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# High School Assessment Program Interventions and Graduation Rates

Karin Roberts
*Walden University*

# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Karin Roberts

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Review Committee
Dr. Nyaradzo Mvududu, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Kerry Burner, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Cathryn White, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2018

Abstract

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MS, University of Charleston, 2004

BS, Clemson University, 1998

Doctoral Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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## Abstract

Graduating high school is a critical juncture for students to achieve. High School dropouts are more likely to have fewer job opportunities than high school graduates, increasing risk for poor health and incarceration. The target district used the academic learning class (ALC) as an intervention to support high school seniors classified as at risk due to failure on the High School Assessment Plan (HSAP). The purpose of this study was to determine the association between at-risk students who participated in the ALC and on-time graduation. Guided by action theory, an ex post facto design using secondary data, was employed to determine if there was an association between the variables of participation in the ALC intervention and graduation. The sample included a secondary data set of 174 records of high school students who met the criteria of failing one or both parts of the HSAP and who received the intervention of the ALC class. Data from a sample of 166 records were analyzed through SPSS. Results of the chi-square test did not indicate statistical significance, $\chi 2(1, N = 166) = 1.27, p = 0.26$, suggesting that there was not sufficient evidence to conclude existing of an association between participation in the ALC and graduation. Further research is recommended with more than 1 intervention to ascertain the association between specific high school interventions and graduation. Determining the association between an intervention and graduation will lead to social change as improving graduation rates helps bridge the economic gap between high school graduates and dropouts.

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# Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my family, friends, and students who have been there with me from the very beginning. To my mother and father, who taught me to never give up on myself and that I could be anything I wanted to be and reach whatever goal I set for myself. Thank you for teaching me how to work for what I want and how to never give up, even thru the darkest of times. To my husband, for helping by being strong for me and always being there for me, you are truly my best-friend and I could not have achieved this goal without you. To my two darling kids, thank you for reminding me every day that I was doing this for the two of you and remember that you can reach any goal you set for yourself. To my sisters, for always encouraging me, and always being a set of shoulders to cry on. To my mother-in-law, thank you for always being willing to listen to me ramble and to watch the kids for me to work. To my friends, thank you for keeping me sane and helping me figure out how to get to the answer in more than one way. For all of you, I will be forever grateful because you were always willing to talk me off of any ledges and to make me laugh, even thru the darkest times. Finally, to my students, thank you for continuing to encourage me, holding me accountable, and pushing me to reach this goal, may you all realize that you are able to reach any goal you set for yourself.

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Thank you very much to Dr. Mvududu, Dr. Burner and Dr. White for helping me reach this goal of mine and for all of your support during this time. Thank you very much to Linda Henman, Charlene Zehner, and Colleen Archambault; without your willingness to give up your time and proofread my papers and give me feedback, this accomplishment would never be achieved. You three will forever be my heroes.

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## Background

From lower earnings and poor health to the higher chances of being incarcerated, high school dropouts are more likely to have more difficult lives than their counterparts who do graduate (Barrat & Berliner, 2016; Deussen et al., 2017). Graduation and graduation rates of school systems have come under more scrutiny than in previous years, specifically by lawmakers (Barrat & Berliner, 2016; Deussen et al., 2017; McFarland, Stark, Cui, & National Center for Education, 2016). The national high school student graduation rate was at its highest in 1969, with a rate average of 77% or better for all high school students (Colbert, 2013). The national graduation rate continuously decreased from 1969 until the 2000s, when the rate started to increase again, reaching 82% for the 2014 year (Dansby & Dansby-Giles, 2011; Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Jordan, Kostandini, & Mykerezi, 2012; Shuster, 2012; Stetser, Stillwell, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2014; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012; Wilcox & Angelis, 2011). In response to the low graduation rate, school system leadership have implemented a variety of interventions which have resulted in the national graduation rate reaching an all-time high of 82% in 2014 (Education Week Research Center, 2016; Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013).

There remains some concern with the graduation rate metrics, however, because more than one method has been used to calculate the national and state graduation figures (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011; Colbert, 2013; McFarland et al., 2016). Researchers for the National Center for Education Statistics,

when reporting on dropout rates, examined four different indices: *event dropout rate*, *status dropout rate*, *status completion rate*, and the *averaged freshman graduation rate* of public schools (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Chapman et al., 2013; Colbert, 2013; Holme, Richards, Jimerson, & Cohen, 2010; Jordan et al., 2012; McFarland et al., 2016).

The event dropout rate is defined by how many students drop out from October of one year to October of the following year. Students who have reentered the year after dropping out, or students in the United States who have diplomas or equivalent degrees are not factored into the event dropout rate (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Colbert, 2013; Holme et al., 2010; Jordan et al., 2012; Phelps, 2009; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Zachry, 2010).

People ages 18 to 24 years who do not have a diploma or an equivalent degree are counted in the status dropout rate. In contrast, students aged 18 to 24 years who have left high school but have earned diplomas or equivalent degrees are counted in the status completion rate (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Chapman et al., 2013; Colbert, 2013; Holme et al., 2010; Jordan et al., 2012; Phelps, 2009; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Zachry, 2010). The final method is the averaged freshman graduation rate of public school students. This rate approximates the number of students who graduate with regular diplomas within four years after entering the ninth grade (Bowers & Sprott, 2012; Colbert, 2013; Holme et al., 2010; Jordan et al., 2012; Phelps, 2009; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Zachry, 2010).

The average freshman graduation rate, in which the data is taken four years after entering high school, is the method that I used to see if academic learning class (ALC) was related to students graduating on time. For the purpose of this paper, on-time

graduation rate and graduation rate signified the same concept, which were students who graduated within four years of entering high school. I gathered information from District A, the state, the nation, and researched literature. The ALC that was reviewed specifically for this study was called secondary intervention. It is a separate class that was created by the target school in 2009 to help the students who did not pass all of the High School Assessment Plan (HSAP) on the first attempt (Swain-Bradway, Pinkney, & Flannery, 2015).

## The Local Problem

The problem in my local setting is that the students in South Carolina who are not able to pass the HSAP, thus failing to meet a requirement for high school graduation, drop out of school and do not graduate (Stetser et al., 2014). The graduation rate for the classes of 2000 through 2014 has been in the bottom half of the United States, with four of those years reflecting South Carolina ranked 50$^{th}$ based on the graduation rate (Education Week Research Center, 2013, 2016; Stetser et al., 2014; Stillwell, 2010). In 2003 South Carolina's graduation rate was 52% which was the farthest away from the national rate of 69.7% (Education Week Research Center, 2013). This low graduation rate affects not only the schools' and state's federal report card, but also the state's economy. The average annual income nationwide in 2011 for people without a high school diploma was $22,900 while $30,000 was the average annual income for people who have at least a high school diploma (Aud et al., 2013).

### Problem in the Larger Population

A lower annual income is not the only potential consequence when a person does not complete high school. Students who do not graduate tend to have shorter life spans, have more health problems, and have children at younger ages than those who do receive high school diplomas or the equivalents. Furthermore, the children of high school dropouts are more likely to drop out themselves, thus perpetuating this cycle (Barrat & Berliner, 2016; Deussen et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2016). Nongraduates also tend to have more problems with the law than those who have graduated (Barrat & Berliner, 2016; Deussen et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2016). In South Carolina, 54% of state prison inmates do not have high school diplomas or equivalents (South Carolina Department of Corrections, 2013).

In 2013, the cohort graduation rate for students in South Carolina was 77.5 % (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013a). District A had a cohort graduation rate of 77.3%, which is below other districts that have similar students (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013b). Unless greater gains are made, the district in which I work for will not be on schedule to have a 90% graduation rate by 2020 (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). The 90% graduation goal is a district goal.

A gap exists between what is occurring within the schools and classroom and what the National government stakeholders expect students to achieve in systems across the nation. Since the implementation of ALC intervention by District A, no quantitative data have been analyzed to assay the association between the intervention services and on the targeted students' graduation. By looking at the association of ALC and graduation rate, I had thought I would discover if there was a way to reduce or close the gap between

schools' performance and federal government's expectations (Amos, 2008; Hickman & Wright, 2011; Maranto, 2015; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009).

## Rationale

### Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

**District level.** The district stakeholders have emphasized improving the graduation rate of the students enrolled in the nine district high schools. The goal of increasing graduation rates has been a key point of District A's strategic plan for the last 7 years (District A Strategic Plan, 2013). In 2013, the goal was to improve the graduation rate to 80% by 2016 with the understanding that once that goal was met, the district would increase the goal to reach a 90% rate by 2020 (C. Kearise, personal communication, August 15, 2014; J. Blackmon, personal communication, November 30, 2014).

Furthermore, the district disaggregated the data to see that the graduation rate changed among gender and ethnicity and other factors. Among the different ethnicities, Pacific Island/Asian had the highest graduation rate in the district with an 85% while Hispanic was the lowest with a graduation rate of 71.2%. Females had a higher graduation rate than males, 84% to 71%. Students labeled as learning disabled had the lowest graduation rate at 39.5% with ELL students having the next lowest graduation rate at 65.3% (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013a). The data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Graduation rates by demographics for District A for year 2013*

| Ethnicity | Graduation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| African American | 76.4 |
| Hispanic | 71.2 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 76.6 |
| Caucasian | 78.3 |
| Pacific Island/Asian | 85 |
| Female | 84 |
| Male | 71 |
| ELL | 65.3 |
| Learning disabilities | 39.5 |
| Free/Reduced price lunch | 72.3 |

*Note.* All data comes from 2013 District A report card.

District A reached the goal for 2016, having a graduation rate of 81.7% (South Carolina Department of Education, 2017).

**Campus level.** The School Improvement Council (SIC) of the study site, School A, included four of the 10 goals dealing with improving the graduation rate set forth in the School Renewal Plan either directly or indirectly (R. Raycroft, personal communication, July 22, 2014; School A, 2013). Of the four goals, three were designed to focus district stakeholders on the students' success in passing state mandated standardized tests. The fourth goal specifies that the graduation rate of students will be

90% by the year 2016 (R. Raycroft, personal communication, July 22, 2014). For the 2013 school year, the study site had a graduation rate of 82.7%, which was higher than the national average, but not at the district goal of 90%. The study site's graduation rate increased from the 2012 school year's rate of 77.9% by 4.8 % to 82.7% for 2013 but was still not close enough to the requirements put forth by the federal government and by the SIC (R. Raycroft, personal communication, July 22, 2014; South Carolina Department of Education, 2012, 2013a). The highest graduation rate for the target school was 88.6% in 2015 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). However, it dropped to 84.4% in 2016 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2016). The fourth SIC goal was not met for 2016 and is being reviewed for future years (R. Raycroft, personal communication, February 25, 2017).

The 82.7% graduation rate for the study site was not across all demographics in 2013. Caucasian students had the highest graduation rate with 86.3%. African American students had the second highest graduation rate with 83.8%. Female students had a higher graduation rate than male students, 87.6% compared to 78.8%. Hispanic students had the lowest graduation rate at 50% with ELL students having a slightly higher graduation rate at 59.1%. The breakdown of the data can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

*Graduation rates by demographics for 2013 for School A*

| Ethnicity | Graduation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| African American | 83.8 |
| Hispanic | 50 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 80 |
| Caucasian | 86.3 |
| Pacific Island/Asian | NA |
| Female | 87.6 |
| Male | 78.8 |
| ELL | 59.1 |
| Learning disabilities | 64 |
| Free/Reduced price lunch | 76 |

*Note.* All data comes from 2013 School A report card.

Therefore, the local educational problem is the absence of associative data for interventions for targeted students to support the graduation outcomes. District administrators are without empirical evidence regarding the value and potential effectiveness of the intervention services that were developed to improve the graduation rates of targeted students in District A.

**Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature**

A low graduation rate is a problem common not only to this specific target district, but also for other districts in South Carolina and throughout the nation

(Tavakolian & Howell, 2012; Wilcox, Angelis, Baker, & Lawson, 2014). For the 2013 school year, the graduation rate for the nation was 80% (Stetser et al., 2014). Twenty percent of the nation's youth did not graduate on time; however, it is not clear how many dropped out and returned to complete high school diplomas or received equivalencies (Wilcox et al., 2014). The graduation rate changes when these data are disaggregated by the students' demographic factors (Wilcox et al., 2014). Looking at Table 3, Pacific Island/Asian students had the highest graduation rate with 88% while Hispanic students had the lowest graduation rate of 67%. Student' graduation rates from the other ethnicities were within the range of 67% to 88% for the year 2013.

Table 3

*Graduation rates by ethnicity for 2013*

| Ethnicity | Graduation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| African American | 80 |
| Hispanic | 67 |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 71 |
| White | 86 |
| Pacific Island/Asian | 88 |
| Female | 85 |
| Male | 77 |
| ELL | 59 |
| Learning disabilities | 61 |
| Free/Reduced price lunch | 72 |

*Note.* All data comes from Wilcox et al., 2014.

Female students had a graduation rate of 85% while males had a graduation rate of 77% (Stetser et al., 2014). Also, students who are considered learners of English as a Second Language had a graduation rate of 59% while students with documented learning disabilities had a graduation rate of 61% (Stetser et al., 2014). Finally, students who were considered economically disadvantaged (or qualified as receiving free and reduced lunch) had a graduation rate of 72% (Stetser et al., 2014).

A profile of students included in the study was drawn using the demographics presented in the literature (Table 3). This allowed for a determination of how the sample related to the larger national picture.

Amos (2008) estimated that students who do not complete high school, or the equivalent, cost the nation $260,000 annually over the course of their lifetime because of incarceration, welfare and poor health. If this amount is multiplied by the average 1.2 million annual dropouts, the nation loses an average net total of $312 billion annually for dropouts (Amos, 2008, Barrat & Berliner, 2016; Deussen et al., 2017; McFarland et al., 2016). By spending money on the students who have been labeled as “at-risk,” the education system stakeholders could make differences in the students’ lives that may lead to at-risk students staying in the school and receiving remedial services, therefore potentially improving the students’ knowledge, skills, and performance. In addition, successful students were found to have greater self-worth and ability to obtain employment thereby contributing to the global economy (Chapman et al., 2013; Ehrenberg & Webber, 2010; Ehrenreich, Reeves, Corley, & Orpinas, 2012; Jordan et al., 2012; Wilcox et al., 2014).

By looking at the school level, I determined what influence the school intervention had on the graduation rate of the students at the school that was observed. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was an association between students who participate in the ALC and graduation rates at the local high school target site.

## Definitions

*Academic learning class* (ALC): ALC is the intervention used at the study site. It is a class built into specific students' schedules to help keep track of those who have been identified as at-risk students for dropping out (W. Anderson, personal communication, February 20, 2016). Extra help is provided based on the results from the HSAP

*Blended-learning*: Blended-learning is a type of learning in which a student takes both on-line and traditional classes to receive all credits needed to graduate (Kronholz, 2011).

*Cohort graduation rate*: Cohort graduation rate is the rate calculated by using the first year that the student entered high school, called the cohort year, and then using longitudinal data to see if the student achieves graduation status four years later (Oregon Department of Education, 2014).

*English Language Learners* (ELL): ELL students are students whose first language is not English but attend in English speaking schools (Kanno & Cromley, 2013).

*Exit exams*: Exit exams that will allow students to graduate are tests used by many states to show that the student has achieved an acceptable competency level in standards-based questions (Shuster, 2012).

*General Education Development* (GED): The GED is a standardized test that many consider to be an alternative to a high school diploma (Tuck, 2012).

*High School Assessment Plan* (HSAP): The HSAP is the exit exam given at the end of a student's sophomore year, or second year of high school in South Carolina (South Carolina Department of Education, 2014).

*School Improvement Council* (SIC): SIC is an advisory committee, mandated by the state of South Carolina, that helps administrators and faculty improve the school setting through meetings and evaluation of goals that had been set forth by the committee of previous years (South Carolina School Improvement Council, 2015).

*State report card*: The state report card issued by the State Department of Education, contains information about each different public school found in the state in a concise and explained manner so that the report is understandable (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant because I examined the relationship between the high school intervention of ALC and graduation of students who participated in the ALC intervention. There is an absence of data regarding the efficacy of interventions for at-risk students to support an improvement in HSAP score therefore leading to successful graduation outcomes. This absence left district administrators without empirical evidence regarding the value and potential effectiveness of intervention services that were designed to HSAP scores and hence improve graduation rates of targeted students' performance in District A. Since graduation rate is a significant outcome and method of

school evaluating high school success in meeting students' needs, a research study relating to interventions used with at-risk students was critical to determine the association between this intervention and graduation rates.

Students who scored below 195 on the HSAP the first time they take it (with 200 as the passing score), received the ALC intervention. Although research exists on high stakes testing and graduation rates, there were no studies specific to this southern state, HSAP, and implementation of interventions for students within a specific range of scores (Glennie, Bonneau, Vandellen, & Dodge, 2012; Johnson, Simon, & Mun, 2014). The research on high stakes testing provided conflicting findings with regard to the relationship between narrowly falling short of passing the exit exam and dropping out (Glennie et al., 2012; Holme et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2014). There was no discussion of what constituted *narrowly*. For the current study narrowly was defined as a score of 195 to 199 on either portion of the HSAP (C. Kearise, personal communication, August 15, 2014).

Both the school and district administrators have made goals in their prospective renewal plans that address passing of state mandated tests and the graduation rate of students with their cohorts. State testing begins in the 3rd grade (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). The passing of the state mandated tests thus is applicable to all of the schools within the district, not just high schools. When analyzing the scores regarding the HSAP passing rates, the students who required intervention were identified based on scoring 194 or lower on any portion of the HSAP test (C. Kearise, personal communication, August 15, 2014). Data on the relationship between school-

based intervention and graduation rate such as described in this study, can help local district administrators make decisions about the intervention services for targeted at-risk students by examining the HSAP score and ALC intervention. If the intervention is effective in improving HSAP score, then it would then affect the graduation rates as well.

## Guiding/Research Question

No research had been performed with regards to graduation rates and the intervention that was implemented within the different schools within District A. Therefore, the research question for this study explored the association between ALC intervention services for students targeted at risk for graduating, based on the failure to pass the HSAP. The two variables were participation in the intervention prescribed by the school and the rate of graduation. The independent variable was participation in the ALC intervention prescribed for a student who did not pass the HSAP. The dependent variable for this study was the time frame in which the students graduate, and whether with his/her cohort or not.

Research Question 1: What is the association between at-risk students who participate in the ALC and on time graduation?

$H_0$1: There is no relationship between participation in ALC and graduating for students who have been classified at risk through the failure to pass the HSAP.

$H_1$1: There is a relationship between participation in ALC and graduating for students who have been classified at risk through the failure to pass the HSAP.

Research Question 2: What is the profile of students who participated in the ALC intervention compared to those who did not participate?

The review of literature reflected differences in graduation rate by gender, ethnicity, and ELL status. For the current study a profile of participants in the ALC was developed by examining the descriptive statistics of the disaggregated data by gender, ethnicity and ELL status.

The purpose of my ex post facto research study was to determine if there was an association between student participation in district intervention processes and graduation rates for high school student at the local high school setting who participated in the intervention program. I was able to answer the research question based upon the data from the host site.

## Review of the Literature

### Theoretical Foundation

The high school dropout rate is important to both educators and politicians (Suh & Suh, 2011). The calculation of dropout rate differs depending on the school, state, or information sought by the developers of the state report cards. There does not appear to be one consistent method in finding the *accurate* graduation rate (Barrat et al., 2014; Bowers & Sprott, 2012; G. Bracey, 2009; Colbert, 2013; Holme et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2014; Jordan et al., 2012; Phelps, 2009; Stetser et al., 2014; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Zachry, 2010). Furthermore, there does not appear to be one main factor that leads to a student not finishing high school with his/her cohort, instead there are many different factors. Some of these factors the school staff can control and some factors the school cannot control (Alspaugh, 1998; Barrat et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2014). School size,

range of grades within the school, and extracurricular activities are some of the factors that can be controlled by the school administrators and stakeholders however funding resources influence the decisions regarding these factors (Alspaugh, 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 2013). Socioeconomic status, attendance, gender, and race are some of the factors that the school administrators and stakeholders cannot control (Barrat et al., 2014; Colbert, 2013).

The theoretical framework for this study is based on action theory and the combined work by Holme et al. (2010) and Pierce (2012). Holme et al. studied how the exit exam can have a negative effect on how a student perceives his/her worth and can cause the student to dropout. However, Pierce conducted a study in which the results showed that it takes more than just identifying the students who are at risk to make a change in graduation rates. Pierce stated that an actual program change needed to be made and implemented. This program change would reflect that not every student should be taking classes for higher education but may benefit more by learning a trade, such as welding, that they are interested in pursuing outside of high school.

Action theory is the theory in which those involved set a common goal with respect to a certain trait (Moss & Brookhart, 2012; Szczesiul & Huizenge, 2014; Young & Domene, 2012). In the case of the target high school, a common goal that school administrators agreed with is decreasing the dropout rate of students. Furthermore, action theory involves brainstorming ideas on how to achieve this goal and then collaborating and following up as a team to see if the goal has been met. Action theory "is an instrument of change to bring about transformation in people's lives wrought by the

people themselves" (Stark, 2014, p. 88). Action theory is found very often in education because the stakeholders are looking to transform the lives of the students and, in turn, change the lives of the stakeholders (Szczesiul & Huizenge, 2014).

There are two main types of action theory, the espoused theory and theory in use (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). The espoused theory is what should happen whereas the theory in use is what actually happens (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). An effective theory of action in use will have both a framework for how to implement the proposed theory and a backup plan for each scenario that may occur, depicted visually in a diagram, figure, and usually in a flow chart (Szczesiul & Huizenge, 2014).

Theory of action in use in education shows the framework of what the educators wish to happen (the goals), then helps educators examine and analyze data to determine if the goal is met (Szczesiul & Huizenge, 2014). For the study site the SIC meets multiple times each year to review and analyze these data and to determine progress on the goals selected for the target site. If the goal hasnot been met, the SIC team brainstorms new ways in which to meet the specified goals and continues to monitor the data to see if the goal(s) are then met (W. Anderson, personal communication, January 20, 2016). Thus, this is a cyclical process in which there is a re-examination of the goals set and an analysis of data to determine the status of the goals set and a refinement of the plan to meet the goals by the SIC team.

The main research question for this study was to see if there is an association between ALC and the graduation rates of students classified at risk by their score on the HSAP. Action theory relates to this study by recognizing a problem within the school,

identifying a method that is being used to resolve the problem, and researching if the action being used is producing the desired results (Rogers-Chapman, 2015). The problem within the school, along with the district and state, is that the graduation rates are lower than the district, state, and national averages. The action being researched is the target campuses' plan to use the ALC, as a required intervention for students' who demonstrate low proficiency scores on the HSAP, thereby resulting in being classified as an at-risk student.

**Review of the Broader Problem**

By searching both ERIC and Thoreau databases, I was able to find peer-reviewed articles. The search terms used to find these articles were many due to difficulty in finding articles related directly to the HSAP and graduation rates. Therefore, many different key words and phrases were used to find previous research that would help me with my research. The following key words were used: *graduation rate(s), high school, dropout rate(s), exit exam(s), HSAP, a specific southern state, state testing, mandatory testing, interventions, at-risk students, self-worth, crime rate, blended-learning, and on-track graduation.* This review of literature provided information on different predictors of students dropping out including specific demographics of the students, factors schools can and cannot control, and interventions that different personal have put in place to help students. These themes were further analyzed to address the gap in District A with regards to intervention and graduation rate.

**Predictors of dropping out.** Some predictors of dropping out seem to be ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family issues, personal issues, ELL status, students with

special needs, gender and students who have entered the world of parenthood (Alspaugh, 1998; Azzam, 2007; Hampden-Thompson, Warkentien, & Daniel, 2009; Holme et al., 2010; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Malkus & Sen, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2011; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012; Wilcox et al., 2014). Suh and Suh (2011) also found evidence that geographic location within the United States influences graduation rates. Using data from two different administrations of the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY), Suh and Suh found that the geographical location in which students lived could have a positive influence on the graduation rate. Suh and Suh found that students who live in the North/East regions of the United States and students who live in a metropolitan area tend to have higher graduation rates than their counterparts who live in rural and South/West regions by 3.2%. While the researchers were not able to cite the specific reason, they hypothesized this 3.2% difference was due to large businesses and policies, such as work studies for students interested in specific careers, that were in effect in these geographical areas (Suh & Suh, 2011).

Mac Iver (2010) stated that what a student encounters, both academically and non academically, before high school must be addressed to be able to fully help this student once he/she reaches high school. "Student experiences and outcomes prior to high school cannot be ignored in addressing how to increase graduation rates, and individual high schools simply cannot address the issues on their own" (Mac Iver, 2010, p. 8). Colbert (2013) found evidence that outside factors had an influence on a student's success in school. Findings from Colbert's research indicated that the more stress a student felt, both in the classroom and out, the less likely the student would be successful in the

classroom. However, Colbert's research also led to the idea that having a place where students can feel safe and relaxed, allowed them to become focused on what was going on in the school that might be affecting students' performance. Consequently, the support of meditation, was implemented to help the students to become more aware thereby resulting in the students being more successful in school, which led to more students' graduating (Colbert, 2013).

***Factors schools' personnel can control.*** Leaders in schools and districts cannot ignore the factors that are controllable when trying to increase the graduation rate (Dawes, Modecki, Gonzales, Dumka, & Millsap, 2015; Phelps, 2009; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). The first factor that appeared to contribute to a higher dropout rate among students is school size. The larger the school, the higher the dropout rate tended to be (Alspaugh, 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Werblow & Duesbery, 2009). Allowing for more extracurricular activities and more opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities seems to have a positive effect on keeping students in school (Alspaugh, 1998; Dawes et al., 2015). Students identified as a risk for graduation, appear to have more success when given the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities (Dawes et al., 2015). The number of grades in the actual high school also seems to have an influence on high school dropout rate, and the number of times that a student changes schools is associated with the dropout rate. Schools with Grades 10 to 12 show a higher dropout rate than schools with Grades 9 – 12. The lowest dropout rates were found in schools with Grades 7 to 12, which were smaller in population (Alspaugh, 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 2013).

***Discipline and dropping out.*** Discipline is also a factor in high school students' dropping out of school (Dawes et al., 2015; Logan-Greene, Nurius, & Thompson, 2012; Suh & Suh, 2011). The more times a student is suspended, the more likely the student is to drop out especially if any of the other factors are involved such as ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status (Dawes et al., 2015; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Logan-Greene et al., 2012; Suh & Suh, 2011). Furthermore, Logan-Greene et al. (2012) found that the more violence a high schooler experienced, either in his/her home life or exhibited in everyday life, the more likely the high schooler was to drop out in comparison to other students who were not exposed to such violence.

***Student's self-esteem and dropping out.*** Another factor that has been found and discussed with respect to a student's dropping out of high school is his/her self-esteem, or lack thereof (Cornell, Gregory, Huang, & Fan, 2013; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2011). Students who do not believe that they are able to achieve success tend to not believe that they can succeed in anything, including graduating from high school (Cornell et al., 2013; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2011). Students who show low self-esteem also tend to become victims of bullying or peer victimization (Cornell et al., 2013).

***Peer victimization and dropping out.*** Cornell, Gregory, Huang, and Fan (2013) found that peer victimization was also correlated with students' dropping out of high school. Students who were victimized start avoiding the classes where the bullying is taking place and then start avoiding school in general (Cornell et al., 2013). These absences have an effect on the student's performance, which in turn starts a downward

descent from which many students cannot recover, and consequently the students drop out of school (Cornell et al., 2013; Lemon & Watson, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2011).

***ELL students and dropping out.*** Being a high school student can be very difficult for students who have been born and raised in the United States but can be even more challenging for students who are coming from countries where the native language is not English (Andrews, 2013). Many of the students do not get adequate intervention/help from the personnel within the school system to allow them to succeed in the classroom (Andrews, 2013; Kanno & Cromley, 2013). This lack of help can create frustration within the student, which in turn leads to the student dropping out of high school (Luster, 2012). If a student has difficulty speaking the English language, he/she is more likely to drop out. On a national level, 82% percent of ELL students dropped out of high school because they were having trouble speaking English (Luster, 2012).

***Gender and dropping out.*** Suh and Suh (2011) found that males were 1.5% more likely to drop out than their female classmates. The graduation rate for females has been historically higher since the 1970's and has only increased over the years for all ethnicities (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013). Males have started to close the gap but still trail behind females regardless of the ethnicity of the student (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013).

***Ethnicity and dropping out.*** Historically, Caucasians have had a higher graduation rate than any other ethnicity (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013; Stark, Noel & National Center for Education, 2015; Suh & Suh, 2011). According to Stark et al. (2015) research from the 2012 graduation class showed that African Americans were 6.8% more likely to drop out and Hispanics were 5.4% more likely to drop out than Caucasians.

Although the gap is closing, Caucasians are still ahead in graduating with respect to the other ethnicities (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013).

**Exit exams and dropout/graduation rate.** Funding for education is decided by the people who are in the government and write the legislation (Brookhart, 2013; Maranto, 2015; Wilcox et al., 2014). Legislators, superintendents, and school board members who have a say in the funding of school systems want to see improvements are being made within the educational system through the results of standardized tests (Brookhart, 2013; Maranto, 2015; Wilcox et al., 2014). Throughout the different Presidential administrations, starting with President Reagan all the way through President Obama, there have been different efforts regarding educational reform. All of the reform efforts have emphasized students' abilities in math and English as measured by state standardized test results (Maranto, 2015). Through these reform system attempts, exit exams are becoming a requirement for receiving a high school diploma in more states (Giambo, 2010; Maranto, 2015; Shuster, 2012). As of 2012, there were 26 states that had an exit exam that was a graduation requirement (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2013; Holme et al., 2010).

In a national poll completed by Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup with regard to exit exams as graduation requirements, the results were: 63% in favor, 36% opposed, and 1% unsure (Dawes et al., 2015; Magee & Jones, 2012; Rose & Gallup, 2006). There is more than one type of exit exam that the different states use, but there is no consensus on whether one is better than another or what the effects are of the different tests on the students (Daun-Barnett & St. John, 2012; Dawes et al., 2015). The effects of these tests are not

clear. Some argue that they motivate students to want to achieve higher scores, while others believe it causes students to drop out of high school (B. Bracey, 2009; Giambo, 2010; Shuster, 2012; Tyler & Lofstrom, 2009; Wilcox et al., 2014). What is known is that the dropout rate is not decreasing as rapidly as desired by the government stakeholders (Wilcox et al., 2014; Zachry, 2010). Holme et al. (2010) found that exit exams tend to have a higher effect on the dropout rate of students who are already considered lower achieving. Shuster (2012) found that "students in exit exam states were more likely to drop out of school than their peers not subject to exit exams" (p. 19). However, it is not clear whether this relationship is causal or correlational (Shuster, 2012). Hemelt and Marcotte (2013) noticed that there does not appear to be a risk factor for students who score high on the exit exam to dropout, but for those who score lower there appears to be a relationship between their score on the exit exam and dropping out of school. In contrast, Heilig (2011) found that more students in an urban school system in Houston had success with graduation after the school administrators implemented the exit exam.

**Methods for keeping students from dropping out.** There are different ways that schools are trying to keep students enrolled. From blended-learning to intervention by school level, to vocational schools, districts are trying to find ways to keep students enrolled (Chappell, Arnold, Nunnery, & Grant, 2015; Freeman, Miller & Newcomer, 2015; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). The blended-learning method allows students to take classes both in a traditional classroom and an online setting. When this type of learning takes place, students who had fallen behind due to numerous different reasons were able

to catch up and graduate (Kronholz, 2011). Blended learning is not just for students who have fallen behind. Students with learning disabilities and ELLs have found the blended learning option a good fit (Johnson et al., 2014; Kronholz, 2011; Repetto, Cavanaugh, Wayer, & Liu, 2010).

**Intervention.** Intervention is another method that schools/educators are implementing to keep students enrolled in school (Johnson et al., 2014; Karakus, Salkever, Slade, Ialongo, & Stuart, 2012; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). The intervention is starting as early as elementary school and in some cases going through college (Johnson et al., 2014; Karakus et al., 2012; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). Students are selected for intervention based on many different factors including attendance, socioeconomic status, learning disabilities, behavior, and ethnicity (Johnson et al., 2014; Karakus et al., 2012; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). There is a great gap between the graduation rates of Caucasian, and African American, and Latino students; some schools are using intervention specifically geared towards African American and Latino students (Johnson et al., 2014).

***Different types of intervention.*** There is more than one type of intervention, and not all interventions are effective (Johnson et al., 2014; Salina et al., 2013; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). The most common interventions used are: (a) relationship with someone in the school; (b) persistence in keeping in touch with the student; (c) monitoring of the student through grades, attendance and discipline, and (d) a tutoring program for the at-risk students (Johnson et al., 2014; Salina et al., 2013; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). By using effective interventions, school administrators have observed a reduction in the

dropout rate. Administrators and faculty at Sunnyside High School, a school located in Sunnyside, Washington, were able to increase the graduation rate from 49% to 78.8% in two years by changing the intervention implemented within the school (Salina et al., 2013).

***Peer intervention.*** Peer intervention is another type of intervention that has worked for high school aged Latino males (Johnson et al., 2014). When juniors and seniors were paired with incoming freshman, the dropout rate dropped from 37% to 19% in a low-income school located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States (Johnson et al., 2014). However, it was recommended that administrators continue to monitor the peer intervention to be certain the intervention was being implemented correctly (Hartman, Wilkins, Gregory, Gould, & D`Souza, 2011; Hickman & Wright, 2011; Johnson et al., 2014; Salina et al., 2013; Tavakolian & Howell, 2012).

***Class intervention.*** Another type of intervention, called secondary intervention, is an intervention in which a separate class placement is used for students who have fallen behind their fellow classmates by not meeting required scores on standardized tests and/or passing one or more classes (Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). This type of intervention, also known as Tier 2, enables the teachers to help specific students in areas of need (Bemboom & McMaster, 2013). Having a class just for students who are deficient in one or more core areas allowed for more targeted learning, which in turn lead to closing the gaps in students' learning (Bemboom & McMaster, 2013; Lane, Oakes, Ennis, & Hirsch, 2014; Swain-Bradway et al., 2015). Making sure that students were

correctly identified and placed in the class intervention is critical for the intervention to work correctly (Lane et al., 2014).

## Implications

School administrators must look at the academic data that they have and use these data to accurately make decisions on how to help students achieve success (Bruce, Getch, & Ziomek-Daigle, 2009; Mac Iver & Groginsky, 2011). "Despite the predictive nature of performance on proficiency tests on academic achievement and graduation rates, such a significant factor has remained absent from the curriculum and design of mentoring programs" (Hickman & Wright, 2011, pg. 27). Through these data the leaders of the school and district administrators can see which students need extra help and which students might be more likely to dropout (Hartman et al., 2011; McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010; Norbury et al., 2012).

By simultaneously looking at a student's score on the exit exam, if ALC was selected as an intervention for the student in need and whether the student graduated with his/her cohort, I was able to determine if there is an association between the variable assignment of ALC as an intervention and graduation with the target population of students at risk of graduating determined by the student's proficiency test performance. Through analysis of the data I sought to discover if there is an association between participating in intervention and graduating with the cohort class. It is important to acknowledge that there may be variables outside of the scope of the research that can have a positive or negative influence on the student passing the HSAP and will have nothing to do with the intervention given (Larson & Farber, 2012).

The results of this study did not support the claim that ALC, makes a significant difference in the graduation rate of students who were considered at risk as determined by poor performance on the HASP, the state proficiency assessment, and enrolled in the ALC program. The resulting project from this study is a professional development program to help teachers implement additional classroom interventions to better support students at risk in their academic performance possibly leading to the improvement in graduation rates for this target population at this target high school site.

## Summary

Education is an important topic that is frequently discussed within both the political and nonpolitical world. Graduation rate is at the top of the majority of the discussions. This section provided background into the problem of graduation within the nation, state, and district. The lack of quantitative data with respect to students taking the ALC and graduating is a major reason as to why this study needed to be completed.

In Section 2, I will discuss specifically how the study was conducted and why the Chi square test of independence was used. I will also discuss the way that the data was collected and the results that were obtained from the statistical analyses.

In Section 3, I will discuss the project that will be developed based on the findings reported in Section 2. I will also discuss the evaluation of the project plan and the implications for social change. Within Section 4, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project and reflect upon the implications of my work.

Section 2: The Methodology

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine the association between at-risk students who participate in the ALC and on time graduation. The review of the literature covered different indicators of students at risk of not graduating. Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2014) found that intervention can help, but there is very little research/literature on using an intervention like the ALC. Therefore, an examination of the association between participation in an intervention and graduation rate for at-risk students was needed (Hartman et al., 2011; Johnson et al, 2014; McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010; Norbury et al., 2012).

### Justification of Design and Approach.

The research design is very important to make sure that the information obtained is used correctly. If the wrong design is used with respect to the research question, then the data collected will be of no use to the researcher. As Triola (2012) said, "the method used to collect sample data influences the quality of [our] statistical analysis" (p.26). In this section I will discuss the research design, the setting for my research, and the way in which the data were collected. This study will help me see if there is a correlation between participation in ALC and the graduation rate of students classified as at-risk based on the students who did not passing the HSAP.

### Design Derives Logically from Problem

The design derives logically from the problem because it addresses the questions of a relationship between variables. The purpose of the study was to explore an

association between the two types of categorical variables, participation in ALC and the graduation rate of students labeled at risk from the results of the HSAP. Therefore, an ex post facto design, was the best design to use since archival data was used. Since the data collected was categorical, a chi-square test of independence was the appropriate analysis to determine if there was an association between each pair of variables.

**Research Questions**

Research Question 1: What is the association between at-risk students who participate in the ALC and on time graduation?

Research Question 2: What are the demographic characteristics of students who participated in the ALC intervention compared to those who did not participate?

## Research Design and Approach

The design of this research project is an ex post facto design since the data that used were archival data. Specifically, this ex post facto, correlation study used archival data to determine if there was a relationship between the two variables under study, participation in the intervention as prescribed by the school and the year of graduation for the student. As defined by Creswell (2012), "correlation designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators measure the degree of association (or relation) between two or more variables" (p. 21). The research question examined the association between two variables (participation in ALC and graduation rate) and was therefore well suited for a correlation research design.

## Setting and Sample

The county from which the school scores were drawn is one of the larger counties, both in area and population, in South Carolina (South Carolina Department of Education, 2010). During the 2010 to 2012 school years, the district had three primary schools, 19 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and seven high schools (South Carolina Department, 2010, 2011, 2012). These schools served 28,949 students in 2010 and increased to 30,085 students in 2012 (South Carolina Department, 2010, 2012). The breakdown of the district by gender in 2012 was 48.4% female, 51.6% male (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012). The breakdown of racial/ethnic origin of students in 2012 was 1.1% American Indian, 34.5% African American, 3.1% Asian or Pacific Islander, 7.9% Hispanic, and 53.4% Caucasian (South Carolina Department of Education 2012). In 2012, 51.9% of the students in this county qualified for free/reduced price lunch (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012).

### Target Population

The target population chosen were sophomores from each of the years of 2010, 2011, and 2012 who took the HSAP for the first time in the spring of their respective year and scored below 195 on either part of the test. Furthermore, any junior or senior students who took the HSAP for the first time due to moving into the state or transferring from a private school were included. Thus, I used only secondary data for students who

were eligible to participate in ALC based on HSAP scores. This study allowed me to see if there was a relationship between intervention given and students graduating on-time.

**Sampling Strategy and Sample Size**

In 2010 the target high school had 941 students enrolled, of whom 186 were students classified as sophomores, juniors or seniors who took the HSAP for the first time. Of the 186 students, 102 were male and 84 were female with the racial/ethnic breakdown as 119 Caucasian, 53 African American and 14 not classifying themselves in any racial/ethnic group. Approximately 20% of the 186 students (37) did not pass both parts of the 2010 HSAP (South Carolina Department of Education, 2010). For the 2011 school year, the school had 942 students enrolled, 202 who took the HSAP for the first time. Of the 202 students, 110 were male and 92 were female with the racial/ethnic breakdown as 120 Caucasian, 63 African American, 11 Hispanic and 8 not classifying themselves in any racial/ethnic group. Approximately 18% of the 202 students (36) did not pass both parts of the 2011 HSAP (South Carolina Department of Education, 2011). For the 2012 school year, 196 students took the HSAP for the first time. Of the 196 students, 103 were male and 93 were female. The racial/ethnic breakdown was 128 Caucasian, 53 African American, 10 Hispanic with 5 not classifying with any racial/ethnic group.

Approximately 16% of the 196 students (31) did not pass both parts of the 2012 HSAP (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012). Therefore, the data analyzed was from approximately 104 students out of the 584 total students who took the HSAP all

three years. The archival data actually had 166 students, I did not account students who transferred in that had taken the HSAP at their previous school but had not passed one or both parts of the test.

Power analysis using G*Power 3 by Faul, Erdfelder, Lan and Buchner (2007) at an alpha level of 0.05 with 1 degree of freedom, with a desired medium effect size and a desired power of 0.80, indicated that the required sample size was 88. Therefore, the resulting targeted sample of 166 (South Carolina State Department, 2010, 2011, 2012) was adequate to address the research hypotheses.

## Instrumentation and Materials

The data set comes from HSAP scores of students in the target high school in South Carolina. HSAP is the state-mandated exit exam that was implemented by both the South Carolina Educational Accountability Act (SCEAA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The SCEAA made passing an exit exam a requirement for all high school students in 1998, and the NCLB Act required that math and English Language Arts (ELA) be assessed for all students. Therefore, the HSAP was formed by combining these two acts. The first HSAP was given in 2004 and has since been used as a graduation requirement and an indicator of a student's ability in math and ELA (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).

### Instrumentation

The HSAP is made up of three core sections that comprise the total exam of which two parts are ELA and one part is mathematics. The ELA sections have the

following specific subskill areas: reading process and comprehension, analysis of texts, word study and analysis, writing and research (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). The math section has the specific subskill areas of number and operations, algebra, measurement and geometry, data analysis and probability.

On the ELA section of the HSAP the students are required to write an essay. The students choose from one of the two prompts given and write at least a five-paragraph paper on the prompt chosen making sure to have an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph. The ELA section of the HSAP also has a multiple-choice portion that is designed to assess a student's understanding after reading passages and sentences. The subskills of the multiple-choice section of the HASP measure the students' ability to (a) read, process and comprehend, (b) analyze texts, (c) interpret word study and analysis, (d) write, and (e) research. The third section of the HSAP is math with the majority of the questions being multiple choice and three free response items that the student must solve and answer. Part three measures the student's ability related to (a) number and operations, (b) algebra, (c) measurement and geometry, and (d) data analysis and probability (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015).

The grading is scaled with part one and two combined into one score. Both the math scores and ELA combined scores range from a minimum score of 100 to a top score of 320. A score of 100 to 199 is considered Level 1, meaning the student did not meet the passing requirements for both math and ELA. Then, for math, a score of 200 to 219 is Level 2; 220 to 240 is Level 3; and 241 to 320 is Level 4. ELA differs for Level 2 and Level 3, but is the same for Level 4. For Level 2 the score ranges from 200 to 222, and

Level 3 is 223 to 240 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2015). All tests are scored by people at the State Department with the writing prompt being scored by two separate individuals to come up with one score. The raw de-identified data from the spring of 2010, 2011, and 2012 can be found in Appendix B. The HSAP is a state test and based on the state website (https://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/File/tests/assessment-information/archives/technical-reports/HSAP2004TechnReport.pdf) all appropriate procedures for instrument development were followed. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that the instrument has adequate reliability and validity.

## Data Collection and Analysis

### Data Collection Procedure

Data required to answer the research question were archival data based on the exit exam scores. After receiving permission from the site principal and the Chief Academic Officer for the district the archival data set of HASP exit student assessment data from the years of 2010, 2011, and 2012 and corresponding graduation cohort data for participants identified for the sample were collected. Class transcripts were used to determine which participants enrolled in ALC.

The data, including the demographic data, were organized and collected by using PowerSchool, the computer program that is used by the district in which the site is located. A query was conducted to identify all students who did not pass the HSAP on the first try, who participated in the ALC intervention, the year the student was a freshman and the year the student graduated to ascertain if the student graduated with

his/her cohort. The de-identified data was then presented to me by the school guidance counselor. I then analyzed these data using the statistical program SPSS. The data were analyzed to determine if participation in ALC was associated with graduation for at risk students identified by failing the HSAP the first time during the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. Since this is not an experimental study, a causal conclusion could not be reached, but an association could be discerned. The data was further analyzed to discern the profile of students who participated in the ALC compared to those who did not participate.

**Scale for Each Variable**

Based on the archival data that were collected the overarching research question was: Is there an association between participation in ALC intervention and the graduation rate of students who did not pass the HSAP the first time? The null hypothesis is that there is no association between participation in ALC and the graduation rate of students who did not pass the HSAP the first time. For the HSAP scores, the nature of the variable is ratio. The HSAP scores were used only to determine which students would be included in the study. For the intervention, the nature of the variable was categorical and binary. Participation in the intervention was coded as 1 (participated) and 0 (did not participate). For the graduation value, the nature of the variable was also categorical and binary. Similarly, graduation was coded as 1 (graduated on time) and 0 (did not graduate on time with his/her cohort class).

Given the categorical nature of the data, the descriptive statistics that were used in this research project were frequency distributions. The inferential statistical procedure used to analyze the data was the chi-square test of independence. The test of independence is the appropriate test to investigate an association between two variables measured on a nominal scale. The results of chi-square test of independence indicated if there was a nonrandom association between participation in the school offered intervention and graduating. Since for both variables the categories are mutually exclusive and independent of each other, all criteria were met so that chi-square test of independence was appropriate (Larson & Farber, 2012; Weisstein, 2015). Each expected frequency was greater than or equal to 5. Both of these conditions met the requirements of the chi-square test of independence (Larson & Farber, 2012; Weisstein, 2015).

There were three additional variables that were examined to provide a profile of students that were eligible for participation in the ALC: gender (0 for female and 1 for male); ethnicity (1 for Caucasian and 0 being all other ethnicities) and ELL status (1 for ELL learners and 0 for non-ELL learners). The descriptive statistics that were used were frequency distributions and contingency tables.

Power analysis using G*Power 3 by Faul, Erdfelder, Lan and Buchner (2007) at an alpha level of 0.05 with 1 degree of freedom, with a desired medium effect size and a desired power of 0.80, indicated that the required sample size was 88. Therefore, the resulting sample of 166 (South Carolina State Department, 2010, 2011, 2012) was adequate to address the research hypothesis.

I hypothesized that there would be an association between ALC and graduation or that there would not be an association between ALC and graduation. I also hypothesized that the profile of students who participated in the ALC and the profile of students who did not participate in the ALC would not differ.

After completing the research and conducting the chi-square test of independence, I was able to conclude that there was insufficient evidence to support the hypothesis that participation in ALC was associated with graduation for the study sample. The descriptive statistics reflected a profile of the sample. The students participating in the ALC differed from nonparticipating students on the variable of ethnicity. However, based on gender and ELL status, students who participated in the ALC did not differ from nonparticipating students.

## Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

### Assumptions

It is assumed that the HSAP is both reliable and valid, but I have not been able to find any research to verify this assumption. However, the HSAP is a widely used state test suggesting that the assumption of reliability and validity may be reasonable. The students included in the study were identified based on HSAP scores and placed in the intervention class. On time graduation was looked at as opposed to the graduation of a student because the school is scored on the school report card based off of on time graduation rate.

### Limitations

The limitation of the study was that I focused only on whether there was an association between the ALC intervention in which students who did not pass the HSAP participated and whether this target population of students graduated on time. I did not examine the association that the ALC intervention can have on all students. There were variables that could impact graduation that were not being considered in this study. I looked only at the two variables of intervention and graduation rate not taking into account the potential influence of other variables such as home life, socioeconomic status, and attendance at school.

**Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of the study was the particular intervention given to students who did not pass the HSAP and the graduation rate of said students with their cohort group. One boundary of the study was that it was completed with only one high school but with three different groups of students within the high school that encompass three different years. Another boundary of the study was the fact that only one criterion (score on the HSAP) was being used to determine who received intervention; therefore, there could have been under coverage of students who needed the intervention due to other risks but had passed the HSAP. The variables studied were graduation rate, participation in the ALC, ethnicity, gender and ELL status of each student.

## Protection of Participants' Rights

The National Institute of Health (NIH) along with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Walden University are very meticulous in making sure that the participants in

any study remain confidential. Permission for this study was granted by the IRB team from Walden University (approval number 11-01-16-0353993). Furthermore, permission was also granted by District A's Chief Officer of the office of Instruction and Accountability and the site principal. Confidentiality was ensured through de-identifying the data through the removal of student names by providing each document a number which was used to protect the identities of the students whose data was used. Student names were not used. I, at no time, saw student names nor had any interaction with the students during the entire study due to the de-identification of the data that was given to me, therefore, I did not need permission from the participants. Permission was granted from both the superintendent of my school district and the principal of my school to be able to receive the secondary data. The data are stored in two different places. One place is a hard drive that is locked up in a safe at my house and the other is a hard copy that I printed out that is also kept in the safe at my house. The data will be destroyed five years after this paper is approved.

## Data Analysis Results

The problem that was observed was the low rate of graduation rate at School A. The main purpose of this study was to determine if there was an association between ALC, the school intervention given, and graduation rate. The secondary purpose of this study was to create a profile of the participants based on different demographic data. Action theory was the theoretical framework on which the research into the above stated problem was based. It is important to reiterate that for the intention of this study the phrases graduation rate and graduation rate are being used synonymously.

**Descriptive Data**

The archival data were originally collected from 174 records of students who had not passed one or both parts of the HSAP and qualified for the ALC class, which was the intervention. Because students can take the HSAP multiple times, duplicates were eliminated therefore the records that were analyzed through SPSS became 166. From the 166 students, 134 students (80.72%) participated in the ALC class, while 32 (19.28%) did not participate in the ALC class. Of the 166 students, 68 of the students were female (40.96%) and 98 of the students were male (59.04%). Non-Caucasian students were in the majority with 98 students (59.04%) of the 166 students; 19 of the 166 students were ELL (11.45%). Table 4 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants by group.

Table 4

*Profile of participants by group*

| | *ALC* | *Non ALC* |
|---|---|---|
| Non Caucasian | 62.69% | 43.75% |
| Male | 61.10% | 50.00% |
| ELL | 11.19% | 12.50% |

*Note.* The data were extracted from the archival data provided.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted with respect to graduation and student enrollment in the ALC class, graduation.

**Research Question**

Research Question 1: What is the association between at-risk students who participate in the ALC and on time graduation?

$H_0$1: There is no relationship between participation in ALC and graduating for students who have been classified at risk through the failure to pass the HSAP.

$H_1$1: There is a relationship between participation in ALC and graduating for students who have been classified at risk through the failure to pass the HSAP.

Research Question 2: What is the profile of students who participated in the ALC intervention compared to those who did not participate?

For the primary research question, I examined the association between participation in ALC and the graduation rate of students classified as at risk**.** I ran a chi-square test of independence with an alpha level of 0.05 to produce the results given in Table 5. Students who participated in the school intervention, ALC class, were labeled 1 while students who did not participate in the intervention, were labeled 0. Students who graduated on time were labeled 1, while students who did not graduate on time, were labeled 0. Expected results were that there would be sufficient evidence found from the research done to be able to reject the null hypothesis (De Luca & Hinshaw, 2013). However, results of the chi-square did not indicate significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 166) = 1.27$, $p = 0.26$, suggesting that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is an association between participation in the ALC and graduation. Most students had taken the ALC ($n$ = 134 participants) with 61.2% of these students graduating on time ($n$ = 82 participants). Results of the chi-square test of independence between students taking the ALC and graduating on time are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Participation in ALC Intervention and Graduating On Time*

| Graduation | Completion of ALC (school intervention) | | $\chi^2(1)$ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | | |
| Yes | 82 [84.76] | 23 [20.24] | 1.27 | .26 |
| No | 52 [49.21] | 9 [11.75] | | |

*Note*: Values displayed in brackets are the expected counts for each cell

**Participant profile**

To develop profiles of the students that participated in the ALC intervention and of those that did not participate in ALC I examined contingency tables of ALC participation and each of three variables (gender, ethnicity and ELL status).

Male students were labeled 1 while female students were labeled 0. Results of the chi-square did not indicate significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 166) = 1.34$, $p = 0.25$, suggesting that there is no significant difference in the gender distribution between those who participated in the ALC and those who did not participate (Table 6). Of the students who took ALC, 61.1% of them were males ($n = 82$ participants) with an equal number of males and females who did not take the ALC *(*$n = 16$ participants each). This is consistent with previous research findings showing that there is not significant association between intervention and gender (Hemelt & Marcotte, 2013).

Table 6

*Taking the ALC and Gender*

| Gender | Completion of ALC (school intervention) | | $\chi^2(1)$ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | | |
| Female | 52 [54.89] | 16 [13.12] | 1.34 | .25 |
| Male | 82 [79.11] | 16 [18.89] | | |

*Note*: Values displayed in brackets are the expected counts for each cell.

Ethnicity was broken down such that Caucasian students were labeled 1 while students of all other ethnicities were labeled 0. Colbert (2013) stated that there is a distinction between the ethnicity of a student and being given intervention. Results of the chi-square indicated a significant in the ethnic distribution of students who participated in the ALC intervention compared to those that did not, $\chi^2(1, N = 166) = 3.83$, $p = 0.05$ (Table 7). This finding suggested that the profiles of the two groups differ with regards to ethnic makeup. Of the students who took ALC, 62.69% of them were non-Caucasian ($n$ = 84 participants) and 56.25% of the students who did not access the ALC intervention were Caucasian ($n$ = 18 participants).

Table 7

*Taking the ALC and Ethnicity*

| Ethnicity | Completion of ALC (school intervention) | | $\chi^2(1)$ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | | |
| Non-Caucasian | 84 [79.1] | 14 [18.89] | 3.83 | .05 |
| Caucasian | 50 [54.89] | 18 [13.12] | | |

*Note*: Values displayed in brackets are the expected counts for each cell.

Students were broken down based on the classification of ELL. Students classified as ELL were labeled with a 1 while students not classified as ELL were labeled with a 0. Research by Andrews (2013) showed a significant relationship between school intervention and ELL students. However, results of the study did not indicate a significant difference in the distribution of students by ELL status between the two groups, $\chi^2(1, N = 166) = 0.43$, $p = 0.84$ (Table 8). This finding suggests that there is no significant difference in the profiles of students who participated in the ALC and those who did not participate based on the ELL status of the student. Of the students who took ALC, 11.2% of them were classified as ELL ($n = 15$ participants) while 12.5% of the students who did not take ALC were classified as ELL ($n = 4$ participants).

Table 8

*Taking the ALC and ELL*

| ELL | Completion of ALC (school intervention) Yes | No | $\chi^2(1)$ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not ELL | 119 [118.66] | 28 [28.34] | .43 | .84 |
| ELL | 15 [15.34] | 4* [3.66] | | |

*Note*: Values displayed in brackets are the expected counts for each cell.
* This cell does not have the required value of 5.

Action theory states that based on results, stakeholders should review what is being implemented at the school and from the data decide what needs to be changed, if anything (Anderson, Steffen, Wiese, & King, 2014). From looking at the results found in this study, the shareholders at my school might want to consider convening and discussing what the results could mean with respect to the intervention given.

## Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was an association between ALC and graduation rate. To explore these categorical data, I utilized chi-square tests of independence to compare these data and to determine if there was a correlation. Review of the literature indicated that students who had intervention tended to have a higher graduation rate than their counterparts, (Bemboom & McMaster, 2013) but this was not shown within my results.

An examination of the profile of the sample provided further insight into the characteristics of the participants based on three identified demographic factors. The

nonsignificant correlation between gender and participation in ALC was consistent with findings in the literature (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013; Suh & Suh, 2011). The significant correlation between ethnicity and ALC is also consistent with the findings in the literature reviewed (Murnane & Hoffman, 2013; Stark et al., 2015; Suh & Suh, 2011). Andrews (2013) found that students who are classified as ELL have a higher tendency to be placed into the ALC because ELL students are more likely to drop out of school. This premise was not shown within my findings. Stakeholders that constantly monitor the data and adjust the action plan to match the students' needs more often reach their goals as was found in the research theory (Anderson et al., 2014).

The results of the chi-square tests of independence showed a statistically nonsignificant association between participation in ALC and graduation outcome. This result does not mean that there is not a correlation between graduation and ALC intervention, just that these findings did not demonstrate a correlation between graduation and ALC intervention. Another possible explanation for the findings of the chi-square test of independence is the difference in the size of the sample groups (e.g. 134 vs 32). This could explain why a significant correlation was not shown within the chi-square tests of independence. One more possible reason that the findings of the chi-squares tests did not show the same trends as the research could be equated to the fact that the students who were placed into the ALC intervention had failed one, if not both, parts of the HSAP instead of looking at the entire student body for students needing intervention. This reduces the variability in the data which has the potential effect of missing a correlation

that may exist. Future research, looking at more schools (both in and out of District A) may lead to a better understanding of whether ALC does help students stay in school.

The methodology of the study was discussed in Section 2. Included in the discussion was the research design, justification for the design, the setting and sample, instrumentation and materials, data collection and analysis, assumptions and limitations, protection of participants' rights, and findings. To preserve configuration with the rationale of the study stated in Section 1, a quantitative research design with archival data was used to investigate the correlation between intervention and graduation rate. Based on the results of this study, a Professional Development (PD) program will be designed to address ways to improve the implementation of different interventions within the classroom. The goal is to provide the faculty and staff the most effective intervention strategies to be implemented both in and out of the classroom. In Section 3, I will discuss the PD program that I developed based on the findings of my data and the literature review. In addition, I will discuss the description and goals, rationale, theoretical foundation, literature review, implementation, and evaluation of the project. Finally, in Section 4, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the project, recommendations for alternative approaches, and implications of the project including positive social change.

Section 3: The Project

## Introduction

Studies show that lack of improvement in the high school graduation rate continues to be a concern (Hoover & Cozzens, 2016; Joo & Kim, 2016). There also continues to be a discrepancy between the graduation rates with respect to gender and ethnicity, with white females having the highest graduation rate (Joo & Kim, 2016). By looking at different student outcomes, including test scores, students who are classified as at-risk can be helped to become successful both inside and outside of the classroom (Xu & Liu, 2016). One way to help at-risk students is by having all teachers agree on effective classroom strategies (Xu & Liu, 2016). The best way for the faculty and staff to have a consensus is through professional development (Kelly, 2012).

One of the characteristics of a high-performing school/district is utilizing and implementing effective professional development sessions (Leithwood & Azah, 2017). The proposed project for this paper is a PD in which the findings of the research are presented, along with the best methods to use to help students, specifically students at risk. By using the data, the moderator will be able to educate the different stakeholders on different interventions. The first day of the PD will be geared towards guidance counselors and administrators from the different high schools in the district. The second day of the PD will be geared towards different students found at the school site. The third day and a half of the PD will be geared towards the faculty and staff at the school site. The goal of the professional development is to help all staff/faculty understand the

best way to help students within the classroom and what measures and interventions to take to keep at-risk students from dropping out of high school.

## Rationale

Teachers are in the forefront of keeping students in school and ensuring graduation (De Luca & Hinshaw, 2013; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013; Soland, 2013). Therefore, teachers need to be continuously up-dated and trained on the best resources to use within the classroom to keep helping all students and, most especially, at-risk students (Blank, 2013; Chong & Kong, 2012; De Luca & Hinshaw, 2013; Goh, 2014; Kelly, 2012; Soland, 2013; Xu & Liu, 2016). One of the characteristics of a high-performing school/district is utilizing and implementing effective professional development into the classroom and school (Anderson et al., 2014; Killion, 2016; Leithwood & Azah, 2017).

Although the graduation rate is increasing at the study site, there are still differences based on ethnicities and other demographic factors (Chesney & Benson, 2012; Hoover & Cozzens, 2016; Joo & Kim, 2016; Royle & Brown, 2014). Some educators have found that by using research data to tailor professional development sessions, significant gains have been made in achievement within a specific content area (Blank, 2013; De Luca & Hinshaw, 2013; Hudson, Childs, & Carver, 2016; Kelly, 2012; Killion, 2015; Leithwood & Azah, 2017). The findings from this research study showed that there was a significant correlation between the ethnicity of students and participation in the ALC class. ALC is one of the few standard interventions done at the school site. However, it is currently not enough because in 2017/2018 alone, 17 students dropped out

of the senior class (J. Blackmon, personal communication, May 25th, 2018). This means that 17 out of the original 232 students dropped out, a rate of 7% for the senior class. This finding does not include any of the students in the other grades who dropped out during 2017/2018 (J. Blackmon, personal communication, May 25th, 2018).

Through research-based professional development, stakeholders discussed more interventions to be implemented into the classroom (Anderson et al., 2014; Bergman, 2012; Blank, 2013; Bradley, Munger, & Hord, 2015; Hudson et al., 2016; Killion, 2015; Pinchot & Weber, 2016). By implementing a professional development based on research, more students could be reached, rather than only students labeled at risk based on qualifying and participating in HSAP (Holcomb, 2013; Jimerson, 2013). Consistent with action theory, the professional development will also allow educators to discuss what is working, what is not working, and what needs to be changed (Kelly, 2012; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013).

## Review of the Literature

I utilized Education Source, ERIC and Thoreau data bases using the key words professional development, student achievement, dropout, dropout rates, interventions, andragogy, transformative learning, Mezirow, Knowles, and action research to find relevant literature.

### Theoretical Foundation

Adult learning and children learning are not the same according to Knowles (McCray, 2016). Pedagogy is the theory most educators use to teach student learners (Sato, Haegele, & Foot, 2017). Educators who use pedagogy implement three

assumptions when teaching their students (Sato et al., 2017). The first assumption is that students do not know the material and must rely on the teacher for the information (Sato et al., 2017). The second assumption is that the lessons for the students must be subject-centered (Sato et al., 2017). Finally, the third assumption made by teachers when using pedagogy is the extrinsic motivation the teacher has (Sato et al., 2017).

Andragogy is the set of principles used for adult learners (McCray, 2016; Sato et al., 2017). Andragogy addresses the idea that adults learn differently than children/adolescents (McCray, 2016; Sato et al., 2017). Knowles, who is the person most associated with the theory of andragogy, states that adult learners learn by themselves and the teacher is there just to be the facilitator (Javed, 2017; McCray, 2016; Namaste, 2017). The biggest difference in pedagogy and andragogy is life experience (McCray, 2016; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017). Adults have a larger wealth of knowledge and experience from which to draw when learning (McCray, 2016). Andragogy is the beginning of adult learning, serving as an entry point into different adult learning theories, such as transformative and self-directed learning (McCray, 2016). The theoretical foundation that will be implemented for the final project is transformative learning.

**Transformative Learning.** Transformative theory for adults is based on three concepts articulated by Mezirow (Javed, 2017). Educators who use transformative learning implement the concepts of andragogy but also three concepts specific to transformative learning. The three concepts are: instrumental, dialogical, and self-reflective (Javed, 2017; McCray, 2016).

***Instrumental learning.*** Instrumental learning is the process in which the learner is able to control the environment (Javed, 2017). Control, in this case, does not mean actual control. Instead the adult learner has a life event (or something happens in his/her environment) that cannot be solved using previous experience or methods (McCray, 2016). Once the event has been identified, the adult learner starts to examine his/her beliefs (McCray, 2016).

***Dialogical learning.*** Dialogical learning is the process where the learner starts to understand the communication of others (Javed, 2017). Communication is the progression of cooperatively and actively understanding the meaning of others through interaction (McCray, 2016). Through communication the learner can infer exactly what other learners expect (Frank, 2013).

***Self-reflective learning.*** Self-reflective learning is the process of the learner understanding him/herself (Javed, 2017). The learner takes what he/she has learned through instrumental learning and dialogical learning and reflects on what changes need to be made (Sato & Haegele, 2018). Through this reflective learning, the learner plans the best action to implement with regards to the life event that originally started the entire process.

Transformative learning differs from andrology and self-directed learning because it does not just place emphasis on the characteristics of adult learning (McCray, 2016). Transformative learning places more emphasis on the cognitive portion of learning (Javed, 2017). The experiences of the learner along with how the learner develops leads the learner into critical reflection, which then leads to transformation (Giannoukos,

Besas, Galiropoulos, & Hioctur, 2015; Javed, 2017; McCray, 2016). The adult learner uses critical reflection by integrating past learning with new experiences to transform (Javed, 2017). Through transformation, the learner becomes self-empowered (McCray, 2016). For the learner to reach transformation, however, the learner must have a leader who will help him/her achieve the level of critical reflection needed to reach transformation (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017; Peppers, 2015). This leader is often found in professional development sessions (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017).

**Professional Development**

Professional development has been long utilized by many school districts around the world to keep the staff current on new research and data and to help staff reach transformation (Chong & Kong, 2012; Javed, 2017; Kelly, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Namaste, 2017; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013; Wood et al., 2017). If executed correctly, professional development helps the staff reach transformational learning which then helps the staff implement new methods in the classroom that help each of the students (Carmichael & Martens, 2012; Frazelle, & Nagel, 2015; Holcomb, 2013; Javed, 2017; Killion & Hirsh, 2012; Moirao, Morris, Klein, & Jackson, 2012). According to the researchers, schools and districts that are high performing engage in professional development that follow three specific criteria (Boehle, 2013; Chapman et al., 2013; Chesney & Benson, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Killion, 2015). First, professionals indicated a need for PD (Boehle, 2013). Second, professionals are included in decision-making during PD (Boehle, 2013). Third, professionals and leadership staff participate in PD together (Boehle, 2013).

**Need for professional development.** Professionals indicating a need for PD is the first criterion that is used by high performing districts/schools. This step corelates with instrumental learning, the first criterion in transformational learning (Javed, 2017; Peppers, 2015). The professional, or adult learner, must realize that there is a need for change to be able to better reach his/her students (Frank, 2013; Peppers, 2015; Sato & Haegele, 2018; Robertson, 2017). To find out the need that must be addressed in an effective professional development meeting, the researcher needs to closely examine the data (Bergman, 2012; Blank, 2013; Carmichael & Martens, 2012; Holcomb, 2013; Jimerson, 2013; Killion & Hirsh, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; McKinsey & Co, 2017). Looking at the data, with the entire staff, allows everyone to see where there are weaknesses and identify areas that should be addressed (Anderson et al., 2014; Blank, 2013; Celeste, 2016; Goh, 2014; Moirao et al., 2012). By focusing on the data and results of student performance staff come to a better understanding of PD needs for the collective staff to better support student success and learning (Boehle, 2013; Chapman et al., 2013; Chong & Kong, 2012; Holcomb, 2013; Leithwood & Azah, 2017).

Allowing staff to examine data prior to the presentation or delivery of PD prepares and engages the staff in the student needs and their needs for development thereby facilitating an open-mind and transparency when participating in the PD (Anderson et al., 2014; Bradley et al., 2015; Chesney & Benson, 2012; Hudson et al., 2016; Killion, 2015; Pinchot & Weber, 2016). By presenting the data to the administration and guidance personnel before the rest of the staff, school leaders can collaboratively present the data and considerations on how best to support staff and

student needs (Abdul-Majied, Johnson, & Campbell, 2017; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013). Through a collaborative decision-making process, the staff support the creation, design and delivery of the PD which is a key factor in the PD being well received (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017; Peppers, 2015)

**Included in decision making.** People like to have a say in how to change something that is broken in the system of which they are a part (Bergman, 2012; Bradley et al., 2015; Celeste, 2016; Holcomb, 2013; Killion & Hirsh, 2012). Few people like being told what needs changing and how to make the necessary corrections to change any "problems" (Frank, 2013; McCray, 2016). Instead, by allowing the staff to have input when it comes to PD, leaders/educators/administrators have observed better results with implementation of the PD strategies by the staff (Boehle, 2013; Chapman et al., 2011; Kelly, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2017). This input allows staff to implement dialogical learning, the second criteria for transformational learning (Javed, 2017).

Educators are in the business of helping students be successful in and out of the classroom; they truly want what is best for each student they teach; so, for the PD to be the most effective, the teachers must have input (Franzenburg, 2017; Kelly, 2012; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013). Asking for input from different teachers as to what has worked or not worked allows staff to be more involved in the professional development (Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013). Opportunities for staff to listen to each other and have open dialogue allows for dialogical learning to happen (Javed, 2017). Furthermore, asking for input from the students being taught about what techniques have worked for them and why they do better in one class than another is a

piece of data that has helped teachers understand the interventions that worked for the students they are teaching (Bradley et al., 2015; Jimerson, 2013; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013).

**Training with leaders.** The final criterion needed for a PD to be successful is for the administration to be present with the staff and just as involved in the learning as the staff (Chong & Kong, 2012; Hudson et al., 2016; Kelly, 2012; Killion, 2015; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Moirao et al., 2012). Administrators are part of the team that is going to address the need, so the administrators should attend the same PD as the staff (Chong & Kong, 2012; Ermeling & Gaillmore, 2013; Hudson et al., 2016; Kelly, 2012; Killion, 2015; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Moirao et al., 2012). Communication between the staff and administrators allows for dialogical learning to occur (Gallchoir, O`Flaherty, & Hinchion, 2018; Javed, 2017; Peppers, 2015). Knowing, and understanding, the common goal allows for critical reflection to occur (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017).

When both staff and administrators start to reflect critically on the problem, what has worked, and what has not, informative discussions occur (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017; Peppers, 2015; Sato & Haegele, 2018). It is through informative discussios and collaboration that significant change can occur for the better and the goal can be reached (Kelly, 2012; Killion, 2016; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Pinchot & Weber, 2016; Royle & Brown, 2014; Sharratt & Fullan, 2013). Meeting all three criteria: a need for PD, inclusion in decision making during the PD, and staff and leaders working together during PD allow for effective PD (Boehle, 2013; Zur & Ravid, 2018).

## Action Theory and Professional Development

Consistent with action theory which framed this study, researchers identify a problem and determine if what was in place was helping to fix the problem (Anderson et al., 2014; Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013). Currently, the research site has one main intervention in place, the ALC; however, through the research that was done, no significant effect on graduation was found for students classified as at-risk who were involved in the intervention. Through Action Theory, I identified a need and determined if the need was being met. According to the data received and evaluated, the need is not being met.

## Transformative Learning and Professional Development

The first criterion in transformative learning is instrumental, or control, in which there is a realization that something must be changed (Javed, 2017). This is also one of the criteria for an effective PD, realizing that there is a need (Sato et al., 2017). The second criterion in transformative learning is dialogical which is the process in which communication is implemented well (Javed, 2017). Not only is a person heard, but the person also hears and understands what others are saying (Javed, 2017). This criterion is also found in effective PD (Frank, 2013; Robertson, 2017). Professionals, or adult learners, are part of the decision-making process and participate with leadership in effective PD (Frank, 2013; Javed, 2017). The final criterion in transformative learning is self-reflection (Javed, 2017). Allowing the adult learner to self-reflect is what allows the learner to reach transformative learning (McCray, 2016). In an effective PD, the leader

of the PD helps guide the professionals (adult learners) to self-reflection as well as reflect on implementation into the classroom (Frank, 2013; McCray, 2016).

## Project Description

### Resources, Support and Barriers

For this project, the needed resources are the data that has been collected; a room that is big enough to hold the audience that will be in attendance; a computer and screen to show the data; paper and writing utensils for the audience to take notes; give suggestions and for continuous feedback to be written down. The existing supports are the guidance department who would like for more intervention to be implemented and the administration who would like to see more students graduate.

Teachers may be both an existing support and a potential barrier. Teachers will be able to bring what works for them in their classroom, which is an existing support, but they may also bring skepticism that another professional development will be effective. Every three years, education tends to be altered in such a way that new training is needed for the educators, at least in the specific context of the site (Killion & Hirsh, 2012; Peppers, 2015). Due to the multiple trainings and changes within the educational field, many teachers are skeptical that yet another professional development will help (Killion & Hirsh, 2012; Peppers, 2015). A potential solution to the barrier of skeptical teachers is to follow the three criteria of how to have an effective staff/professional development session. Another potential solution is the feedback on what has worked and has not worked in each classroom from the students who will also be involved in the staff development. No staff names will be used during the student portion of the staff

development. Data collected from students will be limited to what has worked and not worked and what the students see as their part in their education, as opposed to the students' perception of the role of the staff.

**Implementation and Timetable**

The implementation would be at the beginning of the school year when teachers and staff have come back, but not students. There will be three different days of development with three different audiences. This schedule allows for the teachers to have time to think about the new methods of intervention that are discussed and how and which of the methods could be implemented in their classroom. The actual staff development would go over three nonconsecutive days, so that the moderator could collect the data received from each meeting and compile the data for the next meeting.

The first meeting would be the second Thursday in August before school begins with students with the administration and guidance department from each high school in the district. Most of brainstorming would come from the introduced data (including school report cards) and what has been implemented at other schools for intervention (both good and bad). Each school will be made up of either one or two groups, depending on how many participants there are from each school, and will brainstorm amongst themselves about what interventions have been put in place at the respective school, what has worked, what has not worked, and if the graduation rate changed on the school report card since implementation of interventions. Each group will then share their findings with the entire audience. The moderator will keep a running tally on the interventions, success and failures, to be able to take back to the meeting with the staff.

The second meeting will be the Monday following the first meeting, also before school but with specific students such that the sample accurately portrays the population of the school. The moderator will start by doing an ice breaking activity using a method called silent graffiti to see what has helped the students learn and compare this to the data collected from the first meeting. After the icebreaker, the moderator would break the students up to brainstorm about and give reasons concerning what they agreed and disagreed with from the icebreaker. These results will be shared with the entire group. From there, the moderator will ask what the students determined the different roles are in the classroom with respect to student learning. Finally, the students (still within their respective groups) will brainstorm what has worked and not worked in specific subject area classrooms and why. The moderator will carefully monitor what is being said to make sure no names are being used, just subjects and methods.

The third meeting will be the Wednesday following the second meeting with the staff before the instruction starts for that school year. In this meeting, the original data from the study will be shown via a PowerPoint and the staff will be asked to provide input on the PowerPoint. The moderator will take notes to compare this information to what was said in the other two meetings. The staff will then be separated into groups by subject areas and within these groups discuss what interventions are used and what has worked. Summaries from the group discussion will be shared with the entire group. The techniques discussed in both the district meeting and student meeting will be introduced to the teachers to allow them to discuss the results. Finally, the different interventions that seem to work will be discussed in further detail along with ideas on how to

implement the strategies over time. There will be a follow up meeting with the staff during the October late-in day within each department. At the end of the semester, there will be a short meeting amongst each of the departments to see what has worked, what has been tweaked, and what has not worked at all in the classroom. These findings will be brought back to the moderator for data purposes to implement action theory for student improvement (Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013; Robertson, 2017).

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of the student is to give input into what works and what does not work inside the classroom for each student and to keep working on their individual education. This professional development is to see if there are interventions that can be used that will help all students be successful. It will be the role of teachers, administration and guidance personnel to make sure the interventions are being used and implemented correctly. Both administration and guidance personnel will need to observe classroom lessons/activities to be able to give helpful feedback to the teachers. Furthermore, the students that are part of the process will be polled at the end of each semester to see if the different interventions helped in the different subject areas.

## Project Evaluation Plan

The project evaluation that will be used will be both goal- and outcomes-based. Each teacher will have the goal of implementing at least one new intervention in the classroom. At the end of the semester, the teacher will reflect and determine if a new intervention was truly implemented throughout the entire semester and if it was available for all the students in the classroom. The evaluation will also be outcome-based, to see if

fewer students fail and/or dropout. These data will be based on previous years and will come mostly from guidance personnel and administrators and previous grades, if the teacher is teaching the same class and level as in past years. Furthermore, at the end of each session, the participants will anonymously fill out a Google Form (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqjrCtBwjskDUBTl4icRwEDbNlSrH6cQ5eBM9mc2Uuiyp2Ew/viewform?c=0&w=1) that contains two questions. The first question asks what the participant found helpful from the professional development and the second question asks what the participant feels should be changed with respect to the professional development.

The overall evaluation goal is to determine if different interventions that are implemented in each classroom have a positive impact on students, whether the student is classified as at-risk or not. The key stake-holders are the staff, who wish to see the students succeed; the community, who wish to have productive citizens, and the students themselves, who wish to be able to reach their full potential.

## Project Implications

Possible social change implications are resulting in fewer high school dropouts which would hopefully lead to a better economy and fewer incarcerations (Tavakolian & Howell, 2012). Having fewer dropouts is important to local stakeholders because the local economy should increase along with helping lower the crime rate in the area. In a larger context, the lower dropout rate could help the economy in other areas along with lowering the incarceration rate.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

## Project Strengths and Limitations

The project of conducting a staff development to address school intervention and graduation rates has strengths and limitations. One of the limitations of this project is that many times the techniques that are taught/provided are only implemented within the classroom for one or two years due to either the lack of support from the administration and/or district office and/or the staff (Hirsh, 2013; Kelly, 2012). If the staff does not conclude that there is support from the administration and district office, the staff is less likely to implement the techniques to the best of their ability (Celeste, 2016; Chesney & Benson, 2012; Hirsh, 2013; Kelly, 2012). According to Xu and Liu (2016), it is imperative that principals realize that they carry both the role of instructional leaders and decision makers to be able to have effective professional development that will help teachers implement any new techniques within the classroom.

Another limitation is the lack of teacher leaders who are both knowledgeable and experienced in the different interventions that will be discussed during the staff development. Without teacher leaders, no new technique can be successful in a school, no matter how well it is presented to the staff (Celeste, 2016; Pinchot & Weber, 2016). To be able to have effective teacher leaders, the teacher leaders need to be trained before the rest of the staff and have implemented the techniques in their own classroom before trying to help and lead the other staff members (Carmichael & Martens, 2012; Goh, 2014; Hirsh, 2013; Moirao et al., 2012; Renfro, 2014).

The final limitation is teachers. Teachers are not always comfortable implementing an unfamiliar strategy in their classroom (Patthey & Thomas-Spiegel, 2013; Prilleltensky, Neff, & Bessell, 2014). Stress is already felt in the classroom due to the numerous requirements made by the government without adding a new technique for teachers to try (Ball & Anderson-Butcher, 2014; Prilleltensky et al., 2014; von der Embse, Kilgus, Solomon, Bowler, & Curtiss, 2015). In addition, if teachers are not confidant that they have the support of their administration/fellow teachers, they are less likely to implement any different technique in their classroom (Ball & Anderson-Butcher, 2014; Prilleltensky et al., 2014; von der Embse et al., 2015).

However, if the support is in place, techniques taught at staff developments can be implemented in an effective manner that will allow for steady improvement in the students' achievement levels (Carmichael & Martens, 2012; Chong & Kong, 2012; Kelly, 2012; Leithwood & Azah, 2017; Xu & Liu, 2016). To be able to improve achievement, there must be steps delineating how the staff development is implemented (Bradley et al., 2015; Carmichael & Martens, 2012; Celeste, 2016; Chapman et al., 2013; Holcomb, 2013). There first must be training for the administration so that they are able to offer the proper support to the staff (Kelly, 2012; Xu & Liu, 2016). This staff development cannot be just a few hours; it must show the administration the correct way that the staff should be implementing the methods and the correct way to support the staff in making any needed changes with the implementations based on what has worked for colleagues (Cannata, Redding, & Rubin, 2016). There also needs to be data collected from this meeting to be able to compare to the final two meetings.

Next, there must be data from the students themselves as to what works and what does not work. The students' names will not be given so that there is no bias from the staff. The faculty would just know that students had come together to meet and had answered questions similar to the ones the staff are answering. This will allow the staff to see that the students do notice different methods and are interested in their learning (Cannata et al., 2016).

Finally, the staff must know and understand that this training is to further help all students in the school, not just the ones that have been labeled as needing help. The training is not to point out the flaws in teacher instruction- it is to present other methods that might be helpful. Also, the data that will be collected from the administrators, guidance counselors and students will not be used to evaluate the teacher but instead used to evaluate the intervention (Bradley et al., 2015; Cannata et al., 2016; Jimerson, 2013).

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative approach to doing a staff development would be a curriculum plan for more intervention classes that would be beneficial for students, especially minorities since there is still a gap between whites and minorities in achievement and graduation rate (Joo & Kim, 2016). This plan would allow for a curriculum that would help students who are significantly behind their classmates whether it is in a certain subject or they are on a lower grade level (Royle & Brown, 2014). Furthermore, an alternative definition of the problem is education not meeting the needs of the students. Needs not only include the learning of the students, but also their lives outside of school. An alternative solution

to the local problem would be to provide mentor programs for all students, not just the ones labeled by the school system as needing help.

While doing the research for this study, getting the data, analyzing the data and researching an appropriate project for this study, I developed a better understanding of the different implications that come from a student dropping out of high school. I knew that a student who dropped out would not make as much money, on average, as a student who did graduate from high school, but I did not realize all of the other statistics that came with not graduating. For example, a student is more likely to be arrested, more likely to be sick, more likely to have a child at a young age, and more likely to die younger than a student who did graduate from high school (Hoover & Cozzens, 2016).

Finding research that was helpful to my specific study was very difficult, especially since there has not been any research done with respect to the HSAP and ALC. I did not anticipate it being as hard as it was to find current research when it comes to all students receiving intervention, not just students who have been classified as in danger of dropping out. From doing the study, I found out how hard it is to come up with an effective staff development. Having to come up with an agenda, useful PowerPoints, and ways to be a useful monitor of a staff development was more difficult than I originally thought when I started this process.

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

### Personal Learning/Growth as a Scholar

I have grown as a researcher from this study. Before this study, I honestly had not done a lot of research in many years, so I was not very familiar with the different databases. Finding articles was very difficult for me at the beginning, until I realized that there are different ways to say what I was researching and to also look at the sources cited in articles I found. I also did not realize that some articles could be found only on certain databases until doing this study.

**Personal Learning/Growth as a Practitioner**

This study has made me more effective as a teacher. Before this study, I did not stay as current with the different topics in education that affected me in the classroom. Once I started thinking about what I wanted to study, I started to pay closer attention to what was going on in the classroom around the nation and world. Due to this research, I now realize what information should be used within the classroom and what information really will not be the most beneficial.

**Personal Learning/Growth as a Project Developer**

From researching effective professional/staff development, I have found that I pay a lot more attention to what was given to us at different professional/staff developments that I have attended through the last few years. I have listened to what other educators find effective and not effective and have kept this information in mind while thinking about what to do for my project study. I have realized that doing a professional/staff development for an entire staff is not an easy task and the presenter must be both knowledgeable in the material being presented and organized with respect to what needs to happen during the development.

## Reflection on Importance of the Work

I am adamant that this work is very important because it addresses an issue that occurs everywhere in the United States: students not graduating from high school on time. It also addresses the ways in which students are classified as at risk and if that criteria had any impact on the student graduating on time. From the research done, it appears that the only significance that was found based on the intervention given was that more minorities were placed in the intervention. The intervention, itself, did not appear to have a significant impact on whether a student graduated or not.

## Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

However, based on other studies, it appears that intervention (when done correctly) can have a major impact on graduation rate. Thus, there can be positive change in the graduation rate at the local site if further interventions are put into place. The implication of this study is that just using one intervention based on the HSAP did not appear to make any difference in the graduation rate. Based solely on the data gathered, there was no real social impact, but if the research is reviewed, it appears that a social impact of higher graduation rates can be achieved. To achieve these higher graduation rate, future research should be done on the impact interventions have when used in all classes with respect to the graduation rate.

## Conclusion

I have just finished my 20$^{th}$ year as a high school math teacher. During this time, I have seen numerous students drop out. Many of these students make it to their senior year and then decide to drop out and not receive their high school diploma. During the

school year of 2017/2018, approximately 20 students dropped out of a senior class that only held a little over 230 students and this has been a continuous trend. This is unacceptable to me. I chose to do research on the impact one specific intervention had on the graduation rate of the school I work for. From this research, I found very surprising information - the intervention used did not have a significant impact on graduation rate. Therefore, further research needs to be done to see if multiple interventions, including daily ones used in each class, makes a difference on graduation rates. I have put together a project that would bring together staff, administration, and students to help raise the graduation rate and lower the dropout rate.

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Appendix A: The Project

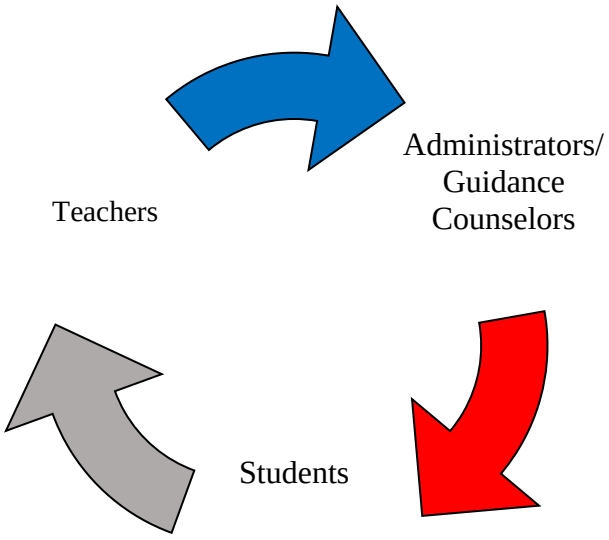
# Managing Interventions

# From the Viewpoint of

# Administrators,

# Guidance Counselors, Students, and

# Teachers




Facilitator: Karin Roberts

## Objectives and Outline of Professional Development Days

### Day One Objectives: Professional Development with Administrators and Guidance Counselors

At the end of this training, administrators and guidance counselors will be able to:

- Identify where their school ranks with respect to the rest of the district and state when it comes to graduation rates
- Collaborate with professionals from different schools on the topic of intervention
- Relay the information and ideas back to their home school

### Agenda

*8:00 – 8:30:* Sign in, breakfast, and find assigned seat

*8:30 – 10:30:* Go over objectives

Using the state report card answer questions on page 1 of handout with other members from the same school

*10:30 – 10:45:* Break and find new assigned seat based on color sticker on handout

*10:45 – 12:00:* Work within new groups discussing interventions that have been used at each person's school

Discuss why each intervention worked or did not work, use page two of handout to take notes

*12:00 – 1:30:* Lunch on your own

*1:30 – 3:30:* Each group will stand up and discuss the interventions and what they discovered from their discussions

*3:30 – 3:45:* Closing remarks and dismissal

**Day Two Objectives: Students**

At the end of this training, the students will be able to:

- Use silent graffiti to discuss interventions whether good or bad
- Define the different roles within the learning community
- List and discuss different intervention for different subject areas

**Agenda**

*8:00 – 8:30:* Sign-in, breakfast, and find a comfortable place to sit, first door prize

*8:30 – 9:15:* Icebreaker – Silent Graffiti

*9:15 – 9:30:* Break and find new seats based on the color sticker on the handout, second door prize

*9:30 – 11:00:* Within the group talk about the different intervention methods that were written during the icebreaker and give the reasoning behind the effectiveness of the intervention

*11:00 – 11:15*: Break and third door prize

*11:15 – 12:00:* Discuss with the entire group what each individual group came up with

*12:00 – 1:15:* Lunch (provided), fourth door prize, and finding new seat based on the smiley sticker on the back of the handout

*1:15 – 1:45:* Discuss within each group the different roles within the classroom and each student's role in his/her own learning

*1:45 – 2:15:* Discuss with the entire group what each individual group came up with

*2:15 -2:30:* Break and fifth door prize

*2:30 – 3:15:* Discuss in individual groups what interventions work best for each subject

*3:15 – 3:45:* Discuss with entire group what each individual group came up with

Closing remarks and thank yous

Final door prize

**Day Three Objectives: Teachers**

At the end of this training, the teachers will be able to:

- Examine and dissect the information received from the other two sessions
- Examine interventions that have worked in same content area classrooms
- Examine interventions that have worked in different content area classrooms
- Commit to at least one new intervention to use within their classroom

**Agenda**

*8:00 – 8:30:* Breakfast, sign-in, visit, find seat

*8:30 – 10:00:* PowerPoint over the two previous sessions

Teachers will fill out page one of the handout

*10:00 – 10:15:* Break, and finding new seats

*10:15 – 11:45:* Within groups of same content area, discuss interventions used in class and how the interventions worked

Discuss interventions that have been tried before in the classroom that did not work and why they did not work

Discuss an intervention that was covered in the PowerPoint that you would like to use and why

*11:45 – 12:15:* Discuss with the entire group what you came up with within your group

*12:15 – 1:45:* Lunch, on your own, and finding new seats (which have been assigned)

*1:45 – 2:45:* Discuss with your new group what intervention you have used in your content area and what your content area came up with as a good intervention

*2:45 – 3:15:* Discuss with entire group what was discussed in each individual group

*3:15 – 3:45:* Information from two previous professional developments will be discussed Teacher will write down at least one new intervention that will be implemented in his/her classroom

**Day 4 Objectives: Administration, Guidance Personnel, and Teachers**

At the end of the hour, each of the members of each group will be able to discuss what intervention has been implemented within the classroom and if the intervention appears to be helping all students be successful.

**Agenda**

*8:15 – 9:15:* Each content area will meet with either an administrator or guidance personnel and talk about the different interventions. (late-in day)

**Day One: Session 8:30 – 10:30**

The purpose of this session is for the school administrators and guidance counselors to be able to research where the school they work for is ranked with respect to other schools in the district and the state. The goal is for administrators and guidance counselors to fully comprehend, and agree, on what is occurring in the school that makes the school successful and what is occurring in the school that is not allowing the school to be successful. To do this, each group will be able to research their school report card and compare it to all of the other schools in the district and in the state. Each person in the group will fill out the front of the handout *How Are We Doing Comparatively*, given when he/she signed in. The handout can be found on the following page:

How Are We Doing Comparatively?

Please fill out the following information based on the school report card, PowerSchool, and what you know is being done at your school.

1) What is the breakdown of students based on gender and ethnicity?

| | African American | Caucasian | Hispanic | Asian | Pacific Islanders | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | | | | | | |
| Male | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | |

2) Compare the following standardized tests scores of your school to the state average.

| | Algebra 1 | English 1 | Biology 1 | US History | ACT | SAT | ACT WorkKeys |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Your School | | | | | | | |
| State | | | | | | | |

3) List the interventions that have been implemented by the school administration for either the classroom or school.

4) Why were the interventions from #3 implemented by the school administration? Have you noticed a difference in your school's scores since the implementation of the interventions?

5) Name any past interventions that were implemented by school administration that did not last. Why?

Notes Page

This is an area where you can take any notes you would like to be able to talk about later with your school:

Day One: Break and Find New Seats 10:30 – 10:45

Please look at the back of the packet that you were given and find the table that represents the color sticker you have on your packet. This is to help with Session Two.

Day One: Session 10:45 – 12:00

The purpose of this session is for administrators and guidance personnel from different schools to collaborate with each other. This will allow for a round robin type discussion between the different high schools within the district on interventions being used in each school and how effective each intervention appears to be. There will be a recorder for each group to write down the answers on a worksheet that will be submitted to the facilitator to collect the data to see if there are any patterns within the responses to be able to use for Day Three Professional Development. This *Collaboration Worksheet* can be found on the following page:

Collaboration Worksheet

Please answer the following questions through discussion with the other members of your group.

1) What interventions are being used at each school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2) What interventions were used in the past at each school but were classified as inadequate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3) What are some possible interventions that have been discussed at each school, but not implemented? Why have these interventions not been implemented?

_____

_____

_____

Notes Section (please use this section to write down any extra thoughts/notes that may occur during the discussion).

Day One: Lunch 12:00 – 1:30

Day One: Sessions 1:30 – 3:30

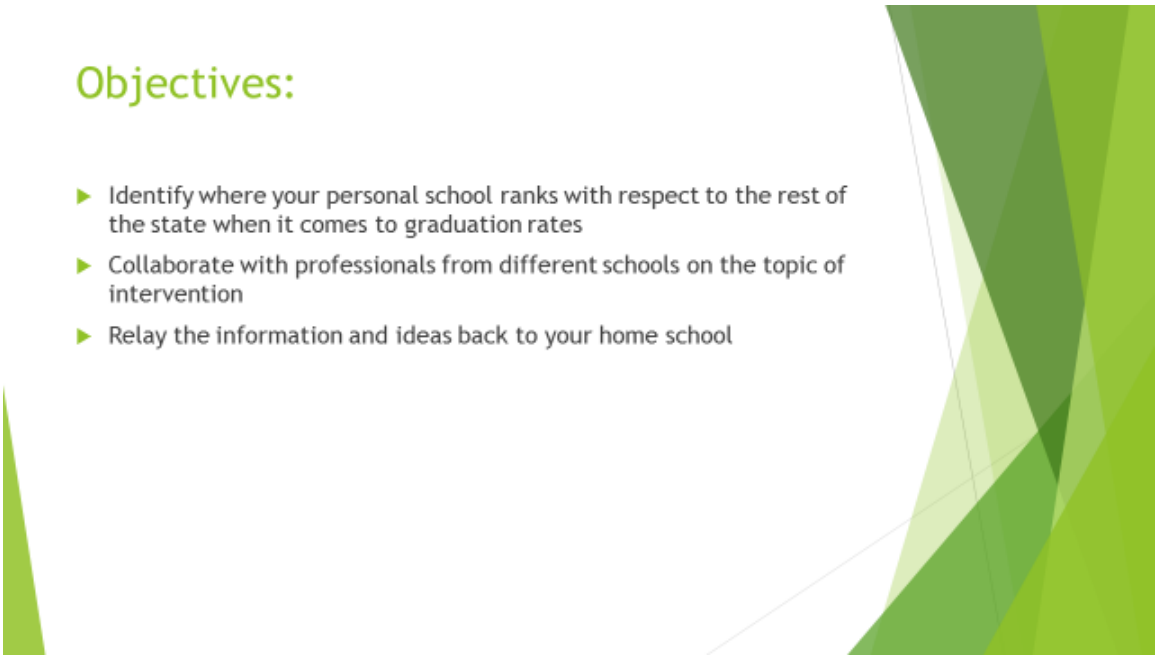
The purpose of this session is to have each group stand up and give one intervention that is being implemented well in one of the schools, one intervention that was discontinued in one of the schools, and one intervention that a school would like to look into for future implementation. Each group must try to give a different answer than the groups before. The facilitator will explain what is expected from each group and then starting with the blue group, will go around the room asking for one person to answer the asked questions. The facilitator might ask questions so that the answers are explained fully and the answers are understandable for everyone in the room.

Day One: Closing Remarks and Dismissal 3:30 -3:45

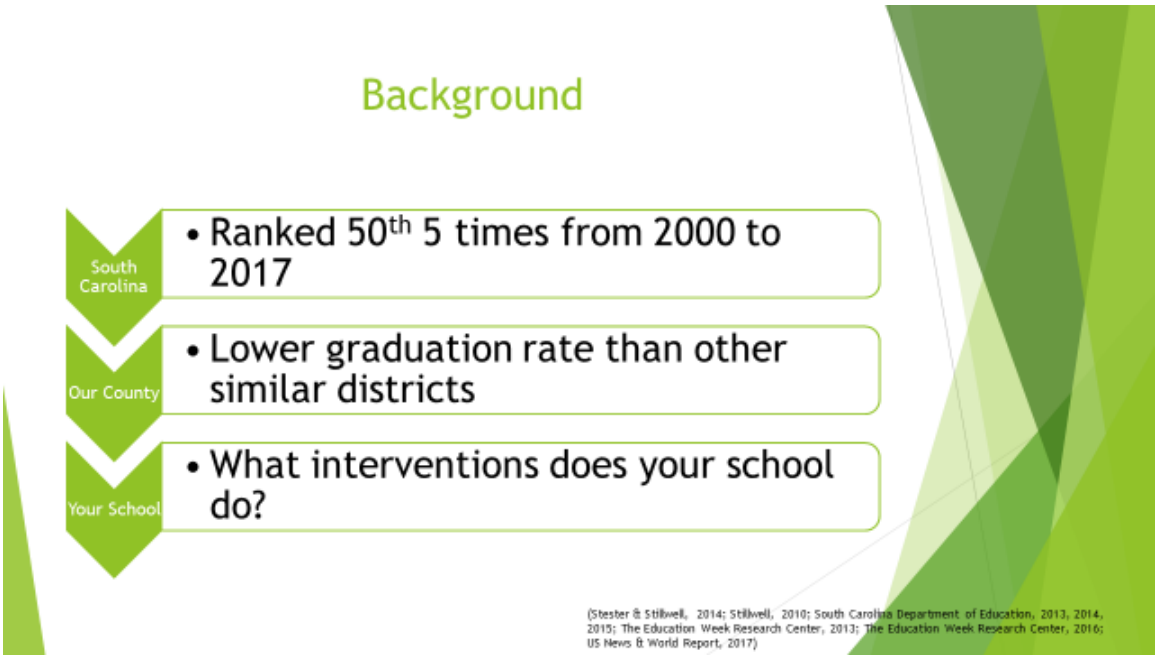
The facilitator will thank everyone for attending and reiterate the need for having this specific professional development. The facilitator will close with asking if there are any further questions and dismissing the attendees.

**Slides from Day One**


Facilitator notes: Good morning everyone, thank you so very much for coming to this professional day today. Please make sure to get yourself something to eat and drink and to pick up the packet. Please sit with your school.



Facilitator notes: Our objectives today are to be able to identify where your personal school ranks with repsect to the rest of the state when it comes to graduation rates. To be able to collaborate with professionals from different schools on the topic of intervention and to be able to take the information you get from today's professional development and take it back to your home school.




Faciliatator notes: I have been working on looking into the graduation of my home school and have found some information that I would like to share with my fellow educators. Our state has been ranked 50th four times from 200 to 2017. Yes, I said 2017. Currently we are ranked 50th by US News & World Reports (McKinsey & Co, 2017). Although our district is not ranked last in the state, we are below other counties that are similar in demographics to ours. What can we do to change this? Intervention, that is what we can do and what many of us already do. However, what do we have set up in place to help students? What would we like to have in place to help the students? What have we had in

place before but it has not worked before? This is what we are going to discuss today. We are going to look at data and talk about how each school is using these data to help the students.

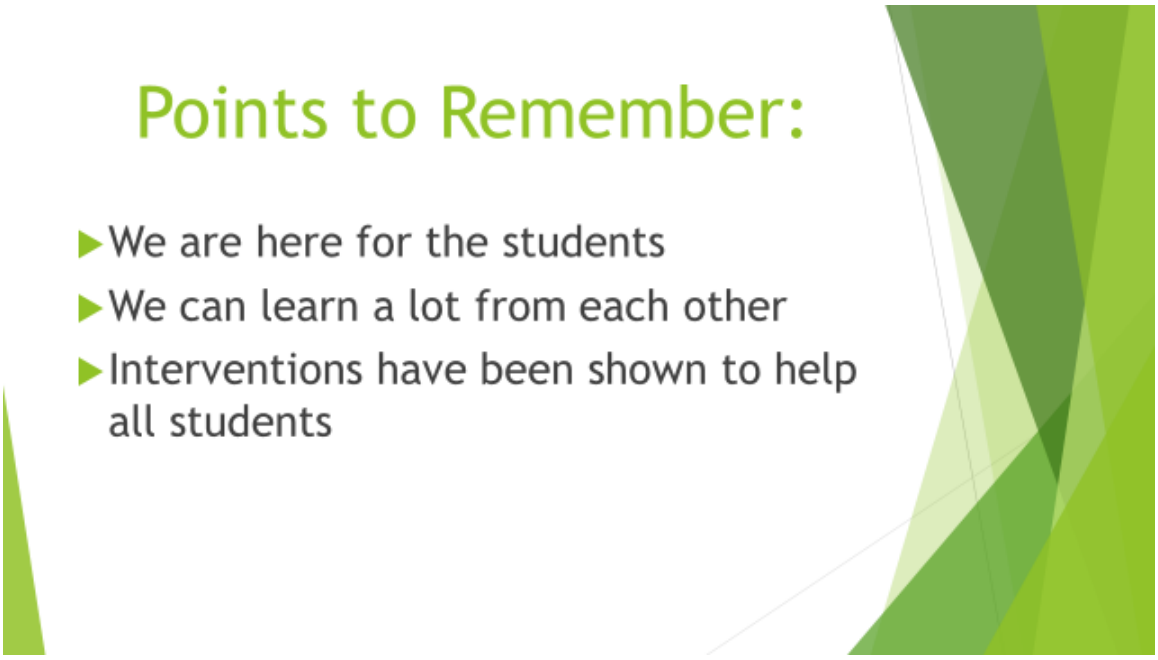

Facilitator notes: As a group, you are going to look at your school's report card, the state report card, PowerSchool and along with discussing interventions being done at your school. This information will all be used to fill out the first page of the packet given to you when you entered the room. Please notice that there is a note section so that you can make any notes you wish to take back to your home school. (Facilitator will walk around during this time to answer any questions and to help facilitate communication between the members of each group).


Facilitator notes: Please take a fifteen minute break and be back in this room at 10:45. When you come back in the room, please find your new seat based on the colored sticker on the back of your packet.

Facilitator notes: Welcome back! We are going to take what we did it before the break and now share it with your colleagues who do not work at your school. We are going to do this round robin style by having one person go first telling one intervention that is being used at his/her home school and then go around the table with the next person naming one intervention being used. Continue to do this for each of the questions on the collaboration worksheet, Please have one person write the information down on the blank form to be turned in at the end of the session.


Facilitator notes: Thank you for all of the work you have done so far. Please go enjoy lunch and be back in this room seated at the same table by 1:30.


Facilitator notes: Welcome back from lunch. I hope everyone had a great lunch and are ready to share with the entire group. We will start with this group right here, name one intervention that your group discussed that has worked at one of the schools. Why did your group say they thought the intervention worked? What is one intervention that your group said had not worked? Why did your group say it did not work? What is one intervention that your group would like to try? (I will then ask each group the same question).




Facilitator notes: I hope, if nothing else, you take from this professional development the following bullets: a) we are here for the students, b) we can learn a lot from each other, c) interventions have been shown to help all students.

Facilitator comments: Thank you so very much for coming today. If you could please go to the site listed on the slide and take the two question survey, it would be very much appreciated. Thank you again and I hope you have a great rest of the day.

Day Two: 8:30 – 9:15 Icebreaker

The pupose for this activity is to get everyone comfortable with each other and to allow them to see that the day is dependent on the information given by them. The facilitator wants to make sure that the students realize that their input is very vital. The icebreaker will be a blank SMARTboard screen that will allow students to write down different interventions and their opinions on the interventions. The facilitator will have the screen up and explain to the students what "Silent Graffitti" is: a method in which there is no talking, all of the information comes from what a student writes and how other students respond, in writing, to what has been written.

Day Two: Break and New Seats 9:15 – 9:30

Please find your new seat based on the color sticker on your handout.

Day Two: Session 9:30 – 11:00

The purpose of this session is to have students talk about the different interventions that were written during the "Silent Graffitti" activity and any comments written along with the interventions. The *Given Interventions* worksheet can be found on the following page:

Given Interventions

Please write down the given interventions and any discussion you have on them within your group including why you feel the intervention is effective or not effective.

Interventions:

1) _____

_____

_____

2) _____

_____

_____

3) _____

_____

_____

4) _____

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5) _____

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6) _____

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7) _____

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8) _____

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9) _____

_____

_____

10) _____

_____

_____

Day Two Break 11:00 – 11:15

Day Two Session 11:15 – 12:00

The purpose of this session is to allow the individual groups to share with the entire group points of their group discussion.

On the space provided, please write down any things you find interesting or want to know more about.

Notes:

Day Two: Lunch 12: 00 – 1: 15

The students will come back from lunch and find the appropriate place for them to sit based on the smiley face sticker that is on the back of their packet.

Day Two: Session 1:15- 1:45

The purpose of this session is to discuss the different roles within the classroom and each student's role in his/her own learning. The worsheet, *Roles in the Classroom*, can be found on the following page:

Please fill out what you think in the following table and then discuss it within your group.

Roles in the Classroom

| Person | Role in the classroom |
|---|---|
| ie: Principal | To help make sure that each classroom is safe (this is just an example and you might have a different idea of his/her role) |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

What specifically do you think your role is in your learning?

_____

_____

Do you go to school each day remembering your role and acting upon your role?

Notes: (this section is to be used for the big group discussion)

Day Two: Session 1:45 – 2:15

The purpose of this session is to have the students discuss as an entire group which participants are important in a student's learning and the role of each participant that each group came up with.

Day Two: Break 2:15 – 2:30

Day Two: Session 2:30 – 3:15

The purpose of this session is to have the students think about different interventions within each of the subjects that they take/have taken and to discuss what has worked for each of the subjects and what has not worked. This allows for the facilitator to be able to take the data back to the teachers during the next professional development day. The worksheet, *Subject Area Intervention*, can be found on the next page:

Please fill out the following form, share with your group and use the form to help start a rich discussion among the group.

Subject Area Intervention

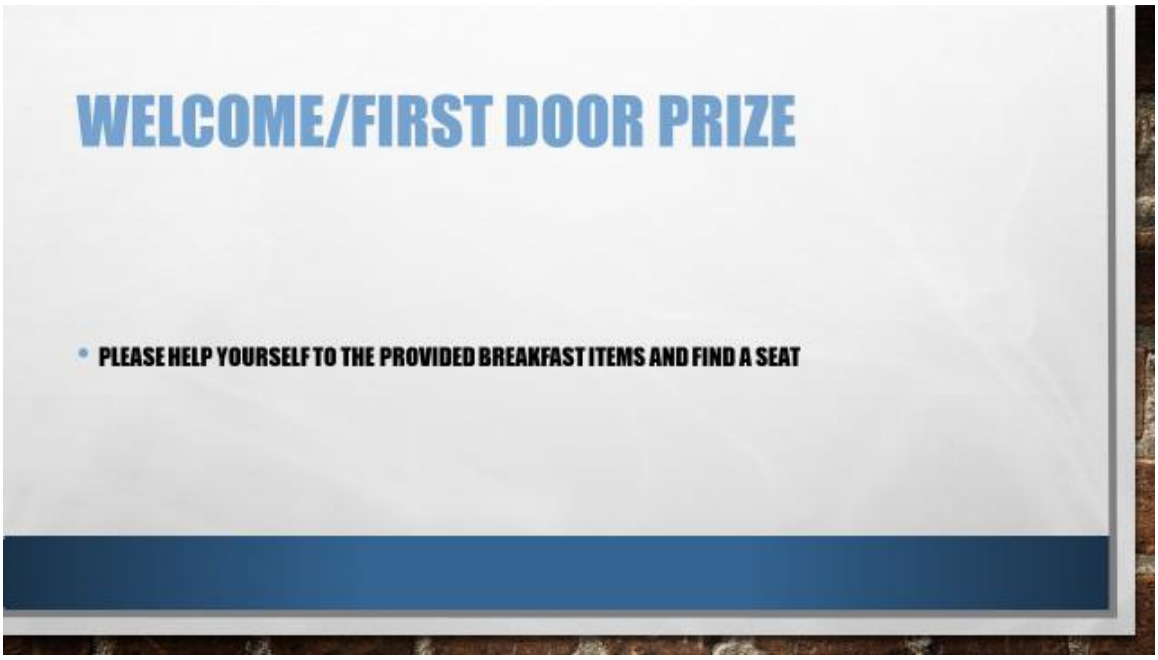
| **Subject** | **Intervention that worked** | **Intervention that did not work** |
|---|---|---|
| **Math** | | |
| **English** | | |
| **Science** | | |
| **History** | | |
| **Band** | | |
| **Art** | | |
| **Chorus** | | |
| **Foreign Language** | | |
| **CTE** | | |
| **PE** | | |
| **Drama** | | |
| **Teacher Cadets** | | |

Day Two: Closing 3:15 – 3:45

The purpose of the closing is to allow for students to have a recap of all that was discussed during the day.

Slides of Day Two

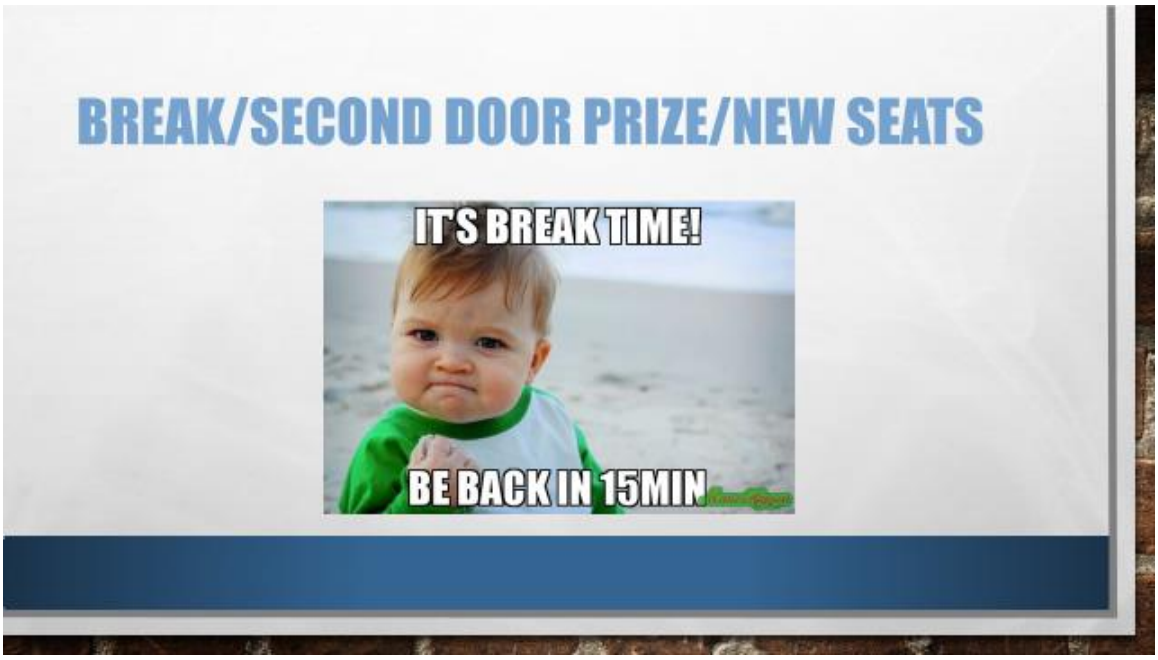

Facilitator notes: Good morning everyone. Thank you so very much for giving up one of your days of summer vacation to help us, the educators, help you.



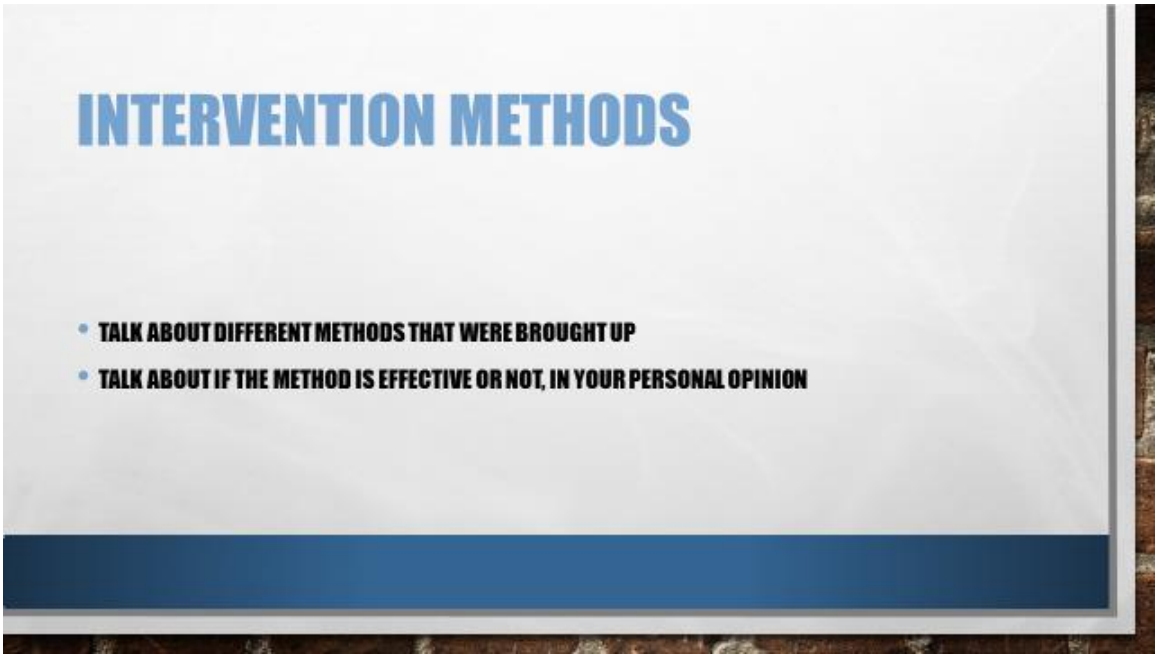

Facilitator notes: Good morning everyone. Thank you so very much for being willing to give up one of your summer days to come help us, the educators, help you. Please help yourself to the refreshments being offered and find a seat. I will call a name for the first door prize right before we start.

Facilitator notes: Congratulations to …… for winning the first door prize. We have more to come today. The objectives for today's meeting is to: use "Silent Graffiti" to discuss interventions, define the different roles within the learning community, and list/discuss different interventions for different subject areas.

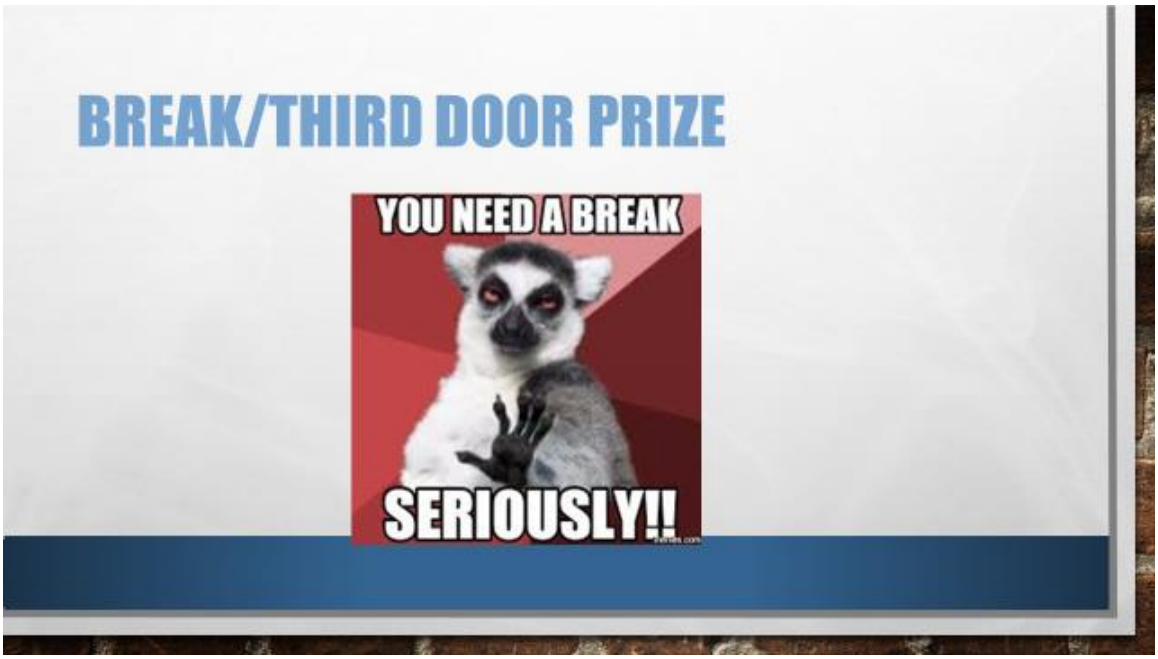

Facilitator notes: Has anyone ever heard of, or done, "Silent Graffiti?" To explain what it is, I am going to put a topic on the SMARTboard and you may go up and write down the first thing you think of, with no talking from anyone. If you see something that has been added and you would like to add a comment on it, you are more than welcome to go up and add your comment making sure that you draw an arrow to the original topic that you are replying to.




Facilitator notes: We will take a 15 minute break now. When we come back, please make sure that you sit at the table with the same color as what is on your last page of your packet. We will also have another door prize.



Facilitator notes: Congratulations to ……. for winning the second door prize. In your groups, please discuss the interventions that were listed during the "Silent Graffiti" activity. Please make sure you fill out the first page of your packet. Please have someone at your table fill out the blank form to be able to use the data to find patterns to use when meeting with the teachers at the Day Three Professional Development.

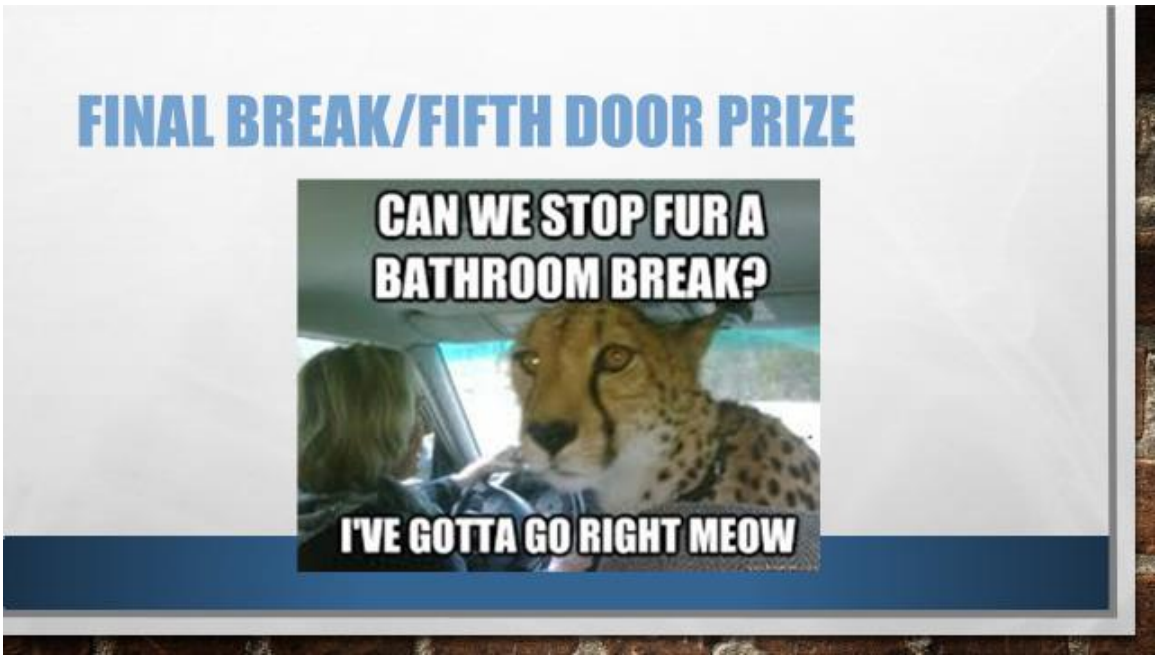



Facilitator notes: Please take a 15 minute break. When you come back I will find the third door prize.


Facilitator notes: Starting with this group, please let all of us know two things that your group discussed when it comes to the "Silent Graffiti" activity and the interventions listed. (The facilitator will continue until no group has anything new to add).

Facilitator notes: Time to take a break!!!! We have lunch for you, so please come eat and enjoy. When we come back from lunch, please find your new seat based on the smiley face sticker on the back of your packet. I will also be doing the fourth door prize.


Facilitator notes: Welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed their lunch. Now that we are back, congratulations to ……. for winning the fourth door prize. I hope that you have found your new seat, if not, please look for it now. Now that everyone is where they are supposed to be, lets talk about the next session. I would like for you to talk about the different roles in the classroom, including yours as a student, and how each role has an impact on learning. I would like for you to fill out the worksheet that is page two of your packet and for someone in each group to fill out the blank form to turn in to me.




Facilitator notes: Alright, time to stop and have our final break of the day. When you come back, make sure you are still sitting with your final group.

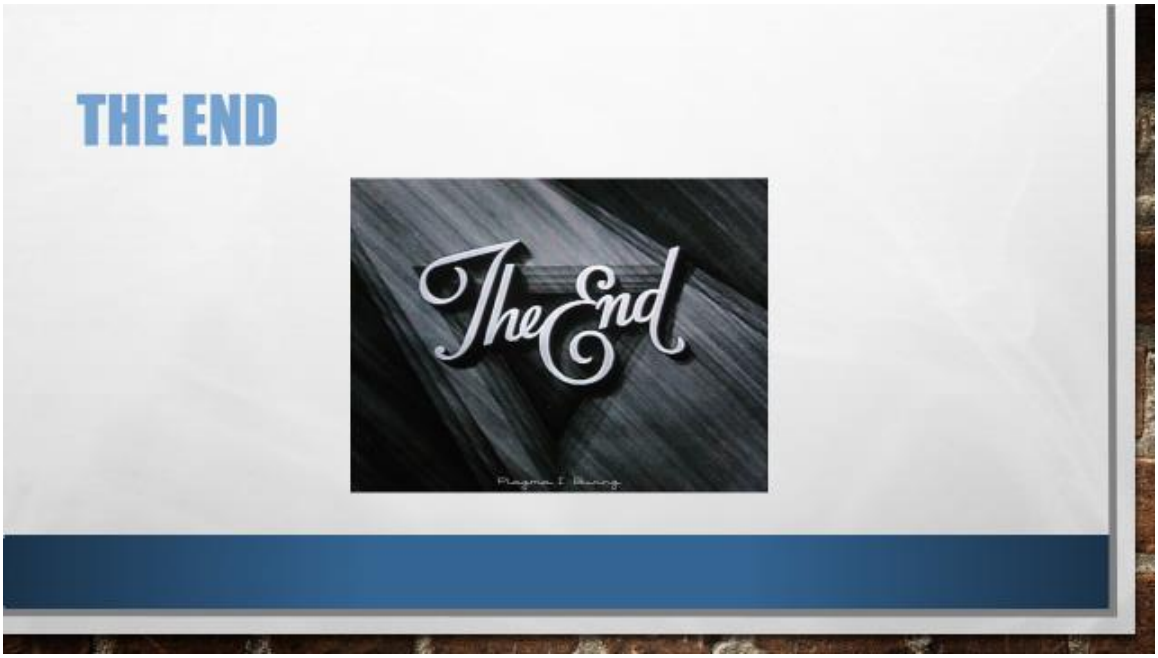

Facilitator notes: Please discuss within your group, and fill out the final sheet of your packet, what interventions work and do not work based on the different subjects. If a

subject was left off of the sheet that you have taken, please mark out one that does not pertain to you, fill in what your subject is, and answer which interventions work in the subject and which intervention does not work. Please have someone in the group fill out the blank sheet to turn in and if there is a subject not mentioned, please add to the sheet that needs to be turned in.


Facilitator notes: At this time, I will start with this group and have one person stand up and let us know how you filled out the worksheet. (Will continue around the room until all of the groups are done.)


Facilitator notes: Thank you so very much, again, for taking a day from your summer vacation. I would like to say that the information you have given me will be organized and discussed with the staff. Once again, thank you for being willing to give this information for me to process.

Facilitator notes: Congratulations to ……. for winning the final door prize. Before you leave today, please make sure you fill out this evaluation to help me make any future sessions better.




Facilitator notes: Thank you for coming and have a great day.

Day Three: Session 8:30 – 10:00

The purpose of this session is to explain to the teachers the purpose of the professional development. The facilitator will explain all information that was gathered from the previous two professional development sessions. On the back of the packet, will be the table given out for the students to fill out with respect to the different subject areas. The following worksheet title *What I Find Interesting* will be given:

What I Find Interesting

Please fill out the following while I am going over the information I received from the previous two professional developoment days with what you wish to discuss.

1) What subject area do you teach? _____

2) Is there an intervention from those listed that you use in your class? Does it work for you? What set-backs have you had with the intervention?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3) Is there an intervention that was mentioned that you have implemented in the past but quit doing? Why did you quit doing the intervention?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4) Is there an intervention mentioned that you have thought about integrating into your classroom but have not done so as of yet? Why have you not implemented it in your classroom as of yet?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5) Did you find anything interesting in the difference of the data between the administration/guidance data as opposed to the data from the students?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Notes:

Day Three: Break 10:00 – 10:15

When the teachers come back from the break, they will find their fellow content area teachers and sit at the same table as them.

Day Three: Session 10:15 – 11:45

The purpose of this session is for teachers in the same content area to discuss the answers that was written down on page one of the packet. The teachers are also able to write down any additional notes on the worksheet in the notes area. This will allow for teachers of the same content to educationally discuss what has worked and not worked in the classroom for the particular content areas. One person from each group will write down, on the blank sheet like the one that the teachers have filled out, to give to the facilitator.

Day Three: Session 11:45 – 12:15

The purpose of this session is to allow each of the indivdual groups to discuss with the entire group what was discussed and what conclusions where obtained. This will allow for the content areas to hear what is similar and different between the different content areas.

Day Three: Lunch 12:14 – 1:45

Day Three: Session 1:45 – 2:45

The purpose of this session is to have conversation among different content areas to discuss interventions that work/do not work for each content area. This will allow for a deeper understanding of why what does work in one area might not effectively work in another content area.

Day Three: Session 2:45 – 3:15

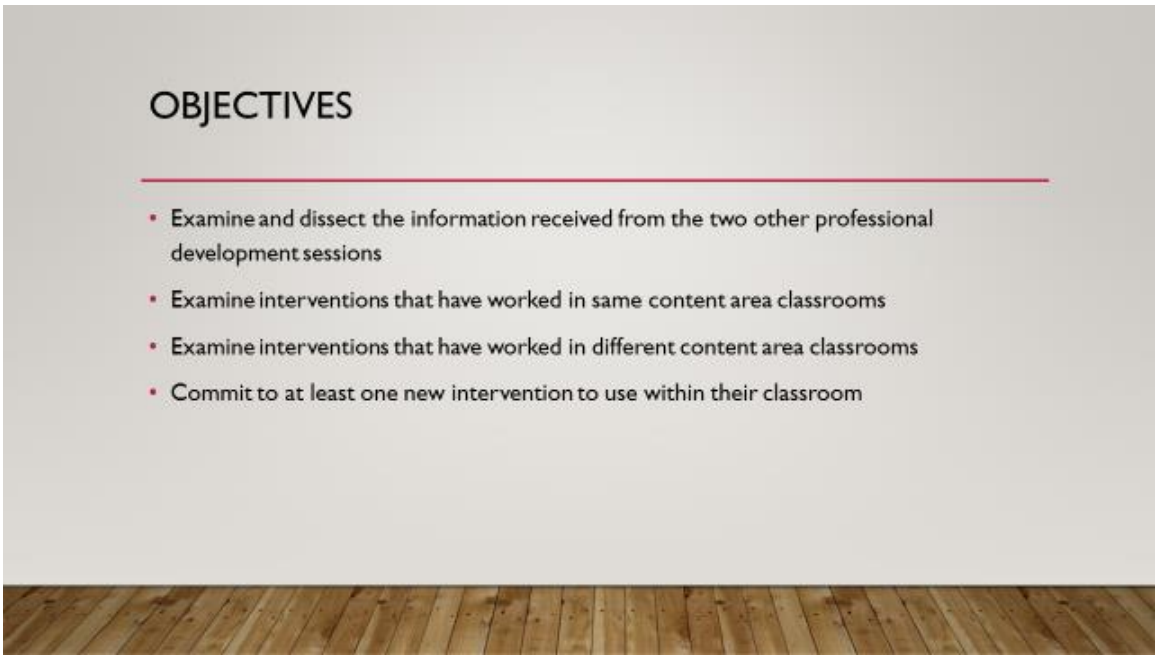
The purpose of this session is to discuss with the entire group what each smaller group has come up with. This will allow for everyone to hear the reasoning that has been occuring throughout the day.

Day Three: Session 3:15 – 3:45

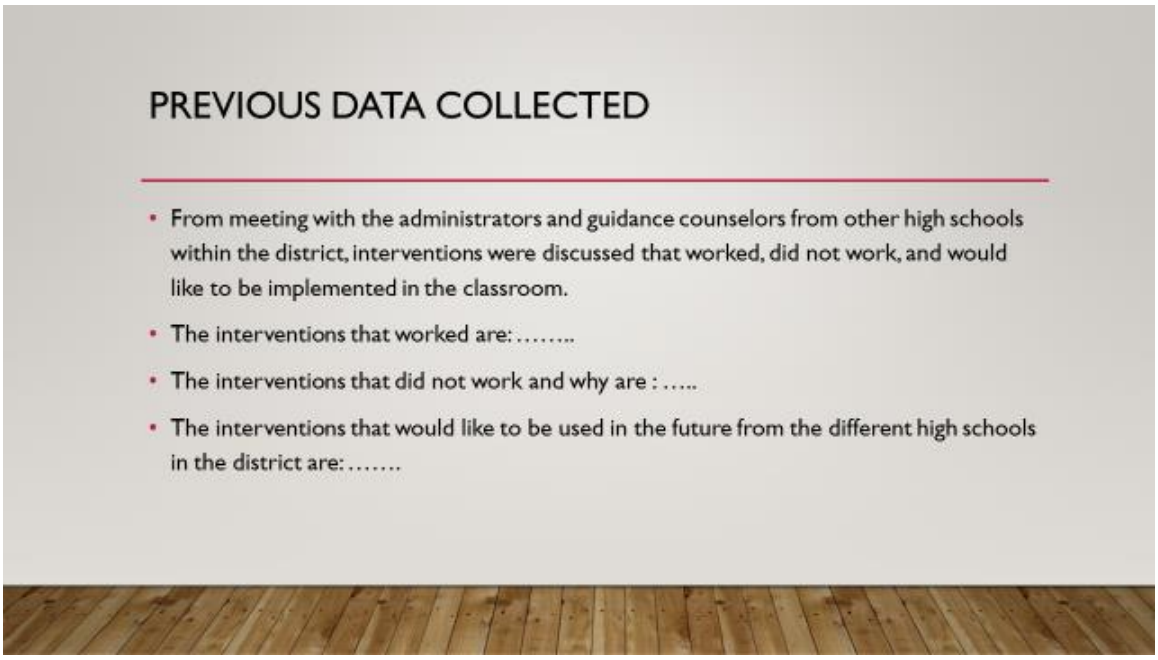
The purpose of this session is to bring everything together that has been discussed, not only in this professional development, but the other two professional developments as well. The teachers will also write down one new intervention that he/she is willing to implement in the classrom for the upcoming school year.

**Day Three Slides**

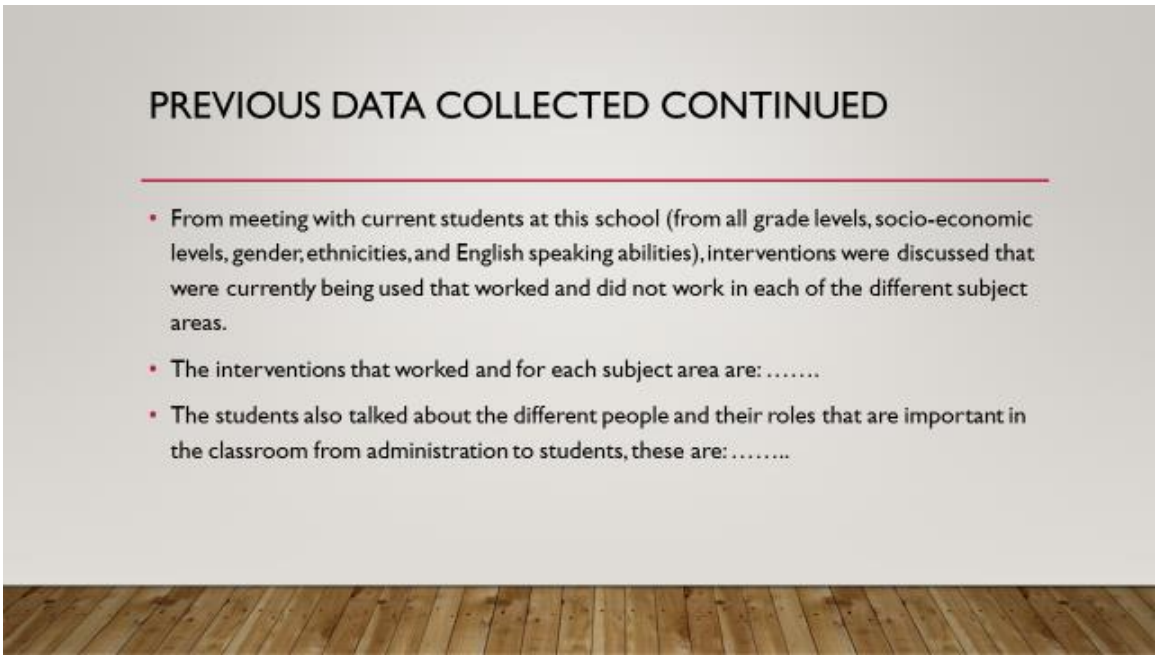

Facilitator notes: Good morning. Please help yourself to the food and beverages being seved and then find the table that is for your specific content area.




Facilitator notes: Thank you everyone for coming today. Doing some reasearch, I found out that South Carolina is currently ranked 50th in education (US News & World Reports, 2017). I have worked beside you all, some of you for the last nineteen years and I know how hard we work and care for our students, so I know we all find this a very discouraging statistic. That being said, during my research, I have found out that intervention is one of the best ways to reach students and help them not only pass, but graduate. Therefore, the objectives of this session are: to examine and dissect the information received from the two other professional development sessions, examine interventions that have worked in the same content area classrooms, examine interventions that have worked in different content areas, and to commit to one new intervention to implement for the new school year. Please, as I go through the PowerPoint, fill out page one of your packet.




Facilitator notes: In meeting with administration/guidance counselors from other high schools within the district, different interventions were discussed (the good, the bad and the ugly). Through this professional development, interventions were found that appeared to work in different schools. These interventions are: ….. The following interventions were found not to have a big impact, or work at all, in the different high schools: ….. Finally, the interventions that have not been implemented but have been discussed are:…




Facilitator notes: The second professional development that was done, was with students that are going to be students in the high school this year. From them, I was able to gather data on interventions that students felt worked really well. These interventions are:….. They also discussed the interventions that do not seem to actually work for them. These interventions are:……

| Subject | Intervention that worked | Intervention that did not work |
|---|---|---|
| Math | | |
| English | | |
| Science | | |
| History | | |
| Band | | |
| Art | | |
| Chorus | | |
| Foreign Language | | |
| CTE | | |
| PE | | |
| Drama | | |
| Teacher Cadets | | |

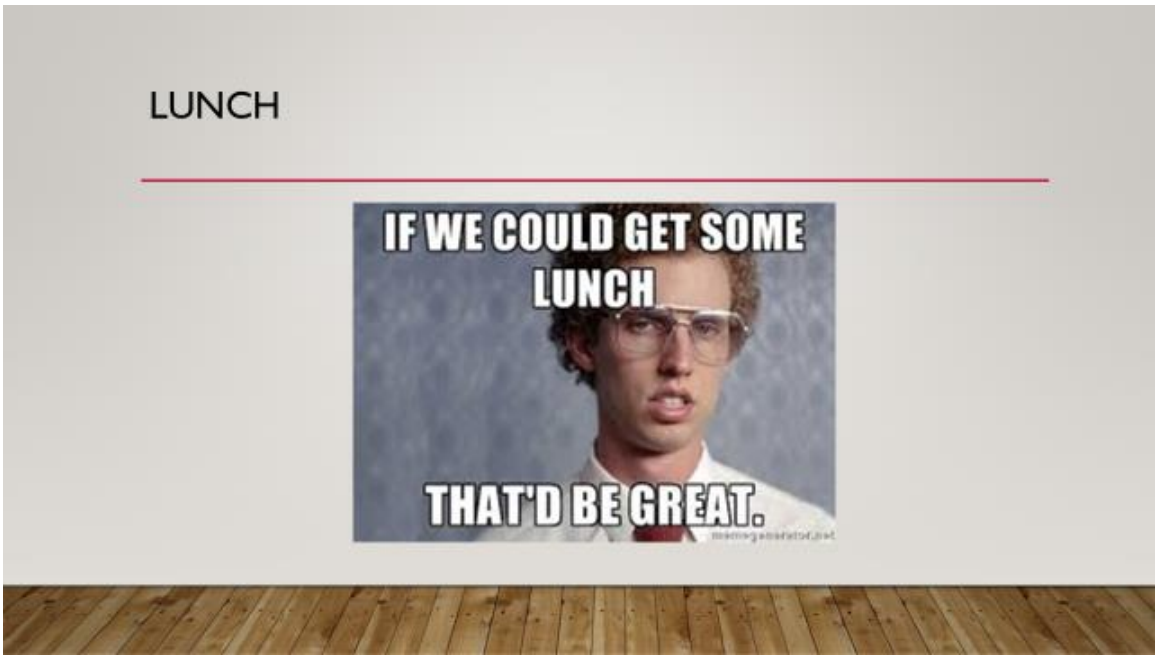
| Person | Role in the classroom |
|---|---|
| ie: Principal | To help make sure that each classroom is safe (this is just an example and you might have a different idea of his/her role) |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Facilitator notes: The students also talked about what interventions worked and did not work for each of the subjects (this can be found on the back of your packet). The students also spoke about people who were important in their educational needs and the roles of those people (including themselves). This table is also found on the back of the packet.


Facilitator notes: Please take a fifteen minute break and when you come back, please make sure you are sitting with your content area colleagues.

Facilitator notes: Welcome back. Please talk among your content area about the first page of the packet that you have filled out and have one person fill out the blank copy on the table to be turned into me for data purposes.

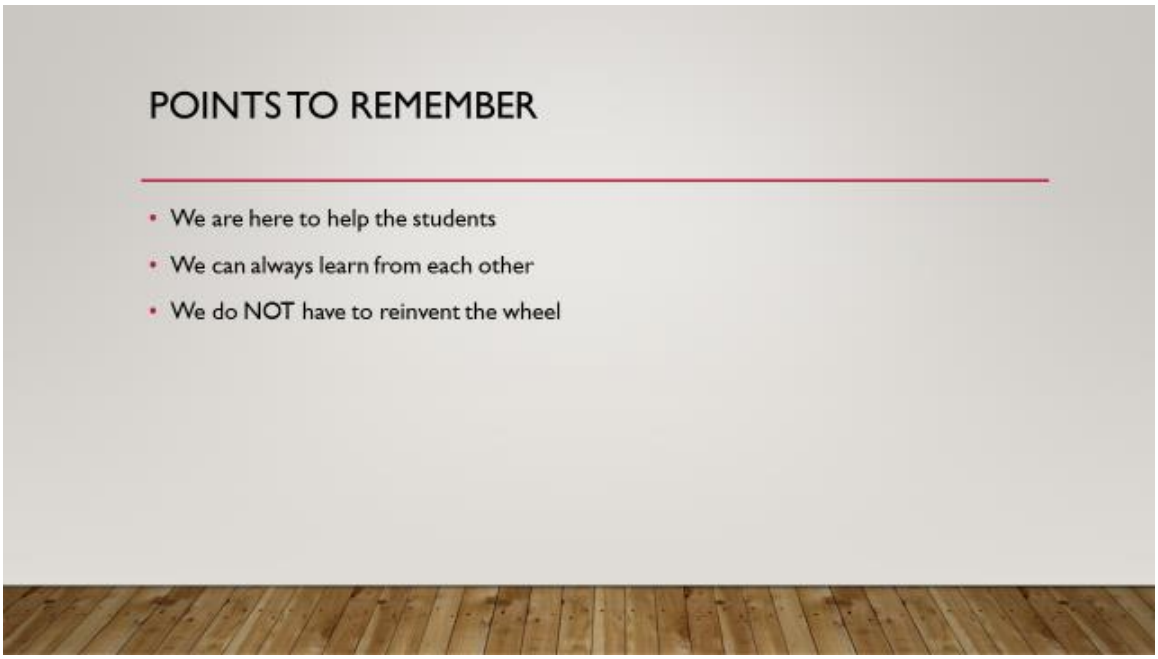

Facilitator notes: Thank you for the wonderful discussion that I heard occuring while I walked around. If one person from each group would please stand up and discuss what answers your content area came up with, that would be awesome. Please include an intervention that your content area feels works, does not work, and would like to try.



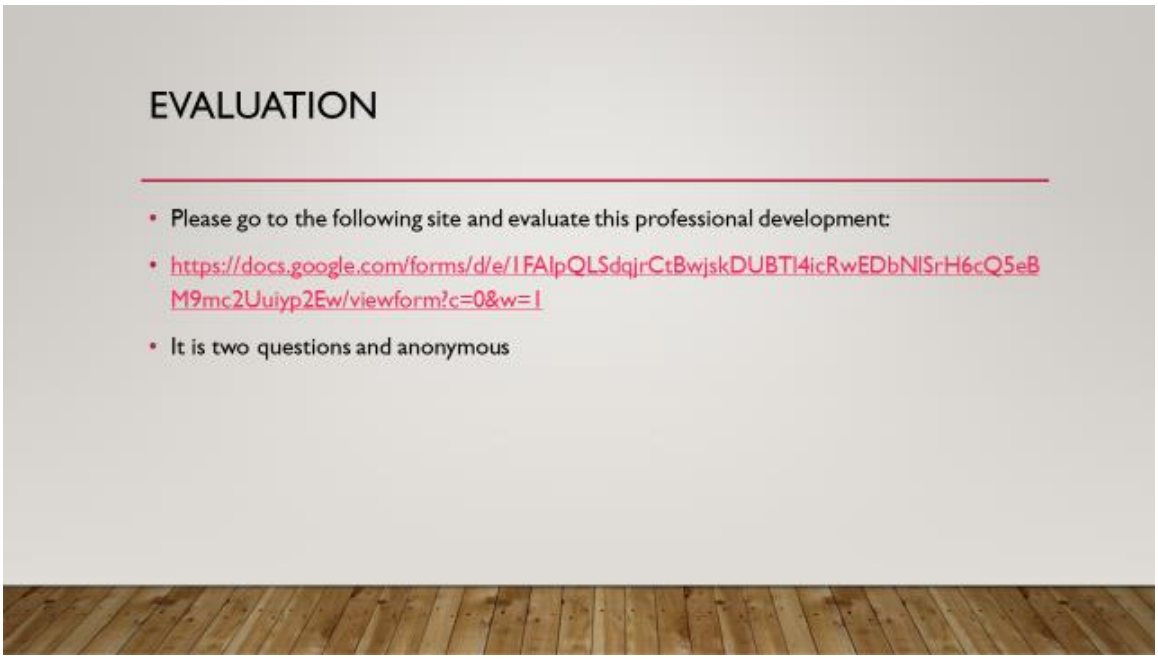

Facilitator notes: It is time for lunch, great job folks! When you come back, please look for where you have been moved to make sure different content areas are together.


Facilitator notes: Please discuss, within your new group, what intervention your content area came up as a good one and which intervention your content area would like to try.

Make sure that all people in the group are able to talk and be heard, so that we (as educators) can better understand what others do in their classroom. Thank you for doing such a good job within your groups. Starting with this group, what did your group find the most interesting? Why was it interesting? Is there one more intervention that is used more than others? Why do you think that is? (These questions will be asked of all groups).




Facilitator notes: I truly hope that this professional development was meaningful to you. Please take all of the data as it is meant to be taken, that we are just trying to help our students become the best that they can possibly be. We are educators, and as such, we should never have to reinvent the wheel. We should always be able to learn from each other, whether in the same content area or not. Our ultimate goal, folks, is to help prepare the future to survive.




Facilitator notes: Thank you very much for being a part of this professional development. I truly hope that you found it helpful. Before you leave, please log onto the following site and answer the two annonymous questions to better help lead future professional development sessions.

Facilitator notes: Thank you again and I wish you the best of school years.

Day 4: Session 8:15 – 9:15

The purpose of this meeting is for smaller groups made up of an administation member or guidance counselor to meet with teachers of specific content areas to discuss what intervention has been implemented and how it has been working. This will be an ongoing meeting that will meet every other month during the "late in" days. Late-in days are days in which teachers come to school at the regular time but the students come an hour later. This allows for teachers to meet in specific groups and discuss different topics, like interventions used within the classroom. Each department head will fill out the following sheet labeled *Late-In Data* and turn it into the facilitator so that data can be continuosly collected throughout the school year for furture research. The sheet can be found on the following page:

Late-In Data

Department head, please fill out the following and return it to me.

1) What interveniton is being used within the classrooms of your specific content area?

_____

_____

_____

2) Have you noticed an increase in the students' behavior, grades, or both?

_____

_____

_____

3) Is there an intervention you started to use but have stopped because you did not see any positive results occurring in the students (behavior or grade wise)?

_____

_____

_____

4) Is there an intervention you would like to have more information or training on to be able to implement it within the classroom?

_____

_____

_____