

DISSERTATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS TEACHING  
CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT COURSES

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## ABSTRACT

### THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS TEACHING CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT COURSES

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment courses. The phenomenon was examined using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen approach for phenomenological research as outlined by Moustakas through data collected in personal interviews with 10 high school instructors who taught concurrent enrollment college courses in their high schools. *Instructional Quality, Passion, Commitment to Students*, and *Pride* emerged as the four structural themes that framed the meaning of the phenomenon. *Balance within a Liminal Space* emerged as the essence of the phenomenon.

Approved high school instructors approached their college concurrent enrollment responsibilities with honor and pride in teaching at the college level, as well as with duty to provide rigorous academic instruction that supported student development and transition and met the college instructional expectations. The phenomenon of teaching of college courses in a high school environment required teachers to balance the demands of their high school environment and instructional philosophies of secondary education with the curricular demands and differing instructional philosophies of higher education. This resulted in concurrent enrollment's unique instructional position in a *liminal* or threshold space between secondary and postsecondary education sectors. The *liminal space* of concurrent enrollment, although laden with ambiguity and tension, provided teachers with unique opportunities to facilitate the teaching of college

academic curriculum integrated with time-built relationships with students and commitment to student learning to create positive, enhanced academic experiences for students. The “productive tension” of the liminal space can serve as a unique and optimal laboratory for addressing some of the pervasive problems with successful matriculation to college and strengthen the college transition process for greater student success.

Key words: concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment, teaching and learning, liminal, college transition, matriculation

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In high schools all over the United States of America students are walking into familiar high school classrooms and sitting down in familiar seats. They are greeted by a familiar high school teacher who prepares to begin class; however, instead of engaging in high school curriculum, these students are enrolled in a college course and earning college credit, while never leaving their high school. This practice of accelerating students into college course work prior to high school graduation is known as concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment, or dual credit. Programs like these have significant support from local school boards, state and local governments, federal policy initiatives, higher education institutions, and students and their families because of their promise of saving money and time and increasing the college-going rate of the nation's youth (Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2003).

First initiated in 1972 at Syracuse University as a way to enrich the high school senior year for academic high achievers, dual enrollment programs have proliferated to nearly all states. These programs go by different names such as concurrent enrollment, dual enrollment, and dual credit. For the purposes of clarity and consistency concurrent or dual enrollment refers the enrollment of current high school students in college-level courses where they typically earn both high school credit to meet school district graduation requirements and college credits from the offering higher education institution (Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2003). Concurrent enrollment programs have been widely supported by policy makers as a means to encourage college-going activity, decrease tuition costs and leverage shrinking state educational resources, reinvigorate the high school senior year, accelerate the transition to college, and increase the degree attainment of the nation's populace (Bailey et al., 2003). Nearly all states have enacted

legislation supporting concurrent enrollment as one method to blur the boundaries separating secondary from postsecondary and improve the high school-to-college transition (Steinberg & Allen, 2011).

Access to dual credit opportunities has been encouraged by making courses available on college campuses, as well as in high schools where courses are taught by college-qualified teachers (Andrews & Davis, 2003). After more than four decades, however, concurrent enrollment programs still meet resistance and expansion is hindered. Struggles continue for “postsecondary institutions to interpret and accept dual-credit courses for transfer... and question the quality of college courses that contain high school students, especially if those courses are taught on high school campuses” (Vargas, 2007, p. 178).

Even as public policies are created to facilitate the integration of the two educational sectors and increase college access through concurrent enrollment options, conflict and concern surface in the lingering debate about the academic rigor and effectiveness of concurrent enrollment activities (Eimers & Mullen, 2003) and similar acceleration options that operate in the boundary area between high school and college. This “liminal space” (Hofmann & Voluch, 2012, p.101), the area of blurred boundaries between one space into another, is a critically important educational threshold between secondary and higher education sectors. The successful transition of students between the two sectors remains a looming national concern, and considerable resources and programs, such as concurrent enrollment programs, have been brought to bear to better facilitate students’ matriculation to college (Hofmann & Voluch, 2012).

Menzel’s (2006) doctoral research provided quantitative evidence documenting the effectiveness of concurrent enrollment in increasing college degree attainment and decreasing time to degree for students who earned college credits during high school. Heath (2008) noted

similar outcomes, as well as increased academic achievement as measured by college GPA. Fara's (2010) study found participation in concurrent enrollment positively contributed to postsecondary academic achievement in the first semester and continuation to the second college semester. Despite these and other recent quantitative and qualitative research studies validating the effectiveness of concurrent enrollment course work in preparing students for success in college (Snow, 2009; Swanson, 2008), doubts persist about course quality and the degree to which concurrent enrollment contributes to college success. Karp and her associates (2005) noted the development of "a backlash against dual enrollment" (p. 7). Dodge (2012) highlighted continuing concerns from the higher education sector about the quality of dual enrollment courses and the rigor of instruction, noting complaints from some institutions that many concurrent enrollment students were "unprepared for more advanced courses" (p.227). Similar concerns about the academic quality of Advanced Placement courses compelled the drastic decision by Dartmouth University to discontinue awarding credit for students based on the results of their AP tests (Ramer, 2013). Advanced Placement, often referenced by its initials AP, is the instructional program sponsored by the College Board in which trained high school teachers teach the Advanced Placement curriculum as a high school course. Students may be eligible to earn advanced placement or college credit based on the results of an end-of-year subject-specific examination. Determination of credit is at the discretion of the postsecondary institution (College Board, 2012).

Tension around the delivery of concurrent enrollment courses has centered on the quality of instruction received, particularly when the course is taught by a high school teacher (Abdul-Karim, 2010; Mace, 2009). Yet the instructors who teach concurrent enrollment courses have received scant attention in the research to either refute or confirm the criticism. High school

instructors who teach the concurrent college courses are a central and critical element in the operation and expansion of these programs. Little is known about their experiences; what they encounter in their classrooms; how they interact with their secondary and postsecondary colleagues; and how they perceive their role in students' transitions to college. What is the essence of their experience as instructors?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Teachers are one of three elements in the instructional paradigm: student, instructor, and curriculum. A review of the literature revealed considerable research has been conducted on the concurrent enrollment students and the college curriculum, but very little research has been done on the instructors who teach concurrent enrollment courses, yet their role in the teaching dynamic is critically important. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to better understand the experience of high school instructors teaching postsecondary curriculum in a high school setting in concurrent enrollment programs.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will explore and describe the experience of high school teachers teaching in concurrent enrollment programs:

1. How do concurrent enrollment high school teachers experience their responsibilities for student learning?
2. How do the high school teachers incorporate the instructional philosophies and requirements of secondary instruction with the instructional philosophies and requirements of postsecondary instruction within their concurrent enrollment role?
3. Where is there consonance and dissonance in the high school teachers' experiences while teaching concurrent enrollment courses?

## **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study contribute to the further development of concurrent enrollment programs as instructors' voices reveal what they experience in the teaching of courses and how they function as part-time college instructors. The results of the proposed study inform constituencies involved with educational program and policy development and reform such as school and college administrators, legislative policymakers, state government officials, and program coordinators who provide critical direction and decisions for concurrent enrollment program operation. A better understanding of the essence of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience benefits instructors and postsecondary academic department chairs who supervise concurrent enrollment teachers with knowledge about the dynamics of teaching in both sectors. The study provides direction for appropriate and targeted support for the high school teachers from college faculty and program administrators. And it informs and provides perspective in the continuing debate and educational reform agenda on improving the secondary-postsecondary transition and college degree achievement of the nation's youth.

## **Researcher's Role**

Best practice in research requires researchers to identify and document their assumptions and biases as they relate to the topic and potential findings of the study (Creswell, 2007). I have worked in higher education for nearly 30 years in both colleges and educational policy agencies. Much of my work has involved higher education's role in partnering with other agencies and institutions to fulfill the broad mission of the institution and engagement in the complex, critical transition of students from secondary and postsecondary sectors. In my current position as director of student services at a community college, I oversee numerous activities related to transitions and direct my institution's concurrent enrollment program. As such I am deeply

involved in fostering the program's growth, ensuring the program's effectiveness, and balancing the needs for faculty, administrators, students, and instructors. This makes me uniquely qualified to understand the policy and programmatic issues related to concurrent enrollment, particularly as they relate to the higher education institution.

This prior involvement also predisposes me to experience and knowledge about the method of concurrent enrollment program delivery, student qualifications, program rigor, instructional quality, and program funding. I also recognize that my view on concurrent enrollment is from one side. My experience is exclusively in higher education. I have never worked in the K-12 sector. I have neither direct experience in the traditional high school environment nor do I teach high school students. My work brings me into contact with numerous high school and college students each day, but my job is not focused on instruction.

Over the years I have identified the differences in the two educational sectors and how they converge in areas of transition, such as concurrent enrollment. I have recognized the dissonance between the two sectors because of differing educational histories, philosophies, and governance even when the two sectors begin with the common core concepts of *teaching* and *learning*. These differences have guided my interest in the subject of concurrent enrollment, and provide insight into the instructional experiences of concurrent enrollment teachers and understanding of the unique role they play in student achievement. This research informs postsecondary program direction for effective concurrent enrollment partnerships.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature concerning concurrent enrollment and its background and foundations; public policies and fiscal support; concurrent enrollment program effectiveness in postsecondary transition and success; and the differing dynamics of the teaching experience in secondary and postsecondary environments. Chapter 3 describes the methodology

of the phenomenological study that explored the essence of the experiences of teachers of concurrent enrollment in the high school setting. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study as described through the voices of the high school teachers who have experienced the phenomenon. Through the rich, thick descriptions provided by the participants, structures emerged of the phenomenon and its essence. These are presented in this chapter. The dissertation concludes in Chapter 5 with a discussion of the study's findings, their relationship to the existing literature on concurrent enrollment, and my integration of the findings into implications for practice and recommendations for future research. I close the dissertation with my reflections.



## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education has long been a goal of many individuals and college aspirations continue to rise. Most Americans consider some college-level education an important requirement for a well-paying job and future success. And the majority of surveyed high school seniors were definite in their intent to earn a baccalaureate degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Yet, fewer students earn postsecondary certificates or degrees than they planned. Bailey, Hughes and Karp (2003) reported nearly 61% of high school graduates matriculated to college directly following graduation, yet 37% had departed two years later without earning a degree or certificate. For many, the successful transition from high school to college is not occurring.

National interest in educational attainment is very high as the nation's leaders perceive wide disparity between the number of skilled, well-educated workers needed to be competitive in the current global, knowledge-based economy and the number of students completing high school and obtaining college degrees to fill those critical workforce needs. Of major concern is the continued decline in the number of U.S. college graduates compared to other industrialized countries as "college attainment rates are rising in almost every industrialized or post-industrialized county in the world except for the U.S." (Lumina Foundation, 2010, p. 3). Concerns over these educational realities drive continued legislative interest in initiatives that challenge the older agrarian-based education model to better meet the needs of today's students to prepare for their success in a future environment dependent upon highly-skilled and well-educated workers (Lumina Foundation, 2010).

One popular option suggested to increase the successful transitioning of students from high school to college has been to integrate college coursework into high school enrollment. Opportunities for high school students to earn college credit through a variety of different programs have been major policy levers for improving postsecondary preparation, transition, and success. These programs, broadly referred to as credit-earning transition programs (CETPs), ease the high school-college transition by allowing high school students to enroll in college-level courses and earn college credits prior to high school graduation.

This review of the literature examines four areas of related research. First, the high school to college transition process, which has received tremendous focus and attention, remains a critical challenge for all sectors. How credit-earning transition programs, such as concurrent enrollment, play a role in the secondary to postsecondary transition is a key element of the review. The second focus explores the status of public program and policy development related to credit-earning transition programs. These programs, developed over the past forty years, have blurred the lines between secondary and postsecondary sectors and received significant public support. The third focus examines the research on the effectiveness of credit-based transition programs and identifies key elements of successful programs and challenges for program continuation. The extent to which these programs have addressed the identified transitional needs of students is necessary to determine their effectiveness. Finally, the review explores the organizational differences between secondary and postsecondary sectors, specifically the factors of organizational culture and teacher preparation that impact and affect the dynamics of teaching and the experiences of teachers.

## High School to College Transition

The expectations for college matriculation are quite high in the United States. “Almost 90 percent of high school students report that they plan to attend college, and approximately 70 percent of high school graduates follow up on that goal by enrolling in some form of postsecondary education directly after high school” (Venezia, Finney, & Callan, 2007, p. 47). The expectation for work force success is also linked to college degree attainment; by 2016 it is estimated that four out of every 10 new jobs will require some advanced education or training beyond high school completion (Kanter, 2010). Further, President Barak Obama, current president of the United States, has set the substantial goal of leading the world in the proportion of college graduates by 2020 with the “the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world” (Kanter, 2010, p. 28). The education pipeline will need to be expanded, strengthened, and shortened to accommodate the demands of the national objective; however, there are significant deficiencies in secondary school completion, postsecondary matriculation, and college degree completion. Kanter (2010) noted:

Only about 40% of Americans hold a two-year or four-year degree. That’s the same proportion as a generation ago. More than one-quarter of high school freshmen drop out by the time their class graduates. That’s 1.2 million students on the streets instead of in school. Most of them are lost in the first two years of high school. Finally, of students who do graduate from high school and go to college, only 40% graduate within six years from the first college they enroll in. In short, not enough students are graduating from high school; not enough of them are enrolling in college; and not enough are staying in college until they graduate. (p.28)

Hirsch (2008) found that even when students have been successful in admission to college, they are acutely vulnerable during their first year, especially their first semester. Often they “aren’t well prepared for the increased demands and expectations of college” (Hirsch, 2008, p. 17) or fail to engage or integrate into the college environment that is quite different from their

high school experiences. Additionally, many students lack the necessary academic background to enroll in college-level work; a 2006 ACT report indicated “that three out of four ACT-tested high school graduates were not prepared to take credit-bearing, entry-level college courses” (Hirsch, 2010, p. 18).

The disconnection between college-going aspirations of high school students and their actual performance and ability to persist may not simply be the fault of the individual student. The secondary and postsecondary sectors remain distinctly separate entities with a long history and tradition of separation. “Despite growing interest in inter-level issues, despite the profound political, economic, technological, and the demographic transformations that have reshaped our nation and world, the historical pattern of cultural and institutional isolation and separation between educational levels has persisted” (Kirst & Usdan, 2007, p. 56).

Many strategies, policies, and initiatives have focused on minimizing the separation between the two educational sectors. Efforts have been most prolific in the K-12 sector, primarily because of its public financial support and historical mission to provide free and universal education for all children. Comprehensive K-12 reform initiatives have continued for the past 30 years, initiated by the 1983 “Nation at Risk” report which put a spotlight on the academic underachievement of the U.S. elementary and secondary education sector when compared with other developed nations (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The report’s national reform recommendations focused on school content, length of learning day and year, adoption of rigorous and measurable standards, and teacher quality. Subsequent recommendations have continued to be made with the addition of performance measures and accountability, standardized grade-level examinations, performance funding

mandates, and reforms to teacher preparation programs. The extensive national K-12 reform initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, expanded the federal government's role into all public schools in the country. It focused on increased student achievement and greater accountability through annual standards-based testing, stringent accountability and school performance measures, as well as greater focus on improving poorly-performing schools and improving the performance of underachieving students (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

These sweeping initiatives have sought to strengthen K-12 education, but have rarely addressed students' transitions into higher education or the world of work. Confronted with economic development needs that require an educated workforce and shrinking state budgets, many states have initiated reforms to connect the K-12 sector with higher education, focusing on the educational continuum of preschool through baccalaureate degree, referred to as P-16 (McLendon, Heller, & Lee, 2009). Many states enacted legislation or established special panels to address "the gaping disjuncture between the K-12 and higher education systems" (McLendon et al., 2009, p. 386). The P-16 initiative has focused on systemic reforms to integrate the sectors through state policy revisions and the creation of special commissions and blue ribbon panels with the goal of college degree attainment for more citizens. Led by policy organizations such as the Education Commission of the States, the P-16 agenda has sought greater integration of the sectors through problem identification and amelioration. Alignment of secondary school curriculum and graduation requirements with postsecondary readiness has been one of the major systemic initiatives.

These integration efforts have met with limited success due to the intrinsic differences and historical foundations of the two sectors (McLendon et al., 2009). Critics have noted "gaining admission to postsecondary education is not the most daunting challenge facing high

school graduates. The most difficult challenge facing high school graduates is to become academically prepared for college credit-level coursework” (Venezia et al., 2007, p. 47). College-ready standards have not been linked with high school completion requirements nor are they tied to the structure, skills, and knowledge needed to be successful in college. In addition to systemic policy revisions that address the high school to college transition, states have increasingly focused on academic-related policy initiatives that provide opportunities for postsecondary preparation. These have included expanding access to college preparatory courses, career and academic counseling, remediation of academic deficiencies prior to college entrance, increased enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, and concurrent access to college coursework for high school students (McLendon et al., 2009).

The increased expectation for students to successfully transition from high school to college has led many parties to consider programs that accelerate that transition as positive additions to other reform efforts. Public concern about the nation’s overall education level has led to expanded support for programmatic options that link together and blur the boundaries between the two educational sectors. These opportunities, such as P-16 and concurrent enrollment, have been supported by many entities seeking to better integrate public education units and smooth the passage of students toward higher education.

### **Program and Policy Development**

The integration of college-level coursework and accelerated learning options into high school enrollment falls into three distinct areas: examination-based college credit programs such as Advanced Placement (AP); course-based college credit programs such as dual credit or concurrent enrollment; and competency-based college credit such as career and technical education (CTE) courses (Bailey, Karp, & Columbia Univ, 2003). Over 47 states have enacted

legislation that encourage and support these kinds of programs, broadly named “credit-earning transfer programs (CETPs)” (Bailey et al., 2003). An analysis of 2002-2003 data, collected from a nationally representative sample of public high schools, indicated dual credit courses were offered by 71 % of high schools enrolling an estimated 1.2 million students (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). Similarly, the number of AP participants has also increased. Of the almost three million students who graduated from U.S. public high schools in 2011, 903,000 (30%) took an AP examination during their high school career (College Board, 2012).

There are a variety of ways for students to earn college credit while concurrently enrolled in high school. The oldest and most familiar is the Advanced Placement (AP) program started by the College Board in 1952. The College Board develops and maintains courses in various subject areas, supports those who teach the courses, assists universities as they define their policies related to AP grades, and develops and coordinates the administration of annual AP examinations (Boswell, 2001). Advanced Placement courses can help students prepare for college through rigorous and structured instruction (College Board, 2012). The planned culmination of the AP course is taking the specified AP exam. Students enrolled in AP courses are not required to take the test(s), and there is a fee to take the exam. The score earned on the AP exam determines the possibility for college credit; colleges/universities establish the minimum score required for the award of college credit and/or placement into advanced courses.

Concurrent or dual enrollment programs provide opportunities for high school students to enroll in college courses, either in their high schools or on a college campus, and earn college credits that are applicable for both high school and college credit. Dual enrollment programs have existed for over 40 years; however, their enrollments have recently increased as more emphasis has been placed on early college credit-earning experiences as a tool to incent and

motivate students' successful transition to college (Bailey et al., 2003). The United States Department of Education (2004) reported wide variety in the elements of concurrent enrollment: location - courses may be offered on college campuses or in the high school; instructors – instruction may be provided by qualified high school teachers who have Master's degrees in the discipline or by qualified college regular or adjunct faculty; students – there may be academic prerequisites to participate or courses may be open to any interested student; and fiscal – which party pays the tuition payment varies by state and school policies with the students often paying the college tuition.

Karp, Bailey, Hughes, and Fermin (2005) provided a comparative matrix of state-by-state concurrent enrollment activity noting 40 states with dual enrollment policies. Eleven states out of the 40 reviewed restricted access to the programs to academically-qualified students, and another five states had specific admission criteria depending on the intended course of study. Four states allowed the secondary school to determine the eligibility of the student, while eight other states relied on the postsecondary institution to set the admission requirements for concurrent enrollment. The review highlighted the tremendous variety and lack of consistent state policy across the national landscape as states must draft policies that meet the perceived needs and demands of their constituencies while balancing the fiscal impacts to the state coffers.

Research identified a continuing trend to increase access to dual enrollment programs to a broader range of students with the prospect that exposure to the challenge of college-level coursework would benefit under-achieving secondary students:

A growing number of policymakers, education reform groups, and researchers argue that middle- and even low-achieving high school students may benefit from participation in these programs (AASCU, 2002; National Commission on the High School Senior Year, 2001). Thus, while CBTPs are not new, the idea they should be accessible to broader range of students is a new approach. (Hughes, Karp, Fermin, & Bailey, 2005, p. 1)



State policymakers and educational administrators, concerned about ensuring the rigor and quality of college coursework while encouraging access, often put in place minimum admission standards for concurrent enrollment program participation (Bailey, Hughes, Karp, & Columbia University, 2003). Expansion of student eligibility beyond advanced students, prepares students for the rigor of college, provides realistic information to students about needed skills for college success through exposure to college-level expectations, provides curricular relevance to students and improves their motivation, and has the potential to lower the postsecondary cost for students (Bailey et al., 2003).

Another individual focus has been the development of specialized concurrent enrollment programs such as Middle College High School programs (MCHS). These programs are designed for at-risk or traditionally non-college bound students and have admission criteria that focus on student motivation rather than strictly student achievement. These programs focus on accelerating students into intensive college coursework in their 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade years and provide extensive counseling to support the students' social transition to college. Students in MCHSs often earn associate degrees upon high school graduation (Kim, Kirby, & Bragg, 2004).

In research conducted on Kentucky concurrent enrollment programs, Welsh, Brake and Choi (2005) observed that widening access to dual enrollment increased the participation of underrepresented students, providing evidence that students are capable of meeting the academic demands of concurrent enrollment courses provided academic and social supports are incorporated into program design. Thorough examination of the pre-enrollment elements of Kentucky's dual enrollment students revealed that students' performance in high school courses continued to be the most powerful predictor of enrollment and success in concurrent courses (Welsh et al., 2005). This supports the decades-old research on student college success by

Adelman (1999), that the quality and rigor of the high school curriculum continues to be the most critical element in future college success. Thus rigorous, high-quality student academic preparation in high school is a vital element in setting the foundation for postsecondary success through concurrent enrollment, regardless of the program eligibility requirements. Both secondary and postsecondary institutions face significant challenges in ensuring students are appropriately prepared to successfully transition to college through concurrent enrollment programs as demand continues to rise for relevant academic acceleration.

The rising costs of attending college are an increasing concern for parents, while policymakers worry over how to maintain a high-quality workforce in the face of alarming college degree-attainment statistics (Lumina Foundation, 2010). Both parties consider acceleration through concurrent enrollment as a means to address their concerns (Boswell, 2001). Appropriate funding for concurrent enrollment is central to its success. As Hunt (2007) concisely noted, “funding presents one of the greatest challenges in implementing P-16 initiatives such as dual enrollment” (p. 863). State legislatures employ a wide variety of funding mechanisms to address these programs. The desire of state legislatures to encourage concurrent enrollment growth is clearly evident in state policies which allow both the participating postsecondary institutions and the school districts to count the dual credit courses for funding purposes. This method is allowed in 27 states, even when duplicative funding concerns are raised by legislators (Boswell, 2001).

The fiscal support provided by dual funding of concurrent enrollment can be supported when policymakers feel they are able to link the funding to desired outcomes affecting the public good (Paulsen, 2001). In the case of concurrent enrollment the public good has been identified as decreasing time to postsecondary degree and shorter time to high school completion, decreasing

total cost of education and increasing postsecondary degree attainment, resulting in expected increased worker productivity. Boswell (2001) found states typically support a significant portion of concurrent enrollment through tuition subsidies, such as discounted or zero tuition or tuition waivers. Most states have policies directing the ways in which participating colleges and school districts will share the fiscal burden with the state. Recent Colorado legislation, for example, expanded student access to concurrent enrollment and supported duplicative funding by allowing both school districts and colleges to claim the dual enrollment for funding (Concurrent Enrollment Act, 2008). Boswell (2001) noted 15 states have statutes that require either the state or the local school district pay all or most of the tuition costs for participating students, and an additional seven states permit local school districts to determine whether or not to subsidize student tuition costs for concurrent enrollment programs.

Through concurrent enrollment programs students are able to earn college credit inexpensively and begin acquiring credits toward a degree, thus decreasing the overall personal cost of a college degree (Bailey et al., 2003). Concurrent enrollment may also shorten the time necessary for students to complete college degrees, again decreasing the overall cost of education. In 1999 the Utah legislature established the New Century Scholarship Program to encourage concurrent enrollment's opportunity to shorten time to degree (Bailey et al., 2003). The program waives \$1100 per semester of junior and senior year tuition at its state universities for students who earn an associate degree within one summer of high school graduation. Funding for concurrent enrollment is shared by the state, school districts, and colleges in a unique partnership in which students do not pay for dual enrollment courses. Utah policymakers see direct public and fiscal benefit from concurrent enrollment to provide such significant support for concurrent enrollment programs and incentives for postsecondary degree attainment.

Other states' policies echo this support of concurrent enrollment and its cost savings to both the state and the student. Minnesota's Postsecondary Enrollment Options Program provides students a head start on college and savings on postsecondary tuition costs as students pay no tuition or associated costs. Auditors estimate that students saved approximately \$10.9 million in tuition and fees through participation in the program. Students participating in Washington's Running Start program in 1998-99 were estimated to have saved \$12.5 million in college tuition, while taxpayers saved over an estimated \$24.6 million (Boswell, 2001). Helfgot (2001) profiled an effective partnership at California's Cerritos College noting that concurrent enrollment provided "substantial benefits to both the college and the participating high schools" (p. 43). Local college leadership elected to waive tuition for students enrolling for dual credit in order to eliminate cost as an obstacle to student access.

Research by Hunt (2007) indicated funding had a large influence on participation in concurrent enrollment courses, a perspective shared by both high schools and community colleges. She noted the decisions about funding dual enrollment programs are crucial to student access; they can act as obstacles to serving students effectively or as incentives for strong program creation. In writing for the Jobs for the Future initiative Hoffman (2005) provided a provocative proposal for funding dual enrollment programs based on extensive research of programs across the country and demonstrated positive savings to the state while maintaining a cost-neutral position for the student. She advocated reframing the last two years of high school as part of concurrent enrollment pathways that would provide greater choice and supported options for all students to accelerate. These programs would be financed through per pupil school enrollment funding already in place and enriched with private foundation or public grant initiatives; students and their families would pay no tuition.

The recent state and local fiscal crises have added pressure to find increasingly creative and affordable solutions to adequately fund secondary and postsecondary opportunities. Programs that appear to compact high school and college, while saving money for state governments as well as school districts and students' families, provide the most promise (Bailey et al., 2003). Some states are experimenting with creative programs and questioning established assumptions about how students are educated to best meet future workforce demands and the state's role in educational funding. For Hunt (2007) "the dual funding structure is an inducement that works with generating inter-organizational participation, which is a necessary ingredient for the successful implementation for dual enrollment courses" (p.879).

Programs that support and encourage student degree attainment with collaborative and effective financial strategies and effective program outcomes stand the best chance of meeting complex future demands; however, current state and federal budget pressures could tighten, and even curtail, such collaborative strategies. States face federal spending requirements in areas such as health care, welfare, and K-12 education, as well as the "effects of binding citizen initiatives limiting taxes or court orders such as those dictating funding guidelines for primary and secondary education" (Doyle & Delaney, 2009, p. 60). These factors have necessitated the balancing of state budgets on higher education funding, one of the few areas of the budgets that are under state control and are considered by legislatures to be less essential than transportation infrastructure, corrections, healthcare, and K-12 education (McLendon, Hearn, & Mokher, 2009). How states continue to fund creative strategies linking secondary and postsecondary sectors will become more challenging as state budgets tighten and overall federal support diminishes.

Perceptions of the best public benefit must be weighed against the private benefit that individuals receive from a college education when state legislatures attempt to balance shrinking state budgets with limitations on tax increases and other revenue sources. These perceptions of the value of accelerated learning options, and how to fund them, play key roles in successful postsecondary transition and degree attainment. Additionally, continued questions about the rigor, validity, and appropriateness of accelerated learning and college credit earning options for high school students often limit opportunities. A 2006 WICHE policy analysis on accelerated learning options across the states noted lingering concerns, particularly about concurrent enrollment; while AP and IB programs are externally validated through national examinations, questions surrounding the quality of many dual/concurrent enrollment programs linger (Michelau, 2006).

Forty-seven states have enacted legislation allowing high school students to enroll in college credit courses as one method to blur the boundaries separating secondary from postsecondary and better prepare students for college expectations. Concurrent enrollment and accelerated learning programs address key public policy levers, such as curricular integration and across-sector financial collaboration, by providing students with college-level experiences and college-level credit to accelerate their initial transition into the postsecondary world, and sustain them through the initial challenges of matriculation (Steinberg & Almeida, 2007).

After 40 years, however, concurrent enrollment programs and other specialized, intensive acceleration programs have not expanded to provide college credit-earning opportunities to high school students in need of college-level exposure. Struggles continue for “postsecondary institutions to interpret and accept dual-credit courses for transfer... and question the quality of college courses that contain high school students, especially if those courses are taught on high

school campuses” (Vargas, 2007, p. 178). Despite the increasing body of literature and research advocating efforts to improve students’ transitions from high school to college through concurrent enrollment programs, questions about the quality of the courses and the faculty continue. “What are those elements within the two sectors that limit the growth of acceleration opportunities for all students? Is the curriculum being taught truly at the college level? Are the teachers who teach the courses qualified?” (Michelau, 2006, p. 6). Questions such as these have continued even as research on concurrent enrollment has increased and focused on assessing the programmatic goals that inspired their creation. The literature does not address how perceptions and opinions of activities within the threshold between the two educational sectors, such as concurrent enrollment, limit student opportunities for successful postsecondary transition and continue the historical disconnection and separation of the two sectors.

### **Program Effectiveness**

Although concurrent enrollment programs have been operational for over 40 years, early evidence of program effectiveness was limited. Until recently few studies existed that went beyond descriptive or participant satisfaction studies. Journal articles prior to 2002 noted the enjoyment and overall satisfaction that program participants had in dual enrollment courses, and the majority of students considered their concurrent enrollment course to be valuable in future college experiences. Assessment of long-term outcomes, such as time-to-degree or academic success, had not been undertaken until recently. Student self-selection may play a role in academic success because “many programs have entry requirements; it is difficult to discern whether measured outcomes result from the selectivity of the programs or the experience that the students have” (Bailey et al., 2003, p. 22). A multi-state, multi-institutional study by Morest and Karp (2006) revealed similar self-selection issues, as well as participation requirements

established by the colleges that “targeted high-achieving or academically proficient students” (p. 232).

A 2003 meta-analysis of the existing literature on credit-based transition programs by Bailey and Karp (2003) provided some of the first program effectiveness data. Researchers evaluated 45 articles and books to structure an initial framework for evaluation of outcomes. While several studies indicated positive results at postsecondary institutions for those participating in dual enrollment programs, only one of the studies reviewed by Bailey and Karp (2003) controlled for students’ prior academic performance or family background (University of Arizona, 1999). They noted three distinct types of concurrent enrollment programs: *singleton* programs such as Advanced Placement; *comprehensive* programs such as Tech Prep programs concentrating on career and technical education and International Baccalaureate programs; and *enhanced comprehensive* programs such as Middle College and Early College High School programs (Bailey & Karp, 2003). They noted AP programs had doubled in size over the past decade. AP programs have tended to attract highly-motivated and able students, but many programs have sought ways to expand their enrollment beyond this initial group. Outcomes studies of comprehensive programs like Tech Prep, which did attempt to control for background characteristics, found positive outcomes for participating students. Enhanced comprehensive programs such as Middle College programs “appear to be best suited to the needs of nontraditional high school students and have the most potential to move non-academically advanced students into postsecondary education” (Bailey & Karp, 2003, p. 19).

Data from the Running Start dual enrollment program in Washington showed 41% of participants earned bachelor’s degrees in four years compared to 31% of non-participants during the same time period (Boswell, 2001). In a study conducted at Florida’s Santa Fe Community



College researchers found for each cohort of dual enrollment students analyzed, “the percentage of college courses taken that qualified for transfer to the state university system substantially exceed success rates for non-program student who took AP exams” (Jordan, Cavalluzzo, & Corallo, 2006, p. 16).

Participation in AP courses does seem to make a difference in the college academic performance of concurrently enrolled students. An examination of high school and college data gathered from the University of Missouri system concluded that students entering college with AP experience tended to get higher first year GPAs than those who entered with only dual credit or than those who had no prior college coursework. Students’ prior academic ability was held constant in the data analysis. Further, students who started college with both AP and dual credit courses persisted into the second year of college at higher rates than those with no prior college credits (Eimers & Mullen, 2003). Sherman Valentine (2010) found similar college persistence experiences for students who participated in either AP or dual enrollment courses in Pennsylvania, although no significant differences were seen in first semester college adjusted GPA between those who participated in AP programs and those who participated in concurrent enrollment programs. Klopfenstein and Lively (2012) distinguished the many differences between AP and concurrent enrollment programs and concluded they were better viewed as “complements rather than competitors” (p. 60). The two programs tended to serve different populations of students with differing needs and different settings with both providing the opportunity for college-level exposure prior to college matriculation.

Krueger (2006) provided evidence from U.S. Department of Education data supporting the reduction in time-to-degree for students who participated in concurrent enrollment programs. The results revealed the average time-to-degree (baccalaureate) was 4.65 years for students with

no prior college credits and 4.25 years for students who earned nine or more college credits prior to college matriculation. Dual enrollment participation shortened college baccalaureate attainment by approximately one semester. Krueger (2006) also noted that removing financial barriers and opening access to concurrent enrollment programs appeared to have a positive effect on the participation and success of underrepresented students. In Florida's programs, where access is fairly open, African American students who participated in dual enrollment programs enrolled at higher rates (70%) in college than those who did not (45%) (Krueger, 2006).

More recent research provided additional quantitative data on dual enrollment program effectiveness. Heath's (2008) research pointed to the effectiveness of enhanced comprehensive dual enrollment programs, such as Middle College High Schools, that accelerated high school students through college enrollment in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Her research, which controlled for student academic ability, found dually enrolled students had higher community college GPAs, higher associate and baccalaureate degree completion rates and shorter time-to-degree than traditional community college students.

An increasing number of recent studies (Fara, 2010; Geise, 2011; Menzel, 2006; Swanson, 2008) have reported that concurrent enrollment can play a significant role in persistence to degree; student academic momentum was enhanced by participation in dual enrollment programs as they encouraged postsecondary transition after high school graduation. In Swanson's study (2008) dual enrollment students were 11% more likely to persist through the second year of college than those who did not participate in such programs. She concluded that dual enrollment created positive attitudes toward postsecondary degree attainment and improved the students' likelihood to persist in college and earn a degree. Based on these findings Swanson (2008) suggested concurrent enrollment programs play a positive role in students' transition and

completion of college degrees and should be considered as equal to other credit-based transition programs, like AP, for rigorous postsecondary preparation and an effective element in bridging the psychological and academic gap between both sectors.

A recent study conducted of high school students matriculating to Iowa State University found positive correlation between involvement in concurrent enrollment and first semester college academic success, as well as persistence to the second fall semester (Fara, 2010). Both Menzel (2006) and Geise (2011) reported involvement in dual enrollment programs increased the likelihood of college persistence and baccalaureate degree attainment when compared with students who did not have concurrent enrollment program involvement. The effects were small but determined to be statistically significant.

These findings were echoed in an evaluation of the City University of New York's (CUNY) dual enrollment program. Researchers (Allen & Dadgar, 2012) found enrollment in College Now courses reduced the time to degree and also increased the students' academic performance as evidenced by a higher GPA. The regression analysis controlled for preexisting conditions and student characteristics in their quasi-experimental model. Their model confirmed conclusions from previous studies finding "large and positive effects of the program in helping students earn more credits even after they have enrolled in college and in earning higher grades in college" (Allen & Dadgar, 2012, p. 19).

Other recent studies have addressed some compelling qualitative aspects of accelerated learning experiences. Snow (2009) provided a rich description of the paradoxical factors that influence college persistence of non-majority students who have been involved in concurrent enrollment programs. His qualitative research noted the complex and personal nature of the

powerful interplay between personal background, high school and family support (or lack thereof), and college-level experiences.

These latest studies provide strong, methodologically-sound evidence of the positive effect of concurrent enrollment and Advanced Placement programs on important policy elements of these credit-based transition programs: psychological and academic transition to college; time-to-degree; postsecondary degree completion rates; and college academic performance. Recent studies have built a strong body of empirical data that can positively impact the development and improvement of concurrent enrollment and other credit-based transition programs to meet the expectations of students, policymakers, taxpayers, school districts and colleges in better preparing students for successful transition to college.

Despite current research on the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs to prepare participants for higher education and increase their college degree achievement, criticism and doubt about program quality and rigor continue to plague programs (Crockett-Bell, 2007). Crockett-Bell (2007) noted published academic policies at Tulane University deny credit for concurrent enrollment college credits earned in high school-based programs. The University of Michigan has a similar policy if the college courses were also used to meet high school requirements; the policy was established because some students were “unprepared for more advanced classes” (Dodge, 2012, p. 227). Concerns about the rigor of dual enrollment course taking have also been raised by state legislators concerned about funding strategies under continued budgetary constraints, course rigor, and instructional quality (Dodge, 2012). Bailey and Karp (2003) noted the resistance of higher education institutions to broaden the admission criteria to less-prepared students or those who would not traditionally go to college, citing the increased academic demands of college that could overwhelm less-capable students.

Mace (2009), a college professor, acknowledged that high school instructors are usually considered less qualified than college professors, even when many are also adjunct college instructors, and concurrent courses are often perceived to be less rigorous than regular college courses. Despite evidence of concurrent program effectiveness, Mace noted her colleagues' perceptions of concurrent enrollment courses as "lacking the rigour [sic] of regular college courses" (Mace, 2009, p. 35). The perceptions of inferior quality, in the face of growing effectiveness research, reflect continued dissonance at the important juncture between secondary and postsecondary sectors.

Dissonance between the two sectors may be function of their organizational cultures and philosophical underpinnings, and concurrent enrollment programs stand squarely in the middle space – boundary area or gap – between the two educational entities. As Hofmann and Voluch (2012) neatly described; "dual enrollment inhabits a space where larger questions about higher education – the cultural practices, norms, institutional relationships and interactions, and the overall 'business of learning' – are grappled with on a daily basis" (Hofmann & Voloch, 2012, p. 101). Thus innovative options that bridge the gap between secondary and postsecondary sectors remain outliers on the edge of institutional inclusion and acceptance.

Concurrent enrollment programs have proliferated throughout the country and have provided college acceleration options for hundreds of thousands of students. Programs have been embraced by policy makers and legislators as effective tools to increase educational attainment, maximize the public's investment in education, and ensure an educated and economically-competitive populace. Research on program effectiveness has demonstrated their overall positive effect on students' academic success in college. The issues that confront concurrent enrollment

have centered on student qualifications and eligibility, the definition of college level work, the responsibility for college preparation and success, and the quality of college course instruction.

### **Organizational Cultures of Education**

The enduring concern of concurrent enrollment programs has been the quality and rigor of instruction. Are the high school-based courses of comparable quality and rigor as those taught at the college? Are high school instructors competent to teach college courses? The reasons for continued dissonance and concern have deep roots in the cultural and organizational differences between high school and college sectors. While the basic elements of teaching – instructor, student, and curriculum – may be perceived to be common in both sectors, the differences in the experiences of teaching in high school and teaching in college are considerable and based, in large part, on the vastly different organizations and the subsequent cultures of the secondary and higher education sectors (Callan & Usdan, 1999; Collins, 2001; Schön, 1983; Cohen & Kisher, 2009; Oakes & Rogers, 2001). There are further distinctive differences between the education and training requirements for those who become secondary teachers and those who become college faculty. These foundational differences have significant implications and impact on activities, such as concurrent enrollment, that operate within the liminal zone intersecting the two educational sectors.

Organizational culture, as defined by Schein (1986), is a set of shared mental assumptions that guide the interpretation and action of individuals in organizations by identifying appropriate behaviors and norms. Organizational and institutional context shapes the behaviors, attitudes, and values of the organization's members (Levin, 2012). The perspective of those outside of education is that all of education – primary, secondary and postsecondary – share the same organizational values: functionalism, intellectual purpose, political purpose, social purpose,

and economic purpose (Sadovnik, 2001). Considerable research into the educational organizations and their operational cultures has affirmed the opposite; there are substantial differences between the two educational sectors. Sirotnik (1991) delineated the distinct differences between the two sectors when he observed:

School systems and universities are not cut from the same cultural cloth. The norms, roles and expectations of educators in each of these educational realms could not be more different, e.g., in the regiment of time and space in the schools versus the relative freedom of these precious commodities in the university setting; an ethic of inquiry in the university versus an ethic of action and meeting immediate needs in schools; a merit system with promotion and tenure in the university versus an egalitarian work ethic in the schools. (p.21)

Research by Ebbutt, Worrall, and Robson (2000) and Gravani (2008) highlighted similar foundational distinctions between the educational sectors and noted numerous differences in the perspectives of teachers and university instructors. Gravani's (2008) analysis of the experiences and perceptions of university teachers and secondary teachers in a professional development program juxtaposed three antithetical pairs: theory versus practice; propositional versus procedural; and knowledge producer versus knowledge translators. Her findings confirmed that the experiences and perceptions of teachers from the two sectors varied substantially, although there were also points of mutual agreement. Gravani's inquiry echoed the conclusions of other researchers (Ebbutt, et al., 2000; Kennedy, 2001; Hoyle, 2001) in articulating the organizational tensions between instructional professionals in schools and colleges and major points of schism. Levine (2007) concurred;

Schools and colleges developed independently. Their curricular and governance systems do not mesh. They differ in the preparation of their faculty members, their values and reward systems, their use of time, their methods of assessment, and their finances. The gap between grades 12 and 13 is a consequence of this history and the differences which resulted from it. (p.47)

Levine's (2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009) extensive research into teacher education/preparation and its place within the university provided substantial support that cultural differences between the educational sectors are considerable and these differences begin at the beginning: the educational pathways to *school teacher* or *college faculty*.

### **Education and training**

Undergraduate teacher education programs to educate and train the nation's school teachers abound in higher education. It is estimated that there are more than 1,300 teacher preparation programs in the United States (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2010). In 2011 colleges and universities awarded 309,000 degrees in education: 17,000 associate degrees, 101,000 baccalaureate degrees, 182,000 master's degrees, and over 9,000 doctoral degrees. This constituted over nine percent of the total degrees awarded that year (NCES, 2012). The majority of teacher education programs are baccalaureate degree programs in which students earn an undergraduate degree in education and a content area major. The degree curricula are generally split between academic and clinical instruction with some fieldwork and school-based internships as part of the degree. Most states require teacher candidates pass a test of basic academic knowledge, as well as content-specific examinations, for secondary teachers to earn a teaching license. Graduate degrees are not required to teach, although continuing professional development through advanced coursework and workshop attendance is usually required. Many states also have alternative routes to teacher licensure, such as Teach for America, that reduce or eliminate traditional classroom-based coursework (Levine, 2009) and fast-track teachers into classrooms. The primary focus of teacher education programs is preparation for teaching students a standard curriculum to support the nation's compulsory primary and secondary educational system.



The path to the college professoriate begins with an undergraduate degree in a content field of study, but proceeds down a markedly different path. While school teachers are eligible to begin their teaching careers directly following college graduation, college instructors must continue their education with graduate work and degree attainment of master's and doctoral degrees. Their focus is on acquiring mastery knowledge in their content/discipline area and furthering the universal body of content knowledge through original research and publication. They must seek opportunities to conduct research in collaboration with senior professors, and often take on positions as teaching or research assistants to fund graduate and doctoral coursework (Oakley, 2001). Creating strong associations with colleagues in their specific discipline becomes the basis for professional life as university faculty positions are grounded in the discipline area.

It is important to note that there are significant differences within the higher education sector related to type of institution and faculty expectations.

Research faculty participates in an environment that emphasizes knowledge construction, research productivity, research grant seeking, competition, and prestige. Public master's university faculty participates in an environment that emphasizes knowledge construction and teaching, as well as research and training grants. Faculty work at the community college frequently entails developing sustained and caring relationships with an ethnically diverse student body in order to help students make sense of and excel in an academic culture. (Levin, 2012, p. 4)

Regardless of institutional type, the emphasis in higher education continues to be discipline-focused rather than teaching-focused. This is an important distinction. Even among colleges and universities focused on undergraduate teaching, research and study within the content area is required for tenure and advancement.

## **Roles and rewards**

To be successful in any organization, members must assimilate to their assigned roles. In turn, their adherence to the standards of expected performance is rewarded through the organization's compensation structure. These rewards are established through formal mechanisms such as salary payments and benefits, as well as through informal mechanisms like group acceptance, choice assignments and involvement in strategic activities (Collins, 2001). In both educational sectors, faculty members are eligible to secure the ultimate employment benefit: academic tenure. Tenure operates differently in each sector and is awarded for differing activities, but it affords teachers in both sectors with significant benefits.

Academic tenure, the protection provided to academics wherein they are secured employment and cannot be dismissed without adequate cause and appropriate due process, is a goal for teachers in both educational sectors. It was established as a means to secure academic freedom, "the freedom to inquire and to communicate the results of that inquiry in the classroom, and tenure offers protection for the exercise of that inquiry" (Hutcheson, 2001, p. 153).

Academic freedom is especially sacred in higher education "as a vehicle for ensuring that scholarly debate continues to thrive. And more than any other institution, colleges and universities honor academic freedom... and also provide tenure systems that are presumed to ensure academic freedom" (Kennedy, 2001, p.32).

The expectation for research and scholarly activity has been a hallmark of the professoriate. Generally higher education rewards scholarship and publication; however, it is essential to note the distinct and sometimes dramatic differences in the higher education institutions themselves. Wide variation exists in the expected proportion of time teachers devote to their academic activities, such as teaching, research, publication, and service (Oakley, 2001;

Clark, 2001; Levine, 2006a). Kennedy's research (2001) found, "one of the most prominent and most controversial norms in higher education is the tendency to reward publications more than most other activities...publication productivity contributes heavily to promotions, to tenure, and to salary increases" (Kennedy, 2001, p. 33). A national study of higher education faculty practices (Fairweather, 1993) identified a negative correlation between time spent teaching and salary increase, and a positive relationship between number of publications produced and salary increases. Essentially, faculty who spent more time conducting research and publishing their results earned higher salaries than those who devoted more time and energy to teaching. Overall the compensation system for college and university instructors rewards research and publication over teaching. Colleges and universities that focus on teaching are less adamant in their zeal for faculty publication; however, reward, recognition, and advancement still include research and study or publication in the content discipline (Levin, 2012).

School teachers are also eligible to secure tenure after an initial probationary hiring period. Like tenure for college professors, tenure for teachers grants them fair-dismissal rights to protect them from unfair or capricious public pressure for dismissal. Once tenure in school systems is achieved, teachers are rewarded for consistent teaching and years of service, and require appropriate due process before contract termination. Greater oversight of tenure and public pressure to improve student learning outcomes has prompted many states to enact laws linking teachers' continuation and salary advancement to student academic performance (Kane, Wooten, Taylor, & Tyler, 2011). Teachers and professors have similar employment protections as education professionals, but their paths to organizational reward and compensation take quite different paths, further articulating the differences between the two sectors.

**Values and focus.** A set of shared attitude and values is one of the key elements of organizational culture. Education of students – the transmission of knowledge from expert to novice – can be universally accepted as a value common to both sectors of education. From that common foundation, however, the differences in organizational values and focus diverge. The differences have been juxtaposed as polar opposites and also considered as separate ends of a continuum with degrees of distance from each end (Gravani, 2008). There are a number of organizational elements that could be compared and contrasted; the values and attitudes most applicable to the dynamics of teaching and teachers’ experiences are the two sectors’ approaches to knowledge, approaches to practice, and their occupational status and prestige.

***Approaches to knowledge.*** One of the central differences in teaching in schools and teaching in universities is the approach to knowledge; “the nub of the issue [is] fundamentally about the nature of knowledge” (Ebbutt et al., 2000, p. 322). The distinctions between the two sectors are old and deep. As early as 1853 Cardinal John Newman in his book, *The Idea of the University*, articulated a clear distinction between colleges as producers of knowledge and schools as translators of knowledge was advanced by (Cohen & Kisher, 2009), establishing a long-standing hierarchy of thought and opinion. Schön (1983) delineated a hierarchical valuing of knowledge that begins with the foundational base of fundamental science and theory. This is the most valued and respected knowledge “produced in the academy through contemplative pursuit of pure theory or pure science” (Ebbutt et al., 2000, p. 322). Upon this base is built applied theory and science, which then gives rise to knowledge implementation and practice, considered lower status knowledge. Higher education institutions have traditionally emphasized highly-valued knowledge construction and research.

Colleges and universities are widely recognized as places where people have knowledge, and in addition are often places where people create new knowledge

through research. The centrality of knowledge to higher education leads to an acute awareness of the importance of truth and the meaning of truth. (Kennedy, 2001, p. 31)

Conversely, schools have affirmed and raised practical knowledge as the pinnacle responsibility and hallmark of their domain. Practical knowledge has been defined as “that body of convictions and meanings, conscious and unconscious, that have arisen from experience (intimate, social and traditional) and that are expressed in a person’s practices” (Clandinin & Connolly, 1995, p. 7). The practice orientation of teachers in schools results in their focus on the implementation and functionality of knowledge; knowledge is an instrument to be used to meet instructional demands. For the school teacher it is the usefulness of knowledge that creates its value (Gravani, 2008). This functional orientation differs from the higher educational perspective where knowledge is valued for its own sake, and underscores the “fundamental distinction between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge” (Clandinin & Connolly, 1995). Further, Clandinin and Connolly (1995) concluded “the difference between the two cannot easily be overcome by urging academics to be more practical and urging practitioners to value and make better use of theory” (p. 7). The dissimilarities between the sectors are grounded in their enduring organizational norms and values, and these are not easily changed. What is true of knowledge approaches is also applicable to instructional practice.

*Approaches to practice.* Teachers in both sectors create their own professional and personal landscapes, where the activities of interactions with students in classrooms are interlaced with the activities of the outer world of the institution. Major differences between educational sectors are seen in how these landscapes are expressed (Clandinin & Connolly, 1995). Teaching is the primary work of school teachers. They are considered education practitioners. Scholarship is the primary work of college teachers. They are considered education

theorists. Interwoven with approaches to knowledge that rank knowledge creation (universities) higher than knowledge application (schools), approaches to practice also create a hierarchy of value; theory is superior to practice (Ebbutt et al., 2000). As Clandinin and Connolly summarily noted (1995), “the universality and taken-for-grantedness of the supremacy of theory over practice gives it the quality of a sacred story” (p.8). Gravani (2008) found this same dichotomy between theory and practice in her study of collaborative professional development activities of school teachers and college professors. Teachers embraced practical knowledge that they considered applicable to classroom implementation and providing solutions to everyday practice. They found less value in the theoretical and philosophical knowledge that did not address an instrumental function. One participant in Gravani’s (2008) study noted theoretical knowledge was “like a football team who know all about the history of football but don’t know how to play” (p. 653).

Ebbutt and his associates (2000) noted “markedly different work patterns of teachers and college instructors” (p.327). School teachers experience their work life inside the classroom. It is afforded prominence of place in schools; “there is a sense of autonomy about teachers in classrooms, a sense of ownership” (Clandinin & Connolly, 1995, p. 13). The classroom also affords teachers a high degree of functional autonomy through its isolation and secrecy, providing teachers with power and purpose focused on immediate and purposeful actions for the students in the classroom at that moment. This is the time when the teacher is at work. School occupational culture and accountability aspects have further narrowed that dimension of work to define teachers’ work as only the time spent in the classroom with pupils (Ebbutt et al., 2000). Often time spent outside the classroom in professional development, collegial planning,

curriculum development, or research is considered non-work and undervalued in its applicability to direct work with pupils.

Further, teachers' professional culture focuses on the current student and on the immediacy and unpredictability of *now*. In contrast, higher education's organizational culture and its research demands require greater control, and the generalizability and transferability of research findings and conclusions to *future* implementation is more important than the immediate practice and use. Ebbutt, Worrall, and Robson concluded (2000), "higher education is likely to continue to emphasize the importance of rigour [sic], whereas ideas or suggestion or proposals for research from practitioners in schools will certainly prioritize relevance" (p.330). Continued distinctions in cultural norms manifest themselves in external (from the public) and internal (within and between the two sectors) perception of the status of teaching as an occupation.

***Occupational prestige and status.*** Hoyle (2001) defined occupational prestige as "the public perception of the relative position of an occupation in a hierarchy of occupations" (p. 139). The relative position of the professional status of educators has remained surprisingly consistent over time. Since the original study of occupational prestige by Counts in 1928 to today's Standard International Occupational Prestige Scale, *school teacher* has consistently located amongst the semi-professions; *college professor* has been considered a profession, in the same category as lawyer, or doctor (Hoyle, 2001). Hoyle (2001) focused his analysis on school teachers; university instructors and professors he noted "have a higher prestige than teachers" (2001, p. 143) because of their relationship to scholarship and research. He noted that one crucial element in the perception of occupational prestige is the relationship of the professional to the clients.

When the public considers educators, “the level of prestige is shaped by the perceived image of the teacher, and this image ultimately stems from the fact that the teachers’ immediate clients are children” (Hoyle, 2001, p. 140) who are required to be in attendance, as are the school teachers. He continued, “compared with the major professions, whose members see clients on an individual basis on intermittent occasions and usually when there is a specific problem to be solved,... teachers confront their client on a daily basis in large groups as a matter of routine” (Hoyle, 2001, p. 141). He noted “that the relationship between teachers and pupils constitutes the most intractable barrier to enhanced prestige” (Hoyle, 2001, p.143) because students are in schools involuntarily and in relatively large groups, enhancing the possibility of mayhem. “No other profession faces the problem of control, with so few sanctions, as teaching” (p.143), which diminishes the prestige of the profession. Teaching has been widely viewed as an extension of parenting and the opinion that teaching is something of a craft or skill that can be learned by doing is remarkably persistent (Kennedy, 2001). This fundamental challenge to professional status for teachers “still divides those who believe teaching is a profession like law or medicine, requiring a substantial amount of education before becoming a practitioner, and those who think teaching is a craft like journalism, learned principally on the job” (Levine, 2006b, p.64).

College professors, on the other hand, are considered professionals with significant control over their environment and high occupational status, on a par with doctors and attorneys (Clark, 2001). As Hoyle (2001) has noted, college professors have significantly more perceived control over their environments than school teachers, and are considered to be working even when they are not in the classroom teaching. They are further distinguished from teachers on the basis of their considerable years of acquired education and the nature of their relationship with



students. Their pupils are of majority age and attend class voluntarily. As such the teacher-student relationship takes on a professional-client aspect rather than a parent-child aspect.

The hierarchy of occupational prestige ranks college professors above school teachers (Hoyle, 2001). Despite massive reform efforts and restructuring, “the position of teachers within the educational hierarchy has essentially remained the same. They were and still are the front-line workers charged with implementing policies created from above” (Day, Fernandez, Hauge, & Moller, 2000, p. 1) and lacking the status of their higher education counterparts. As such, teachers may feel threatened when their “lowly practice-saturated knowledge, engages with the comparatively more highly-valued, more highly respected, pure or applied knowledge that theoreticians bring from higher education institutions” (Ebbutt et al., 2000, p. 322). As a young school teacher Ebbutt (2000) remembered how he felt “simultaneously intimidated and patronized” (p.322) in his early encounters with higher education researchers. The hierarchical tradition of occupational prestige embodies steadfast notions that continue to separate and elevate professors over teachers. These divisions are maintained through social structures of organizations. Ritual classifications provide order, and individuals “derive their identities from the socially defined categories...and become committed to upholding these identities within the context of their school activities” (Meyer & Rowan, 2001, p. 80).

The dichotomies that exist between the two educational sectors influence the teaching dynamics. The differing ways in which education professionals experience and explore knowledge, practice teaching, earn rewards, are compensated and evaluated, and garner professional status vary widely between the K-12 and higher education sectors. The impact of these dynamics may be insignificant for the majority of school teachers and college professors operating within their own educational sectors. These undercurrents may be felt by more keenly

by those who teach in the liminal zone - that transition space – that intersects both educational realms such as concurrent enrollment.

### **Summary**

A college education is a goal for the majority of today's high school students and a perennial national concern for educators and policymakers focused on global competitiveness and a well-trained and educated workforce. Increasing the number of students who attain two-year and four-year degrees has become a national priority with focus directed at improving the critical transition from high school to college. Policies that promote the alignment of the K-12 and higher education sectors are critical because the transition to college is neither smooth nor effective for many students who aspire to a college education. State and federal policies have attempted to address this gap for the past three decades. Many initiatives have been attempted to integrate the sectors and help students prepare and transition better. Systemic initiatives, such as curricular alignment, have been supplemented with efforts aimed at individual student acceleration, such as concurrent enrollment.

Concurrent enrollment programs have been effective in increasing the successful transition to college and degree attainment for participants; however, concurrent enrollment continues to be considered an inferior option in both education sectors. Research has been focused on concurrent enrollment program effectiveness, but has paid scant attention to the experiences of those who provide instruction and their role in student learning and academic success. High school instructors who teach concurrent enrollment courses experience the perceptual barriers about instructional rigor that restrict program growth and instructional support. It is necessary to enhance the research by conducting a study that explores the

experiences of concurrent enrollment instructors as they stand in the center of the divide between secondary and postsecondary sectors in their teaching of college courses inside high schools.

## CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design of this study and the rationale for a phenomenological methodology. My role as researcher in this qualitative study is addressed, as well as details of the study site and involved participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness.

### **Research Rationale and Design**

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of high school instructors teaching postsecondary curriculum in a high school setting in concurrent enrollment programs. A research method that provides an exploration of the multidimensional experiences of the instructors was required. For that reason an interpretive phenomenological approach was the most appropriate as it aims

to determine what an experience means for persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions general or universal meanings are derived; in other words, the essences or structures of the experience. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13)

In phenomenology the researcher seeks to describe the core or essence of those experiencing the event and provide understanding of that phenomenon at a deeper level (Creswell, 2007). These concepts are at the core of the constructivist worldview and well-supported through a phenomenological research approach. Research scholars (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009) have promoted qualitative research as an inquiry process that explores the many facets of human experience and provides a rich, holistic picture of a phenomenon or experience. The phenomenological approach allowed for the in-depth exploration of the experiences of high school instructors as they taught concurrent enrollment courses.

In phenomenology the researcher must suspend current personal knowledge and past experience in order to better understand the experiences of the participants and to approach the phenomenon with a sense of newness and freshness. This allows the researcher, who is also the research instrument, the best opportunity to elicit data rich in description and depth of feeling (Creswell, 2007). To be most open to the experiences of others, researchers must put aside their perceptions, beliefs, and feelings, a process called bracketing (Merriam, 2009). As a higher education professional working in the area of concurrent enrollment, I had a duty and obligation to bracket out my experiences and history in this area in order to focus on the experiences of the teachers. My responsibility as a qualitative researcher required focusing on capturing and articulating the teachers' experiences and leaving my own professional experiences to the side.

At its philosophical core phenomenology requires *epoche*, a suspension of "all judgments about what is real until they are founded on a more certain basis" (Creswell, 2009, p. 59) and that reality can only be perceived within the meanings given by the individual of the experience/phenomenon. This meaning-making is at the heart of the phenomenological approach with "the researcher as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p.6) and the collection of rich, thick descriptive data that lead to greater understanding and illumination of the essence of the lived experience.

### **Participants and Site**

The site of my study was a state-supported college in the United States with a concurrent enrollment program that served a number of school districts, many of which were rural and small (less than 500 students in the high school) and one which was large and relatively urban. The college served the entire state and had special responsibility as the regional education provider for multiple counties in the state, providing educational programming or facilitating the delivery

of needed educational services by others. This comprised an area of approximately 28,300 square miles and 424,000 residents. This college also had authority to provide educational services and programs such as technical certificates and degrees, associate degree programs, and developmental studies.

The study used a purposive sample of all high school instructors from partner school districts who taught concurrent enrollment courses for the identified college. I reference the site with the pseudonym Academy State College (ASC). Additionally, all participants and their high schools were given pseudonyms. Fifty-three instructors comprised the population. All of the members of the research population taught in high schools located in the multi-county regional service area. These instructors often provide the exclusive access to higher education options for students. The majority of high schools participating in the program were located far enough from a college campus to preclude students from attending a class on the college campus. In many of the schools concurrent enrollment was the only academic acceleration option available to students because of school size and class capacity requirements. Because these teachers shared the common experience of teaching these accelerated courses, they were an appropriate, purposefully selected population for a phenomenological research methodology, and their experiences are important to explore and describe. Purposeful selection requires the identification of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon to be studied and are willing to participate in the study; Creswell (2007) references this approach as criterion sampling.

For a phenomenological study Creswell (2007) advised interviews be conducted with 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The number of individuals required for a strong phenomenological study results when the data reaches a point of saturation when no new information is being collected from new participants. I found I had achieved saturation upon

interviewing 10 teachers from the study population. From the list of participating high school concurrent enrollment teachers at ASC I emailed a request to participate. Teachers must have taught concurrent enrollment courses at ASC for at least one year to be eligible members of the study as this provided them with the requisite teaching experience. If there was no response to the initial email, I sent a second email request. I received positive responses to participate in the study from 10 teachers in the population. I conducted a phone meeting to discuss the study, and emailed a copy of the consent form to the teacher. Together we arranged a mutually agreeable time and place for the first interview.

### **Data Collection**

I completed the required human subject protection training from Colorado State University's (CSU) Research Integrity and Compliance Review Office, and obtained permission from the appropriate committees and institutional agencies, I collected data for the phenomenological study of concurrent enrollment instruction as outlined here.

In-depth personal interviews were the data collection method as recommended by Moustakas (1994). These interviews were open-ended and informal as the participant and I engaged in an interactive dialog that drew out a full description of the individual's experience. I began with two broad, open-ended questions to guide but not direct the flow and process of the participants' perceptions and experiences:

- How did you become interested in teaching concurrent enrollment courses?
- How would you describe your experience in teaching concurrent enrollment courses to a new high school teacher thinking about teaching a concurrent enrollment course?

Participants were informed of their rights to confidentiality, privacy protection, and anticipated risks and benefits of participating in the study. Only when the participant had signed

the consent form approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board did I begin the interview. I recorded the interviews with an electronic digital recording device. The digital interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist into a typed electronic form and reviewed by me for accuracy. Interview transcripts were shared with participants to ensure their words were accurately recorded. Corrections and clarifications were sought at that time, but no participant desired either. I used pseudonyms selected by the participants to assist with confidentiality and establish a rapport with the participants in order to fully explore their experience with the phenomenon.

Participants were interviewed at locations convenient and comfortable that provided an uninterrupted space. After receiving consent from the participant, I interviewed the participants. I conducted two interviews with each participant where I was able to collect rich, detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. Participation in two separate interviews provided the opportunity for the participants to reflect on their initial interview and expand their sharing in the second interview. Initial interviews were at least one hour in length; 6 interviews lasted over one and one half hours. I conducted the second interview with each participant in a compatible interview environment after the participants had read the initial analysis and interpretation of findings. Four of the second interviews were conducted by connecting electronically with participants using Internet communication software; the other six participants were interviewed in person at mutually-determined locations. All second interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. The second interviews with participants were shorter: 30 to 45 minutes in length. The second interviews continued the involvement of the participants in checking the data and provided a critical platform for participants to confirm their personal resonance with my interpretations of their experience.



## Data Analysis

I followed the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen approach of the process outlined by Moustakas (1994) for phenomenological research: *epoche*; phenomenological reduction; imaginative variation; and synthesis of description. *Epoche* is described as “a process of setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events, and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Engaging in *epoche* or bracketing is a primary element in this type of qualitative research to facilitate the researcher’s sense of newness and freshness in data collection and it encourages receptivity to listen and hear what is being said without judgments, labels, or comparisons. To facilitate the *epoche* process, I recorded my reflections before and after each interview and throughout the analysis process (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas’ (1994) second strategy for phenomenological research is phenomenological reduction; it is a process of “describing in textual language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and self” (p. 90). Phenomenological reduction required looking repeatedly and from different angles or perspectives at the described experiences to ascertain the full nature of the phenomenon. I engaged in this activity throughout participant interviews and observations, as well as during the analysis of data and reporting of findings. My process for data analysis built in multiple and repeated reviews of the data throughout the process. I went over the interviews multiple times continuing the process of phenomenological reduction. It was during this process that I determined I had achieved saturation with the data collected through the interviews; I was collecting no new information from new participants that I interviewed. I went over the interviews in a constant review and

identified the statements that had significance to the experience of the participants and coded those appropriately; Moustakas (1994) referred to this horizontalization, where the researcher reflects on each significant statement and begins to make connections between and among the participants. Finally, through phenomenological reduction process I created “a complete textural description of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96), bringing the nature and meaning of the experience to the conscious level of understanding and clarity.

The textural clarity that was brought forward in the phenomenological reduction stage was followed by the process of imaginative variation where I sought meaning through use of imagination, divergent frames of reference, and differing perspectives to achieve a structural depiction of the phenomenon. The process of imaginative variation led to an understanding of the essence of the experience, and the identification of meaning as articulated by the participants and synthesized through this analysis phase.

Finally, the textural and structural descriptions were integrated to illuminate the essence of the experience as an entire unified whole. Employing these strategies provided the framework for a thorough and qualitatively sound research method that explored and described the phenomenon of concurrent enrollment teaching. Through this process of data analysis I sought to comprehensively and articulately portray the essence of the experience of teaching concurrent enrollment courses in a high school environment. The route described by Moustakas (1994) required considerable personal reflection and discipline to achieve the necessary state of transcendence that allowed the essence of the participants’ experience to emerge.

### **Trustworthiness**

The value and worth of a qualitative research study is judged by the study’s trustworthiness. Trustworthiness depends on establishing the study’s credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, scholars recommend several strategies to increase the credibility or validity of the findings; triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement with data during collection, researcher reflexivity, peer review, and others (Merriam, 2009).

### **Credibility**

I established the study's credibility beginning with member checks. It was through member checks that the preliminary data and analysis were reviewed by the participants for accuracy. They provided key feedback to me and clarified any misinterpretation that I made that could bias the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The review by participants of interview transcripts and the emerging findings was an important step to ensure I presented accurately the experiences of the study participants. This was an important aspect of my phenomenological research because participant feedback identified inconsistencies and clarified the emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994). Another of the strategies suggested to ensure trustworthiness is the review of data and processes by peers. I sought peer review from my methodologist to provide a check of my consistency in bracketing my personal judgments in exploring the essence of teaching concurrent enrollment courses.

### **Transferability**

Particularly important in qualitative research is the element of transferability: how applicable the findings are in other contexts (Creswell, 2009). This is accomplished through the collection of sufficiently thick, rich description of participants' experiences. Deep involvement in the data collection and analysis is essential so that patterns of relationships and cultural norms become visible and contextually focused. This, then, provides a basis for applying conclusions to other situations and other people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability in this study was

facilitated through two in-depth and sustained interviews with participants, as well as the repeated review and synthesis of the data I collected through the interviews. Phenomenological reduction, where data are repetitively examined from a variety of perspectives, was an essential element in the phenomenological research protocol I employed (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Dependability**

One of the most productive strategies for ensuring a study's dependability is conducting an external audit. This strategy is necessary to demonstrate the consistency of the research methods and findings, and also to provide a pathway for replication. Because the qualitative researcher is the data collection and data analysis instrument, it is incumbent upon the researcher to provide straight-forward and transparent processes that can be verified and confirmed by those outside the study. External audits typically employ a researcher outside the study who examines the process and outcomes of the research to verify the accuracy of the data collection methods and to evaluate how well the findings are supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My study was audited by my methodologist throughout the research process. He reviewed my coding procedures, read and commented on the emerging themes, and affirmed my research process consistency. This peer review process provided the method for fostering dependability in the findings of my research, and determined how well I maintained conformity to the phenomenological research methods developed by Moustakas (1994).

### **Confirmability**

One of the most important strategies for qualitative research confirmability and trustworthiness is maintaining an audit trail - a clear description of the research process, which includes research design and decisions about data collection, as well as the steps and procedures for data management, analysis, and reporting. Throughout the research process I maintained a set

of analytic memos that constituted my research journal. The memos included detailed information about how data were collected, decisions that I made in data analysis, and the rationale for those decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The writing and collection of the analytic memos was an essential element throughout the entire research process to provide an audit trail of my research. The importance of an audit trail was underscored by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) as an evidentiary trail of decisions, notes, interview schedules, coding decisions, annotated transcripts, and reports such that one could follow the trail that started with the research question and continued to the final report in a logical and clear manner.

A further strategy to ensure confirmability is the clarification of research bias: researcher reflexivity. My years of working in higher education, and specifically concurrent enrollment, require acknowledging my past experiences and knowledge, and then setting these aside to enable viewing the data with new eyes and fresh perspective. This process of *epoche* as outlined by Moustakas (1994) is an in-depth, on-going concentration on achieving an authentic and open mind to conduct and collect rich descriptions of experiences without bias or prejudgment. I followed this process throughout the research process through the maintenance of the analytic memos that documented my thoughts, processes, and decisions as I worked my way through the analysis.

I employed these strategies to confirm trustworthiness and they were woven into the research strategies outlined by Moustakas (1994) which served as the guide for my data collection, data analysis, and synthesis of findings processes.

## CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS

My study examined the lived experience of high school teachers who taught concurrent enrollment college courses on their high school campuses. The experience is heard through the rich descriptions from the voices of participants. In order to provide a context for their stories that describe this experience, I first introduce the site and the participants through short biographies. The biographies describe the participants' paths to the teaching profession and their interest in teaching concurrent enrollment courses. The next section presents the structures of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Through data analysis of the interview transcripts the following emerged as the structures that construct the phenomenon: *Instructional Quality, Passion, Commitment to Students, and Pride*. These structures describe the teachers' experiences as revealed in their interviews. The next section synthesizes of the textural and structural elements to provide a contextual description of the phenomenon. The chapter concludes with the meaning and essence of the phenomenon, *Balance within a Liminal Space*. The meaning and essence describe specific, transitional space between the secondary and postsecondary educational sectors where the participants teach college courses in their high school environments. The *liminal space* is an area of dissolved boundaries and blurred distinctions that describes well the unique position of concurrent enrollment as a place between high school and college that is really not one or the other, but a balanced compromise of both.

### **Introduction of the Site and the Participants**

The participants in this research study were high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment courses through Academy State College (pseudonym). Academy State College (ASC) is the primary public postsecondary institution in the region. The entire service area totals 28,300

square miles, exceeding the total area of West Virginia. The nearest other higher education institutions are two community colleges over 70 miles away. Four of the partner high schools are located in the same town as ASC; others are 50 to 200 miles from the College. The College's concurrent enrollment program focused on serving the academic acceleration needs of high school students within a multi-county service area, and provides lower division general education courses taught by approved high school teachers. All participating students are assessed to be academically prepared for college level study. They must meet minimum academic eligibility qualifications to participate in the courses: 3.0 minimum GPA and appropriate placement test scores established by the College and based on the specific course to be taken (see Appendix). This is a relatively common and traditional model for concurrent enrollment to provide educational acceleration opportunities for those students most likely to succeed in college-level courses (Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). School districts were required by state statute to pay students' tuition costs. State statute allowed school districts to maintain control over their budgets and limit their financial responsibility while maintaining legitimate access to district-paid concurrent enrollment tuition. Participating school districts in the ASC concurrent enrollment program paid the tuition for two courses per semester for qualified students; tuition for additional courses was the responsibility of the families. Student and their families were responsible for any course-associated fees and textbooks.

Instructor qualifications to teach in concurrent enrollment courses at ASC also conform to customary institutional practices; instructors must possess at minimum a master's degree with content expertise in the discipline. These requirements are generally established by the standards of higher educational accreditation bodies and are similar across the United States. Master's degrees in the discipline, such as mathematics or history, are not typically earned by high school

teachers; secondary school teachers are more likely to earn advanced degrees in curriculum, instruction, or leadership as they are the path toward advancement in schools and readily available to teachers. All study participants met the College's minimum requirements for instructor approval, although only half had graduate degrees in their academic discipline or a related field. The others possessed master's degrees in education-related fields. ASC's approval of concurrent enrollment instructors with master's degrees in education-related fields (not in the discipline) was an acknowledgement of the rural and remote aspects of the partner school districts where opportunities for teachers to earn discipline-focused graduate degrees is remote. All the participants were also licensed high school teachers and employees of their respective school districts. They held primary responsibilities to teach to the professional and curricular standards established by their school district boards and administrative leadership. Secondarily, they taught concurrent college-level courses in their high schools. Teaching concurrent enrollment courses earned no additional salary, and participants were still required to address all the state and school district curricular standards in their concurrent enrollment courses in order to ensure students earned dual credit.

Concurrent enrollment programs are one type of credit-earning transition program that provides accelerated learning options for students while they are enrolled in high school. Advanced Placement (AP) is the other popular acceleration option similarly targeting academically prepared students seeking to earn college credit. With Advanced Placement, college credit is awarded by colleges based on the results of an end-of-year standardized examination taken by students who have enrolled in a year-long high school preparation class. Typically there are no academic requirements for students to enroll in AP courses, nor a requirement for students to take the end-of-year examination, although not taking the



examination negates any opportunity to earn college credits upon college matriculation. Academy State's concurrent enrollment partner high schools have an eclectic set of experiences with Advanced Placement. The high schools where half of the participants teach do not offer any Advanced Placement course; all college credit options are provided through the concurrent enrollment. The other five participants teach in high schools that provide a combination of acceleration options which include Advanced Placement and concurrent enrollment courses. ASC partners with 14 high schools in providing concurrent enrollment; a total of six high schools are represented by participants in the study

The high schools that offer both AP and concurrent enrollment options experience enrollment patterns different from the high schools without AP options. High schools with only concurrent enrollment acceleration programs enroll all their scholastically strong students in the college credit courses. Those high schools with both AP and concurrent enrollment programs often enroll the highest ability students in AP courses, and those with above average ability choose to take the concurrent enrollment courses. An initiative sponsored by a private foundation to broaden the number of students participating in AP and taking the end-of-year examination has increased the competition between the two academic acceleration transition options and impacted the student population for concurrent enrollment. The initiative provided professional development funds for teacher training as well as fee waivers for students to take the final examinations. The result is a slight difference in student populations served by concurrent enrollment programs within this study.

### **The Participants**

The participants in this study taught concurrent enrollment college courses to students who met academic requirements established by the college. The lived experiences of the

participants are heard through their own voices as they were interviewed and described their experiences. A brief biography of each participant is provided to give the reader a sense of the individual's background and how each came to secondary-level teaching and the current role teaching concurrent college-level courses in the high school environment. All participants selected pseudonyms and their high schools were also assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. The participants' introductions are presented in the order in which they were interviewed.

**Jacob.** Jacob loves to write. He is a published author. First and foremost, however, he is a teacher. He really loves teaching and it shows in what he says and how he approaches his work and his students. Jacob has been teaching for 30 years and is eligible to retire, although he still has children in college so he continues to work. Jacob's path to teaching has been a straight one. He knew in high school that he wanted to teach and his objective never wavered. He changed majors from history to English and creative writing, but his focus has always been on secondary education. He has taught at the same high school his entire professional career and remains passionate about teaching. He had been teaching English part-time for Academy State College for several years before he started teaching the concurrent enrollment courses in his high school. He said he was the logical choice: "I was kind of natural" because he was already teaching the same courses at the college. Jacob's experience and involvement at ASC provide him with a unique position from which to view his concurrent enrollment teaching experience in comparison to his part-time college teaching position.

Jacob has both breadth and depth in his discipline; he writes fiction books and actively leads his department in curricular and instructional issues at school and district levels. He has deep understanding of English and composition, and has a master's degree in Writing. He is

senior in his department at Lincoln High School, and his three decades in teaching continue to stimulate his deep and critical thinking about teaching and learning and the role of the instructor in the matrix of education.

**Anne.** Anne was educated in a foreign country with degrees in mathematics and physics. Before becoming a math teacher, she worked for 25 years as an engineer and her professional career had been in engineering and engineering consulting. The 24/7 aspect of consulting for over nine years wore on her so that she opened herself to other opportunities and accepted a serendipitous offer to write mathematics textbooks. Anne spoke of following connections - “the other side of writing a textbook is understanding how the texts can work in the classroom” – and this led her to transition into teaching mathematics when the number of publishing contracts began to shrink and her partner retired. She was hired six years ago to teach mathematics at Truman High School – the only high school in a small, rural rising resort/declining agricultural community, located almost 100 miles from ASC. With the exception of one year of teaching while earning her master’s degree and teaching license, Anne has taught nowhere else. She credited serendipity with the opportunity to teach the concurrent enrollment courses; being at the right place with the necessary credentials when the former concurrent enrollment teacher was retiring and the economy was tightening, so she was the only logical choice to teach the “upper math classes” because she had the necessary credentials. Anne conveyed a high level of comfort with her teaching and her confidence was evident in her mastery of the subject and her instructional expertise.

**Coach.** Coach selected his name pseudonym easily because it’s what his students call him every day, “Coach.” In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he coaches two to three sports throughout the year and is heavily involved in the life of his school and community.

Coach lives and works in a small rural community that is relatively isolated and still heavily reliant on agriculture and ranching as its economic base. The high school is one of the central elements of the community: everyone in town attends the sporting events, and the teachers and coaches are respected and cherished members of the community. He had been teaching in his high school's concurrent enrollment program for seven years. The concurrent enrollment program at Johnson High School was one of the primary reasons he chose to work at Johnson: he noted, "What I saw here with the concurrent enrollment and the opportunities that it gave kids, and me having my own kids come up through that program...that was kind of a selling point to me." During college Coach spent two years on a church mission. Upon his return he decided to "get serious" and selected teaching as his profession. He taught at his hometown high school before taking on his current position at Johnson High School.

Coaching techniques are the key way Coach relates to his students – building and maintaining relationships with students that bring out their talents through high expectations and a focus on student development: growth model of teaching. "I'm more of a John Wooden type coach, ...rather than trying to get in somebody's face, ...but being more reserved is a lot more effective in the classroom and out of the classroom." He used and applied many coaching techniques in his teaching practice, and found that way of relating to students to be very effective.

**Randy.** Randy came to concurrent enrollment differently than most of the participants; he was not a full-time instructor, but served as the high school's guidance counselor and taught one concurrent course as an additional responsibility. Randy's path to teaching concurrent classes began when he worked as an admissions officer for a higher education institution. It was then that he developed an interest in acceleration options for high school students and

recommended pursuing the concurrent enrollment option when he was hired to be the guidance counselor at Truman High School, in a small rural community. Randy's perspective was different from other teachers. He had the opportunity to direct the program and initiate activity for the entire school. It was due to his influence that the high school moved enthusiastically into offering concurrent enrollment courses, including his own in the social sciences. Randy had a more global perspective on concurrent enrollment than many of the other participants. In addition to teaching a concurrent enrollment course, he also directed the program and was involved in both administrative and instructional aspects of the concurrent enrollment. This provided him with a view of concurrent enrollment outside the classroom alone.

**Elizabeth.** Elizabeth teaches mathematics at Kennedy High School which is located in the same town as Academy State College. She came to teaching after a career as an engineer, but had initially wanted to be a teacher when she was young; “in high school I told my dad I want to be a teacher and he said, ‘No, you don’t,’ and I said, ‘Yes, I do.’ He said ‘Okay. Well, if you want to be a teacher, then teach them something they will use.’ So I went to be an engineer first.” Her journey back to teaching after an engineering career, motherhood, and music was sudden and immediate. She received a phone call from a neighboring high school principal in need of a math teacher immediately. She started teaching there on an emergency teaching license four days later. Elizabeth referred her process of becoming a teacher as an apprenticeship: “I really have come in the back door.” She further commented on her on-the-job training process noting, “I figure you either pay with sweat or with blood, or both!” She saw her pathway to teaching as giving her a different perspective on the process and the outcome.

I think because I've come from the work world I have a different attitude than some of my teacher colleagues...I think I'm more willing to try out some different things. I feel like I've really had my college education on the job and

learning as I do it...I had a master's degree in mechanical engineering and so I have the mathematical background, but I had no pedagogical understanding.

She has used her school district's professional development resources to educate herself on the aspects of pedagogy and instructional methods that were not part of her professional engineering education.

Elizabeth's knowledge of instruction has been enriched through professional development activities that focused on new strategies, and she acknowledged that her expertise has at times limited her empathy for her students: "I think some of the best teachers are the ones who struggle in their content, to tell you the truth, because they have had to figure out it out and struggle." Math was easy for Elizabeth, but she brought to the classroom a heightened focus about who her students were and how they related to mathematics and learning because she has watched them struggle and discovered more about elements they are missing. She was excited to be the first in her high school to teach College Algebra in the concurrent enrollment program because of math's critical role in forecasting future academic success; as Elizabeth noted, "unfortunately, we are seeing [math] as the new civil rights. I don't want to be part of that gate. I don't want to do that. That's why I'm doing it in high school."

**Mary.** Mary is a gentle woman with a soft speaking voice that contains just a hint of her Southern background, even after living in the west for over 17 years. She has a quiet demeanor that overlays a strong will and tenacious spirit. She teaches mathematics at Adams High School, a small high school in a rural mountain town on the fringe of popular resort communities. She teaches all levels of mathematics to students in the 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. She has been involved in the concurrent enrollment program with ASC since it began in her school ten years ago.

Mary grew up in the South and probably had the most unique entry in to teaching of all the study participants. During her summer vacation following her high school graduation, Mary

received a call from the head of her high school math department asking Mary if she would be willing to teach math at her high school in the fall semester while the department head was away on maternity leave. Mary said, “I was good at math and enjoyed it, and so [the teacher] didn’t know who else could come do that. She didn’t know of anybody else. So I said ‘Yes’ very nervously... So I started out; I was very, very afraid.” She remarked that her faith in God guided her to embrace the teaching opportunity even though she was young and afraid. It truly changed her life and her future: “I went in there and had the best experience of my life! I really think God helped me... it was a wonderful experience... I thought, Okay, this is what I’m going to do.” Mary had never considered teaching before that summer opportunity, and she has never reconsidered her decision. She had been teaching for over 25 years and has been at Adams High for more than 17 years.

**JR.** At the time of our interviews JR was enrolled in a PhD program in Liberal Studies and his studies had enriched his instructional practices and they guided much of our interview about his teaching experiences. JR teaches English and its related content at Adams High School where he had taught for 18 years. JR joked that he was “a defector to the humanities” when he related his pathway into teaching. He began college as a veterinary science major and was nearly finished with his undergraduate courses when he began to ask questions and explore wider and deeper aspects of his discipline; “I got fascinated with that whole part of the history, the philosophy. And then the door just kept opening to the humanities; I said I need to go to the humanities because my education’s just not complete.” This led JR to complete a major in English and eventually earn a teaching license. JR had been teaching for close to 30 years and was deeply committed to the practice of teaching. He thought deeply about education and instructional issues from many different perspectives; as he noted, “I’ve always thought about

that [issue] from the administrative and the teaching angle. I can't help it. I'm always thinking of those angles, and I guess that's part of what more or less dragged me into teaching." He has been involved with the concurrent enrollment program for the past ten years with ASC and with another college for three years prior to that.

**Sally.** Sally is an exuberant woman. She laughs easily and enjoys her life as an English teacher. Sally had taught at Alexander High School, a small town, rural high school, for over 25 years and found real joy in teaching. Teaching was Sally's second career; prior to teaching Sally was a graphic artist in advertising in California. Her epiphany came in a wave:

I was always the person who taught on the job, who taught everybody else... And I came to the realization that everything I worked on ...eventually wound up in somebody's trash can...So then I decided I had to do something different, that I didn't want to spend my life creating rubbish... and I thought, well, I'd teach.... then I would be investing myself in something that hopefully would not wind up in somebody's trash can.

Sally had been teaching at Alexander High for about 10 years before she took over the concurrent enrollment English classes upon the retirement of a teacher colleague. She has embraced the challenge of the college-level instruction, as well as the opportunity to accelerate learning for ready students. She relished her concurrent enrollment courses and the boost they gave her in exploring her passion for writing. Sally had been teaching in the concurrent enrollment program with ASC for over 10 years and was one of four teachers in her high school approved to teach college courses. Her high school did not provide Advanced Placement courses; concurrent enrollment courses were the exclusive academic acceleration option available for students.

**Ted.** Ted became a teacher after service in the Marine Corps, although he knew he "was always helping other people understand different content and that kind of stuff, clarify it, put it into their own words... I've always been very organized, able to take directions, and create a step



by step kind of thing on how to accomplish them.” Ted considered several career options in college and fell into a teaching career after tutoring the college football team. He took the entrance exams for teacher education major and “then as I got into student teaching and stuff, it’s like I think I found my niche”. Ted taught at a remote rural middle school in another state before moving to his current community and another middle school teaching assignment. After four years there, he secured his current position where he teaches American Government and American History.

Ted has been teaching for 17 years, 12 of them at Kennedy High. He began teaching the concurrent enrollment American Government course three years ago and finds it an effective companion to the AP American Government and Comparative Politics courses he teaches, as well as an important acceleration option for many of his students. Kennedy High School is located close to the College allowing Kennedy students greater access to courses on the college campus, however, the condensed nature of the high school schedule makes getting to the college campus difficult for students. Access to a college course in the high school was a welcome option for students.

**Joe.** Joe grew up in the small rural farming and ranching community in which he now teaches. Similar to Anne and Elizabeth, Joe’s college and career focus was engineering when he graduated from Johnson High School. He smiled a shy grin when he related how he became a teacher.

At first when I went to college I was in Chemical Engineering. And then I got to thinking after I was done with the first semester...where would I live... I didn’t want to live in Texas and Saudi Arabia wasn’t a good option. And then I got to thinking if I change my major to math and then got an education endorsement on top of that, I could live wherever I wanted to live, so that’s one of the reasons I got into teaching. Plus it’s a pretty good life. I grew up with two teachers...My mom and dad are both teachers. My grandma and grandpa were both teachers. I

have quite a few aunts and uncles that were teachers. My brother's a teacher. My sister's a teacher... I had good examples that way.

Joe had been teaching high school mathematics for the past 19 years. He had an easy confidence with his role teaching concurrent enrollment for the past nine years. He benefited from the taking concurrent enrollment courses when he was a high school student, and he was eager to teach the college-level mathematics courses when he started at Johnson nine years ago. Joe was a big man but his demeanor was extremely gentle and relaxed. He coached girls' basketball in addition to his teaching role. Like other teachers at Johnson, Joe had an elite position in the small farming and ranching community. Joe had additional status in the community with his deep roots and involvement; Joe's parents both taught in Johnson and still lived there. Joe and his family lived on a multi-acre property right behind them.

These brief profiles of the participants are presented to lay a foundation for the experiences the participants described. They also provide a clear vision of the individual teachers who tell their stories of teaching concurrent enrollment courses in their high schools. The site of the study provides another contextual element to understand the experiences of the teachers involved. The setting and the biographies of the participants combine to provide an overall contextual description of the concurrent enrollment environment that was experienced by the participants in this study.

### **Concurrent Enrollment Teaching Structures**

The structures of teaching concurrent enrollment courses describe how the phenomenon was experienced. Four structures emerged from the initial analysis: *Instructional Quality*, *Passion*, *Student Commitment*, and *Pride*. Through analysis of the interviews with study participants, these structures emerged and they frame the phenomenon. This section presents each structure in the participants' voices.

**Instructional Quality.** The core of the concurrent enrollment experience is the college course itself: the college course delivered on the high school campus. High school students are able to enroll in a college-level course and earn both high school and college credit for successfully completing the course. There are elements of a college course that should be comparable across any delivery method or at any location and these constitute *college-level expectations* (italics mine). Across the interviews all participants articulated the college level expectations consistently. They identified the following fundamental elements of a concurrent enrollment course that comprise college-level expectations: college-level rigor, pace of instruction, grading structure, student self-advocacy, student responsibility for preparation, and student responsibility for learning. These fundamental elements, coupled with the objectives of the syllabus, constitute the college course experience which is provided no matter where, how, or by whom the course is taught. The interviews provided evidence of the participants' belief that the instructional quality of their concurrent courses met the College's curricular requirements. They also believed that their concurrent enrollment course enriched their students' educational experiences beyond what is provided on the college campus. These quality enhancements were attributed to the teachers' involvement with the students on a daily basis and over multiple years, as well as to the preparation and motivation of the students themselves. Teachers also noted their opportunity to build strong student relationships and provide more support to students was superior to that of college professors who do not have time or access to develop similar relationships with students. I refer to these two elements – college-level expectations and enhanced educational experience – as *instructional quality*. These elements are explored more fully in the words of the participants.

*College-level expectations.* There was a steadfast commitment by all participants to meeting the college-level expectations that are requisite with accepting the opportunity to teach a concurrent enrollment course. “I understand the expectations,” said Elizabeth, “because I want to do my job. I want to do it well, and so I do understand the philosophy that I need to implement.” Mary noted, “this level class, has always had really high expectations, whether we are doing this for dual credit or not. The expectations have always been pretty high...It’s so important to do it with as much as fidelity as you can.” The participants were very aware of the necessity to provide instructional rigor and expectations for student involvement comparable to those required on a college campus. As Sally remarked, “I never have any problems with the expectations that are put down for us by Academy State; I just read what they have to say and go ‘Okay, I do that’.” Anne, too, was quite clear about the elements of college work that are important in her math classes; for the college courses she expected “more homework, independent thinking, not necessarily a load more problems, but some independent study. I expect the students to realize they do need to go through whatever text we’re using themselves and come back in with good questions.” Jacob provided his perspective on the subtle yet distinctive differences between high school and college concurrent courses and the increased rigor and learning expectations;

The difference between a senior level high school class and a freshman level college class is not night and day, but that’s the shift ... High school to me is really about learning how to learn, and college is about taking those ‘learning how to learn’ skills to actually do interesting, important stuff...High school seems to be an awful lot about gathering or giving kids buckets of data. Your history class **is** about names and dates, and your English class often times **is** about rules. But the main function of college is not to memorize names and dates, but to discuss the meaning of names and dates: to analyze or argue or discover purpose and meaning in the information that we have and to further our knowledge.

Jacob's articulate description of the distinctions between his high school and college courses and how he addressed those instructionally spoke for several other participants and their perspectives of the differences;

There are two major changes to the ASC Composition class in the high school; one of them is just going in with the idea that this is a college class. That is a very nebulous thing, but it is significant. The college class – it just feels different to them. The second one is the level of material I'm giving them... [College course material] is theoretical, and that's not what they're used to.

Of critical importance were both the different environmental expectations and the context of the course materials as notable differences between standard high school classes and his concurrent enrollment courses.

These teachers understood the necessity to provide a course inside their high schools that would prepare their students for college by mimicking the academic college level experience. "I try to make it as high of an expectation as I know they will run into in some [college] classes," noted Sally. The commitment to maintain the comparable college pacing and instructional rigor was a common element for the participants. Ted's comments reflect a common perspective on the need for intentional intensity in the concurrent course;

I know it's my responsibility to push my [concurrent enrollment] classes because ... I would be doing them a disservice if they got into a sophomore class and had missed everything that they did before. Because they're getting both high school and [college] credit, the [concurrent enrollment] classes have to understand they've got to be pushed and that's my role as coach to push them to do a little bit more, learn better, learn deeper.

Anne voiced similar sentiments for her concurrent math course when she noted, "in the math courses I stick as closely as I can to the pacing that I defined at the beginning of the course to get through all the key aspects...I need for them to learn this stuff." This approach was different than how she teaches her high school courses which have more time for students to discover concepts through trial and error and exploration.

Joe focused on a key component in teaching concurrent courses to move students toward greater independent learning, what he called disequilibrium. His description speaks for others who noted the discomfort students feel as they experience new expectations for greater independent work;

I also think it's my job to make them experience disequilibrium, meaning they need to feel a little uncomfortable and try to struggle and do their thing without me telling them every step either. That's one of the big things. They're used to being spoon-fed information and it's always nice to say, 'Well, open your book and use the index and find it. You can read the book first before I tell you what to do'.

Ted shared that he has had to remind himself of the college expectations for student preparation. His teaching requirement for his regular high school sections required him to "spoon feed" much of the material to his students, "but with concurrent enrollment I find I break out the spoon and I'm getting ready to shovel... 'Wait, you should know this already.' So I back off and try not to not to be the personal valet," he shared with a grin.

Mary echoed the need for students to experience being unsettled and disquieted as a necessary part of taking the college course in order to realize their new learning responsibilities. The requirement for greater student independence was echoed by Randy; "My class is about critical thinking. My tests are designed around critical thinking. They have to prepare for the quiz, so there's the intent to study." Other teachers were equally supportive of the need for students to know how to study independently and speak up for themselves in their college courses. JR noted that colleges;

want those independent learners who advocate for themselves. I tell them... realize when you're in trouble. You go to the professor. Don't go home and cry to your parents. Go to the professor and say, 'I'm having trouble with blank. What do students do that helps them adjust? Don't go to the professor and say, 'Change your ways, I'm used to Mr. Jones or anybody else. No, you go to the professor... And chances are good the professor will say, 'Well, what have you done?' And ask for a little inventory, but that's what you should do.

Elizabeth, too, felt it was critical that students learned how to advocate for themselves by setting an example herself; “it’s me advocating initially, then maybe they’ll be more likely to go in and talk with a professor. I’m going to insist on it now so you can get used to it and do it when you get there.” Ted affirmed this when he remarked,

If [students] don’t question, or come in and get clarification, then ...they’re doing themselves a disservice. That’s another thing, as an instructor I constantly push them. Advocate for yourself. You don’t understand something, if you disagree with something, you gotta say something. Be respectful about it, but say something... There’s a lot of hand holding in high school. I try to encourage my classes to advocate, to find out answers for themselves. If you don’t know something, ask. You’re having a problem with your instructor, don’t just let it go; go talk to him.

Building college readiness through practice in the concurrent enrollment class was extremely important to the participants. They were united in their commitment to providing students with opportunities to build and practice the academic and personal skills needed to be successful in college. They also considered it vital that their students experienced college-like classroom interactions as preparation for postsecondary transition.

***Enhanced educational experience.*** Participants were keenly committed to their role in preparing students for the expectations of college study and course taking, as well as providing a college-like experience for student in their concurrent courses. They also recognized that there were aspects of their high school environment and their positions as high school teachers that afforded them opportunities for enhanced educational experiences for their students that would not be possible on a college campus. As Ted noted above, concurrent enrollment instructors are extremely accessible to their students because they see them every day and have developed relationships with students built over multiple years. Ted continued that “there’s a lot more individual interaction I think and I get to know the students better because I see them on campus...and knowing that I’m here all the time; this is my classroom.” Coach modestly boasted

that the students in his concurrent enrollment courses may learn “better because they’re using the same teacher they’ve had for four years...I think the relationship is an advantage. I don’t see it as a disadvantage.... I see it as a perk.” This was echoed by Joe when he described how well he already knows his students; “a lot of the kids that I’ve had, it’s my third year as their math teacher... You already know who they are.” And Joe’s students also have more access to him and his assistance;

every morning we have a study hall that’s from 8:00 to 8:30 ... as one of the core teachers, I have that time ... to help kids every morning. And the after school ... I can work with them for an hour and a half before I go to practice. We have kids use that. And that’s one thing where they have a support system, concurrent enrollment wise. I know a couple of kids really working hard where if it’s at a college setting, they might get lost. It’s a little bit more challenging to find those things [at the college].

Anne agreed that her high school students have greater accessibility to instructional support when she commented, “I pay particular attention to being available when kids get stuck or have problems, and I’m not sure that in a college environment professors have that luxury to be available as much.” The access that high school teachers have to students was a powerful and overarching positive support element for participants as they described their experiences. Participants acknowledged their expanded access to students as a luxury and an exception to the usual college experience of college instructors on a college campus.

As several of the teachers noted some of the enhancements of the concurrent enrollment courses come from the fact that they were offered on the high school campus during the regular high school day. These high school teachers were more available because students have class five days per week rather than the typical college schedule of two to three days per week. With more contact time with students, high school teachers were able to be involved with and witness more class work. Mary noted, “one thing nice about having class time to do that, you know the



kids are doing it. You're not just sending them out ...and maybe they're getting it all from somebody else." The benefits continue. Jacob's writing classes in the high school environment,

automatically has built in more time for practice with the teacher there – more 'over the shoulder time'. I'm not going to go in and lecture 5 days in a row. Wherein a class that only meets a couple of times a week, I'm more likely to be delivering more instruction because that's their time with me. And then a lot of the one-on-one stuff happens outside of the classroom. But in the high school that's hard to do because the kids have 8 classes every day. And there's no office hours for us that they can meet. There's a lot of homework in that class, too, but I have to be able to look over their shoulders and build in those one-on-one moments within the class time, otherwise I don't get them.

The amount of time teachers spent teaching was also seen as an enhancement for concurrently enrolled students. Mary questioned the time college professors can devote to certain instructional elements; "I wonder how much time the college professors have on the applications. Because I'll look at the pace of that, and I'll look at the number of applications involved. I feel like they're hitting and running." The time element, both in terms of time involved in teaching, as well as time spent with students, was a large part of the enrichment provided in the concurrent enrollment experience. Elizabeth felt her instruction in the high school was superior to that of the college because she was able to devote more time to target the instructional needs of her students and "fill the gaps" in their learning; "I can do a pretest and identify that they may be having troubles here. I don't think [college instructors] identify holes. ... I don't think that's part of what their experience is." She also believed she had the opportunity to shape the expectation students have about their own responsibility for class attendance and was determined to help students identify "where the responsibility lies. Because I think a lot of college professors say, 'This is optional. If you don't want to be here, don't. So come here if you want to learn.' ... that's where the attention is given." Elizabeth felt students were hearing the wrong message when it came to their responsibilities for learning, for attendance, and for preparing for class. She

was fierce in her defense of instructional activities that uncover the “hidden rules” of college so that students become aware of the potential traps as well as strategies to avoid them. She felt that attendance was one of those potential traps that students could avoid, particularly when taking the course in the high school environment where attendance is mandatory and monitored.

The instructional benefits of the concurrent courses were not limited to the instruction and access to faculty. Ted identified another important functional element of the high school-based college course that was common for all the participants;

another good thing about being in the high school is they’ve got that constant feedback with their grades so they always know where they are...I know that’s not always the case with universities. I try my hardest if I take up an assignment to try and get it back...by the next day so they get that almost immediate feedback.

The simple convenience of the college course offered on the high school campus was a significant positive aspect for Ted’s students who attend high school in the same town as ASC; “we know ...that it’s kind of a struggle to get back and forth...[concurrent enrollment] is a benefit to them because they’re here already.” For other participants who live in communities distant from ASC, the concurrent enrollment course taught on the high school campus provided one of the only ways their students could access college coursework.

Jacob and JR both teach writing and composition. They both enhanced their concurrent writing courses with additional expectations and assignments beyond the standard college course, and students were aware of this. Noted JR, “they know the reputation of the class: that you’re going to write more papers than you will ever write in a college classroom in one semester.” Jacob confirmed this perspective in his own concurrent course instructional practice;

the act of writing – not when you’re creating an essay – will be how you begin to shape that material into something that is a part of who you are, right? You’re not going to get it just by listening to lectures, and taking notes and taking tests. I mean if you really want to learn, writing is an amazingly powerful tool to help

you learn. So that is kind of one of the agendas of the Freshman Composition class is how do we give our students writing skills necessary for them to write the kind of papers they need to be able to write in college, but also how do we use writing as a tool to help them with learning.

Increased rigor, often more rigorous than the college norm, was a prevailing comment from the participants as they discussed their concurrent enrollment course. Mary said, “I think I’m giving more homework than they [college professors] give... I think I’m doing more of the deeper problems.” Sally, whose composition course is jokingly called “Suicide English” by students because it is so considered so difficult, noted “I was having students come back to me and say, ‘I can’t thank you enough.’ They tell me that college writing is like a piece of cake.” Sally’s comments summarized the experience of the participants when she noted,

I try to make it as high of an expectation as I know they will run into in some classes. And then often times they’ll tell me...after they go to college that my class was so much harder than what they ran into in college.

These teachers often hear from their students after they have graduated and gone onto to college. Randy related stories the positive effects concurrent enrollment, but all participants talked about the decisive benefit for students taking the concurrent college courses. Randy articulated it most directly.

Our retention rate in college for kids who go on is extremely high, and the one thing that all of the kids credit is taking concurrent classes: everyone to 100%. When I see them after they’ve left, coming back over Christmas break, and I’m chatting with them, the one thing that they tell me over and over, and this is everyone. ‘The college concurrent classes prepared me like no other for college. I learned how to read. I learned how to take notes. I learned how to study for the first time. I just couldn’t get by’... What they tell me is, ‘I’m in my classes and all these kids are flunking ‘cause they’re not studying and I know how to study and I know how to manage my time.’

The value of the exposure to rigorous college-level instruction and the opportunity to learn and practice personal management skills that are required to be successful in college was a significant and important aspect of the concurrent course.

Participants articulated their strong commitment to student learning as well as the added benefits they believed were provided to their students as a result of enrolling in the concurrent courses in the high school. The educational enhancements that were identified by participants included the time-built relationships with students, the continuous feedback on assignments and grades, increased homework and performance expectations, and course reputation.

***Prepared students.*** The high academic ability of the students taking concurrent courses was a recurrent dimension when the participants talked about their teaching experiences. In order for students to participate in ASC's concurrent enrollment program they needed to meet certain academic prerequisites: 3.0 minimum GPA and appropriate qualifying test scores (see Appendix). This meant that the students enrolled in the concurrent courses were well prepared and selected to participate and be able to meet the academic challenge. "We've been really good at selecting the right kids for our programs," noted Randy, "we make sure that it's the right fit for them before they take these courses." Anne shared similar thoughts on the students who enroll in her concurrent courses. She remarked that the "students who sign up for the concurrent courses are a lot more driven than their peers. They're more interested in what they're learning. They realize the outcome isn't just the high school graduation. There's more beyond it." Her observations were supported by Randy's observation "that through the self-selection these are the right kids for the class and I think if you had a cross section of all kids you wouldn't have that distribution of grades on the high end." "We get the top of the line kids in dual credit," said Mary, "so they're more likely to get the As, Bs and Cs...The dual credit kids are taking care of business so they rarely fail." Sally, too, commented on the caliber of the students who take the concurrent enrollment courses; they tend to be the students

who have the desire or who are truly gifted and talented... I know I'm a little maybe more strict than what some of the professors have shared with me at ASC,

but at the same token, they're not dealing with all these classes of high achieving students. I imagine the kinds of students I have in my Freshman Composition classes are the kinds of students that ASC professors think of when they teach 300- and 400-level English classes.

The teachers recognized that their concurrently enrolled students were different from their regular group of high school students, and that they were also different from the mix of students enrolled in those courses at the College. The concurrent enrollment students were better prepared and more committed to the higher expectations of the concurrent courses. Sally framed her experience with the class her students called Suicide English thusly; "I have higher expectations on the writing... They know what they have to do, and they do it and get As. Okay. End of story!" JR shared that in his Freshman Composition class he has students enrolled who plan to complete the AP exam at the end of the year, as well as those enrolled for college credit. The level of student preparation and engagement is extremely high. He reported that "with Advanced Placement blended with dual credit both sets of students work harder than they work in most classrooms. Both sets of students will get more homework than either version." The concurrent classes themselves also carry a reputation or mystique that fosters its own tension for students.

According to Jacob;

A lot of what creates the environment is expectations when kids come in the room. I've been doing Freshman Composition for ...four years now. And every year I've been pleasantly surprised by our kids at Lincoln who come into the class who really feel - although it's the same school, same building, and it's me - that they're in a college class now. And that is ... world moving in a lot of ways. I don't have kids come in and think, 'oh, this is just another high school class. I can blow this off.' They all come in kind of scared [with] high apprehension.

The concurrent courses, together with the instructional commitment from the teachers and the high academic ability of the students created an environment of expectation and performance that participants felt equaled and exceeded the same courses offered on the college campus. Teachers made every effort to provide an educational experience in their high school

classrooms comparable to the college-based course as they also balanced high school and college instructional expectations. They also believed that the relationships established with students permitted students to experience greater rigor and greater instructional support in the high school-based course than they would have found in a college environment.

**Passion.** In the book *To Sir, With Love* the lead character, Mark Thackeray, takes a teaching position in a poor, urban neighborhood where crime is rampant and school is a little more than a holding pen for adolescents on their way to adulthood and a continued life of poverty and low expectations. Thackeray, a trained engineer, accepts the teaching position but considers it no more than a temporary position until he is able to find a job in his field. His drive to help his students find self-respect and prepare them for adult lives after they leave school provides Thackeray with the opportunity to positively affect others and ultimately accept his talents as teacher and mentor. Thackeray must overcome the students' resistance and apathy, and embrace his passion to teach. This book dramatizes the experiences of teaching, but it accurately portrays the passion and commitment for teaching and learning that many teachers embody in their daily teaching careers. This kind of passion for teaching emerged from the voices of the participants.

Passion is the second structure to emerge from my data that describes the experience of concurrent enrollment teachers. Passion describes the power and the purpose for these individuals to teach. Participants were motivated to provide instruction and support for students to grow in knowledge of the subject taught, but also to grow in self-knowledge and as individuals. Passion conveys the strong emotions that participants conveyed in their interactions as teachers. Passion consisted of two dimensions: the passion for teaching, and the passion for

their discipline or content focus. Participants conveyed their passion in both of these areas and the necessity for balance between the two.

*Passion for teaching.* These teachers truly enjoy teaching. It was infused in all interviews with all participants. Some, like Jacob and JR, had thought considerably about the act of teaching and the practice of education and were effusive in their expression. Others talked more specifically about their own pathway to teaching and their personal teaching practice. All were passionate practitioners and avid teachers who focused intensely on student learning. Over half of the participants had been teaching for almost 20 years; their long careers support their keen interest in teaching. Sally's changed her entire career after assessing her talent and passion for teaching. She wanted to do something lasting. As she said,

I'm there to teach. I think it's a great job, but it's hard... I love to teach writing because I tell my students that if they really desire to change the world, words come out of people's mouths and they run through the room and people hear them and then they're gone. But when you can write and write powerfully, you can change people's minds about things.

Ted, too, looked toward his natural talents when he was in the military to guide him to his teaching career; "I was able to understand how everything worked and have fun with it and teach others ... how to understand some of the lessons they were teaching us in a better way." Inspired by his own teachers, Jacob decided in high school that he wanted to be a teacher "because I had spectacularly interesting teachers in high school who were inspirational and made the classroom experience interesting and fun and made the material interesting and fun, and I wanted to be able to do that for other people." His initial experiences teaching greatly influenced his perspectives on teaching and reaching students, even reluctant students. Like so many of the other participants, Jacob found his goals in teaching were much broader than the providing "buckets" of information and facts; the goal of teaching,

is to show students that writing is a way to learn the contents of their own mind and to create contents in their own mind. And that writing is not a tool. Its primary function ... is really for self-discovery, and it is where learning what you need to learn comes from. It's a place where you discover stuff about yourself.

Clearly, the passion for teaching expressed so well by Jacob and felt by other participants reached well beyond ensuring students had the facts and skills necessary to meet the curricular requirements. It contained wishes and aspirations for students to develop as individuals, to assist them in growing their lives and knowing themselves; similar, in fact, to the passion demonstrated by the teacher protagonist of *To Sir, With Love*.

For Randy the power of the teacher was central to the success of concurrent enrollment courses; "it's not the name of the class and it's not the title of the program. It's the instructor who provides rigor in the course. I think the instructor is critical." Others concurred that "it's the teacher's response to what's going on in the classroom that makes the class." Jacob's comments highlight the importance of teacher engagement and the power of the teacher's passion and position;

The curriculum just does not matter. All that matters is the teacher. We can write a brilliant curriculum, but if the teacher just sucks, the class sucks. The learning sucks. The kids don't get anything out of it. Regardless of how hard the teacher tried to follow the curriculum, if they cannot connect to kids, if they don't love the material in some way, if they can't motivate, they can't communicate... I had a student teacher two years ago who was straight A's in all of her classes, but could not talk to kids. She did everything she was supposed to do. The curriculum didn't save her. We needed a good teacher. And that seems to me where the emphasis should be.

Jacob described his perspective on teaching that emphasized the responsibility he has for student learning that goes beyond the content of the course itself. It encompasses the specific learning needs of individual students and the teacher's responsibility to assess and then address the identified needs.



When I start a high school class, I start off thinking it's kind of like a college class: I have material that I need to cover. It's exciting. I'm going to give it to you. But pretty soon I discover who else in the class needs other lessons. So when I give first assignment and out of 30 kids, 20 turn them in, I've just identified 10 who I need to work on the life skill of timeliness, or maybe planning, or organizing their priorities. And depending upon the kid, they end with a ... more personalized curriculum, and sometimes it's not about English. I'd be a pretty sad and poor high school teacher, I think, that if I thought my main job was to present material.

Other participants, too, shared their thinking about the role of a teacher in educating the whole student. JR's thoughts went beyond his individual teaching challenges to the wider realm of education and standards;

Call it a 'field of dreams' fallacy that if we require it, they will grow... I think there are some students who will grow with the higher expectations, but I think, this is the loss of the sense of a reality that we have natures; that we have natural abilities that are often different and dispersed differently. One of the confusions that is behind this is that we assume that there is no natural ability, there is no human nature, in whatever contours that you plant, but somehow if you just change the specifications, the material will fit that mold. That's confusing malleable metal with a human being, and those are two different things.

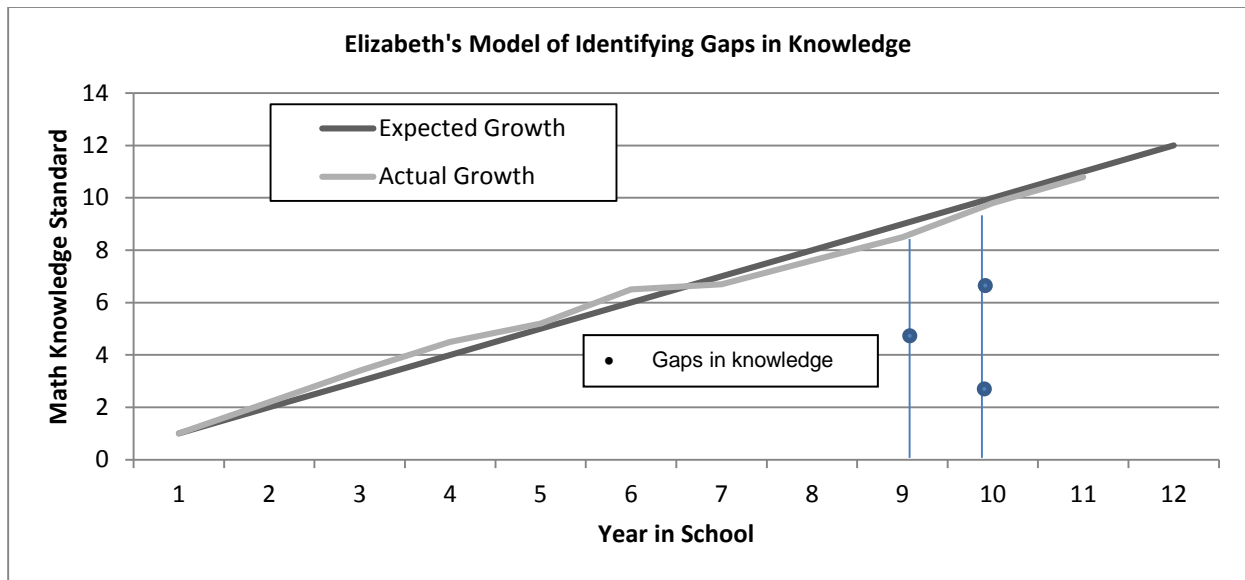
Again, the teacher's responsibility for student learning and passion for teaching went beyond the curricular requirements of student skill building and knowledge acquisition; it encompassed significant elements of students' personal development and growth.

Elizabeth's perspective differed from the other participants because of the alternative approach she took to obtaining her teaching license, coming from a career in industry and not through a traditional teacher education program. She had a more purposeful approach to pedagogy as that was a concept she was actively developing. Elizabeth's knowledge of instruction has been enriched through professional development activities that focused on new strategies, and she acknowledged that her expertise had at times limited her empathy for her students until she was able to see beyond her own comfort area: "I think some of the best

teachers are the ones who struggle in their content, to tell you the truth, because they have had to figure out it out and struggle.” She believed she was

more willing to try out some different things because that doesn’t make sense to do that...I had no idea that there are seven different facets of fractions. When people say, ‘kids don’t get fractions.’ Which variety? Which facet are you talking about? That makes sense to me now. So that is my responsibility, I think, to help. Go out and find out how to help that student.

She focused on the importance of her students learning the crucial material that she teaches, referring to mathematical understanding “next civil right.” Elizabeth talked about her students’ mathematical understanding and her responsibility for their learning; “Kids come to us and they know procedure and they can just follow, but they don’t know the understanding. I need to bridge that.” She believed her role in teaching was to do everything in her power to identify gaps in student learning and then fill them. She stated concisely, “they have holes. They’ve been absent. They haven’t made connections. My job is to fill those. It’s very challenging, but I have to do that. Otherwise, they may not see that mathematical beauty.” She drew a chart (Figure 1) that illustrated this concept of student knowledge gain and their gaps in learning and conceptual understanding.



**Figure 1.** Illustration of Elizabeth’s conceptual description of students’ knowledge gaps.

Anne shared a similar perspective on flexibility she must employ to meet the specific learning needs of each different class; “sometimes I’ll change what I’m teaching to race ahead and then come back because I just sense that they can get through this part by themselves. And I’ll do that at all levels not just with concurrent.” JR, too, was focused on the connections that students need to make in learning in order to move forward. He shared his perspective on his own connections between ideas and people;

I care about people and I care about ideas. I care because ideas can make or break a person, and the way they see connections and they see the way some ideas are helpful and some are a waste of time. Those two points just come together in teaching and I constantly learn new things about how to care about ideas and care about people and how those work together.

For Anne the importance of her teaching was to ensure students were learning deeply, and they were also able to explain their thinking; she explained that her background in industry taught her the importance of knowing why an answer is correct and understanding the concept that supports the answer. She challenged her students to go beyond the derived answer to be able to articulate their thinking behind their answers;

It's not the answer I'm interested in... It doesn't do any good if you go to the VP and ask for \$250,000 to do a project and the first question out of the VPs mouth is 'Why? How? What's your justification?' ... You have to be able to explain why.

For Anne and for all the other participants the passion for teaching students emerged abundantly throughout their interviews. They have thought deeply about their roles as teachers. Sally and Coach were unequivocal in their perspectives as teachers. Coach's avid explanation of his teaching objective candidly described what many of the participants felt.

My primary focus with students is not Biology; it's developing students; and secondary is Biology. I get to teach them Biology, but in the same environment, in the same classroom, I get to talk to them about other aspects of life, leadership, different things like that. That is what is most important.

And Sally noted that her role was to aid in students' success and learning, not to trick or trap her students; "I don't play dirty pool. I've never been able to get any joy out of that ... That's not what I'm teaching for. I'm teaching for knowledge, mastery, expertise, style."

Teaching was of primary importance to all the participants. They all continue to teach because they love it. Joe and Jacob both noted that each day teaching provides something new and unexpected; "it's never the same day twice," said Joe. Joe noted, "It's a rewarding job. It's different than building something. During the school year it's a longer process. You don't see the instant reward; it's a neat deal." Mary shared the personal validation she gets from teaching.

The biggest thing that sticks in my mind in regards to teaching is when I do give those problem solving days and I have a kid succeed with something very, very difficult and they did it because they persevered through it... and I see the smile on their face like, 'Yeah, I'm something!' (laughter) I think that really just fills me up right there."

The passion for teaching was apparent in every participant. They saw their role in teaching stretch beyond instruction in the subject to skill building and problem solving and opportunities to help students develop mastery, leadership, and personal growth and self-

knowledge. They clearly enjoyed their work and their interactions with students. Their excitement in teaching students was demonstrated in their intense focus on student learning and their quest to identify and serve the educational needs of all students and prepare them for their futures. All participants were passionate practitioners and avid teachers who focused intensely on student learning.

*Passion for the discipline.* The participants truly cared deeply about teaching and their impact on students; they also shared their passion for their disciplines. They were ardent as they discussed the subjects and courses they teach. In our interviews they enthusiastically shared details of their learning plans and strategies of instructional frameworks for their varied subject areas. I often found myself stretching to remember algebraic concepts, psychological theories, composition rules, etc. as the participants described significant elements of their concurrent courses. Anne was effusive as she discussed the mathematics pathway for students at Truman High School. She outlined the courses beginning with Geometry in middle school and ending in Calculus for the most prepared students. Her zeal about mathematics and teaching prompted her to explore other ways of presenting mathematical concepts; “I was curious about whether or not my syllabus actually uses words in a way that emphasizes what’s important ... using just my syllabus, throwing it into Wordle [a graphical representation software program], and seeing what came out.” When I asked Anne about the Wordle graphic, she explained that the program displays the number of times a word is used in a document through the size of the font; the most abundantly used word is the largest in the Wordle graphic; the next largest word is the next most frequently used, etc. Anne found the use of this alternative evaluation of her syllabus an important tool in ensuring what was most important in her curriculum was also the focus of her syllabus. She wanted to sync her words with her actions. The actual document is displayed in



beauty in the mathematics. There's infinity, it has a beauty in itself...so I hope they grasp some of those things and think Whoa! Wow! That's just a puzzle. And not always think, Oh, I've got to use it. I don't think that's all math is for... No, there's something beautiful about it. It's in the creation of it. That's what I mean by the beauty.

Anne and Elizabeth also both commented on the innate beauty of mathematics and the power it held for them, as well as for their students. Anne wanted students to “see beyond numerical calculation, see into the reasoning, and being able to think mathematically, and then into metacognition. Are you aware of what's happening, and what you are thinking?” These statements of zeal about their subjects were deep and intense. They displayed an excitement and eagerness that bubbled up in our conversations and continued to excite the participants.

The passion participants expressed about their subject matter was almost always interwoven and balanced with their teaching. The two were inextricably linked together. It was often difficult to separate the participants' passion for the subject from their passion for teaching. Jacob used writing to help his students discover more about themselves and their world; “

If you really want to learn, writing is an amazingly powerful tool to help you learn. So one of the agendas of the Freshman Composition class is how do we give our students writing skills necessary for them to write the kind of papers they need to be able to write in college, but also how do we use writing as a tool to help with learning.

Jacob described writing as a useful tool for learning and he also described writing as a means of self-exploration and personal development, interweaving the utilitarian nature of the skill development with his passionate appreciation for the writing itself. JR keenly discussed the necessity to balance focus on the discipline with attention to pedagogy; “college has gotten better, but has erred on the side of content and not enough strategy. High schools, conversely, have tended to err the other way: too much focus on strategy and not enough on content,” and he

advocated for increased rigor and challenging resources to equalize the instructional environment.

The passion for the subject matter was always balanced by the passion for teaching. Sally's description of a personal idyllic moment summarizes the feelings about the teaching experiences of the study's participants;

I do it [teach concurrent courses] because it's where I get my satisfaction. And you know what? Reading those papers, this is the whole thing. Sunday afternoon... [my husband] watches football...especially if it's snowing outside. This is when it's really good. I get a little cup of tea and I go sit in the corner by the window and I can spend all afternoon reading those papers. And you know what? It's not a chore because they are doing what I have taught them they need to do. Oh, I love it. It's great. That's what I was probably meant to do.

The study participants all expressed their continual dual passions for their discipline and for their teaching. Teaching the concurrent enrollment course gave them the opportunity to share their subject matter expertise with students capable and interested in deeper exploration of the content. Never lost, however, were the participants' excitement and commitment to teaching, especially when they took on the role of college instructor and guide to college-level expectations and college-like academic experiences.

**Commitment to Students.** It may seem obvious that teachers express a commitment to students; we assume that because it's their job and the reason they are in the teaching profession; however, that assumption is based on society's expectation of who teachers are and why they teach. The participants were teachers who demonstrated a sincere commitment to students, and they voiced this throughout the interviews. They expressed a genuine regard for high school students, understood and appreciated the developmental process they were experiencing, worked to establish learning environments where students felt safe to be vulnerable in their learning, and felt an obligation and duty to students and their learning.



Randy was probably the most direct in his expression of outright pleasure in working with high school-aged students. He teaches concurrent enrollment courses and is also the guidance counselor. As the counselor in his small, rural high school, he is responsible for guidance and counseling for both middle and high school students.

I see them when they're still running around like elementary school kids, at the beginning of their sixth grade year...they're still running around playing tag and goofy. And then by eighth grade they're starting to clique out and hang in other groups, getting ready for high school. And then in high school they're doing their things, whatever it is, but I get to influence them every year... I like having conversations with kids that talk and tell me what they think. I love high school because you get those conversations. They're pretty blunt, and they're pretty open, but I love having dialog with people that are thinking and acting and doing and having reasons for what they choose to do and they can articulate that.

Coach was also thrilled about the opportunities he had to shape and create relationships with his students in the classroom and on the field; "I'm not just involved with them as a teacher, but I've got some of them as sophomore players or wrestlers. You just see them every day. There's definitely a different relationship." He felt his coaching philosophy was an additional way to connect with and influence his students;

there's different ways to get people to perform ... I've found that rather than trying to get in somebody's face, being more reserved is a lot more effective in and out of the classroom. There's definitely a lot of coaching techniques that apply in the classroom.

Sally, too, found the relationships she built with her students to be a special part of her teaching experience; "they've been stuck in my classroom for four years. They don't say 'stuck' [laughter]. Aren't you tired of looking at me? 'No' is the response. I know them so well. They'll just talk and I'll listen and they know that." Joe expressed his delight in working with students. When asked what motivates him to go to work each day, he replied, "the kids do. They're fun. It's never the same day twice. Even though I'll be teaching the same topic, every time you walk in the room, you've got a different group of kids in front of you." When asked if he ever got

tired of teaching the same course year after year, Jacob shared a similar sentiment to Joe's; when someone asked him, "you've been teaching the sophomore composition for 30 years, that's not repetitive? Nope! Every day is different...It never grows old. It's never the same experience twice." Elizabeth afforded students a prestigious place in her professional world; "my apprenticeship has included learning from students. What better teachers are there?"

Participants recognized the importance of their relationships with students. These were aspects of teaching that were invigorating, refreshing, and significant to the participants' continued interest in teaching. Their relationships built with students over time were seen as valuable and beneficial to the students, as well as to the teachers who achieved tremendous satisfaction and joy from engaging with students, contributing to their development, and sharing their own passion for their subject.

***Recognition of developmental process.*** The participants expressed an appreciation for the unique developmental process their students undergo during the high school years. The lessons they must teach went beyond the subject matter. Life skills, study habits, and self-knowledge were all necessary lessons outside the curricula that teachers felt obligated to provide. Randy shared his objective for students to incorporate subject knowledge into their own lives, "it's great to know all the theories, but what does psychology mean to you personally? How can you take information, apply it to yourself so you can do something that will improve something you're not happy with about yourself?" Jacob spoke for most of the participants as he clearly voiced his responsibility for student learning when he said,

I have a job in high school to help kids who maybe aren't adult learners yet to become adult learners. And that may mean working very much on these non-English skills, but very strongly academic and workplace skills. A lot of these are maturity issues. Kids who can't focus isn't because they're mean or evil; they're just immature. They just don't recognize that this is not an appropriate time to be doing this other thing, so I have to help them with that. It's a process. It's not just

a lesson. Maturity is hormonal and all these other things, so I have to be patient. And sometimes I wait them out... I may have some of that still in a college class. I can be helpful in those other areas when I need to. I just don't have to "need to" as often in the college class.

Sally's experience and perspective was similar in her patience with the developmental position of her students; "I'm still dealing with 16-year olds developmentally. Sometimes I have to stand there and just wait. And finally they turn around. So then I start and life is good." Coach, too, noted the substantial differences in the maturity levels and experiences of his students; "It's a fact that there's an age difference... I look at where the sophomores are coming from as opposed to where the seniors are... Okay, these sophomores that are coming in are slightly terrified of the whole experience!"

Jacob told a story that contrasted his approach to developmental approach to student learning with that of a colleague regarding the power of the assignment to teach appropriate lessons. The contrast between the two approaches highlighted the depth of understanding Jacob had about his students, their motivation, and their developmental trajectory. I include the entire story as he told it because of the richness of the description.

My attitude about late work and homework and makeup and redoes is I give every kid every opportunity to do all of that. I have 18 weeks. If I'm working with you on the last day to help you to learn and you demonstrate the learning, I'm going to give you the credit for that. I'm not going to take points off because it was late, you know, a day late; a week late; month late. I don't care. Time is my factor here because... you've demonstrated you are not completely academically prepared in terms of your work habits. That's what we've been working on, okay? So you finish the class. It was a major pain for you because you had to do all this stuff late. I was all over you to do it. Your parents were probably all over you. Maybe you got support personnel involved. There's a consequence of not doing things in a timely manner, and hopefully when you get in your next class, you'll realize you don't want to put yourself in that position again, right? That's maturing. That's what they're doing.

But there are teachers in the high school who believe they are already college teachers. And they believe that what a college teacher is is that teacher I had who presents material and all the responsibility for everything is on the student side

and all the consequence is also on the student side. So there are teachers in the high school who say, 'If that paper doesn't come in on time, I'm not taking it. No credit. Zero. Sorry.' And their argument is ... that if you let a kid turn in a paper late and give them full credit, that the real world doesn't work that way. That if you come in late to work, you'll be fired. And I say, well, you know, I agree that if you come in late to work you'll be fired, but do you know who the very best fast food workers are in my classrooms? The kids who are not turning in their work; who are not timely. They know the difference between work and a class, right? There's no carry-over. There's no kid who comes in late to McDonalds and says, 'I was late today because my English teacher let me hand in papers late.' They're not related at all! And to me, the paper that she won't take then becomes a lesson the kid now is denied the chance of ever learning. And in my class I WANT them to learn the lesson. We've got to teach timeliness, right? And I'm all over you because you're not timely, but you've got to do this paper. There are valuable things in this paper that you will learn if you do this paper. Do the paper.

Joe was succinct in his summation of the developmental process he experienced with his students; "it's neat to see them mature. See what they walk in the door as freshmen, and then see how they walk out the door as seniors. It's amazing the growth and maturity." The participants expressed the understanding of their role to support students through their developmental growth process and the strong influence that process has on students' abilities to learn and succeed. Students in the concurrent enrollment courses may be more mature than their peers, but the instructors still voiced the need to support and provide opportunities for student growth and skill development in supportive and academically challenging environment. They considered this support and instruction one of their key duties and responsibilities regardless of the grade level or academic ability of their students. They also considered it vital to balance developmental needs of their students with the higher education expectations for student independence within their concurrent enrollment courses.

***Environment that supports risks.*** One of the necessities for students to learn best was the opportunity to experiment with new learning in ways that exposed students' academic vulnerabilities. The participants were keenly aware of their role in creating safe learning

environments that allowed students to “play in the applications” as Anne liked to phrase the activity of experimentation and exploration that she encouraged in her classes. Other participants were equally adamant about the necessity to help students feel safe in their learning. They thought this freed students to ask questions and create connections between complex and abstract concepts. Elizabeth noted she needed to, “help the kids ask questions and make it safe for them to not know. I really want kids to have the option to take the class just for high school credit ... some kids need to see it twice.”

Randy shared, “it’s not a catch game. I don’t see it that way. I mean grades can be used for all sorts of reasons. It’s not a power game with me; it’s learning.” Anne voiced a similar perspective as she described her strategies for opening up students’ reluctance to try:

One of my main concepts is that students feel comfortable ponying up their thoughts. It’s that nothing is ever wrong. It’s ‘Well, that’s interesting,’ ‘Let’s see, how did you come upon that approach?’ ‘Why?’ ‘How about if we did this?’ ‘How about if you think about this differently or we did this differently? ...to get them back on track, but it’s not wrong. I think in general math is a very fragile subject and I have to be gentle.”

This concept of safely exploring new knowledge without risk or penalty was voiced by so many of the participants as they talked about their teaching strategies. Mary spoke for many of the participants when she described how she ensured that her students felt safe as they experienced the “disequilibrium” of facing radically new concepts.

On problem solving days I set it up so the kids are willing to risk it. I say you’re going to get all your points for today under the conditions that you are working your tail off, you are thinking like crazy, and you’ve got to work, work, work the whole time. And they do. If the problem is so frustrating, they keep trying instead of giving up.

The idea of creating a risk-free zone for learning was a central element for the participants in their desire for student learning and growth. This dovetailed with the participants’ focus on

student development, broadening their learning goals beyond knowledge acquisition to encompass personal development.

One of the key elements expressed by participants was the need to open students' learning options by removing barriers that restricted their desire to risk in order to learn. Decreasing the students' vulnerabilities was one of the aspects of the participants' commitment to and their genuine regard for their students. Creating a safe environment for students to experience discomfort and explore new concepts was central to the teachers' ability to build student confidence and open up learning opportunities. They recognized barriers that kept students from integrating their learning into deeper understanding and provided opportunities for students to test their limits and integrate their knowledge.

**Responsibility.** The participants expressed a sense of duty to teach the whole student and to use education as a tool for student advancement and empowerment. Their perspective on teaching focused on students and their pathways to the future. They felt a responsibility to help them grow. Concurrent enrollment courses were one of the ways that students could advance successfully, but not the only way. One of the most culturally sensitive responses came from Elizabeth as she explored concepts of cultural capital and her position as a gateway to knowledge and to the power that knowledge provides. Her statement that math knowledge is the “new civil rights” spoke powerfully of her position;

I'm committed to our minorities, our women. You know, I'm trying to learn. I'm such a middle class person, and I have a culture, and I do not yet understand a culture of poverty, but I want to get those kids [to college]. In America we have that opportunity. We're the only ones keeping us out of that, but I don't want math to be a gatekeeper that keeps kids from succeeding.

Elizabeth and JR spoke zealously about offering options for students, all students, to move them to successful futures. Elizabeth explained widening the conversation to open other pathways for

students, “maybe college isn’t for you, but maybe welding is. Go find what is right for you, and know that it’s not because you’re unable to. It’s about working and knowing the ‘rules’ and knowing when to call for help.” JR, too, talked about the power of education to provide future options for students beyond the college-bound track, and the responsibility teachers and schools have in preparing students for their potential futures;

I believe we should educate all our students with a quality education so they can go to college if they want to. I think we send local students the wrong message that somehow if they’re going to stay and raise a family, or work at a local business, and they decide not to go to college, that somehow they’re less valuable. When we send that message, we turn them off just about everything we try to teach. If we send the message that there’s a whole lot of what people get to learn in college that is worthwhile if you get a chance, and there are ways for you to learn it, even as a local worker, even as mother. What starts to happen is those students become more interested in college.

He expressed his concern for students lacking literacy skills, those students at the other end of the educational continuum from concurrent enrollment, noting that remedial education had been a passion of his for many years; “what do we do with a student who’s now in 9<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but they’re still at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level?” His concern for those students in the face of increased and more rigid curricular and achievement standards was shared by Elizabeth who also voiced distress at the evolution of education that appears to be leaving some students out.

Participants expressed their personal responsibility to assist students in their learning and knowledge acquisition. They articulated the cultural and social importance of knowledge and education as a key to students’ future access to and success in higher education, and considered the attainment of that knowledge to be their professional responsibility. The sense of responsibility to students extended beyond the concurrent enrollment courses and into all courses participants taught.

*Respecting relevance.* The participants spoke of their challenge and responsibility in reaching students with knowledge that met their developmental needs and was relevant to their lives. Elizabeth realized how much she needed to make the learning relevant to her students so they allowed themselves to learn it. Her duty to student learning was central to her identification as a teacher;

if you're going to learn something you do need to know when it's going to be relevant. When I first started teaching, a student asked me, 'When am I ever going to use this? Why do I need to learn it?' And I went, 'Well, because it's in the book' because that's what I was taught. And then I thought, that is such a valid question and I gave him a terrible answer... We learn better when it's relevant.

Elizabeth's perceived responsibility to identify gaps in student knowledge and fill them before they leave high school illustrated her commitment to students and their learning. Mary also felt an obligation to her students to provide richness and fullness in their high school educations and to their future lives. Her wishes for her students went beyond passing their tests and graduating;

I want the kids to be intrigued with [mathematics] and I also want them to come out thinking, 'Oh yeah, if I didn't know mathematics, I wouldn't understand the world around me. I wouldn't have a glimpse into finance. I would be lied to with statistics and never know it.' And I want them to also come out with the discipline where they said, 'I had to work hard in that class to make it happen'.

The participants talked about their desires and goals for students that cannot be measured, but were the most important to them in teaching. Sally and Jacob voiced their dreams for what students could gain in their concurrent enrollment English composition courses: students enjoy reading more, students discover new knowledge about themselves through writing, students can articulate themselves through writing, and students discover aspects of themselves and the human condition through the appreciation of literature. All these are immeasurable objectives, but these "hidden secret curriculum goals" (Jacob) were the elements that excited the participants and kept them teaching, despite increased pressure for standards alignment, course



comparability, guaranteed common curriculum, and other outside educational pressures. Coach forthrightly spoke for many of the participants when he described the intangible nature of his work, noting his priority was not teaching his particular discipline, but rather in developing kids; the class became the venue for the unquantifiable and more substantial work of student development that addressed the relevant and pervasive needs and challenges of students.

*Dispelling myths and secrets.* The obligation participants had to their students was also described as the exposure of certain myths and falsehoods about the educational sectors and expectations of students. This element was not voiced by all participants, but it is notable; Jacob and Elizabeth spoke of hidden meanings, expectations, and secrets that pervade the talk and continue the mystique about higher education. Jacob talked at length of the myths and lies educators communicate to students. Elizabeth frequently referenced her obligation to reveal the hidden rules in college so that her students would be prepared. As was referenced earlier, the cultural capital of college knowledge was a powerful incentive for Elizabeth to teach in the concurrent enrollment program in order for her students to be better prepared to transition to college through their exposure to college-like academic experiences and expectations. Jacob also focused on the power of the mystery when he shared his strong feelings about the myths that pervade the different educational sectors and are often used to manipulate student behavior.

One of the great disservices that the middle school teachers do and I think the high school teachers probably do this, too, is the middle school teachers who've been teaching middle school for a while will tell their students all kinds of lies about high school - Oh you won't be able to do this in high school; This is what's going to be different in high school. You know, it's like all kinds of threats and stuff. High school teachers will tell the same things to college-bound students - oh, when you get to college you won't be able to do this. Bullshit. These are transitions. They are different, but you're not going to be a totally different person in 3 months... There are different expectations and more accountability on both ends, but you know, it's not like you're entering a different parallel universe or something where the rules are suddenly different.

Other myths about college professors abound. Jacob described one of his college professors “would assign all these books, and he would come in and he would sit down... and he would start lecturing about whatever part was on the syllabus that day. He never tried to engage his students in any way.” These, Jacob noted, were more fodder for the fiction created to scare students, and did not accurately depict the vast majority of current college professors. Building an open bridge to college for students required teachers to dispel these myths by providing accurate information about what will be expected of students in college. Jacob related the differences to his students this way;

I tell them that one of the differences between high school and college teachers is that in high school know that they’re dealing sometimes with a reluctant audience. So there’s a lot of effort on the high school level to support reluctant learners, but in college, the attitude changes. And the attitude is the professor knows that they have information, that they are experts and that you are coming to them. [The professor’s] obligation to entertain you, to create within you motivation if there is none, is not necessary.

Jacob, Elizabeth, Randy, and other participants considered teaching concurrent enrollment courses as one way they could break-down the misconceptions about higher education. If students can experience college-level instruction in a familiar environment with supportive instructors, then they become prepared with the knowledge they need to succeed in college once they matriculate. Further they considered it their duty to dispel the myths about college professors and curricular expectations in order for their students to transition effectively to college and its different level of engagement with students. Being the bearer of knowledge about the anticipated future also provided the teacher with superior status and enhanced position, elevating the knowledge bearer’s importance, significance, and position.

The duty to provide a pathway for students was one of the structural elements that emerged from the participants’ experiences. Their deep concern and commitment to student

learning was expressed in these interviews through strongly held beliefs and practices that support students in many ways. Participants were committed to helping students prepare for college, as well as other pathways, and they were compassionate in their appreciation of students' developmental challenges. Their instructional practices in concurrent enrollment courses were designed for effective transition to college and they took their responsibilities seriously as they worked with students and college faculty to provide comparable college courses on their high school campuses. They were also committed to dispelling myths about college instructional practices by exposing students to accurate reflections of current college practices and instructional expectations. Their unique role as college instructor AND high school teacher provides students with a rare first step into higher education.

**Pride.** One of the other themes that emerged from the interviews with concurrent enrollment teachers was pride. In this context *Pride* consisted of three dimensions: confidence, status, and program value. The participants displayed confidence and satisfaction in themselves as teachers, and modest pride, the proper sense of their own value and status, in their role as a college instructor. They were confident in articulating their instructional and curricular goals, and in providing the requisite college-level instruction as required by ASC. They expressed assurance in the value of the concurrent enrollment program as well.

**Confidence.** Confidence, as sense of satisfaction with self, emerged through the interviews in the words of the participants as well as in their demeanor. Some participants were able to express their sense of self-assurance as teachers explicitly. Ted expressed pride in the reputation he has at school, "I've kind of been known as a teacher that pushes the kids too hard. I am tough but fair." Sally shared a similar sentiment; students in her small rural school call her concurrent English composition course is known as "Suicide English" because of its reputation

as a difficult class requiring hard work. All participants exuded confidence and conviction in their abilities as teachers. Their assurance in their role as teacher was worn comfortably; they were confident in their discipline knowledge, comfortable in their relationships with students as well as their teacher peers, and sure about their abilities as teachers. Several of the participants (Sally, Joe, Jacob, Mary, and Elizabeth) felt that teaching was a calling. All the participants expressed similar sentiments when describing their pathways to teaching and the reasons they continue teaching. Mary realized in her first teaching position that she was called to teach, that she could motivate learning. Her eyes sparkled as she recalled that moment;

The turning point happened within I think it was in the very first or second day, while I was teaching. It was awkward. I knew they were excited about having Mrs. S. and they weren't going to have her, so that was pretty nerve wracking because she was a very popular teacher. But when I went in there and started teaching, a boy from the back of the class moved up to the front of the class, just on his own. Sat there, started taking notes and asking questions and got real serious. And it turned out he was a very popular boy and decided he was going to help me out. And it just it seemed like it just turned the course of how that went, and it went incredibly well. I had a blast with it and just knew it was the direction for me.

Jacob labeled the calling to teach “with-it-ness.” He explained, “Much better than trying to teach teachers techniques in teaching, we should be offering classes in ‘with-it-ness’: a very tough concept and maybe not teachable. It’s totally an art!” Being confident in their abilities as teachers, able to relate to student and appreciate their unique qualities, enjoy the transference of knowledge to others, and participate enthusiastically in the learning process were all parts of the “with-it-ness” that Jacob described. It was something that went beyond simple content knowledge or teacher training and had much to do with their longevity as high school teachers and concurrent enrollment instructors.

Teachers had confidence in themselves, their discipline knowledge, and their teaching abilities allowing them to show their vulnerabilities to their students. Anne and Mary enjoyed

the opportunities to work difficult math problems in front of their students. Anne's comment communicated this well; "they'll see me wrestling with how to solve a problem. I want them to see how to think like a mathematician. If I can help them see how to think like a mathematician, then I think I've a win." Jacob, too, has enough confidence in himself and his writing to share it with his students; "when I'm not in the writing classroom a lot of times, any lesson that I'm talking about in terms of writing maybe something that I'm relooking at how do I handle this as a writer?" Randy enjoyed talking with his students about how psychology influenced him and his work, providing students with a view into his life and also demonstrating the course's relevance to life. The participants showed a level of confidence in their teaching developed over time and honed with practice. They also expressed an internal drive for teaching and displayed confidence in their ability to teach at the college level with the rigor and intensity required by the college partner. Their confidence also extended to the steadfast commitment to honor both the college teaching expectations as well as their own secondary-level instructional beliefs by providing developmentally appropriate instructional supports.

*Status.* All participants took pride, the proper sense of their own value, in their role as concurrent enrollment teachers. Even in small schools, their position as college instructors was considered special and important. Sally noted that her colleagues don't really envy her, but maybe "they think it's easy, but then they look at the hours I spend, and know that it's not easy. But they tell me students have a different respect for me." For Joe and Coach their positions as teachers and coaches afforded them considerable status in their communities; the addition of the college instructor role was taken in stride because several other teachers in their small high school also teach concurrent enrollment courses. "You know, most of the teachers are doing

something with it. We're all kind of in the same place," said Coach. Randy's concurrent enrollment teaching role allowed him a very different relationship with students, increasing his status within his school;

When I teach the college course, it's a totally different way of doing my job. I'm a counselor, not a teacher, and the kids see me in a totally different way. They see me as a teacher, not a counselor, so there's a totally different connection that I have with students...My class is known as the hardest class in the building.

He was very proud of that designation as he talked about how it places him in a different position within the school with students and with colleagues, and even with parents and administrators.

The instructors all articulated a sense of increased status within their schools by teaching a college-level concurrent enrollment course.

The position of the concurrent enrollment instructor in relationship to the college professorate was mixed. Initial reticence about being visited by or visiting with college professors was usually dispelled as conversations turned collegial. Coach's story profiles similar sentiments shared by other participants.

I'm a little high school teacher and Bill's a college professor. And until I got to know Bill and got to meet him, it was always kind of a ... he was on a different level. And getting to meet him, I realized that Okay, we're colleagues. We can work together. He's not an intimidating foe... [The barrier] was just in my own mind. Just because, okay, I'm high school; they're college. College comes after high school so I've got to make sure I have everything together. When he's come and observed, I'm all tense and everything. And then I start to realize that, you know, that's not why he's coming to observe. He isn't coming to critique my class, but to ... just like I would one of my fellow workers there at the high school. Just to look and say 'Okay, what's he doing that I want to implement.'

Jacob related a similar sense of concern and apprehension prior to a concurrent enrollment instructors meeting with college professors on the college campus; "My fears for that meeting didn't come true. ...Dr. J said, 'All of our teachers are hired because of their expertise, their skill levels and [they] can get kids engaged.' The things he brought up I was already doing." The

superior status that participants felt in relation to their high school colleagues did not initially translate to their status with college instructors. While the participants were approved as college instructors, there was still a difference in their status within the college faculty community and their inclusion in that group.

Mary, however, has had a very different experience with her college colleagues over the years. She related how she argued and defended her concurrent enrollment course and her methods. Her gentleness masked a fierce determination that would support Adams High School's concurrent enrollment program.

The ASC teachers have talked to us about grading. They've showed me their grades, There are a lot of F's in their classes. 'Why are there not a lot of F's in your classes?' [The college is] getting all the kids from our school who aren't doing dual credit here... they're getting those lower kids. We're getting only our higher kids... Also we disagreed about pace of the class. When Dr. L heard my argument, she was like 'Okay, yeah that makes sense. They're getting the same stuff, a little longer, and part of the difference is the course is in high school.' But if it came down to the college saying 'Hey, we really just want this one semester,' I'll be okay with that. We'll go without the dual credit.

Elizabeth has also been frustrated with some aspects of the concurrent enrollment policy because, like Mary, she believed they were not in the best interest of students. The college policy to prohibit mixed concurrent enrollment courses (not all students enrolled for college credit), frustrated Elizabeth. She noted the value of exposure to the course material as a valid education experience and as a way to increase her students' likelihood of college success with prior knowledge and experience;

if we have room in the class, they could take it for high school credit and not worry about the college credit, and then they can go to college and take it again. If you've taken a class twice, you know where it is heading, you know some of the vocabulary. You know where this is going to fit...I want to get those kids there."

So these participants felt some friction between their own beliefs about appropriate instructional methods and the policies of the concurrent enrollment courses. They expressed appreciation for

the opportunities they can provide their students, however, they also considered their status as college instructors required they meet the requirements of the higher education institution providing the college credit.

**Value.** The value of concurrent enrollment was articulated most clearly by Randy. His particular role in advocating for concurrent enrollment in his high school and working with ASC as the school's liaison gave him a different perspective on the program's value, although all participants noted the important tuition savings that concurrent enrollment courses provided for students. Randy shared his thought process about his strong support for offering concurrent enrollment at his high school;

the thing that I didn't like the most [about Advanced Placement] was the return on our investment with regard to students. We were averaging about 20% earning 4/5 on AP tests, so 80% of the kids went through an entire year of this, took a 5-hour exam, and ended up getting nothing but the AP mark on their transcripts, and nothing transferred without that 4/5. And so I thought, that's an awful lot of work with a very limited return for kids. The nice thing about concurrent is that everybody who takes it has to enroll in college...It also is nice because a kid can go into the class and walk out with a grade and it will transfer. So I like the idea that if you work hard, you're going to get something in return.

Further, Randy noted that concurrent enrollment improved the retention of Truman High School students in college; "our retention rate in college, for the kids that go on is extremely high, and the one thing that all kids credit that is taking concurrent classes: everyone to 100%." He confidently shared that students from neighboring school districts come to Truman High School for the concurrent enrollment courses; "they've heard good things about them, so I think there's so much to gain and so little to lose by offering the courses."

Anne noted that a concurrent enrollment student at her high school "can come out of the school with 35 plus college credits." "It's still quite a bargain" for students, said Coach, even if students must pay a small fee as they do at his high school. And participants related numerous



stories of students who earned so many college credits during high school that upon high school graduation they had enough credits to enter as sophomores. This saved them a significant amount in tuition, and provided them with a boost in feeling prepared and capable when they matriculated. Participants were mindful of the great financial opportunity that concurrent enrollment afforded students, but also of the financial obligation students had should they fail. Everyone who talked about the financial benefits also mentioned the pressure to pay back the tuition should students fail the class. Joe shared an example,

if they don't get at least a C, they have to pay for the class. I had a couple of those last semester that they didn't get the C. Their final grade took them down and they had to pay almost \$350 I believe to reimburse the district... it's a pretty tough talk they had to have with mom and dad, and both of them were pretty mature about it.

Overall, however, the participants considered the opportunity for students effective in so many ways. Parents were another population that benefited. Noted Randy, "To be honest with you, the kids see it as a year of college and they're all so savvy about the scholarships and the costs, but the parents are solely focused on the costs... The parents love it."

The participants were aware of the importance and the value of the concurrent enrollment opportunity for students and their families, and they took pride in being able to offer that opportunity in their high schools. While the prestige of teaching college courses was not articulated by the participants as a defining reason for teaching concurrent enrollment courses, teachers expressed confidence in their abilities and pride in their teaching abilities and subject expertise.

**Summary.** Participant voices combined to form four structures that summarily defined their experience of teaching concurrent college courses in a high school setting. *Instructional Quality, Passion, Commitment to Students, and Pride* emerged as the defining structures of the participants' lived experience. The four structures are synthesized in the following section to

illustrating how they frame the concurrent enrollment teaching experience to form the meaning and essence of the phenomenon.

### **Textural Structural Synthesis**

The structures of *Instructional Quality*, *Passion*, *Commitment to Students*, and *Pride* combined to frame this study of the lived experiences of high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment college courses in their high schools. The experience of teaching a concurrent college course in a high school environment is both a *duty* and an *honor*, and participants take both elements seriously. The concepts of *duty* and *honor* provide the context for the four structures of the phenomenon.

#### **Duty**

The teachers feel they have a *duty* to meet the *instructional quality* expectations of the college curriculum and the college's academic department. Their *duty* is to maintain fidelity to the instructional objectives as identified by the College academic department, as well as to provide other elements of college course taking to maintain comparability with the college-based course they are teaching in the high school. These elements include the pace of instruction, strict adherence to deadlines for assignments, use of college-approved texts and assessments, comparable grading standards, and the expectation of more independent study on the students' part. Participants felt *duty*-bound to adhere to these expectations to maintain their approval to teach concurrent courses, as well as to provide the college course opportunity and exposure to their students. Participants attend annual on-campus workshops for concurrent faculty and their teaching is evaluated by college faculty who visit their classroom. They work hard and put in extra hours of work to ensure their courses are aligned to college expectations, and they feel little hesitation in incorporating assessments or assignments that ensure course integrity and

comparability with college departmental requirements. Never did they feel their instructional efforts were not up to the standards of the college rigor; they were steadfast in their commitment to the curriculum provided by the college and embraced the specific assignments, assessments, and outcomes required by the college faculty. The *duty* to adhere to the college expectations, curriculum, and minimum standards also provided concurrent enrollment instructors an outside third-party to take the pressure off the instructor to enroll under-qualified students in their college-level class. Their adherence to the college expectations demonstrated their *duty* to *instructional quality* and their obligation as adjunct college faculty members to remain true to the college curriculum and institutional expectations.

Their *duty* to the *instructional quality* of the concurrent enrollment course and the fidelity of the course delivery is also linked to the participants' *passion for their discipline*. They felt responsible to furthering the understanding and power of their particular subject with their students. Participants spoke with reverence and passion about the beauty and necessity of their specific disciplines: Mary, Elizabeth, Joe, and Anne spoke of the beauty and magic of mathematics; Jacob and Sally noted the power of writing to unleash self-discovery and explore life's larger questions; and Ted and Randy exalted in the importance of the social sciences to unite people in common understanding of themselves and their world. The passion for their subjects propelled participants to maintain the high quality of instruction. Doing so was natural and a welcome prospect for the participants. The concurrent enrollment instructional opportunity provided participants with a vehicle to advance their love of the discipline with students prepared to receive and embrace it. The duty to the discipline also connected the concurrent enrollment instructors to their higher education colleagues who also share a passion for the discipline and a duty to its integrity. Connections to college faculty who also share *passion for the subject* united

the concurrent enrollment instructors with other faculty who share the duty to maintain *instructional quality*.

Concurrent enrollment instructors also exhibit *duty* and deep *commitment to student learning and growth* that all the participants share. The responsibility for *Instructional Quality* integrates with their *Commitment to Students* interconnecting these two major structures. *Instructional Quality* in concurrent enrollment is driven by the participants' *Commitment to Students*. This *Commitment to Students* and their learning is seen in the extra work that participants accept to teach concurrent enrollment, the attention to student development and skill acquisition, their increased availability for instructional support, their time-built relationships with students, and their appreciation for and response to the individual developmental challenges of high school-aged students. The participants really want to provide what is best for students. They see concurrent enrollment as one effective way to help their students prepare for the transition to college, learn the necessary skills required for college success, and save money toward college tuition. The participants believe their *Commitment to Students* increases the teachers' effectiveness and enhances the *instruction quality* and effectiveness of the concurrent enrollment courses over comparable courses on the college campus. The relationships built with students are one of the key factors that demonstrate the commitment participants make toward student success. Their investment in the students has been built over time, often teaching the student through successive years of high school, such that the participants know their students and feel duty-bound to aid in their transition to college. Further, the participants take their duty to adequately prepare students for college expectations seriously. They feel the necessity to teach the academic lessons that are central to the college course, and they also feel the obligation to identify and fill gaps in knowledge and personal study skills in order for students to make the

shift to college. These concurrent enrollment instructors work overtime in preparing lessons and grading assignments, providing tutoring and extra “over the shoulder time” to supplement classroom instruction, and coaching students toward independent learning habits. They must also caution themselves and avoid the trap of “spoon feeding” the material to students. Their duty to shape independent learning habits in their students requires they resist giving students the answers, but instead help them find those skills in themselves.

Their commitment to students is deeply connected to their *passion for teaching*. This is displayed in the teachers’ sense of *duty* to open every opportunity for students to succeed. The participants love to teach. They are actively engaged in teaching and all commented on the way the profession suits them and the great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction they find from teaching. Their passion for teaching is intrinsically connected to their duty to teach which is demonstrated in their *commitment to students*. Jacob talked about his important responsibility to provide important lessons that students need to be successful, and Elizabeth noted how critical it was for her fill the missing gaps in students’ knowledge; she considered it her duty to prepare her students for their future academic challenges. As she noted so concisely, “my job is to fill those holes [in learning]; it’s very challenging, but I have to do that.” The participants also share an understanding of and appreciation for the adolescent growth process, as well as their role in facilitating academic achievement.

They attempt to balance the demands of the instructional goals with the tremendous changes that are affecting the students and their personal development. Each one of the participants viewed their students with compassion, understanding, and even humor as the students steered their way through the changes and challenges of adolescence. Jacob and Coach recalled watching students mature from one year to the next, and the necessity of waiting for

students to grow up and be ready for college. Sally noted that not all students mature at the same time so the concurrent enrollment options are not possible for all students. Good teachers, she said, meet students where they are and use their skill as teachers to propel them forward. The participants' commitment to teaching in this manner can conflict with the larger demands of district and state curriculum standards and benchmarks that force teachers to move the curriculum forward before all students have mastered the concepts. Jacob and JR both expressed concern about this trend in education as it conflicted so much with their own passion for teaching and their commitment to student learning.

The passion for teaching and its accompanying obligation for student learning was a key driver for the participants to engage in teaching concurrent enrollment courses. Teachers also maintained responsibility for instructional quality through adherence to the provided curriculum and infusion of their passion for the subject into their teaching of the concurrent enrollment course. The participants' sense of duty weaves through the four structures of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience. Concurrent enrollment courses provide students with key learning opportunities, and teaching concurrent enrollment courses engages the teachers in higher level instructional activities that excite their passions for teaching and for their subjects, and strengthens their commitment to student learning.

### **Honor**

The four structures of the experience are also contextualized by the participants' sense of *honor*. Participants experience pride in their teaching overall as well as pride in teaching the concurrent enrollment courses. Their commitment to instructional quality and their overarching interest in their discipline is acknowledged by their approval to teach in the concurrent enrollment program. The privilege of teaching college level courses is an affirmation of the

participants' *commitment to students* and *passion for teaching*, as well as their respect for *instructional quality*, *passion for their discipline*, and *pride* in their accomplishments. Honor weaves through all these structures because it denotes a level of distinction and esteem that is above the participants' sense of pride. The *honor* of teaching the concurrent enrollment courses is reflected in the respect the teachers have for their higher education colleagues and the curriculum presented. Mary noted her empathy for the college instructors who voiced concern over the integrity of high school based courses. Her pride in her abilities as a teacher and subject expert buoyed her evidence of quality instruction and course comparability.

Throughout the interviews the participants revealed their honor in teaching college courses and being considered capable of higher level instruction. The distinction of teaching college level courses brought extra work, attention to both school-level as well as college-level standards and requirements, additional meetings and contacts, after-school tutoring sessions, and additional evaluation measures, all without any additional pay. The privilege of teaching college level courses also brought regard from peers and administrator, respect from students and parents, connections to higher education colleagues, and the opportunity to "play in the applications" of their subject area disciplines at a higher level with better-prepared students.

These are important factors for the participants, although they were not the reasons for them to undertake the responsibility for college course instruction in their high schools. They undertook the teaching of concurrent enrollment courses because they were considered the logical choices due to their experience and expertise. They may have been the teacher in their department with the master's degree (required to teach college-level courses), as well as the individual with a desire to expand opportunity. They considered concurrent enrollment an important option for students (Mary, Joe, Coach, Sally, Anne, and Randy), they had taught

college courses before (Jacob and Elizabeth), and they were driven to expand their teaching efforts (JR and Ted).

There is a sense of opportunity for the participants to expand their influence and instructional expertise beyond the limitations of the secondary curriculum that comes with the distinction of teaching a college-level course. Of course, the college course also has boundaries and curricular requirements that restrict the instructional reach; however, the level of instructional engagement is different and provides concurrent enrollment instructors with new instructional parameters and opportunities. They believe their commitment to students and their learning, coupled with their instructional expertise and attention to quality, builds a comprehensively stronger learning outcome for students. The strength of the course outcomes is the result of the unique relationship the concurrent enrollment instructor has with the students, the passion for the subject matter, the instructor's teaching strengths, and the pride the instructor has in being a teacher.

The *honor* of being a teacher resonates throughout the conversations with the participants and connects the structures of the experience. Teaching excellence, compassion and care for students, and consideration of their subjects' importance led the participants to accept the responsibility for teaching concurrent enrollment courses as a logical step in preparing their students for the transition to college. They are also aware that it is not the only way to help their students prepare for their futures and are confident and experienced enough to walk away from concurrent enrollment if it does not meet the needs of their students. The privilege to teach extends to all classes and students taught by the participants. While teaching the college-level courses brings a certain cache to the instructor, participants are also passionate about the other courses and students they teach. They realize that their reputation as highly qualified teachers has



been built on teaching students at all ages and levels of ability, not just the concurrent enrollment courses. The concurrent enrollment courses provide the participants with a sort of distinction, but are often only one or two classes out of the total seven or eight classes that they teach each semester. The prestige of teaching the college level courses is balanced against their responsibility for other secondary-level courses and high school teacher responsibilities. The teacher has the responsibility and the strength to help all students learn. As Jacob declared, “The strength of American education is the teacher’s autonomy in the classroom...If they cannot connect to kids, if they don’t love the material in some way, if they can’t motivate, they can’t communicate.” Teaching, he said, is “totally an art.” The opportunity to express that art most fully through the teaching of college-level coursework is highly valued as the participants interact with students in more esoteric ways with greater expectations for student involvement

The participants find teaching fascinating and interesting because it is different every day. The teachers must apply their knowledge of the teaching to their knowledge of the subject, supplement that with their experience as a teacher and their compassion for students, and bring it all together with genuine pride in their ability to teach and implement the specific curriculum lesson to the particular set of students in the classroom. They find it exciting. It is their duty. It is their privilege to teach the college level sections as it brings them a certain degree of status and honor. Duty and honor are the unifying elements that provide the context for the structures of the experience of high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment courses in their high schools.

### **Summary**

The experience of concurrent enrollment high school instructors was framed by the distinct ways in which the structures of *Instructional Quality*, *Commitment to Students*, *Passion*,

and *Pride* connected the phenomenon. The four structural elements were associated and further defined through the contexts of *duty* and *honor*.

Participants consider themselves duty-bound to meet the college established course expectations through their commitment to *Instructional Quality* of curriculum delivery. The participants' bring their *Passion* for teaching and for their discipline together with their *Commitment to Students* to meet or even exceed the college expectations. The benefits provided to students and their families by the concurrent enrollment opportunity produce a sense of *Pride* in the participants along with the knowledge that they are improving the students' transitions to college financially and academically. Participants consider it their duty to ensure students have the necessary study and personal management skills, in addition to the academic knowledge, to make a successful transition to college. Their *Commitment to Student* learning and *Passion* for teaching fuel this added expectation and obligation of themselves.

The distinction of teaching in the concurrent enrollment program affords the participants personal and professional pride. They are honored by the approval to teach the courses, and appreciate the respect that it affords. They love their jobs as teachers and believe teaching concurrent enrollment courses honors their passions for the discipline, their students, and their expertise in teaching. Concurrent enrollment instructors play a critical role for students in easing their transition to college. The capacity of the participants to lead students toward productive self-management in their future academic pursuits is an honorable and important responsibility. They also display confidence in their teaching ability to provide a rich and supportive instructional experience for students that balances the requirements of the college with the instructional and developmental needs of the student. In their experience of concurrent enrollment teaching the

participants balance the honor of the distinction as college instructors with the obligation of the duty to prepare students to successfully transition from high school to college.

### **Essence of the Phenomenon**

*Balance within a liminal space* describes the essence of my study. The word *liminal* comes from the Latin word ‘limen’ meaning ‘a threshold.’ A threshold is the area between two spaces, such as the sill of a window or a doorway between two rooms. It can be considered a physical space separating areas, such as inside from outside, and it can also be considered a conceptual space between two distinct cultures or states of being, such as the transition from wakeful consciousness into sleep. It is an area where boundaries blur and ambiguity may occur. I use this phrase – *balance within a liminal space* - to describe the essence of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience because it expresses the specific and transitional space between the secondary and postsecondary educational sectors where the participants teach college courses in their high school environments. The *liminal space* is an area of dissolved boundaries and blurred distinctions that describes well the unique position of concurrent enrollment as a place between high school and college that is really not one or the other, but a balanced compromise of both.

*Liminal space* accurately describes the unique space where concurrent enrollment occurs for the participants; postsecondary courses taught by secondary instructors in a secondary classroom reflect a threshold area of experience. The elements of one sector (post secondary’s college curriculum and course delivery expectations) are provided in the other sector (secondary high school) by someone (the concurrent enrollment teacher) linking the two sectors within the liminal space between the two. The concurrent enrollment experience inhabits a unique spot

between high school and college that includes parts of both, but that is also neither one nor the other. The term “betwixt and between” could also describe the liminal space.

*Balance within the liminal space* describes how the participants experienced the phenomenon through the four structures of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience: Instructional Quality, Passion, Commitment to Students, and Pride. I purposely selected *balance* to describe the dual nature of the concurrent enrollment instructional role and what is required of the teacher in that role. The participants *balance within the liminal space* of concurrent enrollment in their status as high school teachers and college instructors, in their commitments to secondary level standards and college level expectations, and in their relationships with students as dependent developing teenagers and emerging independent adults. Participants balance the *Instructional Quality* requirements to maintain college-level rigor and pace against the high school course standards and instructional practices. Similarly the participants’ *Commitment to Students* sees the teachers balancing secondary instructional best practice for helping students learn through intensive teacher intervention and involvement against the requirements of college instruction which shifts the learning responsibility from teacher to student. All the while the participants seek to balance their need to help students acquire necessary skills to be successful in college coursework with the requirement that students have and demonstrate the necessary college level skills.

Concurrent enrollment instructors balance their *passion* for their subject discipline with their *passion* for teaching and serving the needs of their students. They respond with a balanced approach within the ambiguous *liminal space* of concurrent enrollment instruction. While teaching concurrent enrollment they feel the ambiguity of their status as teacher responsible to both the school district and the college, but also without the same access and opportunity as

college-based instructors. Their concurrent enrollment teaching experience falls into a *liminal space* that does not fit neatly into either educational sector. The *pride* that participants have in their elevated role as college teachers is balanced between the secondary teacher requirements for accountability and student achievement. Always there is the need for *balancing* – for making compromises that honor the high school requirements and the college requirements. This is the nature of experience in a liminal space.

This tension between secondary and postsecondary expectations and practices within concurrent enrollment is at the heart of liminal space experiences. When a phenomenon exists in the transition space between two sectors, it is at once an element of both sectors and an element of neither. It is betwixt and between. The participants *balance* their high school teaching philosophy and practice against the college philosophy and practice to create a facsimile college experience for students. This research found that the concurrent enrollment course taught in the high school environment cannot duplicate how the course is experienced on the college campus. In that practice the participants must *balance* the ambiguity of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience through adherence to *Instructional Quality* standards of both high school and college requirements, steady their *Passion* for teaching against their passion for the academic subject, stabilize their *Commitment to Students* with a balanced approach that supports student learning and develops student responsibility, and balance their *Pride* and honor in their college instructor status against the duty they have as high school teachers.

The essence of the lived experience of high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment courses is their high schools was a *Balance within a Liminal Space*. The structures of *Instructional Quality*, *Passion*, *Commitment to Students*, and *Pride* interconnected to describe how instructors *Balance within a Liminal Space* in teaching these college courses. Participants

were impacted by often-competing systems and methods as they sought to balance the expectations of the secondary-level curriculum with its focus on teacher-led support of student learning against the collegiate-level curriculum with its focus on student-led preparation and responsibility for learning. Participants found ways to *balance* the expectations of the college curriculum and course delivery methods with the expectations of the high school schedule and student attendance demands. Participants also found ways to balance their passions for teaching students and their passions for their subject matter. Participants felt the greatest tension in holding students accountable for independent learning and preparing them for the expectations and pace of the college environment. Duplicating that in their high school classrooms required new ways of balancing the concurrent enrollment course expectations with their own personal beliefs about quality teaching and effective pedagogy. All participants found ways to balance these competing and sometimes oppositional aspects of concurrent enrollment to create courses that inhabit the liminal space between the two educational sectors and serve students in their move toward higher education.

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

Through my study, I explored the lived experience of teachers providing college course instruction in their high school classrooms through the concurrent enrollment program of a regional college. My study allowed me to holistically examine the experience of these teachers and give voice to their experience. The following research questions guided my study:

1. How do concurrent enrollment high school teachers experience their responsibilities for student learning?
2. How do the high school teachers incorporate the instructional philosophies and requirements of secondary instruction with the instructional philosophies and requirements of postsecondary instruction within their concurrent enrollment role?
3. Where is there consonance and dissonance in the high school teachers' experiences of teaching concurrent enrollment courses?

To address the research questions, I collected data through in-depth interviews with 10 high school teachers who teach college-level concurrent enrollment college courses in their high schools. All participants were approved concurrent enrollment instructors at a regional college serving multiple school districts throughout its service region. I carefully listened to each individual voice as each one shared thoughts, feelings, and stories of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience. I analyzed the transcripts according to the phenomenological research methods outlined by Moustakas (1994). I discovered elements unique to each individual as well as elements that were common to all participants. I identified elements of common shared experience, as well as anomalies exclusive to a few. Through data analysis of the interview transcripts, the following emerged as the structures

that construct the phenomenon; *Instructional Quality*, *Passion*, *Commitment to Students*, and *Pride*. These structures described the lived experience of high school instructors teaching concurrent enrollment college courses in their high schools.

The four structures interconnected to form a nexus describing the experience of the participants. Their commitment to *Instructional Quality* manifested itself in rigorous instructional practices that adhered to the college requirements and learning expectations. Participants also incorporated secondary level requirements for curricular alignment to state standards into their concurrent enrollment instruction, thus balancing the instructional demands of both their high school administrators and college department heads. The opportunity to teach concurrent enrollment courses connected the participants' *Passion for teaching* with their *Passion for their subject* area to create an accelerated learning option for students with energetic instruction and strong pedagogy, and fill a need within the participants to stretch themselves and connect with colleagues of like minds. They also were able to share their *Passion* of their subject with well-prepared and motivated students who were focused on learning, and who made teaching exciting.

The participants' *Commitment to Students* motivated their desire to provide students with a college-level academic experience and prepare them for their transition to college by emulating college expectations for students to work independently and take on more responsibility. These were balanced by judicious levels of support directing students toward increased independence, a deep understanding of students' complex developmental needs, and the secondary teachers' sometimes conflicting responsibility to give students multiple opportunities to learn and succeed. The participants expressed *Pride* and confidence in their teaching skills developed over time and honed with years of practice. They balanced their



steadfast commitment to honor both the college teaching expectations as well as their own secondary-level instructional beliefs by providing developmentally appropriate instructional supports as needed by their students while encouraging and demanding increased independent learning from students.

These four structures formed an interconnection for the concurrent enrollment teaching experience around which participants' duty as teachers linked with their honor at providing valuable acceleration opportunities for their students. The subtle ways that these four structures intermingled described the essence of the participants' experience of *Balance within a Liminal Space*, in which participants' instructional experiences did not fit comfortably into either the secondary teaching realm or the college instructional realm. Concurrent enrollment operates within the liminal or threshold space between the two educational sectors, and it challenges the participants to *balance within a liminal space* that is at once part of both sectors and also part of neither sector.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings as they relate to the literature addressing concurrent enrollment. Next are recommendations for practice and further research. I conclude with my reflections and comments.

## **Findings**

### **Findings confirmed in the literature**

There is ample evidence that the experience of concurrent enrollment contributes to the academic college-readiness of students through commitment of instructors to provide college-level academic experience and expectations in their concurrent enrollment courses (Allen & Dadgar, 2012; Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003). In addition to the positive effect concurrent enrollment has on increasing college degree completion (Menzel, 2008), students benefit from

the anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal that is provided by participating in a concurrent enrollment class (Karp, 2012). The participants' perspectives on their experiences echoed those findings of the benefit of concurrent enrollment as an important preparation activity for college matriculation. Barnett and Hughes (2010) maintained concurrent enrollment programs typically target academically advanced students with participation limited to those with minimum high school grade point averages (3.0) and/or minimum placement testing prerequisites. This is similar to the concurrent enrollment program experienced by the study's participants that involved academically prepared students who must meet GPA and test score minimum entrance requirements to participate. Karp (2012) and Barnett and Hughes (2012) have noted the benefits that concurrent enrollment can provide to lesser prepared students by providing a preview of college expectations and the needed personal management skills. Despite the success of several programs that have shown success by incorporating strong support services and high levels of faculty and programmatic integration, most concurrent enrollment programs have not opened concurrent enrollment to lesser-prepared students for fear the increased demands of college could overwhelm them (Hughes & Edwards, 2012). Kleiner and Lewis (2005) estimated only 5 % of concurrent enrollment programs focused on the at-risk population.

Like many other programs across the country with academic prerequisites for concurrent enrollment participation (Hoffman, 2005), participants in this study considered the established academic requirements for student participation in concurrent enrollment to be fair and appropriate. They expressed concern for students who were underprepared for the level of independent work and fast pace that were hallmarks of the concurrent enrollment program studied. They considered an open enrollment policy would put pressure on underprepared students to enroll in college courses for the tuition benefit alone. Their commitment to student

learning and appropriate instructional support reinforced their support of the eligibility criteria. Many colleges, too, consider student academic preparation to be a key element to participation in concurrent enrollment experiences. Several studies (Morest & Karp, 2006; Hughes et. al., 2005) noted that the majority of concurrent enrollment programs “required students to pass a college entrance exam or have a high GPA to participate in dual enrollment” (Morest & Karp, 2006, p. 242).

More recent concurrent enrollment program development has focused on at-risk populations, such as minority students and students from low-income families, who have historically underperformed in college. Middle College programs integrate high school and college academic coursework with high-level student support services, intensive mentoring and coaching, and transition guidance for students and families. They have been very successful in providing the role rehearsal and anticipatory socialization to aid underprepared students in their matriculation to college, and offer a unique approach to integrating secondary and postsecondary education sectors (Kim, Kirby, & Bragg, 2004). A large-scale application of the integration approach is the establishment of the New Community College at CUNY (City College of New York). The New Community College integrated high school courses with college developmental courses, first year college courses, and intrusive student services in order to holistically help students succeed academically and socially (Meade, 2012). These kinds of ambitious approaches to support the matriculation and college degree completion of academically underprepared students remain outliers in the concurrent enrollment environment (Kleiner & Lewis, 2005). Most concurrent enrollment programs continue to focus on the college-ready student primarily because it does not require full-scale reconstruction of high school-college relationships, intrusion into instructional philosophies and control, or significant financial investment.

Another finding supported in the existing literature was the recognition of the distinctive nature of the concurrent enrollment experience. Teaching in concurrent enrollment program is a unique experience that fits neither into the realm of high school instruction nor into college instruction. It is something else that inhabits the transition area between the two sectors, attempting to give students a preview of the postsecondary instructional experience within their secondary instructional environment. The essence of the phenomenon of teaching concurrent enrollment courses in a high school environment emerged as *balance within a liminal space*. This perspective echoed Hofmann's and Voluch's (2012) description of the liminal space which "conveys the concomitant unease of dissolved boundaries and... productive tension" ( p. 101). The researchers described the tension of the boundary area between the two educational sectors, and noted the ambiguity of terms like *college-level learning* and *college expectations*, as well as differing institutional missions continue to create friction in the liminal space. Study participants articulated this same tension as they sought to balance their secondary responsibilities with their college duties and commitments. They commented on specific elements that needed to be added (i.e., adherence to pace of instruction), and other elements that needed to be withdrawn (i.e., opportunities for grade improvement through repeated testing) in order to meet college expectations and provide comparable college instruction.

Dissonance between the two sectors may be function of their organizational cultures and philosophical underpinnings, and concurrent enrollment programs stand squarely in the middle space – boundary area or gap – between the two educational entities. The participants in the study echoed the unease of the liminal space when they spoke of the need to balance college expectations and curricular pacing with the developmental needs of their students and their professional responsibilities for student learning. They voiced the necessity for students to

realize the different level academic expectation and personal responsibility that will be required at college through their concurrent enrollment experience in high school. Their attempts to mimic the college experience inside the confines of the high school environment and curricular requirements spoke directly to the concepts of liminal space and the sense that their concurrent enrollment teaching experience existed in a threshold space between high school and college.

The perception of a status differential between high school teachers and college instructors that was identified in this study was also supported by finding in existing literature. While participants never articulated any slight or insult directed from the college instructors, they maintained a sense of deference about college professors, their expectations, and their status. The participants painstakingly ensured their instructional practices reflected adequate rigor, perhaps even creating a course more rigorous than the college-based course. Despite this, the sense of needing to justify and prove themselves through the intensity of the concurrent course was expressed by all. These perceptions of inferiority are not without justification. Mace (2009), a college professor, acknowledged that many college professionals consider high school instructors less qualified than college professors, even when many are also adjunct college instructors and possess comparable academic qualifications. It should be noted that college faculty generally consider those instructors who teach part-time (adjunct faculty) on the college campus with similar perceptions of lower status. Hoffman (2006) noted similar concerns from university leaders who perceived decreased quality control of dual enrollment courses especially when the courses were taught at high schools. These concerns are not necessarily unjustified. Abdul-Karim (2010) found significant inconsistency among the institutions in her study of concurrent enrollment faculty qualifications; some colleges strictly adhered to the higher education accreditation requirements for approving concurrent enrollment instructors, and many

others did not. Generally, the 6 regional accrediting bodies consider minimum faculty qualifications to be 18 or more graduate credit hours in the content area in which they teach. This inconsistency continues to undermine the credibility of the instructors and provides ample opportunity for criticism and suspicion. The perceptual difference and doubt is also based, in large part, on the vastly different organizations and the subsequent cultures of the secondary and higher education sectors (Schön, 1983; Cohen & Kisher, 2009), as well as by continued perceptual ignorance between sectors. Further, the status differential is shaped by society's perception of the professions which, consistently over many decades of data collection, ranks college professors higher in occupational prestige than school teachers (Hoyle, 2001).

Given this cultural foundation, it should not be surprising that study participants would have built an enhanced persona of the college professor, internalizing societal preconceptions of college professor occupational prestige to fashion a mythic professor of their own making. Participants expressed anxiety and apprehension in anticipation of their first meeting or evaluation with the college professor persona. They were subsequently surprised and relieved to discover the myth held little substance; the college professor was collegial, accessible, and instructionally focused, similar to the participant. Breaking down this myth by finding a colleague in the preconceived persona of the college professor, facilitated the participants' perceptual change of their status relationship to the college. Negating the myth of the professor persona decreased the distance between high school teacher and college professor and furthered the participants' transition into the liminal space.

In regard to teaching practices, participants in this study did not perceive such a wide expanse between their teaching perspectives and those of the college. The participants easily embraced the curricular requirements of the college and felt little hesitation in meeting the

instructional requirements. For them the differences between the content expectations at high school and college were not that great. What was different between the two sectors was the degree of expected student responsibility for their preparation and learning. The participants considered the secondary environment, with greater access to the instructor, stronger relationships with student built over years, more time on skill development, and greater frequency of instructor-student contact, to be superior to the college experience. Participants utilized the structure of the high school environment with its requirement for student attendance, class meetings every day, time-built student relationships, and focus on student success to undergird concurrent enrollment courses with value-added supports. In their commitment to course comparability, they found ways to integrate the college-level academic and student responsibility expectations within the confines of the high school environment so that they actively supported students in their college learning and weaned them away from the hands-on, teacher-led instructional model of high school. They believed their journey with students from teacher-centered learning responsibility on the high school side to student-centered learning responsibility on the college side effectively transitioned them through the liminal space and on to college.

### **Findings not found in current literature**

One intriguing perspective that emerged from the analysis was the perceptions of two participants' about the myths and lies that some teachers knowingly perpetuate with the students. They share mythic stories about the students' anticipated next educational experience; they do so to motivate compliance with the current requirement or dispel complaints about the current assignment. Teachers may also use the myth to enhance their own status by promoting their knowledge of the world beyond and nurture a position of authority or omnipotence. It

perpetuates the superior position power of the teacher. This was seen through Jacob's description of college professors as self-absorbed lecturers who put all the responsibility and consequence for learning onto the student; the college professor simply lecturing while the students take notes and never trying "to engage his students in any way." Jacob admitted that some of what he told his concurrent enrollment students was a lie:

I tell them that ... there's a lot of effort on the high school level to support reluctant learners,... but in college the attitude changes... The professors know that they have information, that they are experts and that you are coming to them, and their obligation to entertain you, to create within you motivation if there is none, is not necessary.

This characterization of college faculty members who are not responsible for student learning and not interested in motivating their involvement in learning maintains the historical professorial stereotype. The misrepresentation serves to promote and continue old myths that exploit and reinforce stereotypes, maintaining the distance and divisions between the two educational sectors. They also do not prepare students for the majority of higher education faculty they will encounter. Jacob used these stories in an attempt to dispel the lies, but instead they served to elevate his status as teacher, confirmed his principal position in the classroom, and continued to give power to the myth. He also used the myths to counter the historical occupational prestige imbalance that continues to separate and elevate professors over teachers (Hoyle, 2001). By maintaining the myth of the distant college professor, Jacob sought to elevate the occupational prestige of the high school teacher. These divisions are maintained through social structures of organizations. Ritual classifications provide order, and individuals "derive their identities from the socially defined categories...and become committed to upholding these identities within the context of their school activities" (Meyer & Rowan, 2001, p. 80), often without conscious consideration.



This differs from another participant's approach to the lies told to students. Elizabeth negated the power of the myth by unmasking the hidden rules of the higher education experience through her teaching of concurrent enrollment courses. She considered it her responsibility to dispel the myths by uncovering them and dissecting them for her students to see and then to experience. Through these acts she reduced the power of the myth and substituted fact and experience. She endeavored to create opportunities for her students to practice the necessary skills they will require in college; "so it's me advocating, and then maybe they'll be more likely to go in and talk with a professor... they can get used to it and do it when they get there. I set the example." Her perspective was nurturing and empowering of the student, uncovering hidden rules and stating expectations, then providing opportunities for practice and role rehearsal. She believed she "can really get kids ready for what they're going to see [in college]" such as dispelling the pseudo-myth of optional class attendance in college by focusing on the "hidden rule" that students are held responsible for preparation and learning in college.

Elizabeth's beliefs and actions provide important anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal opportunities before students matriculate to college, smoothing their transition with knowledge and experience. Higher education's distinct "ways of knowing and intellectual norms" (Hughes & Edwards, 2012, p. 31) are critical knowledge for high school students to be successful in college. This is especially true for students with little prior knowledge of higher education, from disadvantaged backgrounds, low-income families, or ethnic minorities. As Elizabeth noted, "we really do our kids a disservice if we haven't exposed them to those ideas and then they go [to college] and what they thought were the rules were not; that would not be okay." Actions which dispel the pseudo myths and empower students with the truth and experience of college norms and ways of knowing are powerful tools when artfully wielded by

savvy, compassionate practitioners in the liminal space. By revealing the truths of the future college norms, the concurrent enrollment instructor gives power to the student who can now move confidently forward, armed with the knowledge about college that concurrent enrollment promised.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study provide a view into the phenomenon of teaching concurrent enrollment courses and the unique position that concurrent enrollment instruction inhabits within the educational continuum. The ambiguous nature of concurrent enrollment's liminal position between secondary and post-secondary sectors offers a valuable laboratory space in which to address issues of effective preparation and articulation to strengthen school-college partnerships. The recognition of the challenges inherent in the liminal space of concurrent enrollment teaching can identify targeted professional development topics for both teachers and college professors to better prepare students for the transition to college through realistic anticipatory socialization opportunities. In fact, some of the inherent differences between the two sectors that have been barriers to successful student transition and continuation toward degree completion can be addressed in creative ways when concurrent enrollment partners collaborate.

The long-standing perceptual boundaries separating the two sectors must thin and become more permeable to allow across-sector sharing of student success data, critical examination of instructional practices, increased communication and consideration between faculty, expanded understanding of the forces that shape and impact each sector, and mutual determination of best practices. I believe the exploration of this phenomenon has given voice to a silent cadre of teaching professionals, and that these findings will improve the relationship and collaboration between concurrent enrollment instructors and higher education professors.

Strengthening the relationship and collegiality between concurrent enrollment instructors and college faculty is essential for concurrent enrollment programs to gain appropriate recognition and to dispel the perceptions of inferiority and distrust that exist among college instructors.

These findings can also be instructive to teachers interested in teaching concurrent enrollment in their high schools to better understand the forces at play in a liminal space classroom. They will be better able to anticipate the challenges and the benefits of involvement with concurrent enrollment. The findings may also be of benefit to higher education professionals in starting or directing programs that involve concurrent enrollment classes on high school campuses. Insight by higher education professionals into the unique nature of liminal space experiences can foster a wide range of specialized supports for teachers and students, as well as open up creative opportunities to maximize the beneficial aspects of high school-based concurrent enrollment and mitigate those elements that do not best serve to prepare students for success in college once they reach the campus.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of my study generated a direction for additional research. The following are suggestions for possible research about concurrent enrollment:

1. There is a need for additional qualitative research on concurrent enrollment students as they experienced taking college courses in their high schools: how do these students perceive their concurrent enrollment teachers after they have experienced college professors? Their voices could inform and strengthen experience in the liminal space of concurrent enrollment.
2. There is a need for additional qualitative research on the perspectives of college faculty about concurrent enrollment to provide another perspective on the perceptual issues

surrounding concurrent enrollment and explore the historical tensions between educational sectors. Their voices could also inform aspects of concurrent enrollment's liminal space.

3. There is a need for a longitudinal study of the impact of concurrent enrollment on student persistence and degree completion based on the type of program in which they enrolled. Students in programs that require minimum academic preparation may have a different educational trajectory than those who enter open-access programs. Quantitative studies that control for background characteristics, as well as qualitative studies that explore the student experience, are needed.

### **Researcher Perspective**

*Liminal space* is an apropos concept to describe the unique state of the ethnographic researcher. Phenomenological research requires a familiarity with the studied culture or phenomenon to best understand and give voice to the members' experience. She does this by involving herself in the phenomenon through observations and interviews with study participants. She must also maintain a separation from the studied culture as well as her own experience and culture in order to analyze the data collected and let the voices of the participants come forward. The researcher role is in a liminal space between phenomenon and self, standing squarely between the two.

Experiencing liminality in this way has allowed the experiences of the participants to resonate within me as I sought to bring their voices forward through this study. My years of professional experience as administrator for a concurrent enrollment program have given me a view into the complex nature of secondary-postsecondary collaboration. I engaged in this study in part because of my frustration at the perceptual biases of college professionals about the

quality and rigor of concurrent enrollment instructional practices, as well as questions about the status and quality of the high school teachers providing the instruction. Further, the literature had very little addressing the instructional aspects of concurrent enrollment, particularly the experiences of the high school teachers. Engaging in this research has provided me with another perspective that continues to inform my work.

I was not surprised by the level of commitment and earnestness that concurrent enrollment instructors exhibited. I knew them to be skilled and knowledgeable practitioners who have a commitment to teaching that has kept them in the classroom rather than pursuing administrative advancement or other options. I also knew them to be excited learners who were passionate about their disciplines and the opportunity to teach at the college level. This was confirmed through the participant interviews as they expressed their excitement for stretching their teaching methods into the collegiate level, delving more deeply into their discipline area, as well as accelerating academic opportunities for their qualified students. I also knew that concurrent enrollment instructors with whom I worked were committed to elevating their course rigor, student assignments, and examinations to meet the expectations of the college curriculum and instructional standards, and that “meeting college-level expectations” was terminology that was often used to describe the necessary curricular modifications without providing a true definition of what that actually meant. My findings confirmed my prior experiences with concurrent enrollment instructors and revealed a level of understanding by the participants of the instructional modifications needed to elevate their courses to college-level expectations. I also found clarity in the participants’ commitment to meeting the expectations for student engagement and preparation that are also key aspects of college-level work. They understood the

differences between what was expected academically of students in a high school course versus a college-level course, and were able to modify their concurrent enrollment course accordingly.

The participants had an appreciation for course comparability between the college courses taught by them in their high schools and the college courses provided at the college by college instructors. They worked hard to ensure their courses were academically comparable to the college courses they were approved to teach; however, they acknowledged that they could not duplicate the “experience” of taking a course on the college campus. That remains one of the areas of concern about concurrent enrollment courses offered in high school environments and exposes concurrent enrollment programs and instructors to continued suspicion and doubt. This is one of the negative aspects of liminal space activity; it does not fit neatly into either of the established spaces outside the threshold rendering it easily misunderstood and suspect. Acknowledging and understanding this adverse aspect of liminality has created the realization for training, education, and awareness-building to neutralize ignorance and suspicion with exposure and understanding.

What I did not realize until I completed this study was the true nature of the concurrent enrollment teaching experience; it fits neither into the on-campus college experience nor into the on-campus high school experience. It is an experience uniquely situated in the liminal space, betwixt and between the two educational sectors. It is no wonder that it is misunderstood by concurrent enrollment stakeholders: the college professoriate and administration, high school administrators, high school students and their parents, legislators, and policy makers. That uniqueness brings some distinctive challenges to the teaching experience but also affords some exceptional opportunities. As the participants’ experiences illustrated, students enrolled in concurrent courses in their high schools receive support in developing the necessary academic

and personal management skills that are required for success in college. The concurrent enrollment courses in high schools ease the transition from students' high school, teacher-directed learning environments into the college environment of student-led learning expectations and responsibilities. The concurrent enrollment instructors do this through the intentional instructional strategies that wean students away from the teacher-directed instructional model of high school and toward the student-centered responsibility model of postsecondary learning.

An effective metaphor for the transitional process of concurrent enrollment is a child learning to ride a bicycle using training wheels. At the beginning the child requires the security and balance that the extra two training wheels provide. As the learning continues the child learns to pedal, balance more effectively and gains greater confidence in his or her abilities; the training wheels are moved slightly higher off the ground giving less support. As the child gains confidence and mastery in balancing on the two wheels of the bicycle, the training wheels are again moved higher and eventually removed completely. The child is now riding independently without added support. In the same manner, students in concurrent enrollment courses taught in their high schools are guided to greater self-reliance and individual responsibility for learning and self-management as they progress through the course. As the students gain mastery of the college-level expectations and independent learning, the intensive faculty-led supports are removed, replaced by autonomous learning behaviors. Participants noted that their high school environments provided them with built-in opportunities to support students while they transitioned into self-supporting learning habits with such elements as strong time-built relationships with students, access to students before, during, and after school, "over-the-shoulder time" during class to target individual interventions, and exposure of hidden college rules, and demystification of higher education's environment and expectations. This transitional

support is one of the unique opportunities possible in the liminal space of high-school based concurrent enrollment courses.

One of the benefits of concurrent enrollment has been the opportunity for academic acceleration, for high school students to earn college credits while still in high school enabling them to speed through college to earn a degree in less time and with more success. Through my involvement in this research study, I believe acceleration may not be as important a factor in concurrent enrollment experience as preparation. Concurrent enrollment's location in the liminal space creates the optimal setting to prepare students for college success through anticipatory socialization experiences, rehearsal of effective college student behaviors, and the opportunity to become proficient in the academic and self-management skills required for success in college. The "productive tension" of liminal space can serve as a unique and optimal laboratory for addressing some of the pervasive problems with successful matriculation to college. Instead of focusing on the ways high school-based college courses are not the same as college-based courses, we could capitalize on the liminal space experience to develop new strategies and interventions that would strengthen the college transition process for greater student success.

The experiences of concurrent enrollment instructors shared in this study illustrate the unique landscape of the liminal space, and highlight the skills, instructional expectations, and perspectives on student development needed for effective concurrent enrollment programs. Their experiences also provide a framework for enriching concurrent enrollment programs through greater instructional connections and increased commitment to effective, open partnerships between high schools and colleges as they work together to optimize postsecondary options and transitions for students.



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## APPENDIX

Eligibility Requirements for students to participate in concurrent enrollment courses offered by Academy State College.

Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA): 3.0

Test Score requirements:

Course Type	ACT Minimum	SAT Minimum	Accuplacer Minimum
All English courses	ACT English = 18	SAT Verbal = 430	Sentence Skills = 95
All Math courses	ACT Math = 19	SAT Math = 460	Elementary Algebra = 85
All Other courses	ACT Reading = 17	SAT Verbal = 430	Reading Comprehension = 80