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**COLLEGE READINESS: THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

by

Elizabeth C. Giacobbe

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
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December 10, 2018

Dissertation Chair: JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D.

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Dedications

I wish to dedicate this dissertation in honor of my son, Matthew Dean and in memory of my loving and devoted dog of over 15 years, Annie.

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Abstract

Elizabeth C. Giacobbe

**COLLEGE READINESS: THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

2018-2019

JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D.

Doctor of Education

The proportion of students attending college continues to increase and college remediation rates remain considerably high, particularly at community colleges. This study explored high school teachers and community college perceptions of college readiness in the area of English. An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was employed to develop a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of students' preparedness for the academics rigors of college English. This study was motivated by three research questions. How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English? How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English? What aspects of college-readiness are identified by educators as current priorities for remedies? To examine these questions, quantitative data were obtained from (N=38) educators through the use of a survey seeking to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness. To further examine the issue of college-readiness and to further explain the data from the quantitative phase, interviews were conducted with (N=10) educators from the original group. The results revealed a disconnect between high school and community colleges particularly in the areas of articulation, remediation, and deficiencies. Participant narratives highlighted specific areas where students are unprepared for credit-bearing college English. Implications for policy, practice, and research were discussed.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The proportion of students attending college continues to increase and college remediation rates remain considerably high, particularly at community colleges (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Despite national calls for more students to obtain a post-secondary degree, many students arrive at college unprepared for college-level work (Belfield, Crosta & Jenkins, 2014; Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Hodara & Jaggars, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). It is important to investigate the issue of college-readiness and the disconnect between high school and college, particularly community colleges where there tends to be the greatest deficit (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Goldrick-Rab, 2016; Perna, 2013; Welton & Martinez, 2014). Community colleges often provide access to college to underrepresented students. They serve a disproportionate number of low-income, immigrant, first-generation, and ethnic minority students (Hachey, Conway & Wladis, 2013; Crisp & Nuñez, 2014; Handel, 2013).

Each year, the United States, enrolls more than ten million students in 1,200 community colleges, which is nearly half of the nation's undergraduates (Bailey & Smith Jaggars, 2016; Knaggs, Sondergeld & Schardt, 2015; Norton, Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). Community colleges are open-access, meaning they are open-door institutions that are expected to serve nearly anyone who wants to attend college. Approximately two-thirds of incoming community college students fail to meet their institution's academic standards for college-readiness (Melguizo, Kosiewicz, Prather & Bos, 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015; Niu & Tienda, 2013). The creation of community colleges

created broader education reforms relevant for all student groups to engage in the college experience. Community college is often referred to as “the people’s college” (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris & Dorman, 2013; Lester & Klein, 2014). They emphasize civic participation, extend educational opportunity, and value diversity (Banks, 2014; Banks, 2015; Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco & Swanson, 2016). Over the years, the American community college has worked to develop a skilled workforce to maintain its competitive advantage within a global society (Castillo, 2013; Gleazer, 1994; Kane & Rouse, 1999). The community college president works with community members, their leaders, and other community-based organizations to resolve community issues to address the social, cultural, intellectual, economic needs of the community through educational services (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Banks, 2014; Banks, 2015; Castillo, 2013; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris & Dorman, 2013; Lester & Klein, 2014). Quaye and Harper (2014) posited that community colleges have become a huge part of the American higher education landscape. These institutions have established themselves as a unique establishment among higher education institutions because they are designed to increase access to higher education without burdening the existing four-year institutions (Quaye & Harper, 2014).

Community College

The first public community college began in 1901 as a small junior college (Joliet Junior College). This institution sought to establish itself as a first responder for the United States to meet its need to develop a skilled workforce and maintain its competitive advantage within a global economy (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Banks, 2014; Banks, 2015; Castillo, 2013; Lester & Klein, 2014; Quaye & Harper, 2014). The junior

college was created to meet the needs of the community it serves to promote a greater social and civic engagement in the community. This institution was closely integrated with the work of the high school and of other community institutions that served the community (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Banks, 2014; Banks, 2015; Lester & Klein, 2014; Quaye & Harper, 2014). By the mid-1800's, there were a small number of two-year postsecondary schools in existence (Gilbert & Heller, 2013, Handel, 2013; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015). By the end of the twentieth century, there were over 1,200 public community college campuses located throughout the country (Gilbert & Heller, 2013, Handel, 2013; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015). By the 1940's, enrollment increased to well over a million students (Gilbert & Heller, 2013, Handel, 2013; Schudde & Goldrick-Rab, 2015).

By the 1980's, there were an array of social problems that affected the significance to obtain a college degree. These problems ranged from racial conflict, economic changes, environmental conflicts, rising disputes across ethnic, geographic, gender, political, and economic lines, and the increase in the number of homeless and hungry families (Cilesiz, & Drotos, 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Broton & Gates, 2013). These constraints became a drawback because community colleges were faced with conforming to meet the demands of other higher education institutions to meet the diverse needs of the students. In initiating these changes necessary to better align with four year institutions, community colleges faced greater risks. State and local officials began to focus on institutional accountability because society began to regard community colleges' standards as below university level (Cilesiz, & Drotos, 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016). Students were accepted into community colleges without conforming to specific

academic standards. The colleges had an open admissions policy that did not require a high school diploma, low, or no tuition, and were accessible to the homes of students making travel unnecessary (Cilesiz, & Drotos, 2016; Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016; Goldrick-Rab, Broton & Gates, 2013; Norton, 2013).

Community colleges offered general education courses to serve as the first two years toward a university education. Leaders who helped to establish the public community colleges sought to relieve the university from offering the first two years of college as extensions of high schools and respond to the needs that traditional liberal arts colleges and universities had feeder or transfer schools (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris & Dorman, 2013; Leeder, 2013; Saichaie & Morpew, 2014).

The mission of many community colleges seeks to serve all members of the community by providing open access, offering a wide-range of educational programs, serving the local community as an institution of higher education, and promoting lifelong learning (Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco & Swanson, 2016; Stuart, Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2014). Thus, the institutions began offering vocational degree programs (Bailey, Jaggars & Jenkins, 2015; Zabadi, 2013), and they expanded to include a range of other activities, including workforce preparation, remedial, continuing, and general education (Edgecombe, Cormier, Bickerstaff & Barragan, 2013; McClenney, 2013; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013) and community service (Edgecombe, Jaggars, Baker & Bailey, 2013; Edgecombe, Cormier, Bickerstaff & Barragan, 2013).

Community colleges have been criticized by a host of policy makers and scholars for placing too much emphasis on students gaining practical skills as opposed to rigorous academic preparation. The scholars and policy makers criticize the diluted academic

curriculum and that community colleges fail to transfer students to a four-year institution (Edgecombe, Cormier, Bickerstaff & Barragan, 2013; Freire, 2012; Suskie, 2018).

According to Matt Reed and Kate Drezek-McConnell of the American Association of Community Colleges [AACC] (2016), there were approximately 1,200 community colleges in America (980-Public, 88-Independent, and 35-Tribal). During the Fall of 2016, approximately 10 million students were enrolled in a community college in the United States (AACC, 2016). Student demographics included 47% White, 24 % Hispanic, 13 % Black, 16 % other ethnic, minority groups. The average age was 22-39 years at 39 %. There were 56 % of women and 44 % of men enrolled in community college. Other student demographic included first generation to attend college at 36 %, single parent at 17 %, student with disabilities at 12 %, non-United States citizens at 7 %, and veterans at 4 % (AACC, 2016).

Community colleges play a critical role in providing access to affordable postsecondary education and a degree or certificate that can provide a path to a career or further education (Morest, 2013; Soares, 2013). These institutions delight in being open-access institutions, serving the educational needs of underserved populations in their local areas. Studies have shown that those students who choose to enroll in a community college are racially and ethnically diverse and are more at-risk for being unsuccessful due to poor academic skills, being first generation college students, and being burdened by family and work pressures as compared to traditional college students who attend four-year institutions (Bers & Schuetz, 2014; Carter, Locks, & Winkle-Wagner, 2013; Pike, Hansen & Childress, 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014; Strayhorn, 2015).

In the state of New Jersey, there are 19 community colleges. Seventy percent of first-time students entering college at one of New Jersey's 19, two-year colleges in 2014 required remedial coursework after failing at least one subject on the college-readiness test. In the Annual Institution Profile Report submitted in September 2015 by Rowan College at Burlington County to the Office of Secretary of Higher Education with data from 2014, 59.5% of first-time, full-time students needed to take a remedial course in at least one subject area (Office of Secretary of Higher Education, 2018).

College Readiness

The phrase "college and career-readiness" has become increasingly popular among federal, state, and local education agencies as well as in a number of foundations, professional organizations, districts, institutions of higher education, and the workplace. It is commonly said that the goal of recent high school reform is to ensure that all students graduate "college- and career-ready" (Achieve.org, 2011). From an academic perspective, college-readiness means that a high school graduate has the knowledge and skills in English and Mathematics necessary to qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary coursework or training, without the need for remediation (Achieve.org, 2011).

College readiness is a national education priority (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Liebttag, 2013; Strayhorn, 2015; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Since the 1980s, colleges have increasingly required placement testing to determine college readiness and offered or required developmental or remedial education for students placing below college level (Crosta, 2014; Harvey et al., 2013; Royster, Gross & Hochbein, 2015; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). According to McCabe (2000) in a national study of community college education,

41% of entering community college students and 29% of all entering college students are underprepared in at least one of the basic skills of reading, writing, and math.

Community colleges typically have incoming students take a placement exam to determine their college-readiness. Students who do not meet the standards on these placement exams are often required to complete developmental or remedial coursework. The assumption is that by completing these courses, which do not accrue credits toward degrees, students will acquire the basic academic skills needed to succeed in college-level, credit-bearing courses. The current developmental education system does not improve the typical student's chances of successfully completing introductory college-level courses (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Edgecombe, Cormier, Bickerstaff & Barragan, 2013; Hodara & Smith-Jaggars, 2014; Smith-Jaggars, Hodara, Cho & Xu, 2015; Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim, & Wilcox, 2013; Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013; Scott-Clayton, Crosta & Belfield, 2014). Instead, students earn developmental credits at the same expense of earning college-level credits and often never attain the same level of credits earned as their college-ready peers (Barnett, 2016; Belfield, Crosta & Jenkins, 2014; Cho & Karp, 2013; Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin & Vigdor, 2013; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013; Bailey & Smith-Jaggars, 2016).

Researchers have reported that students in our nation's high schools are earning diplomas, but they are graduating without the knowledge, skills, and metacognitive strategies needed to be successful at postsecondary institutions (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin & Vigdor, 2013; Crosta & Belfield, 2014; Edgecombe, Cormier, Bickerstaff & Barragan, 2013; Hodara & Smith-Jaggars, 2014; Smith-Jaggars, Hodara, Cho & Xu, 2015; Niu & Tienda, 2013; Rath,

Rock & Laferriere, 2013). Although the problem of college readiness is not new, it has received revitalized attention because the increased demand for college has surpassed the capacity of the higher education system (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Hodara & Smith-Jaggars, 2014; Niu & Tienda, 2013). The one-size-fits-all college-readiness agenda is resulting in students not graduating from high school or in students who graduate but are not academically prepared or college-ready (Barnes & Slate, 2013). Some common factors explaining the variations in college readiness are inadequate family and teacher support in the college application process, poor academic performance, and lack of financial resources (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Hodara & Smith-Jaggars, 2014; Niu & Tienda, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of college-readiness from both high school English teachers' and community college English professors' perspectives. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used and involved collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results through the use of interviews. In the first, quantitative phase of the study, data were collected through surveys to freshman-level college English professors and grade 12, college preparatory-level English teachers in a Mid-Atlantic county. The intent of this mixed methods research inquiry was to examine educators' perceptions and their definitions of college-readiness in the area of English in a Mid-Atlantic county. The second, qualitative phase was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results. The purpose was to conduct in-depth interviews to help further explain the quantitative results. In this exploratory follow-up, college-readiness perceptions were explored further with a subset of the

original sample. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to compare the results from two different perspectives to bring greater insight into the issue of college-readiness.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this inquiry was how the perceptions of high school and college educators differ when describing college-readiness. The subsequent research questions that supported this inquiry included the following:

- 1) How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?
- 2) How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?
- 3) What aspects of college-readiness are identified by educators as current priorities for remedies?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that served as the lens of this inquiry is a post-positivist worldview. A tenet of post-positivism recognizes that true objectivity may not always be possible and that it is important to acknowledge your biases, as a researcher (Ryan, 2006), and how they may influence your research. Post-positivists take the position that bias is undesired but inevitable, and therefore the researcher must work to detect and try to correct it. Post-positivists work to understand how their beliefs may have influenced the research (Ryan, 2006). It is my post-positivist worldview that guided me to the theories I used to serve as a lens for this study.

The theories that guided this inquiry were critical theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory. Critical theory has the researcher think about an individual disengaging from power relationships in order to take control of their own lives (Brookfield, 2005). Social capital theory is the belief that if individuals make an investment in bettering their lives, perhaps through education, the student should get a greater return on this investment (Lin, 2017). It also is the belief of this theory that this type of investment not only is for the betterment of the individual, but for the greater good (Lin, 2017). Finally, signaling theory played a critical role in this study. Signaling theory posits that an individual, group, organization, etc. cannot make any significant changes if they are receiving the wrong signals (Conley & Goldman, 2000).

The focus of this study is to explore the issue of college-readiness in the area of English within a Mid-Atlantic county in New Jersey. My bias, which I acknowledge through the post-positivist worldview, is that I serve in this county as a superintendent of a predominantly minority population for which college-readiness is an even larger issue. I was unaware of the issue of college-readiness until I began this doctoral program at Rowan University and started to receive the correct signals. I believe that education is one of the only ways the students in my district could change the trajectory of their lives, and thus it is imperative that they are given every opportunity to make an investment in their personal social capital to better themselves and our society. It is my current position in Burlington County and my belief in the theories that guided this inquiry.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions apply to the terms used in this study, unless the context plainly indicates otherwise.

Articulation refers to the process and dialogue that occurs collaboratively between high schools and institutions of higher education to define curricula alignment and data analysis to ensure “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed - without remediation - in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution” (Conley, 2010, p. 21).

College-Readiness is commonly understood as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college program without requiring remediation (Conley, 2007).

Developmental/Remedial Courses are courses designed for students who do not meet the academic standards on entry-level placement exams to provide the basic academic skills needed to succeed in college-level, credit-bearing courses.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for district and high school-level administrators as well as for community college administrators and faculty who seek to better prepare students for the challenges and academic rigor they may face at the college level. The research also may be useful to policy makers and advocates to assist with closing the achievement gap at the governance level between P-12 schools and institutes of higher education.

Currently, in the state of New Jersey, the Department of Education oversees schools and districts in the P-12 sector. There is also a Secretary of Higher Education who provides regulatory oversight for institutions of higher education. These two departments are

governed separately and, thus far, the two have not co-mingled to work towards the issue of college readiness. State policy makers have increasingly shifted their attention to the issue of college readiness, but fewer than half of the states currently have evidence of what students should know relative to preparation for credit-bearing college courses (Hammack, 2016; Sondergeld, Fischer, Samel, & Knaggs, 2013).

Much of the high school reform that is prevalent today focuses on students meeting specific standards; however, there is no relationship established with the demands of higher education programs. (Camara, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014; Hammack, 2016; Heller, 2010; Lunenburg, 2013 & Sondergeld, Fischer, Samel, & Knaggs, 2013). High schools are adapting and changing to meet the rigors of the Common Core Standards; however, these standards have not been aligned with the expectations and minimum standards of acceptance at institutions of higher education. Despite the fact that 46 states have adopted the Common Core Standards, only 67% of college-level instructors of first-year developmental courses were aware of them (Stern, 2013). This demonstrates a continued lack of alignment between P-12 and postsecondary institutions, which restricts the ability of high schools to prepare college-ready students.

As of the 2014-2015 school year, in the state of New Jersey, students are required to take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment. The goal of these assessments is to measure whether students are on track to be successful in college and their careers. The state's 19 community colleges began using the results from the PARCC high school tests for course placement starting as early as 2016, eliminating the need for qualified students to take the Accuplacer test (D'Amico, 2015). While this seems to be a step in the right direction with regard to synergy between

the two systems, it still does not ensure that all high school students will be qualified and not need remedial education. Conley & Brown (2007) conducted a study that analyzed state assessments from 20 states to determine the content of the state tests relative to a set of standards that identify knowledge and skills necessary for success in entry-level university courses. Exams were found to be moderately aligned with a subset of university standards, but in an uneven fashion. Specifically, English exams aligned poorly or not at all in areas requiring higher order thinking. Camara (2013) recommends that states that want to use high school assessments for postsecondary purposes should examine the content of the learning standards to determine their relationship to college-readiness criteria. “For high school graduates, gaining admission to college is seen as their most daunting challenge. The more difficult challenge is to be prepared academically for college-credit coursework” (Callan & Kirst, 2008, p. 24).

This study was limited to a Mid-Atlantic county in New Jersey, which is composed of 42 public school districts: including four P-6, eleven P-8, ten P-12, three 9-12, three K-12, seven K-8, one 7-12, one K-3, one K-6, and one P-4. There are 20 public high schools and one county community college, which recently partnered with a large university in southern New Jersey to become Mid-Atlantic County Community College (MACCC). The participants of this inquiry will include freshmen English professors at Mid-Atlantic County Community College and high school teachers who teach college-preparatory level English to senior students. In order to keep the scope of the study manageable, the research will be limited to the top high schools that send to Mid-Atlantic County Community College.

Summary

Students are graduating high school with a diploma but are arriving in colleges and universities across the country unprepared to take college-level, credit-bearing courses. American College Testing (ACT), a national organization that administers college-admissions tests, recently found that 76% of high-school graduates “were not adequately prepared academically for first-year college courses” (Klein, 2011). As a result, these students often have to take remedial courses in order to make up for their academic deficiencies. This can be a costly endeavor for students as these courses cost as much as credit-bearing courses, but do not accrue credits towards graduation. The large number of under-prepared students entering the nation’s two and four-year colleges and universities has created what Levin and Calcagno (2008) consider a “remediation crisis” (p.181). Ndiaye & Wolfe (2016) share the same sentiments that the lack of college-readiness has created a state of crisis. This study will specifically explore the issue of college-readiness in the area of English from the perspectives of both the high school teachers and professors at Mid-Atlantic County Community College.

Chapter II

Literature Review

In this chapter, the literature related to the research questions will be examined to determine the significance of pursuing this line of research. The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of college-readiness from both high school English teachers' and college English professors' perspectives. The review of the literature begins with a scholarly investigation into the problem of college readiness. A summation of published research on college readiness is provided in this section of the paper. The purpose of this study is to share the volume of literature concerning college-readiness, as it continues to play a prominent role in the local, state, and national educational arena. This literature review explores studies that have already been conducted in the area of college-readiness and emphasizes what appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions among the research findings in the area of remedial and developmental courses. The literature explores the practices of articulation between the P-12 education sector and institutions of higher education. Much of the literature presented shows deficiencies within governance structure and policy; however, more inquiries and data are needed to address the issue at the local level. Finally, this review of the literature shares the perspectives of college readiness from both secondary school teachers and community college professors. The lack of research regarding the educators' perspectives on college readiness further demonstrates the need for the current study, which focuses specifically on college-readiness in the area of English.

Theoretical Framework

Each one of us lives our lives looking through a specific lens. This also is true for how research is conducted. It is this lens or worldview that guides research. For this mixed methods study, I am identifying my worldview as post-positivist. A component of the post-positivist view is recognizing my own assumptions and beliefs as a researcher and being able to acknowledge them and how they may influence my study. It is important to be acutely aware of my position and how it may be influential and perhaps bias the study. I am looking to study the top ten sending high schools in this Mid-Atlantic county where I currently serve as a superintendent in a preschool through 8th grade (P-8) school district, to Mid-Atlantic County Community College. While I do not have a high school in my district, I will be collaborating with my colleagues within this county to have the study conducted. As a post-positivist, I am assuming a learning role as I conduct my research. As Ryan posits, I regard myself as someone who is conducting research among other people and learning along with them rather than conducting the research on them (Ryan, 2006).

Since the onset of my time in the doctoral program at Rowan University, which linked together educators from the P-12 system and institutions of higher education, I have become acutely aware of the disconnect between the P-12 educational system and higher education and the lack of college-readiness. The students in my P-8 district typically come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and predominantly are minorities. The students are sent to a neighboring district for high school, grades 9 through 12, where we have a send-receive relationship. The students from my district tend to not fare well, academically speaking, compared with their higher socioeconomic peers. I am of the

belief that my study may influence greater discourse to improve their academic readiness to attend college to forge better lives. I think an important aspect of this study may shed light on specific policy issues that need to be addressed across the P-16 continuum to ensure college-readiness. “Post-positivist research principles emphasize meaning and the creation of new knowledge, and are able to support committed social movements, that is, movements that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice” (Ryan, 2006). It is my belief and worldview that this study and my approach may serve students, typical of those served in my district, to close the achievement gap and create social justice and equity in higher education for all students regardless of their race or socioeconomic background.

Critical theory. Much like my worldview guides my research, so too will specific theories. The theoretical frameworks used in this study are critical theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory. Critical theory, as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994), requires a dialogue in the attempt to transform ignorance into a more informed consciousness, analyze how the structures may be changed, and define the actions needed to effectuate that change. The foundation of critical theory is critical thinking. Brookfield (2005) posits that critical thinking is about individuals disengaging from the unspoken assumptions of practices and power relations in order to apply more intentional control over their everyday lives. Critical thinking is both a process and an outcome (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2001). As an outcome, it is best understood how educators engage their students with critical inquiry abilities, skills, and dispositions. As a process, critical thinking is an individual out-of-the box way of thinking.

Brookfield (2005) denotes that while critical theory demands that individuals become aware of assumptions and taken for granted assumptions that may serve to disempower, more recognition of the conditions causing oppression is fruitless unless some action is taken that creates transformation for the benefit of all. Critical theorists hold, with Mezirow that “one must become critically conscious of how an ideology reflects and distorts moral, social and political reality and what material and psychological factors' influence and sustain the false consciousness which it represents especially reified powers of domination” (Mezirow, 1981, p.4).

Critical theory, as defined by Kellner (1992), supports the notion that a critical theorist seeks to find a utopian possibility, avoid authority, and provide openings for social transformation. The greatest tenet of critical theory is that knowledge cannot be separated from the agents of the system in which it exists (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). Critical theory views ideologies as broadly accepted sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appear true, accurate, personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority, but actually work to maintain an unjust social and political order (Brookfield, 2001). The aim of critical theory is to address issues that are taken for granted in society for the purpose of social justice to the benefit of those who are oppressed (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015). From a critical perspective, the traditional teacher-directed strategies support (even though it may be unintentional) rather than challenge the status quo. (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015).

Creswell (2013) views critical theory as empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them. Part of the purpose of my study is to address the issue of college-readiness and the constraints placed on incoming students and the need for

remedial courses. While I recognize it is too large of a topic for one study to remedy, my hope is that the study I am conducting will at the very least attempt to analyze the two structures of secondary and post-secondary institutions and give each a voice regarding the dilemma of the expectations of college-readiness. Adopting a critical theory mindset necessitates educators to examine their beliefs in terms of their role as educators as opposed to uncritically accepting the status quo about the teacher-student relationship, with the mindset that this higher order level of thinking embodies their best interests (Brookfield, 2005), and the interest of the students (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2015).

Social capital theory. Social capital theory is another theory that is guiding this research. Social capital can be defined rather simply as “investment in social relations with expected returns” (Lin, 2001). It is what Lin (2001) defines as the status attainment process. Stanton-Salazar (1997, p.7) suggests that the term social capital is initiated with building networks or supportive relationships with institutional agents. Lee perceives social capital as resources accessed by strong interpersonal social connections or group memberships (2010, p. 781). Social capital was elaborated upon by Pierre Bourdieu (1989), where social capital was highlighted as one of many theoretical concepts which included human and cultural capital in education research (Acar, 2011; Hauberer, 2014; Lin, 2001). Capital is viewed as the investment or production of individual actors, whether seen as independent or as individuals proselytized into espousing the dominant values (Lin, 2017). According to Hauberer (2014), social capital is a relationship that provides useful support when needed. It is the relationship among group members that is maintained by material or symbolic exchanges that reinforces relationships and can be used to socially guarantee or institutionalize them.

The idea of social capital is seen as a social network of individuals' connections and access to resources in the network or group of which they are members (Lin, 2017). Lin (2017) posits there are four explanations that can be offered as to why social networks enhance outcomes of action. First, social capital works because it offers a flow of information (Lin, 2017). Accordingly, social relationships can provide an individual with useful information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available. Secondly, social relationships may wield influence on a provider who play a major role in decisions involving the receiver (Lin, 2017). Thus, influence is used when exercising power in the decision-making process regarding individuals. Third, social relationships may be perceived as certifications of the individuals' social credentials, which may reflect the individual's access to resources through social networks or relationships (Lin, 2017). Supporting the individuals by these establishing these relationships provides added resources beyond one's personal investment. Lastly, social relations are expected to reinforce identity and recognition (Lin, 2017). Reinforcement is aimed to provide emotional support and acknowledgment of one's claim to certain resources. These four elements - information, influence, social credentials, and reinforcement encapsulate the succinctness as to why social capital is instrumental in both supply and demand of social structures that organize the ways in which individuals perceive the world around them and how they react to it.

Bourdieu (2017) refers to this as habitus. Habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification by those agents with the power. Habitus as a system of structures of classification refers to as the social conditionings that produced it, to a social condition where individuals classify themselves, expose

themselves to the classification, by choosing, in conformity with their different characteristics that mesh well with them (Bourdieu, 2017). Thus, habitus refers to the physical expression of cultural capital, to the habits, skills, and dispositions that are possessed due to life experiences.

Consequently, Bourdieu's approach has been abandoned as newer developments of economic and sociological thought were pursued (Acar, 2011; Hauberer, 2014; Lin, 2001). As Coleman (1988) professed, social capital theory elucidates how routine and evident inconsistent social behaviors could be explained as efforts to "overcome economic externalities and market failures." Over the years, social capital has been used to explain mass social problems including education (Acar, 2011; Green & Preston, 2001; Hauberer, 2014; Lin, 2001). In this manner, social capital is when an individual invests in resources for a return in their socioeconomic standing. So, why is social capital relevant to this study? Social capital benefits both individuals and the greater good. For individuals, "resources are embedded in social networks to gain returns in instrumental actions" (Lin, Cook & Burt, 2008, p. 7). Individuals can make investments, in the case of this study in their education, with expected returns, benefits, or profits. When individuals have social capital and profit, typically the greater good also benefits.

Social capital theorists denote that differences in student academic success can be attributed to different levels of existing social capital (Acar, 2011; Baker, 2000; Hauberer, 2014; Lin, 2001; Vorhaus, 2014). The networks and connections of families that a school serves as the foundation and acts as a scaffold for stronger communications networks among families and professionals. The social relationships have values and emphasizes the benefits of attaining trust (Baker, 2000). Social capital exists in

individuals and in relations between individuals and groups (Acar, 2011; Baker, 2000; Bourdieu, 1989; Hauberer, 2014; Lin, 2001; Vorhaus, 2014). Social capital requires honorable ethical standards to manage relationships. Relationships cannot be effectively managed if they cannot directly reap the benefits of the core network or what is being received from it. The best method to take a step back and evaluate one's contribution to the problem in order to be a support to others (Baker, 2000).

This study focuses on the concept of college readiness and how the lack of readiness threatens an individual's as well as the collective's social capital. Halpern (2005) further posits that not only does social capital foster educational achievement, but that education plays a critical role in the development of social capital. The concept of social capital is integral to this study to ensure America's economic continued growth, development, and competitiveness within the world.

Signaling theory. Signaling theory also frames this study. The term signaling theory was first coined by Spence (1978). Spence (1978) purported that signaling theory outlines reducing information that is disproportionate between two parties. Signaling theory is frequently used in the entrepreneurship literature (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011), the signaling value of board characteristics (Certo, 2003), top management team characteristics (Lester, Certo, Dalton, Dalton, & Cannella, 2006), and signaling that occurs during the recruitment process (Suazo, Martinez, & Sandoval, 2009). The formation of this theory was used in the labor market to model the signaling function of education (Spence, 1978).

The primary elements of signaling theory involve signalers, signal, receivers, and feedback (Certo, 2003; Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Spence, 1978; Suazo,

Martinez, & Sandoval, 2009). The signalers are insiders (state, superintendents, principals) who obtain information about individuals, product, or organization that is not available to outsiders (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). This is when insiders obtain information, some of which is positive and some of which is negative, that outsiders would find useful. Such information might include, specifics about my school, the programs offered, and the demographic make-up. Therefore, this private information provides insiders with a privileged view concerning the quality of some form of the individual, product, or organization (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). A signal is when insiders obtain both positive and negative private information, and they must decide whether to communicate this information to outsiders (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). Receivers are outsiders who lack information about the organization in question but would like to receive this information (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). Signaling theory delivers positive information in order to communicate positive organizational qualities. Signalers and receivers have competing interests (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). Thus, for signaling to occur the signaler should benefit by some action from the receiver that the receiver would not otherwise have done. Thus, the receiver observes and interprets the signal, however if the signals are not recognized by outsiders, receivers will have difficulty receiving the signal (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011).

Signaling theory provides an alternative rationale for educational investments (Clark & Martorell, 2014). In other words, signaling theory asserts that the informational exchanges that involve one party (i.e., school administration) is privy to information than the other party (i.e., teacher), signals given by the school administrator are interpreted by

the teacher as indicators of the organization's intentions (Spence, 1978). Signaling theory asserts that people interpret an organization's observable actions as signals of less desirable characteristics, thereby forming opinions about the organization's motives (Goldberg & Allen, 2008).

Signaling theory theorists denote that most applications of signaling theory focuses on how people outside the organization view their jobs (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Goldberg & Allen, 2008; Spence, 1978). As adapted to the high school–college transition process, this theory posits that high school students, teachers, administrators, and others receive signals from state standards and assessments and postsecondary admission requirements about what is important to teach and learn in high school. If the signals are unknown or unclear, those who receive them cannot create programs or adapt practices that are consistent or align with the expectations in college. When this is the case, the signal tends to be misinterpreted or ignored. The potential power of the signal to the system is lost or diminished. State education policy has not necessarily been conceived with signaling as an overt goal, but the ways in which administrators and teachers process policy appear to be a critical factor in determining the success of state education policies (Conley & Goldman, 2000; Spillane, 1998, 2000; Spillane & Callahan, 2000). The signals sent to schools become increasingly important as schools are subject to greater accountability through state and federal policies and as more students seek to pursue postsecondary learning.

The Problem of College Readiness

The U.S. Department of Education found that although 90% of young people report a desire to attend college, only 32% of high school graduates are academically prepared for college-level work with no remediation (Baum, Kurose & McPherson, 2013; Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013; Shaw, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Students graduating high school from public schools and entering community colleges in the United States are unprepared to demonstrate competence to enter college level academic work (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Fink, 2013; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). According to a 2010 report by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, the U.S. public high school graduation rate is just above 70% and many of those students who do graduate are not prepared for college (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). American College Testing (ACT), posited that 76% of public high-school graduates “were not adequately prepared academically for first-year college courses” (Klein, 2011).

The large number of under-prepared students entering the nation’s two-and four-year colleges and universities has created what Levin and Calcagno (2008) consider a “remediation crisis” (p.181). Despite the recent attainment of high school diplomas, many incoming students are academically unprepared for college-level coursework in reading, writing, and mathematics (Harvey et al, 2013; Klasik & Strayhorn, 2018; Levin & Calcagno, 2008; Shaw, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Rath, Rock and Laferriere (2013) and Venezia and Jaeger (2013) posit that students who enter college through remedial pathways are less likely to graduate. Bremer, Center, Opsal, Medhanie, Jang, & Geise

(2013) conducted a study that explored student outcomes related to taking developmental English (i.e., reading and/or writing) and math classes in three community colleges in three different states, using institutional data from 7,898 students who began college in the fall of 2009 (Cohort 1) or fall 2010 (Cohort 2). They examined the outcomes of students at each college, considering their enrollment in developmental courses as well as other variables. They found that older students, White/non-Hispanic students, and occupational students were more likely to graduate. These groups, and women, also had higher cumulative GPAs. The utility of reading placement as a predictor, and the utility of developmental English, reading, and writing classes as an intervention, were both limited to retention into the second term and/or second year. Thus, the misalignment between P-12 and postsecondary expectations is a cause for serious concern, and educators must work together to bridge this ever-widening gap.

The disconnect between high school proficiency and college preparedness is an issue and, therefore, more information is necessary to understand how higher education institutions and P-12 public schools are articulating to ensure less of a disconnect. The articulation process is generally defined as the dialogue, curricula alignment, and data analysis that occurs collaboratively with the high school and community college to ensure “the level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed - without remediation - in a credit-bearing course at a postsecondary institution” (Klasik & Strayhorn, 2018; Shaw, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Jackson and Kurlaender (2014) found that twenty percent of incoming freshmen at four-year institutions and 52% of those at two-year colleges enrolled in some type of remedial coursework. Key questions to investigate concerning the articulation process from the higher education and P-12

perspective include how and if articulation is occurring and what changes, if any, are being implemented in the P-12 schools as a result of the articulation.

Nationally, in 2016, only 25.5% of ACT test-takers met the benchmarks indicating readiness for college-level coursework in all four core subjects (English, reading, mathematics, and science). Consequently, high school graduates are too often required to supplement their high school diploma with remediation courses or programs designed to increase their potential for successful transition to postsecondary institutions. Windham, Rehfuss, Williams, Pugh, & Tincher-Ladner (2014) conducted a post-facto quasi-experimental study to determine whether or not participation in a study skills course affects retention. They found that successful completion of a study skills course increases fall-to-fall retention for students who enroll in the institution with an ACT Compass score over those who do not participate in a study skills course. The results also showed that while ethnicity/race and socioeconomic status were not significant, factors of retention, gender, age, and ACT Compass Reading score significantly predict student retention.

Unfortunately, these courses are often not credit bearing and are not always covered by a student's financial aid (Belfield, Crosta & Jenkins, 2014; Camara, 2013; Crosta, 2014; Rath, Rock & Laferriere, 2013; Schnee, 2014; Twigg, 2013; Shaw, 2014; Wright, Jenkins-Guarnieri & Murdock, 2013). This is an issue for all students; however, it has a greater impact on minority students. Harvey et al (2013) found that minorities lack or possess limited skills deemed necessary for college success, thus making underrepresented minorities the majority of students who may be required to take remedial courses. Consequently, many of the underprepared college students must enroll

in remedial coursework. These underprepared students also represent African-American, Latino, and students from low-income families enroll in these remedial courses at the highest percentages. African-American students account for 14.6% of the public high school population and represent 8.6% of Advanced Placement (AP) exam test takers; however, only 3.9% of successful examinees, defined as scoring a 3 or above on the AP exam, are African American (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; College Board, 2011; Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014; Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016; Paolini, 2015; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Thus, this wide spread agreement among college readiness researchers support claims that minorities are disproportionately underrepresented across racial and ethnic lines.

Approximately \$1 billion USD is spent each year on college readiness (Haskins & Rouse, 2013; King & Sen, 2013; Vargas, 2013). The heavier load of student debt that students carry causes a gap in access to higher education in America (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014; Johnson-Ahorlu, Alvarez & Hurtado, 2013). All students, regardless of their color or socioeconomic background, should be given the same opportunities to succeed. Knowing the amount of debt they will accrue, many students will abandon their dream. Interest rates will rise, and students fear an inability to earn more money than owe (Chen & Wiederspan, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Haskins & Rouse, 2013; Johnson-Ahorlu, Alvarez & Hurtado, 2013; King & Sen, 2013; Vargas, 2013).

Remedial and Developmental Courses

Many colleges, both two-and four-year institutions, offer remedial or developmental courses to assist incoming students who have not met the entry-level threshold of becoming “college-ready”. Remedial or developmental courses are non-credit bearing courses that are often out of the purview of financial assistance. These courses are geared to providing students with remedial instruction in the basic areas of English (reading and writing) and mathematics in order to prepare them for the demands of entry-level, credit-bearing courses. My study is specifically addressing the area of English (reading and writing). Perhaps most alarming of the statistics of college-readiness is, “when reading is at the core of the problem, the probability of success in college appears to be very low” (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Cullen, Levitt, Robertson, & Sadoff, 2013; Hooley, Tysseling, & Ray, 2013; McCormick, Hafner, & Saint-Germain, 2013) which further supports the need for the study. In another study, fifty-four percent of white high school graduates who took the ACT in 2016 met all four of its College Readiness Benchmarks, while only 13% of African-American students and 16% of Hispanic students met all four benchmarks (ACT, 2016).

Bettinger, Boatman and Long (2013) posit that only 26.8% of high school seniors had completed “high-level” academic coursework, defined as four years of English, three years of mathematics, three years of science, three years of social studies, and two years of a single non-English language. Most colleges and universities offer special courses for students who lack the basic reading, writing, and/or mathematics skills that are required for college-level work (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Harvey et al., 2013; Hooley, Tysseling, & Ray, 2013; King & Sen, 2013). These special courses are

often referred to as remedial or developmental courses. Students who do not pass a minimum threshold, despite their high school diploma and acceptance into the college/university, may be required to participate in remedial or developmental courses.

Remedial or developmental education is an educational support intended to provide under-prepared, incoming students of higher education with the skills necessary to succeed in college (Bailey, Jaggars & Scott-Clayton, 2013; Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Wernersbach, Crowley, Bates & Rosenthal, 2014). Remedial or developmental education is not new to community colleges. The first proposed concept of developmental education was used to describe the underprepared freshman student (Cholewa & Ramaswami, 2015; Melguizo, Kosiewicz, Prather & Bos, 2014). These efforts prompted higher education administrators to form college preparatory departments with the sole responsibility to improve the basic skills of underprepared high school students and form remedial programs (Parker, Barrett & Bustillos, 2014; Rose, 2014). Remedial or developmental education is a common program in most community colleges in the United States.

Remedial or developmental programs were established to determine a student's placement in or beyond the course, whereas many of these institutions use standardized placement tests to determine a student's level in math, writing, and reading (Barnes & Slate, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Harvey et al., 2013; Hooley, Tysseling, & Ray, 2013; King & Sen, 2013). Most institutions using developmental education as a support use a set of criteria to exempt students from required participation in assessment testing. These exemptions include high college entrance exam scores, high grade point average, statewide high school exams, advanced placement scores, and transfer status or any

combination of these (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013; Zimmerman, 2014). The most common method of delivering the placement test was computerized assessment measures, but other methods included paper and pencil for standardized college entrance exams (Melguizo, et al., 2014). Although this process appears to be of common practice at most community colleges, many educators continue to wonder if this is a best practice for measuring the placement for nontraditional students, or if a placement test provides a clear picture of nontraditional students' academic capabilities (Melguizo, et al., 2014).

About 92% of colleges and universities use some kind of standardized placement exam to assign students to remedial or development courses. The purpose of these courses is to target underprepared students and provide them with instruction in basic skills in an effort to improve their abilities to handle college-level material.

Developmental education has been traditionally organized in one of three ways: centralized, mainstreamed, or administered through one academic department within the two-year or four-year college, which has been the least common option over the past decade (Booth, Capraro, Capraro, Chaudhuri, Dyer & Marchbanks, 2014; Carnevale & Strohl, 2014; Soares, 2013). Centralized remedial or developmental education is commonly offered in a single department within a two-year college, while mainstreamed remedial or developmental courses such as those in writing or mathematics are offered in academic departments with the main purpose of offering courses applicable to degree or certificate attainment (Jaggars, Hodara & Stacey, 2013; Scott-Clayton, Crosta & Belfield, 2014; Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015; Venezia & Hughes, 2013).

Regardless of how it is organized, remedial or developmental education provides necessary instruction to improve individual academic performance thus enabling students to continue with their education at the college level. Students have graduated without grade-level competency or the proper preparation for college-level material. Students are assigned to remedial or developmental courses based typically on an exam or assessment taken when they first arrive at college.

Remedial or developmental courses are often the entrance gateway to college-level courses. Research suggests that more than one-third of all first-year students in college today are taking some form of remedial coursework in either English or mathematics (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Jaggars et al., 2015; Strayhorn, 2015). The U.S. Department of Education reports that 63% of students at two-year institutions take some remedial education (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Only 34% of students who are required to take one remedial reading course complete a two-or four-year degree compared to 56% of students who do not have to take a remedial course (Crosta, 2014; Hersh & Merrow, 2015). These data are from 2005 and are contradicted in other earlier studies that will be discussed further in this chapter. In a survey conducted by Deloitte (2010), students were asked which subject areas, if any, they were required to take a remedial course in during their first year of college. Twenty-eight percent of students surveyed reported that they had to take at least one remedial course. Out of those students, 79% took remedial courses in mathematics, 32% in English, and 21% in science.

Despite these staggering statistics, remedial coursework has become a politically contentious issue. Some view the existence of remedial or developmental courses as

evidence that many of today's college students are not academically prepared to meet the demands of college-level, credit-bearing work (Camara, 2013; Edgecombe et al., 2013; Morest, 2013). There are contrasting views on the subject. Critics of remedial courses believe that students can get bogged down, both work-wise and financially, eventually leading to a high dropout rate among students. Remedial education is too large of a hurdle for academically weak students who will be unlikely to graduate (Camara, 2013; Cleary & Platten, 2013; Cullen, Levitt, Robertson, & Sadoff, 2013; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). On the other hand, proponents of remedial education believe it is a necessary component of higher education and that most students who take remedial courses subsequently complete their degrees successfully (Bettinger, Boatman & Long, 2013; Hersh & Merrow, 2015; Moss, Kelcey, & Showers, 2014), which is contradictory to data discussed earlier in this chapter. According to a growing body of research, the outcomes of remedial courses are not black and white, but rather considerably gray. The courses appear to either help or hinder students differently by state, institution, background, and academic preparedness. The mixed findings from earlier research have raised questions ranging from whether remedial programs improve student academic outcomes to which types of programs are most effective.

Calcagno and Long (2005) conducted a study to determine the impact of remedial coursework on post-secondary outcomes. Their findings determined that remedial and developmental courses had mixed benefits for students. Their study focused on community colleges in keeping with the larger national trend of focusing on community colleges which are less expensive to study than four-year institutions. Calcagno and Long (2005) posit that although remediation at the post-secondary level may play an important

role in higher education, “little is known about its effectiveness in improving the outcomes of underprepared students” (p. 5). This would lead a researcher and/or educator to believe that it is best to prepare the students prior to entering into an institution of higher education. Calcagno and Long (2005) further posit that even though a large percentage of students are required to take some sort of remedial coursework, “the topic remains an understudied component of higher education” (p. 6). Research about the effectiveness of remedial education programs has typically been sporadic, underfunded, and inconclusive (Skidmore, Zientek, Combs, Fuller, Hirai, Price, & Moore, 2014).

A study by Education Reform Now concluded that the total cost of delivering remediation nationwide during the 2015-2016 school year was an estimated annual cost of approximately \$7 billion; and that across all income groups at all types of colleges, students are borrowing an extra \$380 million per year to take remedial courses in the first year of college (Education Reform Now, 2016). Although remedial and developmental courses often do not count toward graduation requirements, students must pay for tuition for these courses (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2015; Hughes, Gibbons & Mynatt, 2013; Scott-Clayton, Crosta & Belfield, 2014). Institutions are able to lower the cost of offering remedial courses through a variety of decisions, like the use of lower paid adjunct professors and large class sizes, thus generating revenue for some schools (Stewart, Lim & Kim, 2015; Long & Boatman, 2013). Remedial classes may prove lucrative for a majority of schools. The students who invest their time, money, and effort are no more prepared (Berliner, 2013; Levine, 2018; Rose, 2014). Consequently, improving college readiness is imperative and should be a priority for governing bodies.

Governance Structure and Policy for Improving College Readiness

Kirst (2003) writes, “A profound organizational, political, and cultural chasm persists in most states between the governance systems of P-12 and higher education. The two sectors continue to operate in separate orbits... there are separate state boards of education... separate legislative committees, and boards that coordinate one level with the other.” The same chasm currently exists today (Conley & Gaston, 2013). It is this lack of alignment between the P-12 and postsecondary education systems that compounds the problem of college-readiness. McCormick & Johnson posit that the “persistent disagreement about whether the gap should be closed at the high school or college levels . . . continues to have an adverse impact on definitive policy decisions” (2013, p. 285). Until this is corrected, and policy is mandated rather than proposed, college-readiness may continue to plague us as a nation.

Today, the goal of education is that every student will successfully graduate high school and be college ready and meet the demands of the 21st century. “Escaping from the shackles imposed by the existing pre-K, K-12, and postsecondary architecture requires recognizing that these institutions were designed for a world that no longer exists” (Hess, 2008, p. 513). The governance and policy issues that arise from the goal of every student graduating high school and being ready for college or a career are twofold. First, we are not meeting this goal, and second, it is unclear where the responsibility lies for ensuring that students are prepared. The governance structure that currently exists separates P-12 education, which is governed by the New Jersey Department of Education and local boards of education, and post-secondary institutions, which are governed by the New Jersey Department of Higher Education and their individual board of trustees.

Few states define college preparedness from a policy perspective. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia, for a total of 37, have a definition of college-readiness; however, these definitions vary greatly and none of the definitions include policies to ensure college readiness (Horton, 2015; Mishkind, 2014). Twenty-eight of the 37 states' definitions include a stipulation of readiness based on future outcome or the need for remediation (Horton, 2015; Mishkind, 2014), but leave the responsibility of determining readiness at the college level and do not include the high school level where the reform would need to take place. This exacerbates the problem because if the expectations are not communicated to the institutions where the reform needs to occur, the issue will never be remedied. The organizational separation in states between P-12 and higher education institutions further complicates the issue of how P-12 school districts can better prepare students for success at the post-secondary level (Davidson & Major, 2014; Lunenburg, 2013).

College readiness is a concern at the national level (An, 2013; Kyllonen, Lipnevich, Burrus & Roberts, 2014; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). New Jersey also recognizes its students are unprepared for credit-bearing coursework at the college level and the challenges of the work force (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012). Despite the fact that New Jersey is among the top five states in public school graduation rates, in many districts throughout the state, "barely half the children who begin 9th grade graduate from high school. Perhaps most alarmingly of all, New Jersey has the nation's highest graduation rate, yet a distressingly high percentage of those who do graduate are unprepared" for college (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012). Even though the state of New Jersey boasts a high graduation rate, many of the graduates who attend

colleges and universities are still required to participate in remedial or developmental coursework prior to being able to take credit-bearing courses.

New Jersey's high school graduation rate of 90% signifies that every graduating student has the skills and knowledge necessary to choose any life career path. New Jersey is considered a high-performing state based upon our students' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). 70% of those in New Jersey who enroll in two-year colleges and 30% in traditional four-year colleges take remedial classes (Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, 2018). Less than 37% of New Jersey adults over the age 25 have a bachelor's degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016). NAEP data shows that less than half of New Jersey students are at grade level in reading and math. Staggering achievement gaps between different student groups persist (Shulman, 2017).

According to Jacova Feld (2013), in 2009, 91% of first-time, full-time freshmen at Bergen Community College required some form of remediation in either language arts literacy or math or both. In 2007 and 2009, respectively, 61% of incoming freshmen at Union County College and nearly 90% of students entering Essex County College also required remediation in at least one subject area, and 64% of students at Mid-Atlantic County Community College took at least one remedial course. In the Annual Institution Profile Report submitted in September 2013 by Mid-Atlantic County Community College to the State of New Jersey Department of Higher Education with data from 2012, first-time, full-time students needing to take a remedial course in one subject area was over 64% (New Jersey Department of Higher Education, Annual Institution Report, 2013).

Table 1 reflects the number and percent of first-time, full-time students needing remediation by subject area at Mid-Atlantic County Community College.

Table 1

First-Time, Full-Time Students at Mid-Atlantic County Community College Requiring Remediation by Subject Area

Subject Area	Number of All First-Time, Full-Time Students Needing Remediation	Percent of All First-Time, Full-Time Students Needing Remediation
Reading	443	28.3%
Writing	332	21.2%
Math Computation	259	6.5%
Elementary Algebra	600	38.3%

Note. 2017 Annual Institution Report

Similar problems with students needing significant remediation also have been experienced by the four-year colleges. According to data, thirty-two percent of students entering the state’s four-year colleges require remediation; that is, they are not adequately prepared for basic college courses and have to take remedial courses. Seventy percent of students entering our two-year community colleges require remediation (Waters, 2015). Every year in the United States, nearly 60% of first-year college students discover that, despite being fully eligible to attend college, they are not ready for postsecondary studies. After enrolling, these students learn that they must take remedial courses in English or mathematics, which do not earn college credits. In two-year colleges, eligibility for enrollment typically requires only a high school diploma or equivalency. About one-quarter of incoming students to these institutions are fully prepared for college-level studies. The remaining 75% need remedial work in English, mathematics, or both.

The shift in our national and global economy from an industrial economy to one based on service, information, and technology has increased the need and importance to build a workforce with advanced skills and credentials (Garmise, 2014; Klein-Collins & Wertheim, 2013). Many employers now demand that workers have some postsecondary training (Camara, 2013; Cullen, Levitt, Robertson, & Sadoff, 2013; Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014; Maxwell & Connell, 2013; Smith, Given, Julien, Ouellette, & DeLong, 2013). The earning gap between college and high school graduates continues to change in proportion with the ever-changing economy. According to Leonhardt (2014), the pay gap between college graduates and high school graduates reached a record high in 2013, based on an analysis of Labor Department statistics by the Economic Policy Institute in Washington. Americans with four-year college degrees made 98% more an hour on average in 2013 than people without a degree. That's up from 89% five years earlier, 85% a decade earlier, and 64% in the early 1980s. Given these staggering statistics, there is even more of a need for high schools to graduate students better prepared to meet the demands of college and the ever-changing workforce. In this global economy, businesses, communities, and our nation as a whole must have citizens who have graduated with postsecondary degrees.

The vast majority of high school students aspire to some kind of postsecondary education, yet as described in the previous section, too many students enter college without the basic knowledge or skills needed to succeed in credit-bearing coursework. More than 90% of high school seniors in the United States plan to attend some kind of postsecondary institution (including two- and four-year colleges), and approximately 70% of high school graduates actually do attend some form of postsecondary education

(Cullen, Levitt, Robertson & Sadoff, 2013; Maxwell & Connell, 2013). Despite the statistics of students yearning to go to college, as outlined above, too many are unprepared upon entry. Currently, P-12 and postsecondary education exist in two separate arenas within the United States. “Policies for each system of education are typically created in isolation from each other – even though, in contrast to the past, most students eventually move from one system to the other” (Cullen, Levitt, Robertson & Sadoff, 2013; Maxwell & Connell, 2013). The disconnect between P-12 schools and postsecondary education can be found in every state. Currently, in the state of New Jersey, there is a Department of Education for the P-12 system and a Secretary for Higher Education. Rectifying the disjuncture between P-12 and college is one of America’s primary education policy concerns (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2014; Milner, Pabon, Woodson & McGee, 2013).

Articulation Practices

One area evident through reviewed studies is a lack of articulation between community colleges and high schools regarding post-secondary school expectations. As discussed in the previous section, until drastic change is mandated at both the state and national level, the lack of articulation will continue to be a deficit that affects college-readiness. In the meantime, students often attempt to negotiate the divide between high school and college. “They often face unexpected hurdles, such as graduating under one set of expectations in high school and, several months later, enter into a whole new set of standards in college” (Venezia, et. al., 2005). George (1988) conducted a study to assess the status and desirability of articulation activities between community colleges and secondary schools. The findings of this study reported that although both the community

college and secondary schools had a desire to articulate in an attempt to close the gap, very little articulation was occurring. While this information is over two decades old, articulation between high schools and post-secondary schools still remains limited (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; King & West, 2009; Smith, Given, Julien, Ouellette & DeLong, 2013). Jacobs (2001) states that “there is little recognition on the secondary side that a tie should exist” (p. 183).

Developing articulation agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions is no small task. In a study of challenges facing community colleges (Cejda & Leist, 2006), 85% of community college chief academic officers rated “articulation between high schools and your institution” (p. 263) as high or very high. The respondents of the study expressed concern at developing seamless educational experiences between high schools and community colleges. Teachers, both high school and postsecondary, have reported difficulty initiating, sustaining, and achieving successful partnerships as the culture of high school settings differs dramatically from that of postsecondary institutions, making articulation between the two difficult (Creech & Clouse, 2013).

In the state of New Jersey, articulation between grade levels in the P-12 sector is mandated by code, but articulation from high schools to colleges is not mandatory. High schools may elect to work with institutions of higher education to allow students to take approved coursework to count towards credit attainment (New Jersey Department of Education, 2016). In an article regarding articulation between high schools and colleges, Melin recommends “a powerful collaboration between colleges and universities and secondary school teachers” (2005, p. 182). In the article, Melin further states that vertical articulation would be ideal, but it is rarely occurring if at all (2005; King & West, 2009).

In the National Curriculum Survey (ACT, 2013), teachers and professors from elementary school through college were surveyed to determine if their local P-12 alignment or articulation efforts increase college-readiness after high school. Sixty two percent of elementary teachers reported that the P-12 articulation was very effective in increasing college-readiness. This percentage decreased from middle school teachers at 58%, high school teachers at 47%, and community college professors at only 16%. Some of these studies in articulation are outdated, further supporting the need for my study as data are hard to come by and articulation continues to be one area highlighted in much of my readings.

Perspectives of High School Teachers and Community College Professors

There are many facets to the college-readiness issue. Much needs to be done in the area of governance and policy in order to mandate articulation between the secondary and post-secondary institutions. However, there are still many other facets to college-readiness. One such area was studied by Komarraju, Ramsey, and Rinella (2012) where they sought to determine both the cognitive and non-cognitive predictors of college-readiness. Komarraju, et. al., (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 25 studies to determine the cognitive and non-cognitive factors that lead to college-readiness. This study primarily focused on the cognitive abilities and preparedness of the students. The findings suggest that a high school student's grade point average (GPA) and ACT scores reveal non-cognitive factors that may reflect personality traits leading to a student's success or failure in college. For example, a student who has a high GPA and high ACT score may reveal they are more academically disciplined and have stronger study skills and as such, should perform better in their first year in college. In short, Komarraju,

Ramsey, and Rinella (2012) hypothesize that their study increases our understanding of the variables that may influence a students' academic success in college.

Lombardi, Seburn, and Conley (2011) conducted a study to measure academic behaviors associated with college and career readiness. Their research suggests that college-readiness skills are in the students' hands and center around the key areas of cognitive strategies, content knowledge, contextual skills and awareness, and academic behaviors (p. 376). This particular study focuses on academic behaviors of students. The results of their study found four prevalent factors that emerged. These included being goal-driven, being persistent, having study skills, and being able to self-monitor (Lombardi, Seburn & Conley, 2011). Lombardi, Seburn and Conley (2011) contend that these academic behaviors of students are a necessary dimension of college-readiness.

College Readiness

The next set of studies addresses the issue of college-readiness through the lens of the students, high school teachers, and professors. In the 2016 National Curriculum Survey, conducted by ACT (ACT, 2016), the organization surveyed secondary teachers and post-secondary professors. The survey participants for this study included 2,717 high school teachers and 2,252 college professors. In 2016, 85% of high school teachers felt their students left their classroom "well" or "very well" prepared for college-level work in specific content areas. In stark contrast to that result, only 26% of college professors felt the students they were receiving from high school were "not prepared" or "very prepared" for their subject-specific coursework. The findings of the ACT National Curriculum Survey show that there is a clear disconnect between educators in the P-12 arena and educators at institutions of higher education.

Several assessments have been created to determine a student's proficiency. Students' socio-economic status (SES) and ethnicity added relevance to a student's educational experiences. A lower SES was a predictor of lower academic accomplishment (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016). First-year college students from such backgrounds produced lower GPAs than their high-SES peers. Not only do low-SES background students perform poorly in comparison to their high-SES peers, they also tended to seek out additional assistance, information, and services on a less frequent basis. This affected their ability to transition to college with appropriate readiness. Ethnicity illustrated similarities with low SES. Hispanics and African Americans overwhelmingly lacked access to the experienced or well-prepared teaching staff.

The social component of college readiness relies heavily on social capital, the accumulation of social ties that help a secondary-school student successfully transition into college. These social connections consist of family, friends, and school personnel (An, 2012). For those students who have a difficult time adjusting to college, these connections tended to be surfaced and did not encourage achievement (Stuart, Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2014). Supportive networks associated positively with academic achievement. Parental support, on the other hand, did not lead to equal outcomes in academic areas, but providing emotional support and aspirational encouragement were overwhelmingly connected to improved academic achievement in students.

In agreement, Deloitte (2010) posits a clear disconnect in the educational system. The survey participants included 300 recent high school graduates and 300 secondary school teachers. Sixty-eight percent of students surveyed felt they were either "prepared" or "well-prepared" to handle college level coursework. In contrast, 69% of the teachers

surveyed felt their students were not adequately prepared to handle college coursework after leaving high school. The Deloitte survey sought to find answers in academic behaviors as well. Eighty-two percent of students surveyed felt they were “prepared” or “very prepared” with critical thinking skills, while only 30% of teachers say their students were prepared to apply critical thinking skills. Additionally, 68% of students felt prepared to apply research and analytical skills in college; however, the majority of teachers, 70%, disagreed and indicated that students were not adequately prepared.

In a study conducted for Achieve, Inc. (2011), close to 1,500 high school graduates were interviewed. The sample comprised of students currently enrolled in two- and four-year colleges and graduates not currently enrolled, including some who had been enrolled but had since withdrawn. The sample size included several ethnicities and 353 current college students who had taken a remedial course. In the study, approximately 300 employers who make personnel decisions were interviewed as well as approximately 300 professors/instructors who teach first-year students at both two- and four-year colleges. Of these three groups that were interviewed, all felt that high schools did not prepare students well for the demands of higher education or provide the skills needed to be successful in the workplace. Distinctively, college professors rated the preparation that high schools provide the harshest input. Eighteen percent of college professors felt that most of their students came to college extremely or very well prepared. College professors at two- year institutions were even harsher in their ratings. Only 7% say that most of their students came to college extremely or very well prepared, compared to 22% at four-year institutions. The college professors estimated that 42% of high school graduates were not adequately prepared and were required to take some

remedial courses. College professors estimate that 50% of their students are not adequately prepared to do college-level mathematics and/or writing. The data that are lacking from this study, which would have provided a more thorough picture were that of the high school teachers' perspectives.

Conclusion

Much of the literature I have found supports the fact that college-readiness has been and continues to be an issue. The literature clearly delineates that the lack of college-readiness is of grave concern to students, secondary teachers, post-secondary educators, and employers to name a few. There were several limitations to the studies I was able to find for this literature review. A few of the studies were outdated. The fact that college-readiness has been an issue since the 1930s supports the need for further study, as clearly the divide between secondary school and post-secondary school and the issue of college-readiness has not been remedied. Other studies attempted to measure behaviors and non-cognitive variables of students that may contribute to students' academic success in college. While these were interesting and further support the need for college-readiness studies to continue, they did not address what I am attempting to do, which is to explore the concept of college readiness from both high school English teachers' and college English professors' perspectives. Other studies, similar to mine, included all subject areas, and while the data gleaned from these studies support the notion of my study, they would be difficult to replicate due to their size. Similar studies gleaned information from the opinion of students and high school teachers on college-readiness but lacked the college professors' insight. Comparable studies sought the

opinion of students, college professors, and employers, but did not have the high school teachers weigh in.

The purpose of my inquiry included gaining the perspectives of college-readiness in their students from High School English teachers and Community College Professors who teach English to entry level, credit bearing freshmen. In all the research conducted for the purpose of my study and specifically this literature review, there was no study that I was able to locate that specifically addressed the unique aspects of my study. The studies that were conducted in the area of English did not both include the High School English teachers and Community College English professors' perspectives. The studies that I researched that included both of these professionals' perspectives were not conducted in the area of English. It is the lack of research that specifically addressed both of these components that my study addressed further supports the need for the research conducted.

College readiness is a partnership among many stakeholders. This study sought to align both the high school teachers and professor's perceptions and beliefs on the necessary skills to be college-ready in the area of English. The reason English is selected as the area of focus for the study is twofold. First, all seniors in high school are required to take four years of English. This study will focus on college-preparatory level of English for general education students. Second, deficiencies in English constitute a unique obstacle in the skill acquisition process. Murray (2008) argues that "the need for remedial reading is perhaps the most serious barrier to degree completion" (p. 25). Following a similar line of reasoning, Adelman (1996) explains that "deficiencies in reading skills as indicators of comprehensive literacy problems, and they significantly

lower the odds of a student's completing any degree" (p. A56). "When reading is at the core of the problem, the probability of success in college appears to be very low" (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000, p. 75) and significantly reduces the chances of completing a degree (Oudenhoven, 2002, Creech & Clouse, 2013).

The literature focuses on three major tenets that are critical to the purpose of this study, which is to study College Readiness in the area of English from high school teachers' and college professors' perspectives. The literature focuses on the lack of students who are considered college ready, the remedial or developmental courses these students are required to complete in order to be deemed college ready, and the current governance structure that is in place which hinders students from gaining access to credit bearing classes. The theories that guide this inquiry are critical theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory. These theories directly align with the literature review. Signaling theory posits that students, teachers, and administrators in the P-12 setting receive their signals from the state assessments. If the signals P-12 are receiving are unclear or not in direct correlation to the expectations of postsecondary admission expectations, the students will continually fail to be college ready. This theory supports the literature on the governance structure that is currently guiding education. Currently, we have two separate departments that govern P-12 and higher education with little to no communication, thus the signals are not only unclear, but not being received. In order to remedy this dilemma, we would need to rely on critical theory, which requires a dialogue in an attempt to transform the current structure. If these theories were applied to the governance structure and current policy, it would support the social capital theory that is driving this inquiry. Students invest in resources to further their education and thus

expect a return in their socioeconomic standing, which would benefit the greater good. If the governance structure and ensuing policies are changed, perhaps there would not be such a need for remedial or developmental courses as students would be graduating high school college ready.

Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of the current study. In the previous chapters the literature review, theoretical framework, and research questions provided the context to which I could further explain and justify the basis of the study. This study explored the perceptions of high school teachers and community college professors concerning the transition for college-bound high school students. Through the lens of critical theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory, the study sought to capture the articulation practices, remedial/developmental courses, and governance structures/policies of selected high schools and Mid-Atlantic County Community College. In addition, the study added to the knowledge base of research regarding the disconnect between high school and college-readiness in the area of English. The remainder of the chapter provides information regarding the research design, setting and participant selection, data collection procedures, data analysis, issues of validity, and ethical considerations.

Rationale for and Assumptions of Methodology

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore the perceptions and expectations of high school teachers and community college professors concerning college-readiness in the area of English. The goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either qualitative or quantitative procedures, but to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both (Johnson & Ongwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research should try to fit together the insights provided by both qualitative and quantitative designs (Johnson & Ongwuegbuzie, 2004). Combining the quantitative

and qualitative methods into a mixed methods study yields a greater understanding than either method used alone. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) defined mixed methods as "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study" (p.4). The type of mixed methods design employed in this study is explanatory sequential. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) described this design as one "in which the researcher begins by conducting a quantitative phase and follows up on specific results with a second phase" (p. 82) that has a qualitative structure. The second phase of the study will serve to provide in-depth information about the quantitative results to allow for a more complete picture of the problem.

Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this inquiry was how do the perceptions of high school and college educators differ when describing college-readiness? The subsequent research questions that supported this inquiry included the following: In the first strand of the study, the quantitative phase, the research question was:

- 1) What do educators determine as priorities that need to be addressed for college-readiness in the area of English? (Quantitative Research Question)
- 2) In the second strand of the study, the qualitative phase, the research questions were:
 - 3) How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English? (Qualitative Research Question)

4) How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?

(Qualitative Research Question)

Research Design

I used a sequential, mixed-methods design consisting of two phases. This method was selected because the study was implemented in two phases. The first phase included collecting quantitative data from secondary and postsecondary educators through a survey instrument. The survey questions were developed from an understanding of the literature on the issue of college-readiness. The questions covered an understanding of what each group of educators defined as college-ready in English and their specific expectations. During the first phase, a recruitment letter was created to invite respondents to participate in the research study. Those respondents who were interested in participating in the study were sent an email that guided them to the Qualtrics online survey application for the collection and analysis of the quantitative data. Before the participants answered any question, they were directed to give consent to participate in the study. If consent is not given, Qualtrics terminated the session. Moreover, after taking the survey, data screening was conducted to check for missing data and correct data errors. Quantitative data were collected and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequency analysis was conducted to identify valid percentages of responses. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize in the text and to report in a table. Also, a comparison of the data was conducted to address any discrepancies and consistencies between the two data sets.

Accordingly, these analyses helped to guide the second phase of the study. During the second phase, the responses from the quantitative data guided the creation of the

open-ended interview questions that were used to gather more in-depth responses from a subset of the original sample. I created an interview protocol to highlight main questions, follow-up questions, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Responsive interviewing was conducted to form relationships with the participants. The interviews were taped and field notes were kept in a researcher journal. These methods for collecting mixed methods data were selected because they are relatively simple and are defined by clear and distinct stages (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Table 2 aligns the data sources, either quantitative through the use of surveys or qualitative through the use of interviews, with each type of research question.

Table 2

Research Questions to Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Sources	
	QUAN Survey	QUAL Interview
What do educators determine as the priorities that need to be addressed for college-readiness in the area of English?	❖	
How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?		❖
How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?		❖

Mixed-methods designs allow for research to develop as comprehensively and completely as possible and not be constrained by a single method (Morse, 2003). Since all methods of data collection have limitations, the use of multiple methods

offset the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another (Creswell, Clark, Gutman, & Hanson, 2003).

Participants and Sampling

Participants. The participants of this inquiry included high school teachers who teach college- preparatory level English to senior students and college professors who teach freshmen English at Mid-Atlantic County Community College. The high school teachers who teach college-preparatory level English to senior students were from the top sending high schools to Mid-Atlantic County Community College.

Sample. For this study, convenience sampling was used. Convenience sampling is a non- probability sampling technique that was made up of individuals who were readily available to answer questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This sampling technique included those who were readily available to answer questions and agreed to participate in a study (Fink, 1995; Frey, et al., 2000). In addition, the convenience sample was cost effective because there was minimal overhead and no elaborate setup for questions to be answered. For this study, the convenience sample included high school English teachers from the top sending high schools to Mid-Atlantic County Community College and professors who teach entry level English to college freshmen. The Senior Vice President and Provost at Mid-Atlantic County Community College elicited as many participants as possible based on the enrollment and number of English sections offered during the time the study was conducted.

Setting. There are 20 public high schools in this Mid-Atlantic county. This study sampled nine high schools that send the greatest number of students to Mid-Atlantic County Community College. The former Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Research for the Mid-Atlantic County Community College provided data to determine those districts. The top sending high schools to Mid-Atlantic County Community College are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Top Sending High Schools to Mid-Atlantic County Community College

High School District in Descending Order	Number of Graduates	Number of Students Attending Mid-Atlantic County Community College in 2016
High School #1	589	144
High School #2	507	136
High School #3	483	105
High School #4	337	96
High School #5	387	82
High School #6	212	81
High School #7	299	69
High School #8	227	67
High School #9	284	66

Note. These results are from Mid-Atlantic County Community College, Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Research.

Procedures

Recruitment process. I currently serve as a superintendent of a school district in a Mid-Atlantic county, which allows for access to all school districts within the county. Monthly meetings are held with every superintendent in the county. I utilized this forum to initialize the recruitment process for the quantitative phase of the study. Many

superintendents expressed their desire and interest in having their districts participate and assist in completing the study. The top sending high school districts agreed to participate in the study and wrote letters of agreement, which were shared with the University's Internal Review Board (IRB). However, when it came time to solicit participation, a few of my colleagues failed to share email addresses required for Qualtrics thus leading to a smaller participation rate. The freshman English professors included both full professors and adjunct professors as selected by the Senior Vice President/Provost of Mid-Atlantic County Community College. Several contacts were made with the Senior Vice President/Provost of MACCC who then passed the study to the Dean of Liberal Arts. The Dean of Liberal Arts requested a summary of the study that could be shared with professors. Professors were then encouraged to send a personal email if they were willing to participate in the study. As such, no emails were returned. I attempted contacting the Dean telephonically but have never received a return call despite several attempts. I corresponded directly with the Academic Chair of the English Department. After speaking telephonically with the Chair, who had never seen the original email attempts, another email was sent out and a few professors responded. After a two-week period, I contacted the chair a final time to solicit a few more responses if possible. Another email was sent from the chair and three more professors contacted me to participate.

Once the teachers and professors were identified, recruitment letters were electronically sent to potential participants. The recruitment letter included information about how the person was identified, what would be involved if the person participated, who was conducting the study and why, and an overview of any risks or potential benefits. In addition, the survey was used to inform the second or qualitative phase of the

study by asking each participant if they would like to be contacted to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. Those participants agreed to be interviewed were contacted in the order in which they were received upon completion of the survey.

Data Collection

Phase I - quantitative data collection. This study was conducted using a mixed-methods strategy to inquiry. This method of investigation was selected because it included the completion of a survey and interview to obtain a holistic outlook of high school and college educators' perceptions of college-readiness in the area of English. The initial phase of the study was quantitative. According to Creswell (2002), quantitative research involves the following components: "the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions; collects numeric data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner" (p.64). When those concepts were applied to this study, the subject under investigation was the perceptions of college readiness in the area of English.

According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2011), a survey is a non-experimental, descriptive research method that is useful when a researcher wants to collect data on a phenomenon that cannot be directly observed. The survey was administered to high school English teachers and community college English professors. The survey questions, while from each perspective, consisted of the same questions based on the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for college-preparatory English for senior students and what they are expected to demonstrate upon successful completion of the course. The New Jersey Learning Standards are cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce training programs ready to

succeed. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards, retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades, and work steadily toward meeting more general expectations described by the standards (NJDOE, 2016). For example, the standards for reading, writing, and language suggests that by the end of grade 12, students are at grade level or above and are meeting college and career readiness expectations as ascribed by the learning standards (NJDOE, 2016). Thus, the purpose of the survey questions was to gauge from high school teachers if students were in fact, successful with these skills. For the community college professors, the purpose of the questions was to gauge if students were demonstrating mastery of these skills and if these were the skills required to be successful in their coursework. After receiving all participant responses, a comparison of the data was examined to determine the educators' perceptions of college-readiness in the area of English. The results from the quantitative phase of the study informed the qualitative phase of the study.

Phase II - qualitative data collection. The second phase of the study included interviews with a small subset of the original sample including both high school English teachers and college English professors. The interview questions allowed for specific questions related to their perceptions of college- readiness in the area of English. Seidman (2006) suggested that interviewing is a highly structured data collection method that requires semi-structured, open-ended questions to understand the meaning of an activity. Interviewing requires good listening skills, exploring alternative responses, and follow-up (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2006). An interview protocol was created and used to highlight questions related to the study's purpose.

Responsive interviewing also took place. Responsive interviewing involved extended conversations where relationships were formed between the researcher and the interviewee to elicit depth of information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Because this was an in-depth process, it provided a wealth of information. The first stage of analysis was recognition. This process looked overall at the interviews and recognized general themes based upon the literature and research questions for the study. In the second stage of analysis, the general themes provided an initial coding system that was used and further revised into more specific codes. The final stage, for topical studies such as this, produced a "description of events that have occurred and then explained how and why" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.208). All interviews were conducted at the date, time, and location of the educator's choice. Glesne (1998) stated that interviews are per the time and availability of the interviewee; they should be done per convenience of the interviewee. Given the intensity of each question, each interview lasted about one hour. Additionally, the interviews were audio recorded to ensure that the participants' dialogue was thoroughly represented for further analysis. The participants received full disclosure of the research conducted and were required to sign consent forms prior to the start of the interviews.

During the interviews, I attempted to create an atmosphere of easy discussion in order to capture important statements and probe for additional information where needed. This process occurred with each interview until I reached data saturation. Saturation is the point at which no new information emerged from subsequent interviews and is another form of reliability (Tjora, 2006). Once saturation was met the interviews were

terminated. This data collection method was important because it provided an in-depth look into the research questions.

The interview portion of the data collection took part in two separate phases. In the first phase, I interviewed high school teachers who teach college-preparatory English to high school seniors. I interviewed six (6) high school teachers from four (4) different high schools. The first two (2) interviews were done back to back at the same high school. I was able to meet with each teacher privately. Each interview took place in the teachers' classrooms. The interviews lasted approximately forty (40) minutes and thirty-five (35) minutes respectively. The environment was quiet and conducive to a relaxed conversation that elicited thoughtful responses to the questions. The third interview took place over the phone as the interviewee was unable to meet due to familial obligations. This was not the most ideal situation as I was unable to observe facial and body language. Despite this obstacle, a quality discussion generated from the questions asked and the responses were thoughtful. The interview, including the brief interruption, lasted approximately fifty (50) minutes. At one point, one of her minor children of the interviewee interrupted the interview. The interviewee was able to restart the conversation shortly thereafter. After a quick review of where the conversation had abruptly ended, the interview continued without further interruption. Notwithstanding the brief interruption, the interview was authentic. The fourth and fifth interviews were conducted at the same high school as two (2) teachers from the same school agreed to participate. I met with one (1) of the teachers in her classroom. This environment was quiet and allowed for the participant to remain in their comfort zone. A few students returned to gather materials, but this lasted only a few seconds and did not seem to

impede the interview or serve as a distraction. This interview lasted approximately thirty-five (35) minutes. The second interview at this high school took place in the faculty lounge because the teacher did not have their own classroom as she taught multiple grades. This interview took almost the full allotted hour time-frame due to the number of interruptions of other faculty members coming in and out of the room. While no one interrupted our discussion, there was a lot of extraneous conversations and noise due to photocopying, etc. While these obstacles presented as an initial problem, it did allow for some down time in between interview questions, which afforded the opportunity for us to break from the script and have free dialogue. The final interview of the high school teachers took place at a coffee shop after school hours at the teacher's request. This atmosphere was quiet and conducive to a relaxed, easy-going conversation. Of all the interviews, inclusive of each group, was probably the most interesting. The interview lasted for approximately ninety minutes (90), which included the interview questions, a more in-depth conversation about college readiness, and the consumption of coffee. The high school teachers' interviews were conducted at approximately at the same time as the community college professors were receiving the survey. Unbeknownst to me, this high school teacher is also an adjunct professor at Mid-Atlantic County Community College. We had a set date and time to meet and in the meantime she received a request to participate in the college professor's survey. I was able to use this opportunity to interview her using both protocols and gain insight from each perspective. This was a great way for me to gain a better understanding of the higher education perspective prior to starting the remaining interviews of community college professors.

The second phase of the interview process, which was kick-started by my final high school/adjunct professor interview, was of the remaining four (4) community college professors. I was able to complete these over a two-day visit to the one of the campuses of MACCC. Two of the interviews took place in a private room located in the new library facility located in the Student Success Center. There are several private rooms available for either private study or small study groups. The first interview lasted approximately fifty-five (55) minutes. The professor was eager to participate as he has an interest in college-readiness, which led to a lot of rich discussion about what he has observed in his classes. The second interview on that day was with an adjunct professor and lasted approximately forty (40) minutes. She is a relatively new adjunct professor and was able to answer the questions based on the lack of readiness, as she described it, in the class she teaches, but could not offer more beyond this. I spent a second day at one of the campuses of MACCC. The remaining two (2) interviews took place in empty classrooms located in the building where the majority of English classes are taught. The first interview lasted approximately forty-five (45) minutes. The professor was a seasoned professor of the English Department and also has a strong interest in college-readiness. Her initial doctoral study was going to be on college-readiness, but changed to a different topic, but still has a strong interest in the subject. She sees a huge disconnect between high schools and her classes and is eager to see the results of the study. The final interview took place in the same building and was conducted following the professor teaching the English 101 class. This afforded me the opportunity to observe the students this study is based on. This professor provided an interesting perspective as she teaches English 101 this semester but has taught remedial English as well. Her answers were

specific to her current students, but the discussion following the questions centered around how unprepared students truly are when entering college.

Instruments

Phase I - quantitative instrument. The instruments described in this section of the study were designed to evaluate the implementation of the study. The instruments that were used to address the research objectives were a survey and interviews. The first instrument I used for this research design is a cross-sectional survey (See Appendix A). A cross-sectional survey design is a data collection tool used to obtain a picture of attitudes and beliefs in a population (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2011). The technique I used for collecting the quantitative data were through Qualtrics. I developed a 15-item survey containing different formats: multiple choice, 5-point Likert-type questions, and open-ended questions. The survey was organized into two sections.

The first section of the survey sought to obtain information related to college readiness of English when exiting high school and entering college. A 5-point rating scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" was used. The second section of the survey was related to personal demographics. These questions provided information about the participants' gender, age, ethnicity, education level, and title.

Phase II - qualitative instrument.

Interviews. The second instrument I used for this research design was an Interview Protocol (See Appendix B). The interview protocol was created and used to highlight questions related to the study's purpose. Interview protocols are conversational guides created to highlight main questions, follow-up questions, and probes (Seidman,

2006). Creating an interview protocol provided consistency and allowed for flexibility while gathering data during the one-on-one interview sessions.

Field notes. Field notes were used to clarify notations, interpretations, ideas, and impressions (Glesne, 2006). The field notes I kept included subjective sentences/phrases with descriptions of what was observed and impressions gleaned during the interview process (Saldana, 2009). The field notes were a valuable asset to the researcher to help recall nuances from specific interviews that may have influenced the interview process.

Data Analysis

Mixing data determines when and how to integrate the quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2007; Stentz, Plano-Clark, & Matkin, 2012). During the quantitative phase, the quantitative analysis from the survey instrument was descriptive and was summarized to look for trends and patterns, compare means, and frequencies. The survey asked the respondents seventeen (17) questions based off of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The questions are based on what the New Jersey Department of Education has determined that students must meet by the end of their high school careers to be prepared to enter college and/or workforce training programs ready to succeed. The questions are broken into three (3) categories. The categories are based on necessary skills a student should possess to be successful. The categories are writing skills, organizational skills, and research skills.

Writing is a necessary skill that a student must be proficient in in order to graduate from high school and be college or career ready. The questions include the skills necessary to develop and strengthen a student's writing including planning, revising, editing and using a style manual (MLA).

The second category focuses on the organization skills necessary to be successful in a college English course. The questions in this category seek to understand if students were able to produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. They seek to ensure that students are able to avoid plagiarism yet integrate textual evidence to support their writing and express their thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently.

The third category seeks to understand if students have acquired the skills necessary to gather relevant information from multiple sources, assess their credibility, interact and collaborate to compose an argumentative research essay. This dimension also includes questions about the skills necessary to produce and share writing through the use of technology.

A screening of the data was conducted (Stenz, Plano-Clark, & Matkin, 2012) to check for any missing data prior to the data analysis. Descriptive statistics for the survey items was then summarized in the text and reported in a table (Stenz, Plano-Clark, & Matkin, 2012). In addition, frequencies analysis was conducted to identify a valid percentage of responses (Stenz, Plano Clark, & Matkin, 2012) and was placed in tables where Likert responses were grouped (strongly agree/agree and strongly disagree/disagree) and percentages calculated.

Analysis of interview data was similar to analysis of other qualitative data (Creswell, 2007). The interview questions consisted of the themes identified from the quantitative results to gather rich and descriptive information. The qualitative results from the interviews was recorded and analyzed to interpret narrative data in the context of the study by focusing on interconnections between statements and events (Creswell,

2007). Tapes of the discussions were transcribed and combined with field notes during and immediately after each interview. The content was examined for patterns that emerged and then arranged thematically using *invivo* coding and analytic memos. *Invivo* coding helped to categorize participant behaviors or processes in order to identify themes. Analytic memos are similar to a researcher journal (Saldana, 2009). These memos highlighted written activities designed to reflect and challenge assumptions concerning the research process. The themes and memos were maintained during each phase of data collection. Based on the summarized data, the original questions were answered and any unexpected findings are included in the findings write-up. Creswell (2007) posited that when used together, the quantitative and qualitative methods balance each other and allow for a more complete analysis of the data.

Rigor of the Study

Designing a mixed-methods study requires mixing quantitative and qualitative elements to construct validation (Dellinger & Leech, 2007). Reliability is the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (Golafshani, 2003). The survey was used to provide information about priorities of college readiness for high school students. Internal pre- testing of the instrument was conducted with members of my learning community to ensure that the test questions were worded as I intended. Any adjustments were made to ensure the reliability of the data collection instrument. After making the changes, the instrument was tested again. Moreover, I conducted three interviews prior to implementing the interview protocol to ensure reliability of the instrument.

During the research study, understanding the credibility and validity threats of the interview protocol is important to minimize errors that might arise. Credibility ensures that the results of the qualitative research are credible from the perspective of the participants in the study (Toma, 2006). Therefore, to satisfy the credibility threat for using a sample of convenience, only those cases that represent the target population were selected. The participants in the study were an authentic representation of the target population that took part in the first phase of the study. Confirmability was examined to determine if the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others (Toma, 2006). Confirmability is the extent to which the findings of a study are driven by the participants and not by the researcher (Toma, 2006). Checking and rechecking the data was used to search for contradictions from observations, examine the data collection and analysis procedures, and make judgments about potential bias. Member checking occurred throughout the inquiry to review for accuracy (Cho & Trent, 2006) and to ensure that the participants' experiences were similar to my interpretation of the data.

I kept an audit trail of documentation. Field notes were used to clarify notes, interpretations, ideas, and impressions of activities (Glesne, 2006). The field notes included subjective sentences and paragraphs with personal descriptions of what was observed and what it was like to conduct the research study (Saldana, 2009). In this study, I kept a field notes journal to maintain a running record of the research process. In the journal, I made regular entries to record methodological decisions and the reasons for them, the logistics of the study, and reflection upon what was happening in terms of my own values and interests.

Validity is the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept or construct that the researcher is attempting to measure (Toma, 2006). Content and construct validity of the interview protocol was established prior to implementing the study. Content validity is the extent to which the interview questions are representative of all possible questions (Toma, 2006) about college-readiness. The wording of the interview questions was referred to and examined by critical friends to assess whether the questions were relevant to the topic and to examine if any of the questions may yield potential bias. Construct validity seeks agreement between a theoretical concept and specific measuring procedures (Toma, 2006). Therefore, I identified the responses from the open-ended questions that illustrated a correlation between themes and non-observable latent variables in the study.

The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to integrate the results of both datasets and to establish triangulation. Triangulation occurs when several data collection methods are used to overcome deficiencies that emerge from one investigation or one method of inquiry (Denzin, 1989). Triangulation therefore enhances the credibility of the study by introducing other ways to produce evidence in support of key claims (Cho & Trent, 2006) and determines the accuracy of the data.

Ethical Considerations

I gained approval from Mid-Atlantic County Community College, all participating high school districts, and the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study. I independently conducted all data collection and data analysis for this study. There were no participants under the age of 18; therefore, no

parental consent was required. In addition, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to conducting the interviews. The respondents received full disclosure of the research conducted. Each participant who gave consent signed consent forms to take part in a research study, consent forms to be interviewed, and consent forms to be audio recorded. Each respondent received one copy of the signed documents for their records and I kept the other. Pseudonyms were used to prevent the identification of the participants who agreed to take part in the study. The participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study without any consequences, at any time and for any reason. Lastly, the participants were advised that their responses in the study would be used for research purposes and are confidential.

Confidentiality is certainly an important consideration whenever conducting research. As my current role as a superintendent, I was able to gain the contact information for the High School English teachers from my superintendent colleagues. I reached out to the possible participants of the participating high schools via Qualtrics, which sends an email directly to the participant. Should the participant choose to participate, they consent by taking the survey, but their identity remains anonymous to me, the researcher. The only participants who revealed their identity were those who added their name and contact information on the survey if they were willing to further participate in the second, interview phase of the study. The Community College professors, from Mid-Atlantic County Community College, were contacted by the Academic Chair of the English Department on two separate occasions. The willing participants sent me their email addresses, which were inputted into Qualtrics. Qualtrics generates an email that pushes the survey to the community college professors and those

that were willing to participate completed the study thus anonymous to me. Once again, the professors who were willing to participate in the interview phase of the study revealed their identities by providing their contact information to me directly. None of the participants, from either the high schools and/or Mid-Atlantic County Community College, have been disclosed to anyone thus their confidentiality remains of paramount concern to this researcher.

All signed consent forms, interview transcripts, field notes, analytic memos, tapes, and flash drives are stored and retained under lock and key in a secured file cabinet and on a password-protected computer. Paper records, such as transcripts, field notes, and analytic memos, were shredded and recycled upon completion of the report. Records stored on a computer hard drive, flash drives, and audio recordings were erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device and physically destroyed. I have kept records stating which records were destroyed, and when and how it was accomplished. All research records will be maintained and disposed of five years after the day of completing this study.

Role of Researcher

I am the superintendent of a small, urban, one school district located along the Delaware River in the Mid-Atlantic county in New Jersey where the study was conducted. The district serves approximately 300 Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade students. There is no high school within the district and as a result none of the participants will be from the district within which I work. As a superintendent, I gained access to the high school teachers through my relationship with the superintendents within each of the respective districts. This study was a mixed-methods study. For the

quantitative piece and gathering the data through surveys, my role was almost non-existent. During the qualitative phase, when I was interviewing, my role was more etic or an outside observer. During this phase; however, I was cognizant of any biases, expectations, or preconceived notions I may have had as the study progressed. I have maintained a research journal explicating my personal reactions and reflections.

Limitations

This study was designed to explore the perceptions of community college professors and high school teachers when describing college-readiness in the area of English. Consequently, there were several limitations that impacted the findings of the study. The first limitation was evaluating the priorities of high school teachers and community college professors. This was a limitation since the population was not representative of all high schools and colleges. The use of interviews and surveys was not without weaknesses and limitations. The application of surveys has often been criticized for its overreliance on numbers and its inability to gain a deep understanding of the topic being investigated (May, 2001). For that reason, conducting a mixed methods study helped to offset the dependence on numbers.

The mixed-methods research design required that I conduct multiple interviews to solicit robust, rich, and descriptive information from high school teachers and community college professors. The qualitative interviews were dependent on the relationship between the interviewer and the participant. While the use of interviews can lead to a fuller exploration of research questions, the cooperation of interviewees is essential for success (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Since such a relationship cannot be duplicated, each qualitative interview had some differences

and may not be generalizable. A further consideration that affected the quality of the data collected was the interview skills and expertise of the interviewer (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). To address these issues, those being interviewed were limited to the format and manner in which I conducted the interview.

Additionally, since the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, researcher bias can alter the study's findings (Brott & Myers, 2002). This limitation was significant because I brought my personal values and beliefs into the study. To address this limitation, I sought the assistance of critical friends and professionals in the field to ensure that my views did not present bias to the findings.

Conclusion

The literature suggests that lack of college readiness is plaguing our colleges and universities. If the United States wants to remain competitive in our global society, it is imperative that this phenomenon be studied and suggestions found to remedy the underlying problem. The data collection methodology was a sequential mixed methods design utilizing quantitative surveys during phase one followed by qualitative interviews during phase two. The sequential mixed methods design was found to be most appropriate for this study because it used phase one data to guide the best course of action for phase two. This study sought to gain the perspectives of both the high school educators and community college professors at the underlying core issues of why students are not college ready and successful in freshmen English.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings generated from data analysis. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine college-readiness from high school English teachers' and college English professors' perspectives. In the quantitative phase of the study, survey data were collected from high school English teachers and college English professors in a Mid-Atlantic county in New Jersey. The qualitative phase of this study had two purposes: (1) to query participants on their perceptions of college readiness (2) and to gain a deeper understanding of nuances of student preparedness. First, I will describe the quantitative phase followed by the quantitative findings. Then, I will describe the qualitative phase followed by the qualitative findings. Finally, I will integrate the quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a complete picture of the study.

A two phase, mixed methods, sequential research design was conducted for this study. Quantitative data were collected in phase one of the study and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, t-tests, and standard deviations were run and are reported from the questionnaire. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to analyze all data collected from the participants. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) declared surveys are a descriptive research method that is useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena not directly observed. A cross-sectional survey was designed to provide a glimpse of the target population's perceptions for this study. Additionally, Independent-Samples t-tests were used to evaluate the difference in the

means of two surveys. Rudestam and Newton (p.30), recommends using the t-tests' statistical techniques when evaluating differences between groups (2001). Independent-Samples t-tests helped to compare the mean difference between the high school teachers and the community college professors' responses on the survey instrument. After analyzing the quantitative data, qualitative data was collected through interviews; and the responses were coded and analyzed through thematic iterations. The results from all three phases are reported in this chapter as well as a summary of the results as a whole.

Research Questions

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative results are presented to answer the primary research questions of this study, which are:

- 1) What do educators determine as the priorities that need to be addressed for college readiness in the area of English?
- 2) How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?
- 3) How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?

Participant Sample and Setting

For this study, a convenience sample was used, as I currently serve as a superintendent in this Mid-Atlantic county and have relatively easy access to the educators at both levels due to my professional relationship with fellow superintendents and college administrators. Within this Mid-Atlantic county, there are 20 public high schools and one community college that recently partnered with a larger university within the state to offer their students with the opportunity to receive a four-year degree at a fraction of the cost. The community college is the

only one located within the county and offers one main campus and three smaller off-site campuses. The high schools that participated included to regional high school districts that receive students from many of the smaller communities within the county. One of these regional districts has four high schools, three of the schools participated. One of the high schools is a county vocational school that receives students from all of the municipalities within the county upon successfully completing the admission requirements. The remaining high schools are the largest within the county. The convenience sample included high school English teachers from the top sending high schools within the Mid-Atlantic County and community college professors who teach entry level English to college freshmen at the Mid-Atlantic County Community College. There were thirty-eight (38) participants in the quantitative phase of the study. These 38 participants, which included high school teachers and community college professors all participated in the survey, which was the first phase of the overall study. These participants were sent a recruitment letter by me through the superintendents and/or principal of their individual school/district. The respondents who were interested in participating in the study were sent an email that guided them to the online study through Qualtrics. These participants gave their consent at the beginning of the survey or the session was terminated. The participants in the survey portion were anonymous. For the second phase of the study, which was qualitative, I interviewed ten (10) participants. After completing the on-line survey through Qualtrics, these ten (10) individuals gave their contact information to further participate in the second phase of the inquiry. Their confidentiality was addressed through the use of pseudonyms, so no distinguishing characteristics could be gleaned

from an outside source. The setting of the study was within the educational institutions of this Mid-Atlantic county including the top sending high schools that participated; as well as, the community college, which is also located within the county.

Data Collection

An explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was used for this inquiry. This approach involves a two-phase approach to the data collection. Quantitative data is collected and analyzed in the first phase of the study. The researcher then uses the results to guide the qualitative phase, which is the second phase (Creswell, 2018). The data collection and analyses are conducted in two very distinct phases. For this inquiry, the quantitative data was collected through a survey for both the high school teachers and the community college professors. The survey consisted of questions from the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English Language Arts, which reflect the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in college, career, and life. The data collected during the quantitative phase of the study aided in the second phase of the study. The data helped to formulate more in-depth interview questions for the qualitative phase. These interview questions allowed for a broader discussion of the findings from the quantitative phase. The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended, which allowed for open dialogue and new ideas to be explored. The sample of the qualitative phase were individuals that participated in the initial quantitative sample. The intent of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design is to follow up the quantitative results with a more in-depth exploration through qualitative questions (Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative Phase

Data analysis. The first 17 items on the survey had measured responses on a 5-point Likert type scale. Cronbach's alpha was chosen by the researcher to test for internal consistency because of its ability to be used with instruments that match item responses to three or more values (Huck, 2015). For example, 1 = (strongly agree), 2 = (agree), 3 = (neutral), etc. The coefficient alpha reliability method was used for each survey. As Table 4 illustrates, both surveys have an acceptable alpha coefficient greater than .80.

Table 4

Cronbach's Alpha Internal Reliability of Survey Questionnaire

Survey	Number of Items	Alpha Reliability, <i>a</i>
High School Teachers	17	.90
Community College Professors	17	.86

Note. These results are from the sampling of 38 (27 High School Teachers and 11 Community College Professors) people surveyed.

Descriptive statistics. The sample analyzed included 38 participants. Data on demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, and professional title were collected from the survey. The distribution of males (20%) and females (80%) was not surprising as more than three-quarters of all teachers were women. The majority (68%) of participants was ages 30 to 49 and participants ages 50 to 64 composed 21% of the sample. The smallest (8%) age group was participants of 21-29 years. In terms of ethnicity, the large majority of participants were White or Caucasian (97%). More than half of all participants (72%) received a master's degree. All the participants were high

school English teachers and college professors. Table 5 presents a frequency table of demographic variables of the respondents in the study.

Table 5

<i>Demographic Variables</i>		
	Frequency	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	7	21
Female	26	79
No Response	5	
Total	38	100.0
<i>Age</i>		
21-29	3	9
30-49	23	68
50-64	7	21
No Response	5	
Total	38	100.0
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
White or Caucasian	32	97
Native American/Alaskan	1	3
No Response	5	
Total	38	100.0
<i>Level of Education</i>		
Bachelor's degree	5	16
Master's degree	23	72
Doctorate	2	6
Some Doctorate	2	6
No Response	6	
Total	38	100.0

Note. Demographic characteristics of 38 high school English teachers and college professors who participated in the study.

Results. This section of the data analysis includes descriptive statistics that addresses from the High School Teachers and Community College Professors surveys.

- 1) What do educators determine as the priorities that need to be addressed for college readiness in the area of English?

In order to provide a more meaningful interpretation of this quantitative data from Research Question 1, what are the priorities that need to be addressed for college-readiness in the area of English? An Independent-Samples *t*-test was conducted and concluded that there is no statistical significance between the high school teachers' and college professors' responses on college readiness in the area of English. The independent-samples *t*-test was chosen as there was no pairing of scores between the high school teacher and college professors. The *t*-test was conducted to learn whether the difference between the high school and college professors means were statistically significant and therefore either accept or reject the null hypothesis. The dependent variables used were survey questions pertaining to writing, organization, and research. The independent variable was professional title. Significance was determined at the $p < .05$ alpha level for all statistical tests. The means (*M*) is the average that is used to derive the central tendency of the data in question (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Standard deviations (*SD*) is the measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The *t* value measures the size of the difference relative to the variation in your sample data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The *p*-values is the level of marginal significance within a statistical hypothesis test representing the probability of the occurrence of a given event.

Tables 6-22 summarizes the mean (*M*), standard deviations (*SD*), and *t* and *p* values from high school teachers and college professors. Table 6 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values concerning the preparedness of academic rigor.

Table 6

Preparedness of Academic Rigor

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
1. When students complete my course, they are adequately prepared to face the academic rigor of Freshman College English Composition 101/English 101.	HST	1.87	.815	11.003	.000
	CCP	3.09	1.044	9.815	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number one, community college professors had higher scores on student preparedness of academic rigor of English ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.044$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .815$), $t(11.003)$, $p < .05$. Five (45%) community college professors indicated that they Somewhat Agreed while 6 (55%) Somewhat Disagreed. No one strongly agreed, neither agree nor disagree, or strongly disagreed. Eleven (48%) high school teachers Somewhat Agreed, 8 (35%) Strongly Agreed, 3 (13%) Neither agree nor disagree, 1 (4%) Somewhat disagree, and no one strongly disagreed to a student's level of preparedness to face academic rigor of Freshman College. 4 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the majority of high school teachers believe their students leave their course ready to face the academic challenges presented at the entry level of college, credit bearing coursework. The results from the community college professors are a bit more ambivalent; however, the majority felt that the students are not academically prepared to face the rigor they present to their students. This ambivalence is further explored in the qualitative portion of this inquiry. Table 7 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p -values about applying the writing process.

Table 7

Applying the Writing Process

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
2. When students complete my course, they can successfully apply the writing process.	HST	1.57	.507	14.810	.000
	CCP	2.64	.924	9.459	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number two, community college professors had higher scores on students successfully applying the writing process ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .924$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .507$), $t (14.8)$, $p < .05$). None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 7 (63%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 3 (27%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed to applying the writing process. Ten (43%) high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 13 (57%) Somewhat Agreed, no teachers Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, no teachers Somewhat disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed to a student's capacity to successfully apply the writing process. 4 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the high school teachers believe that students are able to apply the writing process overall successfully. The community college professors overall somewhat agreed that students are able to apply the writing process in their course. A few professors did not agree that students are successful in the application of the writing process. Table 8 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p -values about drafting work using conventions of academic writing.

Table 8

Drafting Work Using Conventions of Academic Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
3. When students complete my course, they can successfully draft their work using conventions of academic writing.	HST	1.65	.487	16.271	.000
	CCP	2.64	.924	9.459	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teacher, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number three, community college professors had higher scores on students successfully drafting their work using conventions of academic writing ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .924$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.65$, $SD = .487$), $t(16.2)$, $p < .05$). None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 7 (64%) Somewhat Agreed, one (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 3 (27%) Somewhat Disagreed, and no college professors Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 8 (34%) of high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 15 (65%) Somewhat Agreed, none of the teachers Neither Agreed or Disagreed, Somewhat Disagreed, or Strongly Disagreed to a student's capacity to successfully draft their work using conventions of academic writing. 4 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate similarly to survey item number two. Overall, high school teachers believe that students are successfully able to draft their work using conventions of academic writing. Some of these basic conventions include spelling, punctuation, and grammar. The majority of community college professors somewhat agreed that students were able to apply the conventions, while a few disagreed. This demonstrates that the community college professors overall believe that this is a general area of weakness as none committed to strongly agreeing that students could apply this skill. Table 9 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p-values about revising work using conventions of academic writing.

Table 9

Revising Work Using Conventions of Academic Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
4. When students complete my course, they can successfully revise their work using conventions of academic writing.	HST	2.13	.992	10.496	.000
	CCP	3.27	1.009	10.757	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teacher, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number four, community college professors had higher ratings on students successfully revising their work using conventions of academic writing ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.009$) than did high school teachers ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .992$), $t(10.496)$, $p < .05$). None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, none of the professors Neither Agreed or Disagreed, 7 (64%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none of the Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 5 (20%) of high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 15 (63%) Somewhat Agreed 1 (4%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 1 (4%) Strongly Disagreed with a student's capacity to successfully revise their work using conventions of academic writing. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that overall, a majority of the community college professors believe that students are not capable of successfully make revisions to their work using the conventions of academic writing. The high school teachers' responses also indicate that it is an area of weakness. A majority somewhat agreed that they could revise; however, none felt it was an area of strength based on these scored responses. These results reflect the differences of community college professors and teacher educators. Table 10 presents the frequencies, means,

standard deviations, t and p-values about editing work using conventions of academic writing.

Table 10

Editing Work Using Conventions of Academic Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
5. When students complete my course they can successfully edit their work using conventions of academic writing.	HST	2.08	.881	11.591	.000
	CCP	3.18	.982	10.750	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number five, community college professors had higher scores on students successfully editing their work using conventions of academic writing ($M = 3.18$, $SD = .982$) than did high school teachers ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .881$), $t(11.591)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 6 (54%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none of the professors Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 5 (20%) of high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 15 (62%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (4%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 3 (12%) Somewhat Agreed, and none of the teachers Strongly Disagreed to a student's capacity to successfully edit their work using conventions of academic writing. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses are very similar to survey item number four with regard to revising work using conventions of academic writing. Both the community college professors and high school teachers see this as an area of weakness as none of the groups strongly agreed or agreed that students were capable of

editing their work. Table 11 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p-values for development of writing that is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Table 11

Development Is Appropriate to Task, Purpose, and Audience

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
6. When students complete my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the development is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	HST	1.83	.816	11.000	.000
	CCP	3.09	.944	10.861	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number six, community college professors had higher scores on students producing clear and coherent writing in which development is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .944$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.83$, $SD = .816$), $t(11.000)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (18%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 5 (46%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 9 (38%) Strongly Agreed, 11 (46%) Somewhat Agreed, 3 (13%) Nether Agreed nor Disagreed, 1 (4%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none of the teachers Strongly Disagreed with to a student's capacity to produce clear and clear and coherent writing in which the development is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate a complete disconnect from the high school teachers' perspectives on students' readiness to produce clear and coherent writing that is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience and the community college professors.

Overall, high school teachers strongly agreed that students have mastered this skill and

are able to successfully apply it; in contrast to, community college professors felt more strongly that this was not a skill that has readily been mastered and therefore is not applied as often as it should be. Table 12 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for producing clear and coherent writing in which organization is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Table 12

Organization is Appropriate to Task, Purpose, and Audience

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
7. When students complete my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the organization is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	HST	1.50	.590	12.460	.000
	CCP	3.00	.894	11.124	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number seven, community college professors had higher scores on students producing clear and coherent writing in which organization is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .894$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.50$, $SD = .590$), $t(12.460)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, 3 (27%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 13 (54%) of high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 10 (41%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (4%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, none Somewhat Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed to a student's capacity to produce clear and clear and coherent writing in which the organization is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the skill of the organization of students' writing is more

subjective based on the individual teachers' experience. The community college professors were split down the middle with somewhat agreeing and somewhat disagreeing on students' ability to organize their writing in an appropriate manner. Overall, high school teachers felt strongly by both strongly agreeing to somewhat agreeing that students are able to organize their writing appropriately. The high school teacher portion surveyed had four teachers who either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed that students had mastered this skill. Table 13 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for producing clear and coherent writing in which style is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Table 13

Style Is Appropriate to Task, Purpose, and Audience

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
8. When students complete my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the style is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	HST	1.88	.900	10.208	.000
	CCP	3.55	.820	14.337	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number eight, community college professors had higher scores on students producing clear and coherent writing in which style is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience ($M=3.55$, $SD=.820$) than did high school teachers ($M=1.88$, $SD=.900$), $t(10.208)$, $p<.05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 2 (18%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8 (72%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 9 (38%) teachers Strongly Agreed, 11 (45%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed, 2 (8%) Strongly Disagreed

and none Strongly Disagreed to a student’s capacity to produce clear and clear and coherent writing in which the style is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate another large disconnect from what the community college professors are experiencing as opposed to the high school teachers. A majority of the community college professors somewhat disagreed that students are not able to produce clear and coherent writing with an appropriate style. In contrast, overall the high school teachers felt very strongly that this is a skill that students were actively applying in their writing, whether strongly or somewhat agreed. Table 14 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p-values for analyzing and synthesizing textual evidence to produce academic writing.

Table 14

Analyzing and Synthesizing Textual Evidence to Produce Academic Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
9. When students complete my course, they can analyze and synthesize textual evidence to produce academic writing.	HST	1.71	.806	10.378	.000
	CCP	3.82	.751	16.868	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number nine, community college professors had higher scores on students analyzing and synthesizing textual evidence to produce academic writing ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .751$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.71$, $SD = .806$), $t (10.378)$, $p < .05$. none of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 1 ((%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8 (72%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 1 (9%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 11 (45%) Strongly Agreed, 10 (41%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (8%)

Somewhat Disagreed, 1 (4%) Strongly Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed to a student's capacity to analyze and synthesize textual evidence to produce academic writing. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate another complete disconnect between the experiences of community college professors and high school teachers. Overall, community college professors do not believe their students are capable of analyzing and synthesizing textual evidence to produce academic writing. High school teachers, overall, believe that students are capable of analyzing and synthesizing textual evidence to support their academic writing. Table 15 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for integrating textual evidence while avoiding plagiarism.

Table 15

Integrating Textual Evidence while Avoiding Plagiarism

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
10. When students complete my course, they can integrate textual evidence while avoiding plagiarism.	HST	1.83	1.049	8.558	.000
	CCP	3.82	.751	16.868	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 10, community college professors had higher scores on students integrating textual evidence while avoiding plagiarism ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .751$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 1.049$), $t(8.558)$, $p < .05$. None of the college professors Strongly Agreed, 1 (9%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 8 (73%) Somewhat Disagreed, 1 (9%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 13 (54%) Strongly Agreed, 4 (16%) Somewhat Agreed, 5 (20%) Neither Agreed nor

Disagreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed to a student's ability to integrate textual evidence while avoiding plagiarism. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate a complete disconnect in what teachers believe students are capable of at the high school level, as opposed to what is being observed just one year later at the college level. A majority of the community college professors do not believe students are able to avoid plagiarism and integrating evidence from texts to support their writing. On the other hand, in some degree, high school teachers believe this is a skill their students are capable of applying. Table 16 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for expressing thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently in a variety of essays/writing.

Table 16

<i>Express Thoughts Logically, Clearly, and Coherently in a Variety of Essays/Writing</i>					
Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
11. When students complete my course, they are able to express their thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently in a variety of essays/writing.	HST	1.75	.847	10.122	.000
	CCP	3.09	.944	10.861	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 11, community college professors had higher scores on students expressing their thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently in a variety of essays/writing ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .944$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.75$, $SD = .847$), $t(10.122)$, $p < .05$. None of the professors Strongly Agreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (18%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 5 (46%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 10 (41%) Strongly Agreed, 12 (50%) Somewhat Agreed, none

Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed with a student’s ability to express their thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently in a variety of essays/writing. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses further support the prevalent disconnect between the high school teachers’ experience of students’ readiness as opposed to what community college professors are observing. A vast majority of high school teachers strongly agreed and somewhat agreed that students are able to express their thoughts logically, while a majority of community college professors felt neutral or disagreed with their students’ ability to apply this skill. Table 17 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for composing an argumentative research essay.

Table 17

Composing an Argumentative Research Essay

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
12. When students complete my course, they are able to compose an argumentative research essay.	HST	1.83	.917	9.796	.000
	CCP	3.36	1.027	10.864	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 12, community college professors had higher scores on students composing an argumentative research essay ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.027$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.83$, $SD = .917$), $t(9.796)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 3 (27%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (18%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 5 (45%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 1 (9%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 10 (41%) of high school teachers Strongly Agreed, 10 (41%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (8%)

Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed with a student's ability to compose an argumentative essay. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the majority of high school teachers believe that when students leave their classes they are very capable of composing argumentative research essays while the community college professors are predominantly disagree that students are capable of constructing an argumentative essay. This is another example of the disconnect between what the sets of educators believe students are proficient in. Table 18 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for gathering relevant information from multiple print and digital sources.

Table 18

Gathering Relevant Information from Multiple Print and Digital Sources

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
13. When students complete my course, they are able to gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources.	HST	1.88	.992	9.261	.000
	CCP	3.55	1.128	10.423	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 13, community college professors had higher scores with regard to students able to gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.128$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .992$), $t(9.261)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 3 (27%) Somewhat Agreed, 1 (9%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 5 (45%) Somewhat Disagreed, while 2 (18%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 11 (45%) Strongly Agreed, 7 (29%) Somewhat Agreed, 4 (17%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 2 (8%) Somewhat Disagreed,

and none Strongly Agreed to a student’s ability to gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the majority of high school teachers feel their students are quite capable of gathering relevant information using multiple print and digital sources. The preponderance of community college professors disagree with the high school teachers and believe their students are not capable of gathering relevant information from either print or digital sources. Table 19 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p-values for gathering relevant information and assess the credibility and accuracy of each source.

Table 19

Gather Relevant Information and Assess the Credibility and Accuracy of Each Source

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
14. When students complete my course, they are able to gather relevant information and assess the credibility and accuracy of each source.	HST	2.33	1.049	10.892	.000
	CCP	4.09	.831	16.323	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 14, community college professors had higher scores on students able to gather relevant information and assess the credibility and accuracy of each source ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .831$) than did high school teachers ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.049$), $t(10.892)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 1 (9%) Somewhat Agreed, none Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 7 (64%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 3 (27%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 4 (16%) Strongly Agreed, 13 (54%) Somewhat Agreed, 3 (12%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 3 (12%) Somewhat

Disagreed, and 1 (4%) Strongly Disagreed to a student’s ability to gather relevant information and assess the credibility and accuracy of each source. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the majority of high school teachers believe or are observing that their students are able to gather relevant information and assess the credibility of the sources utilized while community college professors are not observing the same behaviors in their students. Table 20 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for using technology, including the internet to produce and publish writing.

Table 20

Using Technology, including the Internet to Produce and Publish Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
15. When students complete my course, they are able to use technology, including the internet to produce and publish writing.	HST	1.92	1.060	8.860	.000
	CCP	2.64	1.206	7.250	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 15, community college professors had higher scores on students use of technology, including the internet to produce and publish writing ($M = 2.64, SD = 1.206$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.92, SD = 1.060$), $t(8.860), p < .05$. Two (18%) community college professors Strongly Agreed, 3 (27%) Somewhat Agreed, 4 (36%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 1 (9%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 1 (9%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 10 (41%) Strongly Agreed, 9 (37%) Somewhat Agreed, 3 (13%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 1 (4%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 1 (4%) Strongly Disagreed to a student’s ability to use technology, including the internet to

produce and publish writing. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate that the vast majority of high school teachers believe their students are capable of implementing the use of technology to produce and publish their writing while the community college professors were fairly split down the middle with regard to their opinion on a student’s ability with this skill. Table 21 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, *t* and *p*-values for using technology, including the internet to interact and collaborate with others.

Table 21

Using Technology, including the Internet to Interact and Collaborate with Others

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
16. When students complete my course, they are able to use technology, including the internet to interact and collaborate with others.	HST	1.67	.816	10.000	.000
	CCP	2.09	.701	9.898	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 16, community college professors had higher scores on students able to use technology, including the internet to interact and collaborate with others ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .701$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .816$), $t(10.000)$, $p < .05$. Two (18%) community college professors Strongly Agreed, 6 (54%) Somewhat Agreed, 3 (27%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed and none Somewhat Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 12 (50%) Strongly Agreed, 9 (36%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (8%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 1 (4%) Somewhat Disagreed, and none Strongly Disagreed to a student’s ability to interact and collaborate with others. 3 high school teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses suggest that

overall both sets of educators feel students are capable of using technology to interact and collaborate. High school teachers higher scores reflect a stronger belief in their students' ability to be able to use technology to interact as opposed to community college professors who did not feel as vehemently strong about their skill level. Table 22 presents the frequencies, means, standard deviations, t and p-values for implementing the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of formatting to their writing.

Table 22

Implementing the Modern Language Association (MLA) Style of Formatting to their Writing

Question		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
17. When students complete my course, they know and are able to implement the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of formatting to their writing.	HST	1.54	.658	11.478	.000
	CCP	3.73	1.104	11.200	.000

Note. The response scale is as follows: HST - High School Teachers, CCP - Community College Professors

In survey item number 17, community college professors had higher scores on students able to implement the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of formatting to their writing ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.104$) than did high school teachers ($M = 1.54$, $SD = .658$), $t(11.478)$, $p < .05$. None of the community college professors Strongly Agreed, 2 (18%) Somewhat Agreed, 2 (18%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, 4 (36%) Somewhat Disagreed, and 3 (27%) Strongly Disagreed. In contrast, 13 (54%) Strongly Agreed, 9 (37%) Somewhat Agreed, and 2 (8%) Neither Agreed nor Disagreed, and none Somewhat Disagreed or Strongly Disagreed to a student's ability to implement the Modern Language Association (MLA) style of formatting to their writing. 3 high school

teachers did not answer this survey item. These responses indicate quite a large disconnect between what high school teachers and the community college professors. Overall, the high school teachers believe their students are formatting their writing by implementing the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. While on the contrary, the majority of community college professors are not observing their students formatting their writing using MLA correctly.

The quantitative phase of the study did not yield significant results. Since the survey did not illustrate a level of significance, I was unable to answer the research question of the quantitative phase, which was to identify the priorities that need to be addressed for college readiness in the area of English.

Qualitative Phase

In addition to the survey questions, the results for Research Questions 2 and 3 are what follows below.

- 1) How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?
- 2) How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?

Data analysis. The following research questions were answered through participant interviews. During this phase, data was collected via semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Seidman (2006) posited that interviewing is a highly structured data collection methodology that requires open-ended questions to help understand the meaning of an activity. Semi-structured interviews are carefully designed to elicit an interviewee's perceptions on the topic of interest, as opposed to leading the

interviewee toward preconceived choices (Seidman, 2006). I created an interview protocol to organize the interview questions to solicit thoughtful responses. An interview protocol is a conversational guide used to highlight main questions, follow-up questions, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview protocol provided consistency and allowed for flexibility while gathering data during the interview sessions. The interview protocol was created to achieve depth from the respondents' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about college readiness in the area of English. Also, I used responsive interviewing, which are extended conversations that allow relationships between the researcher and the interviewee to be formed to elicit depth and detail of information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The responsive interviewing techniques captured additional information to follow-up and clarify responses with the respondents. The inclusion criteria for participating in the interviews were that the participants: a) were high school teachers; b) were community college professors; and c) were willing to spend approximately one hour answering interview questions. Inclusion criteria are a set of predetermined characteristics used to identify participants in a research study (Spitzer, Endicott, & Robins, 1978).

The interviews were scheduled and conducted as participants completed the survey and shared their willingness to be interviewed. I conferred with each participant on dates, times, and locations that were feasible to permit them to take part in the interview. Prior to conducting the interviews, I posed several background questions. The respondents were asked their years of experience teaching and job title. These questions were asked to help the respondents get into a conversational mindset in an attempt by me to develop rapport. After, I discussed informed consent and confidentiality, I had each

respondent sign two consent forms to take part in a research study, two forms to be interviewed, and two forms to be audio recorded. Each respondent received one copy of the signed documents for their records. Also, the respondents received full disclosure of the research conducted.

I conducted 10 face-to-face interviews. The questions focused on student's level of preparedness, deficiencies, articulation, assessment that drives instruction, and skills that each profession should work on. The questions were broad enough to allow the participants latitude to construct an answer of substance. For example, the first question asked the participants to describe students' level of preparedness to face the academic rigor of college-level, credit bearing, English. This question was further elaborated upon when the participants were asked to further describe what preparedness meant to them. Probing questions were used to obtain more in-depth responses. During each interview, the participants had the opportunity to address additional thoughts or questions related to the study. Each interview varied in length. Immediately after each interview, I reiterated the issue of informed consent and confidentiality. I reflected upon the conversations, tested the recorder to ensure that the entire interview was captured, and filled in any gaps of data. Journaling guided the process for documenting my thoughts, observations and feelings about the interviews. After completing the interviews, the journal was essential for creating additional questions to enhance the interviews when I conducted member checks.

All interview data was uploaded to an Indoswift drop box for transcription. Indoswift Transcription Service Company is a transcription service outsourcing company. Once the data was transcribed, all data were saved in Dedoose. Dedoose is a cross-

platform application that is designed for analyzing qualitative data. In Dedoose, I stored and coded multiple sources of data. Coding was used to organize observations, statements, and other data based on common patterns and themes (Creswell, 2007; Saldana, 2009). To set up Dedoose and begin the coding process, I first coded my data using holistic coding in the first iteration (Saldana, 2009). Holistic coding helped to conceptualize my data. Then, I used Invivo coding to capture behaviors or processes to obtain a description of the categories and identify and develop themes (Saldana, 2009). I collapsed the original number of first cycle codes into a smaller number of codes, and then reanalyzed the data using one key code to develop themes in the second cycle analysis.

First Cycle Codes	Second Cycle Analysis	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woefully unprepared to face rigor, unprepared as readers and writers, lack work ethic, somewhat unprepared, writing and reading not up to par, not prepared for rigor or speed, students who are prepared are in minority, reluctant readers, providing textual evidence, grammar grammatical errors, writing in general, usage, and punctuation, author choice, writing a thesis statement, can't make connections, challenge students to think critically, write more frequently to build stamina, more writing, high level research skills, no authentic testing, never given any data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coursework, achievement test scores, performance levels, performance standards, academic skills, analytic thinking skills, deeper knowledge of the content, readiness benchmarks, different literary techniques, research skills, oral communication, self-awareness, standardized tests, problem-solving skills, coping skills, college norms, ethnic gaps, standards for graduation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation • Remediation • Deficiencies

Figure 1. Response rate of cycle codes and themes.

The interview protocol included 5 semi-structured questions designed to assess participant views regarding college readiness in the area of English. The question format remained open-ended to allow for further probing when appropriate. I had the interview questions reviewed by critical friends to determine if the questions posed any risks or threats that could potentially generate opposition or impose a hardship on the participants and for suggestions to improve the line of questioning to solicit a more complete dialogue with the participants. The critical friends were helpful because they viewed the interview questions as outsiders of the education field. They elicited clarification and additional information in areas of the protocol that appeared disconnected from the study.

The first question I posed was about student preparedness. I began each question by asking, “How would you describe students’ level of preparedness to face the academic rigor of college-level, credit bearing, English?” Several of the high school teachers indicated that their students were prepared,

“As a teacher of honors level English, I work to prepare my students for the rigor of college English programs. We delve into many classic novels which help students broaden their horizons and learn about a variety of authors.”

When probed further,

“We study a variety of literary genres and schools of literary criticism, expanding to study Deconstruction, Post-Modern, and Cultural Literary Criticism. We build vocabulary, develop discussion techniques, and also concentrate on a variety of writing styles, including research papers, and work to help students learn how to integrate information synthesized from complex fiction and non-fiction pieces. Students in this class are fluent writers, and their performance in previous years of school allows them to take this course. They should definitely be prepared for college level composition.”

In my academic level English class, students complete a survey of major authors and discuss their classic and contemporary influence on our culture and on the authors writing today. Students in this class are more directly taught critical techniques and writing techniques to help prepare them for college level writing. Because this class is a step below the honors level class, they receive direct instruction to help them write papers and to fluently communicate using grammar and mechanical conventions.”

When asked to elaborate the teacher stated,

“While I think that students in the honors level course are well prepared for college level writing and literary analysis, I am aware that my academic level English students are not as prepared. In academic level English, I do spend time during the first semester teaching students how to write personal discovery essays for college admissions. I also do spend some time helping students compose college essays, as they need help learning how to substantiate arguments and personal beliefs. I am always helping them edit their work, and showing them ways to revise their writing to make it more robust.”

Another teacher stated,

“Overall, I am confident the students know how to structure an essay in a myriad of genres – but I only share this feeling for students who are on grade level. These students are able to use multiple sources and can refer to the text to support their claim/thinking. All of my students have had lots of experience presenting their thesis’ and developing arguments for it. The students on/above grade level excel in strengthening their word choice in writing.”

While another teacher indicated,

“Generally, my students are prepared to take on the academic rigor of college level English.”

Another indicated,

“Sadly, I would describe the level of preparedness of my students to face the rigor of college-level courses is below average. There is a small percentage of students who are ready to meet the challenges of a rigorous college curriculum.”

Lastly, a teacher shared,

“With respect to composition, students are prepared for surface writing, that is, writing that demonstrates command of the conventions of the English language. However, my freshmen honors students (the only level of high school students I

teach) still struggle with a few concepts that need strengthening: structure, agreement, and shifts in tense and voice. Students also struggle with brevity--condensing their writing, thus eliminating redundancy and wordiness. Varied sentence structure (length and construction) is formally introduced in 7th grade and reinforced in 8th and 9th grades, so students are fairly adept in combining sentences using appositives, subordination, and coordination; however, continual reinforcement is crucial. With respect to literary analysis, students can effectively analyze theme, symbolism, characterization, foreshadow, conflict, and plot. However, in my experience, some students at the freshmen level still struggle with insight--depth of analysis--and sophistication of structure and word choice. Since the inception of PARCC testing, I have noticed a dramatic improvement in the area of citing textual evidence to support analysis, which is a collaborative, cross-curricular effort. However, students need to improve on integrating direct quotes so that it doesn't disrupt fluency."

Consequently, the community college professors shared different sentiments. One professor shared,

"The students have been told how important it is to be prepared for college, so they ARE prepared in the literal sense. They understand the expectations, the different atmosphere they will be thrown into, they understand that there IS a difference to the amount of work they do at the high school level versus what will be expected at a college-level English or Composition skills. However, I don't know if their writing and reading skills are specifically up to par. It does depend on WHERE the students come from—if they are from a school district of higher socioeconomic status versus one from a lower tier socioeconomic status, it plays a significant role. I think the students understand that too. But if a student comes from a school district that didn't teach them the skills they needed or they didn't get these skills until later in their academic career, it doesn't mean they will fail out of an English comp course. It just means putting in more work in the long run.

Another professor shared,

"I find at least half of my students to be woefully unprepared to face the rigor of college English, as readers and as writers. Many simply don't have the work ethic to be able to be successful. Attendance is dismal, and engagement and participation are often non-existent."

Another professor stated,

“The readiness of students to handle challenging writing assignments varies. However, those students who are fully prepared for a rigorous education are in the minority. Bloom’s may be outdated, but I find it invaluable.”

Another professor suggested,

“Students seem prepared to face college-level English courses in terms of reading and discussing literature, less prepared in terms of writing skills and interpreting literature.”

The disparity between the two sets of educators’ answers further supports the need for this type of research to further dissect the contradictory statements and why students are leaving high school unprepared. High school teachers, overall, believe their students leave their classrooms ready to face the challenge and academic rigor expected in college courses. The community college professors see the students as “woefully unprepared.” Many high school graduates fall short of being prepared to be successful in postsecondary education. Green and Forster (2003) stated:

More than half of the students who do graduate from high school, and more than two-thirds of all the students who start high school, do not graduate with the minimal requirements needed to apply to a four-year college or university. (p. 1).

A study conducted in 2012 by Complete College America, reported that nearly half of entering students at two-year schools were placed in remedial classes and nearly 40 percent of those students failed to complete their remedial classes (PBS Education, 2017). The professors interviewed for this inquiry were teaching credit-bearing English and not remedial courses, so it is more surprising that even though the students are surpassing the requirements on the Accuplacer, they are still not as well prepared as their high school teachers think they are.

The second question asked, “What specific deficiencies do students show in the area of English?” One high school teacher posited,

“As I mentioned in my response to your first question, students in the academic level course show more deficiencies than those in the honors level course. These specific students have difficulty with shades of meaning, applying a critical eye to arguments, and also generally have poor writing skills. I spend a lot of time reviewing grammar and mechanics, but still notice that these conventions are missing in their final drafts for assignments.”

Another teacher shared,

“My students (average and below average) have too much of a tendency to plagiarize. Although they know what plagiarism is, students still use material copied from other sources. After being confronted about this issue, their reply is that they just wanted to get an idea of how to get the assignment started. A line or two is copied and spirals from there. Some students also feel that only copying one sentence is not plagiarism. I am also concerned about lengthier pieces. Students repeat their main ideas throughout the piece and can’t further extend their basic thinking. As they progress in college, some of the written pieces will be lengthy and I’m unsure how they will handle this type of assignment. Numerous repetitions will most likely be seen. In high school, we help our students and we want them to experience success, so we may change our expectations for our weaker students. I think in college though, the expectations are the same for all students. My struggling students are going to have a tough time. The demands put on them is not what they are used to in high school.”

A third teacher expressed,

“In terms of writing, usage, mechanics and syntax are particularly difficult areas for them to master. There is very little emphasis on committing the rules of grammar to memory, and as such, they are unable to put those rules into practice in the classroom.

Active reading is another problem area. Students are trained to read for basic comprehension and are not able to glean deeper / complex meaning from the texts they read without significant help from the teacher.”

Another teacher indicated,

“The deficiencies students show are in their writing skills and also in a lack of motivation to read.”

While the final teacher suggested,

“With respect to composition, students struggle in the following areas: maintaining active voice, maintaining parallelism, shifting tense, avoiding abrupt shifts in topic, thus producing gaps in thought, varying sentence beginnings, and sustaining a single focus”.

When probed further,

“With respect to literary analysis, students in freshmen honors struggle with cohesion and elaboration in multi-paragraph essays. They also struggle how to explain how one literary element impacts another, i.e., how foreshadow builds suspense or how conflict fuels plot. Analysis of informational texts pose another challenge for the students, especially when they have to integrate their prior knowledge with material in the text or decode unfamiliar terms/concepts.”

One college professor asserted,

“Some deficiencies included but are not limited to the inability to construct a thesis statement (and thereby being unable to build a specific claim) within the argumentative writing genre, the inability of locating valuable resources, locating sources via a database (inability to filter), finding voice/tone in their writing (specifically in the nonfiction writing genre). I have also taught a Comp II section at [MACCC] where I teach a poetry unit to students, students are familiar with the basic American poetry (Robert Frost), but anything above him (i.e. dramatic monologues, epic poems) are lost and unable to engage in discussions regarding this type higher level of poetry.”

Another professor indicated,

“First, most of my students are reluctant readers. I find myself spending a lot of time reviewing plot and providing background information on things they should probably know. As writers, they seem to know how to organize an essay, but their abilities seem to end there. They have a hard time locating and providing textual evidence from the literature, incorporating quoted material into their work, and errors in grammar, usage and punctuation abound.”

Another professor shared,

“The students are able to think critically; however, the skills involved do not transfer to their writing. Many students insist on using the five paragraph essay format for all assignments.”

Another professor shared,

“Many students have insufficient background in grammar.”

While high school teachers felt that their students leave their classes college-ready, they were able to articulate several areas of deficiencies, which is a bit contradictory to their original statements. This may further explain why students are leaving high school not ready as there are still several areas of deficiencies that students are exhibiting.

Starting in September 2014, 19 community colleges in New Jersey engaged in college readiness partnerships with more than 60 high schools throughout the state. “After testing over 4,055 high school juniors and seniors, the colleges enrolled 921 students in spring and summer bridge programs designed to help the student improve their English and math skills while still in high school. As a result, 440 students achieved college ready status in English and/or mathematics upon successful completion of the program” (College Readiness Now, 2016). This still leaves 481 New Jersey students who were not deemed college-ready. If high school teachers believe students are college-ready, but still cite several deficiencies, perhaps this is a good starting point to remediate.

The next question proposed was, “What types of articulation, if any, occur between high school and college educators?” One high school teacher professed,

“I have never been a part of articulation between our high school and colleges, although I am aware that our Community College does offer college level English courses to our students, and those students that choose to take those classes are able to earn college credit.”

Another high school teacher proposed,

“Any articulation is informal. I do have two colleagues who are currently adjunct professors. I view their syllabus to compare what is being asked to what I am expecting of my high school students. They also provide me feedback of what

I can do as a high school teacher to aid my students in achieving success in college. Their biggest piece of advice has been the amount of reading the students are expected to do. To be blunt, my students do have to read, but some of them don't and they just get the information from the discussion in class the next day. This isn't the case in college. I have been told freshman just aren't used to the rigor of reading required."

Addition another teacher shared,

"Apart from conversations with the occasional high school teacher who happens to teach as an adjunct in a local college, there is very little articulation."

One college professor indicated,

"I'm not sure how much discussion/conversations take place between high school and college educator. Even though I am a first-year high school teacher, a lot of my colleagues look to me as a bridge between H.S. and college and ask me about college/English class curriculums, what students learn, what they need to learn, etc. There's a lot of myths that circulate regarding college level English courses. I think bringing a Comp instructor in some high school English courses, even an adjunct or someone that helps run an English department at a local community college could be so beneficial to all students."

Another professor shared,

"I don't know, to be honest. When I was a high school English supervisor, we occasionally brought in someone from [MACCC] to talk about expectations, but that didn't occur often. Other than that, I don't know of any articulation that occurs."

Another indicated,

"As far as I know, there is no articulation between high school and college teachers. A particular glaring gap exists in the area of public school testing. Now that the PARCC test is utilized, we should be ready for different types of assignments. Continuity is essential."

Another said,

"None."

It is evident from the responses that there is little to no articulation occurring between high schools and colleges or individual teachers and professors. This is cause for

concern and one of the impetuses of this research inquiry. The lack of research on the topic of articulation between high schools and colleges, specifically community colleges, further supports the need for this type of research and for articulation to occur. During a conversation with the acting President of Mid-Atlantic County Community College, with regard to articulation he stated, “It has not been for lack of trying, but to set up a platform that is meaningful, structured and could create change is difficult to orchestrate.”

(Personal Communication, September 13, 2017). He further shared that Mid-Atlantic County Community College offers high schools the opportunity to take the Accuplacer while students are still in high school with the hopes that remediation would occur prior to a student entering college. He stated that very few high schools take advantage of this opportunity and the few that do have no means to provide the remediation necessary beyond the students’ scheduled coursework.

When asked, “What types of student assessment data, if any, are you provided in order to drive your instruction?” One high school teacher shared,

“I use the tests and essays the students write to develop lists of things that I need to focus on in my lesson plans. I also have students who take a computer-adaptive test called Renaissance Star, which tells me the students’ reading level. I do not really use this information except to help them find independent novels. As a class, we usually just read the same book together, regardless of the reading levels of the students in the class.”

Another teacher shared,

“We complete quarterly exams on the genre/skills. I use that data to drive my instruction. We have our units (literature) of study and we stick to that. Not much deviation year to year.”

While another indicated,

“We are able to see / utilize their PSAT and PARCC scores to help determine instruction as well as final grades for the previous school year.”

Likewise, another teacher indicated,

“I am provided scores from the PARCC and have access to SAT scores.

One community college professor asserted,

“As a district, we submit individual SGOs (Student Growth Objectives) and place students in low/medium/high range based off of their MAP testing scores, attendance and a constructive written response graded by their English instructor based off a PARCC written rubric. This would drive my instruction throughout the school year and help to group my students.

Another professor indicated,

“I haven’t been provided with any data.”

Another suggested,

“Currently, we really have no authentic testing to assess student growth. Students take placement tests; however, the teachers are not privy to the scores.”

While another stated,

“None”.

There is little to no articulation occurring between high schools and colleges, so it is not surprising that students’ data assessment is also not shared. The Accuplacer, which is an assessment used to determine a students’ readiness for credit bearing courses does not break down a students’ areas of deficiency, it simply gives a pass or fail score, so this assessment data would not assist professors in remediating a student. Miller and Leskes posited that assessment at the college level is complex and can create an environment of “assessment morass” (2005). Perhaps with the inception of assessments like PARCC, which is supposed to determine a students’ level of preparedness for college and career, data could be shared so community college professors are more readily aware of areas of deficiency.

When asked, “As a college professor, which English skills do you wish high school teachers would focus on to prepare students for the rigors of your college course?”

Community college professors posited that high school teachers should,

“I would like English teachers at the high school level to teach students argumentative writing skills and a focus more on higher level research skills. I also think we need to teach students not to be ‘afraid’ of their own writing and identify their abilities (pre-assess) students before throwing written assignments at them.”

Another professor stated,

“More writing instruction and production would be extremely helpful. Sadly, though, large class sizes, lack of teacher preparation, and too much focus on state testing, all interfere with this.”

Another indicated,

“I would want high school teachers to challenge the students to think critically. In addition, students should be introduced to realistic employment opportunities, so they can connect school achievement with life goals. At present, most students do not know how to prepare academically for the job market.”

Another professor shared,

“High School teachers need to have students write frequently, even (and perhaps especially) ungraded writing would suffice to give them more practice with writing in general and specific skills they need at the college level (research, expository, etc.).”

The overarching area that community college professors wish high school teachers would focus on is writing. They want more writing and production of work that incorporates critical thinking and research skills. They even want students to be able to build up their endurance for writing. Professors want to see concise, coherent, and well-reasoned writing assignments. And regardless of the discipline, they expect students to write at a higher level than they did in high school. According to the professors interviewed, freshmen lack the most basic skills to write clearly, effectively, and

coherently because their working knowledge of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and paragraph structure is poor. The responses from the professors of Mid-Atlantic County Community College directly align with what is being observed nationwide. According to California State University, “. . . 60 percent of first-time freshmen enrolling at the CSU each year do not show entry-level proficiency in [college-level English] assessments, even though they have earned at least a B average in the required college preparatory curriculum.” (Scott-Clayton, Crosta & Belfield, 2014) According to a study by the Chronicle of Higher Education, 44 percent of university faculty members say their students are simply not ready for the rigors of college-level writing.

When asked, “As a high school teacher, what questions do you have of community college professors regarding the standards of their courses?” High school teachers professed,

“How can high school teachers, modify our curriculum to meet the needs of our students so they can better meet college-level expectations? With respect to writing and analysis, what deficiencies do you (community college professor) recognize when high school students transition into college English courses? Are students well prepared for college-level research?”

Another teacher stated,

“I would like to know what specific skills college professors are seeing a deficiency in regarding writing skills and what types of writing should be the main focus of a high school senior English teacher. Finally, I would like to ask if college professors would be willing to share their syllabus for incoming freshman.”

Another shared,

“Do you remediate? For example, if a student comes in with no understanding of how to properly cite in MLA format, will you teach that skill? Or will you refer the student to the campus writing help center or online help?”

While another indicated they would ask,

“What do you find more valuable? Skills that students learn in an AP Literature and Composition class or skills that students learn in an AP Language and Composition class?”

Another teacher stated,

“I am aware of the inconsistent expectations with the amount of reading that is required. Any suggestions to close the gap with this issue? Regarding writing, I would be interested in hearing the writing skills freshman excel with versus the skills they are lacking. Finally, what modification are made for struggling students? How can I better prepare my students who are low achieving?”

The final teacher indicated,

“If I could talk to a college professor, I would ask if they thought students were ready for their class. I would really like to know what genres of writing they cover, and if they are congruent with our state standards, and the genres we teach in our school. I would also like to know if they felt students were prepared for the reading they would cover, and if there are additional strategies I should be teaching students explicitly.”

It is evident that high school teachers are readily aware of the disconnect between the teaching and the learning and how students are unprepared to face the rigors of credit-bearing college courses. It is apparent that they yearn for the knowledge to assist in closing this achievement gap. It is clear that the disparity between high school exit requirements and college entry expectations exists which further exacerbates the disconnect. High school teachers asked meaningful questions of their college counterparts to learn more about the expectations and how they could better assist their students prior to them leaving the classroom.

Discussion

In an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, following the data analyses of each phase independently, the two data bases must be further interpreted to show how the qualitative phase further explains that data that was collected in the quantitative phase (Creswell, 2018). Based on the quantitative findings the data analysis illustrated no significance of the reading, writing, and research questions posed to high school teachers and community college professors. As a result, the findings required further explanation of the issue of college readiness in the area of English as generated in the qualitative phase of the study.

Ultimately, the results found that high school teachers and community college professors illustrated the disconnect between the two separate educational institutions as many of the high school teachers felt their students left their classrooms well prepared to face the rigors of college, while the community college professors felt students were quite unprepared. Both groups of educators agreed that little to no articulation is occurring and would be quite beneficial if it were mandated.

Many of the high school teachers used the interview phase to seek guidance as to where students' skills were deficient and how they could remediate the students prior to leaving high school. The qualitative phase of the study yielded more rich data than the quantitative phase thus yielding a greater expanse of the issue of college readiness, specifically in the area of English, which included reading, writing, and research. The New Jersey Student Learning Standards were used to generate the survey questions for the quantitative phase of the study. They represent the skills students are expected to be able to do upon successful completion of each grade. As the qualitative data showed,

there is no articulation or understanding of what is occurring from high school to community college. Perhaps, since the New Jersey Learning Standards are not something the community colleges are aware of or know, the quantitative phase did not yield significant data hence the necessity of the qualitative phase.

Conclusion

The quantitative phase of this study was based on the literature on college readiness. The $n = 38$ responses were used to answer Research Question 1. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used to analyze the data. The results revealed a significant difference between high school teachers and community college professors' perceptions of college readiness. The qualitative phase of the study built on the quantitative results and expanded on those results to answer Research Question 2 and 3. The $N = 10$ interviews conducted for phase two of the study. The mixed methods research design used for this study provided rich data from two perspectives: quantifiable data and participant interviews. The following themes were identified: articulation, remediation, and deficiencies.

As a result of this inquiry, it was evident that three areas of concern exist, that if addressed, could assist in closing the achievement gap between high school students leaving college-preparatory English and entering into a credit-bearing English course at the college level. The study identified specific areas of deficiencies that students are lacking when they enter college. The greatest area of deficiency was in the area of writing. Overall, professors felt students lacked an understanding of basic writing. Professors felt students lacked grammar, but also the ability to apply MLA style formatting into their writing. If the skills that were identified are remediated early in a student's high school

career, they would arrive on campus more readily prepared to face the academic rigor expected of them. Areas of deficiency beyond basic writing included students' endurance for writing and being able to apply critical and analytic research skills into their papers. Perhaps the biggest area that presented itself was the lack of articulation, which included several facets. Teachers and professors are not aware of one another's curricula, work load, expectations, skills needed to be successful, and performance data on the students. If high schools and colleges engaged in meaningful articulation, perhaps the lack of college readiness that is prevalent nationwide would begin to decrease.

Chapter V

Discussion and Implications

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings, limitations and delimitations, implications for policy, practice, research, and a conclusion. The aim of this mixed methods study explored college-readiness from both high school English teachers' and community college English professors' perspectives. Research proposes that there is a remediation crisis in America's schools (Black, 2016; Boser, Baffour, & Vela, 2016; Cevallos, Webster & Cevallos, 2016). Students are graduating high school with a diploma but are entering the nation's two and four-year colleges and universities unprepared to take college-level, credit-bearing courses (Black, 2016; Levin & Calcagno, 2008; Ndiaye & Wolfe, 2016). This study obtained quantitative and qualitative data to describe the nuances of student preparedness in delivering high school and college English education in a Mid-Atlantic county in New Jersey. The researcher collected data from high school English teachers and college English professors through an online survey and through the use of interviews. The conclusions made from the survey data led to the formulation of questions for the interviews. Final inferences were then based on the results from both phases of the study. The combined data were used to answer the following research questions posed in the study. The study examined three main research questions:

- 1) What do educators determine as the priorities that need to be addressed for college-readiness in the area of English?
- 2) How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?

3) How do high school teachers describe college-readiness in the area of English?

In the following discussion, I will demonstrate how these questions were answered and compared the findings with literature to arrive at interpretations of student preparedness in the subject area of English.

Discussion

The first research question asked, “What do educators determine as the priorities that need to be addressed for college-readiness in the area of English?” As seen throughout the quantitative findings, the survey data indicated a very large disconnect between what high school teachers felt their students were capable of and some of the deficiencies they observed and what community college professors observe as areas of weakness in their freshmen level students. The major priority that emerged from the quantitative phase predominantly focused on students’ inadequacy in writing. Basics like appropriately using grammar and revising and editing techniques along with more complex issues such as applying MLA formatting and analyzing and synthesizing to textual evidence to support academic level writing, were absent.

The second research question asked, “How do community college professors describe college-readiness in the area of English?” As seen throughout the qualitative findings, the interview data supported the nationwide crisis of students entering college extremely unprepared for the rigors of the college institution. According to the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP), only a third of high school seniors are prepared for college-level coursework in math and reading. And while the performance of the country’s highest achievers is increasing in reading, the lowest-achieving students are performing worse than ever (Camara, 2016).

The third research question asked, “How do high school teachers describe college readiness in the area of English? As seen in the qualitative findings, the interview data revealed that students have difficulty mastering basic comprehension of grammar and mechanics and are deficient in generating meaning for complex writing assignments. Students who struggle with college-level literacy face challenges in reading complex texts and adapting to a writing style appropriate for higher-level college courses (Allen, DeLauro, Perry & Carman, 2017). Therefore, if the areas of writing that are insufficient for students are not addressed, it will have a greater impact on a students’ success in college beyond their English courses.

Another factor that required explanation is that there is little articulation between high schools and college educators. Articulation should be more than local agreements between high schools and colleges; articulation should be a comprehensive statewide plan involving all levels of education (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2015). Thus, in order for this area to be addressed, we must look to legislatures to create a governance structure and policy to ensure that the P-12 sector of education, which is the Department of Education for New Jersey, and the Department of Higher Education, bridge the gap and mandate articulation. It was clear through the findings that there is little to no articulation. Through the qualitative phase of the study, I interviewed teachers and professors. All agreed that no articulation occurs, but many were interested in seeing that past practice change. Articulation should occur and include discussion about what high school teachers are teaching and what community college professors see as a lack of readiness when these students enter their class one year later. This directly draws a parallel to the signaling theory that is one of the components

driving this study. The stake holders in the P-12 sector are not receiving the correct signals in order to better prepare the students. Thus, until articulation is mandated from P-8 to High School and High School to Higher Education; as well as, the development of an assessment tool used to measure the standards that the educators have access to in order to remediate along the way, college-readiness will continue to be an issue for students and will continue to plague the state and nation.

Assessment data such as baseline and benchmark assessments and PARCC scores are made available to high school teachers to help guide instruction; however, exams, final grades, and essays are essentially the real-time measurements used to drive instruction. None of these are provided by P-12 to their higher education counterparts. Research suggests that the question of how to measure instruction depends on which indicators are used and the outcomes the teachers want to measure (Nagaoka, Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2013). Thus, if the teachers are looking to measure a students' ability to be college-ready, perhaps it would be best if they used the standards to drive their assessments.

Lastly, high school teachers would ask community college professors if they are remediating, are there modifications for struggling students, and if they thought incoming high school students were prepared for the college experience. Harris, Cobb, Pooler, & Perry (2008) posited that professors will need to know more about the standards their students attained in order to graduate from high school, as well as the standards that will be required to graduate from college. High school teachers will need to know more about the standards their students met in the K-8 grades, as well as the standards they must meet to earn a high school diploma (Harris, Cobb, Pooler, & Perry, 2008; Godbey, 2013).

Many of the professors interviewed express a need for remediation, but most are unable to provide that to students that are already taking their course and feel it needs to be done in high school or before. The remedial courses that are offered, prior to a student taking credit-bearing courses, are not a good determination of a student's success. Professors expressed that they are unaware, typically, of a student's previous grades, coursework, and assessment data prior to teaching them. It remains to be seen if remedial courses are beneficial to a student. If the stakeholders in the P-12 setting were receiving the correct signals from higher educators, perhaps there would be a better opportunity for remediation to occur at the younger grade levels prior to a student graduating.

Critical Theory

Critical theory, social capital theory, and signaling theory were the lenses used to implement this study. Critical theory challenges and destabilizes false ideologies that justify some form of social and economic oppression. The premise behind critical theory is to transcend constraints and transform to effectuate change. The articulation enterprise will continue to widen the gap between students from wealthier, middle-class schools and those from poorer schools, especially schools with greater proportions of students who are dialect speakers or second language speakers of English: language minority students, international students, refugees, immigrants, and resident bilinguals (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Critical theory requires a dialogue to effectuate change, analyze how structures may be changed, and define the actions needed to bring about the changes. Through this lens, further examination of the existing governance structure and the ensuing policies that could be put into place with regard to articulation and standardized assessment data in order to begin to tackle the complex issue of college-readiness.

Through the lens of critical theory, if the three major themes that emerged as a result of this study were further examined perhaps a change to governance structure would occur and transform the education P-12 and higher education educational system as we currently know it would change. It is through this critical lens that the on-going issue of college-readiness needs to be examined and tackled. The first major theme that emerged from this study was articulation or the lack thereof. The lack of articulation was prevalent through reviewed studies, as well as, evident through this inquiry. High schools are unaware of post-secondary school expectations. This is even true within this Mid-Atlantic County between the high schools that send to the community college located within the county. Until the issue of articulation is further examined through a critical lens, deficiencies, which is another of the major themes of this study, will continue to exist. When deficiencies exist, students will continue to need remediation for these deficiencies. Remediation is the third major theme that emerged from this study. It is evident that the three major themes are intricately related. Without articulation, deficiencies will continue to exist and remediation will need to occur at the community college level. An examination of articulation through a critical lens will perhaps begin the critical conversation examining the policies and governance structures that currently preclude this practice from occurring. If articulation was not only mandated, but actually occurred, perhaps the remediation of the students' deficiencies could be remediated at the high school level thus having students graduate college ready.

Social Capital Theory

Thus, the issue of college-readiness is a larger, social justice issue that continues to maintain a class-system in the United States, which directly correlates to social capital theory. Social capital theory essentially benefits both individuals and the greater good. I am reminded of MacLeod's (1995) account of the role of the educational system, as the colonizer, and the students in low-income housing as the colonized. According to MacLeod (1995), the way the educational system works ensures that low-income students are never really able to rise above their social class status thus keeping movement within the classes' fairly stagnant (p. 4). Thus, if this area of inquiry is not further studied and remedied, those individual students who invest in higher education in order create better opportunities and the chance to better socioeconomic status, will forever remain "behind the proverbial eight ball". On a grander scale, if this area of inquiry is not further investigated and remedied, not only will it continue to affect the individual it will continue to have a resounding effect on our nation's economy.

Students who have to take remedial courses are predominantly from lower socio-economic backgrounds and/or minorities (Berliner, 2013). Often times, these courses are not covered by financial assistance, thus putting these students further behind academically and financially making it difficult to catch up (Darling-Hammond, 2015). This ensures these students are always farther behind their higher socio-economic counterparts. Some community colleges that serve mainly low-income and minority students now enroll a student population of which upwards of three-quarters need remediation (McClenney, 2009). Despite moving numerically from margin to center, these students are still academically marginalized in key ways by institutional

designations (Thiele, Singleton, Pope, & Stanistreet, 2016). They exist in an ambiguous status in that they must pay for their enrollment in college courses, yet their institutionally designated remedial status restricts their access to other college-level coursework and to the accumulation of some postsecondary degree credits (Thiele, Singleton, Pope, & Stanistreet, 2016). Therefore, their trajectories toward a postsecondary credential may be obscured and delayed institutionally based on these ambiguous definitions (Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum, 2002). Wealthier students are prepared for college English or are able to pass this course because their secondary education included advanced English courses. But because schools in areas with higher poverty rates usually do not offer such courses, students are unprepared and must take college composition, and often struggle with it (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009; Severino, 2012).

The goal of this inquiry is to not only examine the issue of college-readiness, which could have quite an impact on a national level, but as it directly impacts students of lower socio-economic status, which could have a positive impact on the students in my school district and perhaps change the trajectory of their lives. An example of how it is applicable to this study is how the information I gleaned from the community college professors will be shared with all of the high school teachers in the hopes that until articulation can occur in the future, the teachers will be able to make immediate changes to their instruction in the hopes to remediate their current student population and make them better prepared to face the rigors of college English next school year.

Signaling Theory

Lastly, signaling theory described the behavior of individuals or organizations who have access to different information. Usually, the sender chooses whether and how to signal information to the receiver, who must choose how to interpret the signal (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). Recognizing discrepancies between a student's word formation and the expectations of their teachers is important to reference because one must not assume students have mastered the basics of grammar and usage (Newton, 2016). Research suggests that students who are from a different culture than the instructor sometimes misunderstand their teacher's feedback without the instructor being aware (Black, 1998; Gulley, 2012). Accordingly, if signals are unclear or contradictory, those who receive them have a difficult time creating academic programs or adapting to practices that are consistent or that align with preparing students to do well in college (Brown & Conley, 2007). Thus, the differences between the two constructs make it nearly impossible to receive appropriate signals to guide students, high school teachers, high schools, professors, and colleges.

Essentially, signaling theory means that educators receive signals, and in the case of high schools, we receive these signals from the standards dictated by the Department of Education (NJDOE) and their corresponding assessments (currently the PARCC). High schools then ascertain what is important to teach and learn. In New Jersey, community colleges, colleges, and universities are governed by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. These are two different organizations within the governance structure of New Jersey and the two do not overlap at this current juncture. Typically at the community college level, students who do not enter with certain pre-

requisites met at the high school level have to take an entrance level examine, the Accuplacer. This assessment determines if a student is required to take a remedial/development course or not. This assessment data is not made available to the community college professors. In fact, many shared that they do not even know if a student had to take a remedial course prior to entering their credit-bearing course. Thus, there are not even wrong signals, but rather no signals at all to assist in guiding the issue of college-readiness. What is considered important to teach and learn at the high school level is not being translated to colleges and professors. If colleges are not made aware of this information and vice versa, high schools cannot create or adapt their existing programs to effectuate change and remediate courses to ensure students' readiness. Accordingly, this was evidenced when both the high school teachers and community college professors shared that there is little to no articulation, understanding of the standards expected and taught at each level, and a sharing of the assessments in order to remediate. College-readiness needs to be further examined through the lens of the Signaling Theory. Examining this issue through this crucial lens, could begin the dialogue of examining the governance structures of each the P-12 system and higher education to ensure each are receiving accurate signals to know what to teach and learn so students can make a smooth transition from one governance structure to the next.

Worldview

The lens or worldview that guided this research was post-positivist. One component of a post-positivist worldview is recognizing my own beliefs and assumptions as a researcher and being able to acknowledge those beliefs and how they may influence my approach and interpretation of my findings. Ryan posits that post-positivist

researchers are committed to social movements that aspire to change the world for the better (2006). I currently serve as a superintendent in a small, urban city located within the Mid-Atlantic county with one of the lowest socio-economic populations within the entire county. Over 75% of my students are eligible for free breakfast and lunch and because we serve such an impoverished community we offer free breakfast and lunch to 100% of the student population and full day Pre-Kindergarten beginning at the age of three (3). It is this worldview that motivated my study initially. I am a firm believer that education is the one crucial element that could change the standard trajectory of my students' lives and perhaps begin to break the cycle of poverty that currently plagues them. If students, like those in my current setting, go to college not prepared to face the rigorous curricula they may be required to take remedial or developmental courses, which are often not covered by financial aid, yet schools are accepting students all the time that they know are not academically prepared and offering them student loans. This dilemma is analogous to the subprime mortgage crisis beginning in 2007. Banks gave mortgages and then raised the rates knowing many mortgage holders were going to default. Today, a similar crisis is happening to our college students. They are graduating with a diploma from high school, assuming they are prepared for college. They are accepted into college and often times receive loans to pay for their schooling. Once they arrive, they are required to take placement exams and learn they are required to complete non-credit bearing coursework in order to continue. Many of these students will not be able to pass out of these remedial courses, but are required to pay the outstanding balance of their loans. In 2016, U.S. News reports that there is 1.3 trillion dollars in student loan debt are those of college dropouts (Barshay, 2017). The students took out loans to go to college

thinking they are prepared. Without college degrees, many of these students will not be able to find jobs that pay enough to help pay back these loans and the cost of living. This completely debilitates them and their dream of changing the trajectory of their lives. College loans are financed by the federal government, affecting the nation's budget. This study was important to my worldview as I am trying to change the dialogue to make the world a better one for students like those I serve.

Limitations and Delimitations

As with any study, there are limitations associated with the data that thwarts the findings. I was aware of these limitations throughout the research process and I addressed them as thoroughly as possible. This study used quantitative data from a survey questionnaire and qualitative data from interviews. I ensured that the survey items were representative of all possible questions concerning the transition for college bound high school students. The wording of the questionnaire was examined by critical friends to determine if a survey instrument was the most sensible way to aggregate data. The critical friends helped to find agreement between the survey questions and the measuring procedures used for the data collection instrument.

Researcher bias occurs when the researcher interprets findings based on his or her own values and selective observation at the expense of other data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I highlighted this threat because, if left unmonitored, it could affect the trustworthiness of the data. I examined my personal assumptions and found strategies for challenging my biases. When conducting interviews, I consistently redirected myself from appearing intimidating or intrusive in my line of questioning as I documented those experiences in a researcher journal. I assessed what drew me to the subject matter and my

personal investment in the research. In view of that, I checked and rechecked the data to search for contradictions. I examined the data collection and analysis procedures. I reevaluated whether surveys and interviews were the most appropriate methods for this study. In addition, I made judgments about potential bias and distortion of the data.

I further examined the threats of reliability and validity. The ability to confirm the data was examined to determine if the results were verifiable to the extent to which the findings of the study were driven by the respondents and not by me (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Toma, 2006). Respondent limitations were acknowledged since their responses drove the results of the study. For instance, if a respondent deliberately withheld information or responded to the questions in a manner that served to distort the truth, those responses could skew the results and affect the integrity of the study. I was therefore very clear on the nature of the research, my role as the researcher, and how I was going to collect and report the data.

Validity is the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses specific, measurable concepts or constructs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Toma, 2006). Critical friends assessed the content of the survey and interview protocol to ensure that the questions were reflective of the topic. Content validity is the extent to which the data collection instruments were representative of all possible questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Toma, 2006). Critical friends examined the wording of the questionnaire and interview questions to determine whether the questions yielded bias. To this end, the data collection instruments were reflective of the content under study for both questionnaires.

The delimitation in this study was credibility. I used a purposive sampling framework to satisfy this limitation. I chose high school teachers and community college

professors who would share their experiences concerning college readiness in the area of English. A limitation arose regarding the purposive sampling. When I initially sought permission from my superintendent colleagues to conduct my study in their high schools, the overall response was a resounding yes. I felt comfortable moving forward with the study. When I sought permission with confirmation letters, per the instructions of IRB, a few of my colleagues, who originally agreed, no longer wanted to have their schools participate. This was especially troubling as one of the superintendents was and is an adjunct professor at Rowan University. I found their lack of support and willingness to participate quite troublesome and concerning. As such, it has altered our professional relationship. I collected and analyzed data until I achieved saturation. Also, I relied on the respondents' knowledge and experiences to drive the data collection process. The purpose of the interview data was to gain an understanding of the transition for college bound high school students. The focus of the interviews was on the authenticity of experiences, not the reliability and generalization of the data. As such, the interviews were terminated when the respondents offered no new information about their experiences.

Credibility ensures that the results of the qualitative data are reliable from the perspective of the respondents being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Toma, 2006). The targeted population for the study were high school teachers and community college professors. After reviewing the transcripts, I conducted member checks to gather additional information concerning educator responses from the interviews, to search for any disagreements in the data collection procedures, and to document my observations from the interviews. I took notes during and after every interview to later reflection on

the research process and to document my thoughts. In addition, I compared the results to the literature, research questions and the theories to search for agreement.

Moreover, I used a triangulated approach to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. I used a survey research design, purposeful interviewing data, and journaling. The survey data offered representation and generalization, while the interview data allowed for a greater contextualization of the experiences. I conducted an examination of my personal assumptions, biases and values, and documented the experience all while reflecting on the processes and practices.

Implications

The results of this mixed methods study had several implications for policy, practice, and research, which are applicable to improving college-readiness in the area of English. These implications are a valuable resource for high schools and community colleges across the country, as they will benefit from the high school teachers' and community college professors' experiences shared from the study. In addition, the findings will serve as resource to lobby for educational reform aimed to dismantle the current remedial-focused institutional framework and place more emphasis on working to improve learning and persistence for underprepared students.

According to United States Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2012), each year the United States enrolls more than ten million students in 1,200 community colleges, which is nearly half of the nation's undergraduates. In New Jersey, 64.2% of first-time, full-time students take a remedial course in at least one subject area (New Jersey Department of Higher Education, 2013). Community colleges are open-access, meaning they are open-door institutions that are

expected to serve nearly anyone who wants to attend college. Approximately two-thirds of incoming community college students fail to meet their institution's academic standards for college-readiness (Cevallos, Webster, & Cevallos, 2016; Bailey, 2009). Taxpayers spend approximately \$1 billion a year on developmental classes and because the taxpayers are already funding K-12 education, the research suggests that taxpayers pay for the same student to be educated on the same material twice, once in high school and again at the college level (Cloud, 1988).

Policy. The policy measures that may evolve from this study are intended to assist with closing the achievement gap at the governance level between P-12 schools and institutes of higher education. Future policy provisions may include aligning both the high school teachers and professors from the sending and receiving institutions with the appropriate course content on the skills that are required to promote college-readiness in the area of English, since all seniors in high school are required to take four years of English and deficiencies in English constitute a unique obstacle in the skill acquisition process. Research suggests that deficiencies in reading skills are indicators of comprehensive literacy problems. When reading is the core issue of a student's difficulty it lowers the likelihood of degree completion (Adelman & Taylor, 1996; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Murray, 2008). Specifically, an examination of the governance structure needs to occur. Specific policy, mandating articulation of standards, expectations, data, and a discussion of areas of deficiency should be occurring at least annually between the two bodies. Currently, there are not policies in place in either governance structure that mandates articulation of any kind occur. What my study has done is shown the need for the two governance structures to examine this huge gap in the fight for college-readiness

and explore implementing articulation policies to ensure dialogue is happening. The New Jersey Department of Education is governed by the Commissioner of Education. The Office of Higher Education is governed by the Secretary of Higher Education. These two governance structures need to create a bridge or be brought together under one department. Aligning the two could begin the dialogue between the P-12 settings and high education. Just as the standards guide the practice of the P-12 teachers, having these two governing bodies under one department could ensure that better alignment is occurring in several aspects in the disconnect between the two. Specifically, while articulation is currently in code, it is not being adhered to and there is no consequence for not doing so. With these two governing bodies working in alignment it could ensure that articulation is actually taking place.

A second area that would benefit from a change to the current governance structure would be the alignment of the PARCC or state assessment used in the P-12 sector and the use of the Accuplacer at the community college level. Currently, the Accuplacer is used as the admissions test to exempt students from remediation. They provide a narrow scope of any deficiencies the student may have. Without this data it is difficult to provide accurate remediation per student. Colleges typically establish their own set of placement criteria for different courses making the data arbitrary for any sort of actual articulation as they are not consistent throughout all institutions (Camara, 20113). At its inception, the PARCC assessment was supposed to be used by all community colleges in lieu of the Accuplacer; however, with the vehement pushback of this assessment, community colleges waived on this agreement and continue to use the Accuplacer. Until a state assessment exists that aligns the P-12 sector with higher

education that allows for remediation throughout a student's academic career, there will continue to be a high rate of remediation in postsecondary education.

Finally, if the two governance structures were combined, teachers and professors would be able to have access to one another's standards and syllabi. These could be placed on a clearinghouse or database where teachers could access a syllabi to align what they are teaching to not only align to the state standards, but to the expectations of community college professors as well. If this information could be accessed, perhaps community colleges could align their courses to where the standards at the P-12 level end. With the two government agencies working together as one, eventually there could be a seamless transition from P-12 to postsecondary institutions and make the system more of a P-14 system that includes community college and eventually a P-16 system that includes four year institutions.

If changes, like the recommendations mentioned above were to take place, the state could see a drop in remediation rates and perhaps an increase in completion rates in many different subject areas beyond English Language Arts.

Practice. The disconnect between high school graduates supplementing their high school diploma with remedial coursework that bears no credit toward degree completion puts the student at risk of non-completion. Students who fail remedial English are not able to continue and take credit courses. Because a pre-requisite is assigned for many courses, these same students are prohibited from taking other courses in other fields. The successful completion of remedial courses is a mandatory pre-requisite for admission into several credit-bearing programs and to transfer into a four-year college or university (Shults, 2000). Therefore, a student's failure to successfully pass remedial English limits

educational options of the student's. As a result of my specific study, many of the participants, including administration at the college level, have asked to see the results. The high school teachers, most of all, are curious to know if they are adequately meeting their students' needs. And what specific recommendations the professors can offer to alter their teaching. My study will expand their knowledge and perhaps alter the high school teachers' day to day instructional practice. Specifically, one teacher asked, "How can high school teachers modify our curriculum to meet the needs of our students so they can better meet college-level expectations?" As writing was the prominent area where college professors saw deficiencies across the entire pool surveyed, many teachers asked specific questions regarding writing instruction. They asked, "I would like to know what genres of writing they cover and if they are congruent with our state standards." A final teacher inquired, "I would be interested in hearing the writing skills freshmen excel with versus the skills they are lacking. How can I better prepare my students who are low achieving?" Many of these questions can and would be answered if the governance structure was altered and articulation was able to take place. During the course of the interview phase of the study with the community college professors, many of these very simple questions were answered. One community college professor stated, "I would like English teachers at the high school level to teach students argumentative writing skills." Another professor shared that, "More writing instruction and production would be extremely helpful." "High School teachers need to have students write frequently, even (and perhaps especially) ungraded writing would suffice to give them more practice with writing in general and specific skills they need at the college level." While this study was limited in scope, the qualitative phase was able to elicit some good responses to what

specific skills, especially in writing, high school teachers should include in their instructional repertoire.

Research. Research written about college readiness is vast. However, there is very little research conducted on student preparedness and college expectations. These findings are to aggregate data to provide high schools and colleges in this Mid-Atlantic county with rethinking how to re-bridge the information gap between high school and college English curriculum and instruction. While the literature provides a great deal of information on college readiness, there is still a need for a comprehensive set of standards and expectations with strategies about how to align the high school English curriculum and instruction with college expectations. The findings of the quantitative phase of the inquiry, through the use of surveys using a Likert type scale did not gather statistically significant results. The questions used for the survey were taken from the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for twelfth graders in the area of English Language Arts. During the course of the interview phase, it was clear that the professors are not aware of what instruction, skills, and tasks are required to be covered through the standards. Different questions, that are not just specific to the high school standards, but more inclusive of best practices in English Language Arts would solicit better, statistically significant responses.

In my research, I found a wealth of knowledge on college-readiness; however, there are very few studies conducted specifically in the area on English, which was the focus of this inquiry. My study expands that area, but I still believe more needs to be done in the area of English. Specifically, my inquiry has expanded the knowledge within the Mid-Atlantic county as it has begun, if nothing else, a discussion.

Conclusion

A central strategy to improve college access and performance must be to ensure that students leave high school with the academic skills, coursework, and qualifications they need to persevere. The literature supports that there are challenges with college preparedness across America. Many first-year students find that their college courses are extremely different from their high school courses (Black, 2016; Boser, Baffour, & Vela, 2016; Cevallos, Webster, & Cevallos, 2016; Conley, Aspengren, Stout, & Veach, 2006; Conley, 2007). Statewide articulation agreements may help to reduce the confusion related to numerous articulation agreements between different high schools and community colleges, colleges, and universities throughout the state (Brown, 2001; King & West, 2009). Students need clear direction from their teachers, but students may be exercising their rights to their own language by ignoring teacher comments (Delpit, 1988; Gulley, 2012). Access to and success in college requires students to have increased content knowledge, core academic skills, and non-cognitive skills, which colleges assess by looking at the students' high school coursework, their performance on exams, their class rank and grade point average (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Beyond students needing clear directions from their high school teachers, teachers need to know what students need to be college-ready. This study detailed specific areas of deficiencies that community college professors are observing. To begin, these areas could be remedied at the high school level or even beforehand in middle school to make students more adequately prepared for the rigors of credit-bearing college English. It was evident from this study that articulation, or a lack thereof, is one of the greatest deficiencies that exists between the P-12 sector and college. With articulation, the possibility of a clear

understanding of the standards and expectations at both levels would lead to a stronger alignment ensuring a more seamless transition. Another glaring issue was the lack of data community college professors have access to about their students. Articulation could provide the professors with access to assessment data to gain a broader understanding of their students' capabilities allowing for aligned instruction.

Accordingly, the issue of college-readiness continues to plague our nation. It is a broad issue that goes well beyond the issue of English, which was the focus of this study. The lack of college-readiness affects all subject areas, high schools; as well as, two and four-year colleges/universities, and individual students. While the lack of college-readiness affects all students, regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic status, it does have a profound impact on students of color and/or students in lower socio-economic brackets. This study illustrated some of the deficiencies that community college professors are currently observing in their classes and allowed for a platform for high school teachers to ask questions and community college professors to impart knowledge. More importantly, the study captured the lack of articulation that is occurring between the two institutions, which essentially could be the catalyst to create systemic change in our education system.

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Appendix A

High School Teacher Survey

Directions: For this set of statements, please consider your high school senior students in your college-preparatory level class(es) and answer to the best of your ability.

1. When students complete my course, they are adequately prepared to face the academic rigor of Freshmen College English/Composition 101/English 101.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

2. When students complete my course, they can successfully **apply** the writing process.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

3. When students complete my course, they can successfully **draft** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

4. When students complete my course, they can successfully **revise** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

5. When students complete my course, they can successfully **edit** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

6. When students complete my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the **development** is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

7. When students complete my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the **organization** is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					
13.					
14.					

15. When students complete my course, they are able to use technology, including the Internet, to **produce and publish** writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

16. When students complete my course, they are able to use technology, including the Internet, to **interact and collaborate** with others.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

17. When students complete my course, they know and are able to **implement the Modern Language Association (MLA)** style of formatting to their writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

Directions: For this set of questions, please answer about yourself.

18. What is your gender?

Female	Male	Other
--------	------	-------

19. What is your age range?

21-29	30-49
50-64	65+

20. Please specify your ethnicity:

White or Caucasian	Hispanic or Latino
Black or African American	Native American or Alaska Native
Asian or Pacific Islander	Other

21. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Bachelor's degree	Some post graduate work
Master's degree	Some doctoral work
Doctoral degree	Some post-doctoral work

22. What is your title? _____

Appendix B

Community College Professor Survey

Directions: For this set of statements, please consider freshmen students in your entry-level Freshmen College English/Composition 101/English 101 course(s) (preferably students who did not need a remedial course as a prerequisite if that information is known). These statements are *not* applicable to students who may be in remedial/developmental courses you may also teach.

1. When students enter my course, they are adequately prepared to face the academic rigor of Freshmen College English/Composition 101/English 101.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
2. When students enter my course, they can successfully **apply** the writing process.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
3. When students enter my course, they can successfully **draft** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
4. When students enter my course, they can successfully **revise** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
5. When students enter my course, they can successfully **edit** their work using conventions of academic writing.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------
6. When students enter my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the **development** is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	---------	----------	-------------------

7. When students enter my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the **organization** is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
8. When students enter my course, they can produce clear and coherent writing in which the **style** is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
9. When students enter my course, they can **analyze and synthesize textual evidence** to produce academic writing.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
10. When students enter my course, they can **integrate textual evidence while avoiding plagiarism**.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
11. When students enter my course, they are able to **express their thoughts logically, clearly, and coherently** in a variety of essays/writing.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
12. When students enter my course, they are able to compose **an argumentative research essay**.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
13. When students enter my course, they are able to gather relevant information from **multiple print and digital sources**.
- | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
14. When students enter my course, they are able to gather relevant information and **assess the credibility and accuracy** of each source.

- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
15. When students enter my course, they are able to use technology, including the Internet, to **produce and publish** writing.
- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
16. When students enter my course, they are able to use technology, including the Internet, to **interact and collaborate** with others.
- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
17. When students enter my course, they know and are able to **implement the Modern Language Association (MLA)** style of formatting to their writing.
- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|

Directions: For this set of questions, please answer about yourself.

18. What is your gender?
- | | | | |
|--|--------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | Other |
|--|--------|------|-------|
19. What is your age range?
- | | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| | 21-29 | 30-49 |
| | 50-64 | 65+ |
20. Please specify your ethnicity:
- | | | |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | White or Caucasian | Hispanic or Latino |
| | Black or African American | Native American or Alaska Native |
| | Asian or Pacific Islander | Other |
21. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | Bachelor's degree | Some post graduate work |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|

Master's degree

Some doctoral work

Doctoral degree

Some post-doctoral work

23. What is your title? _____

Appendix C

Demographics of High Schools in Sample

High School District in Descending Order	Number of Graduates	Demographics	Students Attended MACCC in 2014
High School #1	589	White-84.5% Black-6.8% Asian-6.2% Hispanic-2.2% Other-0.3% Economically Disadvantaged- 8.3% Special Education-	144
High School #2	507	White-59.4% Black-28.4% Asian-4.9% Hispanic-6.6% Other-0.7% Economically Disadvantaged- 19.2% Special Education- 16%	136
High School #3	483	White-70.7% Black-16.7% Asian-7.0% Hispanic-4.5% Other-1.1% Economically Disadvantaged- 12.8% Special Education- 13%	105

High School District in Descending Order	Number of Graduates	Demographics	Students Attended MACCC in 2014
High School #4	337	White-47% Black-34.9% Asian-9.7% Hispanic-7.0% Other-1.4% Economically Disadvantaged-24.% Special Education-12%	96
High School #5	387	White-94.8% Black-1.5% Asian-2.1% Hispanic-1.5% Other-0.1% Economically Disadvantaged-5.1% Special Education-	82
High School #6	212	White-76.6% Black-11.5% Asian-4.1% Hispanic-6.0% Other-1.8% Economically Disadvantaged-17% Special Education-17% Limited English	81
High School #7	204	White-69.2%% Black-20% Asian-3.0% Hispanic-6.3% Other-1.5% Economically Disadvantaged-19% Special Education-19%	79

High School District in Descending Order	Number of Graduates	Demographics	Students Attended MACCC in 2014
High School #8	198	White-44.3% Black-45.3% Asian-1.2% Hispanic-8.0% Other-1.2% Economically Disadvantaged-17% Special Education-17% Limited English	72
High School #9	172	White-36.9% Black-56.7% Asian-1.3% Hispanic-4.2% Other-0.9% Economically Disadvantaged-17% Special Education-17% Limited English	68

Appendix D

Consent to Take Part in a Research Study

TITLE OF STUDY: College readiness: The disconnect between high school and higher education Principal Investigator: JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D.

This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you to decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It will help you to understand what the study is about and what will happen in the course of the study.

If you have questions at any time during the research study, you should feel free to ask them and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand.

After all of your questions have been answered, if you still wish to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this informed consent form.

JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D. or Elizabeth Giacobbe will also be asked to sign this informed consent. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

You are not giving up any of your legal rights by volunteering for this research study or by signing this consent form.

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of high school teachers and community college professors about college readiness in the area of English. This study is being written as a part of my dissertation requirements for Rowan University, College of Education.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a valuable member of the education community.

This study will include high school and community college professors who teach English.

This study will take place over a two-month period. As a participant, I will ask you to spend 45-60 minutes to participate in an interview.

This study will take place on a date, time, and at a location that is feasible for you.

If you choose to take part in this research study you will be asked to answer a series of questions about college readiness in the area of English.

The benefits for taking part in this study will add to the body of knowledge currently available concerning college readiness in the area of English. More importantly, the exchange of ideas and experiences that the participants will share will increase the depth and breadth of the study.

There is no direct personal benefit for taking part in this study. Your participation may help us understand which can benefit you directly and may help other people to create a platform and have the conversation concerning college readiness in the area of English more candidly.

There are no alternative treatments available. Your alternative is not to take part in this study.

During the course of the study, you will be updated about any new information that may affect whether you are willing to continue taking part in the study. If new information is learned that may affect you, you will be contacted.

There is no cost to participate in this study. You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

All efforts will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential, but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your personal information may be given out, if required by law. Presentations and publications to the public and at scientific conferences and meetings will not use your name and other personal information. All signed consent forms, interview transcripts, field notes, analytic memos, tapes, and flash drives will be stored and retained under lock and key in a secured file cabinet and on a password protected computer. In addition, in the published document all participants will be referred to by pseudonyms. Paper records, such as interview transcripts, field notes, and analytic memos will be shredded and burned. Records stored on a computer hard drive, flash drives, and audio recordings will be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device and physically destroyed. Records will be kept highlighting what records were destroyed, and when and how it was accomplished. All research records will be maintained and disposed of six years after the day of completing this study to uphold the integrity of the research process.

This study will pose not greater than minimal risk.

If at any time during your participation and conduct in the study you have been or are injured, you should communicate those injuries to the research staff present at the time of injury and to the Principal Investigator, whose name and contact information is on this consent form.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may change your mind at any time.

If you do not want to enter the study or decide to stop participating, your relationship with the study staff will not change, and you may do so without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also withdraw your consent for the use of data already collected about you, but you must do this in writing to JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D. Rowan University, College of Education, 225 Rowan Boulevard, Glassboro, New Jersey, 08028.

If you decide to withdraw from the study for any reason, you may be asked to participate in one meeting with the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions about taking part in this study or if you feel you may have suffered a research related injury, you can call the study doctor:

JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D.
Education Department
856-256-4500

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you can call:

Office of Research
(856) 256-5150 – Glassboro/CMSRU

You have the right to ask questions about any part of the study at any time. You should not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have been given answers to all of your questions.

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read this entire form, or it has been read to me, and I believe that I understand what has been discussed. All of my questions about this form or this study have been answered.

Subject Name: _____

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator/Individual Obtaining Consent: _____

To the best of my ability, I have explained and discussed the full contents of the study including all of the information contained in this consent form. All questions of the research subject and those of his/her parent or legal guardian have been accurately answered.

Investigator/Person Obtaining Consent:

Signature:

Date:

FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING SUBJECTS:

Translation of the consent document (either verbal or written) must have prior approval by the IRB. Contact your local IRB office for assistance.

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

College Readiness: The Disconnect Between High School and Higher Education

Script/Introduction: Thank you for completing the survey and for agreeing to meet with me to further discuss the study on College Readiness in the area of English. I am going to ask you 5 questions that should take less than thirty minutes of your time. With your permission, I'd like to record this interview to ensure I have accurately reported on your perceptions.

1. How would you describe students' level of preparedness to face the academic rigor of college-level, credit bearing, English?
2. What specific deficiencies do students show in the area of English?
3. What types of articulation, if any, occur between high school and college educators?
4. What types of student assessment data, if any, are you provided in order to drive your instruction?
- 5A. As a college professor, which English skills do you wish high school teachers would focus on to prepare students for the rigors of your college course?
- 5B. As a high school teacher, what questions do you have of community college professors regarding the standards of their courses?

Appendix F

Informed Consent for Interviews and Survey

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

You are invited to participate in a research study about college readiness and the disconnect between high school and higher education. This study is being conducted by researchers in the Department of Education at Rowan University.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, you would be interviewed for about 1 hour.

There is little risk in participating in this study; after the interview, you may have questions about your responses which will be answered immediately by a member of the study team.

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number that is unique to this study. No one other than the researchers would know whether you participated in the study. Study findings will be presented only in summary form and your name will not be used in any report or publications.

Participating in this study may not benefit you directly, but it will help us learn how high school teachers and community college professors view college readiness in the area of English. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate in this study, this will have no effect on the services or benefits you are currently receiving. You may skip any questions you don't want to answer and withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

If you have any questions about this study, please the Principal Investigator, JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D., 856-256-4500. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Rowan University SOM IRB Office at (856) 566-2712 or Rowan University, Chief Research Compliance Officer Glassboro/CMSRU IRB at 856-256-5150.

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

If you agree to participate in this study please sign on the next page. Thank you.

Social and Behavioral IRB Research Agreement

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Name (Printed) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Audio/Videotape Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Elizabeth Giacobbe/JoAnn B. Manning, Ed.D. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape (sound) as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for:

- analysis by the research team;
- possible use as a teaching tool to those who are not members of the research staff (i.e., for educational purposes)

The recording(s) will include identifiers. Your name will not be associated with the study. The recording(s) will be stored and retained under lock and key in a secured file cabinet and labeled with an identifier and on a password protected computer with not links to your identity.

All recordings will be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device and physically destroyed. Records will be kept highlighting what records were destroyed, and when and how it was accomplished. In addition, in the published document all participants will be referred to by pseudonyms. All research records will be maintained and disposed of six years after the day of completing this study to uphold the integrity of the research process.

Your signature on this form grants the investigators named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigators will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Signature: _____

Date: _____