcribed verbatim, and journal entries a second time. I was going to chart these codes/themes displaying the codes in three columns covering my topics: Major Topics, Unique Topics, and Leftovers. However, I chose instead to enter the interviews and journal entries into the Atlas-ti qualitative analysis software where I and/or the software coded the text thoroughly, better than I could have done on my own. I then re-read the interview transcripts and journal entries in the software to determine overarching themes or "*families*" as titled by the software.

The software was a useful tool for coding, locating and connecting coded items with larger themes or families, and in the final analysis connecting or correlating the research data with the research questions. Where there was no strength in description enough to code, no code was used in the analysis but the text was still related to one of the research questions. The codes and families in the software analysis are linked to the research questions and can be seen within a network visual showing this aspect and the aspect of certain data being cross linked. One

example of cross-linking data is "time management." In other words, if time management is used well by a student then that student will persist in the developmental reading course. If time management is not used by a developmental reading student, then the student will drop out of the course. Therefore, this is one code/theme with two outcomes depending upon how the tool of time management is used or not used.

Data from multiple interviews and student journal entries were triangulated to validate findings. Creswell (2012) affirmed that the researcher needed to strengthen the information discovered through multiple data collection methods by "corroborating evidence from different individuals" (p. 259), that I used in the form of member checks. While comparing the differing data sources, interviews and journals, I linked the research findings with the literature and did my best to check my own personal history and possible biases which I may have brought to the investigation. No noted biases occurred during the data collection process or data analysis. Finally, discrepant cases appearing to counter the general understanding of most participants (Glesne, 2011; Lodico, 2010) were not found in this study.

I wrote a research reflection journal based on Creswell's (2009, 2011, 2012) writings that included currently analyzed data at each stage. The purpose of this exercise was to maintain organization, focus, and to possibly discover anything missed in analysis thus far using a fresh perspective. Since the findings from the study were in agreement with what I had written in formative reflections, I did not include the reflection journal in the Atlas-ti analysis of data.

Separate student and faculty Likert-type scale opinion/perspective surveys were administered during and at the end of the study to all participants, whether persisting or not, to corroborate final categories or themes found in the qualitative data during the research project

study (a copy of this Likert-type scale is located in appendix F). During the iterative process of multiple interviews and journal reviews, I also used member checks from participants to validate that the meaning of their perceptions were accurately captured as recommended by research (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010). I asked an outsider, a colleague and friend, and my doctoral chair to audit my analyses, interpretations, codes and themes, and field notes to support reliability as recommended by Glesne (2011). Finally, all of the data--multiple interviews, journal reviews, survey results, peer debriefing, and member checks--were triangulated to ensure reliability and credibility of findings. As research pointed out (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010), the triangulation tied the open coding together from the multiple interviews and journaling so that the ultimate meaning embedded in the personal perspectives of the student and faculty participants came together for a better understanding of the factors that affect persistence and attrition. This approach will allow future planning toward successful literacy learning for this population of adults. For a final demonstration of reliability, I will include any limitations of the study as recommended by Glesne (2011).

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the potential causes of either persistence or attrition in collegiate level developmental reading courses. To achieve a greater understanding of what factors may affect developmental reading students' progress within the course, I implemented a phenomenological methodology to learn from student and faculty perceptions via interview data, surveys, and journals in order to focus on the research questions guiding the study. I used two research questions to guide the study:

1. What impact does adult low literacy have on attrition of college entry level, nontraditional adult students in developmental reading courses at a local community college?; and
2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, nontraditional adult students in developmental reading courses?

This section of the study will include: (a) findings related to the research questions, (b) findings related by the qualitative analysis software, and (c) discussion of the findings.

Process

After loading interview and journal documents into the Atlas-ti software, I coded the participant answers and comments which began to follow similar themes as they emerged. As I interviewed, read journal entries and member check survey answers, I kept a journal of my thoughts. As themes emerged, I began to group them into categories or "*families*" for the Atlas-ti software titles codes which have common correlations and associations. The emerging categories addressed the college administrative and faculty concerns such as reading skills and concepts needed to be taught on a basic level for students to be prepared for upper level reading to pursue a degree or vocation.

Use of Pseudonyms

Originally, the data from interviews, journals, and surveys were given participant codes to maintain anonymity for the participants in the study. I have since assigned the participants and their codes pseudonyms which also maintain the required anonymity while allowing personable names for relating the findings in narrative form.

Participant Code to Pseudonym Conversion

Participant Code	Pseudonym	Student/Faculty
F1	Amanda	Faculty
F3	Brenda	Faculty
F4	Carol	Faculty
F2S1	Denise	Student
F1W2S1	Erin	Student
F1W2S2	Fran	Student

Findings Related to the Research Questions

The following findings section will first discuss student perceptions, followed by those perceptions of the faculty participants. The perceptions discussed are in the same order for best comparison between students and faculty: (a) communication, (b) external factors, (c) internal/affective factors, (d) textbook/reading materials, and (e) time management.

Student participants' perceptions.

First of all, students' perspectives on leveling the communication with teachers or making communication with their teachers more comfortable, and achievable, was one key to course persistence and success. For instance, Denise said that "it's all about self-doubt." She thought that it was "definitely a matter of fear in communications" and suggested that instructors "have confidence building exercises." She thought that having these exercises at the beginning of a term would begin "good communications with the teacher right off the bat." Denise also said that she found "most of [her] frustrations" were from the lack of "good communication with [the]

teacher." She believed that many of the students leave a class due to "the lack of communication and feeling like they can't talk to anyone." Fran agreed "that communication between instructor and students [was] really important."

Fundamentally, student participants agreed that the comfort level of communication with instructors was important. Denise brought up another facet of intercommunication which she felt important to the learning environment. She pointed out that she thought her writing teacher had done a wonderful job in "making sure that all [students] knew each other." Not only did that build confidence in the students, but it provided "a comfortable [learning] environment." Denise thought that a comfortable learning environment was an important aspect in whether students persisted or not. This aspect not only indicated that instructors cared enough to help build student "confidence," but also that they cared enough to provide a "comfortable learning environment" in which students felt safe to ask questions, to speak up, to answer questions, to learn, to persist.

Erin mentioned that she had thought the instructors "would think that [she was] stupid [because she] stumbled over [her] words." So she thought that "feeling comfortable and making sure that everybody is on the same page [helped]." Fran thought that by making a "connection to students [could] make the student [feel]more comfortable."

The student participants also agreed that instructors seemed to be "more" or at a "higher level" than the students so as to make them feel both afraid to communicate at all with instructors. The student participants thought that it was quite possible for other students to give up if they were not engaged by the instructor in some way, such as using direct communication or engaging interaction in class. Denise said that she found "most of [her] frustrations and other people that [she talked] to is they don't feel that they have good communication with their

teacher. It's a lot of judgment thinking that you're not at the same level as everybody else. And we are our worst critics in that way."

Second and third, students mentioned external reasons contributing to the temporary affect on persistence, but not on dropping the reading course. They thought that internal, mainly affective factors, either contributed to persistence or attrition. Fran said that she "was thinking to dropping this class 'cause it's just hard work, and that is just stressful. And I have my own problems and I don't want more problems. But it's really, it matters. It's important and it's worth it." She went on to say that her "instructors really helped" her in persisting.

Fourth, student participants' perspectives leaned heavily on removing the textbook from the usual classroom use, using concepts in the textbook along with using shorter reading materials, and using more reading materials relevant to the students' lives. The student participants especially agreed in regard to an expensive text which they hardly used. Erin said "the textbook we didn't use a whole lot." She explained that the students in her class "had to buy two separate other books that. . .were well worth the money [emphasis]." She did mention that "there was some helpful stuff [in the textbook]" but that "a lot of people get overwhelmed when they see a huge textbook." She then reiterated the expense of a textbook "because the big ones alone are expensive." Denise said that she "was a little frustrated with our textbook for Reading" because "we only got to read a couple of passages out of it." She mentioned the expense of "a hundred dollar book" where instructors "could have copied pages out. And people didn't need to spend that much money. There's a lot of it. . .that we never opened and never looked at and never used." She "wasn't all that happy with the textbook" and emphasized that the textbook "was probably [her] least favorite thing of the course."

Fifth and finally, student participants thought that time management either contributed to persistence or attrition. Denise stated that "time management [was] important" and that she did not "want to exceed [her] required time." If she had any school work over the allotted time, then she would plan it for another day. "And that prevents things like sending [negative] signals, cramming assignments in, [and] it prevents me from losing track of what subject I'm on."

Faculty participants' perceptions.

First, all three instructors agreed that, ideally, communication between students in developmental reading courses and their instructors would have a major, positive influence on the self-images of the students and the students' persistence in these courses. The instructors suggested that bringing teacher/student communication to a level of comfort would assist student persistence in all learning activities. Brenda shared that she calls "them by name." She wants "to call it self-deprecating," because she "makes fun of [her]self a lot" in order to "make them laugh." Brenda feels "that humor is a good way to make them open up a little bit" and her sharing "personal" information helps students to "feel a little more comfortable." Basically, she thought that a "personal connection and knowing their names" were appreciated by students. Amanda spoke to her method of teacher/student communication. "The first thing is to talk to them like they are equals and not [imply] that they are lower than you." She does not use words like "okay kids" because "they are not kids. Most of them are young but they're young adults. And it is important to remember that and to treat them as such."

Second, faculty participants mentioned that "external" reasons such as illness, transportation issues, working either a part-time or full-time job, or childcare issues only affected

persistence temporarily (students may miss class, but would not drop out). Amanda confirmed these beliefs, "Well I think the things that contribute to being absent are usually. . . temporary problems. I think that the factors that could cause someone to be absent but may not cause them to dropout could be illness, could be a change in work schedule, could be a family crisis, a sick child, a broken down vehicle, weather, a bus that doesn't come on time, a doctor's appointment. I think that any of those scheduling things are temporary issues." At a later date, Brenda also proposed that external factors such as those mentioned previously by Amanda were not factors for attrition but of short-term absences. Brenda believed that, "internally, they could just be frustrated when they start reading. . .and just want to quit immediately."

Brenda further suggested that the actual factors leading to persistence or attrition were directly attributable to internal, affective factors such as motivation, confidence, self-efficacy, good time management, and self management. She believed that a "supportive environment, supportive partners, friends, [and] social circles" had a lot to do with persistence. She conjectured that people who "do succeed will probably have a friend in school, someone who's kicking their butt through; when you have a partner you are more likely to go [to class]." Amanda thought "the [self-]discipline issue [as] a chronic issue [which is] going to carry over to other classes. So if they're not present because of [self-]discipline issues or because they're not able to find relevance or meaning in the material or, in that case, in the class in general, I think that that will lead to attrition." Other factors that Brenda thought may contribute to persistence were not only "a stable home environment" but also having "positive self-esteem [and] self-efficacy." Basically, Brenda thought that "internal motivators were stronger for those [who persist]" and those students lacking "strong internal motivation and self-image" would drop out.

In fact, the general consensus of the faculty participants included the student issues which were mainly described as "internal" reasons such as self-efficacy, self-confidence, and self-management.

Third, these internal factors included affective barriers generally known as student fears. "Fear of asking questions, fear of talking to the instructor, maybe putting [or] exalting the instructor in this position that makes them fearful of asking questions" are affective factors which may cause attrition according to Brenda. Therefore, faculty thought that internal, mainly affective factors either contributed to persistence or attrition.

Fourth, another factor affecting persistence became apparent when an instructor suggested removing the assigned textbook while using the concepts from textbook, for teachers' use only, to combine.with shorter, more relevant or applicable materials for teaching developmental reading. Brenda said that she did not "necessarily like it." To her, the "stories" given in the textbook were more appropriate for "a literature class" but would not "be helpful if you're going into something more science based" for example. "So [she took] the different parts about how you find the main idea, annotate. . .from the textbook to help them with strategies." Brenda had "given them textbook reading but that [did] not really work." She was not certain whether the textbook was working for herself or the students. "So [she] started assigning journal articles [to engage] their interest" while also giving "them an option of [which] articles to read [where students] employed some of the strategies from the book towards those readings." Brenda said that basically "the text [had] not been very helpful."

Amanda spoke of her experience using shorter reading materials for instruction. The book she used for developmental reading (along with the textbook) had "50 true stories [that are]

all nonfiction and they're short." She thought this book of short stories was helpful "for folks who have attention span issues, [and] can't read big chunks at a time [in order to] retain and comprehend the main ideas." She said, "this is great because: 1. it's everyday people so you can find relevance in the material, 2. it's short, 3. the language is pretty easy and straightforward, and 4. the tone, the diversity of stories is so ample that it's really easy to compare and contrast pieces and to really connect with some of them. So you don't feel like you're the one who's missing something." Amanda thought that "everybody's going to connect to different pieces in different ways" and that she was sure "that the book is going to be. . .a really effective tool for folks who struggle to read a 250 page novel and feel like they're not getting it." She went on to say that "from my perspective [emphasis], the textbook was useful to help me identify the gaps [in learning], to know where we needed to spend more time, where I could create assignments in Moodle, which concepts needed to be covered in assignments so that I could [ultimately]. . . boost the skill level in that particular area. That being said, I don't think it's worth the 100 and whatever dollars that [the students] have to spend to get it. I don't think it has the most compelling and diverse selection of literature. I just wasn't a big fan of the book itself. And if I were a student having to do the same. . . exercises over and over and over, it would get redundant to me. I would feel like I was more focused on trying to push my way through those exercises than I was on actually learning anything."

Fifth and finally, faculty perspectives agreed with the direct correlation found with the Atlas-ti software that time management was a major factor as to whether students persisted or dropped the developmental reading course. Amanda stated, "So I think that the underlying reasons that people dropout are or that they just don't show up even if they haven't dropped out

yet: lack of [self-]discipline, lack of time management skills, [and] not really understanding how to juggle or manage the freedoms they have now that they didn't have in high school."

Discussion of the Findings

Intercommunication.

Both students and faculty concurred that intercommunication between students and faculty was a very important aspect of student persistence in developmental reading courses at the local community college. In addition, good quality communication between students as colleagues in the learning process was also deemed important. Therefore, both perspectives found that leveling communication and having a more comfortable environment in which to communicate were important factors in dissuading student fears and providing better understandings.

Internal factors.

As many instructors of developmental courses have struggled in the past to know why students drop out of these courses during a term, most instructors have or will think it is due to external reasons such as job obligations, family issues, and transportation issues which this study proved to be temporary reasons and not reasons for attrition. Both student and faculty perspectives were that these external, temporary reasons were not the problem with persistence and that the true culprits of attrition for students in these courses were internal factors. These internal factors include motivation, sense of worth, confidence, and self-efficacy.

Affective barriers.

Affective barriers were student self enforced hurdles or walls created by students fears which get in the way of intercommunication and learning. These student fears included fear of speaking in class, fear of asking questions, fear of talking to instructors, fear of feeling or looking stupid, and fear of failing. If these fears were alleviated, or at least lessened, then these self-imposed walls would crumble and release students to learn more successfully. Not only would they experience lowered instances or intensities of their own fears in learning, they would also experience stronger assurance and self-efficacy which may inspire them to persistence and success.

Relevant reading materials.

Faculty and students both thought that the textbook did not meet all the needs for the developmental reading course due to its large size, quality of the short story excerpts, price, and actual usage in the course during the term. They all thought that using the textbook for the concepts to be taught and learned was good practice but that those concepts could be taught more effectively by faculty as applications to shorter reading materials which were more relevant to students' lives.

Time management.

Students thought that time management was important, but most often did not know how to use this concept to help themselves. Faculty did know that the correct use of time management could help students persist and succeed in their studies but did not have current procedures set up to teach students how to implement time management in a concrete, helpful way. Even the qualitative analysis software gave a direct correlation between time management and persistence or attrition. If students used time management in their studies, they would persist. If they did not,

they would drop out. So teaching students how to manage their time for studies and giving them some tools for time management was one of the best strategies for instructors to use in helping students persist.

Findings Related by the Qualitative Analysis Software

The themes from open coding became "*families*" or categories based upon interconnections and interacting variations between themes formerly established by the open coding. Finally, two codes co-occurrency tables were produced by the Atlas-ti qualitative analysis software that included correlation coefficients (0-1, with 1 being a direct correlation)--one table for attrition and one table for persistence--to address the research questions as to why students persist or drop out of developmental reading courses. Does attrition occur because they are low literacy students or were there other reasons?

Persistence and attrition were analyzed for findings as to contributing factors according to student and faculty perspectives using Atlas-ti software. The only correlation which was directly tied to attrition was that of not using or having experience with good time management. In fact, this was the only direct correlation of 1.0 in the findings. Therefore, it is known from the findings that students who did not utilize good time management tended to drop out of developmental reading courses.

Other low to medium correlations tied to attrition (0.08-0.33) were a lack of comfortable communication between the students and the instructor and knowing why students drop out (0.23); internal, other reasons for attrition (0.28) which was twice as high as the literacy factor (0.14); and temporary reasons such as health, work, poor (0.17). Therefore, literacy level of developmental students and temporary reasons seemed to have little effect on attrition.

High correlations to persistence (0.34-1.0) included a need for structure/ guidelines (0.38); a need for a support system/small groups./social connections (0.44); creative, inspirational teachers (0.46); comfortable discussions (0.58); giving options for a participation grade instead of speaking in class (0.63). This separate correlation at 0.63, in addition to the 0.58 above for comfortable discussions, makes for a very high correlation and a strong argument for creating a comfortable learning environment and giving options for participation grades. Other high correlations to persistence included instructor level of energy used to engage students (0.58); use of text for concepts only, or elimination, combined with the use of shorter, relevant reading materials (0.78).

Administrative Requirements

I had discussed possible instruments which might help faculty to better clarify needed implementations, changes in curriculum, changes in teaching strategies, and/or policy recommendations during the faculty interviews and with the developmental courses department chair. Both the administrators and the faculty did not see a need for a new curriculum at the time and required some strategies and instruments which could be implemented immediately for use in the current courses to assist students with their persistence in these developmental reading courses. These discussions with administration, along with the natural outcomes of the data analysis, suggested a student questionnaire for this study's project along with a time management tool (see appendix A for a copy of this questionnaire and time management tool).

Conclusion

The main thrust of the findings suggested that students in developmental reading courses needed additional support in order to be successful. The students felt that instructor supports in

lowering their fears, especially regarding intercommunication, and including the students to have their own learning choices would help tremendously toward their remaining in the courses. The consensus among the three instructors was that a myriad of solutions were needed for two main reasons: (a) to bring the level of the instructor "down" to the same level of the student in order to lower student affective barriers such as fear and (b) to enhance intercommunication between faculty and students during curriculum instruction. The needed support included better intercommunication with not only instructors but peers as well. Therefore, lowering the student fear factors (affective barriers) along with building student confidence and self-efficacy, using relevant reading materials, promoting and teaching time management, and generally having instructors available in a variety of ways and settings--more than just office hours--works best toward student persistence in these developmental reading courses.

The following section will discuss the project that was developed based on the findings of this dissertation research which was primarily the creation of a professional development training. The main instrument or material for use in the training was a student questionnaire. The intent of this questionnaire was for it to be used by the community college to ascertain specific knowledge of individual students within these courses which would be helpful to faculty in supporting students when noticed to be struggling in class. In addition, the questions in this questionnaire were designed to bring student and instructor to the same level, one of caring about the student, and thus alleviating much of the student affective barriers right from the beginning of the term. The other instruments, such as the time management worksheet, were formulated as supplementary "help" for students while learning during the course term (see appendix A for

questionnaire and supplemental instruments). Finally, the training session (see appendix A) for faculty on the intent and use of the instruments was used after the presentation of the findings to the stakeholders, faculty and administration, at the research site. This training session will be used at future faculty retreats which occur every one to two months. In this manner, current faculty are reminded how to use these instruments, to think of new ways of using the instruments, and new faculty are trained in the use of the instruments.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project developed alongside the researcher's discovery of and reflection on the findings in this study as data were collected and analyzed. As the internal factors of self-efficacy, or lack thereof, appeared more and more strongly as factors contributing to attrition from the developmental reading courses, I began contemplating what product and/or method would be best used by instructors to support student persistence and thereby alleviate the current high rate of student attrition from these courses.

To support individual students in a course and to lower the affective barrier, usually fear, that students experienced, a student questionnaire was created for use in the beginning of their term. As the findings also illuminated the fact that good time management supported persistence, the time management worksheet was created along with tips for students' success as both a shortened handbook and elaboration on good time management (to be used with the worksheet). Along with these immediately useful instruments, suggestions were presented to the stakeholders regarding student engagement, small group work, and use of real and relevant reading materials. Using student/ instructor collaboration in creating portions of the course, student input may be used for grading rubrics; for the type of materials to be read, either beyond or in lieu of, what is already required; for games in the classroom; and for student feedback or suggestions in other areas of the course. This inclusion of students in their own learning is qualitative and more meaningful according to one faculty participant. Finally, a culminating professional development training course was developed on the use and implementation of the instruments/materials and suggestions.

Description and Goals

The overall project addressed the problem of attrition from developmental reading courses as identified previously in Section 1 in the hopes of creating greater student persistence. The goals of the project were the positive outcomes that occur when fear or other affective barriers preventing students from fully participating and persevering course expectations were overcome. Once these fears were allayed, students persisted.

The project process was both disseminating the instruments via Moodle to instructors by administrators and training them to use the instruments in Moodle with their students along with suggestions for teaching strategies toward student persistence. Administrators were asked to disseminate the project materials and were also given the faculty professional development training to use as part of future faculty retreats. By having professional development training at every faculty retreat, new instructors would be able to use the same resources to promote student persistence. Additionally, retraining current faculty on the new products and strategies would be best for an iterative process toward faculty immersion with the same goal: student persistence.

Rationale

The findings of this study primarily pointed to a need for instruments and a professional development training for the project that aided instructors in knowing their students individually for one-on-one, informed, caring support when needed. The findings suggested the closing of the communication gap between students, who often think of instructors as "authorities" with a power over the students' lives, and their instructors, who usually want to help in any way possible.

The instructors stated they were ready to help and that they offered different means of communication; however, the students still did not feel sufficiently comfortable or "safe" enough to open up to their instructors, even when it would be in their best interest to do so. Therefore, the first created instrument was a student questionnaire that aids the instructors in knowing students, closing this communication gap, and to truly assist each student individually with the knowledge gained in the questionnaire, filed for later use as students exhibit signs of struggling or possible attrition.

The only direct correlation in the findings was between students' lack of good time management, or no time management at all, and attrition. Therefore, the second created instrument was an Excel worksheet for time management based loosely on a Word document written by a Walden staff member (who is cited in the instrument). The third instrument was created because the findings indicated that students have some tips regarding what is expected in the class, how to succeed by following easy ideas, how to use time management and the time management worksheet, and how to have a positive attitude throughout their course. From the self-efficacy factors found in the study, if a student has self-efficacy, or a strong belief in their own abilities to complete tasks and reach goals, then they will persist. If they do not have this strong belief in themselves, they will drop out. The fourth part of the project was a training session for faculty created for use by administration, after their initial training themselves, for future faculty retreats or workshops in the use of the three instruments and in sharing suggestions for instructional strategies.

I created the project instruments and training based on the findings and gave policy recommendations and suggestions to administration and faculty in the presentation of the

findings to the stakeholders. All project instruments were created in a digital format so that instructors could use them in Moodle. At the end of the presentation of findings and training session, many instructors shared their ideas about using these products. The instructors were very excited about the possibilities and had very good ideas about this study's recommendations and tools for addressing the attrition of not only developmental reading students, but all developmental students. Student fears, affective barriers, can be allayed using these project instruments and recommendations for stakeholders' use in the classroom. This project provides a method of ameliorating attrition from developmental courses.

Review of the Literature

I conducted two literature reviews for this project study. In the literature reviews for the project, I examined and analyzed research of the literature that is appropriate and supports the findings and project. Additionally, I used the criteria from the research to guide the development and future implementation of the project. Based on the analysis of research and theory, the structure of this study and composition of the project was appropriate for the problem. I reviewed current, primary, and peer-reviewed literature. The majority of sources came from the databases ERIC, Education Research Complete, and SAGE Premier. Some sources came from Thoreau and Google Scholar which either offered literature for review, or guided me to literature sources. Initially, the key search terms used in this literature review included the following: *affective factors, non-traditional students, college level, adults, adult learners, instructional strategies, student persistence, student attrition, developmental learning, developmental, developmental reading, reading, attrition, persistence, effective learning strategies, learning strategies, and student-centered learning* as well as combinations of these

search terms as Boolean functions. Subsequently, the literature review turned up new information which directly correlated to the findings in this study so an additional literature review was conducted. The key search terms used for this subsequent literature review were as follows: *external factors, external causes, attrition, persistence, learning barriers, internal learning factors, self-efficacy, self-direction, motivation, learning, instructional strategies, instructional supports, administrative supports, affective barriers, student fears, relevant learning, relevant reading materials,* and *time management* as well as combinations of these search terms as Boolean functions. At first, the Boolean functions of both of the project literature reviews did not always turn up any or much literature for review; however more articles were found through changing the initial combinations in follow-up searches. These two portions of the second literature review were saturated to the point where the literature forthcoming from searches revealed the same articles over and again, especially in regard to their being current.

The overall project literature review contains a minimum of 30 sources that I used to expand my knowledge about the study findings and development of the project. The findings from Section 2 as well as the current research literature were used to support, defend and define the choices made in the project creation details. The project literature review, in combination with the findings, narrowed the study to the following search terms and themes.

External Factors

Attrition for developmental students in the subjects of reading, writing, and math is high especially for those in online or community college courses (Ashby, 2011). The developmental student population balances work, family, and collegiate studies (Edgecombe, 2011; Rutschow et

al., 2011). Differences in developmental students' success rates have traditionally been believed by instructors and administrators to be due to these external factors without any significance in regard to learning environment. However, current research indicates that the learning environment does affect developmental students' completion rates (Ashby, 2011). Ashby (2011) suggested future research to ascertain what other factors, outside of the external and learning environment factors, may lead to student success or attrition from developmental courses.

Greenberg, Wise, Frijters, and Morris (2012) profiled three groups of adult learners in order to learn the characteristics of these groups that predict persistence. The characteristics found to affect persistence the most were English language standing, gender (female having the better persistence than male), age, some reading related skills, and information access. These characteristics differentiated those who completed from those who withdrew from a program of study. Although studying similar external factors such as learning environments, student age, and reading skill levels which have been attributed to student persistence or attrition, some authors pointed out internal factors or non-cognitive factors (Di Tommaso, 2010) as important to developmental students' persistence in their courses. Additionally, more researchers are beginning to investigate the perspectives of students and/or faculty of developmental courses (Schnee, 2014), so guiding the discussion of these perspectives from the external factors mentioned here to the internal factors being newly discovered is necessary in regard to full disclosure of the study findings and direction.

Internal Factors

Di Tommaso (2010) pointed out that developmental students "are most often described as rejecting help, experiencing anxiety, fearing failure, being passive learners, lacking motivation, self-esteem, and engagement." (p. 5) When students begin to believe that their efforts have no effect on their learning success, they may begin to blame external factors for their failures. In a study by Laskey and Hetzel (2011), there existed personality characteristics, such as conscientiousness, among developmental students which correlated to student persistence and higher grade point averages (GPA). The authors contended that characteristics of these at-risk students went beyond basic skills learning, but may also be attributed to lack of motivation, lack of flexible skills such as attending class, maintaining concentration, using effective study strategies, and using social skills necessary to ask questions. They also lacked the character traits needed to persist in their studies (p. 32). These authors asserted that there were no significant differences found in persistence based on gender, ethnicity, or type of school attended (p. 36). Many other studies outlined external factors contributing to either persistence or attrition of these students. In fact, the only external support suggested that assisted with retention (persistence) was the use of tutoring. As this study indicated, attrition was not attributable to the literacy level of students as indicated by ACT placement scores (Laskey & Hetzel, 2011, p. 38; Moss et al., 2014, p. 213). The authors suggested future research on more than developmental students' perspectives but those of faculty and peer relationships as well. The authors indicated that these faculty and peer relationships may play an important role leading to improved persistence and student success.

Barbatis (2010) performed a qualitative study to understand the perceptions of developmental students regarding factors contributing to attrition. The major factors listed included personal attributes (which may include student fears), support systems (including family, peers, instructors, and campus support services), and other characteristics (including engagement and increased interaction with faculty members). As mentioned in the findings of this study, internal factors were much the same in the Barbatis study (2010): fear of communication with faculty and peers, lack of engagement in the classroom, and lack of self-efficacy and/or self-confidence. Barbatis (2010) continued to state that students who felt valued and were more active in small group work, with better communication and a form of support, would persist (p. 14-15). Thus, developmental students who have more family support and are more engaged with peers and faculty within the learning environment will be successful, persist, and graduate. Also noted (Barbatis, 2010) was the recommendation of future research using developmental students' perceptions to provide additional information regarding possible barriers and motivational issues.

In regard to motivation as an internal factor which encourages developmental students to succeed, it appears that they do succeed due to prior program motivation (Brothen & Wambach, 2012). If students are motivated and engaged in their own learning, then they may succeed in completing developmental coursework. In most cited research, students who do persist to completion of developmental reading courses, including math and writing developmental courses, also persist to achieve a collegiate or vocational degree; they become successful students beyond developmental education (Boatman & Long, 2010; Pinkerton, 2010). Although completing developmental coursework does not always ensure that these students will attain a

degree, taking these courses improves "their lives in many ways besides improving their chances for academic success" (Brothen & Wambach, 2012, p. 35). Mellard, Fall, Krieshok, and Woods (2012) explored tendencies or factors that were expected to affect motivation during learning. These authors assessed students' self-perceptions of competency based on affective attributions regarding both external and internal obstacles to learning. "Developmental students of all ages often lack direction and goals, motivation, self-confidence, and belief in their own self-efficacy" (Daiek et al., 2012, p. 38). Additionally, Di Tommaso (2010) stated that "students who lack role models in their lives require assistance in the development of self-confidence, self-direction, and self-efficacy" (p. 14-15). The findings suggested improved learner persistence using future innovations in instructional methods to overcome internal factors which become affective barriers, such as fear.

Affective Barriers

Internal factors related to anxiety, fear of failure, and self-esteem may cause developmental students to feel anxious, frustrated, disappointed, overwhelmed, and angry about their educational prospects (Di Tommaso, 2010). Thus, future educational experiences for these developmental students require more wide-ranging, needs-based support in order to supply adequate interventions. Since non-academic, affective, and personal factors related to student success were increasingly important, instructors and administrators of developmental courses needed to study their own students and identify a program that may be appropriate within their individual educational environment (Fowler & Boylan, 2010). One author reviewed a book which I came to realize as a major commentator to these affective barriers (McKnight, 2012). The book which will be described in more detail on its own merits is entitled: *The college fear*

factor: How students and professors misunderstand one another (Cox, 2011).

According to McKnight (2012), Dr. Cox's Fear Factor book was aimed at instructors and administrators in order that these two populations understand how to more effectively support students in their persistence and success at collegiate level.

Cox did not exclusively focus on first-generation college students but student fears. After five years of interviewing students and observing them, Cox focused on the quiet students: the ones who did not speak to the instructors, the ones who never submitted work, and the ones who opposed our inquiry-driven classrooms simply by refusing to consider our questions. Cox described the interviewed students as "fanned by their own fear factors"--deep doubts about whether they were college material at all (McKnight, 2012). The students wait for the day when they will be found out: the first exam, the first paper, or perhaps the first time they venture to speak in class. Many students begin avoidance right away: staying silent, not submitting work, and avoiding all forms of assessment. Instructors, at the same time, envision a learning environment of openness and comfortable conversation toward learning which is pretty much the opposite of the students' vision. Student fears of not getting any smarter from an expensive, high stakes waste of time and pointless classroom activities cause discomfort. It is this discomfort which explains the silence, the opposition, the frustrating lack of engagement, and the instructors' sense that they are "teaching a bunch of stones" (McKnight, 2012, p. 114).

Moss et al. (2014) agreed with McKnight in that students' discomfort with their self-perceived scholastic capability can advance developmental students' experience of anxiety about how peers and instructors observe their course contributions. Therefore, "lower academic ability may exacerbate developmental student self-doubt and insecurities based primarily on fears of

being viewed as unintelligent" (Moss et al., 2014, p. 204). So when assessing the risk of humiliation, developmental students avoid class participation and/or asking help from their instructors (Cox, 2011).

In her studies of students and their perspectives for over five years, Cox (2011) described many student insights as to factors which affected their collegiate lives, including persistence when fears were overcome. Students revealed tremendous anxiety regarding their educational goals and their abilities to succeed in college. Her book mainly conveys the meaning, consequences, and suggested interventions for what she terms "total fear factor" (p. 21) because this factor emerged in every one of her studies. Whether students were transitioning from high school to college or were non-traditional older students, beginning a collegiate program of study marked a high level of anxiety.

In fact, the vast majority of students strongly believed that their future success was dependent upon earning a college degree and they revealed tremendous anxiety regarding the collegiate pathway on which they were embarking. Students' stress levels were directly linked to their self doubts concerning "succeeding in college and realizing their career goals" (Cox, 2011, p. 24). Students revealed a fundamental lack of confidence and gnawing doubts about their competence to achieve success in their collegiate studies. Due to this doubt, students were just waiting for their inadequacies to be exposed and thereby blocked from pursuing their goals (p. 25). The students expressed their concerns in many ways: allusion to professors and the "entire notion of college itself" (p. 26). The core of students' fears was expressed with the same feelings of dread and apprehension that college would prove an impossible dream.

Students were intimidated by professors' knowledge and perceived power, basically the power to assess. Students were afraid that professors would eventually discover their educational inadequacy. They were afraid to approach their professors because they did not want to look or be discovered to be stupid. Even when students described professors as "kind of friendly," they still felt an intimidating distance between professor and student (p. 27). Another factor which arose in this study was mentioned by Cox (2011) related to class value. Many students considered developmental courses not only as high-risk and high stakes but also wondered whether the courses were a waste of time since they did not receive college credits toward a degree or certificate (p. 30).

Fear of failing drove some students to make use of precautionary strategies. The ultimate fear management strategy was quitting. Strategies used as ways of continuing studies were: scaling back, use of a less stressful environment--such as studying at a community college rather than a four-year research college, redefinition of success and failure--such as remarking on how failure can produce positive results and/or learning experiences, and simply avoiding all assessment which posed the risk of being exposed to instructors or fellow students. Other avoidance strategies were to not attend class, not submitting assignments, and not participating in class discussion when attending (p.36). The avoidance strategy countered success whether the fear being experienced by a student was real or imagined. Mainly these fears are imagined and can play a destructive role by whittling away at students' self-confidence as a competent college student (p. 37). Students' "efforts to manage their fear of failure can easily lead to failure" (p. 36).

Implications for student success may lie in students' ability to work through their fears so that they experience the evidence needed proving that they can succeed. Cox (2011) uncovered a basic resiliency in students who experience good success academically after pushing through their feelings of fear and inadequacy. In this manner, these students teach themselves about achieving possibilities and thus build their own self-efficacy. Avoidance precludes the opportunity to experience success and thus becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure: fear of failure leading to actual failure. Thus fear of failure prevents full engagement and commitment in the course which may lead to attrition. How these fears and counterproductive strategies might be ameliorated is consequently an important problem to address when working to promote student success and persistence.

Time Management and Relevant Reading Materials

Daiek et al. (2012) believed that instruction and support for developmental students was needed beyond basic academic skills: critical thinking, study skills, time management, goal setting, and other self-regulation skills. What worked for developmental students worked for all students. Another factor which affected all students in their progress and success was procrastination which may have stemmed from fear of failure or poor time management and was found in over half of developmental student behaviors (Moore, 2008).

In regard to using methods of instruction which rely on relevancy of reading materials and building on what students already know, there is the study of analogy use in reading courses. One study investigated the use of analogies in developmental education courses which showed that these students used analogy for basic reading processes such as decoding words, but there were other indications that "natural sociocognitive processes of analogy" facilitated

comprehension as well (Paulson, 2014). In this method of analogy, students are creating new meaning from what they as adults bring to the learning moment. Therefore, andragogy, scaffolding and constructivist theory are used in this analogy process. Furthermore, research on student self-regulation within developmental courses has presented characteristics of successful student learning: time management, goal intentions, meaningful and directed reading practice, cognitive and noncognitive strategies, and self-efficacy (Mulvey, 2009). Therefore, to promote student persistence and success within developmental reading courses, instructors need to instigate ways of sustaining student transformation toward self-efficacy. By giving students real and relevant reading material to better comprehend and build knowledge, and by aiding students in their own self-efficacy in the learning process, instructors can meet acceptable administrative learning and teaching parameters. Understanding developmental students' thinking regarding their education can advance curricular and non-curricular strategies to help them succeed (Mulvey, 2009).

Smith (2014) also suggested some strategies for motivating students in their own learning toward persistence. To have students read applicable and relevant materials which correlate to their personal life experiences for engaged interest, persistence, and enjoyment of a course rather than have the current disinterest, internal fears, lack of connection within the learning environment can ameliorate the ultimate attrition. Furthermore, the use of problem-based instruction to promote critical thinking is often recommended.

Using instructional strategies which have been proven effective--engagement, relevancy, collaborative learning--can positively affect student success and persistence (Daiek et al., 2012).

Instructional Supports and Strategies

Brothen and Wambach (2012) suggested that "developmental educators should redefine core principles and key concepts" to improve instruction of developmental students (p. 34). A basic tenet or principle in the United States is that no student be denied access to an equal opportunity education. However, nontraditional adult students who are underprepared for the level of academic work expected affect both the academic system and how instructors teach. There is a need to address instructional strategies for teaching developmental students which includes research-based alternatives such as seminars, supplemental instruction and support, learning communities, collaborative learning, and critical thinking instruction (Brothen & Wambach, 2012, p. 35).

These authors contended that developmental students may impact teaching style that is not beneficial to student progress. Therefore, instructors may move from teaching content areas to teaching basic skills improvement as well as lowering their expectations of these developmental students' capacities to learn. Integrating skills development with core curriculum may be one answer to this dilemma. Di Tommaso (2010) stated that many developmental students who do not have role models in their lives require their instructors to model how to learn. The instructors may model using strategies which adapt to the learning needs of students, strengthens relationships, and encourages students "until they successfully shift to an internal locus of control" (p. 15).

Calhoon et al. (2013) suggested effective instruction for struggling adult readers as defined by the results in the International Adult Literacy Survey (2011) which indicated that 21-24% of adults read prose at the lowest level scored. A more complete picture may be provided by

examining results at the individual, or personal, level to enhance instructional approaches which are most beneficial to struggling adult developmental students (Calhoon et al., 2013). Noteworthy gains in vital literacy skill development for struggling adult reading students have been hard-earned (Alamprese, MacArthur, Price, & Knight, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2012; Sabatini, Shore, Holtzman, & Scarborough, 2011). Mellard et al. (2012) suggested that new instructional behaviors be used to improve learner persistence. Perhaps one instructional behavior, which has shown promise in increasing the success of developmental students, would work well in most any community college. This behavior is direct, one-on-one student tutoring in the developmental content area by the instructor (Gallard, Albritton, & Morgan, 2010). Also, Hern (2012) recommended that developmental students practice in the same kinds of reading and thinking that they will be asked to do in the college-level courses with more assistance than needs to be given better-prepared students. Furthermore, Boatman and Long (2010) pointed out the limitations of using a one-size-fits-all approach to remediation policy and practice.

Non-traditional developmental reading students were defined by Kenner and Weinerman (2011) as adults between the ages of 25 and 50 while meeting at least four factors: financial independence, full-time employment, dependents, and part-time enrollment. These authors stated that these characteristics place non-traditional students at risk for not completing their degree, with no specific reasons given. Stemming from andragogy are metacognitive frameworks which identify how people structure their own learning (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011), mainly within tacit or informal learning theory. With tacit theory, adults learn their metacognitive skills via "peers, teachers, and local culture" (p. 89). One step up from and similar to tacit theory is informal learning theory. Adult, non-traditional developmental students still learn their

metacognitive skills from peers and their environment, but they have at least a rudimentary thought process regarding their own metacognition (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Therefore, these authors suggested that developmental instructors "must understand the background of adult students" and frame "learning strategies in immediately useful ways" (p. 90).

Perin (2013) mentioned how developmental education has overly used basic discrete skills instruction which only garnered dissatisfaction from the public and research with this instructional approach's ineffectiveness. This author called on researchers to determine the "extent to which motivation, self-efficacy and other affective variables are related to reading performance" (p. 127). Some authors suggested that there is a second approach to instruction in developmental courses--constructivism--which leads to students making meaning (Perin, 2013, p. 120; Self Trand, P. A. & Eberly C. 2009). This approach focuses on problem solving, critical thinking, and using authentic reading materials, in lieu of discrete skills textbooks, which are related directly to students' personal or academic needs and interests as mentioned in the findings of my study. Furthermore, Schnee (2014) mentions small learning communities, another finding in my study, as providing not only support from peers but also providing a deeper understanding of the material they are learning while increasing interaction, communication, with one another and their instructors (p. 245).

Additionally, MacArthur and Phillipakos (2013) reported on a design study of an instructional intervention which includes self-regulated reading practice as one strategy rooted in motivation for such practice. The authors pointed out student gains in motivation as being one of

the most important outcomes of intervention as iterated by Silver-Pacuilla, Perin, and Miller (2013).

Collins (2010) addressed differing perspectives in regard to research in developmental education and that numerous types of research evidence was suggesting college administrators and policy makers move toward better instructional strategies (p.2). Best practices for developmental education refers to both instructional practices and administrative activities such as counseling, advising, and tutoring. For instructional practices, most of the current research on successful developmental education programs is in the area of specific program evaluations. Once again, the "dearth" of other research to fill in the gaps of understanding from the perspectives of students and/or instructors in and of these developmental courses is emphasized (Bahr, 2010, Collins, 2010; Crisp & Delgado, 2013).

Administrative Supports

Collins (2010) supported the idea of having state policies attuned to "bridge the gaps" in evidence on developmental education effectiveness by supplying supports and resources, including funding, for identifying and showcasing practices, programs, and strategies that have some promise of student success and retention (persistence). To help maintain strong student performance in subsequent college-level courses, regular faculty development and targeted student supports were considered necessary (Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, & Xu, 2014).

In a recent study (Bremer, Center, Opsal, Medhanie, Jang, & Geise, 2013), the researchers considered several factors that assisted developmental English, reading and writing, and math students' persistence, graduation, and grade point average. Placements into developmental courses as an intervention by community colleges were limited to retention. In

fact, the findings highlighted financial aid and tutoring as being more clearly related to student success than developmental coursework (Bremer et al., 2013). Many factors have been considered and/or hypothesized to be considered necessary for student persistence, but few factors have been thoroughly studied according to Hirschy, Bremer, & Castellano (2011). Many of these factors have to do with students' backgrounds (Hirschy et al., 2011) which were used as data variables collected for a more rigorous study (National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, 2012). Bremer's study (2013) appeared to indicate that developmental reading courses, or remediation, were unsuccessful toward student persistence and success while administrative processes such as financial aid and tutoring were effective.

Collins (2013) discussed the core principles presented in a joint account geared toward presenting the most successful instructional practices and policies for better outcomes in developmental education. According to Collins (2013), developmental education issues have the "attention of the Obama administration, state legislatures, community colleges, and major education philanthropies" (p. 84). Therefore, both faculty and administrators must develop new classroom strategies and policies to promote student persistence in developmental reading courses.

Summary

Thoughts regarding the project for this research study drew upon the findings and the literature in the creation of new or differing strategies which could be immediately implemented in the current courses. The strategies needed were ones that address student fear factors, classroom engagement, effective intercommunication between peers and instructors, making learning become a personal experience for students, and helping students self-manage their

learning. The strategies also needed to provide a conduit for learners to exercise their own resourcefulness in order to learn more deeply (Knowles et al., 2005). Student-centered, experiential learning combined with instructor and administrator support may ameliorate the literacy dilemma. Students who are given opportunities to learn while also having a say in what and how they learn can achieve more literacy learning success. Instructors knowing and supporting their individual students can help address the students' diverse, multifaceted issues. The conclusion drawn by this author is that the profession considers new evidence as it applies to practice and policy, that perhaps the field will be proactive in a full-scale redesign of developmental education while integrating new instructional strategies in the interim.

Implementation

The instructional strategies, and written copies of the instructional tools, were presented to the administrators and faculty of the research site during the presentation of the findings and professional development training session. Administrators supplied electronic versions of the instruments to faculty within the Moodle program for use within the developmental classrooms. The instructors integrated the new instruments and suggestions into their teaching practices. The goal is for administrators and instructors of developmental courses to meet for faculty retreats, usually monthly, as an iterative process of reviewing instruments and strategies use, and performance, as well as introducing these to new faculty. The program will be implemented for at least a full year and evaluated as the year progresses so suggestions can be made.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Potential resources for the faculty are the very knowledgeable administrators at the college who not only hold doctorates in education but remain current in the field with

educational research as it pertains to developmental education. These same administrators are sources of continued professional development and training for instructors at the community college. Monthly faculty retreats/meetings are held to share the most current information on instructional practices and methods as well as professional development days afforded for attendance by these same developmental instructors. When state and federal funding is allotted, the four year colleges do not receive monies for developmental education since they do not hold the responsibility for these courses in the State of Oregon. Community colleges, like the research site, must meet the needs of this ever growing student population of adult developmental students in order to justify receiving any funding from any source, grant or otherwise. The State of Oregon, federal funding, and research are also strong resources of information and financial support in the way of grant monies, although the amount of support appears to be dwindling (National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. 2012; OEIB, 2011).

Potential Barriers

As previously mentioned, the largest potential barrier to implementation will be funding from state and federal agencies. In fact, education is continually losing a significant amount of funding in all areas, not just developmental education, along with other basic social needs according to a U.S. Senator from Oregon who spoke on the floor of the Senate in March 2015 (Merkley, 2015). This constraint may affect the ability of administrators to provide enough reading literature/materials and other resources to faculty for teaching the new plan effectively. The availability of technology such as Moodle or reading labs software to support the teaching may also be affected by the lack of financial resources. However, there may yet be funding

available through other government and non-government listed grants which will require constant vigilance on the part of instructors and administrators in acquiring when availability arises (Gallard et al., 2010; National Research Center for Career and Technical Education. 2012; OEIB, 2011).

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The professional development training, including instruments and recommended strategies, were to be implemented beginning in 2015. The new professional development was suggested to be an ongoing, recursive process where faculty and administrators adjust their teaching styles according to what works best in each classroom individually. Since they will meet approximately once every one to two months for a faculty retreat used for ongoing training and sharing, decisions will be made formatively, organically for best practices toward the goal of higher persistence in developmental courses.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

Instructors will have the most significant responsibility of integrating the new program into curriculum. The implementation includes instructors making the particular selections with regard to reading materials, resources, activities, and assessments for use during the school year. Instructors will also have the chief responsibility for evaluating the program while using the new plan throughout the school year. The developmental courses department chair will have the final and vital responsibility of overseeing alignment between the differing levels of the courses and assuring the program helps students persist in their developmental courses.

Project Evaluation

The goal of the new program utilizing new instruments and strategies in the developmental reading classrooms is to provide the students, whose success is of primary concern, with the skills needed to be persistent and successful in their developmental studies. Basically, higher persistence of developmental reading students is the overall goal. Classroom assessments, student progress, and number of developmental reading students persisting out of the original number of total students enrolled will be compiled into statistics for comparison by the administrators so that ongoing student persistence percentages in these developmental courses may be known at any given time.

One element in the evaluation of developmental reading students' persistence in these courses is to assess if they are being prepared to meet this goal via formative and summative classroom assessments. These assessments will be the initial way that we can check not only for student understanding, but also of their level of engagement, motivation, lack of fear in learning and communication, and level of self-efficacy.

The instructors will continue to assess students for skills and concept learning, but they will also assess the new instruments and strategies integrated into their courses. They will note any positive or negative changes in students' behaviors, such as motivation, easy communication, and self-efficacy, and whether the corresponding student is persisting during the course. The use of any formal assessment to check for student persistence in developmental reading courses will include the primary resources for this type of evaluation and will need to be teacher-created and monitored. The instructors and administrators are projected to meet every one to two months during a scheduled faculty retreat/meeting to evaluate program merits or needs, and to make any

suggestions from their ongoing evaluations for program improvement. This feedback will be compiled by the developmental courses department chair who will meet with the associate dean to review the suggestions and discuss any modifications that should be made to the program.

The teachers' evaluations will continue for the length of time it takes from first integration of instruments and strategies, the new program, to the final modification found necessary by administration and faculty to ensure this program works in ameliorating attrition and supporting persistence of students in developmental reading courses. The department chair will assume the overall responsibility for monitoring program implementation and determining if the new program is meeting its goal. She will ensure that there is continued alignment throughout the school with regard to the integrated instruments and strategies into skills/concepts instruction as these are part of her responsibilities. She will work closely with instructors and the associate dean in regard to program implementation and making any necessary modifications. As modifications are made, instructors will need to continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness to meet its goals.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

The goal of this project study was to apply the knowledge gained from this research to support developmental reading students in persisting within their courses, to find engagement and motivation in learning, and to achieve their particular goals, such as a college degree or vocation. They can become positive, contributing members of the local community and gain self-respect (Mulvey, 2009). The possible increased persistence of these students will be a positive

message in the Oregon Education Investment Board's future reports to the Oregon legislature (OEIB, 2011), thus earning more funding for the local community colleges who provide the education for developmental students in Oregon. The research site community college is not the only community college in Oregon who are finding their state funded budgets without enough funds for proper puchase of new curriculum, much less developing new curriculum via implementing new or differing strategies.

Beyond those students who will achieve a college level degree, the implications for a future, local workforce would be better trained workers that can maintain a steady "better-than-minimum-wage" job, provide for themselves and/or their families in a better manner, and not worry about only existing (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012; Mulvey, 2009). Oregon has traditionally been populated by small businesses, many that are family businesses, agriculture/farming, and a few larger corporations as they decide to invest in this state. There is now a new quickly growing number of larger "green" environmental/energy and technology companies moving into Oregon. Job growth for these industries is expanding so quickly that there is an urgent and immediate need to fill these jobs. Since these jobs require literate, skilled, well-trained employees, the local community colleges are needed to supply most of this new workforce through needed education and training.

For instructors, administrators, educational philanthropic agencies such as the Oregon Community Foundation, and individual educational philanthropists such as Nike's Phil Knight, having more adult students achieve their educational goals means that the society surrounding the college will have potentially better contributing citizenship (Collins, 2013; Lott & O'Dell, 2014). Further implications of an educated workforce in the local communities are less crime and

poverty, less hunger, more volunteers such as for the Oregon Department of Human Services or CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) in support of children in the Child Services system. More educated people can make a social difference via countless avenues such as the Oregon Fellowship of Reconciliation, local United Way supported agencies, and Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty as examples.

Far-Reaching

In the larger context, this study may be used as an addition to the body of research toward creating new interventions which match developmental learner needs (Sternberg, 2010). Due to the dearth of research (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Koch, Slate, & Moore, 2012) that has been conducted to ascertain the perspectives of the learners or the faculty who teach the adult developmental courses, I see this work contributing, along with other research studies, to fill the experiential and information gaps (Moss et al., 2014), to create new learning theory or discovering new ways in which to support developmental reading students toward personal success in life via the learned trait of persistence. Perhaps what we instructors and researchers truly would like to see in our students, developmental reading or otherwise, is how to persevere. An overall result might suggest that we would have more successful learners who have taken on this new trait as their own.

Conclusion

The findings and suggestions that emerged from the research need consideration in promoting developmental reading students' persistence. With regard to important features that became apparent, the program designed as a result of this study requires integrating new instruments (Calhoon et al., 2013; Perin, 2013; Self Trand & Eberly, 2010) and a training session

into instruction and future faculty retreats. Using a constructivist paradigm within instruction of basic skills and concepts requires the use of more relevant, meaningfully engaging reading materials. Promoting effective time management, which was a direct correlation to either students' persistence or attrition from developmental courses, must be presented to, explained, and required of these students for their classroom success. Other suggestions based upon faculty and student perspectives include:

- Students' input in course design and assessment,
- Student opportunities for collaboration, small groups,
- Alternative assignments for course participation grade,
- Employing a variety of teaching strategies which allow varied assessments for students to show understanding of concepts,
- Design and use of ice breakers and confidence building activities with students at the beginning of the term, and
- Distribute and discuss the college campus resources handbook and course syllabus the first week of the term.

As these suggestiosns are followed and iteratively evaluated by the college as to their successful implementation(s), then a positive outcome of higher student persistence in these developmental courses ought to be realized.

The following section will discuss the project’s strengths, weaknesses, suggested future research, and my reflections about me as a scholar, leader, and practitioner.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

Societally proficient adult literacy has been targeted as an important objective in developmental education that is currently addressed in the community college environment (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Daiek et al., 2012; Moss et al., 2014; Paulson, 2014; Pinkerton, 2010; Pricer, 2012; Schnee, 2014). This goal has implications for the types of activities in which developmental reading students participate. There is a need to introduce constructivist based learning activities to help begin the process of having adults meaningfully engaged in learning pertinent reading skills and concepts according to research (Bahr, 2012; Barbatis, 2010; Calhoon et al., 2013; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011; Paulson, 2014; Pickard, 2013). Having adult developmental reading students involved in the constructivist process of making meaning through reading exposes them to real-world problems in relevant reading materials and encourages discussions about different types of solutions to these real-world problems.

This section will include the strengths and weaknesses of the project. The primary goals of the project are to apply the knowledge gained from this research to support developmental reading students in persisting within their courses, to find engagement and motivation in learning, and to achieve their particular goals (college degree, certificate, or vocation). I will also discuss what I learned about myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer as I engaged in this project study and will share my reflections on what I learned and the importance of this culminating project.

Project Strengths

For students to understand the process involved in reading sufficiently to earn a college degree or gain a viable career, they need to persist in their developmental reading courses and to participate in a variety of activities that expose them to reading materials that engage them with real and relevant problems (Pickard, 2013). As mentioned previously, critical thinking can be promoted and learned through students addressing discovered problems, in reading materials or in life, which have no specific answer (Brookfield, 2010; Self Trand & Eberly, 2010). Paulson (2014) found that the learning experience ought to provide opportunities for the students to use their existing knowledge in their analysis of problems, be able to devise a solution and a plan to carry it out, analyze and evaluate their solution, and present their conclusions. In other words, the students build upon prior knowledge to learn new knowledge which is termed constructivism. Such creative and authentic experiences using constructivist planning deviate from the more customary methods of teaching developmental reading which focus on rote learning of basic skills and concepts.

This project study program provides a variety of learning experiences using coursework integrated instructional strategies, and includes tools to use toward student persistence. The program also gives instructors a variety of methods to help students to learn different reading concepts within relevant reading materials (Smith, 2014). This may help students to be engaged, to not be overwhelmed, such as with a large textbook, and apply new ways of thinking. In order for these developmental classrooms to become more functional in engagement, motivation, and learning reading, a more authentic type of learning and assessment can be designed using an open conversation between instructor and students. Some specific examples given in the faculty

training session include using student opportunities for collaboration (small groups/cohorts), using alternative assignments for course participation, and promoting good time management. Additionally, instructors need to teach students how to realistically plan for their learning time using the time management worksheet. Instructors can use the student information given in the questionnaire to both reduce the student fear factor and to support their individual students when they are struggling. Finally, instructors can use the suggestions given, such as an ice breaker/confidence building activity, within the course work time.

The findings of the study indicated that the instructors believed in the importance of teaching literacy in a manner that promotes student persistence. I reiterate that providing students with a variety of reading materials that supply information that is interesting to them in different formats helps them to strengthen their understanding of basic reading concepts (Barabatis, 2010; Paulson, 2014; Perin, 2013; Pricer, 2012; Smith, 2014). Understanding basic reading concepts used in the context of relevant reading materials may strengthen student persistence in their studies. The combination of text-based concepts with discovery-oriented, relevant reading materials encourages an atmosphere of discussion and sharing of ideas while lowering the fear factor (Cox, 2011). Smith (2014) added that reading materials that are relevant to students' lives used in combination with learning concepts aids in the development of effective reading strategies by students that can support their persistence. The use of relevant reading literature is one of my developmental reading suggestions to faculty; it can contribute to student persistence in these courses and improve student success in life. These type of resources may be used as teacher read-alouds and independent assignments to provide the teacher with options when selecting readings for the potential course library or book list. The variety of developmental

students' reading levels contributes to each course's potential library, that allows instructors to confront the demands of differing reading abilities within the classroom. The basic focus of the suggestions given to administration and faculty is a program that allows instructors more latitude in using their creativity to enhance their lessons, engage the students in their own meaningful learning, promote better time management, and diminish students' affective barriers.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

One of the limitations of the identified program, especially for the local community college research site, is the fact that the program does not provide specific lesson plans for instructors and assumes a level of instructional expertise that may not exist. More experienced, creative instructors may be inspired by the autonomy provided by having the support of tools and strategies rather than strict instructional guidelines. However, this plan for instruction does not take into account instructors with little to no experience in teaching developmental reading or who may be enthusiastic yet lack the content and instructional knowledge to expand upon this instructional plan.

Instructors who are more traditional in their teaching style and prefer direct instruction methods rather than facilitating their students' learning may also be challenged in implementing the program's recommendations and tools into their coursework. One suggestion to address this challenge is for the college to provide professional development opportunities for teachers who want to increase their knowledge and instructional expertise beyond their experiences at the faculty retreats. Allowing instructors planning time together so they can collaborate, share ideas, and support each other in the new learning process may also help instructors in developing and

implementing more nontraditional lesson plans. Instructors could also share a compilation of their lesson plans in a lesson plan depository that would be available for common use.

A second limitation of the program is the less than adequate supply of specific activities that instructors can readily integrate into their lessons. Instructors may have difficulty deciding how to include a new strategy as a regular instructional feature in developmental reading lessons without explicitly provided guidelines. One suggestion to overcome this limitation is to align the instructional strategy, such as confidence building activities, into the existing structure and process that instructors currently use as part of their instructional coursework. Constructivist learning, connecting students' prior knowledge and personal experiences to new reading strategies, can support better student persistence and learning. Additionally, reading as part of everyday living provides students opportunities to persist, to attain success in studies as well as in life, and to perhaps experience a new found sense of self-efficacy.

A third limitation of the program is that it does not adequately address the co-curricular requirement that students have the ability to write, to express in words what, how, and why they think about a subject effectively (Pickard, 2013). Writing is part of the current coursework and is mainly used in the assessment of reading skills and/or concepts. Therefore, instructors at the local community college and elsewhere need to allow writing to be a routine part of the developmental reading coursework and not solely used as an assessment tool. One suggestion toward the goal of regular writing in a developmental course is the use of student journals to express what they are learning, what they are confused about, what feelings or affective barriers they have and why, and anything else the instructor considers an effective journal prompt. Using

this approach, students have support from the instructor's immediate weekly or bi-weekly feedback on the content of their journals. This may support student learning and keep their fears from becoming obstacles to their learning to read comprehensively (Cox, 2011; Smith, 2014).

Finally, consideration for alternative approaches to the program is offered. The literature suggested that the integration of course strategies be used to provide student assistance in the immediate future while the search for or the development of a new curriculum or theory be used in the long term (Schnee, 2014). Existing developmental reading programs that may suit the college research site's needs are available and could be evaluated for programmatic strengths and weaknesses. In addition, instructors could form a task force or committee to study a variety of programs, especially those programs that are more discovery-oriented. Factors to consider in this process would include financial cost as well as alignment of course content and outcomes with both national and state standards. Ultimately, the institution will need to identify a program that meets its students' needs and prepares them most effectively for the workforce and for their preferred futures in the world.

Since this project resulted from a qualitative study, generalizing to a larger population of all educational places of learning is not feasible. However, community colleges elsewhere in the US, and perhaps in the world, may have similar characteristics as the local community college research site in regard to administrative, instructional, and campus supportive procedures in use. In this regard, the smaller population of other similar community colleges may benefit from the information and suggestions given by this study project.

Scholarship

Scholarship is at the core of any research study and is an important facet of education. The scholarship involved in this project study began with an examination of peer-reviewed articles, educational journals, college, community college, university, adult learning, developmental, and developmental reading for instance, and books on student affective barriers and other factors to consider toward attrition or persistence in developmental reading courses. Additionally, government documents that reported on the current and historical changes that have affected how the U.S. educates underprepared developmental adult students were investigated. Processing the research literature was a component of my learning in the doctoral journey and reaffirmed the significance of using current research to make informed data driven decisions in any college or university setting. Walden's library resources gave me an unique opportunity. The breadth and scope of information provided within the numerous databases sometimes proved overwhelming, but I learned how to plot a course of action through these academic resources. I found myself enjoying the search for more information, which often led to more questions. The process was similar to searching for a subject in the encyclopedia with my daughter, only to find another interesting fact to follow up on in another volume. The new questions I discovered prevented me from accepting the first or easiest answer provided. This experience is an essential step in any scholar's search to find solutions or form conclusions.

Research from my literature review (Ashby, 2011; Bahr, 2012; Calhoon et al., 2013; Collins, 2010; Crisp & Delgado, 2014; MacArthur et al., 2012; Paulson, 2014) illuminated the fact that not much previous research had been conducted with regard to adult developmental reading education at the collegiate level and that the few studies directed previously were mainly

quantitative in nature. Some of the research literature (Barbatis, 2010; Collins, 2010; Cox, 2011; Di Tommaso, 2010; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Koch et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2013; Perin, 2013; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014) suggested future phenomenological qualitative studies for learning student and/or faculty perspectives in this area of education. Further research only validated the belief that more work was needed in the area of developmental reading for adult students and their persistence in their studies. The research findings became the catalyst for the project study. In addition, the literature search served as harbinger for conducting future scholarly research.

Scholarship also determined the scope and quality with which this project study was completed. Since the research was required to be as comprehensive as possible, the resulting study considered research findings that confirmed my initial thoughts as well as those questions that prompted further reflection on the study's direction. These latter questions compelled careful scrutiny of each project research step taken. The scholarship method that guided this study will remain with me as I move forward in any professional educational journey.

Project Development and Evaluation

The idea for this project first came to mind several years ago when I observed the problem of high attrition while teaching online developmental reading courses for a three year period at Kaplan University where approximately half of the students dropped out by the end of the course (Kaplan Higher Education Corporation, 2011). The thought of developing and using a qualitative study researching student and faculty perspectives on developmental reading began to take hold. As I began my studies at Walden, the concept of doing a qualitative project study instead of a traditional quantitative study or program evaluation began to sow seeds of research

potential. The original research plan was to utilize a mixed methods design. However, statistical data were limited at the college research site and the number of participants was too small to satisfy the parameters of a mixed methods design. A qualitative design proved to be more effective in terms of revealing purposeful data that could inform and guide the creation of instructional strategies. The results from instructor and student interviews and journals could be viable sources of information as they revealed their perspectives and perceptions about the realities and needs for a new curriculum or new tools and strategies as supported by the research (Calhoon et al., 2013; Creswell, 2009, 2012).

The creation of an innovative curriculum was not an option at the research site according to the faculty participants and the administrators. Instead, they most wanted suggestions for changes in instructional strategies that could immediately be implemented in order to promote greater student persistence in their developmental reading courses. I learned that having instructors invest time and energy into implementing a new program using new or personalized tools and strategies was a much easier process when their voices and opinions were expressed and honored as participants. Instituting a major change that would ultimately affect the entire developmental education department of the college required a democratic approach where instructors were actively and creatively involved in the problem solving process (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Pickard, 2013).

Instructors' suggestions along with the data generated from the student participants created the foundation for the construction of this project. The project took some iteration to finish because I considered the advice of my colleagues to be important to the crafting of the final product. Additionally, I changed the project's direction with each iteration based on

discovered research regarding best practices in teaching developmental reading to adults. The entire process of creating this program for incorporating instructional strategies and tools has taught me that all projects are a continuous work in progress vulnerable to formative input. It is important to constantly assess whether a program is meeting the needs of students and that instructors are using best practices. Combining this ongoing assessment of current instructional programs and practices requires current research to guide future decisions in making curricular or other instructional changes.

Leadership and Change

To achieve any proposed variation in the status quo relies on the organization's administrative team. Leadership in education involves creating a culture of scholarship and stimulating a supportive agreement to achieve a shared goal. In this project study, the goal was added instructional strategies and tools used at the collegiate entry level for the persistence of nontraditional, developmental reading students in their courses. Institutions of higher education that develop, preserve, and value a community of scholars requires a leadership that nurtures an environment where all members of the learning and teaching community are committed to constructing new knowledge, collaborating, and growing as lifelong learners (Brookfield, 2010; Daiek et al., 2012; Knowles, 2005; Paulson, 2014; Schnee, 2014).

Effective leaders proactively guide others along a pathway of creating universally shared values and uniting all stakeholders toward a common goal. These are leaders who support and guide a culture that encourages lifelong learning. The new knowledge from ongoing learning is used toward achieving any future changes required (Brookfield, 2010; Glesne, 2011; Knowles, 2005). The task of attempting to integrate innovative methods of collegiate instruction in a

college that believes the primary factor in student achievement is a fixed structure or stringent guidelines may not be successful. Promoting nontraditional strategies in a traditional non-constructivist organization may not receive the vital support for change to occur. Constructivist and innovative ideas may not be well received in some colleges because they may appear to be disquieting ideas. Constructivist educational plans necessitate tough effective leaders who can initiate and preserve organizational changes (Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 2005; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014; Smith, 2014).

Lodico et al. (2010) noted that leaders should be willing to experiment with different methods that are based on new research in education in order to encourage the use of supplementary procedures in the classroom. Brookfield (2010) expressed the importance of reflection and inquiry by persons in an educational institution. Developed awareness of what works best in education sways the decisions made by leaders in the educational institution. At my research site, team learning is a group discipline that involves developing collective thinking skills in order that the group may achieve outcomes unattainable as a result of individual efforts. Educational leaders need be more conscientious in establishing and maintaining conditions that promote the growth of individuals and ideas in the educational enterprise, and thus smooth the progress of individual achievement in a changing world.

The rapid expansion and change that the contemporary world of higher education is experiencing requires an educational leader that is ready to act. A leader will apply previous knowledge and understanding to devise solutions to existing problems in order to effect change. Reflection on previous measures and analyzing what are the best subsequent actions should be an approach which all leaders employ. Reflection-in-action is an important practice in helping

leaders discover solutions to the unique challenges they may encounter. Reflection provides leaders with an opportunity to view their educational system with a critical eye in order to continue effective educational change.

A supportive community practice where all faculty and administrators work together toward attaining mutual goals via shared knowledge is one model of good leadership. In order to sustain this type of community in effective educational change would then require leaders who are ready and capable of inclusivity. The college for which this program has been created has a supportive administrative team which believes in lifelong learning and provides professional development opportunities to support instructors. All administrators at this institution have had experience as instructors and actively join in developing opportunities for instructor workshops and retreats. The administrative support and enthusiasm for the development of the new program was evident from the inception of the program and will be a significant catalyst of its implementation.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

I knew, from childhood forward, that I had a passion for learning and considered myself a lifelong learner. The exhaustive research process proved to be a stimulating time rather than a tiresome step toward creating the final project. The more I read, the more I realized how much could be applied in any current collegiate academic setting. The more ideas I generated for improving the opportunities for developmental reading students to persist in their studies. the more committed I became to this project. Not only has the project study process become an important part of my decision-making, but I have also recognized the value of careful data analysis. Scholarship incorporated learning from colleagues, both other professionals in the

community and those with whom I had previously worked. In addition, I realized that I needed to be open to ideas that conflicted with mine. I discerned that this comprehensive, unbiased approach was actually enjoyable and thus welcomed opinion, contribution, and even dispute from colleagues and experts in the educational community. All of this collaboration served to advance what I was intending to accomplish. The ultimate goal, as a collaborative group, was to make certain we met the requirement of improving developmental reading students' persistence and to provide them with the most effective learning experience possible. I believe that this project program will achieve this learning outcome for developmental reading students.

Scholarship and leadership work in concert as an expected derivative of human character because we possess an intrinsic desire to learn (Brookfield, 2010; Knowles, 2005). Schools with a culture of learning have leaders who create an encouraging atmosphere for developing individual abilities. One of the most important characteristics of a leader is to be a scholar as well as a promoter of the scholarship of others--instructors and students. Leaders must exhibit a passion and dedication toward creating a culture of learning. The research and intellectual abilities gained in the course of completing this project study have been internalized as indispensable elements of who I am as a scholar and as an advocate for lifelong learning.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner who has also been a leader both in education and in business, I know that creating and nurturing a community of learners requires inspiring others to believe in the value of continuing to be a lifelong learner. A society where adults realize and experience the adventure of education collectively potentially results in an atmosphere of lifelong learning.

Colleges which view themselves as communities of learning, where instructors and students learn together, have redefined their customary traditionalist ways. Educators who practice in this "new" community understand that they have a new relationship with their students and they have a new role in facilitating students' learning. The contemporary educational practitioner includes their students in the development of a complete learning experience within the classroom environment.

Collectively, we labor to construct meaningful and engaging programs of study rather than lecturing about basic skills and concepts. The crucial goal is to provide an educational experience that is enjoyable and engaging while remaining relevant. Additionally, my responsibility beyond preparing adult developmental reading students to achieve their personal goals (degree or vocation), is also to be a practitioner who improves the skills necessary to remain current with the best educational practices. I must be prepared to broaden my reasoning abilities, to take risks in trying new methods, and to acknowledge the challenges involved with initiating a long-term educational environment of change. Writing a program using instructional strategies and tools to aid students in persistence with their studies required my willingness to work collaboratively while actively listening to students, faculty, and administrators. This project study has fostered personal growth as both practitioner and leader.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I measured numerous factors during the design development. In the beginning, my thoughts focused on the requirements of my college research site. I examined whether a new curriculum would be helpful and aligned with the college's mission. Next I explored my abilities as a scholar, practitioner, and leader in order to join together the abilities of

the instructors with useful information from the research findings toward the creation of instructional instruments and strategies. This project study required me to evolve and mature as a scholar, leader, and individual. I also realized that extensive research was needed because studies that dealt only with developmental reading education were not as common as the research concerning all developmental education. Beyond this lack of current research literature, it became obvious that there was also a dearth of qualitative research using phenomenological studies to explore participant perspectives on developmental education, reading or other subjects. Professional collegial support and my natural ability to anticipate the differing outcomes associated with the possible choices in project design initially guided me in the best application of resources for this study. As a clearer path of action began to form in my mind, I became conscientious of seeking participation from the faculty and students during and after data collection. It became important to incorporate the participant views well from interviews, journals, and member check surveys. The project study compelled me to organize my thoughts and to develop the resulting program as many aspects of the study came together. The result, I believe, is a product that will immediately and effectively respond to the needs of the community college by filling gaps in instruction.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

My experience teaching developmental reading courses for Kaplan University online afforded me the opportunity to learn about the persistence issues of these particular students (Kaplan Higher Education Corporation, 2011). There was and is a common question asked by online and community college faculty, respectively, who teach developmental reading courses. The question is, "How do we effectively teach developmental reading in a way that promotes

persistence in these courses?" It appears that making a change from the traditional task-based instructional practice to the inclusion of learner centered practices may assist in students persisting. Students become successful in their studies, earn degrees, certificates, or learn new vocations, and potentially become positive, contributing citizens in their local communities. Societally proficient adult literacy has been targeted as an important objective in developmental education within the community college environment (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Daiek et al., 2012; Moss et al., 2014; Paulson, 2014; Pickard, 2013; Pinkerton, 2010; Pricer, 2012; Schnee, 2014). Pickard (2013) suggested that administrators and instructors need to scrutinize their existing courses, discuss necessary instructional changes, utilize opportunities to observe colleges which are pioneering new curriculum and strategies, explore collaborating with colleagues either at other institutions of higher learning or with those in their workplace, and research the advantages of implementing new programs.

This project study's objective was to promote student persistence in developmental reading courses in a regional community college. According to Crisp, & Delgado (2014) and Daiek et al. (2012), developmental education in general has been listed as one of the most difficult, demanding issues facing community colleges due to the large, growing numbers of enrolling underprepared students. Thus harnessing new knowledge of the factors contributing to college entry level attrition and persistence for non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at the local community college was catalytic for changes in instructional strategies.

The goal of the project was to incorporate instructor and student perspectives and ideas with research findings. The result was the creation of this project and its following artifacts. The first artifact is a student questionnaire which provides instructors with a plan for supporting

students and for calming their students' initial fears. The second artifact is a student tips document aiding students in day to day studies, lowering their affective barriers or fears, and guiding students in using time management. The third artifact is a time management worksheet which will greatly assist the persistence of those students using this tool. Finally, the project incorporated a faculty training session based upon the analysis of the findings of this study as provided by participants. The faculty members and administrators at the first training were trained to use the three primary tools in an online format. They were trained to use research findings and suggestions as components to be integrated into their courses. The training session concluded with all present participants sharing, brainstorming, and focusing on what and how these tools and recommendations might be used in their particular classrooms and courses. Faculty members could opt to make the instructional tools and suggestions their own through hands-on explorations, assignments, classroom games, fieldtrips, and guest classroom speakers. The developed project also adds to the existing body of knowledge regarding developmental reading education for adult students by adding a learning program that can be used by any school which needs an alternative program from a basic skill based or textbook based program (Perin, 2013).

The findings from the project study research affirmed the necessity for educators to create a learning program that incorporates the real-life experiences and ideas of developmental reading faculty and students. This developmental reading program helps instructors to create such a learning experience and allows community colleges the opportunity to modify and adjust the program according to local institutional needs. Thus, this project provides colleges with an opportunity to establish a theoretical change in how they teach developmental reading to adults.

If this project study can encourage colleges to reconsider what, how, and why they teach developmental reading and possibly a new theory of teaching/learning, then it will have positive outcomes in creating meaningful social change. Persisting students will more likely become positively contributing members in their local, national, and global communities.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Students who expect to be successful in the 21st century need to be socially literate in reading (Collins, 2013; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Pickard, 2013). Adults need to learn in an educational environment that encourages inspiration and originality. This type of environment allows students to ask questions and instructs them how to be independently resourceful. Student success is enmeshed with internalizing a lasting desire for knowledge; improving student scholarship correlates with instructor scholarship (Perin, 2013; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014; Smith, 2014). Instructors must also view their roles as different from the traditional classroom leader of students. These instructors need to facilitate and encourage motivation and personal engagement.

In this project study I examined how developmental reading is taught and can be taught at the community college level. Developmental reading education needs instructors who engage students in relevant learning activities promoting novel and creative ways to view problems. Students can and will learn if provided with purposeful and meaningful learning opportunities. This project study program will provide instructors the means to educate students with the reading comprehension and skill set necessary to make meaningful contributions in the world. The program provides an educational experience that lowers student affective barriers (Cox, 2011), nurtures a love of learning (Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 2005; Pickard, 2013), allows students

active participation in their learning (Andrelchik, 2015; Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 2005; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014; Smith, 2014), and seeks instructors who are lifelong learners.

Implementing a new program needs instructor commitment, leadership support, and planning time to be effective. Fostering collaboration between administrators and instructors to create a meaningful program of study to assist developmental reading students in their efforts to become knowledgeable and contributing global citizens is a vital aspect to promote and facilitate future social change. This program requires instructors who are committed to facilitating students' critical thinking and supporting students' learning of reading content, processes, and concepts. The instructor's role is to facilitate the students' use of prior knowledge when teaching new concepts that promote students' construction of new knowledge or new meaning. Instructors may possibly not use this model of teaching; often they lack the professional expertise and/or administrative support to create such a learning environment (Pickard, 2013). Instructors may need professional development and administrative support for their professional learning and use of new materials, learning products and activities, as well as learning new methods in providing effective instruction. To focus on a developmental reading program for students without an equal emphasis on professional development for instructors would lack vision.

Successful implementation of any new academic program requires ongoing faculty professional development and administrative support. Collaborating and sharing ideas allows instructors to engage in meaningful and purposeful instructional work to meet students' needs more effectively and efficiently. Without effective instruction, U.S. students will continue to lag behind their international counterparts (Collins, 2013; Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Daiek et al., 2012). Student success requires ongoing preparation, implementation, and assessment of new

innovative programs and instructional best practices. For an institution to facilitate lasting changes in programming requires all members of the college community to embrace student centered learning and for administration to provide the resources necessary to train and support their staff in implementing new programs. Institutions must allocate resources toward more effective student learning which includes processes which promote higher persistence in developmental reading courses.

As I was creating the program based upon the study findings, I considered further research that might be beneficial to promoting better persistence in developmental reading courses. The research conducted for this study highlighted the need for more research in dealing with collegiate level developmental reading since most of the current research on developmental education is primarily focused on mathematics, writing secondarily, and leaves the subject of reading screaming to be researched (Ashby, 2011; Bahr, 2012; Calhoon et al., 2013; Collins, 2010; Crisp & Delgado, 2014; MacArthur et al., 2012; Paulson, 2014). Additionally, there is a scarcity of research using qualitative methodology to gain faculty and student perceptions, especially regarding developmental reading (Barbatis, 2010; Collins, 2010; Cox, 2011; Di Tommaso, 2010; Fowler & Boylan, 2010; Koch et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2013; Perin, 2013; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014). Much of what currently exists in the research is either quantitative in nature and fails to address affective barriers, or are qualitative program evaluation studies rather than phenomenological studies. Therefore, I suggest additional future research which is qualitative, including phenomenological studies of developmental reading students' and faculty perceptions and experiences, in regard to developmental reading.

Additionally, a longitudinal study using qualitative methodology that phenomenologically studies the same participants' views over a period of time, for perhaps at least three years, may illuminate more information than was gleaned in this one time study using the same methodology. The idea of future research using a longitudinal study was later affirmed by this study's literature review (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Lott & O'Dell, 2014; Schnee, 2014; Self Trand, 2009).

Conclusion

I have come to the conclusion that too often developmental educators are so concerned with students mastering basic skills and concepts that instructors overlook demonstrating the enthusiasm that learning can bring these adults. The wealth of knowledge and vast experience adults bring to the classroom becomes a challenge for instructors in the development, design, and delivery of programs of study. These instructors are additionally required to use a myriad of instructional strategies to meet the various developmental reading students' needs. For example, students' individual backgrounds, fears, self esteem, learning habits, learning styles, personalities, and prior educational experiences are factors that instructors need to consider. It is no wonder that instructors may overlook the fun and joy of learning when they are confronted with so many combinations and permutations of student needs. For many adults, much of their prior learning and familiarity with a multitude of concepts comes from indirect sources, from life and living (Knowles, 2005). The challenge is for instructors to know which skills, concepts, and other background information their students bring to the classroom so that they can build upon these skills. Additionally, to make developmental reading relevant for students is critical if educators are to instill an excitement for learning.

Knowledge and learning are the heart and spirit of higher education. An effective learning institution supports adults in their learning by providing creative instructional resources and opportunities for students' freedom of expression to solve problems in new ways. The students have the primary role and responsibility in their own learning through interacting with the real world in ways which are relevant for each student. Teachers are facilitators of learning rather than simple disseminators of knowledge. Students who are motivated and engaged in learning in the classroom may connect newly learned knowledge with the world in which they live. These students are more likely to become inherent learners. Whereas other students in more traditional settings may not learn intrinsically and may tend to forget what they have learned. A learning organization ought to promote constructivist views where students build upon their learning experiences and prior knowledge to build new understanding (Dewey, 1938; Perin, 2013; Pickard, 2013). Constructivist views also recognize that learning is a social activity that is cultivated through interaction and inquiry (Andrelchik, 2015; Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 2005; Pickard, 2013; Schnee, 2014; Smith, 2014).

Instructors need to make certain that they focus on integrating the basic reading skills/concepts with reading materials that are current and that relate to students' lives. The instructors need to integrate classroom activities and discussions with engaging and dynamic work. Based on the findings in this study, the local community college needs to ensure that instructors make the learning developmental reading process a rich and rewarding experience for students in order to promote student persistence. Considering the learning environment and student background knowledge alongside their life experience can help instructors to guide students in persisting through their developmental reading courses. It is my sincerest hope that

this project helps to advance the goals elicited throughout this study and becomes a method by which educators can assist adults to embrace their role in not only the local community but also in the larger global community.

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Appendix A: Project

The Project includes a three-day Professional Development Training Workshop on using researcher designed materials and suggestions as found in the findings of the research.

Project Document 1:

"About Me" Student Questionnaire

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your gender (male or female)?
3. What is your age?
4. Is this your first time in college?
5. Are you a returning student?
6. Do you have a diagnosed disability?
7. If disabled, how can the instructor help?
8. Is English your first language?
9. If English is not your first language, what is and how can the instructor help?
10. How do you get to school (car, bus, other)?
11. Do you have children? If so, how many? Do you need childcare?
12. Do you have a job? If so, part-time or full-time?
13. Have you decided how you will fit school into your other life activities?
14. Do you feel comfortable talking with an instructor?
15. Do you feel comfortable talking with other students?
16. How do you feel about classroom discussions?
17. What is your favorite time of day?
18. What is something that you are proud of?
19. What is something that you do well (good)?
20. What is something that you might need help with?
21. Are you comfortable with your instructor helping you?
22. Are you comfortable with your fellow students helping?
23. Are you confident in yourself and your abilities?
24. How do you see yourself as a student (strong/other)?
25. Are you organized?

26. Do you manage your time well?
27. What do you find funny?
28. Can you make it to class regularly (and on time)?
29. How will you find class information if you miss class?
30. What are your career/job/other goals?
31. How will this class help you reach your goals?
32. What might you fear in this class?
33. What do you look forward to in this class?
34. What is your favorite activity (anytime)?
35. Finish this sentence: I learn best when teachers. . .
36. Anything you would like to add to help your teacher help you:

Project Document 2:

Tips for Student Success (Including Time Management)

Here are some tips to help you to be successful in your class and studies:

What are your motivations?

Why did you choose to attend college; what drove you to continue your education? If you do not care to finish your degree, who does? If needed, use reminders: post-it notes on your computer or refrigerator. . .or anywhere you can think of putting them.

Think positive.

Negative thoughts can cause negative things to happen, especially in your success as a student. Stop putting yourself and your abilities down. Everyone has strengths, so find yours and build upon them. Also, give yourself rewards for doing the work that helps your success: yoga, exercise, positive post-it notes everywhere (including your bathroom mirror), what/why you want to succeed in class/school, scheduling fun and rewarding activities.

Use your learning style:

Visual: Read, read, read. Imagine pictures that go along with the story. **Auditory:** Read out loud, tell others what you read or read to them: your neighbor, friend, family, dog, self in mirror.

Kinesthetic (moving): Make notes and read, read on the treadmill, read and tell someone while you both walk, move, exercise together.

A little bit of being uncomfortable can increase your learning.

A little stress without fear is good. So speak up for what you need from your teacher and your classmates. Talk with your teacher inside and outside of class to become more comfortable with the fact that they are a person just like you. If it makes you feel more comfortable, first ask a friend or school friend about your question.

Managing your reading and assignment time.

No one has time to do everything. For your success, you may need to cut back on time with family, work, and other things during the time(s) you need to work on your school studies. **If you are paying for school and books, then think about the good things and bad things about this that might pull you away from school.** Will you be increasing your pay later in your job or increasing the chances of a new career?

Social relationships.

During this time in school, surround yourself with activities, school friends, and signs of the student you are becoming. Change your current life to a student life. Make time for new discussion partners in class(es) and change your focus away from your job if necessary.

Build new school relationships such as fellow students, instructors, and advisors. Know your school and how it can support you in being a successful student. Support your studies with your goals. What job or career changes do you expect to happen when you are finished with school? Are you preparing for these changes?

Positive changes.

Know that your studies will change you. Studies do not only bring new knowledge, new learning. Studies may make you feel a bit "crazy" at times but this is a good thing. It proves that you are changing for the better, for the reasons you want change. Whether those reasons are a better paying job, to be a role model for your children, or something else, remember to keep your goals in mind. Do not let negative feelings about your studies stop you from reaching your goals!

Growth in learning.

Test your ideas by writing them down and talking about them with a school friend or instructor. Can you tell your instructor what you need? Can you address your fears outside of class? Practice this because a small amount of fear or feeling uncomfortable goes a long way toward learning and growing as a person and as a student.

A few more tips which help your brain, body, and use of time.

* Multitask when possible. Do two or more things at once such as driving and listening to a tape you recorded of your reading. Find an exercise partner who will listen.

* Set aside a study space in your home. You need someplace away from family and friends. Change this space once in a while for variety and to keep your mind fresh.

* Have all school activities ready so that you can work on any one of them that inspires you at the time. It all has to be done, so why not do the one that interests you the most first?

* Rest your eyes by looking up every 5-10 minutes.

* Exercise 5 minutes every hour. If not feeling well, rest 5 minutes every hour.

* For long assignments or studies, exercise/take a break 10 minutes every couple of hours. Get some fresh air, stretch, walk, do what makes you feel healthy.

* Drink lots of water. Water not only keeps you healthy, it gives you energy.

* Take a "Lumosity" break. This is a brain exercise site (http://www.lumosity.com) You can even have it as a free app on your phone (more multitasking).

* Buy needed materials. Always have reading with you wherever you go.

* Do homework with your children.

==========

Now, please print and post these tips somewhere you can see them at home! I hope that you love your studies so much that your learning is more interesting than the time that is passing. Expect a Time Management worksheet to complete for yourself and your instructor. The first week = actual time you spend on different activities. Then use a blank worksheet to plan your future study time. Please adjust as necessary for your own success. (Compiled and adapted from many sources including Keen, 2012; L. Aofrate 10/25/14)

Project Document 3:

Time Management Worksheet

School related	Online networking, group work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Sub Total	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100.00%
Work and travel		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Family	Family; hours not in entrtnmnt/other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	Entertainmt. and Social	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Personal	Boards, committees, etc.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Sub Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
	Self-care, eating, exercise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Health	Sleep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Sub Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Other		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Total Hours		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100.00%

(Text attributed to Dr. Cheryl Keen, Walden University 8/5/07 as edited and used in this worksheet by L. Aofrate 10/25/14)

Project Document 4:

Faculty Professional Development

Title of Program: "Instructional Strategies and Materials Integration"

Purpose: The purpose of the project is to provide an orientation and training professional development workshop for developmental courses faculty members to the teaching strategies suggested by the study findings which includes the use of created materials. The materials presented may be utilized with or without the computer software Moodle. As evidenced by the findings in Section 2, faculty members preferred a new teaching strategies approach to teaching developmental reading, along with usable materials, in order to understand and effectively adopt and adapt such teaching strategies.

Goals: The goal of the project is to provide an interactive learning forum for faculty members to gain knowledge and share their experiences in a collaborative environment.

Desired Outcomes: The desired outcome is faculty members incorporate and increase the use of teaching strategies and materials in their teaching of developmental courses.

Target Audience: The target audience is all full and part-time developmental courses faculty members.

Timeline: A 3-day professional development workshop. Details are listed in the workshop lesson plan.

Workshop Activities: Specific activities include the workshop lesson plan, course materials, and evaluation processes.

Workshop Lesson Plan: The lesson plan provides an outline and roadmap.

Course Name: "Instructional Strategies and Materials Integration"				
Course Description: 3-day interactive professional development workshop whose purpose is to provide orientation and training of the study suggested teaching strategies and materials in the classroom.				
Course Objectives: At the end of the workshop, faculty members will be able to: 1. Gain knowledge of the teaching strategies and materials presented 2. Share experiences as faculty members use the strategies and materials in the developmental classroom 3. Share suggested faculty members' uses and manipulations of the strategies and materials in adaption to individual classroom environments				
Day 1 (5 hours)				
Objective	Content	Time	Methodology	Resources
Welcome	Opening remarks Faculty check-in	8:00 am 15 minutes	Statement/discussion	Facilitator
Introduction of Course content	Introduction of facilitators and faculty members	8:15 am 30 minutes	Group discussion	Facilitator Faculty & Administrators
Housekeeping	Establish ground rules of facility and where break session food is placed	8:45 am 15 minutes	Statement/questions	Facilitator
Workshop Objectives	Cover Objectives	9:00 am 15 min	Discussion	Facilitator
Break		9:15 am 15 min		
Schedule Overview	Workshop agenda for the 3 days is covered	9:30 am 1 hour	Statement/discussion	Facilitator
Orientation to online Module	Cover specific ways instructors use materials, online and offline. Present scenarios for	10:30 am 2 hours	Online Module prompted lecture	Facilitator

	classroom use, utilize demonstration of faculty produced classroom uses of strategies and materials.			
Day 1 Wrap up	Summarize highlights of the day and answer questions. Distribute informal formative evaluation survey link (via Survey Monkey).	12:30 pm 30 min	Group discussion Confirm faculty use of evaluation survey link.	Facilitator

Day 2 (5 hours)				
Objective	Content	Time	Methodology	Resources
Welcome	Opening remarks Faculty check-in	8:00 am 15 minutes	Statement/discussion	Facilitator
Materials Use	1. Student questionnaire: Cover each line item: for a. faculty information and b. for lowering affective barriers and why. 2. Tips for Student Success: Cover each area discussing how it gives students support, how it lowers affective barriers and why. Lead into the Time Management tool. 3. Time Management Worksheet: Cover differing ways this tool can be used by students including changing, adding, or deleting of line items.	8:15 am 2 hours	Group discussion and interactive exercises	Facilitator Faculty & Administrators

Break		10:15 am 15 minutes		
Strategies Use	Cover specific ways instructors can implement/ integrate the eight main suggestions in their classrooms, present scenarios for classroom use, and begin discussing faculty ideas/ scenarios on the use of the suggestions in their classrooms individually.	10:30 am 2 hours	Group discussion and interactive exercises	Facilitator Faculty & Adminstrators
Day 2 Wrap up	Summarize highlights of the day and answer questions. Distribute informal formative evaluation survey link (via Survey Monkey).	12:30 pm 30 min	Group discussion Confirm faculty use of evaluation survey link.	Facilitator

Day 3 (5 hours)				
Objective	Content	Time	Methodology	Resources
Welcome	Opening remarks Faculty check-in	8:00 am 15 minutes	Statement/discussion	Facilitator
Materials: Discussion and Role Play	Break training into 6 groups. Discuss and chart the ideas and suggestions given by faculty and administrators on Day 2. Assign each group a tool (material) to create a role play to present to the whole training group (2 groups will have each of the 3 tools to present). Have faculty present their role plays.	8:15 am 2 hours	Group discussion, interactive exercises, and role playing	Facilitator Faculty & Administrators

Break		10:15 am 15 min		
Suggestions: Discussion and Role Play	Break training into 8 groups. Discuss and chart the ideas and suggestions given by faculty and administrators on Day 2. Assign each group a suggestion to create a role play to present to the whole training group. Have faculty present their role plays.	10:30 am 2 hours	Group discussion, interactive exercises, and role playing	Facilitator
Day 3 Wrap up	Summarize highlights of the day and answer questions. Distribute informal formative evaluation survey link (via Survey Monkey).	12:30 pm 30 min	Group discussion Confirm faculty use of evaluation survey link.	Facilitator

Materials to facilitate the course (professional development in-service training):

1. "About Me" student questionnaire

2. Tips for Student Success document

3. Time management worksheet

Suggestions from findings to facilitate the course:

1.Engaging students via varying methods of instructional delivery

2. Ice-breaker and confidence building activities at beginning of term

3. Cover course syllabus and college campus resource handbook the first week of term

4. Use shorter, more relevant, more meaningful reading materials

5. Include students in course content process

6. Provide alternatives for participation grades

7. Provide multiple methods of communication between instructors and students

8. Provide students the opportunity to collaborate

Guiding view for professional development training

Introduction

The overarching objective of utilizing new teaching strategies and supportive tools in the adult developmental reading classroom is to generate adult students who are literate. These literate students are those who persist in their learning developmental reading, who become more proficient in their abilities to discern meaning from their reading, and who integrate this new skill set into achieving their chosen life goals.

In a time of swift societal change, students need critical thinking skills to adjust. Students will be more capable of increasing these higher-order thinking skills via engaging in activities that allow them to construct information and apply their knowledge. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in their learning development. More involved students who have lowered fears (affective barrier) will preserve more information as they discover, discern, and well utilize learning strategies. Students maximize their learning when instructors make a fundamental shift from emphasizing rote learning of basic skills and concepts to facilitating students' learning how to reflect and consider options. New tools and strategies designed to enhance the developmental reading curriculum can assist instructors in enabling student persistence, and can assist students to immediately learn in a more meaningful manner.

Students need to meet the demands of the current and any future society. Students are required to develop specific reading skills and acquire knowledge while accurately applying their understanding in real life situations. This program highlights the means to lowering students'

affective barriers (fears) and in having students achieve critical thinking skills via natural, relevant means of acquiring knowledge. This program is designed as student centered and student inclusive toward the goal of student persistence in adult developmental reading courses.

Objectives

Helping students in developmental reading courses to persist toward completion of the courses and thus become more literate in everyday living is the overall objective of this project study. Based upon this objective and the findings from this study, there are subgroups of goals to achieve in order to successfully execute a new program toward student persistence.

These goals include the site faculty implementing the three researcher created instruments along with other recommendations from the researcher into the research site developmental reading courses. Beyond this implementation, there will be ongoing faculty training using this session in its then current version after any ongoing informed modifications made by faculty and/or administration based upon practice.

Day 1 Training Notes

Relay to audience:

All three instruments are designed to be used in the electronic medium of Moodle. Within the Moodle environment, the instruments will expand for student input, especially the student questionnaire. They are also compatible with most any online educational program (such as Blackboard and eCollege). All three instruments and suggestions for classroom teaching were created with two goals in mind: 1. to equalize the student perceived level of instructors to student

level in order to alleviate affective barriers (student fears), and 2. to enhance student-faculty communication during curriculum instruction. Other goals arose as suggestions were made toward more specific classroom instructional practices, both suggestions by the researcher and those brainstormed by the current faculty at the research site. A brainstorming of ideas by instructors at the end of each training session is recommended.

Format and Order of Presentation

Inform the attendees to upload the three instruments to their classrooms prior to term beginning. Have attendee faculty assign all three instruments on the first day of class for student completion by end of week two of the term:

1. 'About Me' student questionnaire.

Use: Assign first day of term to be completed and submitted to instructor by end of second week of term, either as a submission to the classroom via Moodle or printed and submitted directly to the instructor. Students need to complete the form online so that the expandable nature of the instrument is utilized in capturing all student information given. Completing the form after printing would leave limited space for a student to write their information. Completing the form online and then printing will work best or, as previously noted, students may submit via Moodle.

Goal: This form will help the instructors in knowing their students needs better right from the beginning of the term, and the student information will be available for future use in supporting struggling students if needed. The questions were designed for both of these outcomes plus the goal of lowering the student affective barriers (fear) at the beginning of the term.

2. Tips for Student Success form.

Use: Assign first day of term to be used by students as printouts of any portion which students deem as important tips to help them do better in the course. Inform the students that this 'tips' form will not only help them in their studies and getting through the coursework, but will also help them in completing the Time Management Worksheet which will be due at the end of the second week. Have students print all or portions of the form and place near their study workstation. Small tips may also be written (or printed) to be placed on or near objects of daily use such as the bathroom mirror or the refrigerator.

Goal: This form will help the students in learning new ways of thinking about what and how they can study more effectively, lower their anxiety levels (reduce stress), and about other resources available to them as supports. The tips were designed mainly to alleviate student affective barriers (fear) at the beginning of the term. Secondly, this form can be followed as an example and guideline for completion of the Time Management Worksheet.

3. Time Management Worksheet form.

Use: Assign first day of term to be completed and submitted to instructor by end of second week of term, either as a submission to the classroom via Moodle or printed and submitted directly to the instructor. Students need to complete the form online so that the automatic calculation of totals and expandable nature of the instrument is utilized in capturing all student information given. Completing the form after printing would leave limited space for a student to personalize their information and would not allow automatic calculation of fields/cells. Completing the form online and then printing will work best or, as previously noted, students may submit via Moodle.

Goal: This form will help the students in planning their study time within their existing available time. The students need to include and consider their time required for current activities: job, family, transportation, entertainment, clubs/committees, self care, pets, sleep, and any other category deemed important by the student. The students need to be informed (or reminded) that in order to study more effectively, they may need to cut back on some of the hours currently given other activities.

4. Strategy Suggestions.

A. Vary methods of instructional delivery using humor, energy, creativity toward the goal of engaging students in their own learning.

B. Design and use ice breaker and confidence building exercises at the beginning of a term toward the goals of lowering affective barriers, and instilling self-efficacy in students. These activities are also useful for the instructor to know their students better individually.

C. Distribute and discuss the course syllabus and the college's resource handbook in the first week of the term toward the goals of lowering affective barriers, guiding students toward understanding the course expectations, and guiding students to campus resources they may not otherwise have discovered on their own.

D. Use shorter, more relevant, more meaningful reading materials while integrating the learning of basic reading concepts and skills into the lessons toward the goal of engagement and lowering affective barriers.

E. Include students in the course content process toward the goals of engagement in and "ownership" of the learning process. This may include instructor open discussions with students on how the class will be held (rules), assignments (how designed), rubrics (how assessed).

F. Provide alternatives for participation grades beyond speaking in class (perhaps written feedback on a class session or topic) toward the goal of lowering the affective barriers so that students may earn credit for what they know.

G. Provide multiple means (times and venues) of communication between students and their instructors toward the goal of lowering the affective barriers, increasing intercommunication, and supporting student needs as they arise.

H. Provide opportunities for students to collaborate, work in small groups, toward the goals of lowering the affective barriers, gaining perspectives from colleagues, and voicing thoughts more readily in the classroom.

Day 2 Training Notes

Relay to audience:

Learning the specifics of the materials and suggestions as to their uses in the classroom, both for faculty knowledge of their students individually and in order to lower student fears, affective barriers, will help a more synthetic integration into regular classroom activities.

Other goals arose as suggestions were made toward more specific classroom instructional practices, both suggestions by the researcher and those brainstormed by the current faculty at the research site. A brainstorming of ideas by instructors at the end of each training session is recommended.

Format and Order of Presentation

Go into the specifics of both materials and suggestions. Materials: (a) Student questionnaire: cover each line item: for a. faculty information and b. for lowering affective barriers and why; (b) Tips for Student Success: cover each area discussing how it gives students

support, how it lowers affective barriers and why. Lead into the Time Management tool; (c) Time Management Worksheet: cover differing ways this tool can be used by students including changing, adding, or deleting of line items. Suggestions: cover specific ways instructors can implement/ integrate the eight main suggestions in their classrooms, present scenarios for classroom use, and begin discussing faculty ideas/ scenarios on the use of the suggestions in their classrooms individually.

Day 3 Training Notes

Relay to audience:

Role playing or practicing using the research suggested materials and suggestions in differing ways of implementing these into the classroom to lower student fears, affective barriers, and increase not only student persistence but productivity will help a more synthetic integration into regular classroom activities. The practiced use and implementation into the classrooms will become more real and relevant to faculty.

Other goals arose as suggestions were made toward more specific classroom instructional practices, both suggestions by the researcher and those brainstormed by the current faculty at the research site. A brainstorming of ideas by instructors at the end of each training session is recommended.

Format and Order of Presentation

Materials: Break training into 6 groups. Discuss and chart the ideas and suggestions given by faculty and administrators on Day 2. Assign each group an instrument to create a role play to present to the whole training group (2 groups will have each of the 3 tools to present). Have faculty present their role plays. Suggestions: Break training into 8 groups. Discuss and chart the

ideas and suggestions given by faculty and administrators on Day 2. Assign each group a suggestion to create a role play to present to the whole training group. Have faculty present their role plays.

Final Note

At the end of the training session, a short (10-15 minutes) brainstorming by faculty on what and how these tools and strategies may be used in their particular course classrooms will be held at all future training sessions. This training session is to be given iteratively on a monthly to bimonthly basis in the department's faculty retreats. From the iterative, formative feedback and new ideas which may emerge, administrators may make modifications to curriculum.

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation and Data Use Agreement

Letter of Cooperation from [redacted]

Dear Lisa Aofrate,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Student Persistence and Attrition: A Study of Student and Faculty Perceptions of Developmental Reading Courses at a Community College within [redacted].

As part of this study, I authorize you to recruit faculty participants of the developmental reading courses and to recruit student participants in the developmental reading courses prior to beginning data collection, to use a campus room for interviews, and to use a room with equipment appropriate for presenting a PowerPoint presentation for the dissemination of final results. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. They may withdraw from the study at any time without retaliation.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include oversight of requests made by the researcher that include the following:

- Access to rooms and equipment for interviews and dissemination of findings
- Researcher presentation materials for subject recruitment (faculty and students)
- Student and faculty consent forms
- Student data (please see Data Use Agreement form for specific circumstances)

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if circumstances change. In accordance with the Oregon Tort Claims Act and the Oregon Constitution, Lisa Aofrate agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless [redacted] and its officers, agents and employees against all liability, loss and costs arising from actions, suits, claims or demands for the acts or omissions of Lisa Aofrate in performance of this agreement that arises out of the negligence of Lisa Aofrate.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without shared permission from the Walden University IRB and [redacted]. I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

darleneg@clackamas.edu/503.594.3392

DATA USE AGREEMENT

This Data Use Agreement ("Agreement"), effective as of approval by the Walden University IRB for data collection ("Effective Date" to be determined), is entered into by and between Lisa Aofrate ("Data Recipient") and [redacted] ("Data Provider"). The purpose of this Agreement is to provide Data Recipient with access to a Limited Data Set ("LDS") for use in research in accord with the HIPAA and FERPA Regulations.

Definitions. Unless otherwise specified in this Agreement, all capitalized terms used in this Agreement not otherwise defined have the meaning established for purposes of the "HIPAA Regulations" codified at Title 45 parts 160 through 164 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, as amended from time to time.

Preparation of the LDS. [redacted] shall prepare and furnish to Lisa Aofrate a LDS in accord with any applicable HIPAA or FERPA Regulations.

Data Fields in the LDS. In preparing the LDS, Clackamas Community College shall include the **data fields specified as follows**, which are the minimum necessary to accomplish the research: COMPASS entrance exam scores for reading that will be initially attached to student names which will be de-identified for research purposes (to discover the element of literacy in the project study). For use of student names tied to COMPASS scores, please see the Student Informed Consent Form.

Responsibilities of Data Recipient. Data Recipient agrees to:

Use or disclose the LDS only as permitted by this Agreement or as required by law;

Use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the LDS other than as permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

Report to Data Provider any use or disclosure of the LDS of which it becomes aware that is not permitted by this Agreement or required by law;

Require any of its subcontractors or agents that receive or have access to the LDS to agree to the same restrictions and conditions on the use and/or disclosure of the LDS that apply to Data Recipient under this Agreement; and

Not use the information in the LDS to identify or contact the individuals who are data subjects.

Permitted Uses and Disclosures of the LDS. Data Recipient may use and/or disclose the LDS for its research activities only.

Term and Termination.

Term. The term of this Agreement shall commence as of the Effective Date and shall continue for so long as Data Recipient retains the LDS, unless sooner terminated as set forth in this Agreement.

Termination by Data Recipient. Data Recipient may terminate this agreement at any time by notifying the Data Provider and returning or destroying the LDS.

Termination by Data Provider. Data Provider may terminate this agreement at any time by providing thirty (30) days prior written notice to Data Recipient.

For Breach. Data Provider shall provide written notice to Data Recipient within ten (10) days of any determination that Data Recipient has breached a material term of this Agreement. Data Provider shall afford Data Recipient an opportunity to cure said alleged material breach upon mutually agreeable terms. Failure to agree on mutually agreeable terms for cure within thirty (30) days shall be grounds for the immediate termination of this Agreement by Data Provider.

Effect of Termination. Sections 1, 4, 5, 6(e) and 7 of this Agreement shall survive any termination of this Agreement under subsections c or d.

Miscellaneous.

Change in Law. The parties agree to negotiate in good faith to amend this Agreement to comport with changes in federal law that materially alter either or both parties' obligations under this Agreement. Provided however, that if the parties are unable to agree to mutually acceptable amendment(s) by the compliance date of the change in applicable law or regulations, either Party may terminate this Agreement as provided in section 6.

Construction of Terms. The terms of this Agreement shall be construed to give effect to applicable federal interpretative guidance regarding the HIPAA Regulations.

No Third Party Beneficiaries. Nothing in this Agreement shall confer upon any person other than the parties and their respective successors or assigns, any rights, remedies, obligations, or liabilities whatsoever.

Counterparts. This Agreement may be executed in one or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

Headings. The headings and other captions in this Agreement are for convenience and reference only and shall not be used in interpreting, construing or enforcing any of the provisions of this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf.

DATA PROVIDER	**DATA RECIPIENT**
Signed: _____	Signed: _____
Print Name: _____	Print Name: _____
Print Title: _____	Print Title: _____

Appendix C: Faculty Interview Protocols

Initial Interview for Faculty

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.
2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT

Date: Oct. xx, 2013

Place: [redacted]

Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate

Interviewee: Name (participant code F1)

Faculty Position: Instructor, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]

[Verbal introduction to the participant: This interview's purpose is to gain faculty's perceived reasons students persist or attrit (drop out) in developmental reading courses. You are one of three faculty interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.]

[Collect previously read and signed consent form.]

[Test recorder.]

[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: How long have you been a faculty member at [redacted], and which course(s) do you teach?

Question 2: Please briefly describe your role as an instructor of developmental reading courses at [redacted].

Question 3: In your opinion what are factors which may contribute to developmental reading students' attrition levels?

Question 4: In your opinion what are factors which may contribute to developmental reading students' persistence levels?

Question 5: When engaging developmental reading students, what strategies do you think work best? Why?

Question 6: What does not work well? Why?

Question 7: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End of Recording and Thank You to Participant]

Second Interview for Faculty

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.
2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT
Date: October xx, 2013
Place: [redacted]
Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate
Interviewee: Name (participant code F2)
Faculty Position: Instructor, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]

[Verbal introduction to the participant: Once again, this interview's purpose is to gain faculty's perceived reasons students persist or attrit (drop out) in developmental reading courses. You are one of three faculty interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour at most.]

[Test recorder.]

[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: In the first few weeks of class, have any of your students been absent? And if so, please share the reasons given by students for their absences.

Question 2: Were there any absences for which students did not give a reason for the absence and if so, to what do you attribute these?

Question 3: In your opinion, are any of the key factors mentioned by you in the initial interview as contributory to developmental reading students' attrition levels, and are they the same as the reasons for absenteeism during the last three weeks?

Question 4: In your opinion, are there any absentee factors which may not contribute to developmental reading students' attrition levels?

Question 5: Have you seen any trends in absenteeism and student attrition/persistence?

Question 6: Of the key strategies that you use in the classroom to engage students in self organization, learning and persistence, what strategies do you think have worked best so far this term? Why?

Question 7: What has not worked well this term? Why?

Question 8: Is there anything new that you have thought of this term to introduce to the class(es) that you teach which, in your opinion, may lead to student persistence?

Question 9: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End of Recording and Thank You to Participant]

Third Interview for Faculty

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.

2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT
Date: December xx, 2013
Place: [redacted]
Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate
Interviewee: Name (participant code F1)
Faculty Position: Instructor, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]
[Verbal introduction to the participant: This is the third and final interview . The interview's purpose is to gain faculty's perceived reasons students persist or attrit (drop out) in developmental reading courses. You are one of three faculty interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour at most.]
[Test recorder.]
[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: Please describe the actions you take in the classroom to help students interact or dialogue with you, as the instructor, both in the classroom and out of the classroom during office hours?

Question 2: What actions do you take in the classroom to help students reconcile the difference between their previous learning in high school and their current learning in a community college environment?

Question 3: What strategies do you use in the classroom to help students with disabilities and/or language barriers to learn reading?

Question 4: In your opinion, would small group (cohort) discussions and feedback to the class during learning time be useful? Please describe how you think that this strategy may or may not work in your classroom.

Question 5: In your opinion, do you think that the textbook for your course is useful? Please describe how it is or is not useful.

Question 6: In your opinion, would additional short reading materials be useful in helping the students learn? If so, how would these materials help (e.g. overcome short attention span)?

Question 7: In your opinion, can social connections be formed in the classroom to support students in their learning success? If so, please describe what actions you take now or would take in the future to help create these connections.

Question 8: In your opinion, would redesigning the curriculum and/or use of textbook for your course be helpful in successful teaching and learning of the developmental reading students? If so, what changes in curriculum do you think would assist successful student learning and persistence?

Question 9: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End of Recording and Thank You to Participant]

Appendix D: Student Interview Protocols

Initial Interview for Reading Students

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.
2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT
Date: Oct. xx, 2013
Place: [redacted]
Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate
Interviewee: Name (participant code A1A)
Course: RD080, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]

[Verbal introduction to the participant: This interview's purpose is to learn developmental reading students' perceived reasons that help them to complete their reading courses or what reasons might keep students from completing the class. You are one of xx student interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.]

[Collect previously read and signed consent form.]

[Collect demographic survey if completed by student]

[Test recorder.]

[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: Do you know your COMPASS entrance test score? If so, what does this score mean to you?

Question 2: How would you describe your learning to read in the past?

Question 3: In your opinion, what reasons may contribute to reading students wanting to drop out?

Question 4: What are some reasons that may help students stay in the reading course and in school?

Question 5: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End Recording; Thank You to student; give Journal]

Second Interview for Reading Students

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.

2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT
Date: November xx, 2013
Place: [redacted]
Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate
Interviewee: Name (participant code A1A)
Course: RD090, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]

[Verbal introduction to the participant: Once again, this interview's purpose is to learn developmental reading students' perceived reasons that help them to complete their reading courses or what reasons might keep students from completing the class. You are one of three to four student interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes.]

[Collect journal and decide how to return it to the student with any researcher notations. This will be highly dependent upon how much the student has written/shared.]

[Test recorder]

[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: Have you noticed any changes in your own study or learning habits which may relate to your staying in class or possibly dropping out ?

Question 2: Would you be willing to share your COMPASS entrance exam score today or in the near future for this study? If so and you know your score now, what was your COMPASS score?

Question 3: In your opinion, are there any new reasons since the first interview that you have noticed or thought about that might make reading students want to drop out?

Question 4: Have you noticed or thought of any new reasons that might help students stay in this reading course and in school?

Question 5: Do you have any suggestions for future changes in teaching and learning in your reading course which may help future students to learn?

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions for future changes in teaching and learning in your reading course which may help students stay and finish the course (if these are different reasons than those given in question 5)?

Question 7: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End Recording; Thank You to student; take Journal; arrange for Journal's return.]

Third Interview for Reading Students

Research Questions

1. What impact does adult low-literacy have on attrition of college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses at a local community college.
2. What other factors influence persistence and attrition of community college entry level, non-traditional students in developmental reading courses.

Interview

Time: 00:00 PDT
Date: December xx, 2013
Place: [redacted]
Interviewer: Lisa H. Aofrate
Interviewee: Name (participant code A1A)
Course: RD090, [redacted]

[Welcome participant to the interview]

[Verbal introduction to the participant: This is the third and final interview. You are one of three student interviewees and some records collected today may be shared using a participant code to protect your identity. A reflection of the interview and some examples from the interview may be shared as quotes. The interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes.]

[Collect journal.]

[Test recorder]

[Commence with the following interview questions]

Question 1: Since all student participants including you have agreed to share their COMPASS scores, what was your score (if you have not already shared your score)?

Question 2: Would having the instructor give all students in the class resources, such as the Student Handbook, be valuable to you? Why?

Question 3: Would having the instructor convey the importance or value of the class in the first week of class be helpful? Why?

Question 4: If the instructor led a confidence building and motivation activity the first week or two in class, what would that look like to you?

Question 5: How would you like to communicate with your instructor, either in or out of the classroom? How many and what types of different means of communication are best to reach all students in your opinion?

Question 6: In your opinion, how can the instructor help students to know whether they have taken on too many classes which may lead to dropping out?

Question 7: In your opinion, how can instructors lower the students' fear of speaking or asking questions in class?

Question 8: In your opinion, would having a third-party, confidential mediation program at the college for instructor/student improved communications be helpful for the students ? Why?

Question 9: Does the textbook meet your learning needs? If so, how? If not, why?

Question 10: Would having other, shorter reading materials be helpful to you in your class? Why?

Question 11: Would you like your instructor to give you positive feedback on how you are doing in the class? If so, what type of positive feedback would work best for you?

Question 12: Is there anything more that you would like to add? Do you have any questions of me?

[End Recording; Thank You to student; take Journal.]

Appendix E: Journal Prompts

Student Journal Prompt

"Please write about what sort of things that you are experiencing in your life that might be helping you to keep on with your studies or that might be making you think of dropping out. Please explain why (the reasons) for either one." (copy to student)

Faculty Journal Prompt

"Please write about what sort of things that you are observing in your classroom regarding students' lives that might be helping them to persist with their studies or that might be making them think of dropping out. Please explain why (the reasons) for either one." (copy to faculty)

(IRB: Journal prompts may result from the qualitative findings as the researcher requires further clarification and written directly into the participant journals when necessary as is normal in the journaling process).

Appendix F: Member Check Surveys

First Member Check Survey

(**IRB:** This sample represents a member check survey to be distributed using Survey Monkey online. This online service has ethics controls and instructions for participants so I have not included these here. The comments in this sample have a single line, but in Survey Monkey, participants will input their comments into a comment box which will hold more information. Also, the scales of "strongly agree to strongly disagree" will be horizontal headings with input bubbles underneath the headings and next to each question.)

1. Economic status is a factor affecting student persistence among developmental reading students at a community college.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

2. Transportation is a factor affecting student persistence among developmental reading students at a community college.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

3. Health concerns is a factor affecting student persistence among developmental reading students at a community college.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

4. Childcare is a factor affecting student persistence among developmental reading students at a community college.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

5. Work (job) is a factor affecting student persistence among developmental reading students at a community college.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

Final Member Check Survey

(**IRB:** This sample represents a member check survey to be distributed using Survey Monkey online. This online service has ethics controls and instructions for participants so I have not included these here. The comments in this sample have a single line, but in Survey Monkey, participants will input their comments into a comment box which will hold more information. Also, the scales of "strongly agree to strongly disagree" will be horizontal headings with input bubbles underneath the headings and next to each question.)

Factors supporting developmental reading students to remain in the course:

1. Support groups such as family and/or friends.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

2. Internal motivators (student motivation).

A. Strongly agree

B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
Comment:_____
_____

3. Open, comfortable (no fear) communication with the instructor.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
Comment:_____
_____

4. Shorter reading materials and/or greater use of reading lists (in lieu of textbook).

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
Comment:_____
_____

5. More relevant reading materials (to students and their everyday lives).

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
Comment:_____
_____

6. Alternative choices for class assignments.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

7. Alternative choices for active class participation (such as a written assignment).

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

Factors influencing developmental reading students to drop the course:

8. Conceptual deficiencies in previous courses (such as main idea, author's purpose, fact vs. opinion, vocabulary acquisition, or other reading skills missed by the student).

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

9. Use of the textbook (RD090; no textbook in RD080).

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

10. Lack of family or other support.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

11. Lack of self motivation.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

12. Poor time management skills.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

13. Procrastination.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

14. Not understanding the value of the course toward future studies.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

Comment:_____

_____

15. Not understanding the amount of work in the course.

A. Strongly agree
B. Agree

C. Neither agree nor disagree
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
Comment:_____
_____