PARTNERSHIPS FOR COLLEGE READINESS:
A QUALITATIVE MULTI-SITE CASE STUDY

of
SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY INSTRUCTORS’ COLLABORATION

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Abstract

This study explores perceptions of college readiness by secondary and post-secondary instructors. The problem investigated is high remediation in college writing. The purpose is to identify secondary/post-secondary writing instructors’ perceptions of collaboration and the impact of collaboration on college readiness. Research indicates high rates of students taking remedial writing in college (EPIC, 2013; Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001; Karp, 2012; Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Alber & Nelson, 2010; Edmunds, 2012; Kirst & Venzia, 2004), yet there were few opportunities for collaboration to address this problem. Some have argued that partnerships may rectify the readiness gap (Kirst & Venzia, 2004; National Center for Public Policy and High Education, AASCU).

This study was guided by these research questions:

1. How does collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction and their students' college readiness as perceived by the partnering higher education and secondary school teachers across three programs?

2. What are the experiences of secondary and post-secondary writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors at each level?

This was a qualitative, multi-site case study based on Malcolm Knowles’ adult learning theory. It involved interviewing eighteen participants representing six secondary and five post-secondary institutions. Themes from research included perception of impact on students’ college readiness,
instructors’ desire for collaboration, and interactions across levels to focus on common goals of college readiness. Findings showed positive perceptions, but more research is warranted to clarify the longitudinal impact of collaboration on students’ college writing readiness.

**Keywords**: Collaboration, English, Teachers, High School, College, Remediation, Transition, College Readiness, Writing
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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

As many as 60% of high school students enter college requiring remedial writing classes because they are not ready for college level writing (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education & the Southern Regional Educational Board, 2010; Kirst & Venzia, 2004). These high rates of remediation have implications for stakeholders at both secondary and post-secondary levels of education (EPIC, 2013; Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001; Karp, 2012; Cates & Schaefle, 2011; Alber & Nelson, 2010; Edmunds, 2012; Kirst & Venzia, 2004). Colleges have a vested interest in retention of students for financial reasons as well. For the purposes of this thesis, college readiness is considered in the context of students’ readiness to attend and be relatively successful in college writing courses after high school, particularly English composition, without the need for remediation.

Attempts have been made to rectify the readiness gap by developing policies, standards-based reforms, state assessments, and high school redesign at the local, state, and national levels. Examples of such attempts, particularly in the state of Maine, include developmental courses in college, AVID (http://www.avid.org/), and College Level Examination Program (CLEP) tests (http://clep.collegeboard.org/exam). These programs, among others, often exist independently of each other, but they have common goals.

Partnerships between high school and college writing faculty have the possibility of rectifying the readiness gap (Kirst & Venzia, 2004; National Center for Public Policy and High Education, AASCU). It has been noted that college/high school partnerships, whether from large or small schools, are a possible solution for high rates of remediation at the college level (Maeroff, Callan & Usdan, Fortune, 2002; Denecker, 2013).
Examples of college/high school partnerships are The El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence in El Paso, Texas (Maeroff, Callen, & Usdan, 2001); The Center for College Readiness (2013); and a 20-year partnership between the Chelsea, Massachusetts public schools and Boston University (Paletta, A., C. Candal, & D. Vidoni, 2009).

There are many examples of other partnerships for the improvement of writing found in literature, (National Center for Public Policy and High Education; Poetter & Eagle; Sirotnik & Goodlad Thompson, 2002; Maeroff, Callan & Usdan, 2001; Sironak & Goodlad, 1988; Denecker, 2013). This study focused on the partnerships within The Maine Content Literacy Project, dual enrollment programs in English composition, and The Maine’s Bridge Year Program.

**Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice at the center of this study is the issue of students entering college unprepared for college level writing. A large number of students have required remedial education upon entering college. The high rates of remediation at the college level indicate a large scale issue with college readiness in students. Research is justified because intentional partnerships between high school and college writing faculty have the potential to positively impact student achievement by focusing on the instructors as learners becoming informed about best practices for assisting students and working collegially with other instructors of writing. According to Parke and Taylor (2008), educators often discuss ideas relevant to instruction with fellow teachers, pupils, school leadership, and parents. This networking can create working partnerships to benefit the educational process (Parke & Taylor, 2008, p. 21). Vanderlind and Van Braak (2010) stated their support for collaboration to focus on college readiness when they mentioned, “Our findings indicate that more cooperation between researchers and practitioners
can be realized by promoting ‘design-based research’ and by establishing ‘professional learning communities’” (p. 312).

Although there is significant support in literature advocating for partnerships between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors, there are some deficiencies in the evidence. There are a number of studies focused on large scale partnerships, but fewer dealing with the experiences of the individual instructors involved in those partnerships. For example, The Center for College Readiness (2013) program of Minnesota State University connect college instructors with high school students to provide students with direct feedback about their college readiness skills. Another example of a sustained secondary/post-secondary partnership is between Chelsea, Massachusetts Public Schools and Boston University. Maeroff, Callan, and Usdan (2001) discuss The Boston University / Chelsea Partnership formed in 1989 which allowed “…Boston University to establish a management team with authority to govern all aspects of Chelsea’s schools, from developing curriculum to hiring and firing administrators, to negotiating union contracts” ( p. 11). Further study is warranted, which may lead to knowing why this partnership was sustainable and how it was experienced by instructors at both levels of education.

Principals, instructors, scholars and other stakeholders at the secondary and post-secondary level should have interest in this topic. As an instructor of English composition at a Maine community college, this information will help me better serve my students and gain a deeper understanding of collegial connections between secondary and post-secondary instructors of writing.
Significance of Research Problem

Stakeholders at both the college and high school levels will have interest in this research due to its focus on student achievement, instructor development, impact on costs and policies at both levels, as well as other potential reciprocal benefits of collaboration between the secondary and post-secondary institutions seeking to better prepare students for college writing. Carpenter and Mahlios (1982) found that colleges might see an opportunity to increase enrollment and have access to research populations among other things if engaged in collaborations with local schools. Alber and Nelson (2010) mention how this participation can also help high school teachers take an active role in their own research as they discover new ways of doing things and how different approaches fit into the context of their classrooms or schools. Additionally, Petty (2014) stated, “Institutions play an important role in motivating students by understanding intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate students to remain in college. Post-secondary institutions should provide a range of programs to help these students face their challenges and weaknesses (262).

Additionally, it has been noted that remediation has presented increasing costs to colleges and students. For example, The Educational Policy Improvement Center (2013) discussed the cost of remediation in their statement that, “students take, on average, 6.2 years to complete a 4-year degree (at an average cost of $18,000 per year), often due to remedial coursework” (EPIC, 2013). It is in the best interests of both secondary and post-secondary levels to cooperate due to cost and student development (Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001).

Ron Fortune and Jan Neuleib (2002) shared the positive outcome of their collaborative experiences when they stated, “This exchange led to a deep understanding of the practice and theory at work at each level of teaching writing and literature” (p. 17). They continued by saying
that, “The implication of these experiences is that teachers, universities, and colleges that want to work together should look for grants and other kinds of support that will encourage exchanges of all kinds” (p. 20). Tucker and Zuidema (2002) build on this when they share that their students “…learned things that neither of us could have taught them without the cooperation of the other teacher … In addition, we each reinforced some of our own existing knowledge” (p. 56).

Another significant aspect of this research problem is the opportunity for professional development. Alber and Nelson (2010) suggest that colleges pair with public schools for staff development as opposed to traditional staff development (workshops and lectures). They discuss how “…collaborative research projects allow faculty to investigate the validity of classroom interventions for practicing teachers…” (p. 25).

This research problem has been noted in literature to be important at the local, state, national, and global level. In the case of this study, the research problem was viewed from the local context of rural Maine. In Maine, as well as the rest of the United States, college readiness in writing has been a focal point of high schools, from designing more rigorous secondary curriculum to giving students the opportunity to receive college credit while in high school. State legislators have noted the importance of preparing young people for college and have championed programs aimed at increasing college readiness. For example, in 2008, Maine Governor John Baldacci established the Pre-K Through Adult Advisory Council, “…to increase the percentage of Maine adults with college degrees to 30 percent, increase the high-school to college-going rate from 55 percent to 70 percent, better leverage resources, and improve administrative efficiencies.” However, Kirst and Venezia (2006) shared that

Many states have begun to organize councils or commissions that include representatives from both K–12 and higher education to resolve cross-sector issues. But simple
cooperation is not sufficient to create the reforms that are needed…In fact, statewide K–16 structures have in some cases become forums for discussion only, rather than drivers of change (p. 4).

From the individual to the global level, data shows that college readiness is significant because students who are well prepared for college level writing are more likely to attain college degrees. This point is supported by Marschall and Davis (2012), who stated, “As adults enhance their critical reading skills, they can not only obtain post-secondary degrees but also enhance their professional opportunities in the workplace and their ability to participate fully in civic life” (p. 67). Therefore, it can be understood from the literature on the topic that higher educational attainment of members of a society leads to a productive and positive social culture. This statement could also be applicable to teacher development through partnerships.

In addition, this research problem was significant to me as a scholar-practitioner who has been acting as a change agent at the community college level, as well as a former high school English teacher. I have the unique perspective that comes from my experience teaching high school and college level writers. Literature suggests that bridge programs and initiatives to build connections between high school and college writing faculty help students gain the necessary skills to persist at the college level. This study has afforded me the opportunity to understand what scholars have written about this topic, what local writing instructors have experienced regarding this topic, and how this topic can be applied to practice in my own educational setting.

Again, this issue is of great significance in the world of education. By developing effective approaches to teaching writing in high school, students will not only be better prepared for college composition courses, but also for college level writing in all content areas. This, in turn, will help student retention, lessen the need for remedial coursework, and save time as well
as money for those involved. This will lead to higher degree attainment and the betterment of society.

Furthermore, scholars agree that producing college graduates with varied and predictable skills, especially in literacy and communications, will improve our society. Ganzert (2014) supported this when she mentioned the urgent need to, “…prepare a workforce that can meet the requirements of the educational and training programs that teach complicated technological skills, and for it to be able to assimilate them” (p. 792). Scholars support the idea that it is vital to allow teachers to develop professionally, not only to better serve students, but to reap the benefits of learning that they otherwise may not have time to pursue. Allen and Engberg (2011) built on this idea when they stated, “One of the most pressing social justice issues of the twenty-first century is providing the opportunity for every American to pursue an education that could potentially unlock a life of reward and fulfillment” (p. 786).

With these factors considered, this study needed to be impartial, yet it was important to emphasize the researcher’s perspective and background as an authority on this subject, as is noted in the following section.

**Positionality Statement**

The problem of practice that I, the researcher, selected was that students have been entering college unprepared for college level writing. The study considered college readiness on a broad scale as well as the high need for remediation in college. This problem of practice led to an analysis of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty and the perceptions faculty members have on how their partnership has impacted college readiness and their own instruction. As a researcher, I attempted to remain objective in my observations and analysis. According to England (1994), “Positionality is often used in the context of the inductive
approach to social science inquiry as an exploration of the investigator’s reflection on one’s own placement within the many contexts, layers, power structures, identities, and subjectivities of the viewpoint” (p. 87).

With that said, when working on this project, I may have had biases because I am a former high school English teacher and I am currently an adjunct instructor of English composition at the community college level. When I was a high school English teacher, I had the opportunity to attend some conferences that focused on increasing discourse between high school and college writing faculty. I was curious as to why there were not more opportunities to collaborate with college instructors or just have conversations about pedagogy. This curiosity has driven my research on this topic since I entered the Northeastern Ed.D program in 2010.

I have also been out of the classroom for five years while raising my small children. So while I have not been actively engaged in instruction, I have been actively taking courses and working on my doctorate through Northeastern University. Being an adult learner, as well as an instructor of adult learners, now puts me in the ideal position to research and study adult learning programs. Marschall and Davis (2012) supported the importance of this when they discussed that some instructors, “…do not have the skills to facilitate these connections for their students. Sometimes faculty are simply not trained to address the needs of adult students” (64). With this considered, my background has trained me to consider these connections and allowed me to develop my study appropriately.

The cultural contexts of high schools and colleges are very different. I have learned that as an adjunct instructor, I am cut off from interacting with many of the other instructors, administrators, and staff. Though I am situated on a college campus, I am not a permanent fixture there. An anecdote to illustrate my situation as a former high school teacher turned
college writing instructor was when a young student in my English composition course told me I taught more like a high school teacher than a college instructor. When I asked about this, she said that I actually waited to see if the students understood instead of lecturing at them for an hour and a half. She emphasized that she preferred my teaching style. In my research, I needed to be open to other teaching methods and approaches, but it was important to note that many students have not had a streamlined experience before or during college.

One of my participants was the head of the English Department at Kennebec Valley Community College. She was considered my supervisor and I often discussed classroom and curriculum concerns with her. This could have impacted her responses in this study.

It is important to note that I expected this study of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty to show that instructors perceive the ways in which collaboration impacts college readiness. I hoped to see that these types of relationships could be impactful to teachers at both levels. With this being said, I needed to keep an open mind and not let my hopes get in the way of the data. I also needed to be prepared for the possibility that some of my participants would not perceive any benefits in collaboration as related to improving college readiness.

While the position of the researcher was important to consider, it was also vital to build this study around a solid theoretical framework. The following discusses the theoretical framework chosen for this study.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to explore perceptions of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. The research answers the following three questions:

1. How does collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction and their students’ college readiness as
perceived by the partnering higher education and secondary school teachers across three programs?

2. What are the experiences of secondary and post-secondary writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors at each level?

Theoretical Framework

The framework that informed this study was adult learning theory. It focused on how individual instructors developed professionally, as well as how it impacted their own practice through collaboration and the ways in which they perceived their learning in these partnerships affected students’ college readiness. A theorist connected with this tradition, Malcom Knowles, pioneered the discussion of adult learning theory (Andragogy).

Andragogy (adult learning), according to Knowles’ and noted by OTPEC-Q (2007), is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn, Knowles identified the six principles of adult learning outlined below:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected

Andragogy emphasizes the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and also emphasizes
equality between the teacher and the learner. Andragogy, according to Zmeyov (1998) and Fidishun (2000), originated as a study of adult learning in Europe in the 1950s and was then pioneered as a theory and model of adult learning from the 1970s by Malcolm Knowles, an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, who defined andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn.”

Though the theory dates back to the 1970s, the concepts are still relevant today. Marschall and Davis (2012) discuss some key traits of adult learners. They state, “By virtue of their personal histories, adult learners possess a rich store of experiential knowledge and understanding that should be validated in the classroom” (64).

Merriam (2008) said that “…adult learning theory in North America has focused on the individual learner, how that learner processes information, and how learning enables the individual to become more empowered and independent” (Merriam, 2008, p. 94). Merriam also stated, “The one thing that all of us educators of adults have in common, regardless of our work setting or learner population, is that facilitating learning is at the heart of our practice” (p. 93).

The components and nature of adult learning are supported by the nature of collaborative programs. A focus on adult learning for teachers has been noted in literature to increase positive working experiences when teachers “buy in” to the learning. Slavit and McDuffie (2013) shared that “This buy-in also supports teachers’ attitudes that improving practice should remain a priority in their work, and in turn focuses their attention and awareness on ways to change” (p. 103).

The “adult learners” this study focused on were the instructors at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Pedder (2007) explained the importance of supporting teachers’ learning when he emphasized “…the need for schools to develop more differentiated strategies aimed at helping
different groups of staff to realize their teacher learning values in practice. In particular, teachers” (p. 250).

It is believed that this theory ties to learning of both high school and college instructors. The researcher hoped to discover how the relationship between high school and college writing faculty members impacted and informed their learning as scholar-practitioners. Penuel, Frank, and Gallagher (2012) discussed this in their study when they said, “The findings also suggest ways that collegial interaction could augment the direct effects of professional development in ways that extend its reach throughout a school in productive ways” (p. 131).

The framework of adult learning theory helped interpret the unique learning that occurred between high school and college levels during partnerships. That being said, adult learning theory was appropriate for focusing my problem of practice into the research questions, methodology, and questions I chose for this study, as it deals with transformational learning of teachers in the context of instructing young adults transitioning from secondary to post-secondary writing. It has been discussed in literature that learning by teachers does impact student success. Howell (2011) stated, “The most compelling evidence on the issue of teacher educational attainment from the analyses in this research indicates that the greater the proportion of teachers in a high school with a master’s degree, the lower the English remediation need by that school’s students in college (p. 314).

Much of the literature on college/high school partnerships was focused on college personnel going into schools to provide professional development and “fix” the problems at the secondary level, or to serve their own self-interests instead of working cooperatively as colleagues developing common expectations/solutions for students at both levels in a way that is mutually beneficial (National Center for Public Policy and High Education, 2010; Poetter &
Eagle, 2009; Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988). Using the lens of the adult learning theory, the researcher examined the instructors’ perceptions of collaboration and ways in which their perception of this collaboration might influence college readiness.

By focusing on developing instructors as learners engaging in collaborative partnerships, the researcher felt a positive impact would be seen in students being college ready. Slavit and McDuffie (2013) noted this by stating, “When the nature of the teacher learning is embedded throughout the educational system, more opportunities emerge to embed the practitioner knowledge into classrooms and the professional knowledge into broader educational contexts” (p. 103). Howell (2011) built upon this idea that teachers’ learning improves student learning. She stated, “By the time students reach college, their ability to handle college level coursework is based not only on their academic ability and effort, but on a cumulative set of influences from family, teachers, peers, and schools” (p. 292).

This theory informed how we see instructors learning and impacting their programs because it focused on instructors as learners and what they need so they can, in turn, support their students, especially those in transition from high school to college writing. After introducing the context of the problem, significance of the problem, positionality of the researcher, and the theoretical framework, the following section will develop deeper understanding of this topic through a review of current literature.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review presents the researcher’s argument of discovery and leads to the development of her research thesis and questions. Claims in this literature review are presented in sections surrounding various aspects of the problem of practice, including the fact that students are entering college unprepared for college level writing. This review is meant to consider factors contributing to the problem at a broad level down to a more focused discussion supporting the study of partnerships between high school and college writing faculty. Particularly, this review considers high school and college writing faculty members as adult learners of practices to increase college readiness. This review is driven by the idea that efforts of writing instructors at high schools and colleges can assist in impacting college readiness in a positive way. Given that topic, the sections in this review are

- College writing readiness: Who is ready? Who is not? Why?
- Dual enrollment efficacy for college writing preparation
- Bridge program efficacy for college writing preparation
- Early college access programs efficacy for college writing preparation
- Impact of higher education and secondary instructors’ partnership and collaboration on secondary teachers’ teaching

College Writing Readiness: Who is Ready? Who is Not? Why?

The transition of students from high school to college has been well reviewed in the scholarly literature. Farrell and McDonald (2012) state, “In general, high school reform is of critical concern to educators. Most comprehensive high school models require retrofitting for more personalization and tailored curriculum to enhance seamless transition of student learning to post-secondary options” (p. 240). Despite this focus on preparing students for college level
writing, there is still a disconnect between the experiences of high school level teachers of writing and college level teachers of writing. Rather than focusing on working collegially across institutional levels to increase college readiness in writing, the initiative is to create high quality remedial education. For example, Torraco (2014) shares that “…remedial education can be improved through collaboration among scholars and practitioners…” (p. 1201), and Lot and Odell (2014) identify “a distinction between being academically college ready and being knowledgeable about college. Both forms of college readiness include knowing that college is an option, having the maturity to understand college processes” (p. 25).

There is not a solid consensus in the literature about the best way to prepare students for college writing, but there are a large number of articles dealing with habits of successful college students. By understanding the commonalities between cases, one might determine best practices in college preparation. According to Arnold et al. (2012), “College readiness” refers to a student’s capacity to enroll at a post-secondary institution, take credit-bearing classes beginning in the first year, earn passing grades in courses, and persist to his or her educational goals” (p. 1). Additionally, An (2011) shares, “As college-degree attainment becomes the prerequisite for an adequate standard of living, discussions of college access and persistence, especially among low-SES students, has remained a priority among researchers, educators, and policy makers (p. 424). This shows that this topic is vital to student and educator success. Allen and Engberg (2011) add,

Given the work schedules and other demands placed on low-income parents, educational efforts must be offered in flexible modalities and should include partnerships among secondary and post-secondary educators as well as resources found in the surrounding community. Ideally, these efforts will bring together both parents and students, creating
both educational and social opportunities that can potentially foster contagious effects
that travel through parent and peer networks (p. 803)

Farrell and McDonald (2012) add, “…the range of first year composition programs
varies greatly from school to school; I can’t purport to have the magic plan to get ‘em ready for
all of them” (p. 76). This, again, puts the responsibility on the high school level. However,
colleges are also key in maintaining students’ preparedness. As Lafer et al. (2002) wrote, “As a
beginning college teacher of beginning college students, I was surprised by the number of high
school graduates enrolling in the basic writing courses because they could not pass the placement
tests that would have allowed them to take regular first year writing courses” (p. 104). Lafer et
al. (2002) also state,

Most of my students identify themselves as poor spellers of correct English grammar,
poor users of correct English Grammar, and poor users of proper English mechanics. But
these problems pale in significance to their inability to read closely, analyze, draw
conclusions, and organize thoughts into logical, readable pieces of writing. These are the
real problems and this is where our attention as writing teachers needs to be focused
(p. 106).

Literature shows that the idea of preparedness must be handled by both high schools and
colleges across the curriculum. Lafer et al. (2002) support this by stating, “As long as colleges
fail to understand the consequences of writing across the curriculum…writing at the college level
will continue to discourage a good many intellectually competent students…” (p. 106).

Moreover, Lafer et al. (2002) share that “We need to consider whether and how the
teaching in our courses helps or hinders students when they meet the writing tasks set in courses
other than English…” They continue by asking, “…what conversations do we need to have to
have with our WAC recruits to save them from damaging the confidence of the fledgling writers who populate our developmental writing courses?” (p. 107). With this evidence from literature presenting the context of college readiness from multiple perspectives in mind, the following sections of this review present a study of scholarly writing related to programs and initiatives to improve college readiness through different types of collaboration such as dual enrollment initiatives.

**Dual Enrollment Efficacy for College Writing Preparation**

Ganzert (2014) defines *dual enrollment* as “…a general term that describes a student who is taking credit courses at a secondary institution and at a post-secondary institution during the same term” (p. 792). Fowler (2009) shares how high schools benefit from credit based transition programs by citing cost effectiveness, retention, and graduation as most prevalent benefits of high school institutions. An (2013) also discusses the benefit of increased communication of administrators through dual enrollment. He states, “Dual enrollment requires high school/college partnerships, which brings administrators from both education systems together (p. 411). An (2013) also states the benefit of reaching students at a time when they need to stay focused on academics. He states, “dual enrollment further reduces ‘senioritis,’ which refers to students’ disengagement with a rigorous course regiment during their senior year of high school” (p. 411). This shows how dual enrollment benefits administrators and students, and this, in turn, creates a supportive teaching environment in which teachers learn and thrive.

While dual enrollment may not always involve direct collaboration with schools and staff to mutually improve programing, it includes beneficial information about how colleges can improve communication with high schools. Ganzert (2014) emphasizes how dual enrollment programs benefit schools and students by “…accelerating learning at secondary education levels
so that students are at least prepared to take on the skills of the modern workforce” (p. 792). An (2013) also discusses this idea when he mentions, “an additional benefit of dual enrollment is that participants have the opportunity to replace their vague notions of college with a more realistic set of expectations. Dual enrollees are able to judge the extent they are able to handle college coursework” (p. 411). This can support teachers involved in student writing development because knowing what students will be working on after high school will help direct their teaching and curriculum.

In dual enrollment programs, high school students get direct access to college level resources and high school instructors get an idea of the type of work expected at the college level. Ganzert (2014) accentuates the importance of these programs when he states, “…programs such as dual enrollment…should be maintained as a vital link in promoting student success in ongoing learning” (p. 792).

Karp (2012) also explains how dual enrollment programs could help students become acclimated to college expectations. She states, “As we focus on increasing college completion rates, it is important to remember that college readiness entails more than academic skill...Dual enrollment is a strategy that can help provide students with such knowledge” (p. 26).

Additionally, Hughes (2010) shares ideas about dual enrollment credit based programs for high school students. There has been a discussion about who is best suited at the high school level and college level to work with students participating in these dual enrollment programs. This is important because it gives some information on what expectations and skills instructors should have when engaging in such partnerships. While dual enrollment programs have been an established attempt to prepare more students for college level writing, bridge programs, as described in the next section, are gaining momentum in helping students become college ready.
Bridge Program Efficacy for College Writing Preparation

Bridge programs are similar to dual enrollment programs in that they allow students to take courses for college credit while still in high school. Maine’s Bridge Year Program, for example, allows students to gain enough credits to attain an associate degree from The University of Maine a year after graduating high school. According to Hughes (2011), Students can take 29.5 college credits in their junior and senior years and summer vacations while in high school. According to Hughes (2011), these amount to a significant cost savings for students, but also set a strong foundation for students to persist in college. Warren (2014) mentions that courses in this program are taught by high school instructors who have been approved by the university, and cost students just $45 per credit hour—considerably less than UMaine’s going rate. Gagnon (2014) also noted that, “…as part of the program, Bridge Year students will continue to have access to their high school guidance staff for the year after they graduate. This type of secondary/postsecondary collaboration is a key element in transition programs aimed at preparing students for college.

Bridge programs are significant at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Cabrera et al. share that post-secondary institutions dealing with “…programs designed to serve low-income, first generation, and racial minority students, are frequently among the first cut when resources are constrained. Within this context, the inability to demonstrate impact is often viewed as program ineffectiveness. Thus, the challenge to scholars is to conduct robust, empirical analyses of these programs to justify their existence and to inform and improve practice” (p. 494).

The Maine Department of Education (2014) explains The Bridge Year Program on its website and supports such an initiative. The department shares that 64 percent of Maine students
enroll in college following their high school graduation, with around a third of those needing remedial courses in reading or math. Warren (2014) also shares the potential benefits of Maine’s Bridge Year Program in helping stakeholders assist students to become college ready. She states, “This is the model for how the public K–12 system, higher education and the workforce could be aligned in a way that engages kids early on and truly ensures their college and career readiness.” Bunch and Reynolds (2002) state, “…Effective academic support programs can enable new voices and perspectives to join the cultural conversations that create public perspectives and shape societies” (p. 21). These examples of bridge programs give further context surrounding the topic of college readiness and secondary/post-secondary collaboration. The next section discusses early college access programs, which have alternate methods of preparing targeted students for college through early exposure.

**Early College Access Programs Efficacy for College Writing Preparation**

Early college access programs use different methods for college preparation than dual enrollment or bridge programs. While the latter programs are focused on upperclassmen in high school, the former programs seek to identify students in the first two years of high school or earlier to get them considering college as a reality for themselves. These programs are particularly focused on students who have been identified as high need, and as Albold, Dyce, and Long (2013) point out, “transition to college is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural, political, economical, and historical context of American society. Researchers have found that despite access to public education, institutional, structural, and societal barriers and disparities persist for first generation, racial and ethnic minority, and low-income students and their families in accessing higher education.”
According to Arnold et al. (2012) early college access programs are vital to educational development in our society. They state, “…these programs attempt to reduce social inequality by providing the connections between K–12 and higher education that are necessary for economically and educationally challenged students to enter college and persist to a post-secondary degree” (p. 3). This is a vital time for developing college-ready writing skills according to Lym (2014), who discusses some key differences between secondary and post-secondary writing. She shares that “Senior high school English classes are literature classes while Composition I courses emphasize analysis of nonfiction” (p. 1055). Maeroff, Callan, and Usdan (2001) express that “The general public as well as most policy analysts are seemingly oblivious to the fact that there are still too few attempts to bridge the chasm that separates the two sectors” (Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001, p. 2). Remedying this lack of collaboration would be beneficial to both levels of education. A number of scholars share how university faculty meet and work with teachers on their own terms in their own contexts, and these interactions emphasize that everyone is learning from everyone else (Fortune, Lamonica, & Neuleib, 2002; Denecker, 2013).

Another program with a focus on early college awareness is called AVID, or Advancement Via Individual Determination. According to the AVID website, this is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to closing the achievement gap by preparing all students for college and other post-secondary opportunities. Established more than 30 years ago, with one teacher in one classroom, AVID today impacts more than 700,000 students in 45 states and 16 other countries/territories.

Studies show that, by offering early experiences and understanding of what college is like to low income students, such programs increase the chances that these students will attend and
do well in college. Cates and Schaeble (2011) agree when they discuss how, “In addition to impacting objective measures of college readiness, like PSAT participation and college-track course completion, students self-reported that visiting college campuses and receiving direct information about the path to college were most important in their decision to attend college (p. 331). There are several grant programs in place to provide early college awareness for low income students. Like AVID, GEARUP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs), is a “…discretionary grant program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in post-secondary education.”

There is great significance in early access programs as related to the topic of college readiness in general, but it is not always given priority. Albold, Dyce, and Long (2013) support this when they mention, “As a nation, not tapping into the tremendous potential of our low-income, first-generation, minority youth will have serious economic and social consequences. Addressing the aspiration-attainment gap is critical to the future of our country. Closing this gap requires more targeted support and programming within the college pipeline to connect parental aspiration with the necessary resources needed for actual college enrollment” (p. 162).

The previous section discussed programs to help students transition to college writing from high school. All of these programs had some degree of collaboration or partnership between secondary and post-secondary institutions. The following section will discuss the impact of higher education and secondary instructors’ partnership and collaboration on secondary teachers’ teaching.

**Impact of Higher Education and Secondary Instructors’ Partnership and Collaboration on Secondary Teachers’ Teaching**
Improving Curriculum

The literature also shows certain benefits high school writing instructors found in building partnerships with college writing instructors. Alber and Nelson (2010) mention how this participation can help teachers be more reflective in their instruction, and how different approaches fit into the context of their classrooms or schools. As with colleges, high schools can benefit from connecting researchers with practitioners. Torraco (2014) expands on this when he wrote that, “Scholar-practitioner collaboration requires the researcher to be directly involved with educational practice in some way, often as a consultant and collaborator in the community college” (p. 1200).

Clarifying Expectations

Fowler (2009) also shares how high schools benefit from credit based transition programs by clarifying expectations through improved communication. Fowler (2009) particularly cites cost effectiveness, retention, and graduation as the most prevalent benefits of high school institutions. While this may not be direct collaboration with schools to mutually improve programing, it includes beneficial information about how colleges can improve communication with high schools. In these programs, high school students get direct access to college level resources and high school instructors get an idea of the type of work expected at the college level.

Likewise, Hughes (2010) shares ideas about dual enrollment credit based programs for high school students. There is a discussion in education of who is best suited at the high school level and college level to work with students participating in these dual enrollment programs. This is important because it gives some information regarding the expectations and skills that instructors should have when engaging in such partnerships.
Lym (2014) discusses a collaborative at the community college level aimed specifically at clarifying expectations related to high school and college writing. This collaborative found that in both secondary and post-secondary schools, “…students should read critically and write effectively by using logical organization, effectively supported arguments, and competent grammar and mechanics” (p. 1055). Lym (2014) goes on to discuss that state tests were of some concern, saying, “…before 2010, state writing tests included prompts that required only personal writing. Since Composition I seldom permits personal writing, we noted that, historically, state testing had a negative impact on students’ college readiness. New state exams and standards that emphasize literary, expository, and persuasive writing should improve student preparedness for college” (p. 1055). Lym (2014) shares that in the collaborative, instructors at both levels of education “…cited lack of student motivation and independent learning as problems…Both faculties also struggle with…effectively grading a large volume of written work” (p. 1055).

Accordingly, scholars suggested that participants have some understanding of what is going to happen in such partnerships. Carpenter and Mahlios (1982) support this need for understanding what to expect when entering partnerships. They discussed the key issue that often, “…such decisions appear to be based on considerable leaps of faith in the possible outcomes…and too little upon a rational framework that at least reduces the ambiguity surrounding institutional interactions” (p. 20).

Ron Fortune and Jan Neuleib (2002) were college Composition instructors who developed a high school/college collaboration in which they co-taught with high school teachers in both settings. Discussing how this affected these instructors, they write, “…they no longer approached their students with their own memories of college… they took back to their students a firsthand account of what university writing would be like” (Fortune, 2002, p. 15). Continuing
with this idea, they share that, “For their part, local high school students approached college with far more knowledge of revision practices than any other students attending college in those days” (p. 16).

**Pedagogical Networking**

Another key idea involving college/high school partnerships is the opportunity to simply discuss teaching and network with others. Teaching can be an isolated profession, and taking the opportunity to discuss pedagogy with others is helpful in developing best practices. According to Parke and Taylor (2008), educators often discuss ideas relevant to instruction with fellow teachers, pupils, school leadership, and parents. This networking can create working partnerships to benefit the educational process (Parke & Taylor, 2008, p. 21). This type of collaboration can encourage vertical teaming between high schools and colleges. As Vanderlind and Van Braak (2010) state, “Our findings indicate that more cooperation between researchers and practitioners can be realized by promoting ‘design-based research’ and by establishing ‘professional learning communities’ (p. 312).

Scholars agree that collaboration doesn’t need to be done on a large scale to provide effective networking. For example, Poetter, Badiali, and Hammond (2000) build on this when they explain, “In school partnerships, collaboration has more to do with informal cooperation, shared values, and personal relationships and less to do with highly structured working arrangements, rules, and mandates” (pp. 161-162).

Of course, literature points to the need for secondary and post-secondary institutions to each have some stake in partnerships with one another. Nichols et al. (2005), along with Sandmann and Weerts (2008), share this need for reciprocity. It is notable that all participants had to have an equal stake in the project, so there was no hierarchy among those involved. It was
also noted that supportive leadership was key to success at both levels and it was beneficial for any in-service to occur on site at the schools involved instead of in unfamiliar territory. Torraco (2014) says that there are many positive things happening in secondary-post secondary collaboration. He states, “Amid the clamor for reform, new programs are being developed by individual community colleges and multi institution demonstration projects to improve the college readiness of underprepared students” (p. 1199).

Literature cites many ways proactive collaboration can happen between the two levels of education. Alber and Nelson (2010) discuss collaboration by suggesting that colleges pair with schools for staff development, as opposed to traditional staff development (workshops and lectures). They discuss how “…collaborative research projects allow faculty to investigate the validity of classroom interventions for practicing teachers…” (p. 25). Stakeholders in these types of partnerships must be wary of some challenges that can arise. Snyder and Valdez (2006) discuss a challenge with sustaining meaningful partnerships. They share that it is often the university that backs out of collaboration, leaving the participants at the high school level with the frustration of having put forth the work to build partnerships, only to have them end prematurely.

**Academic Culture**

Literature shows a critical issue of academic culture separating secondary and post-secondary education. Collinson and Cook (2007) support this by sharing, “Proponents of the organizational learning stream tend to be researchers/scholars who prefer to take a skeptical
stance and keep organizational learning at the theoretical level, distancing themselves from…practice…” (p. 6). Such distance creates challenges when attempting to initiate and maintain quality partnerships. Azinger (2000) goes on to share another challenge of such partnerships, which is the disconnect between different cultural and organizational cultures in high schools and colleges. Torraco (2014) adds to this by mentioning that “…instructors face the pitfalls of trying strategies that are unsuccessful, which are just as useful to those seeking to improve student learning” (p. 1199).

Lym (2014) discusses some cultural differences that exist between high school and college levels. For instance,

In high school, teachers are strongly discouraged from failing students; secondary teachers are required to give make up work and to permit revisions for a higher grade. In college, these opportunities are rarely provided. Large numbers of mandatory grades in high school courses can result in padding the grade with completion marks. Students rarely (if ever) have completion grades in college, so they are unprepared for the impact that a zero will have on their averages. Attendance policies vary, and some college faculty drop or fail students for absences, which is not a part of high school culture. College faculty expect students to take notes and seek help when they need it; high school faculty offer more hands-on support to students” (p. 1055).

Black-Hawkins and McLaughlin (2007) also discuss important ideas about understanding the differing cultures of high school and college. This article focuses on a seven-year study of a partnership between The University of Cambridge and eight secondary schools. Some of the key ideas in this article are how knowledge is generated differently at the college and school level and what types of challenges are faced at each level regarding partnership. They state, “…to
make the work sustainable and rewarding requires structural shifts in both schools and universities as organizations” (p. 339). It shows how the context of learning and the distribution of information or materials vary at each level.

Additionally, Snyder and Valdez (2006) discuss a need for an understanding of institutional cultures and expectations. The article details how institutional theorists are concerned with how institutional organizations affect human behavior. Snyder and Valdez (2006) explain that their “study showed that…state U. also seemed to give scant attention to the school’s knowledge base and expertise, especially the school personnel’s familiarity with the community and their students” (p. 43). This shows the importance of institutional context when entering into college/high school partnerships. Furthermore, as Torraco (2014) states, “…policy makers and reformers want to see a single figure: completions. How many students graduated? How many did not?” (p. 1199). It can be understood from literature that both secondary and post-secondary instructors can benefit from this type of collaboration. For example, Thomas S. Poetter and Jean F. Eagle (2009) believe “Institutions…can be simultaneously self-serving and altruistic. Good and generous institutional partners, in working toward a common goal, often find they are meeting their own needs and interests as well as those of the wider community” (p. xii).

Similarly, Heller et al. (2007) build on this by discussing a partnership that began with an initial gathering of K-16 teachers, college faculty, and others, which sets the groundwork for face-to-face discussion; participants had a chance to understand different perspectives during summer institutes. These partnerships grew to include pre-service teachers working in schools and developing methods in practice while under the guidance of a mentor teacher and a field services support faculty member. Participants responded by saying they felt more empowered in
their teaching because these collaborations are ongoing. There is always opportunity to gain professional development and work to improve student skills at all levels.

**Summary**

This literature review focused on the following topics:

- College writing readiness: Who is ready? Who is not?
- Dual enrollment efficacy for college writing preparation
- Bridge program efficacy for college writing preparation
- Early college access programs efficacy for college writing preparation
- Impact of higher education and secondary instructors’ partnership and collaboration on secondary teachers’ teaching

These examples from literature provided the warrant for how I have come to my thesis, methodology, and research questions because they show the need for collaboration between high school and college writing faculty along with how such partnerships can help students become college ready in writing. My research fills a gap in the literature because I focused on individual instructors who have experienced college/high school partnerships and who have gained an understanding of how rural educators have worked to assist students while developing professionally.

**Conclusion**

Key themes in this review included easing the transition for students between high school and college writing faculty and getting students thinking about college early through targeted initiatives. Other themes included retention at the college level, improving programming and instruction at both levels, saving students and institutions money, and creating meaningful opportunities to collaborate even though secondary and post-secondary worlds are very different.
The information presented and synthesized here, through careful reasoning, shows there is a wide range of current knowledge and literature devoted to aspects of college readiness and collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. It can be gleaned from those cited in this literature review that often college instructors are considered scholars and high school teachers are considered practitioners. Torraco (2014) states that scholar-practitioner collaboration, “…differs from the established scientific tradition of deductive research…Scholar-practitioner collaboration requires a reconception of the meaning of practice…Practice…it is a source of knowledge generation” (p. 1201). This idea leads well into the focal points of this study and synthesizes the ideas presented in literature to support the study. It was noted that it is better to find common ground and forge mutually beneficial partnerships. Therefore, literature shows that through collaboration, those involved in the different cultures of secondary and post-secondary education may better understand one another and better serve students to increase college readiness, especially in writing.
Chapter III: Methodology

The question at the heart of this study is, How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and their students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher and secondary school teachers across three programs? Specifically, what are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level, and how can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors at each level? The methodology chosen to approach this study was the best approach because it allowed for varied perspectives to be included and analyzed. There was great value in doing a multi-site, qualitative case study to gather data from educators at the secondary and post-secondary levels in various, yet similar, contexts.

Research Questions

The three research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and their students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher and secondary school teachers across three programs?

2. What are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors at each level?
Research Design

This project employed a qualitative research design. Merriam (2002) states, “The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). This design was used because it allowed the researcher to substantively investigate the various perspectives and experiences of stakeholders involved in K–12 and higher education partnerships meant to impact high school students’ college preparedness in writing. The case study approach gave the researcher the opportunity to investigate the perceptions of participants’ unique experiences with collaboration in their own contexts. The case study approach gave the researcher the opportunity to consider particular instances and develop an understanding of contextual details. Creswell (2007) states that “case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). This type of approach is invaluable, especially in the socioeconomic and geographically diverse sites included in this study. Additionally, using a multi-site case study was of value as well, allowing for the comparing, contrasting, and synthesis of responses across several different programs and communities.

Participants

This study involved writing instructors at the secondary level and post-secondary level in the state of Maine, along with those instructors involved in The Maine Content Literacy Project, dual enrollment programs, and Maine’s Bridge Year Program. The sampling strategy was theory-based. In each program, at least one secondary and one post-secondary instructor or administrator was interviewed, for a total of eighteen participants. At Kennebec Valley Community College, four participants were interviewed regarding the dual enrollment program. These participants included the school’s dual enrollment coordinator, dual enrollment
liaison/faculty member, chair of humanities department/English faculty member, and a member of the college English faculty who also teaches at the high school level. Another participant interviewed about dual enrollment serves as a college writing faculty member at UMaine-Orono, UMaine-Fort Kent, and Katahdin high school. Finally, two participants, a principal and a member of the English faculty, were interviewed from Carrabec High School. The participants involved in the Maine Bridge Year Program included the director of the Bridge program at UTC, Two college writing faculty members from UMaine-Orono, a high school English teacher from Herman High school and another high school English teacher from Bangor High School. Participants in the Maine Content Literacy Project included, the former director of the program, writing faculty at UMaine Presque Isle and Thomas College, and English faculty at Calais High School and Upper Kennebec Valley High School.

The small size of this sample may have given minimal information and may have impacted external validity by making it difficult to generalize findings. However, the small sample allowed the researcher to provide a deeper study of the participants’ individual and collective experiences and perspectives.

**Summary of Study Sites, Participants, and Data Collected**

As previously noted, this multi-site case study involved 18 participants from five secondary and six post-secondary institutions throughout the state of Maine (see Tables 1, 2, and 3). The following tables present a visual representation of the demographics of participants in each of the programs involved in this study:
### Table 1

#### Dual Enrollment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>KVCC Dual Enrollment Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>KVCC Dual Enrollment Liaison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>KVCC Chair of Humanities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>KVCC College Faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>UMaine-Orono</td>
<td>College Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UMaine-Fort Kent Katahdin High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Carrabec High School</td>
<td>High School Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Carrabec High School</td>
<td>High School Principal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2

#### Maine Bridge Year Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>UTC</td>
<td>Director of Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>UMaine - Orono</td>
<td>College Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>UMaine Orono</td>
<td>College Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>Herman High School</td>
<td>High School Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>Bangor High School</td>
<td>High School Faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Maine Content Literacy Project*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>University of Maine at Farmington</td>
<td>Former Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>UMaine Presque Isle</td>
<td>College Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>Thomas College</td>
<td>College Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 16</td>
<td>Calais High School</td>
<td>High School Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 17</td>
<td>Upper Kennebec Valley High School</td>
<td>High School Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 18</td>
<td>UMaine-Preque Isle</td>
<td>Director of CACE partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recruitment and Access**

Participants for this study were contacted via email, telephone, and/or letter. There will be no incentives offered to participants of this study. I personally contacted administrators or upper level management in the research institutions to assure that my participants were free to participate in this study.

**Data Collection**

The case studies and cross-case analysis included

1. Interviews with instructors at the eleven participating institutions (at least one instructor at the high school level and one participant at the participating university across each of the three partnership programs).

2. A review of relevant documents detailing the purpose, activities, and implementation of each of the partnerships.
3. A review of any relevant documents shared by the high school and post-secondary instructors or participants that serve as evidence of impact by way of the collaboration. These documents mostly included descriptions of the programs. The study mainly focused on the participants’ perceptions of the collaboration, so additional documents were not collected from participants.

Data was collected by phone interviews lasting 45-60 minutes and following a set question protocol depending on the participants’ positions. During the interview, the researcher asked participants to answer specific questions in order to address the three research questions. The nature of the interview consisted of open-ended questions for participants to respond to and discuss. After each interview, the researcher sent the interview audio file to Rev.com for transcription, then began noting the emerging concepts and ideas. This practice helped the researcher develop an initial understanding of commonalities as the study progressed and draw reliable conclusions regarding the perception of participants’ collaborative experiences and the possible impact of these experiences on college readiness.

Documents related to these three programs, which were reviewed, included mission statements and other information pertaining to the goals of each program found on websites and newspaper articles or publically available records.

Data Storage

Data was backed up on the researcher’s computer, email, and flash drives. All data storage units were password protected and she was the only one with access to the passwords. Any physical transcripts of documents and digital recordings were stored in a locked cabinet in her home.
Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed by a transcription service, www.rev.com, into a Word document. This data was analyzed, and segments related to each research question were coded.

The researcher used the aforementioned guiding questions while going over the transcripts to “highlight significant statements, sentences or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Creswell (2007) goes on to explain that the researcher should then develop, “…clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). The researcher followed these steps as suggested.

During first cycle coding, which, according to Saldaña (2009) involves “…those processes that happen during the initial coding of data and are divided into seven subcategories: Grammatical, Elemental, Affective, Literary and Language, Exploratory, Procedural, and a final profile entitled Theming the Data” (p. 45), the researcher followed these suggestions. Within each of these subcategories there are other coding methods which were utilized, particularly in vivo coding and open coding.

During second cycle coding, the researcher engaged in methods requiring analytical skills, as discussed by Saldaña (2009). These skills included, “…classifying, prioritizing integrating, synthesizing, abstracting, conceptualizing, and theory building” (p. 45). These steps were also followed by the researcher as she engaged in pattern coding and analytical coding.

The data analysis process and findings were based on ongoing member checking, field notes, and research memos, along with the combined set of data from all transcribed interviews. This process involved data gathered through analysis of interviews conducted in this study by using the constant comparative method. In this process, according to Creswell (2007),
“significant statements or themes are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced (textural description)” and “…to write a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon, called imaginative variation or structural description” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Finally, “…the researcher writes a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon (p. 62). The researcher completed all steps in this process.

**Trustworthiness**

The researcher established trust and rapport with the participants by providing clear descriptions and expectations for their participation in this study. All participants received a general overview in the initial recruitment letter and a detailed explanation of the study in the informed consent form. Please see appendices for these documents.

To maintain the validity, the researcher made sure to consider these questions concerning a multi-site case study. There were numerous threats to validity in this study. There was a possibility that participants would not cooperate or they might provide inaccurate information, for example. There was a possibility, also, that the researcher may have had some bias and familiarity in certain situations. For instance, she was a teacher at a Maine high school and may have developed preconceived ideas about the participants’ perspectives. Some participants may have dropped out of the study as well. There was no way to know all of the threats to internal validity, but there were ways to design and approach the research to minimize any threats that might be, which the researcher did.

To minimize any threats to internal validity, she asked participants to sign a consent form before entering the study so they would understand, fully, what was expected of them and what they could expect from me, as the researcher. She made sure to establish trust with the
participants and address all foreseeable and unforeseeable threats with all seriousness. Moustakas (1994) explains the research process of *Epoche*, in which “…we set aside our prejudices, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Another term for *Epoche* is *bracketing*. The researcher took this advice and began each interview with an open mind.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this multi-site case study was to explore collaboration between high school and college writing faculty aimed at increasing college readiness. Interviews with writing instructors from various colleges and with teachers from a selection of high schools around the state of Maine provided data for cross-comparison and analysis. Using the lens of the adult learning theory, the researcher examined the instructors’ perceptions of collaboration and how they perceived that this collaboration might have influenced college readiness. The use of qualitative methods fits well for one-on-one interviews and the use of a multi-site case study approach was apt for analysis of these change efforts through multiple stakeholders within the secondary and post-secondary schools. This approach promoted a holistic viewpoint in this study and allowed the researcher to study the problem from varying perspectives.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the data and a thematic analysis gained from the individual interviews of study participants. This multi-site case study examined educators’ and education leaders’ perceptions of collaboration between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors in a collaborative program as well as how these participants believe such collaboration has impacted or might impact college readiness in writing. Commentary from various participants including college instructors, high school teachers, and administrators is included to provide perspectives from multiple stakeholders implementing the programs. Based on the goals of study, the following three research questions were developed:

1. How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and their students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher and secondary school teachers and administrators across three collaborative programs?

2. What are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors and administrators at each level?

The first section of this chapter reiterates the purpose of the multi-site case study. The next section provides background information about the context of the research study. The last three sections present the emergent themes as identified through a careful analysis of the interview questions in relation to each research question broken down by stakeholder groups. The final section provides a brief summary of the research findings.
Purpose of the Case Study

The primary purpose of this research project was to investigate secondary and post-secondary educators’ and administrators’ perceptions of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty in collaborative programs and how they believed such collaboration has impacted or might impact college readiness in writing. The research study aimed to capture how participants perceive the impact of collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary levels and determine how these collaborative experiences impact college readiness as well as inform pedagogy at the high school and college levels. The three programs included in this multi-site case study were the Dual Enrollment Program at Kennebec Valley Community College, The Maine Content Literacy Project, and The Maine Bridge Year Program. A push for articulation agreements between colleges also impacts the focus of this study because creating clear, transferable standards across institutional boundaries impacts pedagogy at each level. The following section provides an overview of each of these programs, followed by a thematic analysis of the interview responses of secondary and post-secondary participants and program administrators.

Program Overviews

To provide the reader with a greater understanding of the various programs discussed by the research participants, an overview of each program as specified through documents and the interviewees themselves is provided below.

**Dual enrollment.** Dual enrollment is a popular program offered by many higher education institutions that allows high school students to take college courses in their high schools and receive college credit for successful completion of these courses. This study focused on the dual enrollment program at Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield, Maine.
Specifically, it considered interactions between KVCC and high school English instructors participating in dual enrollment. According to the KVCC website,

In this off campus program, KVCC offers credit-bearing general education or introductory technical courses on the high school campus. High School faculty are certified to teach courses during the regular school day. To participate, students must meet the following requirements:

- Junior or Senior standing
- minimum cumulative GPA of a B or better
- have the approval of a parent or guardian
- have the approval of the high school guidance counselor

Students must enroll through their guidance counselor. There are currently no charges or fees to participate in these classes. The types of collaboration that typically occurred in the dual enrollment programs in this study included a college liaison going into the participating high schools to discuss expectations, providing syllabi to the instructors, email/phone contact, and providing instructors with access to online curriculum materials.

**The Maine Bridge Year Program overview.** The Maine Bridge Year is a program led by the director at United Technical Center in Bangor, Maine, that allows students to receive college credit for a small fee while in high school and transition to the college level with instructors who began the program with them. This study focused on participants who had been with the program in its initial year when the program connected instructors at the University of Maine and local high schools. According to an article in The Portland Press Herald, by Amy Calder on March 22, 2015, the program is expanding. The article shares some of the following details about what is involved in the program at a particular school. It states,
The Maine Bridge Year is a collaboration among the high school, the University of Maine and Mid-Maine Technical Center at the high school. The 14 students travel together as a cohort to English, math, science and social studies classes taught by high school teachers who have become adjunct University of Maine professors and work with the university’s professors to ensure that the students are meeting standards of both the high school and college. This program enables high school students to take college credits at a fraction of the cost of actually attending college. The Bridge Year Program, a nonprofit run by a board, was started four years ago by Fred Woodman, then the director of United Technologies Center, a technical school that serves high schools in the Bangor area, and others including college and business officials who saw a need for such a program. “This year, the LePage administration has proposed $2 million for Bridge Year over the biennium that would be available to Maine schools,” she said. As part of the program, Waterville students pay only $45 a credit instead of $279 a credit that regular UMaine students pay.

The type of collaboration that occurred in this program included high school Bridge instructors having periodic meetings with college adjunct instructors of writing and/or educational leaders directing the program, being provided with samples of student work, joint development of syllabi, and email/phone communication.

**The Maine Content Literacy Project Overview.** The Maine Content Literacy Project was an initiative to provide professional development to teachers by connecting higher education faculty with high school faculty. According to their website

The Maine Content Literacy Project (MCLP) was a 6 year Maine Department of Education Title IIA grant-funded project created to help all students read and write at
higher levels in 20 Maine school districts across the state. The project is housed at the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) and operates in partnership with five regional educational partnerships- Central Aroostook Council on Education (CACE), DownEast Educational Partnership (DEEP), MidCoast Regional Professional Development (MRPDC), Washington County Consortium (WCC), and Western Maine Partnership WMP), Forty-one schools from 20 school districts throughout the state, University of Maine (UMS) System faculty in education and arts and sciences from 4 campuses, PCG Education, Maine GEARUP

Major project objectives are to
- Increase student achievement in core content areas through the integration of content literacy strategies,
- Increase the number of teachers and principals participating in high quality content literacy professional development activities,
- Increase the number of highly qualified teachers, &
- Create a leadership model for sustainable, capacity-building professional development in content literacy.

Collaboration in this program involved professional development courses taught by college writing instructors, email/phone communication, and joint development of strategies to best approach the teaching of writing.

**Research Question 1:** How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing, and their students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher education and secondary school teachers across three programs?
The first research question was broken down into two parts. The first section discussed the emergent themes concerning college participants’ perceptions of impact on secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing, and an examination of themes regarding participants’ perceptions of impact on students’ college readiness in writing as related to collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. The second section discussed the emergent themes concerning high school participants’ perceptions of impact on secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and an examination of themes regarding participants’ perceptions of impact on students’ college readiness in writing as related to collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. Discussion of six themes regarding perceptions of impact in writing, found in Table 4, are followed by discussion of themes regarding experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level, found in Table 5.

Table 4
Themes Emerging from an Analysis related to Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Perspective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration clarifies college expectations for high school teachers and administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration helps maintain consistency across programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration creates meaningful learning experiences across differing institutional cultures and contexts</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Through collaboration, teachers learn methods to maintain authenticity in instruction, being true to high school expectations, while integrating college strategies and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• After engaging in collaboration, teachers express the desire for more collaborative opportunities
• Through collaboration, teachers develop an understanding of what colleges expect

**College responses.** The three themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the college level are presented below.

**Collaboration clarifies college expectations for high school teachers and administrators.** Across the three programs, the theme of clarifying college expectations for high school teachers was widely discussed. When considering the varied collaborative experiences of the participants, it is notable that participants have differing views on college expectations and how high schools might benefit from the clarification that comes from collaboration across institutional levels.

For example, one college director believes college faculty can benefit from collaboration with high school faculty because college faculty members “…are expanding the way that the teachers think. That is really good. On the other side of the coin is the college professors are actually going into the high schools and watching and learning how to teach.” This concept is challenged by responses from participants at both institutional levels in this study. To clarify, this perspective from a participant at the college level expressed the belief that college instructors are researchers by nature and do not approach instruction like high school teachers.

Adding to this idea, the same college participant goes on to share his stance that, “…high schools are designed to educate kids; colleges are businesses.” However, he believes that The Bridge Year Program, for example, creates opportunities for college faculty to understand the
high school pedagogical model, which, he noticed, is more readily adopted at the community college level than at universities. He states, “When you run into the community college teachers…they understood that they wanted to get closer to the high school model, making sure that people really understood what they were doing and why they were doing it, and they could be proud of that.” This perspective shows how the two educational levels are perceived differently.

Furthermore, participants at the college level see programs such as Bridge Year as bringing college faculty and high school faculty together in situations where discussions will increase college readiness by informing the high school teachers about college expectations. One participant states, “a college professor sits down with high school teachers and says this is the one I am looking for, let’s see what you can you do and here are some things.” He also asserts that Bridge students have been successful at the college level and that high school teachers have been very receptive to working closely with college faculty. He attributes this to the college/high school faculty interaction. These examples show how conversations and collaborative opportunities can be facilitated with positive results. The constructive style of instructors working together to clarify ideas in a collegial way may promote improved learning opportunities for students.

**Collaboration helps maintain consistency across programs.** Many college participants discussed the need to maintain consistency across programs. This can be difficult when factoring in the very different institutional cultures of college and high school. A dual enrollment program such as the one at KVCC is large; a great number of schools participate in this program. One participant at the college level mentions that her main objective is to “…try to work very closely with the department chair, because I know that each department does things a little bit different.
What I am trying to do in the collaboration is I’m trying to make sure that we have consistency within the department.” This perspective from an administrative point of view is important in making sure high schools maintain their articulation agreements with the college, but also to make sure dual enrollment expectations are consistent across all content areas.

Another participant at the college level adds to this idea of struggling to maintain consistency, stating

I think it’s all about the resources. We need somebody to help coordinate it. We should have at least one meeting a semester with just the instructors. We need someone to coordinate that, and maybe some money to back it up and support those efforts...to me it’s of the utmost importance to maintain the integrity of the course, and to make sure the students are getting that experience.

Many agree that it is the growth of these programs that has caused a struggle to maintain authenticity of content. These examples show how college participants perceived that maintaining consistency across programs has the potential to streamline educational opportunities for students, therefore helping them transition into college level writing.

**Collaboration creates meaningful learning experiences across differing institutional cultures and contexts.** This theme focuses on participants’ perceptions of the impact of collaboration on teaching and, in turn, the learning experiences that result from that teaching. One participant at the college level who had been involved in collaboration mentioned, “I’m very excited about this change in education. I think that we are finally moving with a focus on learning rather than seat time.” It has been mentioned that the experiences of writers at the high school level vary from those at the college level. Another part of this theme is that there are many different aspects of writing to be learned, and collaboration can help develop pedagogy to
encourage meaningful, authentic, and multi-faceted writing at every level and situation students will encounter.

Another participant expressed the need, from a college instructor’s perspective, to be authentic to the writing process and not try to rush through the important steps in skill development, asserting that writing is complex at all levels. Though programs like Bridge Year want to give students opportunities, there must be far more preparation in the teaching of writing for high school instructors. One college instructor shares, “There is a lot to be learned about how to teach writing and how to assess it than just simply finding five volunteers to teach English 101 curriculum at local high schools.” This shows that there is a wariness regarding programs such as this, especially at the college level where instructors may have advanced degrees in the content. These concerns, again, can be applied to education in general. The existence of the Bridge Year Program brings these widely held questions to light where they can be applied for real change and promote situations to increase best practices as well as promote college readiness in writing.

Another college participant, however, touched on how he feels Bridge does create authentic, meaningful learning experiences for students. He shares that, “… all of a sudden English has real meaning, and when you add meaning to anything they are going to be successful.” Most instructors want to be true to what they believe is expected of them in the program.

Even with the challenges of creating meaningful learning experiences and coordinating the programs in various settings, many participants noted that there were examples of excellent student engagement. For example, a Bridge instructor at the college level noted, with pleasure, the high motivation of students in the Bridge Year Program. She said, “The Bridge Year students were following our curriculum: similar readings, and similar assignments. The Bridge students,
some of them were just fantastic writers and thinkers. I was really impressed.” This observation of highly motivated students reflects well on the program and the readiness of students to move forward to college level work. These examples show how creating meaningful learning experiences across differing institutional cultures and contexts is essential for helping students gain skills which will help them attend and be successful in college.

**High School Responses.** The three themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the high school level are presented below.

*Through collaboration, teachers learn methods to maintain authenticity in instruction, remaining true to high school curriculum expectations while integrating college strategies and content.* The idea of maintaining authenticity in instruction and remaining true to high school curriculum expectations while integrating college content stems from the high school participants in this study who often struggle with replicating the content of a college course in a high school context. They also strive to maintain the authenticity of their high school content at the same time. Some worry that doing both levels of writing simultaneously is counterproductive. A number of high school teachers express concern over moving students through high school too quickly while still trying to make sure the work being done is authentic. One participant at this level shares, “I’m all for advancing people’s education, but we can’t just credential people without the education piece. I think a lot of what you’d see is us kind of tackling it, trying to make sure that it’s authentic and real and means something.” This can be interpreted as a perception that these programs may be moving students too fast and sacrificing learning in the process. An administrative participant also sees the benefit of integrating college strategies and content. She shares, “…Ultimately, it was for students to benefit students, but it
also was about teacher learning, and administrator learning.” This clarification and continuous learning is something participants feel encourages professional growth.

Another high school teacher discussed how in her interaction with college faculty, her methods were criticized for not encouraging college ready behavior, but she noted that it is challenging to replicate a college class when there are so many distractions at the high school level. She states,

High school is distracted in a million different ways. We’re interrupted by announcements. We’re interrupted by dismissals for assemblies. We’re interrupted by kids who have athletic contests to get released from school early, and so sometimes that becomes tricky to navigate as well because we have such a rigid attendance policy in the college environment, and we have essentially no attendance policy in the high school environment, so kids can miss a significant amount of course time without incident. There are no consequences to them because it’s a high school situation. I think that is difficult sometimes.

These examples show how maintaining authenticity in instruction while integrating college strategies and content may help students transition to college level writing more effectively. Participants noted that this can be a challenging undertaking, however.

After engaging in collaboration, teachers express the desire for more collaborative opportunities. Participants, particularly those at the high school level, expressed the desire to have more open opportunities to collaborate with instructors at the college level and more opportunities for direction and collaboration to make sure they are meeting the demands of this program appropriately. One high school participant states, “…they know that we are going to try our best teaching them, but I do wish that we had more of those resources. Just so that we can get
a little of a perspective on what they would be experiencing.” This participant also questioned if the best practices, which have been pushed so hard at the high school level, are being utilized at the college level, and if college instructors will understand how these students have become used to writing assistance.

An administrative participant at the high school level also discusses this point and the need for colleges to initiate conversations, saying,

I think post-secondary needs to reach out to the high schools rather than us reaching out to them. We, at the high school, reach out to the middle school to show them where we are and where we would like to see the students be when they come to us. We show them our cards. We show them where the student needs to be. I don’t think [that] happens at the post-secondary level. They don’t know.

This shows how creating more meaningful collaborative opportunities may allow teachers time to refine instruction and better prepare students. It is also important for college instructors to know that high school teachers welcome the chance to collaborate.

*Through collaboration, teachers develop an understanding of what colleges expect.*

Another theme expressed by participants at the high school level related to this question is facilitating situations in which teachers can develop an understanding of what colleges expect, which participants agreed could lead to enhanced success for students. However, there was some wariness that two people having a conversation does not constitute full scale college/high school collaboration, which requires a gradual process of change at both levels. One participant touched on this topic, expressing her surprise that a college instructor told her that students would not be collaborating at the college level as she was having these students do in her high school course. This high school participant stated, “I was a little surprised by that ... because we hear about the
importance of collaboration all the time. I remember collaborating a lot in my English classes as far as writing workshop style.” She also mentions how she was told that students should be prepared for lecture. She responded, “Well, why not? Wouldn’t you want to know if everyone’s on the same page in your classroom? Wouldn’t you want to know if people had questions?”

Some concern, particular to geographically isolated schools in rural sections of Maine, was that many courses at the college level are taught by adjuncts who are also high school instructors. One participant noted, “How do you collaborate with yourself?” High school teachers and college adjuncts became an unexpected subset in this study, bringing new questions and issues not faced by those instructors with experience solely at one level. One participant who teaches at both levels and has some freedom in her school’s curriculum, mentioned that she has students do a portion of their senior English course as a “mini-composition” course. Another participant supported this practice when he shared the success of Bridge Year students. He said, “…they don’t seem to have any problems of writing in college, okay. In other words, it has done its job. But remember, we had a college professor helping out their high school teacher that made it happen.” This participant is saying that the success of these students in college is directly related to a college instructor in their high school course. Some participants felt otherwise however, mentioning that the work done in high school by high school teachers is an important foundation for college learning.

It was noted, also, that to strengthen an understanding of what colleges expect, it is helpful to have someone located at the college level to facilitate partnerships. As one participant mentioned, “I think a piece of it that’s important is having that office space, right there on campus. We like each other.” This example shows how there is often a disconnect between the
high school and college level. When teachers have a better understanding of what colleges expect, they can better acquaint students with those expectations.

**Research Question 2: What are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary levels?**

The second research question discusses the emergent themes connected to the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Five themes regarding experience were identified through a careful review of the interview transcripts, as presented in Table 5 and discussed below.

Table 5

*Themes Emerging from an Analysis related to Research Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborators express the desire to make sure high school instructors feel supported</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaborators express a worry of being too imposing on high school teachers.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborators develop a perception of college approach to instruction and rigor of coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborators learn strategies to integrate writing across the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborators express an uneasiness of the sometimes disjointed approach to collaboration</td>
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</table>
College responses. The two themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the college level are presented below.

Collaborators express the desire to make sure high school instructors feel supported.

Participants at the college level shared their desire to make sure high school instructors felt supported. Though there was some discussion about the best way to approach this support, there was agreement that providing support was beneficial. This facilitation of learning was also discussed by a college participant, who shared how important it is to connect with dual enrollment instructors at the high school level. Though she is not able to meet with them often, this participant feels it is important to make time to meet with instructors at some point. She states,

When I have talked to high school instructors, overwhelmingly, they really want that connection, so I’ve had the similar experience. They want to come and meet with the people who teach English 101 here and get ideas. The people that I’ve dealt with have been, you know, absolutely open, and they want to share and collaborate.

Often it is a matter of funding and conflicting schedules that creates the largest barrier to collaboration, but college faculty do see collaborative experiences as valuable. This shows how college participants want high school teachers to feel supported. It is sometimes challenging to find time to collaborate, but college instructors see the value of it.

Collaborators express a worry of being too imposing on high school teachers. Another theme connected with research question two is the idea that college participants worry about being too imposing on high school teachers. For example, a Bridge Year instructor at the college level expresses his wariness of possibly being too imposing when offering suggestions to high school teachers. He states, “…anything that I say in context of working with secondary teachers,
I have to be extra scrupulous that I avoid any appearance of condescension…or, “You’re saying that what I’ve spent the last 30 years on is a waste of time.” This concern sheds light on the pervasive issue of blame in education. Another instructor at the college level builds on this idea to move away from the perception of finger-pointing and its negative effects. She says, “…once you start pointing fingers, people get like turtles. They just withdraw into their own shells and no conversation ever happens ever again and that’s just too bad.” Another participant noted,

Yeah. There are big, some substantial differences and different kinds of pressure. There’s the issue of workload. There’s very much, of course, the sense of “Who are you to come in and tell me? I’ve been doing this for 30 years. I have 120 students a day. You probably teach three hours a week.” That’s all totally fair. Those kinds of asymmetries, we just have to find a way to work around them. I know I’m not always successful in gaining that kind of trust. I wish I were better at it.

This is a significant observation because it shows how a college instructor has thought carefully about the best way to approach collaboration without offending high school teachers.

An additional college instructor also mentions her observations of high school instructor preferences. She says,

At the high school level, what I have noticed is they do not like me lecturing them. [They] don’t want me to come in telling them what to do. What we do is, I would get meetings with different teachers. You have somebody who will intervene on your behalf, so they come to meeting, because they’re on their own territory.

This participant makes an important point by noting that approaching collaboration between levels as you would with colleagues at your own level is vital to a successful collaboration. This participant goes on to suggest that “You have to have a really good rapport with people, be able
to laugh at it, not be angry about it, because here's the thing: Every time you go in there, you feel like you’re stepping on their toe. That’s not my point.” This shows that it is necessary to develop a rapport with teachers and make sure everyone is on common ground when approaching collaboration.

Other college instructors build on this by discussing the process of making instructors feel at ease with collaborative experiences. Another college participant agrees with this sentiment and expresses how some approaches can be counterproductive, stating,

Absolutely, which is kind of appalling, I think. At least for people who, indeed, if they are teaching courses in schools of education for perspective teachers, that they can become very removed from the realities of schools. It is, it’s kind of a commonly known thing that to develop some real deep collaborations that really go deep in the schools, it’s just a hard thing to do.

There was consensus from all participants at the college level that it is important to develop the right collaborative mindset of focusing on common goals when working together across levels to support high school learning and transitioning students to college.

However, caution comes from one college participant who shares that,

Just as you can have some faculty who are removed, you also can have some teachers … It comes from both sides, and I think there have been some real changes in the sense of more of an understanding that where somebody is coming from is less important than who has the skills and the knowledge and the abilities that can help us help our kids and deepen their own learning.

This shows that college instructors want to make sure that high school instructors perceive their suggestions as constructive and not feel offended, which could be
counterproductive to the goal of helping students transition to college writing with appropriate skills.

**High school responses.** The three themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the high school level are presented below.

*Collaborators develop a perception of college approach to instruction and rigor of coursework.* High school participants discussed developing perceptions of college approaches to instruction and rigor of coursework. Because there is sometimes little communication between the two levels, high school teachers will instruct as they expect the course would be taught at the college level. This can be a frustrating endeavor for numerous reasons, however, especially when considering college readiness and academic maturity. For instance, a high school teacher reflects on college readiness and academic maturity when she shares, “It’s been a little bit of a challenge too…getting them to behave like college students when they’re just juniors or seniors in high school…We’ve been working a lot on personal responsibility, and that’s taken some time.” Some participants expressed displeasure that it should be expected that high school students should be doing college work before they are fully prepared for it. For example, the previously mentioned participant questions whether her high school juniors really should be considered ready for college when she states, “I don’t know…maturity-wise, they are not ready. Independence-wise, they are not ready. Some of my students, probably out of the sixteen that I have, probably five of them, as far as juniors, are ready for college level writing.” This teacher goes on to note that college faculty often suggested that the college content should be taught in a college setting as opposed to a high school setting. This shows how developing a perception of college approach to instruction and rigor of coursework may help better prepare students for the college level.
**Collaborators learn strategies to integrate writing across the curriculum.** A number of high school participants mention the benefits of writing across the curriculum. A particular participant shares an example of collaboration across content areas in her high school. She says,

> Actually, I had a biology teacher in my school come into my sophomore English classroom. He’s done this for the past three years. I do a unit around ... It’s deadly invaders, so it’s around new diseases of the 20th century and the 21st century and how they’ve been discovered, and just by a weird coincidence when we did this unit at the beginning of the year the Ebola Outbreak had happened...he always does this great complementary lesson to the unit about how a virus replicates itself. He brings in the science into the research that we’re doing, and then when we write about it we usually do an argumentative essay, and this particular year it was, “Should US aid workers continue to be allowed to travel to places where Ebola is present?”

Such examples of writing across the curriculum were widely shared at the high school level, as this has been a popular initiative in education over recent years. Regarding this initiative, one participant shared,

> I think we’re becoming more mindful of “How do we reach out across to different content areas?” We’re still so siloed at our high school in terms of content area and I think that’s a problem with trying to be cohesive with literacy skills and strategies, so even though I feel like we’ve raised our awareness about many of these writing skills to get them college ready, what I’d like to see improved is making these writing skills something that happens across content areas.

These responses focus on the many facets of teaching and learning involved in writing strategies across the curriculum.
Collaborators express an uneasiness of the sometimes disjointed approach to collaboration. High school participants shared thoughts on their uneasiness regarding collaboration that sometimes feels disjointed. For numerous reasons, some participants feel that there should be more consistent follow-through when making sure instructors are delivering the content appropriately. Some participants feel that a more streamlined approach to learning content methods from the college level would help them feel more confident. For example, one high school instructor touches on this when she says,

The thing that surprises me the most is I would have thought that there would have been more direct oversight of the type of product that I’m putting out. I’m very confident in what my kids and I have done…I just thought in general if KVCC was going to stamp their okay on it, that they would have wanted to check on things a little more because pretty much I’ve been out there alone. Does that make sense?

It can be gleaned from this that there is a need for more support to ensure that programs such as this are being implemented effectively.

Another participant expressed her concern about seeking more connection to develop deeper understanding of the content to be taught. She stated,

The only thing that I have received from UMA is a binder that has sample essays in it. They use the SAT rubric, which I’m very familiar with. Most of us English teachers have had training on assessing using the SAT rubric so I was really familiar with that and it had some resources for some textbooks that we could order. Or, have our kids purchase, but nothing really specific about how to go about teaching writing in the college level or resources. It was more like an outline of the course and some sample papers. I think they anticipate that we know how to teach. All the faith in the world, that they know that we
are going to try our best teaching them, but I do wish that we had more of those resources. Just so that we can get a little of a perspective on what they would be experiencing. Because it’s been a while since I’ve been in a 100-level English class.

This points out that there are some important challenges that writing instructors have faced when engaging in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

**Research Question 3: How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors and administrators at each level?**

The third research question discusses five emergent themes that relate to instructors and administrators’ perception of how collaboration has impacted or may impact students’ college readiness. The themes, found in Table 6, were identified through a thorough examination of the interview transcripts.
Table 6

*Themes Emerging from an Analysis related to Research Question 3*

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<th>College</th>
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<td>• Collaboration assists in deeper understanding factors related to the academic maturity of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration assists in developing strategies to assist students in learning to write in different contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration assists in building student confidence through familiarity with college work.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>High School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration assists with utilizing tools and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collaboration assists with understanding the necessary rigor of coursework</td>
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</table>

**College responses.** The three themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the college level are presented below.

**Collaboration assists with understanding factors related to the academic maturity of students.** A number of college participants expressed the possibility that high school students may not be mature enough to handle college level expectations and content. Participants had various responses to this, but most were in agreement that it is perfectly fine for students not to be able to meet these expectations before they have fully met their high school writing expectations. One college participant said that maybe we are expecting too much of young high school students by pushing them to be college ready earlier. She states,
It seems to be just perfectly fine if high school kids aren’t ready yet. It’s a college course. That, as far as I can tell, keeps getting lost. There is such great determination to have everybody do college when they’re in high school.

Additionally, there are also some concerns and differences in opinion about the goals of this program. For example, one college participant believes there needs to be changes in the high school curriculum that would allow the high school junior year to be all college composition. Others feel these programs are pushing students into college level work too soon. There is consensus between college participants, however, that they are happy to have the chance to communicate and collaborate with high school instructors, even if the programs might move fledgling writers too fast.

A third college participant adds her perspective on the academic maturity of students, stating, “This particular year we’ve had students with a particularly high number of problems that range, not just from academic preparedness, but they have emotional issues or mental health issues, or health issues, a number of things that have been really, really complicating their performance in the classroom. This shows how factors related to the academic maturity of students can help instructors better prepare students for college level writing.

Collaboration assists with developing strategies to assist students in learning to write in different contexts. Another key idea discussed by participants was the importance of developing strategies to assist student learning to write in different contexts. As previously mentioned, there are those who expressed that high school students may not be ready for college content, but they should be prepared to adapt to writing for different purposes. It was also expressed that the importance of writing at the high school level should not be discredited, because it is an important foundation for college level writing. A college instructor expands on this idea when
she offers the suggestion to collaborate while still keeping true to high school and college contexts. She says,

There are writing courses taught in high schools that are worth teaching. I don’t know why we can’t respect those too and just figure out better ways to connect what’s going on in high school with what’s going on in college. There are certainly things about writing [that] high school students don’t know coming into college, but we require college courses of college students, so that’s absolutely fine that there are some things they don’t know. Attitudes, ones who are afraid to try new things, ones who are not curious, ones who don’t want to take risks, they’re at more risk I think, than the ones that can do those things.

One Bridge instructor at the college level mentions the idea that, “… high school is just not college. It’s a different setting. It’s a different experience…All the sorts of factors that go into the social context of a college classroom are obviously not present in high school classrooms.” Another participant supports this using anecdotes to show how it is important to learn strategies of writing across the curriculum to assure that students are well versed and experienced in a variety of applicable skills. Similarly, one participant relates how the Maine Content Literacy Project helped develop such an understanding. She says it …has made me aware of the fact that, number one, students are going to be asked to largely write about issues that aren’t just English. No longer are students strictly analyzing the story of an hour. They are looking at real life topics and I think that it’s influenced … I think I do a lot more argumentative kind of “supporting a position” type of writing…Sometimes it’s not about “This is what I want from you.” It’s about “Let me make you aware of what we’re doing right now,” and it’s through those types of
conversations that I think that’s how the real change happens, not through demands of how the other needs to change.

Another college participant discussed the importance of learning to apply skills in different context so students can be adaptable with their writing. This participant shares,

Would you want to fly in a commercial airline with a pilot who get an A in takeoff, an A in instruments, an A in navigation, and an F in landing? I don’t think so, but that averages out to a B; but the landing is wicked important…We do it for everything. If you had a skier, who won the gold medal we would never say, “Well, that’s not fair.” She practiced more than all the others. We honor that. They show clips of her as a little kid, falling in the snow and getting up, so it’s only really in school that we set these time constraints, and move people along by averaging.

This shows that focusing on instruction of writing in various contexts can be of great assistance when engaging in collaboration between high school and college writing faculty.

Collaboration assists with building student confidence through familiarity with college work. Participants at the college level brought up the perception that collaborative programs build student confidence and familiarize them with college work. One participant, for example, explains her perception that dual enrollment is beneficial for students because “for them to go from a high school environment in a small school to a big college environment is a difficult transition for a lot of them. So by putting the college courses in the high school, it gives them a leg up.” This means that these types of programs can ease students through the difficult transition to college. As other participants note, they allow for students to transition to college with a support system in place. One participant states, “That’s the difference, because when they hit that wall, … in the college level, there is nobody there when they are in the college campus...when
they hit the wall, their high school teacher is still right there.” He believes this support is necessary for students to be college ready and make the transition seamlessly to other writing contexts. Additionally, one college participant mentioned,

One of the things the research is pretty clear on, is that the more of those noncredit courses you make, the higher probability is that you won’t graduate from college. It was in that interest, we work closely with schools and see that kids are coming, not just necessarily with a good average, but really none of the things that they need to know.” He goes on to state, “For students to come to college, prepare to do the reading and writing, and computation that’s expected there, is in the best interest of everybody. The more we worked together on this, I think, the better we are. I see the proficiency as a huge step in alleviating the problem.”

This shows how developing strategies to familiarize students with college work may help them feel more confident in their ability to succeed at that level.

**High School Responses.** The two themes captured through an iterative analysis of the transcripts of participants at the high school level are presented below.

**Collaboration assists with utilizing tools and strategies.** High school participants shared that an important benefit of collaboration was the tools and strategies amassed through collaboration. One high school participant, for example, was pleased with the result of MCLP because she stated,

…where I think people continued to use a lot of the strategies and the knowledge of the Maine Content Literacy Project because it didn’t become one more thing. It just became part of how people did business in the classroom. It didn’t seem artificial or contrived, but made sense.
This participant also supported this idea when she shared how the program has been sustained in the school even though the official project has ended. One participant in the MCLP mentioned,

…I think people continued to use a lot of the strategies and the knowledge of the Maine Content Literacy Project because it didn’t become one more thing. It just became part of how people did business in the classroom. It didn’t seem artificial or contrived, but made sense that in science in order to get students.

This shows how developing different strategies for instructing students may help prepare students to face these instructional strategies at the college level.

Collaboration assists with understanding the necessary rigor of coursework. Another theme discovered through analysis and consideration of the research question was high school participants’ perceptions of the rigor of coursework at the college level. This understanding can impact pedagogy and may ultimately help students transition effectively to college level writing. A secondary Bridge Year teacher adds to this idea by stating that new college students sometimes, “…struggle with these changing demands and struggle with different contexts because they’ve always been taught to approach writing as one very specific way and are very good at it.” These different contexts, however, are also noted to be what makes the two levels unique, and each serving an important role in skill development.

Another high school participant builds on this when he notes that students will often be content to do the bare minimum. He states, “This is not really an English issue. I think it’s a general school issue... I’ve actually had students say to me, “Can you just grade this one? Can you just give me whatever grade you would have for having done this much work?”
This shows how developing an understanding of the necessary rigor of college coursework can inform teachers’ instruction to better prepare students for expectations at the college level.

**Differences Amongst the Programs and Participants in Study**

The three programs involved in this study were similar in that they involved participants from secondary and post-secondary levels. The Maine Bridge Year Program and Kennebec Valley Community College’s Dual Enrollment Program were both concerned with giving students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school, whereas The Maine Content Literacy Project was focused on providing professional development to teachers.

When considering responses from across the three programs, participants shared a number of common ideas regarding collaboration between high school and college writing faculty, particularly regarding the positive impact of collaboration on college readiness in writing. Though all interactions between college and high school writing faculty were done with the common goal of increasing student success, there were, a few differences regarding the type of collaboration experienced.

**Maine Content Literacy Project.** The collaboration within The Maine Content Literacy Project was mostly focused on giving teachers strategies and tools to develop as professional leaders within their schools. It was a six year, longitudinal initiative that connected professionals at both the high school and college levels in formal and informal ways. This project involved a select number of college faculty and directors who worked with instructors who taught exclusively at the high school level. There were some participants who wished the MCLP could have continued, but others felt that their schools were able to continue with the strategies presented as a part of this project.
**Dual Enrollment.** Dual enrollment is a program offered by many colleges. The college considered in this study does not charge a fee for students to participate in dual enrollment, but emphasizes that students can receive college credit for college courses taken in high school. Some of the dual enrollment participants at the high school level have worked at the college level before, or are adjunct instructors at the college level as well as high school teachers. There were some participants, particularly at the college level, who felt that high school students were being pushed into college level work too quickly. They expressed the feeling that a strong foundation in high school level writing is necessary and important for students before they move on to college level writing. There are collaborative opportunities available, but a more streamlined connection is necessary. High school teachers worried about not presenting the content as a college instructor would in terms of expectations and rigor. Many participants also expressed the concern that the distractions present in a high school make it challenging to replicate college coursework appropriately.

**The Maine Bridge Year Program.** The collaboration within The Maine Bridge Year Program has been happening for the shortest time of the three initiatives in this study. This study focused on the experiences of those instructors who were involved in the first year of the program. There is some professional development involved with this program, but instructors appear to seek more communication between secondary and post-secondary levels when instructing at the high school level. Collaboration in this program seems to focus more on student development. There is also a small fee associated with being a part of this program, which allows students to gain access to actual college courses. After its first year, Bridge Year moved from UMaine-Orono to its present place at UMaine-Augusta. It has been noted that the relatively new
program has become very large, and this popularity requires a great deal of continued management.

Another notable difference is the challenge of maintaining collaborative programs in a geographically diverse state, such as Maine. One participant shares his example of the challenge of collaborating in rural areas. He states,

I’m not sure how many English teachers, say Jackman, for example, has, but I know that they very much look forward to the times that we can have the occasional collaboration between even just our two districts. We had a chance this past fall. I think it may have been our pre-year workshops that we do, where they came and they sat in on a lot of the stuff that we were talking about, and it was such a great experience for them to come down, and hopefully we can return the favor by going up there. Even just having conversations with people that are “next door,” even though they’re 50 miles up the road, that’s the way it is up here, as you know. Of course, they’re even smaller than we are. I’m not sure how many English teachers they have. I think I’ve met one of them. I’m not sure how big the staff is.

This shows that there are many different contexts of education, even within one state, and collaborative opportunities are received well by instructors in isolated areas as well as urban areas.

Summary

In summary, analysis of these three programs provides evidence that supports secondary and post-secondary participants’ perceptions revealed during the interviews. All three types of programs reflect the attitudes, beliefs and practices described by participants during the data collection process. Though these three programs are different, there is a consensus from all
participants that facilitating and encouraging future collaborative opportunities between high school and college writing faculty is worthwhile.
Chapter V: Discussion of the Findings

Revisiting the Problem of Practice

In recent years, studies have shown that more and more students are entering college unprepared for college level writing (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Southern Regional Educational Board, 2010; Kirst & Venzia, 2004). Therefore, there have been high rates of students requiring remediation in college. This study considered collaboration between high school and college writing faculty and the perceptions those faculty members had on how their partnerships impact college readiness and their own instruction. The high rates of remediation at the college level indicate a large scale issue with college readiness in students. The intentional partnerships between high school and college writing faculty in this study have the potential to positively impact student achievement by focusing on the instructors as learners becoming informed about best practices for assisting students and working collegially with other instructors of writing. According to Parke and Taylor (2008), educators often discuss ideas relevant to instruction with fellow teachers, pupils, school leadership, and parents. This networking can create working partnerships that benefit the educational process (Parke & Taylor, 2008, p. 21). This collaboration does not necessarily need to be expensive or highly structured, but facilitating connections between the two levels can create an easier transition for students and a deeper understanding of pedagogy at each level.

This study has shown positive outcomes related to the instructors’ perceptions of collaboration impacting college readiness; a number of participants expressed that these types of collaborative relationships have been or can be impactful to teachers at both levels. Though there was some concern of collaborative programs encouraging students to move too quickly into content they are not ready to approach, there was consensus that the act of collaborating between levels has great potential to improve college readiness in writing.
Principals, instructors, scholars and other stakeholders at the secondary and post-secondary level would be interested in this topic. As an instructor of English composition at a Maine community college, this information will help me better serve my students and gain a deeper understanding of collegial connections between secondary instructors of writing.

**Review of Methodology**

This qualitative multi-site case study explored collaboration between high school and college writing faculty and focused on the following research questions:

1. How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and their students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher and secondary school teachers and administrators across three collaborative programs?

2. What are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors and administrators at each level?

To best explore the research questions, the use of a multi-site case study format was selected. This format is apt because of the method’s ability to highlight perceptions of collaboration and its impact on college readiness from participants representing secondary and post-secondary levels. At the conclusion of each interview, the dialogue was transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed for emergent themes. This process helped the researcher determine if any ideas and concepts unveiled in one interview could be further explored in the next interview.

This chapter is broken down into the following sections: presentation and discussion of the major findings, discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical framework, discussion
of the findings in relation to the literature review, final analysis, significance of the study, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

**Discussion of Major Findings**

Through an examination of the data collected from interviews, a number of themes discussed in Chapter 4 provided the basis for four major findings. The following is a breakdown of the pertinent themes related to the research questions from each level. Then the synthesized major findings are presented.

Regarding perceptions of how collaborative experiences have impacted high school students’ college readiness based on data collected:

**College**

- College participants were in consensus that their collaborative experiences impacted high school students’ college readiness by creating meaningful learning experiences across differing institutional cultures and contexts, maintaining consistency across programs and, therefore, streamlining educational opportunities for students while helping them transition to college level writing.

**High School**

- Although, high school participants mentioned the feeling of being “disconnected” from instructors at the college level, they agreed that maintaining authenticity in instruction while integrating college strategies and content was helpful in positively impacting students’ transition to college level writing. Participants at this level noted the challenges of collaborating across institutional levels and the desire for more meaningful collaborative opportunities to allow teachers time to refine instruction and better prepare students. However, most expressed the desire
for college participants to know that teachers welcome the chance to collaborate and gain a better understanding for what colleges expect to better acquaint students with those expectations.

Regarding the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level based on data collected:

*College*

- College participants expressed that they want high school teachers to feel supported. They recognize that even though it is sometimes challenging to find time to collaborate, they see the value of it. Furthermore, college instructors want to make sure that high school instructors perceive their suggestions as constructive and not feel offended, which could be counterproductive to the goal of helping students transition to college writing with appropriate skills.

*High School*

- High school participants presented their beliefs that developing a perception of a college approach to instruction and rigor of coursework may help better prepare students for the college level. They also focused on the importance of developing writing strategies across the curriculum and working through the inevitable challenges that occur when engaging in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

Regarding perceptions of how collaboration may impact students’ college readiness based on data collected:
College

- College participants shared their perceptions that it is important to consider students’ academic maturity to help instructors better prepare students for college level writing. They suggest that focusing on the instruction of writing in various contexts and developing strategies to familiarize students with college level work may help with the engagement between high school and college writing faculty, therefore helping students feel more confident to transition to college level writing.

High School

- Participants at the high school level expressed the importance of developing different strategies for instructing students to prepare them to face these instructional strategies and rigor of coursework at the college level.

Therefore, the four synthesized major findings for this study are as follows:

1. Participants expressed mostly positive reactions to the impact that collaboration has had or could have on their students’ college readiness.

2. Participants desired more meaningful, consistent connections between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors, despite differing contexts and institutional organization.

3. Participants at both the secondary and post-secondary level sought to clarify their interest in pursuing collaboration between levels in constructive ways.

4. Participants desired to create strong, collegial interactions across levels to focus on developing instructional strategies to support their common goals of preparing students for college level writing.
Based on this analysis, several pertinent findings were identified, as follows:

Participants expressed mostly positive reactions to the impact collaboration has had or could have on their students’ college readiness. College and high school participants in this study saw collaboration between levels as a positive thing with the potential to affect proactive change at each level and bring the levels closer, creating the possibility of smoother transition between high school and college writing.

College participants shared stories of how they felt welcome visiting high school teachers and observing classes at the high school level. Some interactions began as professional development and moved into more informal discourse as participants felt more comfortable exchanging ideas with one another. Participants noted that this type of interaction has shown improved college readiness across the three programs studied, mainly because collaboration clarifies college expectations for high school teachers and administrators. High school participants, in addition to gaining a clearer understanding of what colleges expected, also learned methods to maintain authenticity in instruction, be true to high school curriculum expectations, and integrate college strategies and content.

Participants desired more meaningful, consistent connections between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors, despite differing contexts and institutional organization. Participants at both levels expressed the desire for more collaboration, but they also mentioned facing some challenges when trying to collaborate, such as time, funds, and support for professional development. Participants often said they felt unsure who should initiate the collaboration and how to maintain meaningful, sustainable connections between very different institutions. Participants, especially The Maine Bridge Year participants, did share their feelings that collaboration helps maintain consistency across programs. Dual enrollment
participants, sought to develop and facilitate learning experiences across differing institutional cultures and contexts. Even though there was often an adjustment period for collaborators to feel comfortable expressing ideas with one another, teachers expressed the desire for more collaborative opportunities.

Participants at both the secondary and post-secondary level sought to clarify their interest in pursuing collaboration between levels in constructive ways. The participants in this study were unsure if their interest in collaboration was clear and they understood that collaboration was mutually beneficial. Many expressed the hope that collaboration would be constructive. Collaborators expressed the desire to make sure high school instructors felt supported. For example, collaborators at the college level shared their worries of being too imposing on high school teachers. Collaborators at the high school level in this study were motivated and interested in collaborating and developing a perception of college approach to instruction and rigor of coursework.

Participants desired to create strong, collegial interactions across levels that focus on developing instructional strategies to support their common goals of preparing students for college level writing. Participants hoped collaboration would assist in the creation of tools and strategies teachers could use to inform their instruction and increase students’ college level writing readiness. Such strategies also support initiatives present at the high school level, such as integrating writing across the curriculum. Although instructors sometimes mentioned some frustration with disjointed approach to collaboration, instructors felt that there is great possibility to help more students become college ready in writing and inform pedagogy at both levels.
Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

This study was constructed through the theoretical lens of adult learning theory. Adult learning theory was chosen as the framework that informed this study because it focused on how individual participants developed professionally, how they impacted their own practice through collaboration, and how they perceived that their learning in these partnerships affected students’ college readiness. This theory was apt for this study because it focused on the need for instructors to learn new ways of interacting across different educational settings and contexts. As aforementioned, the theory of andragogy (adult learning), according to OTPEC-Q (2007), is defined by Knowles as,

...a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn. Andragogy emphasizes the value of the process of learning. It uses approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative rather than didactic, and also emphasizes more equality between the teacher and learner.

For the purposes of this study, this theory was connected with professional development principles of participants at secondary and post-secondary levels with a focus on how instructors at both levels can facilitate experiences to improve college readiness.

Aspects of adult learning theory were shown in this study by participants sharing their experiential knowledge of their approach to instruction at their own level. By coming together though collaboration, each participant expressed learning from other participants as they worked toward common goals of promoting college readiness in writing.

As this study showed, even when a collaborative initiative ended, instructors were likely to continue using strategies they discovered through collaboration. Merriam (2008) builds on this when she states, “The one thing that all of us educators of adults have in common, regardless of
our work setting or learner population, is that facilitating learning is at the heart of our practice” (p. 93). In this sense, adult learning theory is an apt lens for this study because to facilitate learning, educators must be learners as well.

This study showed how the components and the nature of adult learning are supported by the nature of collaborative programs. A focus on adult learning for teachers has been noted in literature to increase positive working experiences when teachers “buy in” to the learning. However, participants expressed that they were far more engaged with sustained, mutually beneficial, and meaningful collaboration, rather than a single professional development event, such as a workshop or lecture.

It has been shown that this theory ties to learning of both high school and college instructors. The researcher discovered that the relationship between high school and college writing faculty members impacts and informs their learning as scholar-practitioners. This study builds on previously noted literature, as it implies that collaboration should be considered a productive practice for both the secondary and post-secondary participants when they are all working together to approach common issues.

This study showed that the principles of adult learning theory could be used as a lens to consider collaboration between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors. It can be concluded that these principles should guide collaboration. If this does not happen, then collaboration may seem disjointed or threatening.

The framework of adult learning theory helped interpret the unique learning that occurs between high school and college levels during partnerships. That being said, adult learning theory was appropriate for focusing the researcher’s problem of practice into the research questions, methodology, and questions she has chosen for this study, as it deals with
transformational learning of teachers in the context of instructing young adults transitioning from secondary to post-secondary writing. She used the principles of adult learning theory as a lens to consider her participants’ perceptions of collaboration. These principles were as follows:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected

It has been discussed in literature that professional learning by teachers does impact student success. This study recognizes that just as high school teachers can work on a peer-to-peer basis with middle school and primary school teachers, high school teachers can also work on a peer-to-peer basis with college instructors.

By focusing on developing instructors as learners engaging in collaborative partnerships, the researcher feels positive perceptions of impact were seen by participants in students being college ready. This study challenged the commonly held perception that the educational system ends at grade twelve, and took this into consideration as the modeling of adult learning for young adults to guide students through the difficult transition from high school to college level writing.

Ultimately, this theory informed how we see instructors learning and impacting their programs. It focused on instructors as learners and what support they need so they can, in turn, support their students, especially those in transition from high school to college writing. Furthermore, use of the lens of the adult learning theory assisted the researcher in examining the
instructors’ perceptions of collaboration and how this collaboration might influence college readiness.

**Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature**

A review of relevant literature, provided in the second chapter, presents a thorough investigation of participant perceptions on the impact of their own collaboration, pedagogy, and their students’ college readiness. The following discussion examines the results of this study against the topics reviewed in the second chapter. The sections are broken down into four key topic areas developed from the three research questions in this study and presented in the following way: Collaboration across differing institutional boundaries and cultures, impact of higher education and secondary instructors’ partnership and collaboration on secondary teachers’ teaching, and college readiness.

**Collaboration across differing institutional boundaries and cultures: Impact on academic culture.** This study supported the evidence from literature, noted previously, which showed a critical issue of academic culture separating secondary and post-secondary education (Azinger, 2000; Collinson & Cook, 2007). Participants noted that such distance created challenges when attempting to initiate and maintain quality partnerships, especially when participants had experience exclusively at one level. A number of participants in this study made the point that “high school is not college and we should not try to make it college.” Many of the frustrations from participants in this study came from the concern that students were moving too fast and being exposed to college level work before they were emotionally and academically ready for it. This study was not as much about the efficacy of the programs as it was about the experiences of participants.
These differences between high school and college levels were expressed by scholars in literature, such as Lym (2014). The participants in this study also noted these differences, especially those who were trying to teach bridge year or dual enrollment courses and found it challenging to integrate college content in a high school environment.

This study echoed literature such as Black-Hawkins and McLaughlin (2007) in that it showed how the context of learning and the distribution of information or materials vary at each level and understanding how instructors at each level operate may improve learning at each level. Participants in the study noted, however, that learning to write in a variety of contexts was very important in college level writing.

Many scholars cited in the literature review shared that there is a need for an understanding of institutional cultures and expectations (Snyder & Valdez, 2006). Participants in this study were generally very interested in making quality connections with instructors to improve teaching and learning, but were also concerned about offending instructors who have been teaching a certain way for a long time. They also noted that there are some counterproductive situations in which college teachers are not receptive to the needs and interests of high school instructors when involved in collaboration. It can be understood from literature and the points made within the study that both secondary and post-secondary instructors can benefit from this type of collaboration.

Some participants noted things that were common in reviewed literature. For example, some mentioned that a shift should take the form of 12th grade English becoming English composition, and others think English composition should utilize high school methods to improve student success. Participants responded by saying they felt more empowered in their
teaching because these collaborations are ongoing, and there is always opportunity to gain professional development and work to improve student skills at all levels.

**Impact of higher education and secondary instructors’ partnership and collaboration on secondary teachers’ teaching.** In this area, there were three primary subtopics, including the improvement of curriculum through reflection, the clarification of expectations with students, and the benefits of being able to connect and work with one another on pedagogy.

**Improving curriculum through reflection** The literature review noted that teacher reflection can improve instruction and learning outcomes (Alber & Nelson, 2010). Participants often mentioned feeling like they would be more effective if they could clarify the expectations and rigor of college instruction. This is significant to this study because this reflection may help college participants gain the information they need as researchers and help high school instructors gain the strategies for being reflective practitioners to improve their own instruction and likelihood of students leaving high school ready for college level writing. Additionally, this study showed ways that high schools can benefit from connecting researchers with practitioners. These aspects were shown in the study when high school participants noted the positive interactions with representatives from the college level and how beneficial it was to develop a deeper understanding of what was expected of them as well as their students.

**Clarifying expectations.** This study showed that clarifying expectations was important to participants at both levels and across three different programs. The high school participants in this study mentioned having positive interactions with the college level through credit based transition programs, but time and funds made it difficult to have the amount of conversations that participants at both levels would like.
Likewise, in the literature review, Hughes (2010) shares ideas about dual enrollment credit based programs for high school students. There is a discussion of who is best suited at the high school level and college level to work with students participating in these dual enrollment programs. This is important because it gives some information on what expectations and skills instructors should have when engaging in such partnerships. It was mentioned in the study that there are some requirements, such as having a master’s degree in the content area, to teach a dual enrollment course, but participants did express a sense of feeling unsure about rigor, content development, and delivery of information being consistent with college level expectations.

A number of concerns had been expressed in literature about the focus on state testing at the high school level. This is consistent with what college participants in this study wanted to express to high school participants. A number of participants at the college level mentioned that timed tests were one of the major factors harming college readiness in writing. One participant mentioned that students will rarely be expected to write timed essays in their academic or personal lives. College participants stressed the importance of the writing process, which includes revision. This is something that state mandated tests can’t measure.

Accordingly, scholars suggested that those involved in collaboration should have some understanding of what is going to happen in such partnerships. This ambiguity became a theme that came up repeatedly in the study. Participants at both the secondary and post-secondary level felt that collaboration needed to be more consistent and expectations needed to be clarified. Again, this study was not about the efficacy of the programs as much as the experiences of the participants. These experiences show that collaboration could be clarified if both levels had a clear direction of how collaboration should occur.
It has been noted that developing a deeper understanding of what occurs in various educational contexts can be beneficial. It was discussed in this study that not everyone has the opportunity to teach at both levels. In fact, participants noted that there is value in what is happening at the high school level or at the college level, but they showed that knowledge of both levels can help inform teaching exponentially.

Pedagogical networking. Another key idea in this study involving college/high school partnerships is the opportunity to simply discuss teaching and network with others. Teaching can be an isolated profession, and taking the opportunity to discuss pedagogy with others is helpful in developing best practices. According to Parke and Taylor (2008), educators often discuss ideas relevant to instruction with fellow teachers, pupils, school leadership, and parents. This collegial networking can be seen at other educational levels, but, as this study shows, there is still a disconnect in networking between the college and high school levels. One college participant called these collaborative programs an unfunded mandate to get college faculty to visit high schools. It is notable that this is one perspective, but this perspective may not be proactive in reaching common ground between high school and college faculty.

This study and the literature reviewed point to the need for secondary and post-secondary institutions to each have some stake in partnerships with one another. It was noted that all participants had to have an equal stake in the project, so there was no hierarchy among those involved. It was also mentioned that supportive leadership was key to success at both levels and it was beneficial for any in-service to occur on site at the schools involved instead of in unfamiliar territory. Participants in this study repeatedly cited strong, supportive leadership as key to maintaining an effective collaborative partnership. There were also a number of participants who noted the importance of having a liaison from the college level who could work
to facilitate partnerships. The three collaborative programs from this study are excellent examples of such initiatives.

This study connects with literature that cites many ways proactive collaboration can happen between the two levels of education. As participants in this study note, stakeholders in these types of partnerships must be wary of some challenges that can arise. Snyder and Valdez (2006) discuss a challenge with sustaining meaningful partnerships. They share that it is often the university that backs out of collaboration, leaving the participants at the high school level with the frustration of having put forth the work to build partnerships, only to have them end prematurely. This is why one administrative participant suggested that colleges should reach out to high schools instead of high schools reaching out to colleges.

Conclusion

These examples from the study and pertinent literature provide a rationale for this study, demonstrating the need for collaboration between high school and college writing faculty along with how such partnerships can help students become college ready in writing. My research fills a gap in the literature because it focused on individual instructors who are or have experienced college/high school partnerships. I have gained an understanding of how secondary and post-secondary participants have worked to assist students while they are developing professionally.

Along with connecting to important aspects of the study, key themes in this study included college and high school writing faculty perspectives about easing the transition for students between high school and college writing and getting students to think about college early through targeted initiatives. Other themes included retention at the college level, improving programming/instruction at both levels, saving students and institutions money, and creating
meaningful opportunities to collaborate even though secondary and post-secondary worlds are very different.

The information presented and synthesized here through careful reasoning shows there is a wide range of current knowledge and literature devoted to aspects of college readiness and collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. It can be gleaned from those cited in this literature review that often college instructors are considered scholars and high school teachers are considered practitioners. Torraco (2014) states that scholar-practitioner collaboration, “…differs from the established scientific tradition of deductive research...Scholar-practitioner collaboration requires a reconception of the meaning of practice...Practice…is a source of knowledge generation” (p. 1201). This idea leads well into the focal points of this study and synthesized the ideas presented in literature to support the study. It was noted that it is best to find common ground and forge mutually beneficial partnerships. Therefore, literature shows that through collaboration, those involved in the different cultures of secondary and post-secondary education may better understand one another and better serve students to increase college readiness, especially in writing.

The goal of this study was to investigate how collaboration between high school and college writing faculty, as perceived by participants who have engaged in some type of secondary/post-secondary collaboration, has or could impact college readiness in writing. This was analyzed through a qualitative multi-site case study research design that sought to answer the following three questions:

1. How does the relationship and collaboration between higher education and secondary school teachers impact secondary school teachers’ instruction in writing and their
students’ college readiness in writing, as perceived by the partnering higher and secondary school teachers and administrators across three collaborative programs?

2. What are the experiences of writing instructors who have engaged in collaboration at the secondary and post-secondary level?

3. How can such collaboration impact students’ college readiness, as perceived by instructors and administrators at each level?

In answering these questions, data was gathered through interviews. The entirety of the data was coded for thematic analysis.

The results of this study show that participants at the secondary and post-secondary levels found collaboration to be a positive experience and even though it is difficult to schedule and sustain, realized the potential to assist with students transitioning from high school level writing to college level writing.

**Significance of the Study**

Stakeholders at both the college and high school levels will have interest in this research due to its focus on student achievement, instructor development, impact on costs and policies at both levels, and other potential reciprocal benefits of collaboration between the secondary and post-secondary institutions seeking to better prepare students for college writing. Scholars and those involved in this study agree that that the inquiry-oriented focus of research in colleges and the action-oriented research in secondary schools could help stakeholders at these two levels meet common goals if all parties seek to use partnerships for simultaneous reform, particularly to close gaps between high school and college writing expectations (Sirotnak & Goodlad, 1988; Denecker, 2013). Participants in this study expressed strong support for the possibility of
increasing college readiness if collaborative programs are given enough funding and administrative support.

This research problem has been noted in literature to be important at the local, state, national, and global level. In the case of this study, the research problem were viewed from the local context of rural Maine. In Maine, as well as the rest of the United States, college readiness in writing has been a focal point of high schools, from designing more rigorous secondary curriculum to giving students the opportunity to receive college credit while in high school. State legislators have noted the importance of preparing young people for college and have championed programs aimed at increasing college readiness.

From the individual to the global level, data shows that college readiness is significant because students who are well prepared for college level writing are more likely to attain college degrees. This point is supported by Marschall and Davis (2012), who state, “As adults enhance their critical reading skills, they can not only obtain post-secondary degrees but also enhance their professional opportunities in the workplace and their ability to participate fully in civic life” (p. 67). Therefore, it can be understood from the literature on the topic and through the points made in this study that higher educational attainment of members of a society leads to a productive and positive social culture. This statement could also be applicable to teacher development through partnerships.

In addition, this research problem is significant to me as a scholar-practitioner who is acting as a change agent at the community college level as well as a former high school English teacher. I have the unique perspective that comes from my experience teaching high school and college level writers. Literature suggests that bridge programs and initiatives that build connections between high school and college writing faculty help students gain the necessary
skills to persist at the college level. This study will help me be impactful towards change because it will afford me the opportunity to understand what scholars have written about this topic, what local writing instructors have experienced regarding this topic, and how this topic can be applied to practice in my own educational setting.

Again, this issue is of great significance in the world of education. By developing effective approaches to teaching writing in high school, students will not only be better prepared for college composition courses, but also for college level writing in all content areas. This, in turn, will help student retention, lessen the need for remedial coursework, and save time as well as money for those involved leading to higher degree attainment and the betterment of society.

Limitations

The findings of this study are informative and worthy of continued exploration. Yet the number of teachers and schools drawn upon to participate limits the findings and conclusions drawn from the data. There have been some changes in the programs central to this study. For example, The Maine Content Literacy Project is no longer happening, even though participants are still using the resources and strategies from its six year run. Additionally, The Maine Bridge Year has grown to include more high schools, but it is based out of University of Maine-Augusta instead of University of Maine-Orono. The leadership, organization, and application of this program has changed and this study focused mainly on those who experienced it as a new program.

This study has uncovered many different perceptions of college readiness from a relatively small sample of college and high school stakeholders. While the interview format provided the best method to answer the research questions, scheduling the 45 minute-60 minute interviews for extended periods of time proved to be challenging. Some school leaders also had
some questions about my study before granting permission to interview staff members.

Scheduling seemed to be the most challenging obstacle in the data collection process. When the interviews were conducted, however, the researcher was met with robust and energetic discussions, in which all participants appeared willing to share their perceptions and experiences. Unfortunately, all interviews were not equally timed. There were some interviews which barely made the minimum of 45 minutes and others which had to be cut short at the hour mark. It is unknown what additional pieces of data were never uncovered owing to an interview ending due to time restraints.

**Validity**

Issues of validity previously discussed included response bias and maintaining researcher objectivity throughout the data collection process. The second threat to validity was researcher objectivity, as the researcher was not only a former high school English teacher, but also as an adjunct instructor of English composition at one of the college level study sites. The researcher previously had professional interactions with some of the participants and had a strong rapport with these participants. While this rapport helped establish a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants, therefore helping limit response bias, it presented a threat to validity. To combat this, the researcher used the same protocol for each interview session.

**Future Research**

Findings from this research study present the possibility of future studies to advance the body of knowledge regarding collaboration between high school and college writing faculty to benefit college readiness in writing. This study represents an early examination of collaboration and college readiness that focuses on secondary and post-secondary participants involved in three different types of collaborative programs: dual enrollment, The Maine Bridge Year
Program, and The Maine Content Literacy Project. Therefore, there is potential to broaden the scope and scale of this study by expanding the number of instructors and collaborative programs that participated in this study. The researcher plans to share her findings with The Maine Composition Coalition and with all those who participated in the study.

Future research might also include going deeper into the perceived notions of the hierarchy between secondary and post-secondary levels and what impedes successful collaboration. Additionally, future research avenues might also include a longitudinal study of student success in college with a focus on students whose high school instructors had engaged in the types of collaboration discussed in this study.

Participants across the eleven study sites reflected on the role of collaborative programs within the school or college and noted their experiences with collaboration. Future studies should seek to examine the continued collaborative experiences of those instructors involved in dual enrollment and The Maine Bridge Year Program as well as any additional collaborative initiatives and the efficacy of these programs.

The findings of this study indicate the desire of participants at both secondary and post-secondary levels to engage in collaboration. Studies should seek to determine the significance between secondary/post-secondary collaboration and students’ readiness for college level writing.

**Personal Comments and Recommendations**

This project was founded in my (the researcher’s) personal practice as a high school English teacher in a public school setting and, later, an adjunct instructor at a community college. Coming from a strong English/secondary education background as an undergraduate, I felt comfortable with my grasp of educational methods and theories. I was surprised, however to
learn that these theories did not mesh with how I was expected to actually teach high school English. Conversations with college writing faculty, essentially filled in the gaps of what would be expected of my students at the college level and allowed me to make adjustments to my own instruction and perception of teaching. As I worked through my master’s program in education, I retained an interest in collaboration and hoped for more opportunities like the conversations I had during that professional development series. Upon entering Northeastern’s educational doctorate program, I knew I would focus on this topic, and each class honed my direction and scope of future research. During the course of this study, I began teaching as an adjunct instructor of English composition at the community college level. This experience deepened my understanding of the post-secondary approach to writing instruction. With my experiences at the secondary and post-secondary levels, I was able to be truly objective with my participants and empathize with their perspectives in a way that someone who had experience with only one level could not.

This study has allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own educational experiences. As a high school English teacher, I had very little time to reflect about what types of writing these students would encounter after high school. I just wanted to make sure they made it through high school. After years of teaching, attaining my master’s in education, entering the college level as an adjunct instructor of English composition, and focusing on my doctoral studies, I feel like I have strong experiential knowledge of secondary and post-secondary education. This study has deepened my understanding of perceptions of participants in collaboration at the high school and college level. The opportunity to speak and reflect with other educators was the most beneficial part of this study. It allowed me to identify resources used at the post-secondary level, such as The Framework for Success in Post-secondary Writing
(http://wpacouncil.org/framework), which was developed by high school and college writing faculties working together and emphasizes behaviors of highly successful college writing students. These behaviors are something I share with students and secondary teachers, and include

- Curiosity
- Openness
- Engagement
- Creativity
- Persistence
- Responsibility
- Flexibility
- And Metacognition

The research and writing process involved in this study has also helped inform my teaching at the college level as well and put many of my students at ease, as I have expressed an understanding of where they have come from, academically, and the challenges they face as new college students. Again, as someone with experience at both levels, I understand that there are often barriers to collaboration, whether it is time, funds, or lack of administrator support. I strongly recommend that collaboration between high school and college writing faculty be given high priority. It is clear, through the findings in this study, that collaboration can inform high school instruction and improve students’ college readiness in writing, therefore reducing the need for high numbers of students taking remedial courses in college. This can translate to better student retention rates for colleges and a higher probability of moving students, successfully, through college.
The findings in this study do not necessarily show the efficacy of collaborative programs or the best ways of approaching collaboration. However, this study does provide perceptions to collaborative experiences of participants and how these participants felt collaboration has had or may impact college readiness. Even though there was a great deal of information gathered and perspectives analyzed, this study provided me (the researcher) with an opportunity to hear real voices of people who have experienced different types of secondary/post-secondary collaboration. I am certain that this study can be used to inform and develop further understanding of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. It has given me the gift of seeing the possibility of a streamlined transition for students from high school writing to college writing as well as the chance that high school teachers and college instructors could someday feel part of a supportive professional learning community.
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Appendix A

Interview questions (Based on Patton, 2008)

Interview Questions for High School Writing Instructors

Background (demographic) questions

1. What is your education and background in teaching?
2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with post-secondary writing instructors?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do you teach?
2. What are the English graduation requirements for students at your school?

Experience/Behavior Questions

1. If I had been in your class during the past semester, what kinds of things would I have been doing that may have been influenced by your collaboration with post-secondary writing instructors?
2. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a post-secondary writing instructor, what would I be likely to hear?

Opinion or Values question

1. What do you think about your current or former students’ college readiness? What would you like to see changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for college level writing?

Feelings Question

1. How do you feel your relationship and collaboration with higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted your writing instruction and your students' college readiness in writing?
Appendix B

Interview questions (Based on Patton, 2008)

Interview Questions for College Writing Instructors

Background (demographic) Questions

1. What is your education and background in teaching?

2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with secondary writing instructors?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do you teach?

2. What are the core English requirements for all students at your institution?

Experience/Behavior Questions

1. If I had been in one of your writing classes during the past semester, what kinds of things would I have been doing that may have been influenced by your collaboration with secondary writing instructors?

3. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a secondary writing instructor, what would I be likely to hear?

Opinion or Values question

1. What do you think about your current or former students’ college readiness? What would you like to see changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for college level writing?

Feelings Question
1. How do you feel your relationship and collaboration with higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted your writing instruction and your students’ college readiness in writing?
Appendix C

Interview questions (Based on Patton, 2008)

Interview Questions for Administrators or Program Directors

Background (demographic) questions

1. What is your education and background in working with teachers of writing?
2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with post-secondary and secondary
   writing instructors or what are the objectives of your program?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do your staff/program participants teach?
2. What are the core English requirements for all students at your institution or at your
   participants’ institutions?

Experience/Behavior Questions

1. If I had been a writing instructor working with you recently, what kinds of things
   would I have been doing or encouraged to do to develop my collaborative
   experiences?
2. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a writing instructor (secondary or
   postsecondary), what would I be likely to hear?

Opinion or Values question

1. What do you think about college readiness in general? What would you like to see
   changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for
   college level writing?

Feelings Question
1. How do you feel the relationship and collaboration between secondary and higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted college readiness in writing?
Appendix D

A letter requesting permission to conduct the study at Kennebec Valley Community College

January 5, 2015

Dear Richard R. Hopper,

My name is Holly Wess. I am an adjunct instructor of English composition at Kennebec Valley Community College and I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program at Northeastern University. I am in the process of completing the dissertation stage of the program. My research is focused on collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. It is my belief that fostering such collaboration has the potential to increase college readiness. This letter is being sent to you to request your permission to conduct this study at KVCC.

Through a qualitative multi-site case study approach, I will explore the partnerships between secondary and post-secondary writing instructors and investigate their perceptions of how their collaboration has impacted or could impact college readiness. I will connect with those instructors involved in dual enrollment, Maine’s Bridge Year Program, and the Maine Content Literacy project as well as stakeholders involved in the direction of these programs. The research process will involve designing questions and procedures collecting data at KVCC and elsewhere, and developing general themes inducted by the analysis of data. Through a case study model, interviews will be conducted with administration and instructors. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the impact of college readiness as perceived by individual instructors and other stakeholders.

I believe this multi-site case study will serve the benefit KVCC as well as other secondary/post-secondary institutions aimed at increasing college readiness. The goal is to understand how collaboration has happened or is happening to hopefully lower the need for remediation at the college level.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (207) 696-8465 or via email at wess.h@husky.neu.edu or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Christopher Unger at Northeastern University, (617) 909-1360. Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this request for permission.

Sincerely,

Holly R. Wess, M.Ed.

Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies

Northeastern University, Boston, MA

wess.h@husky.neu.edu
Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Letter

January 5, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

My Name is Holly Wess and I am a doctoral candidate in the college of professional studies at Northeastern University and an adjunct instructor of English composition at Kennebec Valley Community College. As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting a study about the collaboration between high school and college writing faculty.

In order to gather data about this research I am inviting you to participate in my study. You have been asked to participate in this project because you have a wealth of in-depth knowledge about your subject or program and your insight will be helpful in obtaining information regarding secondary/post-secondary collaboration. Your input regarding the perceptions of college readiness related to these partnerships will be helpful in obtaining information for this multi-site case study.

Consider this a formal request for your participation because you have been involved with or are directing initiatives dealing with collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. Please be aware that agreeing or not agreeing to participate in this study will have no reflection on your work position whatsoever. Also any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used.

Please respond via email to wess.h@husky.neu.edu if you are interested or have any questions. Thank you in advance for your time.

Best Regards,

Holly R. Wess, M.Ed.

Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
wess.h@husky.neu.edu
Appendix F
Signed Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Investigator Name: Principal Investigator, Dr. Chris Unger; Student Researcher, Holly R. Wess

Title of Project: Partnerships for College Readiness: A qualitative multi-site case study of secondary/post-secondary instructors’ collaboration

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study? You have been asked to participate because you have been involved with or are directing initiatives dealing with collaboration between high school and college writing faculty.

Why is this research study being done? The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of high school and college writing faculty, along with other stakeholders who have been involved in collaborating with one another or directing programs dealing with such collaboration aimed at improving college readiness. Through a multi-site case study model, interviews will be conducted with faculty members and administrators. This will lead to the identification of themes and data, which may lead to an increase in more students becoming college ready and, therefore, less need for remediation at the college level.

What will I be asked to do?

The researcher will be looking for you to participate in the following way:

1. Participate in an interview session that will be audio taped
2. Participate in a follow up email with the student researcher

Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

Where will this take place and how much time will it take?

Interviews will take approximately 45-60 minutes each. Interviews will be conducted in a place and time convenient for participants. A brief follow up email will be sent a month after the interview.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There are no direct benefits for you. However, potential benefits may include the opportunity for site participants to reflect on collaboration between high school and college writing faculty as well as their perceptions of how such collaboration may impact college readiness.

Who will see the information about me?
Your part in the study will not be confidential. Your name will be used in the final project. Your name may be used for future research.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**
You are not required to take part in this study. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign this form.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
Participation in this study is voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will not in any way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**
Holly R. Wess
KVCC
511 Main St.
Madison, ME
Home # (207) 696-865
Cell # (207) 431-4651
Email: wess.h@husky.neu.edu

Christopher Unger, Ed. D.
College of Professional Studies
360 Huntington Avenue (BV 20)
Northeastern University, Boston
Cell # 857-272-8941
Email: c.unger@neu.edu

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel. 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
There is no cost to participate in this study.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant, and the potential risks. I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. **I understand that my name will be used in the final project.**

___________________________________
Research Participant (Printed Name)

___________________________________     __________
Research Participant (Signature)        Date
Appendix G

Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol

Interviewee (Title and Name): High School Writing Instructor

Interviewer: Holly R. Wess

Date: ______________________

Location of Interview: ____________________________________________

Previously attained background information

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for tape recording.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. This research project focuses on student and school success with a particular interest in understanding how individual instructors experience collaboration between the secondary and post-secondary levels. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into how such collaboration may help more students become college ready and decrease the need for remediation at the college level. We hope this will allow us to identify actions, strategies, and use of resources that can be recommended for replication at other schools and institutions.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information, and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (provide the form). Essentially, this document states that (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form). Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form? I would also like to audio tape this interview and have a consent form related to this as well (provide form).
We have planned this interview to last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview I

A. Interviewee Background – my name is Holly Wess and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am presently working on my dissertation. I am also an adjunct instructor of English composition at Kennebec Valley Community College. Prior to that I was an English teacher at Carrabec High School in North Anson, Maine.

*Interview Questions:*

Background (demographic) questions

1. What is your education and background in teaching?

2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with post-secondary writing instructors?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do you teach?

2. What are the English graduation requirements for students at your school?

Experience/Behavior Questions

1. If I had been in your class during the past semester, what kinds of things would I have been doing that may have been influenced by your collaboration with post-secondary writing instructors?

2. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a post-secondary writing instructor, what would I be likely to hear?
Opinion or Values question

1. What do you think about your current or former students’ college readiness? What would you like to see changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for college level writing?

Feelings Question

1. How do you feel your relationship and collaboration with higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted your writing instruction and your students’ college readiness in writing?
Appendix H

Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol

Interviewee (Title and Name): College Writing Instructor

Interviewer: Holly R. Wess

Date: ______________________

Location of Interview: ____________________________________________

Previously attained background information (assume this has already been collected)

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for tape recording.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. This research project focuses on student and school success with a particular interest in understanding how individual instructors experience collaboration between the secondary and post-secondary levels. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into how such collaboration may help more students become college ready and decrease the need for remediation at the college level. We hope this will allow us to identify actions, strategies, and use of resources that can be recommended for replication at other schools and institutions.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information, and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me (provide the form). Essentially, this document states that (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm (allow time to review form). Do you have any questions about the interview process or this form? I would also like to audio tape this interview and have a consent form related to this as well (provide form).
We have planned this interview to last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Do you have any questions at this time?

Introduction to Interview I

B. Interviewee Background – my name is Holly Wess and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am presently working on my dissertation. I am also an adjunct instructor of English composition at Kennebec Valley Community College. Prior to that I was an English teacher at Carrabec High School in North Anson, Maine.

Interview Questions:

Background (demographic) Questions

1. What is your education and background in teaching?

2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with secondary writing instructors?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do you teach?

2. What are the core English requirements for all students at your institution?

Experience/Behavior Questions

5. If I had been in one of your writing classes during the past semester, what kinds of things would I have been doing that may have been influenced by your collaboration with secondary writing instructors?

6. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a secondary writing instructor, what would I be likely to hear?

Opinion or Values question
7. What do you think about your current or former students’ college readiness? What would you like to see changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for college level writing?

Feelings Question

8. How do you feel your relationship and collaboration with higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted your writing instruction and your students’ college readiness in writing?
Appendix I

Interview Protocol Form

Interview Protocol

Interviewee (Title and Name): Administrator or other program director

Interviewer: Holly R. Wess

Date: ________________________

Location of Interview: ____________________________________________

Previously attained background information (assume this has already been collected)

INTRODUCTION

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes): Build rapport, describe the study, answer any questions, review and sign IRB protocol and form for tape recording.

Introductory Protocol

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the experience of collaboration between high school and college writing faculty. This research project focuses on student and school success with a particular interest in understanding how individual instructors experience collaboration between the secondary and post-secondary levels. Through this study, we hope to gain more insight into how such collaboration may help more students become college ready and decrease the need for remediation at the college level. We hope this will allow us to identify actions, strategies, and use of resources that can be recommended for replication at other schools and institutions.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. I will also be taking written notes during the interview. I can assure you that all responses will be confidential and only a pseudonym will be used when quoting from the transcripts. The tapes will be transcribed by a transcriptionist, but the pseudonym will be used to label the tapes. I will be the only one privy to transcripts and information, and the tapes will be destroyed after they are transcribed.

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Introduction to Interview I

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Interview

Background (demographic) questions

1. What is your education and background in working with teachers of writing?
2. What kind of collaboration have you engaged in with post-secondary and secondary writing instructors or what are the objectives of your program?

Knowledge Questions

1. What kinds of writing-specific courses do your staff/program participants teach?
2. What are the core English requirements for all students at your institution or at your participants’ institutions?

Experience/Behavior Questions

3. If I had been a writing instructor working with you recently, what kinds of things would I have been doing or encouraged to do to develop my collaborative experiences?
4. If I were to sit in on a meeting between you and a writing instructor (secondary or postsecondary), what would I be likely to hear?

Opinion or Values question

5. What do you think about college readiness in general?
6. What would you like to see changed in the way things are done regarding preparing high school students for college level writing?

Feelings Question

7. How do you feel the relationship and collaboration between secondary and higher education writing instructors impacts or has impacted college readiness in writing?