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High School Seniors' Knowledge about College and the Acquisition of College-Readiness Skills

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Karen McSherry

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

High School Seniors' Knowledge about College and
the Acquisition of College-Readiness Skills

by

Karen Franklin McSherry

MA, Webster University, 1995

BA, Rutgers University, 1979

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2016

Abstract

Lack of college readiness, which affects persistence in college, is a problem for many students at a high school in New Jersey. Only 1 in 5 students in this school persist from first to second year in New Jersey public colleges and universities, and as many as 50% do not graduate in 4 years. This problem is important to study because low persistence may engender personal failure, familial debt, social stigma, and wasted public funds.

Guided by Bandura's social learning theory, this qualitative case study addressed the lack of college readiness by exploring what high school students know about going to college.

Eight high school seniors who were interested in attending a 4-year college were purposefully selected to be interviewed about their knowledge of college-readiness skills and where they obtained information about the college experience. The data were analyzed with open coding to determine common themes. Participants reported that (a) personal responsibility was a key to being college-ready; (b) they experienced stress associated with the unknown; and (c) they wanted better knowledge about time-management skills, organization, and where to obtain pertinent information. A project was designed that gives high school seniors access to this information as well as virtual practice to make the transition to college less stressful. A greater level of college readiness may contribute to social change because more students may graduate.

Successful college graduates may have a better opportunity to attain suitable employment and to contribute to the community.

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Dedication

My grandfather, James, called me *Teacher* when I was a little girl and I know that educators are born to teach and pursue learning. I have been a teacher my entire life and the journey for this doctoral degree was the natural progression of that life's pursuit. This academic accomplishment is dedicated to those who have given me the pathways and support to realize this dream. Thank you, Pop Pop, for recognizing my vocation from the beginning. Thank you, Mommy and Daddy (Dorothy and Frank), for being parents who advocated learning and personal achievement – and excellence. I know, Daddy, you “expected no less”. Thank you to my beautiful, intelligent, and compassionate daughters, Katie and Claire, who continue to be life-long learners and to pursue their own scholarly dreams. Your encouragement and insightful contributions have made the journey more enjoyable. And lastly, but most importantly, thank you to my husband, Brian, who has supported and encouraged this endeavor from inception, through many trials, to completion. Now it's your turn to pursue another dream.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Enrollment in institutions of higher learning has increased significantly in the last 3 decades (Bound, Lovenheim, & Turner, 2010). According to Brown (2012) society, government, secondary, and postsecondary schools in the United States have promoted a “college-going” culture that suggests all students should attend an educational institution after high school. In a speech to Hispanic leaders in 2009, President Obama said that all students should have access to higher education and that this was a goal of the administration (Obama, 2009). In fact, more students than ever are applying to colleges and universities in the United States (Bound et al., 2010; Howell, Kurlaender, & Grodsky, 2010). Those students who have college degrees have more opportunities for better careers and employment, including significantly higher salaries than those who do not have college degrees (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Morisano, Hirsh, Peterson, Pihl, & Shore, 2010).

Many postsecondary institutions offer remediation in areas of English grammar and basic math, as well as counseling programs for first-year students. Postsecondary institutions offer such programs to help students make the transition to a college setting and to help them achieve academic success and persist to graduation. Despite these measures, many students do not return for the second year (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013). Because funding for many of these programs may come from taxpayers (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Schneider, 2010) this affects the entire community. In some cases, incoming college students with good academic preparation do not persist because they

are insufficiently prepared in the areas of adaptability (Wagner, 2008) and social skills (Shim & Ryan, 2012), which are needed for college life. Wagner (2008) defined adaptability as the ability to survive, “to be flexible and adaptable and a lifelong learner” (p. 30). Shim and Ryan (2012) defined social skills as “how to approach, engage, function, and evaluate oneself in the social domain” (p. 505).

Students who enter college with high grade point averages (GPAs) and acceptable scores on college entrance exams are not always able to succeed through the college experience and persist (Bound et al., 2010). Dzubak (2010) discussed students who are able to memorize information and discuss facts, but are unable to think critically and apply knowledge analytically. Colleges have been trying to deal with this problem at the first-year level, but it may be more effective to ensure that high school students develop the skills associated with college success before graduation: for example, organization, time management, and social interaction (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). Baxter (2012), Bound et al. (2010), and Brown (2012) wrote about students’ need for purpose, motivation, self-awareness, and resilience; these are important contributors to success in college. However, the focus of those studies was on the college student who had already matriculated. Some authors did look at high school influences on persistence [e.g., Bell, Rowan-Kenyon, and Perna (2009); DeWitz, Woolsey, and Walsh (2009), Farrington et al. (2012), and Jackson and Kurlaender (2013)], but none attempted to learn what high school students know about college readiness before matriculating. I conducted a qualitative case study to learn what high school students know about being prepared for the college experience and their awareness of personal learning skills and how this

knowledge could contribute to college persistence.

The Local Problem

There is low college persistence of students from the local research site (a high school in New Jersey) who attend New Jersey colleges and universities. Students who graduate from New Jersey public schools are very likely to attend New Jersey public colleges and universities. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2010) determined that 85% of New Jersey high school graduates remain in state for postsecondary education and that in-state residents comprise 75% of the population at those state colleges and universities. According to information from the site guidance counselors, students leave these colleges without graduating in the same percentages as those recorded by the New Jersey Department of Higher Education [NJDEH] (2014). A low rate of persistence of 60% at New Jersey public colleges is a problem that has been well documented by government statistics on both the federal and state level, as well as by dropout rates provided by individual colleges and universities (NCES, 2010; NJDEH, 2014).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

According to information provided by the guidance department of the study site, 70% of college-going seniors matriculated to New Jersey 4-year institutions of higher learning. According to anecdotal information obtained from the local high school guidance department, students choose to apply to these postsecondary institutions due to variables such as proximity, cost, academic ability, and lack of knowledge of other

opportunities. Statistics indicated that while persistence from freshman to sophomore year in New Jersey colleges and universities is 80%, only 60% of these students graduate in a 4–6-year period (NJDHE, 2014). These statistics may suggest a lack of college readiness by the students entering college. In order to qualify for federal funding, New Jersey Public schools have been participants in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) enacted by Congress in 2001 and have sought federal grants with Race to the Top (RTTT, NJDHE, 2014). These laws and programs place much emphasis on state-mandated testing scores, forcing the teaching process to concentrate on skills necessary for the test-taking process (Perna & Thomas, 2009; Wagner, 2008). Therefore, a consequence of compliance with NCLB, RTTT, and similar government laws was a diversion of attention from teaching skills and information needed for college readiness to rote learning and memorization for taking state-mandated tests (Stone & Lewis, 2012). The emphasis on learning how to take tests has created a student population that is less likely to have developed critical thinking skills during high school (Wagner, 2008), which may be contributing to a lack of college persistence among New Jersey students.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Alarcon and Edwards (2012) and Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon (2011) reported that a quarter of the student population leaves a postsecondary institution before graduation, which can damage an institution in terms of continuity and rankings. Lee, Edwards, Menson, and Rawls (2011), Sparkman, Maulding, and Roberts (2012), and Talbert (2012) noted the importance of increasing the retention and graduation rates of colleges and universities to keep pace with other nations in a global environment. Other

researchers discussed the problem of low persistence and the desire for students and society to maintain financial and social competitiveness and success (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Bound et al., 2010; Davidson, Beck, & Milligan, 2009; Howell et al., 2010; Kallison & Stader, 2012; Schneider, 2010).

Miller and Lesik (2014) studied the retention rates of full-time college students noting that many government and private organizations continue to call for an increase in those numbers. Researchers studied student success in New Jersey colleges interviewing both private and state institutions to understand best practices for retention using academic, non-academic, and integrative methods (Donaldson, Mian, Rodriguez, Wang, & Weisenbacher, 2015). Research studies that address the problem from other viewpoints are necessary to address the factors that contribute to low rates of college persistence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to explore (a) the current academic practices and strengths of local high school seniors, (b) how they obtain information about attending college and college readiness, and (c) their perceived needs to improve their chances of persistence in college. The data from this study is expected to help students develop a better understanding of how to prepare for, and be successful in, college.

From the point of view of the high school student, the problem of persistence is not well understood nor well researched (Howell et al., 2010), nor is there enough research on the important role the high schools play in decisions students make about college (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). Finally, although many postsecondary institutions

offer remedial instruction English and math and transition seminars for first year students (Angrist, Lang, Oreopoulos, 2009; Clark, 2005; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013), there is little data on programs in secondary schools that address college preparation and college readiness (Stern, Dayton, & Raby, 2010).

Technical Definitions

College readiness (college preparedness): The arrangement of abilities, attributes, propensities, and information that understudies need to enter school with the ability to succeed once they are selected (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012).

Persistence: Continued enrollment or degree completion at any institution (First-year persistence and retention rates by starting enrollment intensity 2009-2012, 2014).

Self-regulated learning: An individual, method to obtain scholarly aptitudes and practices that are efficiently situated toward fulfillment of learning objectives (Zimmerman, 2008).

Operational Definitions

College involvement: For this study, *college involvement* is operationally defined as students being appropriately engaged in the social and academic life at a postsecondary institution.

College success: For this study, *college success* is operationally defined as student attainment of appropriate grades while following institution guidelines to persist to next academic year.

Retention: For this study, *retention* is operationally defined as continued enrollment in college through degree completion, rather of whether they transfer during

their studies.

Significance

Lack of college preparedness may influence persistence, which may then affect students' career and life choices (Moore et al., 2010). Low persistence rates may lower colleges' rankings (Brown, 2012). Retention of students and subsequent acquisition of higher degrees benefits both the student and the university. It is expected that this study will offer the local school district methods they can use to help students understand and develop the skills they need to succeed in colleges or universities. Students who do not obtain postsecondary degrees may not be as successful in finding employment or in receiving satisfactory salaries (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013). It is expected that this study will provide information and recommendations to help more students succeed in college and therefore attain the necessary credentials and knowledge needed for success (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Morisano et al., 2010).

Lack of persistence in college has been documented and studied throughout the last 40 years with little agreement about the cause or about remediation (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Reason, 2009; Roberts & Styron, 2010). Jackson and Kurlaender (2013) and Kallison and Stader (2012) reported that students who enter college unprepared harm themselves and their community and suggested that courses to aid college success should be taken at the secondary level. A report by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (2012) and Smith and Zhang (2009) suggested that high school courses should address motivational skills along with the academic content, because motivation is needed for success.

The research has also noted that unsuccessful transition to college may involve a lack of readiness in social skills, study skills, and time management (Bandura, 2012; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Sedlacek, 2011); it may also reflect an inability to live away from home (Wardley & Belanger, 2013). Many colleges and universities have mandated preparation and remedial courses for incoming freshmen (Balduf, 2009; Brown, 2012). However, most preparation and remedial courses focus on academic readiness, especially in the math and language areas (Barnes, Slate, & Rojas-LeBouef, 2010; Budden, Hsing, Budden, & Hall, 2010; Wiley, Wyatt, & Camara, 2010).

Social Change

The topic of college persistence becomes an issue of social change, as greater success in employment will help the economy grow. According to the Walden University's definition of social change (Walden University, 2016), individuals and communities must be given opportunities to realize worth, dignity, and development. Students who are able to persist through the college experience will be more likely to have a better self-concept and pursue better life opportunities. Additionally, college graduates may contribute to a successful society and may also be promoters of social change (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009) because individuals with college degrees are more apt to be contributors through taxes while being active in social and charitable organizations that help to promote positive values throughout the community.

Alarcon and Edwards (2012), as well as Morisano et al. (2010), reported that remaining in school and obtaining a degree is important for career advancement and salary requirements. Braxton et al. (2010) discussed that postsecondary institutions have

a moral commitment to promote human potential and support the future. Johnston (2010) noted that the obligation of education to empower students to meet personal expectations and develop skills needed to be successful in school as well as obtain steady employment and become lifelong learners.

Research Questions

The lack of persistence among college students is a prevalent issue in New Jersey. There is a gap in the research from the perspective of high school students, an important point of view that may provide a different perspective on how to tackle the problem. This study aimed to address this gap in the literature by addressing the following questions:

1. What are the local site high school seniors' current academic practices and strengths?
2. How do high school seniors at the research site obtain information about attending college and college readiness?
3. What skills do the local high school seniors identify as necessary for college success?

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature was completed to understand high school students' knowledge of college readiness and its relationship to persistence in postsecondary education and presented the existing interventions that promote persistence. Through this review I noted that lack of persistence through college is a societal concern, as students who do not obtain postsecondary degrees may not be prepared to succeed in their careers and life (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Schneider, 2010). They

add to the financial burdens borne by the government, institutions of higher learning, and the community at large (Kallison & Stader, 2012; Moore et al., 2010; Morisano et al., 2010). Moreover, the stigma attached to failure in college can have far-reaching implications individuals and the institutions they attended (Barnes et al., 2010; Kallison & Stader, 2012).

I examined the peer-reviewed literature about the factors that affect students' lack of persistence, for example, inadequate knowledge of academic content, lack of knowledge of postsecondary experiences, and inadequate college readiness. I also examined the effect of family and peer influences on college readiness and previous studies and methodologies that have been devoted to the study of low postsecondary persistence.

Research Strategy

To identify prospective, peer-reviewed articles and books, the following databases—Academic Search Complete, ERIC, Education Research Complete, and Google Scholar—were searched for the years 2009-2016 using the following keywords: *college persistence*, *college readiness*, *high school students*, and *preparation skills*. I used the Boolean operators, AND and OR to optimize the results. Abstracts were used to judge an article's relevancy to the research questions.

I found over 95 articles on college readiness and persistence, but concentrated on the 27 among them that referred to high school students.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on two theories: (a)

Bandura's original (1977) social learning theory, whose basic tenet is that learners obtain cognitive knowledge in social situations, either through observation or direct instruction. (1977; 2012); (b) Hadwin and Oshige's (2011) expansion of this theory which connected perceptions of social learning to self-regulated learning and the ability to achieve goals. Bandura (1977) theorized that social learning was especially important when learning about a new subject or learning in an unknown environment. How and where high school seniors learn about college readiness may be during social circumstances. Bandura (1977) offered a practical theory about human behavior that can be applied to the experiences of adolescents and those entering college. He theorized that humans learn from one another through observation in the context of social learning situations. I asked students to talk about their personal knowledge about college readiness, the skills associated with college readiness, and the college-going experience.

Lack of Knowledge of the Postsecondary Experience

High school students do not generally learn about college or the going-to-college process until late in their sophomore year. Many high school students reported that information about the college experience is not easy to find (Bell et al., 2009). According to the local high school guidance counselors, students reported that most of the information about college choice and college readiness was acquired through internet sources, from friends and family, and from teachers and counselors.

Belasco (2013) reported that high school guidance counselors are the primary source for information about college entrance and that their input is usually positive and significant to the college-going process. However, the local high school guidance

department noted that information given to students was usually limited to statistics, housing facts, and other such data reported in college brochures and on college websites. (Guidance Counselor, personal communication, January 14, 2014). Additionally, the guidance counselors reported that even when students experienced colleges through tours and information sessions, little was learned about the day-to-day process of leaving home and living away.

Need for practical skills. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2011) first-year students have reported feeling immediately overwhelmed and at a loss of how to proceed with finding information related to class procedures and processes. The authors also reported that students' motivational and non-cognitive experiences are related to student success in college. Similarly, Alarcon and Edwards (2012) and Davidson et al. (2009) discussed the affective and personality-based aspects of college success, including practical skills such as time management, housekeeping, and organization.

Bound et al. (2010) discussed the decline of college persistence even though more students are entering colleges each year, and suggested that the result is due to the lack of college readiness (preparedness) of entering students. Arnold et al. (2012) described *college-preparedness* as not just student knowledge of college life, but also as student development of a multidimensional set of skills and habits to succeed after enrollment. Kuh et al. (2011) noted that college preparedness involves students being ready for the practical skills needed for life away from home. Incoming students are often unprepared to live in dormitories inhabited by stranger roommates. The food is unfamiliar as is the

physical environment and students are expected to fend for themselves for probably the first time with very little accommodation time (Kuh et al., 2011). These new experiences and the lack of being ready for college may contribute to conditions that may affect their ability to be successful in the first year of college and therefore may influence overall persistence.

Familial and peer influences on student preparedness. There are also familial influences on a new college student. Authors discussed that students' need for parental support about the college experience is linked to comfort, success, preparedness and eventual persistence (Bound et al., 2010; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Leonard, 2013; Surjadi, Lorenz, Wickrama, & Conger, 2011). Additionally, parents may be very involved in student decision-making about the college-going experience and may contribute to conditions that affect preparedness (Cheung, Wan, Fan, Leong, & Mok, 2013; Kennedy, 2009; Reason, 2009; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). Students also reported that parents sometimes exerted pressure to attend a certain institution, and in fact, many students left a college after the first year because they did not feel that the college was a good match (Kelly, Kendrick, Newgent, & Lucas, 2007).

The ability to establish friendships and sustainable peer relationships as well as develop a positive social persona is an important skill during the first year of college and directly relate to a positive experience and a greater chance of persistence (Carroll et al., 2009; DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2012). However, Yu, Tian, Vogel, and Kwok (2010) discussed how networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter can provide access to information, comfort, and guidance and may be beneficial

to the learning process (Black, 2010; Gerard, 2012; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011; Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). A student who is comfortable in a college environment and more socially active is more likely to persist (Davidson et al., 2009).

High School Seniors' Lack of College Readiness and Preparedness

High school seniors should contemplate and master conscientiousness, readiness, and self-management in order to have a successful first year of college (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Bandura, 2012; DeWitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Some authors discussed the need for students to be able to blend both academic preparedness and preparedness of self for successful persistence (Barnes et al., 2010; Sedlacek, 2011). DeWitz et al. (2009) discussed an individual's confidence in the ability to successfully complete a task and linked this ability to goal orientation. DeWitz et al. (2009) also suggested that these traits are indicators of success in many areas; including college. The authors noted that the transition to college begins in high school, not when the student enters the first semester of college.

A lack of readiness may lead to poor performance (Baxter, 2012) and can affect capabilities to organize and attain goals (Capara, Vecchione, Alessandri, Gerbino, & Barbaranelli, 2010). Conley and French (2013) discussed an ownership of learning by the college student by describing these areas of importance: thinking skills, attitudes toward understanding content, ownership of learning skills and techniques, and contextual understanding. Additionally, DeWitz et al. (2009) and Carroll et al. (2009) wrote about an individual's ability to be self-regulated and ready to work independently through goal completion to be an indicator of success in college. Sedlacek (2011) discussed the

success rates of students who took conscious ownership of learning and readiness by taking preparatory seminars and classes to prepare for college. DeWitz et al. (2009) discussed the need for readiness skills to begin to be developed when individuals are in high school.

Proven Interventions to Promote Persistence

High school practices. Some researchers have found that effective preparation for college readiness is done through programs and seminars provided by the high schools (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013). Jackson and Kurlaender (2013) and Tinto (1995) discussed that even though researchers have known for many decades about the problem of persistence, there has yet to be an effective intervention in the postsecondary setting. Jackson and Kurlaender (2013) suggested that requiring high school students to experience rigorous classes may improve college persistence. Venezia and Jaeger (2013) agreed that rigorous high school courses and expectations from high school teachers positively affect self-regulated learning in college. Some secondary schools have implemented college-level courses with college credit. If administered correctly, such courses can appropriately help a high school student understand what is expected in college (Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2011; Edmunds et al., 2010). However Barnes et al. (2010) suggested that that schools shift the emphasis from quantitative scores to emphasis on college-readiness skills to help students be more college-ready. Klopfenstein and Thomas (2009) debated the effectiveness of relying on Advanced Placement (AP) test scores to effectively predict success at the college level because the AP tests measure a specific content area and not readiness. Perna and Thomas (2009) warned about relying

only on testing as indicators of college readiness, but rather also factoring in other accomplishments in high school, such as human, cultural, and social experiences (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). Completion of studies in career academies at the high school level has been shown to be an effective predictor of student success in college (Stern et al., 2010). Similar to a European model, students may choose to study subjects related to career and future pursuits. Some academies may be geared to arts and humanities study while others may focus on a specific academic genre such as the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) subjects. These academies seem to be more rigorous and conducive for learning that translates to and transitions well to the college level (Kuo, 2010; Stern et al., 2010). Students graduating from academies with such specific categories of learning may be better prepared for college due to a number of factors including smaller class size, better teacher to student ratio, enthusiasm for specific study, and increased self-regulation (Kuo, 2010). However, academies tend to be small, with low enrollment and are selective about admittance, and not all communities have the resources to offer this type of school.

Postsecondary practices. Postsecondary institutions have recognized the need to help students succeed and persist to second year, and to graduate in a timely manner. Postsecondary institutions have tried to make the college-going process less intimidating in an effort to make students and their families more comfortable with the first year (Kelly et al., 2007). In the past 2 decades, colleges have reached out to the accepted students and their families with many colleges offering meet and greet and orientation days for the student as well as for parents and siblings (Kennedy, 2009). Postsecondary

institutions have also tried to make the application and college entrance experience more user friendly with usage of the Common Application, available information on easy to navigate websites, and dedicated first year deans, advisors, and counselors (Roderick et al., 2011).

Another area where colleges are attempting to make the transition more comfortable for first year students is in social situations. Colleges usually house first-year students together and try to foster atmospheres of friendship, camaraderie, and reliance on each other (Kuh et al., 2011). Additionally, they often host information seminars as well as activities for students to come together in social settings. Postsecondary institutions often implement health and wellness services, technical support, and academic tutoring available to further assist with the transition process (Kuh et al, 2011; Morisano et al., 2010). Through these diverse efforts, postsecondary institutions are attempting to increase the number of students who succeed and persist.

Importance of Persistence in Postsecondary Education

Tinto (1975; 1995) theorized that there is a link between the level of activity in college life, social interactions, academic performance, and awareness of self of first year college students to successful completion of the college career. Tinto (1975; 1995) based this theory on work developed by Van Gennep, an anthropologist who described the separation from known environments to successful integration into new environments through involvement and incorporation (Elkins, Braxton, & James, 2000). Astin (1999) discussed the importance of engagement of the student to the college experience as critical for academic success in college and Milem and Berger (1997) explored the

relationship between positive involvement in college life and successful college persistence. More recently, Wolf-Wendel, Ward, and Kinzie (2009) compared individual student effort and involvement in social and academic activities as predictors of college success. Throughout the last 40 years, studies have been conducted on the relationship between student engagement and persistence but the fact remains that studies *have* found that students continue to leave college after the first year at a high percentage (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013; Kallison & Stader, 2012; NJDHE, 2014).

Career benefits of college persistence. The acquisition of a college education remains a goal of a majority of today's high school seniors (Bound et al., 2010; Howell et al., 2010). In the last 3 decades enrollment in postsecondary institutions has increased by 74% (Bound et al., 2010; NCES, 2012). President Obama (2009), as well as prior U. S. presidents, the nation's governors, Congress, and the State Department have all called for raising the awareness and availability of postsecondary education for all Americans declaring that higher education benefits individuals and society (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013; Perna & Thomas, 2013). Success in higher education is necessary for competitiveness in international markets in many fields, such as business, education, and finance, as well as being a requirement for many current and future jobs in the United States (Perna & Thomas, 2013). Although there is a trend to prepare students to train in technical and operational careers that do not require a college degree, there is evidence that college degrees are necessary for better salaries and opportunities for advancement in most fields (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Brown, 2012).

Financial concerns of students, families, and colleges. The lack of persistence

by students who do not complete degrees creates financial concerns for themselves, their parents, the government, and society as a whole (Kallison & Stader, 2012; Schneider, 2010). High school seniors are awarded scholarships and grants by private entities and government programs every year. These monies are wasted when students do not persist to the second year of college, and in many cases money awarded to a student who does not persist is money that another student could have used. It is often difficult to recoup loan money from students who leave college and do not find jobs or jobs with adequate income to repay those loans (Moore et al., 2010). In addition, contributing to the financial concern is the amount of monies paid by parents and families to prepare a student for postsecondary life. This includes payments for testing preparations, tuition, board, outfitting dorm rooms, and personal spending money. When a student does not return to school after the first year, these resources have been wasted and are not recoverable.

There are also significant costs to colleges related to programs aimed at helping students persist. Colleges provide remediation courses in attempting to address the deficiencies of academic preparation as well as counseling and developmental services offered to freshman students in need of help in coping with the transition (Balduf, 2009; Kallison & Stader, 2012). Almost all institutions of higher education offer first-year courses in basic academic subjects, such as mathematics and English language arts. Many require students to take standardized assessment tests or prove competency to determine preparedness in these areas before allowing full matriculation. Furthermore, many colleges offer seminars or discussion groups pertaining to living away from home, coping with stress, study habits, and other subjects related to succeeding at the college

experience. These programs that have become necessary to help with persistence come with costs, both financial and time related.

Postsecondary institutions may face negative feedback from society when students do not succeed and may face political and societal pressure to improve completion rates (Morisano et al., 2010). Additionally, various publications and programs rank many colleges, with persistence and retention rates as part of the ranking processes (Brown, 2012; Morisano et al., 2010). Public institutions are answerable to government and taxpayers, and private institutions may face lower reputations.

Causes for Lack of Persistence

The literature notes no agreement about a single cause for lack of persistence. Several studies have shown that there is basic lack of knowledge of college and the college-going process by students (Bell et al., 2009; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2010; Kelly et al., 2007). Some studies attributed the problem of persistence to students' lack of understanding about what it means to be college-ready (Bound et al., 2010; Clark, 2005; Niu & Tienda, 2013) and other studies discussed a relationship between persistence and content knowledge and academic preparation (The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2012; Balduf, 2009; Dzubak, 2010). In addition, some researchers discussed cultural, community, and family influences as important facets in college persistence (Budden et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2013; Morisano et al., 2010; Surjadi et al., 2011; Wardley & Belanger 2013).

Causes may also include lack of motivation, dissatisfaction with an institution, lack of mental preparedness, incorrect choice of school or course of study, financial

concerns, other available opportunities such as employment, or simply missing home and friends. It may be a reliance on quantitative cognitive abilities to predict success in college rather than those aspects of affectivity that have presented the large gap between acceptance into college and successful, completion of degrees (Sommerfeld, 2011).

However, as pointed out by multiple studies, many causes can be understood as being derived from a lack of readiness of a new college student (Bandura, 2012; Baxter, 2012; Brown, 2012; Sedlacek, 2011).

Gaps in the Literature

Although this study looked at the local problem of college persistence and college readiness of New Jersey high school students, it is interesting to note that most of the studies in the literature about the problem of college persistence have looked at the data generated from academic scores, dropout rates, and interventions done by colleges to change this trend. Few studies have been written about interventions at the secondary level. Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) discussed the need for further study to be done on changing the way students learn in high school and to understand how high schools are developing skills that will help students excel in school and beyond. Howell et al. (2010) discussed how little is actually known about what leads to college readiness and degree completion, and reported that little was known about where students obtain postsecondary knowledge. Similarly, Kallison and Stader (2012) and Turner and Conkel-Ziebell (2011) reported that some inner-city and low income college students were not satisfied with the pertinent information about college readiness learned in high school and that few studies examined career paths of middle school, junior high, or high school

adolescents in the United States.

Hawkins, Letcher, Sanson, Smart, and Toumbourou (2009) reported that little research has been done on the developmental period between adolescence and adulthood, especially in terms of success in school. Peper and Dahl (2013) discussed the significance of understanding puberty and maturation on cognitive engagement and motivation and Shin and Stega (2016) reported the importance of understanding the adolescent's need for having purpose and meaning in learning. Reason (2009) and Ravert (2009) believed that more research regarding conditions that influence students is necessary and will help in understanding relationships between readiness, educational goals, and college persistence.

Implications

The literature provided evidence of the problem of college readiness and the relationship to low college persistence. I spoke to high school seniors to understand their perceptions of college readiness. From the data I collected, I determined what college-readiness information and skills are lacking by high school seniors. I used this data to create a program to offer college readiness information that can be beneficial to seniors in high school. The project is the creation of this program for high school seniors at the research site. Students who take part in the program will receive information regarding college readiness and therefore may be more able to persist in college.

Summary

Individuals who complete postsecondary degrees are more able to find good jobs,

succeed in chosen careers, and earn better salaries than individuals who do not attain these degrees (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Morisano et al., 2010). However, nearly 1 in 5 students who begin college or university in New Jersey do not persist to graduation (NJDHE, 2014). This problem affects those individuals, the postsecondary institutions, and society at large. Although authors have discussed reasons for low persistence and conducted studies that have shown links with a number of variables there is still little consensus of a cause or of a solution (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Reason, 2009; Roberts & Styron, 2010). I discussed literature that reported that lack of knowledge of the college experience, lack of college readiness, and lack of skills related to self-regulation may be contributing to low college persistence (Bound et al., 2010; Clark, 2005; Niu & Tienda, 2013). Postsecondary institutions have implemented interventions to help prevent or remediate the problem (Kelly et al., 2007; Kennedy, 2009; Roderick et al., 2011). However, interventions at the high school level, before individuals enter college, may be more beneficial because skills related to college readiness are developed in adolescence (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013).

In Section 2, I will describe and justify the methodology of my qualitative case study including setting, sampling, instrumentation, ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis. In Section 3, I will present the proposed project. In Section 4, I will focus on reflections and conclusions, including strengths and limitations, possible alternative approaches, and directions for future research.

Section 2: Methodology

Introduction

I chose a descriptive case study design because I wanted to focus on information that needed to be described and detailed in order to present an in-depth understanding of a bounded system. Merriam (2009) and Glesne (2010) discussed qualitative research as a way for researchers to understand how people interpret experiences and environments, while attempting to understand the significance of their interpretations. Yin (2009) and Creswell (2013) discussed using a qualitative case study design when the research involves exploring real life contemporary settings through detailed data collection from multiple sources of information. I explored this problem by examining high school seniors' perceptions of college readiness and preparedness within the bounded system of one high school.

Setting

The location for this case study was a one-town high school 650 students in northern New Jersey, where typically 70% of the students choose to attend a 4-year institution within the state, according to the school guidance department. The community is predominantly White (87%), middle class, and according to information provided by the United States Census Bureau (2014), 32% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. Since I have been a teacher at this school for 15 years, I am familiar with the setting and brought firsthand knowledge of the population to this bounded location and case.

Rationale for Research Method

I chose a qualitative case study design after considering other methods. The

literature included many quantitative studies done on the problem of college persistence, mostly showing causal relationships between variables such as race, gender, family, high school GPAs, college entrance exam scores, and location and students' persistence (Bound et al., 2010; Budden et al., 2010; Combs et al., 2010; Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Brown, 2012; Niu & Tienda, 2013; Roderick et al., 2011). However, quantitative designs require a large sample and do not allow for an in-depth description of individual experiences in the participant's own words (Glesne, 2011). A qualitative design was not appropriate because I wanted to explore high school students' perceptions of college readiness--a variable not easily measured, (Creswell, 2013).

Few studies explored the problem of college persistence using a strictly qualitative model. However, Clark (2005) and Kelly et al. (2007) used interviews and surveys to report on influences on college persistence. An early case study by Tinto and Goodsell (1993) discussed participation in first-year programs and the influence on performance. More recently, Perna and Thomas (2009) described several case studies that explored testing policies in high school related to college enrollment and performance. Jamelske (2009) reported a case study that explored the effects of first-year programs in a college on success and Leonard (2013) discussed a case study that explored the partnership between parental support and college success. Pyne and Means (2013) presented a case study that discussed the lived experiences of a female Hispanic student enrolled in college and strategies that she used for her success. However, in very few of these studies did the researcher attempt to understand the perceptions, strategies, or understandings of the student before entering college.

Because the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and knowledge of high school seniors about college readiness, a qualitative design was appropriate (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2009). Other qualitative methods were considered and not deemed appropriate for addressing the problem. I wanted to have an in-depth understanding of the knowledge and experiences of the participants, therefore the bounded setting of the case study was more specific and meaningful.

Although phenomenological design also determines meaning from human experiences, these types of studies are usually less specific to an “event, activity, or process” (Creswell, 2013, p. 15). Ethnographic research is interested in cultural influences and grounded theory looks at developing theory from experiences (Merriam, 2009); neither of which was appropriate to the purpose of this study. Case study design was a more appropriate approach for me because as Yin (2009) noted, it allows for flexible collection of the data.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2013) suggested using purposeful maximal sampling to provide different perspectives on the topic, explaining that the samples can represent both the ordinary and the unusual. The research site high school has an average grade size of 160 students with a slightly higher male than female (54% male, 46% female) percentage. Most students are White (70%) with a smaller Hispanic (25%) population and small percentages of Black (2%) and Asian (3%) students. Creswell (2013) counseled against using more than four or five cases in a single study, as this number should be sufficient to suggest common themes that can be used to conduct cross-case analysis. Yin (2009)

discussed that it is important to have literal replications of the data collection for each case in a case study and that the number of participants is related to the straightforwardness of the theory. Baker and Edwards (2012) recommended that the sample and interview size should represent the population while leading to saturation and comparison of data. In order to comply with these above guidelines, I purposefully selected a research sample of eight high school seniors who were interested in attending a 4-year college in New Jersey.

Participants were purposefully selected based on interest in attending college, as well as being representative of the class in gender, which is approximately 50% boys and 50% girls. Because this research site is not ethnically diverse, ethnicity was not a factor in participant selection. All participants were from one high school and were not my current students. In order to continue to have a viable pool of participants and to guard against losing participants due to possible withdrawals, I chose 25 students who met the above criteria to participate. From that group I selected the eight students by choosing the first four boys and the first four girls from a random mix of names. Students who withdrew would have been replaced from the original number in the same manner. However, this did not occur.

I proposed to solicit participation at a weekly senior class meeting. I explained my research proposal and asked for students who were interested in participating to contact me via the in-district mail system. I also advised students at the class meeting that only I would see this information. Students were asked contact me within 1 week. I received 34 replies of interest and from those, chose 25 possible participants who fit the criteria. I

randomly selected the eight participants from the 25 and invited them in-person to participate. All eight accepted the invitation.

If from the initial presentation enough students did not agree to participate, I would have attempted another explanation of the research project at a later weekly senior meeting to attract more participants.

Protection of Participants' Rights

I obtained approval to conduct this qualitative case study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University (IRB approval #12-21-0330044). I invited students to participate voluntarily at the initial presentation. All students interviewed during this study were purposefully selected from the initial contact via in-district mail.

After receiving invitation acceptances, I scheduled meetings with each participant. These meetings were scheduled outside of school hours in comfortable, safe, and private rooms such as the main conference room. The sessions began informally with light conversation to ensure that they were comfortable with the process and with me and to begin to build a relationship of trust and enthusiasm. To begin, I again explained the study and explained the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and explained that each participant had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were able to schedule, reschedule, or cancel the interview at their convenience by contacting me at my Walden University e-mail.

Confidentiality was addressed by (a) de-identifying each participant (they were assigned a number 1-8), (b) using a password-protected computer program to record the data with secured internet access, and (c) using a locked file cabinet in my home for

secure storage of any paper data. I used only my personal computer and not any school-owned computer to store or compile data. I may have known the students, but they were not students in any class I currently teach. Data were disposed of at the appropriate time in accordance with Walden University protocol.

Data Collection

The interviews were held at a comfortable, safe, private site in the high school suitable for audio recording (no background noise) and outside of school hours. I collected data via a recorded, in-depth personal interview (questions to be found in Appendix B) with each participant and each participant had the opportunity to answer questions and discuss relevant issues as the interviews progressed. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner where participants were free to express themselves about the topic in a comfortable environment. Because scheduling of interviews was ongoing, I was able to collect data throughout a flexible time period.

I generated the interview questions (Appendix B) from the literature by determining prominent themes that recurred throughout the studies and that specifically addressed the research questions to look at how high school seniors understand college readiness. The interview questions focused on perceived academic practices and strengths of high school seniors (Kuh et al, 2011), how and where high school seniors obtain information about going to college (Bell et al., 2009), and skills needed for college success (Arnold et al, 2012). Each interview question was directly relatable to a specific research question as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Relationship Between Research Questions and Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Question
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2	6, 7, 8, 9, 10,11,12
3	13, 14, 15, 16, 17

Interviews were scheduled for no longer than 45 minutes. Once the interviews began, using the interview questions as a guide, I allowed the participants to expand on their thoughts and to ask follow-up questions. All sessions were digitally recorded and participants were aware of the recordings and were advised verbally that the interview was audiotaped and that they may elect to have any or all parts of the interview deleted. Information that participants wished deleted would have been erased from hard drives, transcriptions, and voice recorders, however no participant made such a request. Member checking with each participant was done informally in private rooms of the research site to confirm that I understood correctly what each had said during the interview.

The data collection process through the interviews provided information to sufficiently answer each research question. I kept the data outlined contemporaneously in a journal as the interviews progressed.

Role of the Researcher

I am a world language teacher at the research site. I do not teach many 12th grade students and did not use my current students as participants; however, some students may have known me as a faculty member. I was careful to watch for evidence that participants

may have answered questions to please me or ingratiate themselves to an adult in a school setting. I selected participants who were not my current students and conducted interviews in safe, comfortable settings to avoid an authoritative atmosphere. My role was to purposefully choose, interview, and observe the participants and to analyze the data. By using accepted and reasonable precautions and methods of research, I helped assure that participants were able to answer the research questions openly, honestly, and thoughtfully. As in any case study, reflexivity of the researcher was a concern (Creswell, 2013). I was careful to control any personal bias or expectation of the data.

Timeline of Study Events

The steps in the data collection were as follows:

Month 1	Week 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I presented the research project at senior class meeting (10-15 minutes) 2. I asked for responses by interested students and parents in 7 days.
	Week 2-3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I reviewed responses from interested students (1-2 days). 2. I chose 25 students from those interested (1-2 days). 3. I randomly chose four female and four male participants from the original 25. 4. I personally invited each student to participate. 5. I scheduled interviews (45 minutes in length)
	Week 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I began to conduct interviews
Month 2	Weeks 1-2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I continued interviews.

2. I scheduled and conducted member checking sessions
3. I began coding and initial analysis of verified data.
4. I continued member checking and analysis
5. I finished interview sessions

Analysis

The data analysis process was ongoing and directed by the research questions. A researcher conducting a case study makes a detailed description of the case while looking for similarities and differences among the data (Yin, 2009). Yin noted that it is important for the researcher to keep that data in manageable sections while continuously synthesizing and coding for patterns. Based on the above, as I conducted the interviews and transcribed the recordings, I used open coding throughout the interview process, and looked for patterns and common themes from the answers to the interview questions that related to the research questions with evidence of college readiness and college-experience familiarity.

I identified themes that recurred in each participant's data and then conducted cross-case analysis to ascertain the emergent themes among all the participants' data (Creswell, 2013). I started with topic coding as revealed by the research questions and the participants' answers to get an overall idea of the data (Creswell, 2013). The most common themes that emerged from the data were *personal responsibility, organization and time-management skills, uncertainty, and origin of information*. Participants reported that they believed that personal responsibility was a key to being college-ready but also expressed a level of stress associated with the unknown as well as a need for better

knowledge about time-management skills, organization, and lack of knowing where to obtain information. As the data accumulated, I intensified coding and categorizing to focus on those repetitive themes. As the data became saturated as evidenced with the same themes and information repeating, I focused on those patterns of repetitiveness (Punch, 2009) and found consistencies in the data. Throughout the process, I used an iterative approach while I continued to code and search for patterns, as the data became available (Yin, 2009) making revisions to themes as warranted.

Discrepant data that did not fit into the common themes were acknowledged and discussed. Merriam (2009) observed that qualitative research should emphasize “inquiry and comparative case analysis rather than discovering causal generalizations” (p. 206). Maxwell (2013) advised that allowing for examination of discrepant data is important to address validity and guard against using data that only agrees with researchers’ biases. Discussion of data that did not fit into the common themes added to the richness of the description of the case.

Data Analysis Results

I conducted interviews with the eight selected participants. These interviews took place over a 3-week period. I transcribed each interview within 24 hours of the interview. I copied the interview questions (Appendix B), one for each participant and used this as my guide for asking the questions and I took short notes and made comments on these copies for each during the interview. The questions were asked in order and were specific to the research questions (Table 1). When all interviews and transcriptions were completed, I began to analyze the transcripts and my notes for recurring themes. I used a

color-coding system, where a specified color pen was used to highlight emergent themes. If a theme was present in a least five interviews I have presented the findings. If a theme was not present in at least three interviews, I may not have included the theme as an overall finding but may have included specific answers from a participant that highlighted that theme in order to include discrepant data that adds richness to the narrative (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Each interview was scheduled in person and took place in a quiet, pleasant, and private conference room at the research site. I greeted participants as they entered the room and engaged in informal conversation for a few minutes to put each at ease and to set up the interview process. I reviewed the assent form with each participant under age 18 and the consent forms for those participants over age 18. I signed each form in their presence and copies were made available to each and I advised each participant that the interview would be audiotaped and received his or her consent. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes.

Common Themes

At the beginning of each interview, during the informal communication period, all eight participants expressed positive and confident attitudes about going to college and about being college-ready. Each was sure that they would be matriculating to college the coming fall semester even though most had not yet received acceptances. As the interviews commenced, the first theme that emerged from the data was that all participants felt *a sense of personal responsibility* for being prepared to go to college. Subthemes involving skills, such as *time management* and *organization* were expressed

by a majority of the participants. Most of those discussions about skills were related to how these skills were used or inversely how these skills were lacking for a participant. However, as the interviews progressed, each expressed a little less confidence and a little more uncertainty of at least one facet about the college readiness and college-going process. All participants expressed the theme of *uncertainty and related stress*, even though initially they had been more confident in demeanor. The last overall theme that emerged was *confusion* about where and how information about college readiness and the college-going process was obtained, although all the participants confirmed that most of the information they knew had come from internet sources. Some participants had more information than others did at the time of the interviews, but all expressed an interest in knowing more about going to college and what to expect. Each theme was related to the research questions, discussed and illustrated from the participants' own words.

The following section is about the themes that related to Research Question 1:
What are the local site high school seniors' current academic practices and strengths?

Personal responsibility. Most participants spoke about personal responsibility when referencing academic strengths. Many of the responses focused on a participant's acknowledgment of personal actions and practices about learning and how these related to success in academics and school in general. These actions and practices were sub themed as being independent, organized, and included mastering time management. Participant 1 stated that an academic strength was "being able to prioritize, independence, and maturity." All of the participants discussed independence and they used words like *on your own*, *leadership*, and *ambition* to describe what independence meant to them.

Participant 7 spoke about the need to be grown up and independent. Participant 7 stated, “Independence is like being prepared to do things you have to do without someone else.” Most participants acknowledged that going to college is different from high school in terms of support from family and teachers.

Organization skills. Related to personal responsibility, the use of organizational skills was a recurring theme in speaking about academic strengths and practices. Besides *organization*, participants used words such as *focus* and *control* to explain that organization was not only having the proper tools with which to study, but was also knowing how best to personally maximize the study process. Every participant expressed confidence that they had a study or organizational system in place that worked well for them.

Time management. Most participants acknowledged the importance of time management but not all participants were as proficient in keeping things organized and timely as others. Participant 3 discussed the responsibility of time management, “It means to be able to get everything done that you need to get done by the end of the day and be able to do it in a successful manner.” Participant 4 and Participant 5 were more focused on time-management skills in order to keep everything organized. Participant 5 stated that “time management is a huge part of me because I need to have a schedule.” Participant 5 added that she relied on two or three planners through the year to keep track of this schedule.

Although not categorized as a theme because at least five participants did not discuss it, four of the participants spoke about procrastination and this topic was an

important facet of those interviews. Three of those discussed the downfall of procrastination in academic success. Participant 6 discussed the bad impression that procrastination can make, however Participant 8 admitted to being a procrastinator. This student also believed that his overall skills and drive gave him the ability to surpass his classmates. Participant 8 stated,

Well, I'm not really that great with it [time management] but I am a big procrastinator. I just try to push things off but I will get it done. As long as you get it done, as long as you do it well.... I personally don't so what I need to do I will do to the best of my ability.

In the complete picture, Participant 8 used procrastination as a tool to finish a task, being confident and comfortable in producing quality work under pressure. During the member-checking session he said that he wanted to add to my interpretation of his view of procrastination. He added, "It's not that I leave things to the last minute because I'm lazy, I just really work better on a deadline."

The following themes related to Research Question 2: How do high school seniors at the research site obtain information about attending college and college readiness?

Uncertainty about college-readiness information. All eight participants gave similar responses to the questions that related to this research question. Seven of the eight participants were aware that SAT preparation courses existed. However, not all were sure of what they were or how to find them. Two participants found online materials or bought the College Board SAT preparation book and studied in that manner. One participant was

not aware of any SAT preparation materials; although other participants discussed that this information was given to the junior and senior students by the guidance department during class homerooms or English classes. Regarding professional SAT test-preparation, two participants noted that they did take a Kaplan group course over a 6-week period but no other participant had looked into taking these courses.

No participant was aware of a college preparations course available to them and three participants seemed confused by the question asking about their knowledge of college preparation courses. Participant 1 stated, “There isn’t really like a ‘how to’ to become a college student. You basically have to rely on the people around you.” Participant 3 contributed, “I think some of the colleges themselves have those programs when you get there or maybe over the summer.” Participant 8 thought that some of his peers might have taken some classes at a local college. Six of the eight added during the response that such a program would be *interesting*, *cool*, or *helpful*.

Continuing the theme of uncertainty about college-readiness information, participants did not report much help or information given by their parents in learning about the college experience. Only one participant reported that both parents had graduated from an American university or college and two participants had one parent who graduated from an American university or college. Two participants reported that neither parent had a college degree. Two participants reported that their parents had graduated from foreign schools where they grew up as well as one participant whose father graduated from a foreign school and her mother did not graduate. For six of the eight families the participant was the first child going to a postsecondary institution. As

such, there was not much advice given by parents, and participants reported that they themselves had the most knowledge about the college experience in the family. Even those participants whose parents went to postsecondary schools in the U.S. reported that parents' college experiences were very different than theirs now and not of much usefulness. Participant 6 actually stated that parents were responsible for increased stress about the college process: "The whole thing is stressful to begin with and my parents just stress me out more." In all, participants did not report receiving college-readiness information from parents or family except if older siblings had already attended college.

Information about college obtained from current college students and teachers was also uncertain and vague. Participants asked friends in college about social life, clubs, and difficult classes and homesickness. However, participants were not able to be specific regarding subjects discussed with friends. Participant 6 expressed regret that he had not asked current college students "more things" and that "knowing some things before you get there it would make the introduction to college much more easy." This statement was indicative that participants felt uncertain and wanted to be more informed about the college-going process.

Internet access to information. All of the participants had used the internet to investigate colleges or apply to colleges. Two of the participants did not find the college sites easy to navigate or user friendly. However, the other six stated that they went often to college websites, especially those of colleges they wished to attend. Three of the participants found the virtual tour possibilities provided by college websites useful. Participant 2 stated, "I wasn't able to visit many colleges but over the internet is probably

the second best way because over the website you can take virtual tours.” In all, participants reported that most college websites were very informative but sometimes a little difficult to navigate. Participants also stated that they learned most of their information from internet sources. Participant 5 stated that they looked at websites related to the college process every day. These included college websites as well as government websites and social media such as YouTube.

The following section looks at themes related to Research Question 3: What skills do the local high school seniors identify as necessary for college success?

Taking control. Participants spoke about organization, independence, time management skills, communication skills, responsibility, focus, drive, and belief in oneself as important skills necessary to be college ready. Although there was not a consensus regarding these skills, there was an overall theme of taking control and being responsible for one’s actions. Each participant expressed this theme in a variety of ways. Participant 1 stated, “You need to be responsible and to know how to prioritize.” Similarly, Participant 4 contributed, “Time management skills are important because you have a lot of free time in college so you can’t just do whatever you want if you don’t get your work done. You need to have a handle on yourself.” Participant 6 discussed the importance of communication skills saying, “Good communication doesn’t take care of everything but it makes things easier.” Participant 7 and 8 both decided that a sense of personal drive was most important. Participant 8 also decided that belief in oneself was the ultimate goal stating, “You gotta believe first because if you don’t believe you’re not motivated to do it.” Participant 2 expressed this as staying focused, “If you stay focused

everything comes along.” Participants were most enthusiastic when attempting to discuss the qualities that they believed they possessed to be college-ready.

Confusion about available resources. When discussing additional resources that might benefit them in preparing for college all participants again expressed a measure of confusion. I found that the question was difficult for them to answer because they had no reference of what preparing for college would mean. However, most expressed a need to have this knowledge before entering college. Participant 3 stated, “I’d like to know what to bring and what to expect overall. My friend actually went through a typical day of a college freshman and she said it was amazing to see what the college life actually feels like.” Participant 6 wanted to know the daily routine and Participant 7 expressed a desire for “a class where it’s like college but it doesn’t count for anything -a virtual college day.” Not all of the participants wanted to know what to expect before arriving on campus. Participant 8 was hesitant and stated, “I might see a benefit (in experiencing a college day) but I have always been one to learn on my own. I like to learn on the fly.” However, all participants expressed some desire to know more of what to expect and some fear of the unknown.

Participant responses varied to Interview Question 18, but were common to the theme of personal responsibility, mostly relating to their answers regarding what skills are most important to be college ready. Participants 3, 4, and 5 spoke about practical skills such as good study habits and self-discipline. However at the conclusion of the formal interview questions, some participants expressed that the interview process had made them more thoughtful about the future. Participant 1 expressed the need to have a

real interest in what is being done, whereas Participant 8 expressed his desire to succeed in order to give back to those who support him. Participant 6 spoke about how adapting to a new life in college is important as well as exciting. Participant 7 discussed, in very personal terms, how important it was for him to remain in college and be successful. He stated, “It’s about me wanting more education, of pushing myself.” The participants told me that going to college is important to them and that they want to succeed.

Summary of Results

The participants were interested in expressing their opinions about college and college readiness. Some were stronger in their opinions than others were. Participants seemed to be confident in their academic skills and were looking forward to making the transition to college. As the interviews progressed, I noted that most of the participants expressed confusion about information related to college and college preparation. When asked, I shared that college preparation is more than studying for the SAT or taking an AP or honors course. Most participants said they were not aware of this.

Moreover, in every interview, I took note of hesitation and uncertainty about some of the topics covered in the interview questions. These questions concerned actual knowledge about skills needed to be college ready and how to live and succeed in a college setting. Participants were unsure of what they needed to know and were concerned about the unknown. Also all participants discussed a certain level of stress in their daily lives and the fact that they expected this stress level to increase in college and all expressed some degree of nervousness about going to college. They expressed their belief in their capabilities but wanted to know more about what to expect. Some of the

uncertainty was due to not knowing what questions they needed to ask. Participant 6 stated, “I think about how much people know about college, not only the physical things, but also the unwritten stuff that all people know and act in college. I would like to know about that.” Most participants expressed some version of wanting to know about college but not sure about who to ask or what to ask.

Senior high school students at the research site have learned about college readiness mostly from what they have heard from others. The participants believed that they had the skills necessary to succeed in college but were very hesitant to say that they knew what it meant to be college-ready. They expressed varying degrees of nervousness and all would have liked more information about the college experience before arriving at college but did not know where to go to get this information.

In studies conducted to understand lack of college persistence, Alarcon and Edwards (2012), Davidson et al. (2009) and Kuh et al. (2011) discussed that new college students need to be college-ready in regards to cognitive ability as well as practical skills including time-management and organization. However, as the peer-reviewed literature has supported, high school students reported that information about the college experience was difficult to find (Bell et al., 2009). Providing more opportunities for high school students to learn about being college-ready may increase persistence in college by giving practical information as well as by decreasing stress related to the unknown.

Bandura (1977, 2012) theorized that an individual’s thoughts and imagination about the future is a source of motivation. Bandura’s theory, which provided the conceptual framework for this study, also spoke about learning in social situations,

especially new things or about the unknown. Shin and Stega (2016) discussed that “cultivating meaning and purpose in life is one of the critical developmental tasks for individuals in late adolescence and emerging adulthood” (p. 18). Providing a program that allows high school students to learn about college readiness in a familiar learning setting, along with their peers, in interactive, practical situations may help persistence in college. High school seniors who attend such a program may be more confident, more knowledgeable, less afraid, and more motivated to attend and subsequently to succeed in college.

As a result, the project for this study is based on these theories and designed to address the results of the data. The program, as detailed in Section 3 and Appendix A, will provide high school seniors at the research site a 10-week (one quarter) class experience to learn about college readiness and the college going experience. In classroom seminars as well as accompanying computer/internet modules students will have opportunities to obtain information and to encounter hands-on and/or virtual practice. Through such a program, college readiness knowledge may be elevated and stress related to the unknown may be decreased.

Evidence of Quality

I assured the quality of the study by using accepted methodology strategies for data collection, including continuous member checking, rigorous adherence to standards, and an understanding of reflexivity and my role as researcher (Creswell, 2013). Credibility and dependability of a qualitative study is accomplished through rigorous adherence to data collection and analysis standards (Merriam, 2009). Member-checking

opportunities were scheduled after each interview. I contacted each participant privately after transcribing the interview session and discussed and summarized verbally my understanding of what they had said. As noted by Merriam (2009), member checking sessions done both during collection and during analysis may also provide opportunities for rapport and relationships between the researcher and the participants to strengthen and evolve to better respect and trust. However, most participants did not add any other information or revise what I said. Seven of the eight participants agreed with my summarization with little comment. I reviewed the information provided by the interview data and member checking provided opportunities for comparing information. Each component of data was used together to converge on common themes and corroborate the evidence (Creswell, 2013).

Limitations

The small, homogenous population of the setting and the fact that it was conducted at only one school limited the generalizability of this study. Students may have known me as a teacher even if they have never taken a class with me and this may have limited my participant pool. It is possible that because students may have known me before participating in the study, this might have influenced their responses in either a positive or a negative way. However, I was careful to explain that I wanted truthful, thoughtful responses and that I hoped that they were able to participate without feeling the pressure of our acquaintance. The study was very specific to this population and this school and may not be easily transferable to other high school populations. The study was also limited by not having additional data from other sources such as focus groups or

observations and therefore no opportunity for triangulation of the data. The pre-set schedule and commitments of a public high school as well as the extra-curricular activities of the participants were the determining factors in not being able to obtain additional data from a focus group. The process of trying to schedule active, busy high school students to be able to meet together at one time for an extended period was not possible during the data collection period.

Assumptions

In order to have a sufficient sample pool and sufficient number of participants, based on statistics from the school guidance department over the previous 5 years, I assumed that 70% of the senior population at the research site were expecting to enter college the following September. I assumed that all participants in this study were honest with me in speaking about the topic of college readiness. I also assumed that each participant's reality was based on his or her individual experience.

Summary

I used instrumental case study design research to explore high school seniors' perception of college readiness and preparedness within the bounded system of one New Jersey high school. Participants were selected from those seniors interested in attending postsecondary education. I conducted an interview with each of the eight purposefully selected participants. I analyzed the interview responses to determine common themes, used data coding, and looked for saturation and repetitive results. Throughout the analysis I allowed participants to member check. I conscientiously adhered to ethical data collection and analysis standards to ensure evidence of quality (Merriam, 2009) and was

aware of my participation in the study as the researcher and guarded for bias. This study was limited due to being specific to this particular research site with a small participant pool.

In Section 3 I will explain the project, which was designed to address the results of the data.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

I used high school seniors' perceptions on, and understanding of, college readiness to design a project to help students at the research site become more knowledgeable about college and to be comfortable about going to college. If students at the research site are more college ready, they may be more successful remaining in college. In this section, I present the project in detail, including its rationale, a review of the literature used in developing the project, implementation of the project, the potential barriers to implementation, the process for evaluating the project, and its implication for social change. (See Appendix A for the complete project: *The Who, What, Where, When, and How of College Readiness*.)

Description and Goals

The genre of this project is a curriculum plan designed to be executed during 1 quarter (10 weeks) of a school year. The plan was designed to address the problem of college readiness by providing practical information about the college going experience. I will deliver the curriculum to all high school seniors as part of their mandatory health class. Each topic of the plan is presented in Appendix A: lesson plans with objectives, materials, activities, along with assessments and evaluations. This project is designed as a four-session in-classroom seminar with accompanying computer/internet modules that are used personally by students to reinforce and enhance the learning. These modules are designed to allow the students to experience real first-semester situations in virtual practicums.

In congruence with the student program, a one-session evening program will be conducted for parents to answer questions from their point of view. High school seniors are also welcome to attend the evening session that will be a shortened, recap version of the 4-session seminar. Authorization from the Board of Education for implementation of this curriculum, as well as solicitation for its involvement will be done at a board meeting with a slide show presentation.

The seminars for this project will take place throughout the senior year. Each senior student is assigned a quarter from the physical education curriculum for health, usually devoted to the development of “an understanding of the physical, emotional, social, economic, and psychological phases of human relationships” (Guidance c

counselor, personal communication, February 2, 2016). The college readiness seminars are taken in four of those sessions, one each cycle, for four consecutive cycles. (The school schedule is an A, B, C, and D rotating schedule). The faculty from the career education department and I will be the facilitators for the seminars. The sessions are each 56 minutes and all senior students will be required to attend as there is no system in place to schedule pop-up seminars during the school day. All students may benefit from these seminars as the skills and knowledge associated with college readiness can be used in the workplace, the armed forces, and other destinations after high school (Conley & French, 2013; Oh, Jia, Sibuma, Lorentson, & LaBanca, 2013; Contreras, 2011).

The computer/internet modules will be discussed and explained during a seminar and all students will have access to these modules through the school internet portal. The modules are designed to reinforce and enhance information learned in the seminars

(Patchan, Schunn, Sieg, & McLaughlin, 2015) and give students an opportunity to evaluate the information from an individual perspective. They will be asked to complete a module before the next classroom seminar to facilitate questions; however, the modules are designed to be taken at the convenience of the student. Students may ask questions of the facilitator at any time through email or personal contact. Students will receive a certificate of completion after successful attendance of all sessions and completion of all internet modules since recognition of achievement is an important facet of learning (Kallison & Stader, 2013). Students may continue to complete modules through the end of the period of instruction and make up sessions can be provided for absent students. Grades are provided for the quarter through the physical education department pursuant to attendance policies and grades related to the assigned health curriculum but there will be no grades associated with the actual seminars or modules.

The parent information seminar will be scheduled after the majority of students have completed the program in late April or early May. By this time of the academic year, most senior students will have received acceptances to colleges and have made a choice of matriculation. The session will be offered in the evening in the school auditorium and is designed to review all of the information given to students through the seminars as well as provide time to answer questions. I will conduct this session and parents and students will be invited to attend through the community newsletter, the school parent portal, the weekly phone update from the principal, and word of mouth from their children. A slide show presentation will be given followed by a brief overview, with adequate time available for questions to be answered. In my research, most

participants reported that their parents knew little about the college experience and therefore had little information about college readiness. Students also related that a high proportion of parents were not college graduates, graduates of American universities, or able to connect their own college experience to college life today. The inclusion of parents in the project acknowledges that this is also a time of stress and uncertainty in the parents' lives as well as the children's lives (Coburn & Treeger, 2009; Leonard, 2013) and that they may also be seeking information.

The title of the project is *The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of College Readiness*. The seminar sessions are designed to answer the questions that prospective college students have about going to college and college readiness. Throughout the interviews and subsequent data analysis, I concluded that most seniors in high school are confused and unaware of the questions to ask about going to college. Therefore, the goal of this project is to give high school seniors, who are expecting to enter college, a practical, hands-on resource to understand what going to college means and what college readiness means. The seminar sessions will each introduce a lead-in word based on the who, what, where, when, why and how of the project title. Each session will focus on one or two of these question words with time allowed for discussion and reflection. Seminar topics are designed to be related to one another but also flexible in being student driven. Each session topic will focus on one or two of these questions as noted in Table 2.

Table 2

Focus of Project Seminars

Seminar	Focus Question	Sample Question
Seminar 1	Who	Who is my roommate?
	When	When is move-in day?
Seminar 2	What	What is time-management?
Seminar 3	Where	Where is my first class?
Seminar 4	Why	Why do classes only meet twice a week?
	How	How do I know how long to study?

The seminars will provide information, resources, and time for reflection and questions, while the computer/internet modules will provide opportunities for students to experience virtual situations about college readiness. The combination of the two learning genres will strengthen the knowledge and therefore lessen the anxiety that comes with not knowing what to expect.

Rationale

The problem that this project addresses, as discussed in Section 1, is that statistics from the NJDHE (2014)—as well as information provided by the guidance department at the research site—show that only 60% of students graduate in a 4- to 6-year period. The data suggest a lack of college readiness by the students entering New Jersey colleges. In Section 2 the data analysis revealed that senior high school students, even though excited to begin the college experience, were unsure of what they needed to know and were concerned about the unknown. My findings agreed with work done by other researchers regarding college readiness (Baxter, 2012; Howell et al., 2010; Karp & Bork, 2012).

I determined that a curriculum plan that offered both seminars and internet modules would provide the students with practical and everyday knowledge about the college-going experience. Additionally, especially through the internet modules, students would be able to experience logical and hands-on ways to approach college readiness. The project provides opportunities for senior high school students to ask questions, to understand the value of asking questions, to obtain information, to learn and interact with others in the same situation, and to have access to practicums online that can facilitate entering college and ease anxiety about the unknowns of college. The students who take the seminar and use the internet modules as outlined in the project may be less anxious, more college-ready, and may be more apt to succeed.

Review of the Literature

Research Strategy

I read peer-reviewed articles and books from the years 2009-2016 from the following databases - ERIC, ProQuest, Sage, and Google Scholar - using the following keywords: *high school (secondary) interventions for college persistence, influences on college persistence, seminars, computer modules, adolescent learning, and high school teaching*. I used the Boolean operators, AND and OR to optimize the results. Abstracts were used to judge an article's relevancy to the research questions.

The literature review also focused on learning/instructional modalities used in this curriculum plan in a high school setting, focusing on seminars and computer/internet learning. Some information obtained about college persistence and high school interventions for the literature review of Section 1 was also used for the project. I also

included peer-reviewed literature about parent influence and practices regarding college readiness. To add some practitioner ideas on the creation of projects such as this one, I have included several books written for the college-going freshman and/or their parents. These sources gave examples of real-life experiences of new college students with suggested tips for success.

Transition from High School to College

Students planning to enter college the fall semester after graduation from high school are mostly unaware of the experiences awaiting them (Barnet et al., 2012, Kirst & Usdan, 2009). Additionally Morisano et al. (2010) discussed the changes inherent in the transition from high school student to college student that can affect persistence, including heightened anxiety about achievement and decreased familiarity with postsecondary norms. However, as Contreras (2011) concluded, “The transition from high school to college is a critical step that establishes the foundation for a student’s educational attainment, career options, preparation, and social mobility” (p. 500). Authors of other studies related to college persistence conclude that fostering a college-going culture is an important function of preparation for college (Barnet et al., 2012, Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). It is the responsibility of the senior high school student to be aware of this college-going culture but it may be the responsibility of the secondary schools to provide avenues for this awareness.

Characteristics of a college-going culture. Researchers have discussed goals and goal clarity as one of the most important characteristics of a college-going culture (Morisano et al., 2012; Tierney, 2015). Baxter (2012), Coburn and Treeger (2009), and

Shin and Stega (2016) further stated that a higher sense of purpose or meaning is essential for success in college, including individuals' understanding who they are, what the world around them is like, and how they fit into that world. Goal clarity can also be described as positive motivation and a mastery of self and one's own learning (Baxter, 2012). Muresan (2014) and Surjadi et al. (2011) discussed the motivation to master and therefore influence one's environment. Other authors stressed the importance of the individuals' responsibility to be an active participant in learning (Conley & French, 2013; Hadwin & Oshige, 2011; Sparkman et al., 2012), as well as to become a life-long learner. Bernstein and Kaufman (2013) characterized this concept as "getting the college rhythm" (p. 160).

More skills that are practical affect the college-going culture. Students should learn effective time-management behaviors and good study skills before entering college (Roberts & Styron, 2010; Tierney, 2015). Organizational strategies are critical for success in postsecondary institutions (Bernstein & Kaufman, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013) as well as positive social skills. These skills are not necessarily inherent for a student about to enter college and need to be modeled and learned. Karp and Bork (2012) stated that without a clear understanding of what is expected, student success in college is hindered.

Secondary School Responsibilities

If high school students must develop a college-going culture then education at the secondary level must provide opportunities for this (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; DeWitz et al., 2009; Howell, 2010). At the least, everyday learning in the high school should address and encourage mastery in practical skills such as time-management as

well as habits of the mind such as critical thinking, problem solving, inquisitiveness, and initiative (Wiley et al., 2010). However, dedicated programs conducted or facilitated by high schools for students preparing for college may be more effective for college persistence (Kallison & Stader, 2012). Some of these are mentor type programs that match interested high school students with college students or professors (Strayhorn, 2011) or opportunities to take college classes through middle college and early college programs (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). More comprehensive are bridge type programs taken during senior year or during the summer before entering college (Cabrera et al., 2013; Kallison & Stader, 2012). These programs offer interventions that help students better understand the college-going culture and be better prepared to enter college (Kallison & Stader, 2012; Kuo, 2010). Students can participate in activities such as seminars, role-playing, virtual tours, and question and answer sessions that may help to ease the transition (Schaefer, 2014).

Curriculum Planning

The curriculum plan as detailed for this project is based on the concept of blended learning. Staker and Horn (2012) discussed the concept of blended learning for K-12 that exposed students to a curriculum that combined formal educational instruction with at least some part on-line acquisition of knowledge. This concept also suggested that students have some control over timing and location. Students will be involved in traditional learning modalities, in a classroom setting, but also will be allowed to explore and practice information on their own in their own time. Seniors in high school can start experiencing less structured learning situations as a preparation for the college learning

experience.

Motivation and involvement in the learning are other aspects to consider in this curriculum. Jessup-Anger (2011) and Lunenburg (2011) both reported that these criteria are linked and are critical for learning in a classroom setting. Jessup-Anger (2011) stated that personal connection to the content was directly related to motivation and success and Lunenburg (2011) stated that pertinent content presented through relevant learning activities fosters active involvement and true learning. Whereas Larson and Keiper (2013) reported that "curriculum should be purposeful and have an aim" (p. 46), the curriculum, as presented in the project, will be specifically designed to be relevant to the prospective college student and the activities will be practical and hands-on.

Objectives for the curriculum will be student-centered and behavior based in order to focus on what is the goal to be learned and the outcome of the learning (Larson & Keiper, 2013; Lunenburg, 2011). Activities will be practical and based on the lack of knowledge of the participants in the study. Assessments will be both formative and summative in order to "find out whether a particular sequence of instructional activities has resulted in the intended learning outcomes" (William, 2011, p. 3) as well as provide feedback about the program and information on student learning (Dirksen, 2011).

Learning/Instructional Modalities

Seminars. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) identified seminars as one of the 10 most effective practices to facilitate progress and achievement (Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013). Seminar learning situations about college readiness may offer students chances to learn new information, ask questions, and

role-play (Stevens, 2016). Spruijt, Leppink, Wolfhagen, Scherpbier, VanBeuklen, and Jaarsma (2014) looked at the use of seminars as teaching tools and found out that a seminar is a more interactive learning session to discuss issues and ask questions related to a specific topic. Seminars provide opportunities to target specific learning agendas for a specific audience. A seminar may use varied instructional strategies including lecture, role-play opportunities, and interactive experiences. Varied learning modalities may give more students opportunities for learning. However, Stevens (2015) discussed that a little of some learning strategies, such as role-playing, goes a long way, and should be used discriminately for each group of students.

Postsecondary institutions have initiated first year seminars to facilitate the transition to college life and college learning. This kind of program has sometimes been helpful in assisting freshman students to persist to second year in many cases. Researchers have recounted that much of the stress of the first year of college is caused by not knowing what to expect (Baxter, 2012; Howell, 2010; Karp & Bork, 2012) and that stress was the most commonly reported health complaint related to lack of success in college (Krumei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013). Seminars conducted in secondary schools may provide avenues to provide answers to questions.

Computer Modules / Internet Learning. Students of the 21st century are digital natives, fluent in acquiring knowledge through the medium of the internet as well as connecting with each other (Black, 2010). In fact, some high schools have made online learning part of the graduation requirement (Borup, Graham, & Davies, 2012). High school students are comfortable and proficient in using computer-designed modules for

learning specific topics. Computer designed modules pertaining to college readiness are appropriate for high school students because they are student-centered and content-focused (Harris & Hofer, 2011). Additionally computer modules allow students to review and practice information learned during seminars or other learning situations at their own pace. Students in computer learning situations may also benefit from social networking with friends or instructors for clarification, review, or discovery (Gerard, 2012; Yu et al., 2010).

Adolescent Learning

The average student enters high school at ages 13-14 and leaves at ages 17-18. Emerging adulthood has been proposed as a unique and distinct life stage (Ravert, 2009) and represents a period of significant social and cognitive development (Blakemore, 2012). Peper and Dahl (2013) discussed how adolescent hormones influence behavior and thought, especially through bonding and other experiences while Cheung et al. (2013) discussed adolescence as a pivotal period of exploration and evaluation of future goals. Oh et al. (2013) discussed that some successful college preparation programs begin in early adolescence. Providing a program at the high school level, facilitated by high school teachers who understand the adolescent learner, may provide information and practices to a prospective college student that can help with the student's persistence by being more prepared, knowledgeable, and college-ready.

Additionally Roberts and Styron (2010) reported that adolescence is a time of social connectiveness when students are more likely to learn in the company of others who are facing similar challenges. Peer learning situations that engage students' curiosity

about college readiness may help to inspire them to share and develop strategies for coping and obtaining a college-going culture (Farrington et al., 2012). Strategies that use social connectivity in helping high school seniors understand college readiness are in line with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory. Students who have the opportunity to learn about being college-ready in the company of peers may strengthen their motivation and their learning.

Parental Support

Students have reported to the local guidance counselors that information about college readiness is difficult to find. Participants of this study also reported that their parents had very little information about college readiness or the college-going process. However, parental support, as well as partnerships between parents and schools in promoting a college-going culture was reported as beneficial to positive outcomes and possible eventual persistence (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Hill & Wang, 2015; Leonard, 2013). Bryan, Griffin, and Henry (2013) also discussed that such community partnerships can “enhance students’ academic preparations, build students’ college aspirations, and increase students’ and their families’ college knowledge” (p. 2) by offering different programs and activities that provide this information. The parental information evening that will be given as part of this project is such an activity that will allow parents and families to ask questions and receive answers about the college-readiness process.

Implementation

The project was designed to be beneficial and pertinent to the adolescent learner, specifically high school seniors preparing to leave secondary school and go to college.

Seminars and computer/internet-based modules will be incorporated into a comprehensive program that addresses college readiness. The program will be given to every senior student in the school (approximately 150) during the school year with four seminars and seven computer/internet modules. The four sessions will be scheduled during the senior health quarter and take place one each class cycle (A, B, C, and D) for four cycles. Modules will be done on individual free time and proof of completed modules will be electronically submitted to me. At the end of the school year in late May, an evening seminar will be given for parents of senior students and the community at large. A review of the entire program is given at this session.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

There are many resources needed for this project. First, the approval and support of the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education are essential because only they can authorize the change to the curriculum of study. The support of the school building principal is critical to promote the program and elicit cooperation among departments. As well, the support of the school vice principal and director of guidance is needed to facilitate staff and student scheduling. As I will be the lead facilitator and conductor of the seminars, at least for the first year, I will need the help of the administrators to find class coverage for me as needed. I will also need the goodwill and support of the high school teaching faculty and support staff. A change to the curriculum can be logistically challenging due to a low availability of classrooms to conduct the seminars. I will also need support from the technology department as well as from the staff of the media center many students will use the facilities to do the individual

modules.

There is a link on the school webpage which I manage, devoted to the college-readiness seminar along with information including assignments and reminders. Students may always contact me through my email at the research site. Guest speakers will also be used in the seminars, but these may change from session to session due to availability. I may require assistance from other faculty members due to commitments I continue to have as a teacher. However, the career education staff is certified to conduct such seminars. These teachers have agreed to be part of this pilot program.

After each 4-part seminar ends, students will receive an evaluation sheet to determine their initial feelings about the effectiveness of the program. A follow-up evaluation may be requested via a link when they have completed the computer modules.

Potential Barriers

There is a potential barrier caused by the logistical considerations in scheduling such a class in the high school. The 4-part seminars must be scheduled during time carved from an existing curriculum and possibly existing class schedules. I intend to solicit the good will of the entire staff as much as possible before the start of the program by listening to their concerns, keeping them informed, knowledgeable, and part of the process. The Board of Education and the superintendent must approve the addition to the curriculum and budgeting for the class. After an initial request for a new class in the curriculum, I will be presenting a review of this class at a board meeting early in the summer of 2016.

Another barrier may be the lack of enough teachers to help facilitate the program,

at least during the pilot year. I may not be able to teach four classes per quarter and still continue to be effective as a world language teacher. The need for additional, willing facilitators and/or co-teachers may cause scheduling problems. After I have experience in facilitating the seminars, I can train other teachers who would like to assist in the program (Egan-Lee, Baker, Tobin, Hollenberg, Dematteo, Reeves, 2011). Co-teaching situations may be the best option so that responsibilities may be shared as well as provide more opportunities to accommodate diverse learning styles (Walsh, 2012). I intend to work closely with the guidance department, the physical education department, and the career education faculty to make a viable teaching schedule.

The fact that the program will commence at the beginning of the senior school year may present a barrier in that the class may be more effective for senior students in the second half of the year when college acceptances and decisions where to attend are more likely. However since this is a program for all senior students, the 4-quarter class approach is the only viable design. Other barriers may be the lack of enthusiasm and diligence of some senior students to participate. This may be the case with any class. Not all students may want to take advantage of the benefit of this program and there may be students who do not participate effectively in the seminars or through the models. There is no penalty for not successfully completing this program. The facilitators must be as effective as possible in presenting the seminar sessions in interesting, informative, relevant ways. This is important to also promote and explain the individual work required for the computer modules. Students who successfully complete all facets of the program will receive a certificate of merit to give recognition and validation for their efforts and

learning (Kallison & Stader, 2013).

Timetable

The project implementation process will start at completion of the doctoral degree. Approval from the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education and the administrators at the high school research site may take a couple of months. Presentations and proposals to those entities can be completed over the summer break and it is feasible that a pilot study could be put into effect in September of 2016. The seminars will be held in the four quarters of the school year to finish by early May. An evening seminar for parents and community will be held in late May of 2017.

Roles and Responsibilities

As the researcher of this study and the creator of the project, I will plan and facilitate most of the seminars for the senior high school students and prepare and execute all materials. I will also train and coach other teachers at the school who may wish to assist me. I will also evaluate and recognize student success and will coordinate with the administrators of the school building and the guidance department in scheduling classes and class coverages as well as logistically scheduling classrooms and access to the media center.

Administrators, teaching faculty, and support staff will be responsible to cooperate with the program but it is my responsibility to make cooperation as easy and non-disruptive as possible. The senior high school students are the participants and benefitters of the program. Their responsibility is to be open to the material presented and do their best to incorporate learning about college readiness and the practicalities of

college readiness before they enter a postsecondary institution.

Project Evaluation

Because this is a new program and outcomes may affect the future continuation of such a project, it is important to have continuous, on-going formative evaluations as well as a summative evaluation at the end of the entire program from all stakeholders (Gulikers, Biemans, Wesselink, & VanderWel, 2011; Wiliam, 2011). At the end of each seminar the students will take a survey on the effectiveness of that seminar. Each survey will be specific to the topic of discussion as well as general to procedure. These surveys may help to provide data to help make the program better and/or more relevant for the students as the program continues (Gulikers et al., 2011). Students will also send me, via the school internet portal, the work done through the computer modules. Each module will contain an opportunity for students to comment on the module, providing more data for formative assessment.

The summative assessment at the end of the project will serve mainly to determine the perception of usefulness and worth of the program in terms of logistics, time, and effort. These assessments will be asked of the superintendent, administrators, teachers, facilitators, student participants, and parents. I will share this summative evaluation with those stakeholders to give credibility for the continuation of the project for future senior classes.

Although it is not possible to realize a summative assessment of the effectiveness of the program because participants will be unavailable in any consistent way, I hope to hear informally from students after they have entered college about the value of the entire

program. This evaluation will not be statically accurate or significant, anecdotal reviews from college freshmen about the effectiveness of the information and insight they received, as senior high school students may be the most useful and satisfactory data obtained.

Implications

Data received from this study, and the data to be received from the project as proposed, may result in better college readiness for students entering postsecondary institutions. Students who are more prepared and college-ready may be more likely to persist, succeed in college, and be more positive members of the local as well as global society (Brown, 2012). The program as designed in the project may offer a plan to help students in high school become more college-ready before matriculation.

Implications in the Local Community including Social Change

The students who participated in this study provided information that suggested that senior high school students are not aware of what it means to be college-ready and have only a vague idea of what going to college means. The results of the study noted that these students know that it will be different, but do not know how nor why it is different, nor do they know to whom to speak to find answers. The inability to know the answers to these questions may lead to a lack of college readiness and may contribute to lack of persistence in college.

This project may affect positive social change in this community because students at the research site as well as their parents will have a forum to learn practical information about going to college. This may lessen their uncertainty, lower the stress

associated with going to college, promote a college-going culture, raise college readiness, and encourage college persistence.

Regional Implications and Beyond

My research focused on the senior high school students of a small school in northern New Jersey. However, the problem of college persistence is nationwide and a continuing problem for most postsecondary institutions. Colleges and universities spend money and time to try to alleviate the problem, but freshmen continue to leave at high rates. It is possible that programs that are more comprehensive conducted at the secondary level that focus on the knowledge and practicalities of college readiness might promote a more able student entering college. The program designed in this study might help other high schools design like programs that fit their students' needs to ready a class of college-ready freshmen.

Summary

College readiness may be more effectively addressed through programs in the high school before students matriculate. The transition from high school to college is a step that may seem natural and easy, but is actually a time of high stress and uncertainty for the new college student. The problem of low persistence in college may be an outcome of this. Programs in high school that engage and inform the student while addressing the responsibility of secondary education institutions may provide more students who are successful and able to persist.

After an analysis of the research data, I designed a program to address the lack of college readiness knowledge and skills. The literature review addressed transition from

high school to college and a college-going culture. The literature review also contained information about the appropriate avenues for adolescent learning and high school learning. Adolescent high school students who learn best in social environments may be best served with a program that uses peer group seminars supplemented with individual computer based modules to reinforce the learning. I examined resources, barriers, the timetable, roles and responsibilities, and the evaluation process related to the project. I also discussed the implications of the project in terms of social change. The project *The Who, What, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness*, in Appendix A outlines this program for students at the research site.

Section 4 will conclude the study with a description of the projects strengths and liabilities, a discussion of different approaches or alternate solutions as well as directions for further research. I will also reflect on the process as to what I learned and my personal and professional growth.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The lack of college persistence affects individuals, postsecondary institutions, and society. Programs are necessary to address the problem before students enter college. But they are scarce. The goal is to help students enter more college with more knowledge and better preparation. Students with access to such programs are expected to be better able to succeed and persist. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to address the lack of college readiness by exploring what high school students know about going to college.

In this section, I will reflect on the importance, strengths, and limitations of the proposed project as well as recommendations for alternative approaches and future research. I will also reflect on my growth as an individual, as a professional, as a scholar, as a leader, and as an advocate for social change.

Project Strengths

The project was designed based on data generated from interviewing high school seniors about what they know about going to college. After analyzing the data and doing extensive research in the peer-reviewed literature, I designed this project as a program to address what students at the research site identify as gaps in their knowledge about college preparation and readiness. The program gives students an opportunity to learn what they do not know, provides a forum to ask questions and reflect on the concept of college readiness. This program may improve college readiness and alleviate some of the stress associated with entering a new environment, one that can affect success (Baxter, 2012; Karp & Bork, 2012; Krumei-Mancuso et al., 2013).

The project was based on the theory of social learning as proposed by Bandura (1977, 2012) and other researchers (Hadwin & Oshige, 2011). Students will be learning with their peers in comfortable, familiar class sessions taught by facilitators who are known to them. Students will have the opportunity to interact, question, role-play, and reflect in these group sessions. Barnes and Slate (2013) suggested that high school students be given an agenda that promotes college readiness and that its design gives each student an opportunity to plan for attending college. For that reason, individual computer modules are used to give students opportunities to review and reflect on their own and to internalize, process, and reinforce the new information (Patchan et al., 2015).

The project is further strengthened by its proposed incorporation into an existing high school curriculum that is sanctioned and supported by many stakeholders. The community, represented by the Board of Education and the superintendent, will have an interest in the program. The administrators, faculty, and support staff of the high school will also be involved and have knowledge of the process. The students themselves will be aware of the project and of the goal of the project. Stakeholders may have personal reasons to help with the process of the project in order to give the students at this local site more of a chance to be college-ready and to succeed in college.

Project Limitations

The most significant limitation may be the opportunity to insert this program into an existing curriculum of study. Before this project can be implemented, the Board of Education and the superintendent must approve curriculum change as well as any funding needed. Staffing and scheduling changes or adaptations must be approved and enacted by

the guidance department and administration at the high school. Faculty and support staff must be involved and ready to participate. If any of these components are not in accord, there may be a delay in execution.

There is a limitation in the time length of the project. The project is proposed as a pilot program for the incoming senior students. I hope that it may continue each year, but this is not a certainty and will depend on budget concerns, scheduling concerns, and the continued enthusiasm of the stakeholders. Effectiveness of the program may not be known for many months or even years after the participants of the program have entered college. Even then, without anecdotal information supplied by the graduates of this research site, effectiveness may not be measured at all. This project may take 4-5 years to evaluate.

A more broad limitation is the inability to be able to implement the program to a wider audience. This program is specifically designed to address the needs and concerns of the seniors at the research site at that physical location. This type of program may not be feasible in other schools and may have to be adapted as needed.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative method to preparing high school seniors to be college-ready is a summer bridge program (Cabrera et al., 2013; Kallison & Stader, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). These programs may last from a few days to a few weeks and are available in a variety of media including online access and in-person seminars. Different programs stress different facets of the college-going process from English and math remediation to living-in-a-dorm scenarios. Overall, many bridge programs may help students make a more

successful transition to the college experience. Some colleges offer one or two-day introduction to the college experiences before the actual start of classes (Lizzio & Wilson, 2013; Roderick et al., 2011). These courses try to help the new college students become acclimated to the physical location, develop relationships with other students, and make the first days of school less stressful. Strayhorn (2011) discussed mentorship programs that can also help individual students to understand the concept of college-ready, especially when students are paired with experienced students who share common interests. In addition, there are books available for the college-going senior and their parents that can provide some of the information needed as well as practical worksheets to gather data (Bernstein & Kaufman, 2013; Costaras & Liss, 2013).

An alternative approach regarding the specific project of this study is to make a presentation to the entire senior class during an assembly period. The assembly period might be for a half day. This program could incorporate all of the elements described in the project, albeit in less comprehensive form, with little chance for peer reflection or questions. A follow-up session might be scheduled closer to the date of graduation to provide opportunities for them.

Scholarship

I have been an educator for over 30 years. I have taught at the high school and college levels as well as facilitated in the corporate world. I have always promoted learning and I have always continued to learn.

Boyer, Moser, Ream, and Braxton (2015) discussed the four phases of scholarship for educators as “the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the

scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching” (p. xxii). I believe that my journey through the doctoral process has allowed me to implement these levels of scholarship in all my professional work. From the search for a local problem through a review of the existing professional literature to the development of a project that attempted to find possible resolutions to that problem, I have incorporated scholarship. I have also become a better educator because I can better understand the processes of learning and of teaching.

Scholarship should be a comprehensive concept that takes into account the process of learning including the quality, activity, and attainment of knowledge. Carpenter and Pease (2013) defined the scholarship of learning to mean more than acquiring raw facts or having basic skills but to also internalizing that knowledge with beliefs and emotions that completes a process. I have found that scholarship begins with a question and concludes with discovery of self as well as knowledge.

Project Development

As a high school teacher, my goal has always been to prepare my students to move on to the next phase of life. Typically, students enter high school around age 12-13. They are still very much children. As seniors, at age 17-18, they are young adults. The responsibilities and freedoms of the adult world are in sight. This is frightening, stressful, and exciting all at once (Blakemore, 2012; Peper & Dahl, 2013).

When students graduate from high school, the expectation, for almost all, is a positive college experience. However, in recent years, I was often told of former students who were not successful in college. The students were now again at home and looking for

jobs or hanging out. I was frustrated but no longer able to influence or teach these young adults. When considering a local problem for my doctoral project study at Walden University, I became more and more drawn to researching the literature about the problem of college persistence. The more I read, the more I discovered that while there was much agreement that the problem existed, there was little agreement about why the problem existed (Alarcon & Edwards, 2012; Morisano et al., 2010). Freshmen were entering postsecondary institutions at greater numbers than ever before but they were not college-ready and were leaving before the second year at unacceptable rates (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013; Kallison & Stader, 2012; NJDHE, 2014). Some researchers traced the lack of college persistence to a disconnect with the educational process at the secondary level (Barnes et al., 2010; Brown, 2012; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2013; Kallison & Stader, 2013; Sedlacek, 2011). However, there was almost no information in the professional literature about the secondary school influence of responsibility regarding college readiness and college persistence (Lizzio & Wilson, 2013). I wanted to study this disconnect from the point of view of the most affected stakeholders, the students entering college.

Once I decided on the problem to study I continued to read peer-reviewed literature to develop research questions designed to find out what high school seniors understand or know about being college ready. I conducted interviews with the participants and analyzed the data to determine the best design for the project that focused on providing college-going high school seniors with information and skills to be college-ready. The process was systematic and detailed including attention to developing

formative and summative evaluations from all stakeholders that may help to refine the project and provide additional data that may address college readiness.

Leadership and Change

A leader is a person who effects change in others. The most effective leaders promote positive learning and positive change through example. As an educator for over 30 years, mostly in the New Jersey secondary schools, I have encountered many people who considered themselves leaders. Most were not effective leaders of positive change, but were simply trying to follow a proscribed set of rules. A true leader is one who believes in the agenda and is able to inspire others to follow, learn, and change. A true leader is able to have others think for themselves (Covey, 2013).

Through this process, I have tried to continue to be an effective leader for my own students while being open to learning and change through the process of my doctoral studies. The journey has been longer and more difficult than I had first surmised. However, I have listened, read, studied, and spoken to others along the way. My classmates have offered insights and clarifications, my professors have given techniques, skills, and encouragement. These were all leaders from whom I have learned. Aided by their efforts, I have changed, and grown professionally and personally.

My vision for myself as a leader in the future is not at the instructional level. I want to take the skills I have honed as an instructional leader and combine them with the pedagogical knowledge I have acquired through the research for this project and become an effective leader for educational change in a larger forum.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

Walden University has given me an opportunity to indulge my love of learning with the ability to make a difference for positive social change by directing me to find a local problem that needed a resolution. As a lifelong learner, I have relished the study and research involved as well as the practicalities of instruction afforded by the coursework. My practice as scholar continues to grow and evolve even as I encourage scholarship and learning in my own students.

I am committed to continuing be a voice for preparing high school students to be college-ready. As I see my tenure as instructional teacher coming to an end, I am preparing myself to become a scholar and advocate for programs that encourage college readiness. I would like to take the idea for this project to other schools, and even introduce a state endorsed plan for all schools in the state. After receiving my doctoral degree, my position as a recognized scholar of the topic may make such an idea a reality. I recognize myself as a scholar, as a lifelong learner, and as a lifelong educator. I am committed to continue to understand learning and to approach the future as learner, teacher, scholar, and researcher to remain an effective leader.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

I have always enjoyed being a classroom teacher. The ability to lead and offer knowledge to others is a unique experience. When that knowledge is learned and internalized, the gratification is intrinsic but powerful. My role as practitioner in the classroom continues to change and evolve based on students, curriculum, and state mandates. However, the desire to teach remains constant. During my doctoral journey, I have learned some new techniques and new skills to use in the classroom and was able to

grow in my ability to use technology in practical and interesting ways as well as understand the concept of project learning. Furthermore, I have utilized some of these new techniques and knowledge in designing my lessons and assessments. I believe that every time we learn we are changed and we incorporate that new learning in our life skills. I see myself as a practitioner who continues to learn and lead.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

I began to see the outline for the project of this study almost from the very beginning of thinking about the problem. I knew immediately that the program had to be held in the high school during school hours and that there needed to be both in-person seminars and computer modules. However, the actual design and possible implementation took much thought and research to determine the best instructional modality for my local research site. I based the design on the conceptual framework of Bandura's social learning theory (1977) and let the plan develop.

I have been involved in preparing seminars for adults in the business world and I did implement techniques that worked in those situations and but I also needed to consider the implications for those techniques when used with an adolescent audience. I struggled with putting together an outline of the most important topics to cover, topics that would be the most relevant to the college-going student. I was fortunate to be able to discuss this with a few colleagues who helped me to brainstorm. During these sessions, I was teacher, collaborator, and learner. This assistance and this experience were invaluable.

My experience as a project developer was satisfying. I was able to use my

understanding of peer-reviewed research and the analysis of data obtained in my qualitative case study to formulate a program that may be helpful to students I may know, to be college-ready and to persist in college. I realize that the actual implementation of such a program might take many more hours of work and preparation. It may be difficult to have all stakeholders in agreement, but I believe I have developed a basic plan to address the problem.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

The problem of lack of persistence in college and the lack of college readiness of students preparing to enter college is a problem at the local research site. I learned that there is no agreement among experts as to a reason for this lack of persistence. However, there was information in the peer-reviewed literature that suggested that preparation in high school was insufficient. I decided to research and develop a project that could offer possible remedies by understanding what high school seniors know about being college-ready before matriculation

My doctoral study may add to the professional literature about what high school students know about being college-ready. The study has also helped me develop a project that may offer a practical course of study to help high school students begin to learn what being college-ready means. The significance of this work is that it may help more students, first at the local site and then perhaps in a broader way, to persist in college.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The implications of this project are that some students at the local research site may be more college-ready due to experiencing the program designed in the project. A

more broad implication is that this program may be extended to include other students from other schools and areas, thereby extending the reach for social change. It may be possible to consider this program a pilot program for a state-wide curriculum.

Consistent application of the program in this high school may provide more information that can speak to the overall practical effectiveness of the program for those entering college. If the program is able to continue over the course of a number of years, making it a standard part of the senior curriculum, there may be more students each year from the research site who are more college-ready and able to persist. In addition, as the program continues through more years, more information can be collected from both the formative and summative assessments that can be used to make the program more effective. A program that becomes consistent and successful in terms of producing more students who persist in college may become a module for other schools.

Directions for Future Research

Further research may be conducted to address the limitations of this design. A study that is broader in the scope of participant sample may make the findings more general to the high school senior population as a whole. Future study that generates more data from different sources, including focus groups and observations, may provide opportunities for triangulation and enhanced validity of the data. In addition, a quantitative study could focus on other variables associated with being prepared to go to college, including age at matriculation, parents' college experience, and socioeconomic influences. Future quantitative research may include a longitudinal design that actually follows students who have taken a college-readiness preparation program before high

school graduation, after matriculating to college, and during their college experience. Such a study could provide statistical data relating enhanced college-readiness skills with college persistence.

Future research should continue to include information gathered from secondary school sources. Information from secondary teachers about teaching methods and curricula devoted to college-readiness skills and knowledge may be beneficial to understanding the problem of low college persistence and help to enhance the program as designed in this study.

Impact on Social Change

In my doctoral study, I discussed the importance of college readiness and the lack of college readiness to the lack of persistence in postsecondary institutions. Students who do not succeed and leave college (Brown, 2012; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009) usually negatively affect themselves, their families, postsecondary institutions and society. Students who persist through the college experience are likely to have a better self-concept and pursue better life opportunities.

Additionally college graduates may contribute to a successful society and may be themselves promoters of social change (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). The project tries to give information and practical skills to students about being college-ready. The project also addresses parental concerns about sending children to college who are better prepared. This may lessen the uncertainty, lower the stress associated with going to college, promote a college-going culture, raise college readiness, and encourage college persistence and therefore contribute to positive social change at the local level.

Conclusion

This project developed from my personal observation of the lack of being college-ready and lack of college persistence by students whom I have taught. The problem of college persistence is one that affects many members of society. I have attempted to study the problem by focusing on the stakeholders most directly involved, the prospective college-going freshman, by understanding high school students' knowledge of college readiness. Through scholarship, leadership, and practice I have developed a program to help remedy the problem by providing a forum to help students entering college be more college-ready. This project offers a forum for students to ask questions and obtaining answers from facilitators or peers in order to be more prepared before entering college.

High school seniors are uncertain about being college-ready and are generally unaware of where to obtain information about the college-going process and about being prepared. However, research has shown that young adults who are more college-ready and understand the college-going process, are better able to persist, to be successful in college, and eventually be successful in life. A program that is offered in high school that can provide information and practical applications of that information can be very helpful in influencing a better college-going culture before actual matriculation. College-ready freshman may be more apt to become college graduates.

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Appendix A: The Project

The Who, What, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

The project is a program designed for high school seniors to learn about being college-ready. There are three components of this program. The first component is a 4-part, in classroom seminar styled learning site. Students will obtain information from facilitators, as well as be able to interact and role-play with peers about situations that might be encountered, and ask questions that may be relevant to them. Component 2 is an individually styled computer module related to information presented in the seminar. The third component is an informational evening session for parents as well as any student who wishes to attend as a review and follow-up to the seminars and modules. All components are designed to offer information and awareness of being college-ready.

The initial step to introduce such a program into the existing curriculum of a high school is a presentation to the Board of Education. A slide show exhibit explains the rationale for the program and describes the components. Also included in the presentation are the lesson plans and descriptions for each seminar and explanations for each computer module. The parent session is outlined in a slide show.

Presentation to the Board of Education

College Preparedness Seminar

The Who, What, Where, When, and Why
of College Readiness

Presentation for the Board of Education
2016



Statistical Information

- ◆ Students are entering post-secondary institutions in greater numbers than ever before (Bound, Lovenheim, and Turner 2010)
- ◆ Only 80% persist from Freshman to Sophomore year in NJ public colleges (NJ Dept. of Higher Education 2014)
- ◆ Only 60% of the 80% graduate in 4-6 years from NJ public colleges (NJDHE 2014)
- ◆ Research indicates that students are not college ready upon high school graduation (Baxter 2012)
- ◆ Researchers have reported that stress, *including fear of the unknown*, is the most commonly reported health complaint related to lack of success in college (Krumei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, and Wilcox 2013)

Adolescent Learning

- ◆ Adolescence is a period of significant social and cognitive development
 - ◆ Peer bonding
 - ◆ Social learning
 - ◆ Pivotal period of exploration and evaluation of future goals
 - ◆ Critical time of formulation of learning habits

Goals

To give high school seniors, and their parents, a practical, hands-on resource to understand what going to college means and to prepare for college readiness.

- ◆ Provides
 - ◆ Information
 - ◆ Resources
 - ◆ Opportunities for discussion
 - ◆ Virtual practice

Description

- ◆ Program is:
 - ◆ 4-session in-classroom seminar with accompanying internet based modules
 - ◆ implemented during the one quarter of Health Education of student's senior year
 - ◆ 4 classes, 56 minutes in length, 1 class per 4-day cycle
- ◆ Students will have access to internet through school Internet portal
 - ◆ 7-part Web-based exploration of college resources
- ◆ Researcher and Career Education Faculty will facilitate course
- ◆ Parent Program
 - ◆ Evening session (May)

The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of Being Prepared for College

Seminar	Focus Question	Sample Question
Seminar 1	Who When	Who is my roommate? When is move-in day?
Seminar 2	What	What is time-management?
Seminar 3	Where	Where is my first class?
Seminar 4	Why How	Why do classes only meet twice a week? How do I know how long to study?

A College-going Culture

- ◆ Includes:
 - ◆ A higher sense of purpose
 - ◆ Understanding of self and one's own learning
 - ◆ Understanding the world around them
 - ◆ Positive motivation
 - ◆ Mastery of emotional intelligence
 - ◆ Mastery of practical skills
 - ◆ Individual responsibility
 - ◆ Being an active life-long learner

High School Responsibility:

providing opportunities to develop
a college-going culture

- ◆ Everyday high school learning should address and encourage mastery in:
 - ◆ Practical skills
 - ◆ Habits of the mind
- ◆ Dedicated programs:
 - ◆ Mentoring
 - ◆ High school bridge-to-college programs
- ◆ Parental guidance and support

Evaluation

- ◆ Students will complete surveys about information learned in seminars and computer modules
- ◆ Students will be asked to contact Researcher via dedicated email address regarding effectiveness after matriculation to college
- ◆ Researcher will conduct formative and summative evaluations of all sessions

Social Change

- ◆ Students and parents who participate in the program:
 - ◆ May experience less uncertainty
 - ◆ May have lower stress levels regarding college
 - ◆ May be more college ready
 - ◆ May persist to graduation

Time Table

- ◆ Start: September 2016
- ◆ Seminars and Internet modules to be conducted and completed each quarter
- ◆ End: Early May 2017
- ◆ Parent seminar: Late May 2017

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Lesson Plan

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 1

Objective	Lesson Title	Materials
<p>Students will understand their role in the college-readiness process, analyze that understanding in terms of practical assessment.</p> <p>Students will create a timeline for being college-ready</p>	<h1 style="font-size: 2em;">Who and When</h1>	<p>Interactive white board</p> <p>Who is a high school student? /Who is a college student? Exhibit A</p> <p>Timeline exhibit B</p>

Activities

1. Introductory information session given by facilitator: College readiness
2. Students will go to groups of 4-5 individuals and brainstorm the two questions: Who is a high school student? Who is a college student?
3. In full session, class will use interactive white board to use key words to describe each student. Similarities and differences will be discussed.
4. In full session, facilitator will ask students to think about the timeline associated with being college ready:
When do you start thinking about going to college?
5. The interactive whiteboard will be used to portray the concept of college-ready about timing.

Assessment	Notes
<p>Formative: Students will give feedback for each session.</p> <p>Summative: Students will be asked to take survey at the end of the program</p>	

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 1 – Exhibit A

Who is a high school student?

Who is a college student?

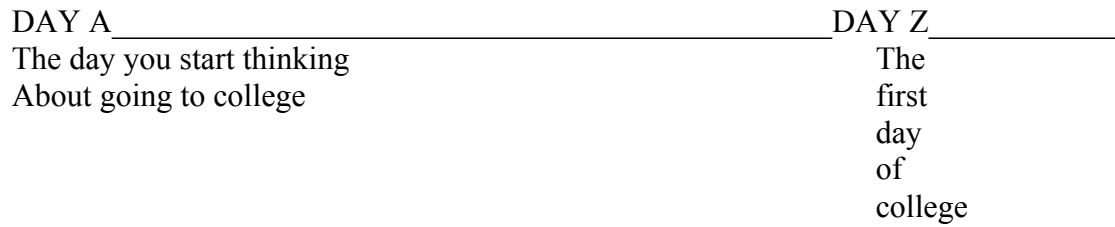


The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

**Seminar 1 – Exhibit B
Timeline of College Readiness**

When do you start to think about going to college?

That is day A



The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 2

Objective	Lesson Title	Materials
Students will encounter scenarios that they may encounter in a new college situation and create practical solutions while dealing with new experiences	What	Role-play scenarios

Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory information session given by facilitator: What do I need to know? 2. Students will go to groups of 3-4 individuals and be given a topic that deals with a <i>what</i> question and will be asked to compose a short role-play skit that dramatizes that topic., 3. Groups will perform skits for the large group 4. The pros and cons of the scenarios of the role-play skits and <i>what</i> topics will be discussed <p><i>What</i> topics: What do I need to pack to go to college? What is time-management? What is good classroom behavior? What time should I wake up for an 8:00 class? What homework is important?, What is spellcheck? What is a good breakfast?</p>

Assessment	Notes
<p>Formative: Students will give feedback for each session.</p> <p>Summative: Students will be asked to take survey at the end of the program</p>	

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 3

Objective	Lesson Title	Materials
<p>Students will learn to navigate a college campus Students will begin to relate preparation with accomplishment</p>	<h1>Where</h1>	<p>Interactive white board</p> <p>College campus map - exhibit A</p> <p>Scavenger Hunt – exhibit B</p> <p>Colored pencils</p>

Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory information session given by facilitator: preparation 2. Scavenger Hunt - Students will receive a college campus map and a set of instructions for using that map 3. After students have completed the instructions a full group discussion will focus on preparation and how to lessen anxiety by being prepared. Students will also understand that navigating a college campus can be fun but difficult at first

Assessment	Notes
<p>Formative: Students will give feedback for each session.</p> <p>Summative: Students will be asked to take survey at the end of the program</p>	

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 3 – Exhibit A

Rutgers University–New Brunswick: College Avenue Campus (2016)



The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness**Seminar 3 – Exhibit B**
Scavenger Hunt

1. Find the Student Center – circle it in red
2. Find Hardenbergh Hall (residence hall) – circle it in blue
3. Find the most expeditious route between the Students Center and Hardenbergh Hall – follow the route with the green pencil
4. Find the library – circle it in red
5. Find the College Avenue gym – circle it in blue
6. How many blocks are between the library and the gym? _____
7. Find the School of Communication and Information – circle it in yellow
8. On what street is the School of Communication and Information?

9. What public transportation can you take to this campus? _____
10. Find the public transportation station – circle it in black
11. Find the School of Arts and Sciences – circle it in blue
12. What other office is housed in the building with the School of Arts and Sciences? _____
13. Find the large parking deck – circle it in yellow
14. Give directions from the parking deck to the Student Center – be specific about street names:

15. Find a park area – circle it in green.
16. What is the name of the river by this park? _____
17. Find the nearest hospital – circle it in yellow

18. Find the Records/RPO/Financial Aid office – circle it in blue
19. Find the oldest part of campus (Old Queens) – circle it in red
20. Find the Center for Latino Arts and Culture – circle it in green

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Seminar 4

Objective	Lesson Title	Materials
<p>Students will discuss and analyze questions that are relevant to students entering college, focusing on relieving anxiety associated with the unknown</p>	<h1 style="margin: 0;">Why and How</h1>	<p>Interactive white board</p>

Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introductory information session given by facilitator: All those questions 2. Students will brainstorm questions beginning with Why and How. Facilitator will write them on interactive white board. 3. In small groups of 4-5 individuals, students will discuss assigned questions from the list and analyze the importance of each. Groups will offer solutions or practical answers. 3. In full group, these solutions and answers will be debated

Assessment	Notes
<p>Formative: Students will give feedback for each session.</p> <p>Summative: Students will be asked to take survey at the end of the program</p>	<p>Facilitator may assist with questions - possible questions to consider:</p> <p>Why should I go to classes if the professor does not know I am there?</p> <p>Why should I be involved in social experiences?</p> <p>Why do I have to call home so often?</p> <p>How do I do laundry?</p> <p>How do I remember my ID numbers?</p> <p>How will I get through finals?</p>

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness**Computer Module 1**
Getting the College Rhythm

1. Research what you might need to bring to college. Make a list.

The following websites may be helpful:

<http://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/pack-it-up-what-to-bring-to-college>

<http://www.collegeview.com/articles/article/what-to-bring-to-college-151-your-dorm-room-checklist>

2. Learn to learn

Explore your learning style.

The following web site may be helpful:

<http://www.studygs.net/metacognition.htm>

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module 2

First Impressions (on paper)

Handing in a well-written first assignment can be very important. A written assignment may be the only interaction between you and a professor. Make sure you:

- Hand it in on time

- Type it

- Follow directions about length and topic

- Use spell-check and grammar check – but reread it before you turn it

in

Proceed to the following website – this is an interactive paragraph practice writing tutorial. Do the exercise as indicated.

<http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/students/Paragraph%20Writing%20Exercises.htm>

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module 3

Time Management

Your weekly time budget is 168 hours per week (24 times 7 days a week)

Figure out how you use your time each week – consider these activities:

hours spent in class

studying (many colleges recommend 3 study hours for each class hour)

job/work

commuting/transportation (include walking around campus!)

co-curricular activities

family connection

living responsibilities – cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc.

social time

sleeping

eating

bathing, make-up, hair

Using the computer find a time management template or use a spreadsheet program to see your weekly use of hours.

If you have fewer hours than you need, there needs to be some changes made!

If you have time remaining, where can you add more commitment – or more sleep!

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module 4

Discovering the College Library

A college or university library is much more than a building. It can be a place to study and a place to congregate. The librarians in this building are there to help you and information and facilitate your learning. Become familiar with this place – it will be an important step in your success.

Research a college library. If you have decided where to go to school, use that college library. Otherwise, choose the library of a school that interests you.

Take notes on what you find – these are some sample questions to get you started:

Where is it on campus?

How study rooms?

How are study rooms reserved?

What hours is the library open?

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module 5

Money Management

Learning how to manage money in college is important. Find a money budget template on line or use a spreadsheet program to think about your finances and create a preliminary budget:

Income:

This includes money you earn, money given to you by mom or grandpa, financial aid, scholarships, or other sources.

Expenses:

These can include tuition, board (or rent), food, transportation, cell phone, toiletries, clothing, social occasions, gifts, fees and dues, and miscellaneous costs.

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness**Computer Module 6**

Improve One Skill Before College

Try to improve one basic and practical skill before entering college. Improving the skills, of reading, writing, listening, and speaking is always important and will help you in many areas of your future.

Use the following website to find practical exercises to help improve these skills:

<http://www.wikihow.com>

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module 7

Tips for Academic Success

Being college-ready and attaining academic success is the goal of this program. The following website developed by the University of California San Diego is a great guide to help you prepare to be ready to be a college student.

<https://students.ucsd.edu/academics/advising/academic-success/tips.html>

From the list, choose 2 tips and make a true effort to use these techniques the first day of your college career.

The Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness

Computer Module Summary

Congratulations! You have completed the computer module component of the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of College Readiness Program. Thank you for your participation.

Please complete the following survey:

WWWWWH of College Readiness

Please rank the computer modules in order of usefulness: 1. Getting the College Rhythm, 2. First Impressions (on paper), 3. Time management, 4. Discovering the College Library, 5. Money Management 6. Improve One Skill Before College, 7. Tips for Academic Success

Are there any topics about college-readiness for which you would like more information?

What is college-readiness?

Do you believe that you are more college-ready now than before you attended this program. Why or Why not?

Would you be willing to contact me after you are in college to discuss the program again and its impact on your college experience?

Done

**Parent Informational Seminar
Slide Show Presentation**

The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of College Readiness

An informational parent seminar

What is this about?

- This evening is not about answers.
- This evening is about coming up with questions that you may have and being able to learn and discuss in a group setting with others who may be experiencing the same questions and anxieties.
- A child going to college is an unsettling experience for them and for you as parents (Bound et al., 2010; Coburn & Treeger, 2009; Kennedy, 2009; Leonard, 2013).
- The more you understand, and the more you are ready, the better you can help to alleviate the fears of your children and help to make them college-ready (Bryan et al., 2013; Hill & Wang, 2015; Kennedy, 2009; Leonard, 2013).

Who?

- Who is a college student?
 - academic preparation
 - social skills
 - college-readiness skills
- Who is the parent of a college student?
 - financial advisor/benefactor
 - emotional support

When?

- When is move-in day?
- When is family day?
- When should we look at financial aid?
- When should we start buying/packing dorm supplies?
- When will I be comfortable with this big change?
- When do I begin to repay student loans?

What?

- What do I do??
- What do they need to bring?
- What do I do if they say they want to come home or transfer after the first week?
- What happens if they get sick?
- What happens if they lose the scholarship money?
- What does it all cost??

Where?

- Where do I find all the information that I need?
- Where do I send care packages?
- Where is the financial aid office?
- Where is the nearest public transportation?
- Where is the Safety and Security Office on campus?
- Where do I stay if I visit?

Why?

- Why won't my child tell me anything?
- Why do they never call?
- Why is this so difficult for me?
- Why do I need to let go?
- Why won't the school release semester grades to me?
- Why don't they want me to visit more often?

How?

- How can I afford this?
- How can I contact the college administration?
- How do I know that this was the right decision?
- How often should I call my child?
- How much money will they need for expenses?
- How will this change my family dynamic?

Now What?

- What other questions do you have about being college-ready?

References

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- Leonard, J. (2013). Maximizing college readiness for all through parental support. *School Community Journal*, 23(1), 183-202.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What are your strengths in an academic setting?
2. How might these strengths help you in college?
3. How do you personally learn better: reading something, hearing something, or doing something?
4. What does time management mean to you?
5. How do you think time management might assist you in college?
6. What are some SAT preparation courses that are available to you?
7. What are some college preparation courses that are available to you?
8. How can you use the internet to look at colleges and/or apply to colleges?
9. How are your parents active in helping you learn about the college experience?
10. What information have your parents given you about college preparation?
11. What do you ask current college students about experiences in college?
12. What do you ask your high school teachers about college?
13. What do you think are three important skills necessary to be college ready?
14. Of these three skills, which is the most important? Why?
15. What skills are needed to live away from home?
16. What additional resources do you think might benefit you in preparing for college?
17. What do you think will best help you remain in college?