2018

College Readiness as Perceived by First-Year Community College Students Taking Remedial Courses

Kristopher Kyle Wallaert
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kristopher Wallaert

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Peter Kiriakidis, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Karen Milheim, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Mark Earley, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

College Readiness as Perceived by First-Year Community College Students Taking Remedial Courses

by

Kristopher Wallaert

MA, Multnomah University, 2011

BS, Multnomah University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2018

Abstract

Roughly 60% of first-year community college students attending a community college in Idaho need to take remedial courses. Such a high percentage of first-year community college students in remedial courses indicates that students are not being properly prepared for collegiate studies. The purpose of this study was to understand college readiness through the perception of first-year community college students who were taking remedial courses. The framework for this study builds on Conley's multidimensional model of college readiness. Data from 10 semi structured interviews conducted with community college students taking remedial courses provided information about the opinions and ideas about college readiness, in addition to evaluations regarding what was missing in their K-12 education to prepare them for collegiate studies. Through open-ended data coding, interrelated themes were analyzed, and the interpreted meaning was shared through a qualitative narrative. The findings from this study suggest that college readiness is more than academic knowledge and understanding. The K-12 education system shall help students to focus on specific skills such as time management and note taking and to seek out their passions and goals. The findings also suggest that the K-12 education system within the United States needs to be restructured to incorporate a system that encourages and supports student success through more individualized learning that places focus on student passions. When students are given the opportunity to seek after their passions, they gain more interest and motivation to learn and build a strong sense of self-efficacy.

College Readiness as Perceived by First-Year Community College Students Taking Remedial Courses

by

Kristopher Wallaert

MA, Multnomah University, 2011

BS, Multnomah University, 2008

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2018

Dedication

This is an optional page for a dedication. If you include a dedication, use regular paragraph spacing as shown here (not centered, italicized, or otherwise formatted). If you do not wish to include this page, delete the heading and the body text. The dedication page is generally limited to one page or less.

Acknowledgments

This is an optional page for acknowledgments. It is a nice place to thank the faculty, family members, and friends who have helped you reach this point in your academic career.

If you do not wish to include this page, delete the heading and the body text, but leave the section break that you see below this text.

No page number appears on any of the pages up to this point.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

College readiness refers to the ability of a student to enter college and pass entry-level courses that lead to a baccalaureate or certificate without the need of remediation (Conley, 2012). College readiness has been a key focus in educational policy as expressed in the federal initiative Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law by President Obama on December 10, 2015 (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015). One of the top three initiatives in ESSA is college readiness. A strong determining factor for college readiness is whether students achieve a passing benchmark score on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT; Camara, 2013). Maruyama (2012) stated that high school grades are stronger predictors of first-year community college students' success than college admission tests such as the ACT. Maruyama (2012) also stated that the ACT and the SAT are not logical or consequential within higher education. High stakes entrance exams have been shown to be poor predictors of college readiness (Complete College America, 2014).

The need for college remediation is determined by college entrance exams such as the SAT and the ACT and whether students fall below the required benchmark score. Richert (2017) reported that Idaho students who took the SAT struggled with meeting qualifying marks for college readiness. The percentage of students who met SAT standards in reading and writing was much higher than students who met SAT standards in math (Table 1). A large percentage of high school students were not college-ready and needed remedial college courses in either math, English, or both. According to Jimenez,

Sargrad, Morales, and Thompson (2016), the national percentage of first-year community college students who needed to take remedial courses in English, math, or both was 40 -- 60%, and the percentage of first-year community college students needing remediation within the state of Idaho was 47%.

Table 1

Idaho Students' Percentages for SAT Benchmarks

	Both SAT Benchmarks	Reading and Writing Benchmark	Math Benchmark	Neither Benchmark
Percentage of Students Who Met SAT Benchmarks	32	60	34	38

College students take remedial courses based on their college entrance exams; however, students who struggle with entrance exams are classified as students who are not college-ready (Andrews & Brown, 2015; Anis, Krause, & Blum, 2016; Conley, 2014a; Gigliotti, 2012). Students who need to take remedial courses spend more money on nonaccredited classes that do not count for their chosen program and are not guaranteed to graduate on time, if at all (Jimenez & Thompson, 2016).

There was a significant problem in the percentage of first-year community college students who needed to take remedial courses in Idaho. Even though Boise State University and the University of Idaho have a low percentage of first-year students needing remedial classes, the two other universities in Idaho, and both community colleges, have significantly high percentages of first-year students needing remedial courses (Table 2).

Table 2

Percentage of First-Year College Students Needing to Take Remedial Courses

	2012	2013	2014	2015
State Universities				
Boise State University	10.4%	8.7%	9.4%	11.7%
University of Idaho	13.78%	10.71%	14.83%	13.97%
Idaho State University	39.79%	33.06%	34.44%	36.75%
Lewis-Clark State College	48.04%	52.05%	52.16%	56.11%
Community Colleges				
College of Southern Idaho	69.47%	65.6%	60.65%	60.63%
College of Western Idaho	89.11%	53.54%	64.93%	68.39%

Rationale

College readiness is a significant priority for the United States (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015). Researchers have sought to understand college readiness through exploring college entrance exams, preparatory college programs, and attempting to define attributes that show college readiness (Connolly, Olson, Durham, & Plank, 2014; Hilgoe, Brinkley, Hattingh, & Bernhardt, 2016; Nicholas-Barrer, Place, Dillon, & Gill, 2016). Much of the research conducted about college readiness has been focused on academics, assessments, and quantitative measures.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

A community college in southern Idaho has an average remediation percentage between 50.7% and 62.3% (Table 3; Bragg, 2016). Remediation percentage is the overall percentage of first-year community college students needing to take remedial courses. The remediation percentage is found by dividing the number of first-year community students in remedial courses by the total number of first-year students enrolled.

Table 3

Remediation Rate Percentages of First-time, First-year College Students

Remediation Rate	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
First-Time, First-Year Students Attending Idaho College within Last 12 Months	60.6% (692/1141)	60.6% (659/1087)	62.3% (493/791)	50.7% (533/1053)

Due to significant changes to college remediation within the past few years, the percentage of students needing remedial courses has decreased. Colleges have moved to a corequisite remediation model where students are placed in support classes that parallel their required courses needed for their certificate or degree. The support classes are taken alongside collegiate level courses to give students the extra support that is needed. Thus, students are not considered remedial students because they are taking collegiate level courses alongside the support courses (senior administrator, personal communication, September 7, 2017).

Fifty percent of first-year community college students needing to take remedial courses is a significant percentage (senior administrator, personal communication, September 7, 2017). With such a high percentage of first-year community college students needing remedial courses, students start college behind in their program (senior administrator, personal communication, September 7, 2017). Students who start behind in their program can have a negative effect on student success rates and show poor retention rates for the research site (senior administrator, personal communication, September 7, 2017).

The percentages in Table 3 are a problem at the research site (senior administrator, personal communication, September 7, 2017). With more than half of first-year community college students needing to take remedial courses, there is a great need to understand the preparation of high school students to be college-ready. One way the state of Idaho has attempted to prepare students for college is through the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC). The SBAC is an assessment that was started in 2009 and was fully implemented in 2015 (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, 2017). The SBAC was designed around the common core standards and used by more than 220 colleges to determine student readiness for entry-level courses. Idaho implemented SBAC in 2014-2015 school year. Before the SBAC, Idaho used a state created assessment to assess students' levels of understanding in academic content. When Idaho implemented the SBAC, scores significantly dropped by 30 and 40 points (Ujifusa, 2015). Even with the implementation of the SBAC, there was still an alarming amount of

first-year community college students that were not college-ready when they graduate high school.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Student Preparation

Most graduating high school students in the state of Idaho were not college-ready (Idaho Business for Education, 2015). College readiness is assessed using either the SAT or the ACT, which all high school students must take to graduate. High school students are also required to have 3 years of math, one of which must be taken their senior year, 3 years of science, and they must complete a senior project (Idaho State Department of Education, 2017a). In the state of Idaho, school districts have offered advance placement (AP) classes and early college credit courses in high school. Idaho has also pushed for more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in schools. (Idaho State Department of Education, 2017b). However, college readiness is more than just content knowledge.

College readiness includes attributes such as self-efficacy, motivation, ownership of learning, and proactivity (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012a; Conley, 2014a; Geertshuis, Jung, & Cooper-Thomas, 2014; Kyllonen, Lipnevich, Burrus, & Roberts, 2014). Preparing high school students for college on an academic level is essential; however, students need other skills to succeed in college (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012b). If these skills and attributes are not intentionally taught in high school, students struggle in collegiate classes that demand theses skills from them and with being college-ready (Conley, 2014a, 2014b; Conley & French, 2014).

Student Assessment

When high school students apply for college, they are required to take some form of college entrance exam to determine their level of understanding on specific content such as reading, writing, and math (Klasik, 2013). College entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT only assess students' knowledge in reading, writing, and math (Richert, 2017). High school students who do not score high enough on college entrance exams are placed in remedial courses to bridge the gap between missing content knowledge and college readiness. Throughout high school, students should be preparing for college through cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning strategies and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills (Conley, 2014a). However, students are leaving high school not prepared for college. More than 50% of students who enroll in community colleges have needed to take at least one remedial course (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

Researchers have indicated that college readiness is multidimensional and consists of more than content knowledge (Conley, 2012, 2014b; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern, Allen, & Camara, 2016). Students are not assessed using a multidimensional assessment. Students are assessed on strictly core content standards and knowledge. There is currently no assessment that is used to assess the multidimensional demands of college readiness. However, researchers have suggested that different assessments that are better defined and more logical and consequential to higher education should be used to determine college readiness (Conley, 2014a; Mann & Martin, 2016; Maruyama, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to obtain a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students taking remedial courses. Given the importance of college and career readiness in education, it is critical to understand college readiness through the perceptions of the students who needed to take remedial courses. I examined what first-year community college students in remedial courses believed might have been missing throughout their K-12 education to properly prepare them for college. I also explored how first-year community college students taking remedial courses defined college readiness.

Definitions of Terms

American College Test (ACT): The ACT is a college entrance and readiness assessment that is used and accepted by colleges and university around the United States (ACT, 2017).

College- and Career-Ready (CCR): Students who can enter college and succeed in entry-level courses that will lead to a baccalaureate or certificate without the need of remediation (Conley, 2012).

College Remediation: Students whose end of the year assessment scores, or college entrance exams, fall below the required level for college entrance (Phipps, 1998).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Obama administration signed ESSA into effect in December 2015. The ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and continued the effort for all students to be college- and career-ready (Brennan, 2017).

Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT): A college entrance exam created by the College Board to make college admission decisions and gives colleges more information to use than just relying on GPA scores (The Princeton Review, 2017).

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC): An assessment designed around the common core standards and used by more than 220 colleges to determine student readiness for entry-level courses (Batel & Sargrad, 2016).

Significance of the Study

Although there has been a drop in the need for first-year community students to take remedial courses, over 50% of first-year community students still need remedial courses (Bragg, 2016). The remediation rates at Idaho community colleges have been troubling. Higher percentages of first-year community college students in community colleges have needed to take remedial courses. These percentages suggest that students were not being properly prepared for collegiate courses. College readiness is not a one-size fits all, and the findings of this study could benefit the local community by improving how students are being academically prepared for collegiate studies. The findings from the dialogue with first-year community college students taking remedial courses might reveal what is missing in students who are graduating high school unprepared for college. The findings from this study might also encourage school districts to reassess how students are being prepared for college. With the knowledge gained with this research, superintendents, administrators, and faculty in the surrounding community could begin the dialogue of how to better prepare all students for college. By encouraging college readiness on multiple levels, and focusing on the education of the

whole student, the community, district, and students could possibly benefit by building a sense of pride for themselves and their community, taking responsibility for their choices and learning, and have a better foundation to build their future. Students who walk into college prepared will be more apt to finishing their 2-year or 4-year degree (ACT, 2013; Mattern, Shaw, & Marini, 2013).

Research Questions

First-year community college students taking remedial courses are potentially unprepared academically for collegiate studies. Gaining a better understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students taking remedial courses can provide valuable information on what might be missing in the preparation of high school students for college. The following research questions guided this qualitative study:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do first-year community college students taking remedial courses describe being college-ready?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What do first-year community college students taking remedial courses say was missing throughout their K-12 education to properly prepare them for college?

Review of the Literature

In this review of the literature, I focused on aspects of college readiness that adhere to Conley's (2014b) multidimensional module of college readiness. This review contains definitions of college readiness, discussions of the struggles with college readiness, and explanations of college remediation. The studies included in the literature

review were searched through educational databases such as: Education Source, Education Resource Information Center, Education from Sage Publishing, and Teacher Reference Center. The terms that I used to collect literature included: *attributes of college readiness, college readiness, college remediation, college preparation, college entrance exams, first-year college students, student perception of remediation,* and *transition from high school to college*. Building on the theoretical framework of Conley's (2012, 2104b) multidimensional module of college readiness, the search included studies between 2012 and 2017. Studies considered for the literature review had to meet the following criteria: a) studies were from peer-reviewed journals, b) information that was not from peer-reviewed journals came from credible educational organizations, and c) the studies focused on college remediation and college readiness within the United States.

Conceptual Framework

Conley's (2012, 2014b) multidimensional module of college readiness was the theoretical framework for this study. Conley's model draws on multiple qualitative and quantitative studies in different contexts and takes into consideration multiple perspectives from stakeholders including university educators. Conley explained that college readiness is composed of four key dimensions: (a) cognitive strategies, (b) content knowledge, (c) learning skills and techniques, and (d) transition knowledge and skills. Cognitive strategies consist of problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, and precision and accuracy. Content knowledge includes structure knowledge, attitudes toward learning, and technical knowledge and skills. Learning skills

and techniques include ownership of knowledge and learning techniques such as time management, note taking strategies, strategic reading, and collaborative learning.

Conley's college readiness model includes all students and expresses college readiness as more than academics. Knowing that college readiness is multifaceted, the focus of college readiness can begin shifting from purely academic knowledge to the preparation of the whole student. Conley (2014b) stated that college readiness consists of the four key dimensions previously mentioned, and students are considered college-ready depending on their mastery of those dimensions.

Defining College Readiness

College readiness has been a topic of concern for many years. Stakeholders and administrators have expressed the importance of college readiness through policies and education initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) and Every Student Succeeds Act (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015). However, defining college readiness has become a challenge. Zinth (2012) explained that individual states have created separate definitions of college readiness based on academic knowledge and state assessments, while other states defined college readiness based on national assessments. Zinth (2012) stated that the definition of college readiness is a work in progress. Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia have requested that the federal government provide an overall definition for college readiness (DeNisco, 2015).

The call for a more focused definition of college readiness has led researcher to seek a way to measure and define college readiness. College readiness has evolved from strictly academic content knowledge to including student characteristics and attributes.

Anderson and Fulton (2015) stated that college readiness should include multiple measures. Multiple measures allow for mastery of content and greater potential of success in college (ACT, 2013). Anderson and Fulton (2015) also gave examples of the multiple measures that should be considered: Competency-based assessments, rigor in courses and curriculum, GPA, class rank, assessments, and index scores. The researchers also included the amount of time spent in the classroom as a suggested measure.

In order to better explain and define college readiness, studies have measured the correlation between high school grade point averages (HSGPAs) and college readiness (Anderson & Fulton, 2015; Connolly et al., 2014; Kowski, 2013; McNeish, Radunzel, & Sanchez, 2015), advanced placement classes and integrating rigor into the classroom (Lindsay, Davis, Stephan, Bonsu, & Narlock, 2016; Mariani, Berger, Koerner, & Sandlin, 2016; Parikh, 2013) and characteristics and attributes that express college readiness (Arnold et al., 2012a; Geertshuis et al., 2014; Kyllonen et al., 2014). Overall, researchers have agreed that college readiness needs to be considered a multidimensional process (Conley, 2012, 2014b; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016). There is still no definitive definition to college readiness. However, being college ready is integral for the success of first-year community college students.

High School GPA and College Readiness

Studies have shown that GPAs are a strong reflection of students' college readiness (Jimenez et al., 2016; Maruyama, 2012; Sanchez, 2013). Anderson and Fulton (2015) have stated that GPA is a more accurate college ready assessment than standardized achievement tests. Students who graduate with higher HSGPA (3.0 or higher) have shown better college readiness than students who graduated with a lower HSGPA (ACT, 2013). However, in a study conducted by Connolly et al. (2014), students who had a HSGPA of 3.0 or greater were still identified as needing college remediation. Due to discrepancies in grading practice and rigor in high school courses, earning high grades in high school is no longer a guarantee that first-year community college students will be successful in college (ACT, 2013). With the conflicting research about HSGPAs as a strong indicator of college readiness, more questions are left unanswered about college readiness.

Kowski (2013) showed that HSGPA alone did not show a significant correlation to college readiness, and that college readiness was dependent on factors such as the level of math classes students took, whether students took classes beyond the minimum requirements, and whether they graduated with an overall GPA of "B" or higher. McNeish et al. (2015) stated that academic performance varies depending on student characteristics. HSGPA averages were not only affected by content mastery, but by student behavior and characteristics while in school. In Komarraju, Ramsey, and Rinella's (2013) quantitative study about cognitive and noncognitive predictors of college readiness, the researchers stated that HSGPA and ACT scores revealed different patterns

of non-cognitive and varied levels of college readiness among college freshman. In the same study, the researchers concluded that academic discipline partially mediated the relationship between HSGPA and college GPA. To assume that HSGPA and college entrance exams are strong indicators of predicting college readiness is not necessarily accurate.

AP Classes and Rigor

With the inconsistency in research about HSGPA as a predictive indicator of college readiness, another consideration is the implementation of advanced classes (AP) classes and integrating a more rigorous expectation in the classroom. High schools and some middle schools offer students the opportunity to enroll in AP classes or college preparatory classes. These classes are designed to be more rigorous and include an element of collegiate expectations (Digby, 2016). AP classes offer students the opportunity to receive college credit while in high school and prepare them for the rigor that is to be expected in a college setting. Receiving college credits in high school alleviates the need for first-year community college students to take prerequisite courses their first year in college (College Board, 2017).

Students who have participated in AP classes have scored higher on college entrance exams (Colgren & Sappington, 2015). AP classes offer students better knowledge and understanding of college expectations than regular high school classes (Digby, 2016). Other college preparatory classes that are offered to high school students are international baccalaureate (IB) classes. IB classes offer students another means of experiencing college-level work and earning college credit (Navarro, 2016). IB classes

are very similar to AP classes, and students' success rates in IB classes are equivalent to students who take AP classes. Both types of classes offer students college level experience and expectations, along with the opportunity to earn college credit. Conley, McGaughy, Davis-Molin, Farkas, and Fukuda (2014) stated that IB classes address the key variables—both cognitive and noncognitive—associated with college readiness. A strong predictor of college readiness is the extent to which high school students took advanced classes (Edmunds et al., 2017).

Along with college level expectations, AP and IB classes increase rigor within the classroom. Having more rigorous classes leads to a better foundation for college readiness (Balestreri, Sambolt, Duhon, Smerdon, & Harris, 2014; Glancy, Fulton, Anderson, Zinth, & Millard, 2014; Mann & Martin, 2016; Zinth, 2012). Multiple states have implemented more rigorous standards in the classroom in the effort to better prepare students for collegiate studies. Classes that are more rigorous lead to students who are better prepared for collegiate courses. College has higher expectations, requires more self-dependency, and engages in higher-level order thinking. Rigor in high school academics promotes the necessary requirements to be successful in college.

To assess the rigorous requirements of collegiate studies, states have collaboratively created assessments that are aligned to college ready standards. Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) are assessments that have been created through collaboration of multiple states. However, assessments that have been created through state collaboration may not demonstrate the level of validity and

reliability that is needed to accurately assess readiness (Mann & Martin, 2016). This has been evident by the number of states who have withdrawn from using either PARCC or the SBAC. However, the SBAC has been more widely accepted, with more states still using the SBAC than the PARCC (Jochim & McGuinn, 2016).

Attributes and Characteristics of College Readiness

The implementation of more AP and IB classes, and increasing rigorous standards and expectations in the classroom, have proven to be challenging and have not shown to encourage college readiness (ACT, 2016a). Students are still struggling with college readiness and are not entering college with the skills needed to be successful (ACT, 2016b). The definition of college readiness is still unclear and is assessed using only academic achievement and assessment scores. However, as stated previously, college readiness is multidimensional and moves beyond academic abilities (Conley, 2014b; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016).

Conley and French (2014) explained that even though content knowledge is important, it is insufficient. Today, the goal is to broaden participation and success in postsecondary education of a wider range of students, many of whom lack content knowledge. Attributes that suggest college readiness are self-efficacy, motivation and engagement, aspirations, and academic skills and discipline (Arnold et al., 2012a; Conley, 2014b). Personality can predict academic success from early grades through graduate school. Personality can also determine the self-efficacy, motivation, aspirations, and academic skills and disciplines that a student possesses. Self-efficacy is closely related to engagement and academic performance. Motivation and engagement in the

classroom also lead to higher academic achievement (Arnold et al., 2012a; Conley & French, 2014; Kyllonen et al., 2014).

Researchers have discussed the importance of understanding college readiness as being more holistic rather than just relying on academic knowledge (Conley, 2014a; Kurlaender & Howell, 2012; Porter & Polikoff, 2012). Academic and content knowledge is crucial to the success of students in collegiate courses. However, if students are unable to cope with difficult situations, problem solve, use critical thinking skills, or persevere through difficult circumstances, then students will struggle academically and not be college ready (Karp & Bork, 2014).

Research has shown that characteristics and attributes, such as the ones listed above, can impact students' academic motivation and engagement, in turn, increasing content knowledge and GPA. Seeing as college readiness is determined based on HSGPA and scores on college entrance exams, creating an environment that acknowledges and encourages characteristics and attributes of college readiness, such as motivation and engagement in the classroom, self-efficacy, and discipline, then students will have a better chance of producing higher HSGPAs

Remediation and College Readiness

College remediation is for students who did not achieve passing scores on college entrance exams for reading and writing, math, or both (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017). These courses do not offer college credit and cost students more money. Students taking remedial courses do not have the content knowledge needed to be college-ready. However, Conley (2014a) expressed that college readiness depends on the

degree at which students fully harness the four keys to college readiness: (a) cognitive strategies, (b) content knowledge, (c) learning skills and techniques, and (d) transition knowledge and skills.

With the understanding that college readiness is multidimensional, students who are not college-ready are lacking one or more of the four keys from Conley's (2014a) definition of college readiness. Wilson-Strydom (2010) expressed the importance of listening to students' experiences to gain a better understanding of how first-year community college students make sense of college. In a phenomenological case study conducted by Koch, Slate, and Moore (2012), a 19-year-old first-year student described his frustrations with having to take a remedial course. He expressed his disappointment by explaining that even though he never took AP classes, he still passed regular high school classes, and passing regular high school classes should have been enough to be college-ready.

College remediation is a current hot topic among colleges. Some colleges have completely done away with college remediation courses in hopes to retain more students. However, not all colleges agree with the removal of remedial courses (Mangan, 2017). Some believe that removing remedial courses altogether is a disservice to students. Placing students in courses they are not ready for will do more harm than good (Mangan, 2017). Nevertheless, a study by Logue, Douglas, and Watanabe-Rose (2017) found students who were mainstreamed into college statistics did far better than their counterparts who took remedial courses. Logue et al. (2017) also found that students who

were mainstreamed into college statistics were more likely to persist in college. Students and faculty have also expressed their frustrations with college remediation.

In a case study by Bachman (2013), students taking remedial courses stated that they weren't necessarily there because they chose not to learn in high school, but rather the content was never taught to them. Other students in Bachman's (2013) study expressed that they believed they were underprepared for collegiate studies. In another study conducted by Hassel and Giordano (2015), students expressed their thoughts, choices, and frustrations of being underprepared for collegiate studies. One college student stated that his high school needed to better prepare students for collegiate writing. He also stated that he missed a valuable opportunity his senior year by choosing to take an easy class instead of a college preparatory class. College faculty members have also expressed their concerns with students in remedial courses. Zientek, Schneider, and Onwuegbuzie (2014) studied college readiness through the perception of faculty members who taught remedial math courses. One faculty member expressed his opinion about students having a time delay by losing content knowledge due to not taking a math course their senior year in high school. The idea that this student did not take math courses their senior year would reflect the research literature that expresses how students who take more courses, instead of the minimum requirements, have been shown to be more college ready (Kowski, 2013).

First-year community college students who take remedial courses are considered unprepared for college. With colleges and universities using college entrance exams and high school transcripts to determine student placement, students in remedial courses

potentially were missing something in their K-12 education to make them college ready. The research that has been presented in this literature fails to understand college readiness through the perceptions and experiences of first-year community college students. If a true definition of college readiness is to be reached, research needs to seek a deeper understanding of college readiness from the perceptions of the students who are being prepared for college.

Implications

State and federal institutions acknowledge the importance of college readiness through initiatives such as Every Student Succeeds Act (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015). ESSA places a strong emphasis on college readiness, and states must adhere to its demanding expectations. One of these expectations is a written plan on how states adhere to and utilize a college readiness plan. As indicated through the literature review, college readiness is multidimensional in that it is more than just content knowledge. The findings in this study could possibly have a strong impact on how the local community recognizes and understands how college readiness should be implemented and assessed.

Another possible direction for a project might be the collaboration between career leaders, policy makers, district superintendents, and K-12 educators about how to better prepare students for college and integrate new ideas, knowledge, and concepts about college readiness into school policies, school districts, and classrooms. Through a professional forum, information gained from this study could be presented to policy makers, administrators, and K-12 educators. In a professional forum, the audience can vary from policy makers, district superintendents, and K-12 educators. Providing

information in a professional forum allows for questions and collaboration about the study.

Understanding college readiness through the perceptions and experiences of first-year community college students taking remedial courses could give deeper insight as to how students believe they are being prepared, and what they consider to be important aspects of college readiness. Students and teachers might be able to see that the frustrations and anxiety from remedial students and plan for better college success. Colleges and universities at the local level could learn from the personal accounts of first-year community college students taking remedial classes and encourage communication between local colleges, universities, and school districts to adjust the ways that students are prepared for and placed in collegiate classes. College readiness courses could be restructured to include all students and promote awareness for the need to educate the whole student rather than focusing solely on academic content. Local districts might have a better understanding of how to prepare all students for college and integrate methods to better prepare students for the transition from high school to college. The focus of college readiness might shift from strictly academic to a more wholistic approach that focuses on students' passions and goals.

Summary

College readiness is essential for the success of students and society (ACT, 2013). College readiness has multiple aspects and students are all different. Making college readiness a one-size-fits-all belief, does not account for all students and hinders progress for many (Barnes & Slate, 2013). With a significant percentage of first-year community

college students needing to take remedial courses, students are leaving high school not college-ready. First-year community college students placed in remedial courses lack the skills necessary for collegiate studies. College remediation hinders students' progress throughout college and may cause a more detrimental outcome for college students.

The next section provides the research method used for this study. The components include the research design and approach, population and sample, data collection and analysis, assumptions, limitations, as well as ethical considerations. Additionally, the next section includes a discussion of the findings and the goal of the study project.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

A case study is used to explore and examine a bounded system (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). With the focus of the study being on one case (Dumez, 2015), the bounded system in this study consisted of 10 first-year community college students taking remedial courses at the community college under study.

I used a qualitative case study design for this study to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students taking remedial courses. The purpose of a case study is to seek deeper understanding of an event or phenomenon through explanatory questions such as “how”, “what”, and “why” (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). In this study, I focused on how first-year community college students perceived how their K-12 education prepared them for college. The “what” in this study was understanding what first-year community college students felt was missing in their K-12 education to better prepare them for college. Finally, the “why” in this study was why first-year community college students perceived their K-12 education the way they did, and why they felt certain ways about their K-12 education.

I designed this study using a qualitative approach that focused on understanding college readiness through the perspectives of first-year community college students in remedial courses. I studied 10 first-year community college students in remedial courses. This method allowed for an interpretation of data through semistructured interviews of multiple participants to gain a deep understanding of college readiness. I considered

ethnographic research as a design for my study. However, the focus of this study was to understand the perspectives of first-year community college students in remedial courses rather than the context and culture. Thus, I rejected ethnographic research as an option. Phenomenological research was also considered and rejected. Phenomenological research focuses on understanding participants' interpretations and experiences within various situations (Lodico et al., 2010). I rejected phenomenological research due to the nature of this study. There was no specific phenomenon that was being studied. Grounded theory was also considered and rejected. Grounded theory research seeks to develop a theory of process, action, or interaction centered around the view of the participants (Creswell, 2012). I did not seek to develop a theory based on the results of the data, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perspectives of first-year college students.

Participants

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling to select participants for this study. The participants were selected based on their ability to provide information essential to the study (Lodico et al., 2010). Participants who were willing to participate in the study had to be first-year community college students who were taking remedial courses. The participants had to be high school graduates who were 18 years of age or older. First-year community college participants in college remediation courses had to have a distinct outlook on college readiness due to the little transition time between high school and college. The participants had to be willing to sign a consent form, which included information such as

the purpose of the study, the rights of the participants, and a detailed description of the study. The participants had to give consent to be interviewed and recorded for this study.

Number of Participants

I used a flexible sample size of 10 participants for the study. Lodico et al. (2010) described saturation as a point at which the researcher feels as though adding more participants would not provide new data to the study. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) stated that saturation can happen as early as six interviews; however, saturation usually occurs within 12 interviews. To accurately answer the research questions, I needed multiple perspectives from first-year community college students taking remedial courses. By using a flexible sample size of 10 participants, I was sure to have enough data to answer the research questions, and the data provided multiple perspectives from first-year community colleges students taking remedial courses to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness.

Gaining Access to Participants

To gain access to the participants, I first identified the gatekeepers to the research site (Lodico et al., 2010). The gatekeepers that I identified were the administrator responsible for IRB, the dean of academics and student affairs, and any professors who taught remedial courses. Once given approval by the administrator responsible for IRB, I communicated with the dean of academics and student affairs to gather an email list of students who are taking remedial courses. I then sent an email to all students with an introduction, the purpose of the study, and approval of consent if any students wanted to participate in the study.

Protection of participants

After I received communications from first-year community college students taking remedial courses who were interested in participating in the study, I replied with an explanation of the purpose and the process of the study. I also explained the participants' rights, the confidentiality of the participants within the study, and the consent form that students had to sign to participate in the study. The consent form provided a detailed explanation of the study, how the information from the participants would be used, and the rights of the participants participating in the study. Any students who were willing to participate in the study remained confidential to protect the participants. To ensure protection of each participant, all data that were gathered during the interview process were kept in a locked file, and all transcripts were kept in a password protected computer.

Data Collection

Type of Data

I conducted one-on-one, semistructured interviews that include open-ended questions, to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of the participants. Interviews are the most common form of data collection in qualitative research (Lodico et al., 2010; Weinbaum & Onwuegbuzie, 2016). Creswell (2012) explained that one-on-one interviews are best used to gain deeper understanding from participants who are not hesitant to speak and who can share ideas comfortably. One-on-one interviews allowed participants to speak freely about their feelings, interpretations,

and reactions to college readiness. Due to the nature of the qualitative study, participants were asked to respond to the following research questions:

- How do first-year community college students taking remedial courses describe being college-ready?
- What do first-year community college students taking remedial courses say was missing throughout their K-12 education to properly prepare them for college?

Semistructured interviews allowed for flexibility of the questions asked within the interview. Lodico et al. (2010) explained that semistructured interviews follow a specific time, date, and topic that are identified in advance.

Data Collection Instruments

To ensure consistency and structure, interviews followed an interview protocol that I created. Creswell (2012) explained that an interview protocol helps with the organization of the interview questions and allows for space to leave notes. The interview protocol included probes to gather more comprehensive data and clarify responses from the participants. The interviews were audio recorded and followed a conversation-style protocol to encourage participants to express their ideas, opinions, and thoughts in detail. The audio recordings assisted in providing an accurate record of the conversation and ensured accuracy when transcribing the data. During the interview, I took brief notes on the interview protocol in case the recorder malfunctioned. I used abbreviated form on all notes to ensure the interviews stayed on time.

Source of Data Collection Instrument

I created the interview questions. Due to the specificity of the study, interview questions and probes focused on the specific topic of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students taking remedial courses. The interviews consisted of five open-ended questions relating to the research questions. The first question was an icebreaker to make the participants more comfortable, relaxed, and motivated to talk. The remaining four questions were the core questions that focused on the research questions (Appendix B).

Sufficiency of Data Collection

Data were gathered through interviews with a flexible sample size of 10 participants. The number of interviews allowed for saturation of the data. Even though saturation can occur at six interviews (Guest et al., 2006), to ensure a complete gathering of data, this study gathered data from 10 participants through semistructured interviews. The number of interviews also allowed for multiple perspectives to be considered when collecting data.

Interviews consisted of five questions that were scripted on the interview protocol (Appendix B). More questions were considered for this study, however, as Creswell (2012) stated, there was a risk of seeking what I wanted to learn instead of learning from the participants. With five questions and probes within the interview protocol, I was able to be clear, concise, and thorough. The objective was to learn from the participants and record their feelings, thoughts, and ideas about the research topic.

Process of Data Collection

I interviewed participants at the research site to ensure comfort and convenience for the participants. After participants had been chosen for the study, I communicated with them through email or phone calls to schedule interview times that were most convenient for the participants. I conducted interviews in a designated room that the research site allowed for use during school hours. The interviews were 60 minutes in length, and were voice recorded to ensure all answers and conversations were complete when transcribed.

Before data were collected, I obtained consent from the participants to be interviewed. Creswell (2012) explained the importance of obtaining consent from all participants to ensure that participants understood their rights as individuals. Data were collected through semistructured interviews of first-year community college students taking remedial courses. The interviews followed an interview protocol that was used for each interview. The interviews consisted of five open-ended questions that I pilot tested to ensure relevance and conciseness. This is in line with Creswell's (2012) suggestion to pilot test interview questions to be sure that the questions are relevant and succinct. Interviews began with a reintroduction, a restating of the purpose of the study, and a reminder to the participants of the confidentiality of their responses (Lodico et al., 2010). The first question was an icebreaker to make the participant more comfortable and relaxed and motivated them to talk. The remaining four questions were the core questions that focused on the research questions. However, due to the nature of the interview, the four remaining questions were asked in any order depending on the progress of each

interview. Throughout the interviews, I observed and took notes on the participants' body language and voice inflection and record them on the interview protocol.

Tracking Data

I collected, transcribed, and organized data using Microsoft programs such as Word and Excel. Due to the amount of comprehensive data that were gathered, data were transcribed and organized into folders using a personal computer. To organize notes that were taken during the interviews, I used an Excel spreadsheet to document all notes from each participant. After each round of interviews, I organized my notes and interview protocols according to the number of each interview. The data were placed in a binder until I had the opportunity to transcribe the data into Microsoft Word and Excel.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I viewed the study as an opportunity for professional growth and to gain a deeper understanding for what is needed to encourage college readiness within the classroom. I had no connections or personal relationships to any of the participants. I had no connection to the research site or the personnel at the research site. I had never worked nor attended the study site. My current professional role at the time was as a public-school educator. I worked at an Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) school that focused on the necessity of being college ready.

Data Analysis

Process of Data Analysis

The data analysis for this project consisted of four stages. The first stage included that preparation and organization of data. Preparation of the data involved transcribing all interviews verbatim into a document, along with all nonverbal aspects of the interviews, and all reflective notes that were taken during the interview process. The data were organized in chronological order of the interviews that were given. The second stage of data analysis was to review and explore the data. I began with an initial review of the data. As I reviewed the data, I highlighted and circled any words or phrases that captured important aspects of the data (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). I reviewed the data multiple times to ensure that all aspects of the data were included. The next stage was coding the data into categories. Different segments of the data were identified and labeled using broad category names (Lodico et al., 2010). Finally, I identified major and minor themes that I coded in the data. These themes were then used to interpret and explain the data.

After the first stage of the data analysis, I began with the review and exploration of the data. I read through each transcribed interview multiple times. While reading, I took notes on words and phrases within the data that captured important aspects of the data. The purpose of the initial review of the data was to gain a better understanding of the data before I divide the data into more manageable chunks through coding. The first initial read gave a better understanding of the flow and structure of the data.

The third stage of the data analysis was to code the data into themes. The purpose of coding the data was to identify segments within the data that shared commonality and point to similar phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010). As I read the data, I coded sections within the data and then organized the data based on the same codes. Throughout the coding process, I continually reread and reexamined all the data to make sure I had not missed anything. Along with manually coding the data, I used Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT). CAT is a free computer-generated program that is hosted by the University Center for Social and Urban Research, and it is specifically designed to code raw text data sets. Along with CAT, I used another computer-generated program called Trint to transcribe all audio to text. Trint is an online program that takes audio files and transcribes them into a word document. Using Trint cut down on transcription time, and all I needed to do is confirm that the transcriptions were accurate and complete.

The final step for data analysis was building themes from the coded data. The goal was to reduce the number of codes by identifying different themes that accurately described the data (Lodico et al., 2010). Themes were then organized and used to explain findings from the research.

Credibility and Reliability

The credibility of the research was determined by the amount of time I spent at the research site with the participants. With a total 10 interviews, and each interview lasting 60 minutes each, I was in contact with the participants at the research site for about 600 minutes. This amount of time only included interview time and did not include time spent conducting member checks. I conducted member checks after I had

transcribed, coded, and established themes within the data. I emailed the participants my initial findings from the data to ensure that I have accurately explained and described the information that was shared during the interview process. I also included rich, thick descriptions of the study and the responses given by the participants in my final report.

Discrepant Cases

In the case of any discrepancies within the data, Creswell (2012) expressed the importance of conducting follow-up interviews with the participants to provide an opportunity for the participants to comment on the findings. Another procedure I used was negative case analysis. This involved reviewing the data for any contradictions or discrepancies (Lodico et al., 2010). I examined the interviews of each participant and determined if there were any instances that do not coincide with other responses from other participants. If conflicting perspectives were found within the data, I reexamined other data sources to determine if the differences could be resolved. If I was unable to resolve the differences, I presented both perspectives in my final writing.

Data Analysis Results

Process and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students in remedial courses. The review of data showed that a community college in Idaho had a remedial rate between 50% and 60% of first-year community college students. The review of data suggested that first-year community college students were entering this community college underprepared. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How do first-year community college students taking remedial courses describe being college-ready?

RQ2: What do first-year community college students taking remedial courses say was missing throughout their K-12 education to properly prepare them for college?

The goal was to interview first-year community college students who were taking remedial courses and gain a better understanding of college readiness through the perspectives of those students. The process and procedures for gathering, generating, and recording data followed specific steps.

IRB approval. Before the study could take place, IRB had to approve the proposed study. It was necessary to gain IRB approval to assure that all ethical precautions were considered and addressed. The population for this study included first-year community college students in remedial courses. Participants needed to be 18 years of age or older. There were no restrictions on race or ethnicity as all perspectives of college readiness were valuable to the study. After considering all ethical principles within the study and submitting a completed IRB application, IRB approved the study (approval #: 01-29-18-0571505).

Participants. Once the study had IRB approval, I contacted the gatekeeper of the research site. I asked for permission to conduct my study at the research site and who I needed to talk to gain access to potential participants. I received names for potential participants from the Dean of Students. There were 392 first-year community college students in remedial math courses. The college replaced their remedial courses in reading and writing with support classes that students are assigned to offer extra support in the

areas of reading and writing. A blind carbon copy (BCC) of an introduction letter, which included a copy of the informed consent form, was sent to all 392 potential participants. Potential participants were encouraged to express the best time that they would be available for interviews. After participants responded to the introduction email, interview times were scheduled to best accommodate the participants schedules.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted at the research site. Interviews were scheduled to last no longer than 60 minutes. Before the interviews were conducted each participant was asked to read and sign the informed consent form. Interviews were audio recorded to assist in transcription of the interviews during data analysis. An interview protocol was used during the interviews (Appendix B) to ensure consistency in the questions asked and to keep the interviews within the time allotted. During the interviews, I took notes on the responses given from the participants. Coding was used in the notetaking process to keep the interviews on time and to ensure that most of the information that the participants shared were recorded. Participants were asked probing questions to expand on certain responses that were given. After the interview was completed, participants were thanked for their time and given their $5 Starbucks gift card.

Data analysis. After the interviews were conducted, I began transcribing the data into a Word document by referring to notes and the recorded audio. Once the transcription process was complete, I read through all transcriptions and coded the data by locating similar words or phrases that were used between the participants. From the codes, I defined the themes that emerged within the data. These themes were then

chunked together, and conclusions to the research questions were made based on the emerging themes within the data.

Emerging Themes

Ten first-year community college students taking remedial courses took part in semistructured interviews that were conducted by me, and each interview session lasted no longer than 60 minutes. I asked each participant eight questions. The findings are drawn from the deductive themes that emerged from the data. The themes were determined using the research questions for the study. Each research question contained multiple themes that emerged from the data (Table 4).

Table 4

Emerging Themes from the Data

RQ1: How do first-year community college students taking remedial courses describe being college-ready?
Skills needed for college readiness
Self-efficacy
Mental Preparedness for collegiate courses
Financially Responsible
RQ2: What do first-year community college students taking remedial courses say was missing throughout their K-12 education to properly prepare them for college?
Real-world learning within the classroom
Track system that focuses on students' passions
Skills not being taught or encouraged in the classroom
Academic and teacher support

Being College-Ready

Skills needed for college readiness. Participants shared their perspectives on what they felt college-readiness looks like. There were multiple types of skills that participants expressed were needed to be college-ready. Unanimously, the most

significant skill that participants shared was time management. Participants shared that time management is a vital skill to have when in college. With multiple assignments assigned each week, work, and a social life, time management is needed to keep one's self on track for success in school, work, and personal life. Time management is also needed to ensure assignments are completed on time. As Participant 5 expressed,

> You have to be able to, not only study and take good notes, but you have to be able to organize your thoughts, know when the due dates are, and manage your time well so you can get stuff done by those dates.

Participant 6 stated,

> You need to allocate time every week to focus on doing homework and just completing things that you need to complete. For me, I kind of build a time frame of everything, so I allocate enough time for class and then for assignments out of class and for work and for all the other stuff.

Participants shared the importance of balancing time between school, work, and personal life; making sure to leave enough time for studying, working on assignments, and preparing for class. Participant 2 stated,

> The characteristics that I found to be most important are time management and paying attention. Time management helps with keeping everything in your life organized. If you need to work, take care of family, go to class, or whatever you have to do, time management is what helps keep you going.

Participant 8 also stated,

> Time management, once again, I mean I still struggle with it a little bit too, but if you get time management down, that's really half the battle; cause all of your courses they'll have their homework levels, they'll have their different study levels, and if you don't manage that well, you're not going to do well.

This correlates with Verrell and McCabe's (2015) study that expressed the importance of time management, pride in one's work, dedication, and responsibility in college readiness. The study also showed that college students felt they were inadequately prepared to manage their time well and were not pushed to go beyond the minimum in their work.

Another significant skill that was expressed was study skills. Study skills were considered to be note taking and organization. Participant 5 stated, "Study skills is one of the most important if you are going to go into anything hard; because you have to be willing to put in the work for that." When it comes to note taking, participant 5 expressed the importance of "making sure you have a format so that you can find the information on. For note taking, we should consider that if kids think in words maybe that's easier, but for me I'm a picture thinker, so I doodle pictures in my notes."

One participant expressed the importance of note taking be stating,

> You need to be able to write perceptively and fast; cause that's the hardest part is, you know, a lot of college classes you only have a week or two to write a seven page essay, is to sit down and be able to be, okay well, you set up all the points and you can go through it a lot faster, cause it's not just English I am writing essays for, it's sociology and everything else I am taking. I take a lot of notes.

Participant 2 expressed, "I feel like one very important skill to have to be college ready is knowing how to take notes." Participant 3 stated, "I feel that my K-12 education encouraged note taking, but not so much the right kind. They would say here write all this down, while in college you better right fast or just the important stuff." Participants expressed the importance of note taking as a valuable skill for college readiness. With the classroom being a fast-paced learning environment, and students needing to be more responsible with their learning, notes become a skill that promote college readiness. Bambrick-Santoyo (2014) explained the importance of teaching students a variety of note taking methods, so students who enter a lecture hall will be prepared to focus on the key points of professors' lectures.

Along with note taking, participants expressed the need for organization as a key skill for college readiness. Participant 6 stated, "Organization is the first thing that is needed for college readiness." Participant 8 stated, "Academically, in some of the higher courses, when I got into high school, umm, studying habits, some organizational skills, and time management." Organization plays a key role in college readiness as there is more expectations for college students to keep assignments in order, know the due dates,

and be sure to turn assignments in on time. Participants explained that organization was significant for college readiness in that it helped keep them from feeling overwhelmed. Participant 5 stated,

> You do need a level of organization. I was thinking that with the time management is, I feel like they (K-12) taught me that really well, but I think part of that is they gave me the tools to do it, and I wanted to do that any way, so my organization kicked in. I wanted to organize my time; I wanted to have something to look back to understand when I was going to do stuff.

Organization as a college ready skill is in line with Edmunds et al. (2017) who stated that many skills are needed for college readiness, one of which is organization, and that these skills should be recognized to properly prepare students for secondary education.

Participants also expressed the importance of learning how to communicate. As Participant 10 stated, "A huge proponent of having an actual future in life is being able to communicate." Other participants expressed the importance of being able to properly communicate to be more successful in life outside of high school. Participant 9 stated,

> You can come up and talk to your professor, it's like 'Hey I'm having an issue with that…', and you're looking him in the eye, its different than looking at the ground, not being able to talk to him. I didn't realize how bad that was. That's the hardest part, you have to be able to ask questions, you have to be able to talk with him.

Many participants shared the importance of asking questions. Asking questions is an important skill for success in college. As participant 8 shared, “Talk to parents. Talk to family. Talk to friends who have already been through college. Ask them what worked and what didn’t for them.” This is in line with Radcliffe and Bos (2013) who stated the importance of high school and middle school students collaborating with college students to gain a better understanding of the rigor and expectations of college. Gaining a perspective of college readiness from other peoples’ point of view clarifies the expectations and rigor of collegiate courses. Along with gathering other peoples’ opinions and wisdom of college, the importance of asking for help was also discussed. Participant 5 stated,

> I think you really need to be able to ask for help, cause your teachers are some of your best resources. And if your going through something and you don’t tell your teacher, then your teacher’s going to think that your just not trying, and they won’t have any sympathy for you and they’re not going to work with you.

The theme of asking questions and communicating was a significant priority to many of the participants. This theme is in line with Sugito, S. M., Hartono, & Supartono. (2017) who stated that it is vital for students to learn proper communication skills, as communication skills are a necessity for college and career in the 21st century.

Self-efficacy. Many of the participants expressed the importance of having a passion, and/or being goal driven. Without a sense of self-efficacy, college becomes more of a burden, or “something you are doing for someone else and not yourself” (Participant 8). Being driven gives meaning to classes, assignments, and the expectations that college

sets forth. Participants expressed the importance of focusing on doing what "you" want to do. As participant 6 stated,

> Definitely going into it (college), doing it, having a set goal in mind and something for you. Having the idea and cementing it in your mind that I'm doing this because I want to, and it's going to help me do something I want to do later, and not doing it for other reasons.

College needs to be about personal goals and passions, and future students need to pursue their own goals and passions. Participant 4 stated, "I think you need to have passion for what you're doing and for what you're going to school for, or else you will get burnt out, and be like 'why am I doing this?'." Participant 5 also stated,

> I think we are in a society that is really dependent on your education to be successful, which goes both ways, that like people go into stuff to make money, but people also tend to stay away from things they're passionate about, because it is not a good career. I think it is important to succeed and do well in your field and to care about it.

This correlates with Lee and Durksen's (2018) study that showed passion as a driving force behind overall life satisfaction and academic interest. Having passion creates self-worth and meaning in one's life.

Along with passion, participants expressed an overwhelming need to be goal-driven. Participants stated how having a goal strengthens self-efficacy and helps define one's purpose while in college. Participant 1 stated,

> You need to decide young, despite being immature, what track do you want your life to go on; and based on that track you need to be a driven individual. The more you individualize and internalize your success, your life, your future, the more you will be successful long term.

This is in line with van Rooij, Jansen, and van de Grift (2017) who found that student self-efficacy is crucial for the success of students in a university setting. When asked what attributes are needed to be successful in college, Participant 3 stated, "Goal focused, and determined are the best attributes to have to be college ready." Participant 2 also stated,

> Being driven is very important to getting to where you need to be. I was very immature in my high school years, and I didn't have any drive. Now that I am here, I realize the importance of being driven to get to where I want to be.

Participants also expressed how being driven is a necessity in college. Without drive, college can become overwhelming and you might not want to keep going. Participant 7 stated, "Goals and passions help you want to learn better. They make you want to strive for something." This correlates with Villatte, Marcotte, and Potvin's (2017) study that found that the lack of personal goals in first-year community college students can cause symptoms of depression. Moreover, self-efficacy is a crucial attribute for college readiness. As participants stated, having passion and drive is a necessity for success on a collegiate level.

Mental preparedness. Participants discussed the importance of being mentally prepared for college. Many participants shared many differences between high school and college, and to survive college, one must be mentally prepared for it. Mental preparedness was described as knowing you will fail but being able to learn from those situations. When asked what attributes or characteristics were important for college readiness, Participant 8 stated, "Failure. Know that you're going to fail at some point. Take those interactions or situations and take it with a grain of salt. Take the positive from it and make sure you are learning from those situations." Participant 5 also stated, "You need to be willing to be wrong. You need to be okay with not being "on top" in college. It's not like high school." Mental preparedness was also described as perseverance; pushing through the hard times. When asked what strategies are needed to be college ready, Participant 9 stated,

> You just need to be mentally ready for it. It's not going to be like high school. You are going to have to put in a lot of work. Don't let it (college stress) get to you. That's a lot of the thing. You need to find a way to destress. You need to be able to do it responsibly.

Mental preparedness is also about having the right mindset. Participant 4 explains, "You need a positive attitude, because there will be a lot of things that you will bombarded with. You just need to learn to take one thing at a time, and like, don't overwhelm yourself." Participants expressed the need for being mentally prepared for college. With higher expectations, more stress, and added responsibilities, having a mental preparedness for college will help students be better prepared. This theme is in

line with Donham (2014) who stated that self-reliance and perseverance is a significant importance to the success of college going students.

Financial responsibility. Even though financial responsibility was not a major theme within the data, some participants expressed the importance of financial responsibility as a key to college readiness. Participant 9 expressed the need to be financially aware of how much college costs. He explained, "If you're going to spend $80,000 on a 4-year college, you got to be able to make more than that just to pay of student loans." He also stated the importance of knowing how one will pay for college. Participant 9 also stated, "You know it was kind of hard, cause you tried to figure out how to pay for college, even if you don't want to pursue a true degree, but like for me, it was like 'How was I going to pay for this?'" Hillman, Cast, George-Jackson (2015) showed that families in the middle to higher income range might be more susceptible to paying for their child's college, but low-income families will not offer their child the same financial help. Due to the rising cost of college and the financial responsibility students need to take, being financially responsible is imperative for college readiness. Participant 8 expressed, "I wish I had a general basis with things like housing and general finances." Participant 8 also expressed the importance of understanding and knowing finances as a crucial part of being college ready. Venzia and Jaeger (2013) state that financial and economic literacy is part of "college knowledge" that is needed to navigate college well. Financial readiness is also in line with Conley's (2012) Four Keys to College Readiness. Balestreri et al. (2014) showed that part of goals and expectations of college readiness, financial literacy and consumer skills are a part of lifelong learning

skills. The theme of financial responsibility was not one of great significance within the data, however, the importance of financial and economic literacy and responsibility has been discussed in previous research as a strong component of college readiness.

Missing Components in K-12 Education

Real-world learning and applicable content. Many themes emerged from the data about missing components in the K-12 education system. Nine out of 10 participants expressed the lack of real-world learning in the classroom. Real-world learning was explained as learning that is applicable to life, hands on, and content that can be appropriately used in life. Participants expressed their frustration with feeling as though they were taught very little academic life-skills but rather were taught how to take a test. Participant 8 stated, "Man, do I wish they had a course, both Jr. and Sr. year, that focused solely on life skills."

Participants expressed their frustration with feeling as though K-12 education focused more on taking tests than preparing students for life. Participant 1 stated,

> There is a difference between teaching life and teaching to the test. Teach to know your job. Teach to know…like the purpose of English. How will you use this English in real life? How are you going to show your employer on your resume that you are not an idiot?

Participant 2 said, “There needs to be less bookwork and more time spent on learning real life stuff. Don’t teach to the test. Teach so that I can understand how it applies to my life.” Participant 4 shared that she felt there was more of a focus taking tests than learning real-world skills. When asked what needed to change in the K-12 education system, Participant 6 expressed the need to make classes more applicable to gain more interest from students.

Participant 9 expressed that he had some real-world learning in school, but he wished he could have had more. Participant 3 stated something similar when she said, “I do love hands-on training/activities and not just books upon books studies. I think having interactive learning is important for most students and not just have talked lessons.” It was the real-world learning that became relevant to him. When asked if K-12 education taught real-world learning, Participant 8 stated,

> No, and that’s a strong ‘no’. Honestly, I believe not only myself, but every student, would be in a better spot life wise. If I just got simple things, I think I would have been more successful moving out initially. I would emphasize that that K-12 system didn’t have real-world learning.

Participant 5 expressed,

> I just feel like the point of public education is to make it so everyone can pass. For that you don’t end up teaching kids a lot of stuff. Math was just a lot of problems and textbooks and they don’t apply it (to the real world).

Participant 10 stated,

> I believe what needs to happen is a mandatory K-12 real-world learning. There needs to be a preference on moving towards auto, woodworking, hands-on stuff. Half the grown-ups over the age of 25 can't change their own oil.

The importance of learning being applicable was a steady theme throughout each interview. When asked what was beneficial in their K-12 education, Participant 6 stated, In 6th grade and 7th grade, some of the stuff like social studies and other courses were more applicable, so they became more useful to me. However, a lot of the stuff in the later grades, like my Jr./Sr. year, was not applicable to me at all.

> My friend, in his senior year wanted to take a more real-world math class, cause he felt it would be more applicable to him, and he couldn't because his grade point average was too high, and they wouldn't let him take that because you needed to have a lower grade point average to take that class, a more applicable class, so he had to take an advanced math class, and it's bringing down his grade.

Participant 4 stated,

> All subjects didn't connect to the real world. In English they taught you how to write, but they didn't teach you anything about scholarly articles and I learned that that's like a lot of what type of resources you needed to use in college is scholarly articles, and they don't really teach you anything about that in K-12 education at all. That would probably help a lot.

Participants also expressed specific content that they wished they would have had in their K-12 education. Math became a major focus for multiple students, and how they could have been taught more real-world math skills. A lot of the math focused around

economic and financial understanding. When asked if their K-12 education prepared them for college, Participant 6 expressed that in the areas of English and social studies it did, however she stated, “In areas like finances and taxes I was not prepared. It would have really been helpful if there were those options cause there weren’t even those options for me.” Participant 10 shared the he felt there should be mandatory life-skills classes such as, “balancing check books, how to do your taxes, and budgeting.” Participant 8 also expressed the importance of teaching real-world skills such as, “Budgetary skills, housing, and general finances.” Participant 9 shared,

> There needs to be more focus on relevant content. For the most part, getting my first apartment and balancing my first checkbook, that was real-world stuff for me. I had some experience in class, but it wasn’t like doing it in real life. I would like to see a lot of financial literacy: how loans work, applying for apartments, balancing books, money management, and budgeting. A lot of things would have to go around loans, cause you look at the big things you have to buy in life (houses, cars) what you can afford and what you can’t afford.

Participants expressed the need for the K-12 education to have a focus on applicable classes that teach proper financial literacy and responsibility.

Participants shared that real-life problems were absent from the classroom, and many participants expressed their frustration with not having the opportunity to connect their learning to the real-world. Curry (2017) expressed the importance of relating academic content to real-world application and challenged teachers to develop their skills to ensure that their teaching is relatable to real-life. Merz (2015) stated that soft skills are

just as important as academic skills. She goes on to say that a struggling student who has a strong understanding of soft skills will be better prepared for college and career than a straight "A" student who lacks soft skills.

Track system that focuses on students' passions. Another theme that emerged from the data that was almost unanimous was a desire and need for a tracking system in high school. Participants shared their ideas and perspectives on taking classes in high school that were irrelevant to their future goals. Participants also discussed the value of having more choices and not just focusing on the idea of college being the end goal. Participants expressed their thoughts on how allowing more student choice in programs and academics will give way to more motivation and passion for students to want to learn. As Participant 4 stated, "School doesn't really prepare you for what you want to do."

The tracking system that participants referred to was one that sought to place students in an academic track that focused on students' passions and goals. The end goal was determined by what students were interested in and not just graduating high school. Whether that might be college, trade school, or straight into the work force, the education system would place each student in a track that helped them obtain their goals. Participant 9 suggested,

> I think there should be a track system, where if you want to go to college, it's more of a track. That would be the thing, have a track if you want to go into trade, be able to open up some options for trades; be able to open up some options for people that want to just go out and work, maybe job placement assistance things

like that. More focused on like math that you will need for the trades and get a job out of a school versus how to pay for college if you don't want to go.

Participant 1 expressed a need for,

A system that makes a student care about their own life, their own success, their own destiny; whether it be 7th and 8th grade planning high school career, take a college prep class, or be in a class for scholarships. Idaho needs to track their students, and genuinely care about their students. They need to track them toward college, technical school, work, or just be life ready.

Participant 6 stated,

I think there needs to be more options. If they (students) want to take a different career path, they should have the ability to choose different things. It's a waste of your life to spend 2 to 3 years of your life taking classes that won't be applicable to you.

Participants shared the need for a tracking system that follows students throughout their K-12 academics and places them in position of success based on what the students' want to do. Childress and Benson (2014) state that personalized learning increases student motivation, meeting students where they are at, accelerates their learning, and promotes students to be lifelong learners.

Participants not only shared the need for a tracking system, but for the K-12 education system to consider students passions over content. Instead of students working on standardized academic content, participants stated that schools should focus learning on the students' passions and goals. Participant 7 expressed her gratitude for her high

school by helping her focus on her passions. It was because of her high school helping her focus on her passions that she was able to overcome her struggles that she faced. Participant 7 was the minority in expressing that her school helped her focus on her passions. Most of the participants expressed the need for high schools and the K-12 system to move away from generalization and standardization and begin focusing on a more personal, goal focused education for each student. Participant 9 expressed the lack of schools focusing on student passions. He stated, “There really isn’t a focus on like, ‘Hey, what do you want to do with your life?’. I wish there was more of a focus on what are students’ interests and helping them narrow that down.” Participant 10 also expressed the need for a track system by expressing the need for schools to focus from freshman to senior students and asking each student their life goals and to help them get there. Participant 5 stated, “I think that’s why people don’t like K-12 as much; they lose passion because you don’t get to pick what they want to study.” Participant 6 shared,

> I think that’s a big flaw with high school is that everyone is required to take the same courses even though we’re all going to do something different. The public school system tries to fit people into a mold, and sometimes people just give up because they can’t make that mold, and they don’t know they can make their own.

Participant 6 went on to express her feelings on how the K-12 education system should shift the focus on more personalized education. Participant 4 stated, “I mean, public school took my passion. I just hated being at school.” Encouraging students in their passions is in line with Jihyun and Durksen (2018) whose study showed that passion is a key factor to academic interest. The study also showed that students’ passion for

learning directly related to overall life satisfaction. Participants expressed the importance of focusing education on the passions and goals of students. Aviles (2015) designed a new type of learning called passion-based learning, where students' passions direct their learning and gives students control of their own education. Aviles states that students can do amazing things when they can apply their passions to their learning.

Skills missing in K-12. Participants expressed that college ready skills were not taught during their K-12 education. There was one skill that emerged from the data that participants expressed was lacking in their K-12 education. Many of the participants expressed the importance of note taking as a college ready skill, however, participants stated that they were not properly taught how to take notes, which caused for some frustrating times their first year of college. With college classes being more fast paced and higher levels of responsibility placed on college students, note taking is a crucial skill that students must have to remain organized, focused, and successful in college. Participant 2 stated, "I came from a small school, and note taking was not taught. I believe I would have had a less stressful college experience if I had learned the importance and value of note taking in high school." Participant 5 expressed her frustration with notes being taught, but notes depended on different schools that she attended. Some schools taught a specific style of notes, like Cornell notes, while other schools taught outline notes. She stated that it made it difficult to understand exactly what was needed in note taking and she was left more confused than confident in note taking.

Participant 10 expressed some similarities with participant 5 expressing how school did not encourage proper note taking, nor did school focus on helping students find what worked for them. He explained that some students like more hands-on note taking, while other students are more auditory learners and take notes by recording lessons and lectures. Participant 9 stated, “I had to learn how to take notes in college. It made for a stressful first semester, but as I continued to practice and work at note taking, it became easier and allowed me to find what works for me.” This theme is in line with Verrell and MaCabe’s (2015) study where students expressed how note taking was not taught very well in high school. Instead of teaching the skills needed for note taking, students were given specific notes for a class and were not encouraged to review their notes.

Participants also expressed that a crucial skill for college readiness was time management; however, participants stated that their K-12 education did not encourage proper time management skills. Participant 3 stated that her high school helped her in time management by not accepting late work. She explained, “My teachers didn’t accept late work, which is much like now.” However, she was the only participant that expressed that their school helped encourage this skill. Most of the participants expressed that time management did not seem to be a focused strategy within their K-12 education. Participant 4 stated, “The K-12 education didn’t teach time management too much.” Having a strong understanding of time management skills is crucial to success in college. Participants expressed that the lack of time management skills have caused frustrations and stress during their first year in college. Participant 5, 6, and 8 shared how high school

did not prepare them with time management skills, and how there was a significant difference between the expectations for high school and college are vastly different. They also shared how they felt time management skills would have helped in the process of transitioning form high school to college. Akcoltekin (2015) stated that students who have strong time management skills have a decreased level of anxiety. Time management is a critical skill for students to master.

Academic and teacher support. Participants expressed that they felt there was a lack of support in the K-12 education. Many of the participants went to several schools throughout their K-12 education. All participants went to schools outside of Idaho and ended their K-12 education in Idaho. There were a few participants who went to both small and large schools. Participants shared the value that was found in teachers who supported and encouraged them, however, supportive teachers were outnumbered by negative, uncaring teachers.

Some participants shared the apathy they saw from their teachers. As Participant 10 shared, “It just seems that some teachers don’t throw themselves into their career.” Participant 9 stated, “Some of the teachers seemed like they didn’t really want to teach. They were just trying to get in and out.” He continued be giving an example of a math teacher he had that never taught in front of the class and expected students to read the material and understand it. He stated, “It was like a lack of enthusiasm.” Participants shared that teacher apathy was observable and effected their overall care and desire for learning.

Some participants shared that they felt as if they were there to just get pushed through, while other participants expressed mixed feelings. Participant 4 expressed her feelings about going to a bigger school in San Jose and stated, “They really didn’t seem to care. Their faculty didn’t seem to care at all.” However, when participant 4 started to discuss her experience at the alternative school she attended, she expressed that she felt like teachers cared more. She felt that because it was a smaller school, faculty put more effort into caring about the students. However, Participant 1 and 2 attended smaller, more rural schools and expressed their discontent with their high schools and the lack of support they felt. Rodriquez et al. (2017) stated that the relationship between students and teachers is significantly valuable for the success and future education of said students.

Participants also expressed support as teachers taking an interest, willing to give extra support, and sharing information and knowledge about college and what is needed to succeed. Participant 7 expressed her feelings about the support she felt from teachers from different schools. Out of the four schools she attended, she expressed that two schools didn’t care at all for her or other students, and the other two schools she attended cared more for students, and teachers took more personal time to assist them. Participant 5 shared her feelings about her teachers that worked hard to help her wherever she needed. However, she also expressed that there were a few “bad apples” during her K-12 education. She stated, “I had some teachers that tried to tear me down. I had a few teachers who tried to get me expelled.” Uslu and Gizir (2017) expressed teacher-student relationships are a significant piece to students feeling as though they belong in school.

Roorda, Jak, Zee, Oort, and Koomen (2017) stated that there is a direct correlation between positive teacher-student relationship and achievement.

Discussion and Conclusion

The emerging themes from this study has shown that college readiness is more than just knowledge and understanding of academic content. Participants expressed the importance of certain skills, such as time management and note taking, real-world learning and applicability, self-efficacy, mental preparedness, and support. This is in line with Conley's (2014a) four keys to college readiness. Participants also expressed that there are multiple factors that are missing in the current K-12 education system to properly prepare students for college.

The results from this study support current literature in that college readiness is multidimensional (Conley, 2014b; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016). Participants expressed college readiness as more than content just knowledge. Participants expressed the importance of certain skills, mindsets, and focuses that encourage college readiness. There was great discussion on time management, note taking, and organization as skills that are vital to college success. These finding are in line with current literature that express skill sets that encourage college readiness (Arnold et al., 2012a; Conley & French, 2013; Kyllonen et al., 2014; Wasylkiw, 2016). Literature has shown the importance of specific skill sets for high school students to encourage college readiness. As participants expressed in this study, time management, note taking, and organization were all crucial skills that helped them be successful in college. "Organization is the first thing that is needed for college readiness" (Participant 6).

"Academically, in some of the higher courses, when I got into high school, umm, studying habits, some organizational skills, and time management" (Participant 8).

Another theme that supports current literature is the importance of self-efficacy. Participants expressed the importance of having a "driven mindset." Self-efficacy was considered vital for college success as the responsibility to learn and get work accomplished was solely on the student. As participant 3 stated, "Goal focused, and determined are the best attributes to have to be college ready." Conley and French (2013), state "self-efficacy is related to engagement and performance on academic tasks, college performance, and college retention" (p. 1025). Student success in college is dependent on self-efficacy and being determined (Zientek et al., 2014). "You need to be a driven individual" (Participant 1).

Participants also expressed the need and importance to be mindful and mentally prepared for college. Even though Conley's (2012) four keys to college readiness expresses the importance of mental preparedness by categorizing it under "Key Knowledge and Transition Skills," participants suggested a different type of mindset that students need to have to succeed in college. The type of mindset that participants suggested was one that focused on learning from failures and perseverance. As Participant 5 explained, "You need to be willing to be wrong." Also, Participant 9 stated, "You just need to be mentally ready for it. You are going to have to put in a lot of work." Literature states that perseverance and determination are critical attributes for college readiness (Conley, 2014a; Gazdzik, 2014; MacCann, Duckworth, & Roberts 2009; Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014).

Real-world learning was a significant theme in the data. Participants expressed the need for real-world learning to occur in the classroom, and learning should be applicable to the student. This theme is in line with Conley (2012, 2014a) in that college readiness is dependent on the relatability of the content to the student. Mobley, Sharp, Hammond, Withington, & Stipanovic (2017) stated that career guided and career focused education starts with real world content that is applicable to the students. Current literature encourages real-world learning in the classroom and expresses the importance of real-world learning for college readiness (Ball, 2016; DiBenedetto & Myers, 2016; Larmer, 2016). Real-world learning in the 21st century is crucial for students to be college and career ready.

Another major theme that emerged from the data was the need for a tracking system or pathway for students in high school. The participants shared the necessity for the school system to focus on students' passions and guiding them in their future goals. Participants expressed that college is not necessarily for everyone. The idea of trades become a topic of discussion throughout most of the interviews. The participants shared an understanding that college was not an end goal for all students. The focus became students' passions and guiding them through applicable academic classes that would prepared them for life outside of high school.

The idea of pathways for high school students is not a strange idea. However, not very many states in the United States offer multiple pathways for students. According to Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation (2016), 44 states offer one pathway for high school diplomas. However, four out of the 44 states provide multiple

pathways for students to earn their diploma. These pathways are geared toward student interests and passions. These states are the only states in the U. S. that offer multiple pathways that focus learning on students' passions and interests. Deeds and Malter (2016) showed how alternative schools offer pathways for at-risk students that are more concentrated and focused on students' interests and how these alternative schools are successful in creating college ready students

Many countries around the world use pathways in their education system for students and focus learning on students' passions and interests. Some of these countries include Finland, Japan, and the United Kingdom. According to Human Rights Advocate (2017), all three countries are in the top 10 in the world for education; Finland is ranked 1st, Japan is ranked 2nd, United Kingdom ranked 7th, and the United States is ranked 20th. The educational focus in these countries are on student passions and guiding them to become successful in their passions. A few participants even discussed how European nations are better at K-12 education because of the focus on student passions.

Participants also discussed the lack of teacher support they feel there is in the K-12 system. Even though participants had good experiences with teachers, they also shared the negativity that was felt while in school, and the apathy that in teaching that was seen in some teachers. Some research has shown that the lack of self-efficacy and autonomy to be a factor in overall job satisfaction for teachers (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). A more in-depth study is suggested to determine the effects of teacher apathy in the classroom and students' academic success and achievement. ‘

The data in this study supports many of the current literature on college readiness. Whether it is specific skills, mindsets, or the need for more real-world learning, current research has expressed the importance of focusing on different aspects of college readiness. However, there has been little research on the importance of a pathway system within the United States education system. Even though current literature discusses alternative school systems and the importance of pathways in alternative schools, there is little research to support the importance and need for a pathway system in the current public-school system. One suggestion would be to research the four states that offer multiple pathways for students to earn diplomas and compare the college readiness level of students in those four schools to schools who offer only one pathway.

Overall, participants shared their perspective of college readiness, what is needed, and what is missing in the K-12 education system. The data within this study coincides with much of Conley's (2014a) four keys to college readiness. With such themes as skills, self-efficacy, and knowledge and understanding, this study supports Conley's framework. Participants expressed that college readiness is dependent on learning and understanding certain skills such as time management and note taking. However, other findings and themes showed that a mind shift needs to take place from standardization to individualized learning. With 9 out of 10 participants expressing the need for some form of a pathway system in K-12 education for students, and the United States falling short in overall academic ranking in the world, there needs to be a strong consideration for what needs to change, be improved, and overhauled within the K-12 education system in the United States.

After careful consideration of the findings from this case study, the project that I have chosen is a 3-day professional development/training (PD). The purpose of the PD is for K-12 educators, school administrators, school district leaders, and policymakers to gain a better understanding of college readiness, understand what is still missing in the K-12 education environment to properly prepare students for college, apply and analyze new information that is introduced during the professional development, and finally, create and design a college preparation program, with an emphasis on project-based learning, for each grade level that can be implemented district wide.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

College readiness is a significant component for high school students who will graduate from high school. Students who leave high school need to be prepared for collegiate courses and expectations (Every Students Succeeds Act of 2015). Because college readiness is multidimensional, school districts should focus on college preparation beyond just content knowledge (Conley, 2014a). The findings from this study support that students are missing important key factors that Conley (2014a) explained are vital for college readiness. Some factors that were discussed in the findings showed that students expressed that their K-12 education was missing important college preparation factors such as academic support from teachers and parents, real-world learning, and academic skills. Participants expressed that learning was not meaningful and did not promote self-advocacy or value in college preparation. Participants also expressed that circumstances outside of the classroom created some hinderances to their academics.

Rationale

The findings support the development of a professional training program. The professional development program could help K-12 educators, school administrators, school district leaders, and career leaders provide an opportunity for much needed discussion about enhancing or changing the current roles of education. Professional learning communities could also increase local teachers' self-efficacy and help them become culturally responsive to the needs of students in K-12 education. Some K-12 educators recognize the positive possibilities associated with encouraging and focusing

on student passions and goals and are willing to make a professional commitment to make needed changes to the K-12 education system. School administrators can participate in the professional development process and prepare teachers to design a system that will promote new approaches to teaching (Kaufman, 2013). During the professional learning discussions, K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders can reflect and determine the best approach to encouraging and promoting student success by focusing on and encouraging student passions and goals.

Teacher training is a major component in producing quality teaching because some teachers struggle with understanding a diverse population (Mincu, 2015). By participating systematically in professional learning communities, K-12 educators can work together to improve classroom practice, write related lesson plans, and increase educational focus to support and bolster students' life goals and passions (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). The findings of this study illustrate the need for developing effective professional development for all K-12 educators. The research might enlighten many K-12 educators, administrators, and district leaders and encourage them to participate in active professional learning sessions, increase their knowledge, and understand what first-year community college students feel is missing in the current K-12 system. These professional learning discussions could minimize any ignorance or indifferences about the needed changes within the K-12 education system.

School administrators can share their school vision about teaching and learning and encourage teachers to make decisions about teaching to students' passions and life goals. Professional Learning Communities (PLC) include members who collaborate,

share ideas, and make decisions about school improvements and the school's effectiveness. These practices are resources for staff to maintain trust and a willingness to suggest ideas regarding issues and problems. A classroom atmosphere that is conducive to creating a learning environment that is dedicated to encouraging students in their passions and life goals can promote higher order thinking skills in daily classroom exercises due to a student-centered learning environment (Stolk & Harari, 2014). K-12 educators can use student-centered learning environments to encourage motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy (Childress & Benson, 2014). Intensive training is essential to improve teachers' practices (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). Providing an opportunity for K-12 educators to learn new methods and strategies in education promotes a positive outlook on school success and meaningful experiences.

Review of the Literature

PLCs contribute to school improvement. A PLC is described as a collective of educators dedicated to learning with and from other educators to improve teaching and learning (Kose, 2009). Members of the learning community embrace two attitudes: (a) learning benefits both the teachers and the students, and (b) learning should be challenging and meaningful (Hoerr, 2010). According to The Annenberg Institute for School Reform's publication: Professional Developmental Strategies That Improve Instruction (n.d.), a crucial step to creating and improving effective schools is the development of a strong professional community. Significant and continuous improvement might occur when K-12 educators work collaboratively. Collaboration is significant to the success of any professional development (National Staff Development

Council, 2001). Collaborative communities continually strive to improve and represent potential strategies for school improvement (Fullan, 2006).

When teachers discuss a multitude of issues in education (i.e., mission, curriculum, instruction, student learning, relevant data, research, decisions) and share a common language about beliefs and practices, it increases teachers' perspectives and knowledge of the dilemmas and struggles within education. According to Jacobson (2010), the teachers in the inquiry-oriented learning community work together, engage in collaboration, review their teaching standards and student performance, and are more effective in developing and implementing best practices. However, teachers in the results-oriented approach are more grade level minded or content area minded, such as high school teachers, and follow a specific agenda, usually set forth by administration, with the focus on student learning. By combining both approaches to the learning community, the learning communities can build on each other's work and create the best plans for supportable improvement (Jacobson, 2010).

There is substantial and expanding support for the potential of collaborative cultures to improve teacher work and, consequently, student achievement. Schools that promote PLCs, collaboration amongst teachers, administration, and other stakeholders have shown tremendous signs of student growth (Munoz & Branham, 2016). However, there must be a definitive form of trust between teachers and administrators. Yi-Hwa Liou and Daly (2014) showed that teachers in high-performing, collaborative schools expressed strong, positive, trusting relationships with their colleagues and administration.

Without a strong foundation of trust amongst colleagues and administration, collaborative learning communities will struggle with encouraging and establishing student growth.

Culture of continuous learning. When the school's culture focuses on continuous learning communities and shared roles within leadership, teachers and administrators can work cooperatively to confront and engage the issues and problems the learning community faces. Through cooperative work, teachers increase knowledge and skills and make decisions to best support all students in the learning environment (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009). Edwards and Gammell (2017) stated nine key elements to promoting a culture of continuous learning: (a) focus, (b) results orientation, (c) self-reflection, (d) grounding in multiple forms of data, (e) dedicated time, (f) collaboration, (g) trust, (h) agency, and (i) actionable advice and feedback. With these elements, a schools' culture will be student-centered, student focused, and promotes a culture of continuous learning.

Professional development and coaching are a crucial piece to the creation and establishment of a continuous learning culture (Edwards & Gammell, 2017). Professional development is meant to induce conversation and collaboration amongst teachers and administrators. Coaches are individuals who follow up with teachers to determine how what was learning in the professional development is being implemented into the classroom. A strong component to building a community and culture of continuous learners is trust. To enhance and encourage a culture that promotes teacher learners, schools need to redesign school structure to promote teacher learning, promote the value in learning as a professional, and have an open and supportive environment that promotes

positive and trusting relationships (Haiyan, Walker, & Xiaowei, 2017) When teachers struggle, they must be able to trust their administrator and coach to help them through those struggles (Edwards & Gammell, 2017). School leaders are a crucial part to creating a culture of continuous learners.

Design, implementation, and evaluation of staff development. Professional development can have many purposes; however, at the heart of professional development, K-12 educators are seeking to best support and educate students. Teachers determine the effectiveness of their instruction and teaching strategies as they teach. Thus, professional development needs to be incorporated into the everyday life of teachers to ensure best practices for students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). According to Danielson (2002) , "Professional development opportunities must include opportunities for teachers to learn more about the populations they serve and the recommendations for working with students and communities of different backgrounds." Professional learning and professional development have become synonymous with staff development within the recent years. What follows is a discussion of the development, design, implementation, and evaluation of staff development.

Design of professional development. In the past, professional development consisted of short workshops that consisted of topics chosen by individual schools or school districts, along with college or university courses (Choy, Chen, Bugarin, & Broughman, 2006). Recently, the goal of professional development has shifted to focus on student learning, best practices, and teacher collaboration (Choy et al., 2006) Research has shown that professional development needs to be a part of teachers' every day work,

or it must be included in the school culture to ensure students' success and progress (Marzano et al., 2005). Research has shown that the most beneficial professional development includes collaboration with colleagues, administration, and stakeholders (Field et al., 2010). In addition, high quality professional development needs to be intensive, focused, coherent, strongly implemented, and should be constructed on teacher learning and change (Institute of Education Sciences., 2007). High quality professional development focuses on the learning environment, content, strategies and modeling those strategies, collaboration between teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders, and encourages reform or improvement (Knapp, 2003). Mangrum (2010) stated, "Teachers must have opportunities to learn from and with each other" to create positive change in deepening teacher knowledge, strategies, and the learning environment. Professional development needs to include setting goals that can be attained and enhance teachers current knowledge over a sufficient period of time. (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Professional development programs that spend a substantial amount of time, 30 to 100 hours over 6 to 12 months, show the largest effect on student learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009) When teachers can collaborate and work together, student achievement has the best chance of growth (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Another characteristic of a well-designed professional development is one that encourages teachers to critically think about their profession, learn from colleagues, and from students and their perspective (Zepeda, 2008). Professional development should include the study of curriculum and instruction and how both effect student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 2002a). Effective professional development should include modeling,

coaching, and problem solving that support the all-encompassing job of K-12 educators (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, & Hammerness, 2007).

How teachers learn is a significant part of professional development, but so is how schools affect teacher learning, practices, and student achievement (King & Newmann, 2000). The growth and change in education depends on how well teachers are given the opportunity to improve their practice (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scivner, 2000). Inducing change in policy and school improvement requires an array of professional development where teachers, administrators, and stakeholders can collaborate and work together for the betterment of the learning environment (Western Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Successful schools take professional development seriously, and they understand that continual professional development is crucial to the success of their teachers and students (Danielson, 2002).

Long term professional development that is content specific allows for support and training for teachers to become more effective teachers in the classroom (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005). Teachers offered 10% more instruction for comprehending text after they received intense professional development over the specific content (Correnti, 2007). Professional development includes focused and coherent content strengthened teachers understanding and knowledge (Firestone et al., 2005). The Schenley School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania became a staff development center where outstanding teachers were brought together in a low performing high school, and as a result student achievement rose due to the content focused and

intensified instruction that students received from the teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2002b).

Professional development that focuses on current best practices that positively affect the learning environment and understands that teachers, much like students, differ in learning styles, readiness, interest, and have their own personalities that they incorporate into the profession (Tomlinson, 2005). The success of students depends on professional development that is connected to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Hirsh & Killion, 2009).

Implementation of professional development. Best practices that have been identified through research should be established and promoted through staff development (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Professional development that fails in schools is due to lack of support and failure to adhere to the priorities and needs of teachers and students (Guskey, 2003). The National Staff Development Council encouraged educators to carefully consider the claims that research makes about teaching strategies, improvements, or school reform (Mizell, 2001). Hirsh (2004) recommended that professional development should encourage the involvement of all stakeholders to ensure a well-rounded plan for school or education improvement.

Researchers have noted that although professional development is improving, there is little opportunity for teachers to collaborate and problem solve how to teach specific concepts or analyze student work through study groups, peer coaching, or grade level collaboration (Barnett et al., 2003) The professional development in low-performing schools that are federally funded tend to focus on tested subjects to increase the

performance level of such low-performing schools (Laitsch, 2004). To increase school performance and student achievement, there must be an array of professional development that encourages a wide range of strategies (Western Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000). Greene (2003) explained that the design and implementation of professional development must consider the process by which teachers gain knowledge and skills and program evaluation.

Professional development programs must include a wide array of strategies in which teachers feel comfortable and challenged to learn new concepts and teaching strategies, promotes hands-on learning for teachers to build and construct their own understanding, encourages reflection of practices, and supports the application of the learned concepts (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Teachers who practice and are given feedback will ultimately improve in their pedagogy and teaching strategies (Willingham, 2009).

Support in the classroom is a vital part to the success of the content that is learned through professional development. As one study found, teachers who partook in a professional development that offered a 45-hour course in language and literacy and year-long coaching rated their language and literacy practices higher (Neuman & Cunningham, 2008). Teachers at Osmond Elementary in Wyoming became experts in specific strategies and then mentored other colleagues. The teachers would choose a strategy, study the strategy through focused reading, participate in study groups, observe peers who were using the same strategy, and then demonstrate competence of the strategy through being observed using specific criteria (Semadeni, 2010). For teachers to improve

their practice, they must be given support and be challenge in small increments (Brozo & Fisher, 2010).

Professional development that is student centered and focuses on student learning, people, and best practices are more effective than professional developments that focus on programs (Reeves, 2010). Teachers' perspectives, personal beliefs, attitudes, and experiences have a major impact on professional development (van de Berg, 2002). To change teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs, there needs to be evidence of student learning, and this occurs when professional development is properly and successfully implemented (Guskey, 2002). When professional development is properly implemented, teachers experience actual staff development, increase teaching skills and/or change their thoughts and perspectives, implement learned instructional practices in the classroom, and increase student learning through strategies presented through professional development (Desimone, 2009).

Research has shown that successful planning of professional development occurs when goals guide staff development, strengthen teachers' skills and knowledge for improving the learning environment, and are embedded within the district and school plan and is considered the primary strategy district goals for school and student improvement (Holler, Calender, & Skinner, 2007; Sever & Bowgren, 2007). Marzano et al. (2005) discovered that there is a 20 percent variance in student achievement based on the relationship between school and teacher practice. Students grow when professional development results in in teachers performing proficiently, both individually and collaboratively (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Lowden, 2005).

Including the input of teachers encourages the success of professional development. Eleven schools within two districts in New York found that the success of professional development depended on the inclusion of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders (Lowden, 2005). Farmington Public Schools found the value of teacher and administrator involvement in professional development that focused on reform efforts when 13 teachers led professional development session in the district (Rothman, 2009). When teachers are given the opportunity to participate in professional development, help develop goals for student learning, share responsibility for meeting those goals, and collaborate, the improvement of student achievement is likely (Youngs, 2001).

Implementation of professional development that is effective and valuable includes input from teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders within the education community. Professional development needs to be specific, student centered, encourages a variety of strategies for teachers to fully understand and build their knowledge, encourages collaboration between all participants, and supports teachers after the professional development has concluded.

Staff development research. Literature and studies have shown that effective professional development encourages longer contract hours and continuous activities over time that include active learning opportunities, specific content focus, and alignment with reform efforts. (Desimone, Garet, Birman, Porter, & Suk Yoon, 2001; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Suk Yoon, 2001; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Suk Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Kiriakidis, 2009) Research has shown that professional development that is content

focused encourages best practices and higher order learning of research. Student learning is positively affected when teacher professional development is sustained over time and provides “hands on” (active learning) learning and is relevant to everyday life in the classroom (Garet et al., 2001). The following examples reported increased student achievement due to sustained professional development and active learning. Students in four San Francisco Bay districts scored significantly higher on a science content pre- to post-test due to teachers meeting monthly to collaborate and participate in active learning in science content (Heller, Daehler, & Shinohara, 2003). Students in The Tremont, Illinois Community Unit District increased their writing scores on the standardized achievement test due to the three-year, content specific professional development that teachers participated in (Peine, 2003). Teachers in the St. Louis Public Schools reported having received “adequate training” in content specific professional development that resulted in students increasing their test scores on the Missouri Assessment Program state tests in the areas of communication arts (-15.0 to +11.0) and mathematics (-11.0 to +6.0) (Kedro & Short, 2004). A 2-year professional development for staff within an elementary school located in a small, mid-Atlantic city improved student learning by increasing student pass rates from 47% to 65% in reading (Hayes & Robnolt, 2007).

The Institute of Education Sciences’ (IES, 2007) research has shown that teachers who receive sustained professional development can increase student achievement by 21 percentile points. Laitsch (2003) found that teacher engagement in professional development and the use of strategies learned from professional development made a positive impact in the classroom and student achievement. The following examples

illustrate the potential of staff development to improve student learning. Student showed significant increases in their scores on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills due to a focus on literacy, class size, and professional development (Haughey, Snart, & DaCosta, 2001). 90% Students in three Texas public elementary schools over a 5-year period passed the reading, writing, and mathematics portion of the Texas Assessment and Academic Skills Test due to professional development that was content focused and supported the needs of the schools in the district (Linek, Fleener, Faxio, Raine, & Klakamp, 2003). The Baltimore City Public School System showed significant improvement in eighteen low-achieving elementary schools due to a focus on school reform, intense professional development, and coaching and monitoring (Dicembre, 2002). The increase in student achievement is attributed to on-going professional development within the schools (Brown & Spangler, 2006). The Monroe Township in New Jersey Public Schools found in 2005-2005 that teachers who changed their practices due to professional development increased student achievement on the standardized test (Tienken & Stonaker, 2007).

Project Description

The 3-day professional development focuses on college and career readiness with an emphasis on students' interests and passions. With the consideration of Conley's (2014a) Four Keys to College Readiness and a focus on project-based learning, K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders will create and design a model for promoting student passions and interests within the K-12 system. Career leaders are individuals who are leaders in their given professions. These leaders might include business leaders, medical leaders, veterinarian specialists, coaches, humanitarian

specialists, and many others. The 3-day professional development is separated in to 2 days of presentation and collaboration, and one day of workshop for K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders to collaborate and design a college readiness program that promotes students' passions and goals as the focus of learning and engagement. Because this professional development is district wide, there are a few resources that are needed to make the professional development a success.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports. The 3-day professional development is designed to incorporate all K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders within the school district. Career leaders shall be given a formal invitation to participate in the professional development. Career leaders are valuable assets during collaboration and the workshop days, thus a strong encouragement for their attendance should be attempted through mail and electronic mail. Invitations are needed to be sent to all career leaders and city officials inviting them to partake in the 3-day professional development to invest into the students, K-12 educators, and the program that is designed to promote students' interests and passions. As Jordan, Chrislip, and Workman (2016) stated, including stakeholders in a more collaborative model is essential for the success of any plan.

K-12 educators participating in the professional development program need the following resources: mobile devices (laptop computer or electronic tablet), access to the Internet, a working knowledge of computers, a projector, and access to a google docs. The mobile devices must have an active Internet connection as participants need to access

embedded videos and hyperlinks to a variety of web resources included in the program presentation.

The school district shall provide the wireless Internet connection and a central location where the professional development program will take place. The site of the program should be the meeting room at the district's professional learning complex which will provide access to a wireless Internet network and a projector. Additionally, as each participant will be a school district employee, each participant needs to have access to Google docs through the school district's Intranet system.

To facilitate a large audience, a facility that can hold everyone is needed. This facility could be a school gym, cafeteria, large meeting room, or public building. The room needs to be able to facilitate all K-12 educators from all grade levels within the school district, administrators from all buildings, district leaders, and any stakeholders who responded to their personal invitation. The room needs to be arranged with round tables with chairs around the tables to encourage collaboration between participants. Handouts, pens, pencils, highlighters, and sticky notes shall be placed in the middle of the tables.

There is a need for a projection system, audio system, and technology connection for the presentation. The facility also needs to include WIFI access. All participants are encouraged to download the PowerPoint for the professional development for their own personal use. There shall also be a Twitter account connected to the professional development to encourage real-time thoughts and questions from the audience. Real-time thoughts and questions encourage an environment of free-thinking and collaboration. The

professional development encourages networking between K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders. The objective is to invite real conversations, problem solving, and critical thinking at all levels.

Potential Barriers and Solutions. With any program or professional development, there is always the potential for barriers to hinder the process. Barriers for this project might include technical, financial, scheduling, support, and/or validity. However, with every potential barrier there is a potential solution to encourage productivity, growth, and change. The following are a list of potential barriers that could hinder the progress of the professional development and the potential solutions to those barriers:

Technical barriers. Technical barriers might consist of facility management, technology issues, lack of materials, and communication issues. There is a potential that the district does not have a facility that can manage to accommodate all needed participants for the professional development. If the district was unable to find a facility to accommodate all needed participants, a potential solution for this barrier is to arrange for the professional development to be split between elementary and secondary K-12 educators and be held on different days. Another potential solution for this technical barrier would be to invite educational leaders from each grade level, district leaders, and career leaders. This would lower the attendance numbers, which would allow for a smaller facility to be used, and still provide the school district with the professional development.

Another potential technical barrier would be the inability to connect to technology. This would be due to presenting at smaller, more rural school districts. If this happened, I would provide my own projector, projector screen, and computer connections. This would ensure that the digital presentation would still be available for the professional development.

Incompatibility issues might also be a potential technical barrier. There are a couple of ways to alleviate incompatibility issues. First, by using personally owned equipment, there is little to no risk of a compatibility issues. Another potential solution is to use a cross-compatible program such as Google. Using Google Drive ensures little to no risk of compatibility issues, as Google can be used from any device. The key is to be prepared for any situation to make the professional development a full success.

Financial barriers. With all things, money can become an issue when trying to make something a success. For this professional development, money has the potential of being strong barrier. With the need for printed materials, larger facilities, possible travel, and technical requirements, there are many ways that finances may be of concern. Due to the importance of this professional development, many of the financial barriers can be avoided by using personal resources and taking personal time.

Even though printed material would be an important piece to the professional development to get materials into the hands of the educational leaders, district leaders, and career leaders, it might not always be financially feasible. To alleviate the cost of printed materials, relying on electronic documents keeps the cost of printed materials down, and allow for the participants to have a permanent copy that can be saved

electronically. The use of Google Documents and Google Share eases this potential barrier as everyone can have a copy of the documents and share thoughts and ideas on a working document.

Another potential financial barrier would be the cost for professional development. The state allots money to districts for professional development, however, this allotment might not include summer or extra professional development days that the district schedules on the calendar. Because this professional development focuses on creating a personalized college readiness program for the district, it would be appropriate for the professional development to be held during the summer or before school for the year. The potential solution to this barrier is to choose already chosen professional development days that the district has allotted for the calendar. Spreading the professional development throughout the school year can add additional benefit for the educational leaders, district leaders, and career leaders. By spreading the professional development throughout the school year, K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders can build, change, manipulate, and explore ideas throughout the year to see what works best.

Support barriers. There is no guarantee that K-12 educators, district leaders, or career leaders will support the professional development. Teachers who are not convinced that the professional development is relevant might not give the support needed to make it a success. To get buy-in from K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders, a relationship must be built. K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders need to be shown the importance of why their time and energy is beneficial in the

design and implementation of a district wide college readiness program. For this professional development to be successful for the district, all parties need to be invested and believe that what they are doing is for the betterment of the student. The best way to do this is by building a rapport with the district and the K-12 educators. Spending time with thorough explanation of the need and necessity of implementing a college readiness program is crucial to the support that the professional development needs.

Implementation and Timetable

The professional development could be implemented at any time. There are many options that could work best for effective implementation of the professional development. Offering PD to teachers, policymakers, administrators, and career leaders during the summer months will allow time for all participants to design and create a program that fits well within the school district and could be implemented the same year. However, there is the potential problem of K-12 educators not being able to attend due to vacation and time off for summer. To prevent the issue of summer vacancies, implementation of the professional development could be during the school year. Using the scheduled professional development days that the district has already assigned would ensure complete attendance from K-12 educators and district leaders. Instead of having a 3-day professional development through consecutive days, the professional development could be spread throughout the school year, which could allow for follow up, more collaboration, and problem solving for potential issues that might arise.

This professional development could be implemented at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year or throughout the 2018-2019 school year. The district could choose to have a 3-day professional development at the beginning of the school year to implement the program before the school year begins, or the district could choose to take three different professional development days throughout the school year to design and create the college readiness program. Ultimately, the timetable for the professional development is flexible based on the needs of the district.

Roles and responsibilities. As the leader and creator of the professional development, I have the responsibility of speaking, presenting, and organizing the professional development. I am responsible for contacting the district, discussing suitable times to conducts the professional development, building the rapport and relationship with the district, and ultimately present and direct the professional development.

The district is responsible for finding the facility, informing the K-12 educators, ensuring WIFI and technology is in place for the participants and the presentation, and providing lunch for the participants; if they wish. The district is also responsible for reaching out to the career leaders around the community and inviting them to participate in the professional development.

Career leaders will be responsible for bringing any needed items, written plans, and career requirements. These stakeholders are the ones who know what is needed to be successful in various careers. With their knowledge and understanding, career leaders can share ideas and thoughts that can help K-12 educators promote needed content and skills

to be successful in different career types. The focus will be on placing students in applicable courses that can help them achieve their goals.

Project Evaluation Plan

There are multiple evaluations throughout the project, and all evaluations will be conducted at different times. Each evaluation has a specific purpose and goal. The goal of the evaluation is to gain understanding, improve weaknesses in the professional development, and determine the effectiveness of the professional development. Evaluations have short-term and long-term goals in mind.

Types of Evaluations. Due to the newness of the professional development, the initial evaluation will be a formative evaluation. The goal of the formative evaluation is to gather ideas and opinions from the participants to help the professional development be more relevant to the educator and show areas of weakness that need to be strengthened. Participant feedback also encourages engagement and buy-in. If the K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the professional development, then the professional development could be better tailored to be more relevant to teachers, district leaders, and career leaders.

After the first professional development is conducted, not only is there a formative evaluation, there is also an outcome evaluation. The outcome evaluation will be conducted at the end of the school year to determine if there were any changes to teaching, if career leaders had greater investment, and if K-12 educators implemented all, some, or little of the college readiness program that they created during the professional

development. The outcome evaluation asks K-12 educators if they saw a difference in students' performance and in school collaboration and community. The evaluation also asks K-12 educators to reflect on their own experiences. The outcome evaluation is beneficial, as it shows the level of commitment and implementation that the K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders placed on the college readiness program that they developed.

To evaluate whether the professional development is having a significant impact on student learning and college readiness, an impact evaluation will also be conducted. The goal of the impact evaluation is to focus on the long-term effect of the professional development. The evaluation seeks to determine if the professional development is having a positive impact on student growth and college readiness. Districts who implement their college readiness programs throughout time, will be asked to share their thoughts and perceptions about how the college readiness program has improved student achievement and college readiness. The end goal is for districts to design, create, and implement a personalized college readiness program that increases student engagement and better prepare students for college.

Stakeholders. Stakeholders for this project consist of community college and university leaders, career leaders, district leaders, and K-12 educators. Community college and university leaders are important in the development of the college readiness program. With input from college leaders, the college readiness program can include specific detail to encourage college ready students.

Career leaders are respected stakeholders, as they have valuable knowledge that can help shape and define the needs and necessities that students must have to be successful in certain careers. With an emphasis on student interests and passions, career leaders can enhance the direction of students' academic direction by helping define personalized learning plans. These plans can help shape the required academic content that is needed to be successful in each area of interest.

District leaders are important, as their goal is to develop well educated and college ready students. With input and support for the K-12 educators in the district, district leaders can ensure collaboration between grade levels and college leaders and proper implementation of the program.

K-12 educators' goals are to prepare students to be college and career ready. K-12 educators can collaborate with each other and college and university leaders to ensure college readiness qualities are being developed in the classroom. The goal for K-12 educators is to help determine and support student passions and interests, so that students graduate high school ready to succeed in whatever life track they choose to commit to; whether it be college, trade school, or a personal career.

Project Implications

There are several potential implications that can come from this project. The implications can range from benefits in the classroom, to benefits within the district, better communication between school districts and stakeholder, and ultimately high school graduates who are better prepared for college and life. With the emphasis on properly preparing students for college by focusing on student passions and interests,

classrooms in all grade levels can implement strategies and content that can encourage student engagement and growth that will ultimately lead to better college readiness. Teachers will be given the opportunity to have better collaboration with fellow colleagues, district leaders, college and university leaders, as well as career leaders. With a college readiness program that is designed around supporting students' passions and interests, and created by a multitude of stakeholders, students will graduate high school prepared for whatever they choose to do.

An important implication from this project will be the focus of specific skills that are not being encouraged or taught in classrooms. These skills might include time management, not taking, and self-efficacy. It is crucial that K-12 educators put a focus on the skills that students feel are missing in the K-12 education system. These skills are not to replace other skills that are being taught, but rather a focused addition to those skills. Focusing on the skills that students feel are missing in the K-12 system will promote and encourage better college preparation and provide students with skills that first-year community college students claim to be valuable to being successful in college.

Another implication from this project might be the restructuring of the education system. Academic content is important; however, students are learning content that does not apply to their future goals or passions. A student who has a passion for design will not find thematic writing, calculus, and certain science courses applicable to their future goals. By restructuring how the education system focuses content, students will become better, more well-rounded citizens in society who can thrive in their passions, and they can focus their attentions on what is most applicable to them. By encouraging this shift in

education, student motivation and wiliness to learn has the potential to increase based on learning being more individualized for each student.

The readiness gap between high school and college might diminish. With districts creating college readiness plans through collaboration with a multitude of stakeholders and K-12 educators, the focus on strictly academic knowledge might shift to include a tracking system for students to be better prepared them for college based on their passions and goals in life. Each classroom, each teacher, and each grade level will all have a plan that builds upon the previous grade levels. There will be a strong emphasis on Conley's (2014a) Four Keys to College Readiness. With more graduating high school students prepared for college based on the needs and necessities of what students are needing to know to be successful in their goals and passions, the number of students in need of remedial courses might possibly diminish, and colleges might have higher retention rates.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The problem that I address in this project was the overwhelming number of students who enter college unprepared and need to take remedial courses. Driven by research, literature, and data, the focus of this project was on preparing students for college by supporting students' passions and goals. This project provides stakeholders an opportunity to give input into what is needed in K-12 education to encourage student preparation. The project reduces the communication gap that exists between colleges, universities, school districts, and career leaders (Dumas & Anderson, 2014). With more collaboration between all entities, K-12 educators will have a better foundation to build, implement, and teach college ready skills that are focused on students' passions (Edmunds et al., 2017).

This project also provides opportunities for districts to build a personal, more customized college readiness program that fits their own district. The district will have a full college readiness program that runs K-12 and is unified throughout all grade levels due to the collaboration and work that each educator puts into creating and designing the college ready program. K-12 educators are given the opportunity to voice how students' passions can be encouraged in the classroom (Edwards & Gammell, 2017). K-12 educators will be given the opportunity to share their strengths with their colleagues and collaborate in the building of a school district focused on building and encouraging students' passions.

Project limitations. This project has limitations. For this project to be a success, follow up and support must be given to the district and K-12 educators (Edwards & Gammell, 2017; Gulamhussein, 2013). If there is no follow up with the district or K-12 educators, the college readiness program that K-12 educators, district leaders, and stakeholders created may not succeed.

Another possible limitation for this project is the amount of information that is shared, and the work that is needed to create a college readiness program for the district. Districts need to be willing to put in time, effort, and money into creating a well-balanced program with the collaboration between K-12 educators and stakeholders. Districts need to understand the importance of the professional development and the meaningful academic goals that are expressed within the professional development (Colwell, MacIsaac, Tichenor, Heins, & Piechura, 2014). If districts are not willing to invest completely into the project, the professional development might not produce the best results that it could potentially hold. If the district uses the professional development (PD) to only fill PD days, there will not be a unified college readiness program that is spread throughout all grade levels. Some K-12 educators will walk away from the professional development willing to try new things, and others will see no benefit to it at all.

Literature has stated that teacher buy-in is a potential limitation (Fullan, 2002; Silin & Schwartz, 2003; Zimmerman, 2006). Teachers may not support the districts move to implement a college readiness program. Teachers might also find it frustrating to have to change their teaching style in the classroom. This might be especially true for veteran

teachers who have been teaching in the district for many years. Teachers may not give their full effort to the implementation of a college ready program in the district. There is the possibility that teachers will do the bare minimum, causing areas of the program to be weakened and not support students the way in which it was intended. Overall, this project will need teacher buy-in if it is to be successful.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

There are many alternative approaches another researcher could take with this study. Because the focus of this study was on the perception of first-year community college students in remedial classes, another approach could be to include any first-year community college students without limitations. This would allow for a wider range of understanding from students who are considered college ready and students who are not considered college ready. Also, this study focused on community college students; including university students would allow for a larger population and a different perspective on college readiness.

This study might also be more specific if a researcher focused on different academic content. For example, instead of remedial students, the focus for a case study might be first-year college students in specific reading, writing, or mathematic classes. This would allow for a deeper understanding of college readiness based on specific academic content. Students could give valuable insight into what they believe is missing or could be improved in preparing students in these specific content areas.

Another approach that would yield valuable information would be a narrative study that follows the educational journey of a senior in high school through their first

year of college. To gain a first-hand experience of an individual who is going through this educational process would provide valuable information for educational leaders, district leaders, and college and university leaders. Understanding the education process of senior year in high school through the first year of college would give a first-hand perspective of what students struggle with and what they find important.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The emphasis of the current study is on understanding how first-year community college students felt they were prepared for college, and what they felt was missing in the K-12 education system to better prepare them for college. Much of the data reflected what other research had already found; specifically, certain skills are needed for college readiness (Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation, 2016; Conley, 2014b). However, some data that emerged from the study were new. One new datum that emerged was the need for a tracking-system or pathway system for high school students. I was not expecting to hear this from the participants. I found it fascinating that first-year community college students believed that the K-12 education system needs to include some type of system that is already found in some of the top performing countries such as Finland and the United Kingdom (EP-Nuffic, 2015; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

I found that saturation of the data occurred around the seventh participant, which had been expressed by Guest et al. (2006). However, gaining more insight from three more participants and comparing the findings to other research added to the

generalizability of the data (Golafshani, 2003; Leung, 2015). The participants were willing and open to discussing their feelings and opinions on college readiness and what is missing in the K-12 education system. With the participants being chosen completely at random, and each participant having different backgrounds, the saturation of data was quite surprising.

The development of the project was based on the initial idea of college readiness. However, after reviewing literature and the data of the study, then my focus for the project changed to include the emerging themes that participants expressed were missing in the K-12 system. With most of the participants expressing the need for the education system to focus on students' passions, and create pathways for students, the project was altered from college readiness to a focus on passion driven education. Providing knowledge, training, and opportunities for collaboration are just some of the many benefits of research (Georghiou, 2015). The project was designed to share new knowledge and provide an opportunity for training and collaboration amongst K-12 educators, administrators, district leaders, and career leaders. The goal of the project was to share the importance and need for the incorporation of students' passions within education.

The research conducted in this study revealed what first-year community college students believed was missing in the K-12 education system. As the data correlated with previous research in certain areas, I believe new knowledge was gained through the semistructured interviews. The data revealed a need for change within the K-12 education system. Through professional development, the new knowledge gained from this study

and related literature might incite conversations and reform within the K-12 education system.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Having the opportunity to investigate a problem on a much deeper level is very enlightening. Discovering that there was very little qualitative research that had been conducted about college readiness was rather surprising. There were many studies that focused on the quantitative measures of college readiness, but very little research had been conducted to study the ideas and perceptions of the students who were most effected by the K-12 system. Due to the little qualitative research that had been conducted on students' perceptions of the K-12 education system, I wanted to investigate the ideas and perceptions first-year community college students had about college readiness. I kept wondering why educational policies were being written without listening to the ones that are most effected by them. K-12 educators know that education needs to be student centered, but very little research has been done to involve student thought and ideology regarding their own learning. With this study, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of college readiness by listening to the individuals that should have been properly prepared for college.

Gaining a deeper understanding of college readiness through the perceptions of first-year community college students taking remedial classes was educational. The issues and problems that the participants discussed were both surprising and predictable. After listening to the participants share their ideas and thoughts, I found that I had more questions that could lead to more research. There was a lot of uniformity in the answers

that the participants gave. It was interesting to hear their thoughts on college readiness and their feelings on how little their K-12 education prepared them for college. It was also interesting to hear their personal stories and how it had an impact, some positively and others negatively, on their K-12 education.

I found enjoyment in finding the answers to the "Why?" in life. I found I prefer to take a more qualitative approach to life, and I feel it gives a deeper sense of understanding. Even though it may be more time consuming, and involve more effort and energy, the answers that are gained from a qualitative study are informative and have the potential of being transformative. This is not to say that quantitative studies are not valid or just as important. I feel that a qualitative study provides a deeper understanding to a problem and can give information that can improve lingering issues. The qualitative process allows the researcher to see, feel, and hear in deeper, more meaningful way the issues, struggles, and life experiences that participants face. It allows for transparency and vulnerability. The knowledge that is gained from qualitative studies provides deeper meaning and substance to problems that need to be addressed. The answers in qualitative studies provide a glimpse into the lives of others and present the researcher with the opportunity to gain a deeper connection to the problem with the interactions from the participants.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The knowledge gained from this study has many implications on multiple levels. There is a strong opportunity for change in the academic setting. Currently, education is focused on achievement scores and college entrance exams, however, there is much more

to college readiness and student learning than these two aspects (ACT, 2016a; Edmunds et al., 2017). This study has provided findings that can shift the idea from education being focused on numbers, and place emphasis on the whole student. Due to the focus that the education system currently has on student achievement, students, as individuals, are not at the center of education (Jimenez et al., 2016). Students have become nothing more than numbers in a large system. This study will add to the research that has already been conducted about college readiness and give new insight into the struggles that students are facing on a personal level. This study might help policymakers and educational leaders reassess K-12 education and put emphasis on the whole student, rather than only on the academic content.

This study might encourage communication and collaboration between school districts, college and university leaders, and career leaders. The findings of this study might bridge the gap between what is needed in collegiate studies and how students are being prepared for college. Districts can begin to focus their efforts on addressing what is missing in preparing students within the K-12 setting. School districts might start to reevaluate college readiness as a grade wide initiative and not just a high school initiative. With the knowledge of what first-year community college students feel is missing in the K-12 system, school districts and K-12 educators can modify how students are being encouraged and prepared for college and begin focusing on student-centered learning where the students' passions and interests are what drives learning.

This study provides K-12 educators with new knowledge that can be used in the classroom to address college readiness issues. The focus for college readiness in all grade

levels might begin a much-needed conversation between K-12 educators, district leaders, and career leaders. Teachers might begin collaborating with other teachers from other grade levels to determine the needs that should be addressed in the classroom concerning college readiness. Instead of college readiness being a number or level of understanding, it might be reshaped to include needs and necessities of specific careers.

Overall, this study can have an impact on multiple levels. Career leaders, district leaders, and education leaders might begin to reassess how college readiness is supported and taught within the classroom. Listening to first-hand experiences from first-year community college students about what they felt was missing in their K-12 education will provide opportunities for school districts to reassess the focus of classroom content and academic structure.

This study has led to the potential for future research in college readiness. One future study might have a qualitative approach that focuses on college readiness through the perspectives of first-year community college students from community colleges and universities. One might compare the different perspectives from both community college students and university students do determine any differences or similarities that might exist. The research could focus on how first-year community college students felt their K-12 education prepared and underprepared them for college.

With many of the participants suggesting a track system within K-12 education, future research might include a mixed-methods study that would compare students in a traditional style education, such as those found in the United States, to students who are in a type of tracking system, like those found in Finland, Japan, or Great Britain where

the passion and goals of those students determine the path they take in education. Student motivation, academic success, and college readiness might be correlated depending on which style of education system they might be in.

A longitudinal study might also be appropriate to better understand the relevance of academic content through the perception of high school students. A longitudinal study that focuses on high school juniors and seniors and their journey through graduating and entering college might provide a deeper, more detailed understanding as to what motivates and drives students to make certain academic choices. A study that focuses on understanding students' academic choices would yield valuable information as to how the education system might need to change to better meet the needs of all students.

Another potential study would be a qualitative study include only first-year community college students who are English Language Learners (ELL). To gain a perspective from students who have English as a second language might provide information that might benefit school districts and K-12 educators on how to better prepare ELL students. ELL students already struggle due to the language barriers in the classroom. To gain a deeper understanding of the struggles that these students go through in the K-12 setting, might encourage better classroom techniques to overcome the hardships that these students face.

Along the same lines as a study that includes ELL students, future research might focus on refugee students who are new to the United States and are placed in public schools. This research might yield new insights into the struggles and hardships that refugee students face in the classroom, and how they feel these hardships hinder them

from college readiness. With more refugees coming to the United States, gaining a deeper understanding from the perspective of first-year refugee college students will help K-12 educators and school districts implement strategies in the classroom that can help refugee students.

Ultimately, due to the lack of qualitative studies that seek to understand college readiness through students' perspectives, the possibilities for future research might be endless. With the understanding that qualitative research takes more time and effort to accomplish, these studies will provide a deeper meaning and understanding to the education gaps between high school expectations and collegiate expectations. These studies might be necessary to reshape the focus of K-12 education to be more student centered.

Conclusion

Students entering these institutions underprepared might not be successful in their academic progression. There needs to be a shift in how students are being prepared for collegiate studies. First-year community college students taking remedial courses have expressed their frustrations and views on what they felt was missing in their K-12 education. The new findings gained from this study need to be strongly taken into consideration for future generations. If students are missing important content or skills that will help them be college ready, then school districts have a responsibility to the students to change the curriculum or teaching standards to better equip the students to be better prepared for college.

First-year community college students expressed the need for more real-world learning; noting many aspects from Conley's (2014a) Four Keys to College Readiness. Participants expressed the disconnect from high school to college, and the lack of fluidity between both educational settings. First-year community college students taking remedial courses also noted that the culture and environment of their high school played a significant part in preparing students for college. This insight shows that college readiness is not necessarily content knowledge, but also the environment and attitude that is expressed within the education environment.

Students have expressed that K-12 education is not properly preparing students for college (Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation, 2016). Students have expressed their frustration with being taught to take tests instead of being taught relevant, real-world skills that will help them be more successful in the real-world. The findings help in the support and growth of current students and change how students are being prepared for collegiate studies. The focus of students being taught strictly content, academics, and standardized tests can shift to a better, more well-rounded student who is prepared on multiple levels of college readiness to be more successful in the real world.

References

ACT. (2013). Readiness matters: The impact of college readiness on college persistence and degree completion. Policy Report. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED542017.

ACT. (2016a). ACT national curriculum survey 2016. *ACT Inc,* 1-81. Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/NCS_Report_Web.pdf

ACT. (2016b). The condition of college and career readiness 2016. *ACT Inc,* 1-19. Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/CCCR_National_2016.pdf

ACT. (2017). The ACT test for students. *ACT Inc.* Retrieved from http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html.

Akcoltekin, A. (2015). High school students' time management skills in relation to research anxiety. *Education Research and Reviews, 10*(16), 2241-2249. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ1078338.

Aldridge, J., & Fraser, B. (2016). Teachers' views of their school climate and its relationships with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. *Learning Environment Research, 19*(2), 291-307. 10.1007/s10984-015-9198-x

Anderson, L., & Fulton, M. (2015). Multiple measures for college readiness. *Education Commission of the States,* 1-5. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED561931.

Andrews, A., & Brown, J. (2015). The effects of math anxiety. *Education*, *135*(3), 362-370.

Anis, Y., Krause, J. A., & Blum, E. N. (2016). The relations among mathematics anxiety, gender, and standardized test performance. *Research in The Schools*, *23*(2), 28-37.

Arnold, K. D., Lu, E. C., & Armstrong, K. J. (2012a). Individual: The attributes of college readiness. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *38*(5), 19-29.

Arnold, K. D., Lu, E. C., & Armstrong, K. J. (2012b). Special issue: The ecology of college readiness. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *38*(5), 1-138.

Bachman, R. M. (2013). Shifts in attitudes: A qualitative exploration of student attitudes towards efforts of remediation. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education*, *29*(2), 14-29.

Balestreri, K., Sambolt, M., Duhon, C., Smerdon, B., & Harris, J. (2014). The college and career readiness and success organizer. *College and Career Readiness and Success Center*, 1-32. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED555672.

Ball, C. L. (2016). Sparking passion: Engaging student voice through project-based learning in learning communities. *Learning Communities: Research & Practice*, *4*(1), 1-8. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ1112791.

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2014). Making students college ready in high school. *Kappan, 95*(5), 72-73. Retrieved from https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.1177/003172171409500517.

Barnes, W., & Slate, J. R. (2013). College-readiness is not one-size-fits-all. *Current Issues in Education, 16*(1), 1-13.

Barnett, B., Turchi, L., Johnson, D., Hare, D., Duncan Owens, D., & Clements, S. (2003). The impact of high-stakes accountability on teachers' professional development: Evidence from the south. Chapel Hill, SC: Southwest Center for Teaching Quality, Inc.

Batel, S., & Sargrad, S. (2016). Better tests, fewer barriers: Advances in accessibility through PARCC and smarter balanced. *Center for American Progress*, 1-26. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED568077.

Battersby, S. L., & Verdi, B. (2015). The culture of professional learning communities and connections to improve teacher efficacy and support student learning. Arts Education Policy Review, 116(1), 22-29. doi: 10.1080/10632913.2015.970096

Bragg, C. (2016). Performance measurement report. CSI. Retrieved from https://dfm.idaho.gov/publications/bb/perfreport/pr2017/education/pr_CSI.pdf.

Brennan, J. (2017). ESSA: Mapping opportunities for civic education. *Education Commission of the States*, 1-10. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED574090.

Brown, C. R., & Spangler, D. (2006). Creating sustainable reform: Five urban districts implement models for continuous improvement and lasting change. *School Administrator, 63*(8), 18-22.

Brozo, W. G., & Fisher, D. (2010).. *Educational Leadership, 67*(6), 74-77.

Center on Standards and Assessments Implementation. (2016). High school graduation requirements in a time of college and career readiness. *CSAI*, 1-69.

Childress, S., & Benson, S. (2014). Personalized learning for every student every day. *Kappan, 95*(8), 33-38.

Childs-Bowen, D., Moller, G., & Scivner, J. (2000). Principals: Leader of leaders. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 84*(616), 27-34.

Choy, S. P., Chen, X., Bugarin, R., & Broughman, S. P. (2006). Teacher professional development in 1999-2000: What teachers, principals, and district staff report – statistical analysis report. *National Center for Education Statistics,* 1-158.

Colgren, C., & Sappington, N. E. (2015). Closing the achievement gap means transformation. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research, 2*(1), 24-33.

College Board. (2017). Work toward college success. *College Board and National Merit Scholarship Corporation.* Retrieved from https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap/the-rewards.

Colwell, C., MacIsaac, D., Tichenor, M., Heins, B, & Piechura, K. (2014). District and university perspectives on sustaining professional development schools: Do the NCATE standards matter? *The Professional Educator, 38*(2), 17-26

Complete College America. (2014). The game changers: Corequisite remediation. *Complete College America.* Retrieved from http://completecollege.org/the-game-changers/.

Conley, D. T. (2012). A Complete Definition of College and Career Readiness. *Educational Policy Improvement Center,* 1-4. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED537876.

Conley, D. T. (2014a). A new era for educational assessment. Students at the center: Deeper learning research series. *Jobs for the Future,* 1-44. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED559683.

Conley, D. T. (2014b). *Getting ready for college, careers, and the Common Core: What every educator needs to know*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Conley, D., & French, E. (2014). Student ownership of learning as a key component of college readiness. *American Behavioral Scientist, 58*(8), 1018-1034.

Conley, D., McGaughy, C., Davis-Molin, W., Farkas, R., & Fukuda, E. (2014) International baccalaureate diploma program: Examining college readiness. *Educational Policy Improvement Center*, 1-34.

Connolly, F., Olson, L. S., Durham, R. E., Plank, S. B. (2014). Indicators of college readiness: A comparison of high school and college measures. *Baltimore Education Research Consortium,* 1-66. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED553163.pdf.

Correnti, R. (2007). An empirical investigation of professional development effects on literacy instruction using daily logs. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 29*(4), 262-295.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Curry, D. (2017). Where to focus so students become college and career ready. *Journal of Research & Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary & Basic Education, 6*(1), 62-66.

Danielson, C. (2002). Enhancing student achievement: A framework for school improvement. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2005). Teaching as a profession: Lessons in teacher preparation and professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(3), 237-240.

Darling-Hammond, L., Bransford, J., LePage, P., & Hammerness, K. (2007). Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). Teacher learning: What matters? *Educational Leadership, 66*(5), 46-53.

DeNisco, A. (2015). Defining college and career readiness. *District Administration, 51 (*4), 22.

Deeds, C., Malter, Z. (2016). What Can States Learn about College and Career Readiness Accountability Measures from Alternative Education? Ask the CCRS Center. *College and Career Readiness and Success Center,* 1-8.

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher, 38*(3), 181-199.

Desimone, L., Garet, M., Birman, B., Porter, A., & Suk Yoon, K. (2001). How do district management and implementation strategies relate to the quality of professional development that districts provide to teachers? *Teachers College Record, 104*(7), 1265-1312.

Desimone, L., Porter, A., Garet, M., Suk Yoon, K., & Birman, B. (2002). Does professional development change teachers' instruction? Results from a three-year study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(2), 82-112.

Diaz-Maggioli, G. (2004). Teacher-centered professional development. Alexandria: VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

DiBenedetto, C. C., & Myers, B. B. (2016). A conceptual model for the study of student readiness in the 21st century. *NACTA Journal, 60,* 28-35.

Dicembre, E. (2002). How they turned the ship around. *Journal of Staff Development, 23*(2), 32-35.

Digby, J. (2016). Got AP? *Journal of The National Collegiate Honors Council, 17*(2), 31-35.

Donham, J. (2014). College ready – what can we learn from first-year college assignments? An examination of assignments in Iowa colleges and universities. *School Library Research, 17.* 1-21.

Dumas, M. J., & Anderson, G. (2014). Qualitative research as policy knowledge: Framing policy problems and transforming education from the ground up. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 22 (11). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22n11.2014.

Dumez, H. (2015). What is a case, and what is a case study? *Bulletin of Sociological Methodology, 127*(1), 43-57.

Edmunds, J. A., Arshavsky, N., Lewis, K., Thrift, B., Faith, U., & Furey, J. (2017). Preparing students for college: Lessons learned from the early college. *NASSP Bulletin, 101*(2), 117-141. DOI: 10.1177/0192636517713848

Edwards, B., & Gammell, J. (2017). Environmental impact: Reinforce a culture of continuous learning with these key elements. *Learning Professional, 38*(6), 42-43.

EP-Nuffic. (2015). Education system Japan. *Ep Nuffic,* 1-44. Retrieved from https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-japan.pdf.

Every Students Succeeds Act, 1177 U.S.C. § 114-95 (2015).

Field, B. E., Blakeney, R., Burton, M., Dunlap, E., Faile, J., Hudson, Z., & Jackson, M. (2010). The university of South Carolina professional development school network: Twenty years of effective collaboration. *School-University Partnerships, 4*(2), 41-52.

Firestone, W. A., Mangin, M. M., Martinez, M. C., & Polovsky, T. (2005). Leading coherent professional development: A comparison of three districts. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41*(3), 413-448.

Fullan, M. (2002). The change. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 16–20.

Fullan, M. (2006). Leading professional learning: Think "system" and not "individual school" if the goal is to fundamentally change the culture of schools. Retrieved from http://www.questia.com

Gaertner, M. N., & McClarty, K. L. (2015). Performance, perseverance, and the full picture of college readiness. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice, 34*(2), 20-33. doi:10.1111/emip.12066

Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B. F., & Suk Yoon, K. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 915-945.

Gazdzik, K. (2014). How children succeed: Grit, curiosity, and the hidden power of character. *Teaching and Learning*, *28*(1), 44-47.

Geertshuis, S., Jung, M., & Cooper-Thomas, H. (2014). Preparing students for higher education: The role of proactivity. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 26*(2), 157-169.

Georghiou, L. (2015). Value of research. *European Commission,* 1-15. Doi: 10.2777/732192.

Gigliotti, J. (2012). Rice university: Innovation to increase student college readiness. *Continuing Higher Education Review, 76,* 166-174.

Glancy, E., Fulton, M., Anderson, L., Zinth, J. D., & Millard, M. (2014). Blueprint for college readiness: A 50-state policy analysis. *Education Commission of the States,* 1-163. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED556058.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(4), 597-607.

Greene, W. (2003). The challenge of quality professional development. *Journal of Jewish Education, 69*(1), 23-36.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 50-82.

Gulamhussein, A. (2013). Teaching the teachers: Effective professional development in an era of high stakes accountability. *Center for Public Education*, 1-44.

Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 8*(3/4), 381-391.

Guskey, T. R. (2003). Scooping up meaningful evidence. *Journal of Staff Development, 24*(4), 27-30.

Haiyan, Q., Walker, A., & Xiaowei, Y. (2017). Building and leading a learning culture among teachers. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45*(1), 101-122. Doi: 10.1177/1741143215623785

Hassel, H., & Giordano, J. B. (2015). The blurry borders of college writing: Remediation and the assessment of student readiness. *College English, 78*(1), 56-80.

Haughey, M., Snart, F., & DaCosta, J. (2001). Literacy achievement in small grade 1 classes in high-poverty environments. *Canadian Journal of Education, 26*(3), 1-12.

Hayes, L. L., & Robnolt, V. J. (2007). Data-driven professional development: The professional development plan for a reading excellence act school. *Reading Research and Instruction, 46*(2), 95-119.

Heller, J. I., Daehler, K. R., & Shinohara, M. (2003). Connecting all the pieces. *Journal of Staff Development, 24*(4), 36-41.

Hilgoe, E., Brinkley, J., Hattingh, J., & Bernhardt, R. (2016). The effectiveness of the north carolina early mathematics placement test in preparing high school students for college-level introductory mathematics courses. *College Student Journal, 50*(3), 369-377.

Hillman, N., Cast, H. J., & George-Jackson, C. (2015). When to begin? Socioeconomic and racial/ethnic differences in financial planning, preparing, and saving for college. *Teacher College Record, 117*(8), 1-28.

Hirsh, S. (2004). Putting comprehensive staff development on target. *Journal of Staff Development, 25(*1), 12-15.

Hirsh, S., & Killion, J. (2009). When educators learn, students learn: 8 principles of professional learning. Phi Delta Kappan, 90(7), 464-469.

Hoerr, T. R. (2010). Principal as parachute. *Educational Leadership*, 67(4), 90-91.

Holler, E. W., Calender, S., & Skinner, C. (2007). Time well spent. *Principal Leadership, 7*(9), 42-44.

Human Rights Advocate. (2017). 2017 world best education systems – 1st quarter report. *World Top 20 Project.* Retrieved from https://worldtop20.org/2017-world-best-education-systems-1st-quarter-report.

Idaho Business for Education. (2015). 2015 Idaho high school career & college readiness scores. *Idaho State Board of Education,* 1-58. Retrieved from http://www.idahobe.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/SAT-College-Career-Readiness-Report.pdf.

Idaho State Board of Education. (2017). Need of remediation for math and/or english. ISBE. Retrieved from https://boardofed.idaho.gov/publications-research/statistics/.

Idaho State Department of Education. (2017a). High school graduation requirements. Retrieved from https://sde.idaho.gov/topics/hs-grad-req/.

Idaho State Department of Education. (2017b). i-STEM. Retrieved from https://www.sde.idaho.gov/academic/istem/.

Institute of Education Sciences. (2007). Review of the evidence on professional development and student achievement. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/pdf.

Jacobson, D. (2010). Coherent instructional improvement and PLCs: Is it possible to do both? *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(6), 38-45.

Jihyun, L., & Durksen, T. L. (2018). Dimensions of academic interest among undergraduate students: passion, confidence, aspiration, and self-expression. *Educational Psychology, 30*(2), 120-138. Doi: 10.1080/01443410.2017.1342770

Jimenez, L., Sargrad, S., Morales, J., & Thompson, M. (2016) The cost of catching up. *Center for American Progress.* Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/reports/2016/09/28/144000/remedial-education/.

Jimenez, L., & Thompson, M. (2016) The cost of catching up in Idaho. Generation Progress: Center for American Progress. Retrieved from http://cdn.genprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/01104509/COCU-Fact-Sheet_ID.pdf.

Jochim, A., & McGuinn, P. (2016). The politics of the common core assessments: Why states are quitting the PARCC and smarter balanced testing consortia. *Education Next, 16*(4), 45-51.

Jordan, M., Chrislip, D., & Workman, E. (2016). Collaborative stakeholder engagement. Special report. *Education Commission of the States,* 1-6.

Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002a). Student achievement through staff development. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002b). Testing the proposition: Cases in point. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter

Karp, M. M., & Bork, R. H. (2014). "They never told me what to expect, so I didn't know what to do": Defining and clarifying the role of community college student. *Teachers College Record, 116*(5), 1-40

Kedro, M. J., & Short, W. E. (2004). Many schools, one complex measure. *Journal of Staff Development, 25*(3), 44-49.

King, M. B., & Newmann, F. M. (2000). Will teacher learning advance school goals? *Phi Delta Kappan, 81(*8), 576-580.

Kiriakidis, P. (2009). Professional development in higher education. Toronto, ON: Research and Education Consulting Corporation.

Klasik, D. (2013). The ACT of enrollment: The college enrollment effects of state-required college entrance exam testing. *Educational Researcher*, *42*(3), 151-160. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X12474065

Knapp, M. (2003). Chapter 4: Professional development as a policy pathway. *Review of Research in Education, 27*(1), 109-157.

Kose, B. W. (2009). The principal's role in professional development for social justice: An empirically based transformative framework. Urban Education, 44(6), 628-633.

Koch, B., Slate, J. R., & Moore, G. (2012). Perceptions of students in developmental classes. *Community College Enterprise, 18*(2), 62-82.

Komarraju, M., Ramsey, A., & Rinella, V. (2013). Cognitive and non-cognitive predictors of college readiness and performance: Role of academic discipline. *Learning and Individual Differences, 24,* 103-109.

Kowski, L. E. (2013). Does high school performance predict college math placement? *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 37*(7), 514-527.

Kurlaender, M., & Howell, J. S. (2012). Academic preparation for college: Evidence of the importance of academic rigor in high school. New York, NY: The College Board.

Kyllonen, P. C., Lipnevich, A. A., Burrus, J., & Roberts, R. D. (2014). Personality, motivation, and college readiness: A prospectus for assessment and development. *ETS Research Reports Series*, 1-48. doi:10.1002/ets2.12004

Laitsch, D. (2003). What professional development structures best affect classroom instruction? Retrieved from https://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE

Larmer, J. (2016). It's a project-based world. *Educational Leadership*, (6), 66.

Laitsch, D. (2004). Teacher professional development in high-stakes accountability systems. Retrieved from https://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.MAXIMIZE

Lee, J., & Durksen, T. L. (2018). Dimensions of academic interest among undergraduate students: Passion, confidence, aspiration and self-expression. *Educational Psychology, 38*(2), 120-138.

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, *4*(3), 324-327. Doi: 10.4103/2249-4863.161306

Lindsay, J., Davis, E., Stephan, J., Bonsu, P., & Narlock, J. (2016). Ramping up for college readiness in minnesota high schools: Implementation of schoolwide program. *Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest,* 1-50. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED566907.

Linek, W. M., Fleener, C., Faxio, M., Raine, I. L., & Klakamp, K. (2003). The impact of shifting from "how to teach" to "how children learn." *Journal of Educational Research, 97*(2), 78-89.

Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtle, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Logue, A. W., Douglas, D., & Watanabe-Rose, M. (2017). Reforming remediation: College students mainstreamed into statistics are more likely to succeed. *Education Next*, *17*(2), 78-84.

Lowden, C. (2005). Evaluating the impact of professional development. Retrieved from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/research/index.cfm

Mangan, K. (2017). Cal state's retreat from remediation stokes debate on college readiness. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 64*(4), 40.

Mangrum, J. R. (2010). Sharing practice through Socratic seminars. *Phi Delta Kappan, 9*1(7), 40-43.

Mann, S. B., & Martin, R. (2016). A roadmap to college readiness. *State Higher Education Executive Officers,* 1-38. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED569340.

Mariani, M., Berger, C., Koerner, K., & Sandlin, C. (2016). Operation occupation: A college and career readiness intervention for elementary students. *Professional School Counseling*, *20*(1), 65-76. doi:10.5330/1096-2409-20.1.65

Maruyama, G. (2012). Assessing college readiness: Should we be satisfied with ACT or other threshold scores?. *Educational Researcher*, *41*(7), 252-261. doi:10.3102/0013189X12455095

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). School leadership that works—from research to results. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mattern, K. K., Allen, J. J., & Camara, W. W. (2016). Thoughts on a multidimensional middle school index of college readiness. *Educational Measurement: Issues & Practice*, *35*(3), 30-34.

Mattern, K. D., Shaw, E. J., & Marini, J. (2013). Does college readiness translate to college completion? *College Board*. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED562613.

MacCann, C., Duckworth, A. L., & MacCann, C. (2009). Empirical identification of the major facets of Conscientiousness. *Learning and Individual Differences*, *19*(4), 451-458.

McNeish, D. M., Radunzel, J., Sanchez, E. (2015). A multidimensional perspective of college readiness: Relating student and school characteristics to performance on the ACT. ACT research report series 2015 (6). *ACT Inc.*, 1-56.

Merz, S. (2015). Teaching the soft skills: Three students break it down. *Education Horizons*, 18-20.

Mincu, M. E. (2015). Teacher quality and school improvement: What is the role of research? Oxford Review of Education, 41(2), 253-269. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1023013

Ministry of Education and Culture. (2017). "Education in Finland". *Finnish National Agency for Education,* 1-27. Retrieved from http://www.oph.fi/download/171176_finnish_education_in_a_nutshell.pdf.

Mizell, H. (2001). How to get there from here. *Journal of Staff Development, 22*(3), 18-22.

Mobley, C. c., Sharp, J. J., Hammond, C. C., Withington, C. c., & Stipanovic, N. N. (2017). The influence of career-focused education on student career planning and development: A comparison of CTE and Non-CTE Students. *Career & Technical Education Research, 42*(1), 57-75. doi:10.5328/cter42.1.57

Munoz, M. A., & Branham, K. E. (2016). Professional learning communities focusing on results and data-use to improve student learning: The right implementation matters. *Planning & Changing, 47*(1/2), 37-46.

Navarro, M. V. (2016). Class of 2015 advanced placement and international baccalaureate exam participation and performance. *Montgomery County Public Schools,* 1-36.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2017). Hot topic in higher education reforming remedial education. *National Conference of State Legislatures.* Retrieved from http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/improving-college-completion-reforming-remedial.aspx.

National Staff Development Council. (2001). Standards for staff development. Retrieved from http://www.uky.edu/Education/CPD/nationaldoc.

Nicholas-Barrer, I., Place, K., Dillon, E., & Gill, B. (2016). Testing college readiness: Massachusetts compares the validity of two standardized tests. *Education Next,* 16(3), 70-77.

Neuman, S. B., & Cunningham, L. (2008). The impact of professional development and coaching on early language and literacy instructional practices. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*(2), 532-566.

No Child Left Behind, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2001).

Parikh, S. B. (2013). Urban high school students' experiences in an afterschool college readiness program. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, *45*(2), 220-231.

Peine, J. (2003). Planning, measuring their own growth. *Journal of Staff Development, 24*(1), 38-42.

Phipps, R. (1998). College remediation: What it is, what it costs, what's at stake. *The Institute for Higher Education Policy*. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED429525.

Porter, A. C., & Polikoff, M. S. (2012). Measuring academic readiness for college. Educational Policy, 26(3), 394–417. doi:10.1080/00098655.2013.782850

Radcliffe, R. A., & Bos, B. (2013). Strategies to prepare middle school and high school students for college and career readiness. *The Clearing House, 86*(4), 136-141.

Richert, K. (2017). SAT scores illustrate a college-readiness gap. *Idaho Education News.* Retrieved from https://www.idahoednews.org/news/sat-scores-illustrate-college-readiness-gap/.

Reeves, D. (2010). Transforming professional development into student results. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rodriquez, N. N., DiSanto, J., Varelas, A., Brennan, S., Wolfe, K., & Ialongo, E. (2017). Building understanding of high school students' transition to college. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *29*(2), 402-411.

Roorda, D. L., Jak, S., Zee, M., Oort, F. J., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2017). Affective teacher-student relationship and students' engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic update and test of the mediating role of engagement. *School Psychology Review*, *46*(3), 239-261. 10.17105/SPR-2017-0035.V46-3

Rothman, R. (2009). Improving student learning requires district learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *91*(1), 44-50.

Sajan, K. S., & Sindhu, M. (2014). Efficacy of Ethnographic Research in Education.

Sanchez, E. I. (2013). Differential effects of using ACT college readiness assessment scores and high school GPA to predict first-year college GPA among racial/ethnic, gender, and income groups. *ACT Inc.*, 1-52.

Saunders, W. M., Goldenberg, C. N., & Gallimore, R. (2009). Increasing achievement by focusing grade level teams on improving classroom instruction: A prospective, quasi-experimental study of Title I schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 46*(4), 1006-1033.

Schreurs, J., & Dumbraveanu, R. (2014). A shift from teacher centered to learner centered approach. *International journal of Engineering Pedagogy, 4*(3), 36-41.

Semadeni, J. (2010). When teachers drive their learning. *Educational Leadership, 67*(8), 66-69.

Sever, K., & Bowgren, L. (2007). Shaping the workday. *Journal of Staff Development, 28*(2), 20-23.

Silin, J., & Schwartz, F. (2003). Staying close to the teacher. *Teachers College Press, 105*(8), 1586–1605. doi:10.1111/1467-9620.00301

Skaalvik, E., & Skaalvik, S. (2017). Still Motivated? A study of school context variables, stress and job satisfaction among teachers in senior high school. *Social Psychology of Education, 20*(1), 15-37. 10.1007/s11218-016-9363-9

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. (2017). History. *The Regents of the University of California.* Retrieved from http://www.smarterbalanced.org/about/history/.

Stolk, J., & Harari, J. (2014). Student motivations as predictors of high-level cognitions in project-based classrooms. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 15*(3), 231-247. DOI: 10.1177/1469787414554873

Sugito, E. S., S. M., Hartono, & Supartono. (2017). Enhancing students' communication skills through problem posing and presentation. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education, 6*(1), 17-22.

The Princeton Review. (2017). About the SAT test. *TPR Education IP Holdings.* Retrieved from https://www.princetonreview.com/college/sat-information.

Tienken, C. H., & Stonaker, L. (2007). When every day is professional development day. *Journal of Staff Development, 28*(2), 24-29.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2005). Traveling the road to differentiation in staff development, *Journal of Staff Development, 26*(4), 8-12.

Ujifusa, A. (2015). Common core's big test: Tracking 2014-2015 results. *Education Week, 35*(14). Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-common-core-2015-test-results.html#id.

Uslu, F., & Gizir, S. (2017). School belonging of adolescents: The role of teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and family involvement. *Educational Science: Theory and Practice, 17*(1), 63-82. DOI 10.12738/estp.2017.1.0104

van de Berg, R. (2002). Teachers' meanings regarding educational practice. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(4), 577-625.

van Rooij, E. M., Jansen, E. A., & van de Grift, W. M. (2017). Factors that contribute to secondary school students' self-efficacy in being a successful university student. *Research in Post-Compulsory Education, 22*(4), 535-555. doi:10.1080/13596748.2017.1381301

Venzia, A., & Jaeger, L. (2013). Transition from high school to college. *Future of Children, 23*(1), 117-136.

Verrell, P. A., & McCabe, N. R. (2015). In their own words: Using self-assessments of college readiness to develop strategies for self-regulated learning. *College Teaching, 63*(4), 162-170. DOI: 10.1080/87567555.2015.1053046

Villatte, A., Marcotte, D., & Potvin, A. (2017). Correlates of depression in first-year college students. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 47*(1), 114-136.

Von Culin, K. R., Tsukayama, E., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). Unpacking grit: Motivational correlates of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 9*(4), 306-312.

Weinbaum, R. K., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2016). Getting more out of your interview data: Toward a framework for debriefing the transcriber of interviews. *Journal of Educational Issues, 2*(1), 248-264.

Western Regional Educational Laboratory. (2000). Teachers who learn: Kids who achieve. San Francisco: WestEd.

Willingham, D. T. (2009). Why don't students like school? A cognitive scientist answers questions about how the mind works and what it means for the classroom. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Wilson-Strydom, M. (2010). Traversing the chasm from school to university in south africa: A student perspective. *Tertiary Education & Management, 16*(4), 313. doi:10.1080/13583883.2010.532565

Yi-Hwa Liou, & Daly, A. J. (2014). Closer to learning. *Journal of School Leadership, 24*(4), 753-795.

Youngs, P. (2001). District and state policy influences on professional development and school capacity. *Educational Policy, 15*(2), 278-301.

Zepeda, S. J. (2008). Professional Development—What works. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Zientek, L. R., Schneider, C. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2014). Instructors' perceptions about student success and placement in developmental mathematics courses. *Community College Enterprise*, *20*(1), 67-84.

Zimmerman, J. (2006). Why some teachers resist change and what principals can do about it. *NASSP Bulletin, 90*(3), 238–249. doi:10.1177/0192636506291521

Zinth, J. (2012). Defining college readiness: Where are we now, and where do we need to be? The progress of education reform. *Education Commission of the States, 13*(2), 1-7.

Appendix A: The Project

FOCUSING ON STUDENT PASSIONS

3-Day Professional Development

MEETING NORMS

- Be present (physically and mentally)
- Be on-time
- Start on time/finish on time
- Show respect at all times through active listening and participation
- Cell phones are turned off or placed on vibrate
- Communication is respectful, courteous, and engaging
- Everyone is equal and everyone has something to offer

"THE LONGSTANDING AMERICAN PREOCCUPATION WITH BREAKING SUBJECT-AREA KNOWLEDGE DOWN INTO SMALL BITS, TESTING STUDENTS' MASTERY OF EACH ONE, AND THEN TEACHING THOSE BITS SEQUENTIALLY, MAY IN FACT BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE."

DAVID T. CONLEY

GOALS

Understand	Gain a better understanding of what is missing in K-12 education
Understand	Understand what needs to be done to help students be more successful
Apply and Analyze	Apply new information to analyze ways on how we can better prepare our students for college
Create and Design	Create and design an academic system that focuses on students' passions

DAY 1: LAYING A FOUNDATION

DAY-1 OVERVIEW (8:00 TO 3:00)

- Introduction – Is the K-12 system missing something? (8:00-9:30)
- Break (9:30-9:40)
- What is the focus of the K-12 system? (9:40-11:30)
- Lunch (11:30-12:30)
- What is the purpose of the K-12 system?(12:30-1:30)
- Break (1:30-1:35)
- Is the K-12 system providing students with every opportunity? (1:35-2:30)
- Group Discussion (2:30-2:50)
- Reflect (2:50-3:00)

IS THE K-12 SYSTEM MISSING SOMETHING?

- More than 60% of first-year community college students need to take remedial courses
- State Universities vary from 11% to 56% of first-year students needing to take remedial courses
- High school graduates claim their schooling did not prepare them for college
- Something is missing in the K-12 system to properly prepare students for college
- This should be a major concern for school districts around the state

Percentage of First-Year College Students Needing to Take Remedial Courses

	2012	2013	2014	2015
State Universities				
Boise State University	10.4%	8.7%	9.4%	11.7%
University of Idaho	13.78%	10.71%	14.83%	13.97%
Idaho State University	39.79%	33.06%	34.44%	36.75%
Lewis-Clark State College	48.04%	52.05%	52.16%	56.11%
Community Colleges				
College of Southern Idaho	69.47%	65.6%	60.65%	60.63%
College of Western Idaho	89.11%	53.54%	64.93%	68.39%

WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE STATISTICS?

- Students are graduating high school not prepared to enter higher academics
- Students who need remedial courses tend to not finish their program or degree
- The number of first-year students needing remedial courses reflects negatively on the school system
- Something is missing in the K-12 system for all students to be prepared

HOW DO WE CHANGE?

- Humble ourselves
- Listen
  - To research
  - To students
  - To educators
  - To educational leaders
- Observe other countries who are doing well
- Be willing to change
- Implement new ideas and strategies

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

- Finland – 1st
- Japan – 2nd
- South Korea – 3rd
- United Kingdom – 7th
- Where do we measure up?
  - United States – 20th

Human Rights Advocate. (2017). 2017 world best education systems – 1st quarter report. *World Top 20 Project*. Retrieved from https://worldtop20.org/2017-world-best-education-systems-1st-quarter-report.

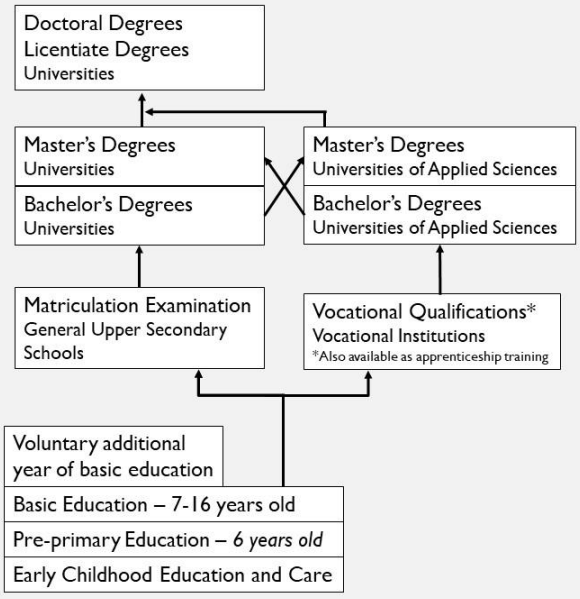
FINLAND

Early Childhood and Basic Education

- Basic education is provided within a single structure
- Assessment is part of daily schoolwork

General and Vocational Pathways

- General upper secondary education is flexibly organized
- Vocational education and training is organized in cooperation with the world of work



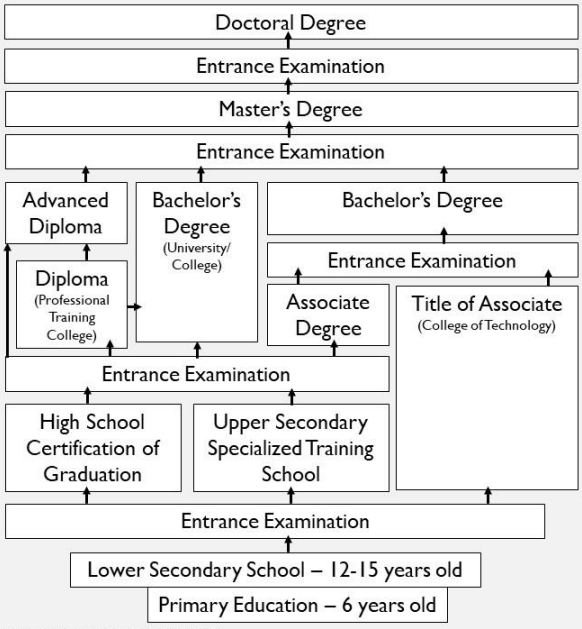
Ministry of Education and Culture. (2017). Education in Finland. Retrieved from http://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf

JAPAN

Primary Education
- Instructed by same teacher for 6 years
- The curriculum consists of Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, life studies, music, arts and handicrafts, homemaking, and physical education

Secondary Education
- Total of 9 years completed
- Requires examination
- School results determine whether they will be accepted to a good upper secondary school in the 3 upper grades of secondary education

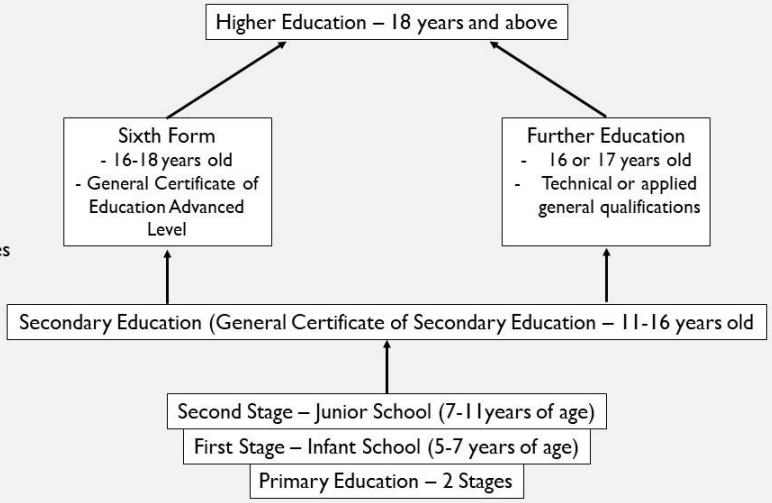
Upper Secondary School
- Requires examination
- Secondary vocational courses are provided
- Taught by specialist teachers



EP-Nuffic. (2015). The Japanese education system described and compared with the Dutch system. Retrieved from https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-japan.pdf.

UNITED KINGDOM

Secondary Education
- Provides students with options
- Strong emphasis on vocational studies



Hansen, K. & Vignoles, A. (n.d.). The United Kingdom education system in comparative context. Retrieved from https://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/library-media%5Cdocuments%5CThe%20UK%20Education%20System%20An%20International%20Perspective.pdf

SIMILARITIES

- Give students more than one pathway
- Focus on vocational studies
- Provide opportunities for students to focus on passions
- Students encouraged to focus on passions

- What's missing in the United States?

REMEMBER

"If you only measure the statistics, you miss the human aspect."

Timo Heikkinen – Helsinki Prinicipal

10 MINUTE BREAK

TED Talks [TED]. (2013, May 10). *How to escape education's death valley – Sir Ken Robinson* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/wX78iKhInsc

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM?

- Choose someone to be the scribe at your table
- Take a few minutes to discuss what you feel is the focus of the K-12 education system
- Be prepared to share out your ideas and thoughts

THE FOCUS OF THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Standardization
  - The standardization of education is intended to address major educational gaps in basic literacy, science, and math—all important skills for a viable career or continued education in the modern age (Fortunato, 2017).
  - "I never blame teachers or schools… But there is this deadly culture of standardizing, that's being pushed on them, politically. My core message here is that we have to personalize education, not standardize it. That all children are different, and we have to find their talents and cultivate them." ~Ken Robinson
- Testing
  - Standardized tests are critical for the assessment of students' progress, and of our nation's progress toward a standard that will ensure international competitiveness for our graduates (Benjamin & Pashler, 2015).
  - Most Americans believe there's too much emphasis on standardized testing in public schools, and they rank standardized testing lower than other approaches to measuring student progress such as examples of student work, grades awarded by the teacher, or written observations by the teacher (PDK/Gallup Poll, 2015).
- Policies
  - "If research is to engage with policy, then research and policy making must progress both theoretically and chronologically in tandem. Neither can claim precedence in the relationship" (As cited in Dumas & Anderson, 2014).

LUNCH BREAK

WELCOME BACK

- Ask yourself:
  - What is the purpose of education?
  - Why do students go to school?
  - How is K-12 education system being used?
  - Where is the K-12 system helping and/or hindering students?

As you watch the following video, please write down any thoughts and ideas you might have.

Next School. (2016, December 15). *6 Problems with our School System* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/okpg-IVWLbE.

DISCUSS AND SHARE

- Have a conversation at your table about the video
- What did you agree with?
- What did you not agree with?
- How did it make you feel?
- Is it an accurate representation of our current school system?

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE K-12 SYSTEM?

- According to the US Department of Education:
  - *Our mission* is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access (US Department of Education, 2018).
- Is this happening?
- Are students prepared for global competitiveness?
- Is educational excellence being fostered?

20TH IN THE WORLD

- With the United States ranked 20th in the world, there is a good chance that the US Department of Education's mission statement is not holding up.
- Why?
- Is it the money?
  - US spent $11,319 per FTE in 2014 (Most recent year data is available)*
  - Education spending declined 3% from 2010 to 2014*
  - Still one of the top countries in spending

*The Hechinger Report. (2017). US spends less as other nations invest more in education. *U.S. News.* Retrieved from https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-09-18/while-rest-of-the-world-invests-more-in-education-the-us-spends-less

20TH IN THE WORLD

- Why?
- Is it the graduation rate?
  - 2015 – 83.2%
  - 2016 – 84.1%
  - Risen 4% since 2011

Balingit, M. (2017). US high school graduation rates rise to ne high. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2017/12/04/u-s-high-school-graduation-rates-rise-to-new-high/?utm_term=.77beaf1b05af

20TH IN THE WORLD

- Why?
- Is it the scores?
  - Scores are lower than leading countries
  - From the most recent PISA results, U.S. placed 38th out of 71 countries
- What is keeping scores so low?

Average scores of 15-year-olds taking the PISA

	Science	Math	Reading
Finland	531	511	526
Japan	538	532	516
United Kingdom	509	492	498
United States	496	470	497

Desilver, D. (2017). US students' academic achievement still lags that of their peers in many other countries. *Pew Research Center.* Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/02/15/u-s-students-internationally-math-science/.

5 MINUTE BREAK

IS THE K-12 SYSTEM PROVIDING STUDENTS WITH EVERY OPPORTUNITY?

- Does the K-12 system provide student with academic excellence?
- Does the K-12 system support student passion and future goals?
- Does the K-12 system provide every student with the best opportunities?

- According to the PISA scores…NO!
- What needs to change in order for the answer to be "YES"?

Let's take a look at other countries!

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: FINLAND

- Special needs education is generally provided in conjunction with mainstream education
- Life-long learning in focus
- Local administration and educational institutions play a key role
- Educational autonomy is high at all levels
- Quality assurance is based on steering instead of controlling
- National core curriculum leaves room for local variations
- There are no national tests for pupils in basic education in Finland

Ministry of Education and Culture. (2017). Education in Finland. Retrieved from http://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: FINLAND

- General upper secondary education is flexibly organized
- Vocational education and training is organized in cooperation with the world of work
- The studies are based on individual study plans, comprising both compulsory and optional study modules
- Skills demonstrations are designed, implemented and assessed in co-operation with representatives of the world of work
- An individual study plan is prepared for each student taking a competence-based qualification.
- Vocational studies take into account individual needs and circumstances.

Ministry of Education and Culture. (2017). Education in Finland. Retrieved from http://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: JAPAN

- The curriculum consists of:
  - Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, life, music, arts and handicrafts, homemaking, and physical education. **In addition, a great deal of attention is devoted to moral education.**
- Pupils take final examinations in 5 subjects: Japanese, mathematics, social studies, science and English.
- Secondary vocational courses are provided at upper secondary specialized training schools.
- The Japanese place a high value on acceptance and support from the group of which one is a part, including one's family and one's school, so young Japanese work very hard to win the approval of their families and their teachers

EP-Nuffic. (2015). The Japanese education system described and compared with the Dutch system. Retrieved from https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-japan.pdf.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: JAPAN

- Curriculum demands mastery of a great deal of information about the, but it also demands a good deal of problem-solving ability
- Instruction focuses not on getting the right answer but on understanding why the answer is right
- Students in Japanese schools do not skip grades nor are they held back
- Teachers are the highest paid civil servants in Japan
- The Japanese spend less than many other nations on their schools
- Japanese students take the meals from the kitchens and serve them to their classmates in their classrooms
- Japanese students are expected to clean both their classrooms and their hallways.

EP-Nuffic. (2015). The Japanese education system described and compared with the Dutch system. Retrieved from https://www.nuffic.nl/en/publications/find-a-publication/education-system-japan.pdf.
NCEE. (2018). Japan overview. *National Center on Education and The Economy*. Retrieved from http://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/japan-overview/.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: UNITED KINGDOM

- The Foundation Phase is a holistic developmental curriculum for 3 to 7-year-olds based on the needs of the individual child to meet their stage of development
- Major goals of primary education are achieving basic literacy and numeracy amongst all pupils, as well as establishing foundations in science, mathematics and other subjects
- Further education is often seen as forming one part of a wider learning and skills sector, alongside workplace education, prison education, and other types of non-school, non-university education and training
- Individual schools are unusually autonomous

Education System in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219167/v01-2012ukes.pdf

LEARNING FROM OTHERS: UNITED KINGDOM

- Teachers are treated respectfully, but don't earn respect by default
- Students taking A-levels usually take a mere three or four subjects entirely of their own choice – so after the age of 16, they could focus entirely on sciences, and never study humanities again
- Students are encouraged to speak up and share their opinions

Education System in the UK. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219167/v01-2012ukes.pdf
Oxford Royale Academy. (2018). 10 fascinating differences between British schools and schools abroad. Retrieved from https://www.oxford-royale.co.uk/articles/british-schools-different-from-schools-abroad.html

IS THE K-12 EDUCATION SYSTEM MISSING SOMETHING?

- Take some time to reflect on today's presentation
- Have conversations at your table about ideas and thoughts from today's presentation
- Do your best to answer the above question.
  - Yes or No?
  - How or How not?
- Be ready to share your thoughts.

"THE TASK OF THE MODERN EDUCATOR IS NOT TO CUT DOWN JUNGLES, BUT TO IRRIGATE DESERTS."
— C.S. LEWIS

DAY 2: BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK

MEETING NORMS

- Be present (physically and mentally)
- Be on-time
- Start on time/finish on time
- Show respect at all times through active listening and participation
- Cell phones are turned off or placed on vibrate
- Communication is respectful, courteous, and engaging
- Everyone is equal and everyone has something to offer

Goals

Understand	Gain a better understanding of what is missing in K-12 education
Understand	Understand what needs to be done to help students be more successful
Apply and Analyze	Apply new information to analyze ways on how we can better prepare our students for college
Create and Design	Create and design an academic system that focuses on students' passions

DAY-2 OVERVIEW (8:00 TO 3:00)

- Welcom back and review of day 1 (8:00-9:00)
- Break (9:00-9:05)
- Focusing on passion (9:05-10:30)
- Break (10:30-10:35)
- Encouraging students in their passions (10:35-12:00)
- Lunch (12:00-1:00)
- Creating a passion driven education for students (12:30-1:30)
- Community is key (1:30-2:30)
- Group discussion (2:30-2:50)
- Reflect (2:50-3:00)

DAY 1: REVIEW

- The K-12 system is missing critical components for students to be successful
- Change involves the following:
  - Humility
  - Listening
  - Observing
  - Willingness
  - Implementation

- The focus of the K-12 system should be to help students become their best
- The K-12 system should be providing students with every opportunity

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

- Top countries each have similarities and differences in education
- Top countries focus on student-centered education
- Top countries provide multiple pathways for their students
- Students are given every opportunity to succeed in their passions

5 MINUTE BREAK

FOCUSING ON PASSION

- If education is supposed to be student centered, then why is the focus on standardization and test scores?
- How can we make education student centered?
- Is there value in student-centered education?
- Should classrooms focus on individualized learning?
- Is focusing on student passions beneficial?

WHAT IS STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION?

- Student-centered learning moves students from passive receivers of information to active participants in their own discovery process.[1]
- What students learn, how they learn it and how their learning is assessed are all driven by each individual student's needs and abilities.[1]
- An approach to learning in which learners choose not only what to study but also how and why that topic might be of interest.[2]
- Encourage learners to do more discovery learning and to learn from each other; the instructor focuses on constructing authentic, real-life tasks that motivate learner involvement and participation.[2]
- Student-centered learning reverses the assumptions of the research university that have dominated our academic value system since the late nineteenth century.[3]

1 ISTE. (2018). Essential conditions. *International Society for Technology in Education.* Retrieved from https://www.iste.org/standards/essential-conditions/student-centered-learning.
2 TEAL (2010). Student-centered learning. *American Institute for Research.* Retrieved from https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/6%20_TEAL_Student-Centered.pdf.
3 Davidson, C. I. (2016). Educating Higher. *Liberal Education*, *102*(3), 10-17.

BENEFITS TO STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION

- This environment encourages students to interact with peers in learning more actively
- Students become more motivated to learn, link information together, and freely express their opinions with greater self-confidence
- Students become more focused and self-directed when they are involved
- Practical approach to developing professional skills by learning in a real life context
- Allows students to identify a problem, formulate learning issues, collaborate with others, create social interaction, encourage research, be motivated to express a different opinion, stimulate ideas, and offer an alternative perspective during discussion

Osman, S. M., Jamaludin, R., & Iranmanesh, M. (2015). Student centered learning at USM: What lecturer and students think of this new approach?. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *6*(19), 264-277.

BENEFITS TO STUDENT-CENTERED EDUCATION

- Students take responsibility for their own learning, they become explorers capable of leveraging their curiosity to solve real-world problems (ISTE, 2018).
- Students learn to direct their own learning, ask questions, and complete tasks independently (Room 241 Team, 2017).
- It uses methods that suit students learning styles, and it maximizes student engagement through immersion in personal reflection and activities (Gorzycki, n.d.)

ISTE. (2018). Essential conditions. International Society for Technology in Education. Retrieved from https://www.iste.org/standards/essential-conditions/student-centered-learning.
Room 241 Team. (2017). Which is best: Teacher-centered or student-centered education?. *Concordia University*. Retrieved from https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/which-is-best-teacher-centered-or-student-centered-education/.
Gorzycki, M. (n.d.). Student-centered learning. *The center for Teaching and Faculty Development: San Francisco University. Retrieved from https://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/student-centered-teaching.*

PLACING STUDENTS PASSIONS FIRST

- Students have passions and desires
- Students need to be encouraged to explore and grow their passions
- The education system needs to help shape and focus students' passions
- The education system needs to provide pathways for students to explore their passions
- There needs to be a framework that is designed to support and bolster students' passions

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Discuss with your table ideas and thoughts about the importance of focusing on student passion
- How can this become a reality
- After 10 minutes, we will come back together and share as a larger group

5 MINUTE BREAK

TEDx. (2013,, August 7). *Developing students passions in public schools – Michael Serban – TEDxkids@ElCajon* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/AiXWend236s.

ENCOURAGING STUDENTS IN THEIR PASSIONS

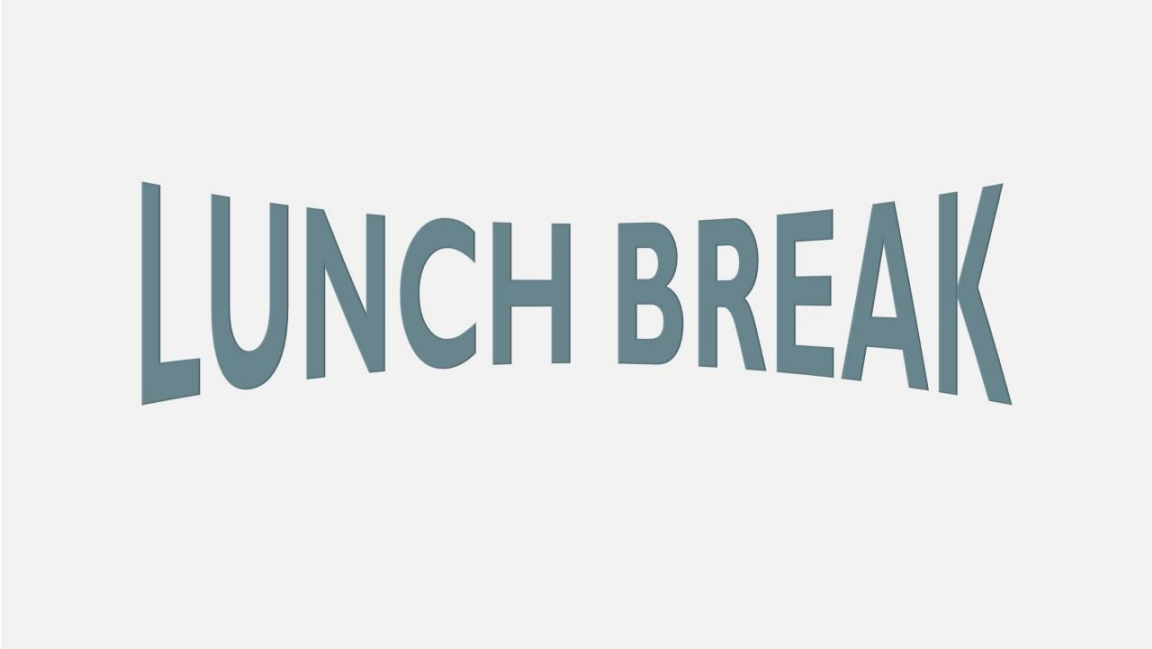
- Ask yourself…
  - What would have school been like for you if you were given the choice to study what you had a passion for?
  - Would you have enjoyed studying things that interested you?
  - Would you have been more excited for school?
  - Would you have wanted to work to achieve your goals?
  - How can you make this a reality in your classroom, school, district?

FOCUSING ON STUDENTS' PASSIONS THROUGH THE STANDARDS

- Curriculum needs to be seen as a guide
- Curriculum doesn't meet the needs of students
- Curriculum does not promote student passions
- Design lessons around promoting student passions
- Standards can be taught when focusing on student passions
- Encourage students to explore their passions through standards based teaching

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

"Students must possess a basic foundation upon which they can build their knowledge and skills in postsecondary opportunities. Such a foundation can be built through the coursework in which students are engaged" (WestED, 2016).


LUNCH BREAK

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Start Time of Interview: _____

Stop Time of Interview: _____

Audio Tape Number: _____

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I will be audio taping our conversations today. For your information, I will be the only one who will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. Please feel free to share any and all ideas, thoughts, and insights during this interview.

1. Tell me about your academic experiences during your K-12 education.
    a. What did you find to be most helpful and beneficial in your K-12 education?
        i. Can you please elaborate on…
    b. What did you find to be most difficult or hindering in you K-12 education?
        i. Why was _____ most difficult or hindering?

2. How do you define college readiness?
3. Tell me about your experiences regarding college readiness during your K-12 education.
    a. Do you feel as though your K-12 education properly prepared you for college?
        i. Why or why not?
    b. Do you feel as though your HSGPA accurately reflected your level of college readiness?
    c. What strategies do you find to be the most important to being college ready?
        i. Do you feel that your K-12 education encouraged these strategies?
            1. If your K-12 education encouraged these strategies, how were these strategies encouraged?
            2. If your K-12 education did not encourage these strategies, were there other strategies that you feel they encouraged instead?
    d. What characteristics or attributes do you feel are the most important to being college ready?
        i. Why are these characteristics or attributes the most important to you?
        ii. Do you feel your K-12 education helped you build these attributes or characteristics?
            1. (If yes) How did your K-12 education help you build these attributes or characteristics?
            2. (If no) Do you feel your K-12 education encouraged any attributes or characteristics to being college ready?

e. If you had the opportunity to redo your K-12 education, what would you do differently to be better prepared for college?