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Building Bridges:
A Case Study of A High School-Community College Partnership

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Lisa Ann Hernandez

2017
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Building Bridges:
A Case Study of A High School-Community College Partnership

by

Lisa Ann Hernandez
University of California, Los Angeles, 2017
Professor Reynaldo Flores Macias, Co-Chair
Professor Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

This dissertation contributed to research on partnerships by conducting a case study of a high school-community college partnership. By providing narratives of stakeholders’ collaboration, this dissertation shed light on the process of creating and implementing a high school/community college partnership in addition to tracking the early outcomes of this partnership’s third year of implementation.

This study focused on a high school/community college partnership that addressed community college remediation by introducing a new 12th grade English curriculum titled expository reading and writing course (ERWC). Through the collaborative efforts of instructors, counselors, and administrators, this partnership identified and implemented ways to help students place into and complete college level English.
Studies have shown that partnerships can significantly improve student outcomes (Bathgate, Colvin, & Silva, 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Lawson, 2013; Wang & Hodara, 2014). Model partnerships serve to inform educators and legislators about what makes a partnership effective (Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Lawson, 2013; Wang & Hodara, 2014). This K-16 partnership resembles the Santa Ana model. A case study of this partnership found that it provided an effective long-term strategy for improving high school completion rates and college success and yielded measurable improvements for students (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). Other studies have found that P-20 partnerships improve curriculum alignment and facilitate the transition of students from high school to college (Bathgate et al., 2011; Wang & Hodara, 2014).

This partnership targeted remedial education since it is a significant problem in community colleges (The Century Foundation, 2013; Complete College America, 2011). According to Venezia and Kirst (2005), California suffers from “disconnected educational systems” (p. 283): a problem that can be ameliorated by creating pathways. Through pathways, high schools and community colleges can better inform students, parents, instructors, and administrators of each institution’s respective mission; the greater the communication and collaboration, the greater the possibility of improved outcomes (Venezia & Kirst, 2005).

Understanding how partnerships reduce remediation would allow community colleges to replicate similar partnerships throughout the United States. Research supports inter-institutional studies for reducing institutions’ silo tendencies, which make it hard for students to transition from one institution to another (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Inter-institutional partnerships, such as P-16 partnerships or Cradle To Career Community Partnerships, offer a promising new
institutional design for a more integrated, equitable educational system (Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Lawson, 2013).

This partnership implemented a variety of strategies to improve high school graduation rates and college-readiness, strategies that focused on staff development, implementation of a new English curriculum, and increasing student support services. All of these strategies were based on the mutual effort of partnership members. Combined, these strategies aimed to increase high school graduation, increase enrollment at the local community college, and assure that students are not only entering college level English but also, because they are college ready, accelerating their progress in community college.
The dissertation of Lisa Ann Hernandez is approved.

Robert Cooper
Leobardo F. Estrada
Reynaldo Flores Macias, Committee Co-Chair
Diane Durkin, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2017
DEDICATION

To my beloved mother, Nicolasa Hernandez, who passed before seeing this project complete: Mamita, usted fue mi primer maestra y la mejor madre del mundo. Usted es mi amor eterno.

To Dr. Juan Francisco Lara, a man who exemplified leadership with his intellect, kindness, humor and dedication to others: Your passing left me with a great sense of loss. I carry your example in my heart as I endeavor to use my education in the service of others.
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The high number of students needing remediation at community colleges is a national problem. One study found that only 33% of students referred to developmental math and 46% of students referred to developmental reading go on to complete the entire remedial sequence (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010); those who do not drop out, on average, take up to 5 years to transfer and only transfer 1 year’s worth of credit (Melguizo, Hegedorn, & Cypers, 2008). Only 17% of students who are referred to the lowest level of developmental math complete the remedial sequence (Bailey et al., 2010) A 2011 report from the 21st Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges recommended improving college readiness by doubling the rate of students who complete developmental education programs and progress to successful completion of related freshman-level courses (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2012). Through acceleration, which has been defined as “the reorganization of instruction and curricula in ways that facilitate the completion of educational requirements in an expedited manner” (Edgecombe, 2011, p. 4), colleges propose to improve retention, shorten the time students take to exit remedial programs, and increase course completion (Quint, Jaggars, & Byndloss, 2013).

A comprehensive study of compression and mainstreaming acceleration strategies found that accelerated students were significantly more likely to complete college-level math or English within 1-3 years, and students in accelerated English developmental education accrued more college-level credits within 1-3 years than students in traditional sequences (Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2014). Another study found that accelerated programs in 16 California community colleges, which included redesigned pathways in English and math, not only
increased completion for students placed at all levels of the basic skills sequences in math and English but also reduced students’ time in remediation by at least a semester (Hayward & Willet, 2014).

With mandates from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office to improve transfer rates and certificate completion (Harris, 2013), community colleges in California are piloting programs aimed at accelerating students through remediation, such as Chabot Community College’s accelerated English program and Los Medanos Community College’s accelerated pre-statistics course (California Acceleration Project, n.d.; Edgecombe, Jaggars, Xu, & Barragan, 2014). Partnerships demonstrate potential in meeting this goal since multiple entities can collectively address remediation by improving placement, aligning curriculum, and establishing collaboration through articulation agreements (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). Another study found that partnerships between community colleges and high schools can increase enrollment in college, increase the number of students who are college-ready upon entry, and increase students’ persistence in college (Barnett & Hughes, 2010). Given that for the last 10 years researchers have recommended more funding for studies on high school-community college pathways as a way to address college readiness (Venezia & Kirst, 2005), only very recently have federal and state agencies shown financial support for such pathways (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2013; The White House, 2015), making it a precipitous time to study school partnerships.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine a high school-community college partnership that, through an instructional intervention at the high school level, aimed to place students in college credit classes directly. The following research questions guided the study:
1. What partnership strategies have helped 12th grade students accelerate into college level classes?

2. What kinds of collaboration or collaborative leadership between institutions are necessary for implementing and developing a partnership of this kind?

3. If at all, what do stakeholders say most helped students become college ready in English as a result of participation in this partnership?

**Study Design**

Qualitative studies give an in-depth understanding of unique cases (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). Here, the case was a high school-community college partnership that aimed to place students in college-credit courses directly. Rather than studying the cause or effect of remediation, this study proposed to understand how a select number of stakeholders at these specific sites built relationships across institutions for the purpose of helping students succeed in their educational endeavors. It sought to understand how people interpreted their experiences and what meaning they attributed to those experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methods—one-on-one interviews, document analysis, and classroom observations—allowed the researcher to grasp the complexity of an inter-institutional partnership in aligning curriculum, mutually developing strategies for improving students college-readiness, the process of how strategies were implemented in the classroom, and stakeholders’ experiences in developing the partnership. With narratives that captured stakeholders’ perspectives of the instructional, counseling, and administrative tasks of mainstreaming students in college level courses, this study hoped to gain a deeper understanding of the day-to-day tasks involved in helping students achieve college readiness given their poor academic performance on placement tests.
In this study, the sample size was necessarily small because few programs of this kind exist, but they show great potential in shortening students’ classroom time and maximize the relevancy of students’ educational experience and success. A qualitative study usually includes a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserves their individuality in their analysis, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations (Maxwell, 2005). This partnership was unique in that it is one of few high school-community college partnerships in California, which has created a curriculum to address remediation at the high school level and which aimed to place students directly in college level classes. As such, this study sought to understand how the unique characteristics of this partnership influenced its effectiveness.

Sample Populations and Site Selection

Criteria for sites included a high school and a community college willing to work with an outside agency to create a partnership that addressed remediation through an instructional intervention and through increasing support services. In this case, the participating schools were Hollywood High School and Los Angeles City College. The state agency was the California Academic Partnership Program and the facilitator was Dr. Juan Francisco Lara, academician, administrator and expert on the implementation of K-16 partnerships. These sites had a large number of students who were not college ready and were, therefore, in need of an intervention. Both institutions identified for this study are located in large urban cities with a high number of students who required remediation at the time of enrollment in community college. High school and community college administrators initiated the partnership at each school site and had knowledge of how the partnership had evolved in the 2 years of its implementation. This study included interviews of a high school and a community college counselor, each of whom had
knowledge of recruitment strategies, enrollment patterns, and other information that helped the researcher track students from high school to community college.

In addition, a total of six English high school instructors and one community college English instructor participated in the study. Instructors had experience working with basic skills students and had been actively involved in the implementation and strategizing of the partnership. Through this collaboration, high school instructors gained some knowledge of the community college curriculum.

Finally, this researcher interviewed two community college students who had placed directly in college level English and two who took remedial courses. These students were between the ages of 17-19 and had recently graduated high school. Interviews questions focused on whether students felt they were adequately prepared for college level English courses.

**Necessary Participant Experience**

Two students who participated in the study had passed their English courses with a C or better and enrolled in a community college directly after high school. Two other students who were interviewed participated in the partnership’s counseling services and had visited the community college campus, but were not in expository reading and writing curriculum (ERWC) and placed in remedial English. High school English instructors who participated in ERWC training and implemented strategies learned in the training how to improve students’ writing abilities. The community college agreed to waive the placement test in lieu of a passing grade and enroll students in college level courses. Students were asked to sign an interview consent form.
Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included interviews, document analysis of meeting minutes, and classroom observations. Secondary methods included an analysis of professional development materials, exam rubrics, conference and promotional videos, and partnership websites. Semi-structured interviews of instructors allowed for in-depth understanding of implementation of the curriculum and allowed instructors to more fully explain implementation strategies. Classroom observations took place at both the high school and at the community college. Observable classroom strategies as well as student participation in English classes served to triangulate instructors’ statements about curriculum with observable classroom instruction.

Documents such as instructors’ syllabi helped substantiate observable classroom strategies. Notes of meetings provided a measure of how effective collaboration was. Course outlines and rubrics provided essential information about course content and instructional strategies. Program websites, program brochures, and online videos provided information about students’ satisfaction and experiences in the program as well as program structure. Student class work helped determine the level of students’ writing level and students’ overall academic abilities.

Dissemination of Findings

Online and hardcopy summaries of the study’s purpose and methods were made accessible to participants. When completed, this study will be published online to be used as a resource for other colleges with similar programs or for colleges considering pilot programs of this nature. A letter will be sent out to all California community college administrators summarizing the study, providing relevant website information so that those who are interested can download the study.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last 30 years, inter-segmental partnerships have become increasingly common across educational institutions as they attempt to address the needs of complex problems facing K-16 institutions (Lawson, 2013). At both the national and state level, legislators and educational agencies have actively promoted inter-segmental collaboration. However, funding shortfalls and the silo tendencies of institutions have prevented the proliferation of these partnerships. In spite of these funding shortfalls, the prevalence of K-16 partnerships has increased. Through collaboration, state organizations across educational levels are committed to forming a seamless transition system in California (California Education Round Table [CERT], 2014). One such organization funding the development of such collaborations is the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP).

CAPP was established by the California State Legislature in 1984 for the purpose of developing cooperative partnerships between public secondary schools and postsecondary institutes and to improve students’ academic performance and preparation for college. The goals of these early partnerships were to:

1. transform the relationships between educational institutions in ways that directly benefit students,
2. improve curricula in subject areas required for admission to college, and
3. strengthen teachers’ capacities to enable all students to learn the curriculum.
(Flaherty, Diaz-Meza, Holmes & Dailey, 2005, p. 1)

Studies support legislative enthusiasm for partnerships. Key studies have shown that effective partnerships have the potential to improve student retention greatly (Bathgate, Colvin, & Silva, 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Wang & Hodara, 2014). Early evaluations of partnerships have found that model partnerships have served to inform educators and legislators about what makes a partnership effective (Domina & Ruzek, 2011; Wang & Hodara, 2014).
Lawson (2004) stated that partnerships have evolved as organizational structures, and that when they are done effectively, they address local community needs. These partnerships, according to Lawson, are in their second and third generation of evolution; therefore, studying them can serve to inform institutions interested in creating their own partnerships.

Nationally, in the American Graduation Initiative, President Obama outlined his plan to reform the nation’s community colleges. He called for an additional five million community college graduates by 2020 and new initiatives to teach Americans the skills needed to compete with other nations. President Obama’s initiative supports the creation of education partnerships to expand course offerings, promotes the transfer of credit among colleges, calls for the improvement of remedial programs, and advocates for the acceleration of students’ progress (The White House, 2015). A 2014 report by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) recommends doubling the rate of students who complete developmental education programs and progress to successful completion of related freshman-level courses; currently, the AACC has created an implementation team to address community college and K-12 collaboration for college readiness (Wood, 2014).

In California, the California Education Round Table (CERT)—which is composed of the Chancellor of California Community Colleges, the President of the University of California, the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Chancellor of the California State University—recommended that:

Collaboration, especially at the regional level, should become institutionalized and incorporated into the daily fabric of our organizational actions in order to garner the synergy, combined expertise, and innovation that is desperately needed to reform our educational enterprise. (CERT, 2007, p.12)
California state agencies such as the Inter-segmental Committee, California Community Colleges Success Network (3CSN), and the California Acceleration Project (CAP) advocate for the multi-faceted benefits of K-16 collaboration. A recent focus on collaboration involves the dissemination of the California Common Standards since K-16 collaboration can assist in the inter-institutional alignment of the newly adopted Common Core Standards (California Common Core State Standards, 2015).

The partnership under study is a CAPP partnership in its third year of implementation. It is modeled similarly to the Santa Ana model studied by Domina and Ruzek (2012). While this partnership involves several institutions and targets both English and math, the focus of this study was the high school/community college component of the partnership and the implementation and development of its English curriculum.

**Background to the Problem**

**Conventional Remediation Shows Poor Results**

In California, 77% of incoming students are placed in remedial courses; however, only 40.5% of all remedial students complete coursework and go on to college level classes. The numbers are much lower for African Americans (33.5%), Native Americans (31.5%) and Hispanics (34.7%; California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2012). California community college students who earned an associate degree in 2013 took a median of 4.1 years and graduated with 78 credits: much more than the 2 years and 60 credits the degree was originally designed to take (Complete College America, 2011).

Remediation is an expensive failure. According to the Century Foundation (2013), remedial programs cost community colleges an estimated $2 billion per year. Other studies place the cost at $4 billion and $7 billion per year (Community College Research Center, n.d.;
Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). With little evidence that remediation is working, the cost in terms of time and money is of concern to community colleges and legislative entities alike. Based on the 2011 National Center for Education Statistics Digest of Education Statistics, the annual cost of college-level remediation at community colleges is nearly $4 billion (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). However, most community college students who start in remedial courses do not persist into college level courses. A CCRC study of 250,000 community college students found that only 20% of students referred to developmental math and 37% of students referred to developmental reading go on to pass the relevant entry-level or gatekeeper college course (Bailey et al., 2010). More studies are needed to monitor pilot programs that have identified strategies and best practices such as compressing remedial courses or mainstreaming students directly into college level courses, improving counseling services for remedial students, and offering bridge and early enrollment programs so students transition more smoothly into college level coursework (Simmons et al., 2007). Several recent studies have provided quantitative data on the nature of the problem; however, few studies have provided rich qualitative data on the strategies currently in use that are ameliorating the problem. Based on quantitative data collected in 33 participating states, one study recommended that colleges divert students from traditional remedial programs, mainstreaming students in college-level courses with embedded support, intensifying instruction, and overhauling the current placement system (Complete College America, 2011). How exactly will community colleges mainstream students, how will they embed support in programming, and how will community colleges make systemic changes to improve the quality of instruction and students services? This study sought to address these questions.
Current Assessments Misplace Students

Part of the remediation problem has been blamed on assessment, which the majority of community colleges use to place students in remedial sequences. One study found that 92% of 2-year institutions use scores on assessment tests for placement into remedial education (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Two college placement exams, the ACCUPLACER and COMPASS, are used widely. One study found that ACCUPLACER severely misplaces 33% of entering community college students; one third of entering students were either overplaced in college-level courses and failed, or underplaced in remedial courses when they could have earned a B or better in a college-level course (Belfield & Crosta, 2012). Another study found that COMPASS severely misplaced 33% of entering students into English and 24% of entering students into math; more than one third of all tested students who placed into remedial English were severely underplaced, and almost a quarter of all tested students who placed into remedial math were severely underplaced (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012).

Student Are Not Completing Remedial Sequences

Half of all college students take at least one remedial course as part of their postsecondary experience, despite mixed evidence on the effectiveness of this intervention (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Bailey et al. (2010) found that fewer than half of students referred to remediation actually complete the entire sequence because there are too many exit points in the sequences. In a study that included data from more than 130 colleges in 24 states, researchers found that only 20% of students referred to math remediation and 37% of those referred to reading remediation completed a gatekeeper course in the relevant subject area within 3 years.
To make matters worse, instructors are typically not aware of the high attrition rate. This is usually because attrition in a multi-course sequence is an invisible problem for teachers who typically focus on the pass rate of the individual courses that they teach rather than on longitudinal studies (Hern, 2012).

**Students’ Background and Needs**

Researchers have found that remedial students are not gaining the needed college level skills necessary to transfer (Calgano & Long, 2008; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). Using data from a large urban community college system, one study found little evidence that remediation develops students’ skills. (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012). One possible reason is poor instruction. One study noted that most remedial courses are taught by adjunct instructors, who make up nearly 70% of community college faculty and are not trained to address remediation (Datray, Saxon, & Martirosyan, 2014). Moreover, they are less accessible to the students, have less frequent interactions with students, and are less integrated into the campus cultures in which they work (Jolley, Cross, & Bryant, 2013). Another study found that assigning students to remedial classes negatively impacts college persistence because students perceive that they are not *college material* (Matorell & McFarlin, 2011). According to recent studies, remedial pedagogy as well as inexperienced and poorly trained instructors are to blame for poor classroom instruction (Grubb, 2013; Rose, 2012).

Melguizo et al. (2008) found that Blacks and Latinos were especially affected by the excessive length of time it took them to complete remedial sequences. An analysis of Education Longitudinal Study data found that 50% of Hispanic students start at a community college, along with 31% of African Americans (Community College Research Center, n.d.). Up to 90% of community college first-time entrants (Taylor, 2014), and up to 97% of students of color require
remediation (Hagedorn, 2006). Even though community colleges are affordable in comparison to 4-year state university tuition, tuition is offset by the length of time these students have to be enrolled in classes. Students often have to take three or four sequences of remedial math or English courses before they are able to take a college level class (Bailey et al., 2010). According to a California community college study, the average time it takes community college students to go through the three tier remedial sequence and transfer is 6 years (The Century Foundation, 2013; Melguizo et al., 2008). In California, community college students who earned an associate’s degree in the 2012-2013 academic year took a median of 4.1 years to do so and graduated with 78 credits: much more than the 2 years (for full-time students) the degree was designed to take (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2014). Gandara, Alvarado, Driscoll, and Orfield (2012) found that community colleges have long been the primary route to a degree for the great majority of low income and ethnic minority students, but that this route too often dead ends.

Historically disadvantaged groups disproportionately begin college at the lower end of the remedial hierarchy, where the chances of attaining college-level competency also are the lowest (Bailey, Jeong & Cho et al., 2010). In turn, students who begin the remedial sequence in math or writing, but do not complete it are very likely to leave college without a credential of any kind (Bahr, 2011).

**National Concern and Programs Offered**

State and federal agencies decry remediation’s failure rates and are pressuring community colleges to improve their basic skills education programs. For the last 10 years, states have responded in different ways to the poor outcomes. California community colleges began to consider redesigning basic skills education with the funding of the Basic Skills
Initiative in 2006; this initiative aimed to strengthen student success and readiness for college-level courses after the Board of Governors raised the statewide minimum in English and mathematics graduation (Illowsky, 2008). The Basic Skills Initiative resulted in the creation of a consortium of statewide organizations whose goal is to fund and monitor colleges’ pilot acceleration programs (Boroch et al., 2010).

In 2009, the Developmental Education Initiative funded pilot programs in community colleges across the nation in hopes of identifying strategies to accelerate students’ progress through remediation. Quint et al.’s (2013) study of the initiative’s impact found that strategies that involved acceleration programs that focused on contextualized instruction were more likely than other kinds of strategies to be associated with positive outcome differences. Researchers in Quint et al.’s study cautioned against making generalizations based on its findings since only three programs in the 15 community participating colleges implemented contextualized instruction as a strategy. As with other studies, there are not sufficient programs implementing contextualization to draw strong conclusions. Hodara and Jaggars (2014) note that there is limited empirical research on the effects of accelerating students’ progression through their developmental requirements.

The federal government is also actively involved in promoting acceleration. In July 2016, President Obama proposed the American Graduation Initiative, a $12 billion initiative, a part of which is earmarked for improving remedial and adult education programs. Under President Obama’s plan, new competitive grants would enable community colleges and states to innovate and expand proven reforms. White House recommendations include offering dual enrollment at high schools and universities; promoting the transfer of credit among colleges; and aligning graduation and entrance requirements of high schools, community colleges, and 4-year
colleges and universities. The recommendations also include improving remedial and adult education programs, accelerating students’ progress, and integrating developmental classes into academic and vocational classes (The White House, 2015).

In California, where the completion rate is even lower than the national average, the CAP has funded acceleration programs across the state and is currently monitoring their progress (Hern, 2012). Hern and Snell (2014) gave an account of how acceleration has expanded in California:

The project focus[ed] on the problem of attrition in long remedial sequences and the improved result our own colleges were seen in shortened, redesigned English and math curricula. We hoped to spark a statewide conversation and, perhaps, inspire colleges to offer their own accelerated models of English and math. But we recognized that curricular change is difficult, particularly in California, where all 112 community colleges are locally governed. Our first grant proposal included modest goals; by fall 2013, we aimed to give workshops to 40 community colleges to pilot accelerated remediation.... As of December 2013, faculty and administrators from almost all of the state’s 112 community colleges have participated in CAP workshops, and 42 colleges have offered redesigned accelerated courses in English and math through a year-long professional development program offered with 3 CSN (p.12).

In spite of the promising movement toward acceleration training, community college districts in Southern California have not piloted larger scale acceleration programs. Even small-scale programs are not common. The task is formidable since community colleges are being asked to think beyond remediation pedagogy and address poor completion rates on a larger scale. Grubb (2013) has found instructional innovation too limited in scope and recommended creating faculty-oriented teaching and learning centers as part of a widespread institutional initiative to address mediocre instruction. This, of course, takes time and money, and pilot program funding runs out quickly (Perin, 2011).
Acceleration: A Promising Strategy

Acceleration is a national effort to improve the poor completion of remedial students in community colleges. Venezia and Hughes (2014) defined acceleration as a “strategy used by community colleges to reduce the amount of time students spend in remediation and allow them to enroll more quickly – or immediately – in courses leading to certificates or degrees” (p. 39). Models of acceleration allow students to complete their developmental requirements in a shorter amount of time, or even concurrently with college level coursework (Edgecombe, 2011). Recent studies have tracked the effectiveness of pilot programs aimed at accelerating students’ progress through remediation (Cho, Kopko, Jenkins, & Jaggars, 2012; Hern, 2012; Quint et al., 2013; Venezia & Hughes, 2014). Quint et al. (2013) tracked community college programs funded by the Developmental Scale Initiative, a large scale program sponsored by the Gates Foundation, in which each college program adopted strategies categorized by three broad types: policy strategies, instructional strategies and support strategies. Some of the key instructional strategies were to (a) compress developmental and college level English; (b) create short, intensive English and reading courses; (c) redesign developmental math and developmental English courses; (d) contextualize developmental reading and English curricula; and (e) pair and compress developmental courses. Quint et al. (2013) found that, when compared with outcomes for non-participants, outcomes for participants in the pilot studies were not statistically significant; however, participation was more likely to be associated with positive results for some outcomes than for others. Moreover, the study found that strategies that involved contextualized instruction and collaborative learning were more likely than other kinds of strategies to be associated with positive outcome differences. The study cited challenges such as resource limitations, institutional reluctance to impose mandates about how students should learn and
instructors should teach, students’ own wishes and priorities, a perceived need to scale back when strategies appeared to be ineffective, and a desire to evaluate the strategies’ apparent effectiveness before moving forward.

Unlike the Quint et al. (2013) study, which categorized acceleration strategies by type (policy, instructional, and support), other studies have categorized acceleration strategies into two broad approaches. CCRC divides acceleration into programs that offer course restructuring and those that offer mainstreaming models (Community College Research Center, n.d.). The following sections discuss each of these sections in greater depth.

**Course Restructuring Models**

Course restructuring models reorganize instruction time or modify the curriculum to reduce the time necessary to fulfill developmental education requirements. A quantitative study examined student outcomes from 16 colleges that offered redesigned English and math pathways as part of the CAP, an initiative of the California Community Colleges’ Success Network (California Acceleration Project, n.d.a). The redesign model was defined and described as follows:

Curriculum redesign is a term for acceleration strategies that replace multiple levels of remedial coursework by focusing the accelerated course’s curriculum on just those skills and abilities that are explicitly required for success at the transfer level— a principle known as backwards design. It resembles fast-tracking in that some students may be surmounting two of more semesters of the traditional remedial sequence in a single term but it differs in that it comprises only a single course in which all accelerated students are enrolled….instead of simply repackaging the same content into a shorter timeframe, curricular redesign asks faculty to reconsider both content and pedagogy in developmental courses. (p. 8)

Hayward and Willet (2014) found that the overall effect of curricular redesign was robust and significant, and that students’ odds of completing a transferable math course were 4.5 greater in accelerated pathways than for students in traditional remediation. The overall estimated
English sequence completion rate was 30%, while the completion rate for the comparison groups in the traditional sequence was 22%. Acceleration worked for students at all placement levels and of all backgrounds.

A study of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) of the Community College of Baltimore Country (CCBC) found that concurrently enrolled students in a remedial course and a transferable course completed the accelerated program at a higher rate and had higher rates of persistence (Cho et al., 2012). Researchers noted that while Baltimore’s findings are still early and that there is still a significant need for further research, the findings regarding evidence of the effectiveness of acceleration are promising. At Chabot College, two developmental English classes were combined into one semester class. Developmental students practiced the same assignments they received in a college-level English, and were provided with targeted feedback and additional instruction to help them perform more strongly (Hern, 2012); the study found that students were 21% more likely to enroll in college level English within a year when compared with their non-accelerated peers. Overall, the study found that the Chabot accelerated program and the ALP at CCBC provided students with a strong positive boost in terms of their probability of enrolling in and completing college-level math and English (Jaggars, Hodara, Cho, & Xi, 2015). In the ALP model, students were simultaneously enrolled in the college-level course and the developmental writing course. The course contained college-ready and almost college-ready students and the companion developmental writing class was redesigned as a supportive, workshop-style course to reinforce the college level class. The study found that ALP students completed college-level English at higher rates and also had higher rates of persistence to the next academic year (Cho et al., 2012; Venezia & Hughes, 2013).
Mainstreaming Models

Mainstreaming acceleration models place students directly in college-level classes, often by bypassing a placement exam and instead using high school GPAs and ACT test results. In California, Los Medanos College was the first to implement an accelerated pathway for students taking statistics. The program allowed students who were non-math-intensive majors to take a one-semester pre-statistics course with no minimum placements score. The one course replaced two to four courses in the traditional remedial curriculum. Descriptive data found that completion of college math was three times higher among accelerated students than students in the traditional curriculum (Hern, 2012).

Mainstreaming allows students to avoid time-consuming remedial coursework by placing them directly into college-level courses. Tinto (2012) recommended the following:

Institutions should begin by carrying out a detailed analysis of existing developmental education courses and the sequences of courses that lead to college-level work. In addition to changes in pedagogy and assessment, institutions should contextualize and/or integrate basic-skills instruction into college-level courses and accelerate, through mainstreaming, the movement of developmental education students through the curriculum. This can be achieved by placing some students referred to developmental education directly into college-level courses where they receive additional instruction through companion classes (e.g., learning communities, labs, or other supports such as supplemental instruction). (p. 122)

Community colleges cite remediation’s poor outcomes as an argument for mainstreaming students into college level courses (Hayward & Willet, 2014; Hern, 2012). One study that analyzed the patterns of student progression through sequences of developmental education found that fewer than one half of the students who are referred to remediation complete the entire sequence to which they are referred. The findings show that more students exited their developmental sequences because they did not enroll in the first or subsequent course than because they failed or withdrew from a course in which they were enrolled (Bailey et al., 2008).
Small pilot programs throughout the U.S are experimenting with mainstreaming students into college level courses. Perin (2006) found that in a study of 15 community colleges throughout the United States, six colleges were able to decrease the number of students in remediation by overriding, not enforcing or removing, the remedial prerequisites. In California, Moorpark College allows students to self-place into college English; Fresno City College and Chabot College allow students to enroll in regular college-level course high school coursework or GPA rather gain entry than through a placement exam.

**Acceleration Models Require the Training of Teachers**

Whether a community college plans to modify the curriculum or provide additional instruction in a mainstreamed course, teachers will need training. To maintain strong student performance in accelerated programs, researchers recommend that community colleges need to incorporate systematic professional development (Jaggars et al., 2015). Professional development is a significant problem for community colleges because 69.2% of their faculty is part time (The Century Foundation, 2013). Most colleges do not feel it is a good investment to train part time faculty because professional development is expensive and part time faculty are limited in the number of hours they can teach per week (Wallin, 2008). Consequently, the majority of community college faculty are untrained, which does not bode well for classroom instruction, since evidence shows that being taught by adjunct faculty is associated with negative student learner outcomes (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009).

In fact, it is quite possible that community college instructors have never been trained in teaching methods, since community colleges require a master’s degree in the content area and not a certificate or degree from a teaching program. Effective redesign of a program cannot occur without the investment of training the tenured as well as the part time faculty of
community colleges. Studies have found that investing in adjunct training and professional development can lead to an increase in classroom effectiveness (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Thirolf, 2012). Recent studies have found that professional development improves teaching, allows adjuncts to integrate more readily into the college community, and enhances the reputation of the institution (Jackson, Stebleton, & Laanan, 2013; Lightner & Sipple, 2013).

One study of 79 basic skills adult school in New York City found that most attempts to reform classroom instruction fail to fully affect teachers’ practice. Instructors adopt only certain elements of a more broad-ranging reform or implement these new practices only superficially within their classrooms. In addition, instructors who are used to being in charge of their own domain within the classroom, typically react negatively to externally developed, top-down interventions with which they have had little contact or in which they have little investment. Such research has shown that attempts at large-scale reform in K-12 settings have typically failed when they do not consider the contexts in which they are being implemented and do not provide support to those responsible for carrying out changes (such as instructors). Researchers have argued that meaningful changes in classroom practice require sustained supports, including training, coaching and learning/practice communities: nearly all of which go beyond the meager resources available for professional development in most adult education programs (Rutschow, Grossman, & Cullinan, 2014). One study found that the one challenge to scaling up accelerated models of English and math is that the curriculum can represent substantial changes to both what and how faculty have been teaching. Teachers typically focused on remedial teaching methods, such as grammar exercises, would benefit from support for accelerated teaching strategies such as writing text-based academic essays, especially if their departments are going to ask them to integrate reading and writing courses (Hern, 2012).
Partnerships: Bridging with High Schools and Universities To Address Remediation

The Obama administration pledged funds to create K-16 partnerships around college readiness (The White House, 2015). The Strive Partnership in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky is considered a national model of how shared accountability can work; it includes a cradle-to-career partnership that includes K-12 schools with civic groups, philanthropies, colleges, public agencies non-profits, and businesses and focuses on an overarching vision of student success: a system of collecting, analyzing, and communicating student-level outcomes data and strong civic leadership (Bathgate et al., 2011). California has also shown interest in developing partnerships that wrap around the local needs of the community.

In California, a 2013 report by the California Community College Chancellor’s office established a goal toward greater articulation with K-12 schools to improve alignment of courses and assessments; the Chancellor’s office noted continued experimentation at the local, regional and state levels to respond to emerging needs, noting the importance of local collaboration and coordination (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office). One model partnership is Adelante, a K-16 partnership in Santa Ana, California, which has succeeded in increasing student graduation and university enrollment rates by tailoring the partnership to local needs; it is one of the few partnerships that has been studied in an in-depth manner (Domina & Ruzek, 2010).

CAPP, a recently developed partnership in its third year of implementation, resembles the Santa Ana Adelante Partnership in its efforts to address college-readiness, increase support services, and increase collaboration across institutions. In CAPP, remediation is addressed at the high school level through math and English courses that stress college-readiness. Students who pass ERWC and Discrete Math with a minimum of a C grade are placed directly in college-level coursework at the community college, thus avoiding remedial classes there. With the help of
college counselors, students are registered early to ensure that they get college level math and English classes. At the community college, they are given tutors in the classroom or in the writing lab. One study found that 88% of community college students responding to a survey reported that they believed their grades improved because of tutoring (Hendriksen, Yang, Love, & Hall, 2005).

Successful partnerships also address curricular interventions and increase students’ support services such as the GEAR-UP P-20 partnership in Oahu, Hawaii, a partnership targeting low-income students, that successfully increased student support services by streamlining their outreach program with individualized counseling and a workshop series on the value of college, the application process, financial aid, and money management (Wang & Hodara, 2014). Another large-scale study of Texas partnerships found that underprepared students improved their college readiness when they participated in summer bridge programs, school year transition programs, senior year transition programs, and early assessment/intervention programs (Barnett et al., 2012).

**Partnerships Address Curricular Alignment**

Community colleges team up with high schools to help transition students into college level classes by providing professional development for high school faculty in the community college curriculum. Venezia and Kirst (2005) found that the amount and consistency of information high school students receive about preparing to take college-level courses helps transition high school students into higher education institutions more smoothly. This study recommended communication pathways by local postsecondary institutions in collaboration with neighboring K-12 schools (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). A study of a P-20 partnership in Cincinnati found that the partnership helped students demonstrate proficiency in math and reading and
helped enroll students in college; for example, after school providers aligned tutoring with in-school lessons, and local community colleges and universities were encouraged to implement programs to get middle and high school students ready for college (Bathgate et al., 2011). A California Common Core State Standards (CCSS) strategy is to collaborate with the postsecondary and business communities to integrate the CCSS into programs and activities beyond the K-12 school setting (California Department of Education, 2014).

**Partnerships Raise Student Achievement**

Districts involved in comprehensive K-16 partnerships report high levels of student academic achievement. In 2005, the 4-year graduation rate in these districts was noticeably higher than elsewhere in the state, at 66%. Graduates from high schools in districts with K-16 partnerships are somewhat more likely to complete the necessary courses to satisfy UC and CSU eligibility requirements than their peers elsewhere (Jarsky et al., 2009, p 255). A 15-year-old partnership between Indiana and Purdue University and George Washington High School helped raise graduation rates, improved student performance on standardized tests, and helped develop leadership at the high school, which was located in a working class neighborhood just outside of the university; the partnership was recognized in 2010 by the Kellogg Foundation for outreach and engagement (Officer, Bringle, & Grim, 2011).

**Partnerships Can Make The Transition From High School To College Smoother**

Some community college scholars argue that community colleges should not bear the sole responsibility of remediating students since students are, after all, entering unprepared for college level work (Grubb, 2013; Tinto, 2012). Grubb (2013) stated that while the problem of passing on remedial students is a systemic one, the transition from high school to college is especially difficult for students. Kirst (2008) and Grubb argued that neither K-12 nor
postsecondary education can resolve this problem alone. Through a collective effort, partnerships can better transition recent high school graduates who may lack the social skills to seek help actively (Wang & Hodara, 2014). Through the coordination and collaboration of counselors, partnerships can make the transition from high school to college smoother (Hugo, 2008).

Counselors can play a pivotal role in smoothly transitioning students from high school to college. Many high school students do not seek counseling even though they are very much in need of counseling (Perna et al., 2008). This reluctance to ask for help becomes more pronounced at the community college level (Karp & Bork, 2014). By targeting students who are typically reluctant to seek help, partnerships can successfully transition students into college by providing extra scheduling and counseling services (Hugo, 2008).

One study found that credit-based transition agreements between high schools and local colleges decrease high school dropout rates through a variety of strategies and activities, including counseling and mentoring and college preparation and application assistance (Fowler & Luna, 2009). Another study found that:

Many students make the transition more easily when exposed to deliberate efforts to get ready and get in, which collectively address attitudes, experiences, and behaviors before and after matriculation to college. Getting ready encompasses the background and preparatory experience of students. These experiences instill college attendance expectations, shape students’ ideas about college life, and create beliefs and attitudes about behaviors that lead to college success. (Oliver, Ricard, Witt, Alvarado, & Hill, 2010, p. 14)

Middle College High School, which was developed for underserved and underprepared students through a partnership, successfully provided counseling, application assistance, and mentoring (Bailey & Karp, 2003).
Partnerships Require Collaborative Leadership

By working together, partnerships allow organizations to look outside of their own institutions and institutional problems and focus on students. One study of high school-university partnership called the Mathematics Partnership Program (MaPP) found that as a result of the partnership, university faculty saw their role in student learning more holistically and felt a heightened responsibility toward the education of secondary students. The study also found that the partnership increased engagement of both high school teachers and their students (Forrest, Kosick, Vogel, & Wu, 2012).

Collaborative leadership requires the balancing of power and the building of trust. One study found that the collaborative nature of a P-20 action research partnership led to greater progress and a higher quality project; however, external university partners placed in schools were seen as outsiders, and staff distrusted the placement of a college coach on campus (Jarsky, McDonough, & Nunez, 2009). One study found that counselors and school personnel resent and resist school-university initiatives when their roles are prescribed (Valadez & Snyder, 2006). For this reason, building trust and balancing issues of power is an important component of the partnership. Jarsky et al. (2009) found that strong collaborative leadership requires a balance between prescriptive measures that guide instruction and allow instructors the freedom to discover what works best for them.

Several studies have found a unified mission as crucial to the success of a partnership (Barnett et al., 2012; Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Wang & Hodara, 2014). A key element of a partnership’s success depended on objectives aligned with the vision for each of the participating entities as well as for the collaborative as a whole (Bathgate et al., 2011). Kochen and Reed (2005) recommended educators expand their awareness of the value of
collaboration across institutions; they noted that teacher and educational leadership networks are usually built around a common purpose.

**Partnerships Better Address the Needs of Historically Underrepresented Students**

Partnerships can improve underrepresented students’ limited access to college guidance at home and at school. Through the improved flow of information across institutions, colleges can make more culturally responsive decisions about counseling, scheduling, and financial issues (Perna et al., 2008). Institutions can together identify specific obstacles that prevent Latino and other groups underrepresented from entering and persisting in college (Oliva, 2008). One such partnership was the Bridge Project at Stanford University, which sought to determine what students, K-12 instructors and parents know about college and how information was being disseminated to them; the study found deep inequalities throughout the systems in areas such as college counseling, college preparation course offerings, and connections with local postsecondary institutions (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). The study recommended expanding federal grants for collaborative discussions between K-12 and postsecondary education, as well as for joint development activities that enable students to transition successfully from one system to the next. Another example of best partnership practices is Cuyahoga Community College’s Early College High School, which has enabled 75,000 underrepresented students to earn a high school diploma and an associate degree or up to 2 years of credit toward a bachelor’s degree tuition-free. With an enrollment of 220 students, the regional public high school offers an opportunity to collaborate with top faculty in the Cleveland public schools and Cuyahoga Community College (Thorton, 2013).

There is a need for more partnerships that address the obstacles that underrepresented students face when applying to college. In California, one study found that although K-12
partnerships were located in districts with large Black and Hispanic student population, minority enrollments in the programs were relatively low (Domina & Ruzek, 2012). Another study found that partnership success depended on improving student achievement across demographic groups (Bathgate et al., 2012). In sum, partnerships that target students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds should focus on improving the flow of information that students and parents receive about college readiness and financial aid options, as well as seek greater understanding of the students’ unique social and emotional needs.

**Challenges Faced By Partnerships**

One challenge partnerships face is that they need time to evolve (Domina & Ruzek, 2010). Because a partnership is about building relationships, the gains made by a partnership can take years (Lawson, 2013). If allowed to develop, however, the relationships fostered by partnerships can make a difference in addressing college readiness (Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Lawson, 2013). By nature, partnerships are complex, which may pose challenges in establishing them. Many of the K-16 and community partnerships have multiple goals, which depend on the coordination and collaboration of stakeholders; some are loosely partnered, others involve an intensive intervention (Lawson, 2013). The more successful of these partnerships tailor the needs to the school and student population; this means that they need time to identify and then develop programs to meet the needs of the local community (Domina & Ruzek, 2012).

**Theoretical Framework**

**Levin’s Theory of Acceleration**

Levin (1988) defined acceleration as the concept of increasing learning that takes place within a given time period; he described acceleration as a distinct phenomenon that can be
differentiated from other interventions by the establishment of two criteria. First, it is characterized by a systemic underlying and, second, by a purposive set of accelerated goals. Levin’s theory of accelerating education for at-risk youth addresses a key goal of CAPP; by preparing student in high school with college readiness skills, students can enroll directly in college level community colleges courses. This would accelerate their learning by allowing them to circumvent long and generally unproductive remedial sequences.

CAPP students prepare for the transition to college by taking a year of Common Core curriculum with an embedded college readiness component titled ERWC, which was designed by the California State University system. All high school instructors who teach ERWC courses take a professional development course in the curriculum.

Levin and Calgano (2008) stated that in order to improve community college remediation, two things must occur. The first is to address the drill and kill pedagogy. Grubb (2013) described the problems of drill and kill pedagogy:

Remedial pedagogy violates most of the precepts for powerful teaching, including the conditions for motivation and engagement. We observed the lack of engagement in students’ responses to remedial pedagogies – like coming late to class and leaving early, texting throughout, and otherwise not paying attention. Therefore, the ubiquitous claim that students are “not ready to be college students” is partly the fault of the instructor. (p. 210)

Tinto (2012) stated that because the effectiveness of remedial courses has come into question, community colleges have begun to adopt a range of pedagogies beyond those typically employed, such as ongoing collaborative inquiry and evidence about teaching and learning. Grubb further stated that students are more likely to be motivated in programs that give them some autonomy in selecting tasks and methods and can construct meaning, engage in sense-making on their own, and play an active role in learning. They will be more engaged in well-
structured educational environments with clear purposes, a challenging curriculum, high expectations, and a strong emphasis on achievement.

Levin and Calgano’s (2008) second proposition for the improvement of remediation is that community colleges must have formal evaluations of different remedial approaches to test their efficacy and cost-effectiveness in order to pursue a remediation strategy. CAPP is an intervention aimed at addressing the traditional pedagogy and replacing it with the ERWC curriculum. This curriculum, which is reviewed by an independent agency to measure its level of success, attempts to enhance the quality of instruction and increase the number of students who are eligible to transition from high school to higher education and take college level courses. High school English instructors are trained to teach the California State University’s ERWC, that is aligned to the CCSS; high school math instructors are also trained and teach a year-long course in discrete mathematics. ERWC is an inquiry-oriented curriculum that helps high school students develop high-level literacy. ERWC embeds social and cultural experiences with reading and writing to shape how students comprehend and engage with academic reading. For example, the course includes a module titled “What’s Next? Thinking About Life After High School,” where students develop educational plans and explore their own college readiness through journal writing. Modules range in subject matter from traditional high school senior material such as Shakespeare’s Hamlet soliloquy to a module on racial profiling (The California State University, 2013).

Collaborative Leadership

Because community college outcomes are so disconcerting, there is an urgent need for strong leadership to implement systemic changes. CAPP’s goals include students’ development of English and math skills, their successful transfer to community college, and their completion
of college level courses and transfer. These goals are predicated on the ability to collaborate effectively. Kochen and Reed (2005) named four factors that facilitate or hinder collaborative leadership: (a) coming to consensus on values and purposes, (b) balancing power, (c) dealing with time constraints and persistence, and (d) identifying transcendent leaders who have the ability to build trust and who have high levels of communication skills. This study will use these four factors to inform study of CAPP’s ability to model collaborative leadership.

The focus of the Partnership is on students’ trajectory across institutions. The common goal is to help students succeed in college-level coursework. The Partnership also aims to establish pathways for students. In the past, K-16 partnerships have failed because they did not address the issues of building trust and sharing power. Case studies (Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Jarsky et al., 2009) show that institutions create silos and become resistant to change. Building trust is essential to the success of the partnership because without strong networking, partnerships will stagnate.

Studies have found partnership facilitators to play a key leadership role (Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Jarsky et al., 2009). CAPP has an independent consultant to facilitate networking and lead the collaboration. This facilitator plays a key role in the constructing of goals and in recruiting members to the partnership. Moreover, the facilitator is in charge of identifying faculty who can fulfill leadership roles and carry out the partnership’s goals.

**Organizational Theory**

Inter-institutional partnerships, such as P-16 partnerships or Cradle to Career Community Partnerships, offer a promising new institutional design for a more integrated, equitable educational system. Partnerships as subsystems directly address the problem of institutional silos. Partnerships can be designed to change conditions and optimize relationships among
organizations in order to achieve the desired results; complexity is endemic because their implementation entails crossing professional, organizational, and community boundaries in the attempt to organize and mobilize stakeholders for collective action (Lawson, 2013).

According to Morgan (1986), an organism is open to its environment and defined by its subsystems. Applying Morgan’s organism metaphor, K-16 partnerships, like interacting subsystems, contextualize the partnership in the needs of the community. Current K-16 partnerships address students’ academic inabilities but also try to address emotional and social needs. Partnerships have been built around curricular interventions and increasing student support services. Several partnerships include wrap around services and include social services agencies and businesses in the partnerships (Barnett & Hughes, 2010; Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Wang & Hodara, 2014). Tailoring partnerships to the needs of the community is comparable to Morgan’s metaphor of an organism trying to adapt to its immediate environment.

Morgan (1986) also stated that subsystems can establish congruencies or alignments between different systems and identify and eliminate potential dysfunction. In this regard, K-16 partnerships align curriculum as well as institutions’ missions and can facilitate students’ transition from one institution to another (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). Morgan argued that looking at alternative ways to organize systems offers a way to break free from bureaucratic thinking and organize in a way that meets the requirements of the environments; this adaptation includes seeking alignments and good fits. K-16 partnerships provide a way for community colleges to team up with high schools to transition students into college level classes by providing professional development for high school faculty in the community college curriculum and vice versa. In California, the CCSS strategy is to collaborate with the postsecondary and business
communities to integrate the CCSS into programs and activities beyond the K-12 school setting (California Department of Education, 2014). High schools have been asked to bridge with community colleges and businesses to establish common understanding of the CCSS. Venezia and Kirst (2005) found that the amount and consistency of information high school students receive about preparing to take college-level courses help transition high school students into higher education institutions more smoothly. This study recommended communication pathways by local postsecondary institutions in collaboration with neighboring K-12 schools.

Morgan (1986) explained that matrix organizations systematically attempt to combine a bureaucracy with a project-team structure, but that this fails frequently because the functional bureaucracy retains control. However, when influence and control are diffused, team based organization can increase adaptability, increase coordination, and make good use of human resources. In a study of the organizational structure of a university-community partnership, researchers found that engaged institutions partner with communities to collectively meet both parties’ needs and that a collaborative paradigm can redefine an organization (Steward & Alrutz, 2012).

Lawson (2013) described how partnership can evolve into collaborative partnerships:

A collaborative partnership is an intervention designed to create and reinforce shared awareness of interdependent relationships as well as to enable once independent stakeholders to optimize, and act in relation to, their codependence. Optimization entails designing new relationships among people (collaboration) while designing a new relationship among their respective organization (a partnership). A collaborative partnership is in evidence when both kinds of relationships (interdependent people; interdependent organizations) are in evidence. (p. 640)

Several studies have found shared awareness to be crucial to the success of partnerships (Barnett & Hughes, 2010; Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Wang & Hodara, 2014). A key element of a partnership depends on objectives aligned with the vision for each of
the participating entities as well as for the collaborative as a whole (Bathgate et al., 2011). Kochen and Reed (2005) recommended the expanded awareness of the value of collaboration across institutions; they noted that teacher and educational leadership networks are usually built around a common purpose.

Morgan (1986) stated that evolution can only be understood at the level of the total ecology; he argued that it is the pattern that evolves, not just the separate units that make up the pattern. K-16 partnerships have broadened the scope of the issue to include the ecology of public education. In identifying themselves as K-16, partnership are including themselves in the larger landscape of public education. Rather than frame goals for one or two organizations, focusing on K-16 as one educational system would help look at the larger issues affecting public education. Through the sharing of data and resources, partnerships can better solve problems endemic to the entire ecology of public education. By combining forces, there is a higher possibility of solving the problem. Collaboration allows organizations to tackle the formidable challenges of aligning a curriculum like CCSS, getting students college ready, and improving their completion, transfer, and graduation outcomes.

**Conclusion**

Levin (1988) noted the urgency of improving remediation nearly 30 years ago when he stated that in the absence of improvement in the community college system, disadvantaged students are likely to become disadvantaged adults and thus create a cycle of poverty. Studies from the last 2 decades have shown that large numbers of students drop out of college without the skills necessary for employment, increasing the number of under-skilled, unemployed, or underemployed workers (The Century Foundation, 2013; Complete College America, 2011).
Due to the complexity of systemic change and to a lack of resources, interventions have proven only marginally successful. Recent pilot studies occurring throughout the United States may provide some strategies to address remediation. CAPP aims to create college readiness through a new curriculum and establish pathways between high schools and community colleges by establishing networks and developing leadership. Community colleges across the United States are struggling to understand the needs of remedial students and implement effective programs. This study detailed the progress of a partnership in its third year of implementation at a community college with a large population of remedial students. This researcher hoped that stakeholders’ perceptions regarding the implementation of this partnership can help inform educational leaders who are considering implementing a similar partnership on their campus (Grubb, 2013; Tinto, 2012).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine a high school-community college partnership that, through an instructional intervention at the high school, placed students directly in college credit classes. The instructional intervention was a new English curriculum titled ERWC. Students who passed their ERWC with a C or better waived the placement test and enrolled directly in college credit English, an acceleration strategy known as acceleration. During the enrollment process, the partnership sought to increase student support services to help students enroll more smoothly. The partnership sought to do this through intensive collaboration across institutions. Although the focus of this study was to examine the ERWC, partnership stakeholders were aware that no one intervention is necessarily going to address college readiness. Rather it was the confluence of partnership strategies, which included ERWC, direct placement in college-level classes, increased student support services, and intensive collaboration tailored to the needs of students at these institutions that accelerated student learning.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What partnership strategies have helped 12th grade students accelerate into college level classes?
2. What kinds of collaboration or collaborative leadership between institutions are necessary for implementing and developing a partnership of this kind?
3. If at all, what do stakeholders say most helped students become college ready in English as a result of participation in this partnership?
Research Design and Methods

This study is qualitative in nature because it sought to understand how a partnership through a new curriculum and increasing student support service accelerated students’ transition from high school to college credit bearing classes. With narratives that included multiple perspectives of the challenges of working collaboratively to improve students’ performance, this study gained a deeper understanding of the complexity involved in meeting students’ needs. In this study, the sample size was necessarily small because few programs of this kind exist, but they show potential to shorten students’ classroom time and maximize the relevancy of their educational experience. Finally, this study required a qualitative methodology because it was subject to the researcher’s interpretation of data and was exploratory in nature and, therefore, requires flexibility (Creswell, 2009).

The specific research strategy chosen was that of a case study. According to Merriam (1990), the defining characteristic of a case study is its bounded system. Here, the bounded system or unit of analysis was a high school-community college partnership with targeted remediation strategies; a finite number of stakeholders were involved in the partnership and could be interviewed, and there were a finite number of classes that could be observed. Yin (2009) stated that case studies focus on contemporary events, do not require control of behavioral events, and answer how and why research questions. This partnership reflected the very latest in partnership design; in literature it is referred to as a second-generational partnership because it is more complex, tailors itself to the needs of the students, and as such offers a new organizational structure (Lawson, 2013). In this study, the researcher attempted to address the how of implementation and direct placement.
This case study on a partnership and its ability to improve college readiness included interviews of community college students, instructors, counselors, and administrators, as well as making classroom and meeting observations. This study was particularistic (Merriam, 2009) in that it was focused on a unique partnership and was concerned with the practical implications of developing a program that successfully enrolled students in college level classes. Although surveys provided some information on the nature of the partnership, the actual number of individuals involved in the creation of the partnership was small and information about participants’ perceptions was in-depth.

Site Selection

The site included in this study is Hollywood High School, an urban high school within Los Angeles Unified School District. A Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) report indicated that in the 2013-2014 school year, Latinos made up 74.38% of the student body, Blacks 6.51%, Whites 11.37%, Asians 3.29%, Pacific Islanders 3%, and Filipinos 3.79%. The high school student population is 1,571; its demographics are similar to those in the district, which is 67% Latino, 9.7% Black, 12% White, and 3% Asian. Eighty-one percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Its API score is 762, which is 28 points short of the California targeted score, making it a focus school. Hollywood High School is an urban high school with a working class, largely Hispanic/immigrant student body. Like most high schools in LAUSD, it is struggling to raise its academic performance.

For the 2014-2015 school year, Los Angeles City College enrolled approximately 31,385 students; 55.98% were Latinos, 15.46% were White, 8.43% were African-American, 11.3% were Asian, 3.30% were Filipino, 0.17% were American Indian, 1.87% were of mixed ethnicity, and 3.37% were of unknown ethnicity. The ethnic demographics of the community college resemble
those of community college students in California who are 38.9% Latino, 31% White, 7.3% African-American, and 14.4% Asian. Remediation problems at the college were more severe than at the national level. Nationally, 60% of community college students received remedial education (The Century Foundation, 2013). At the community college, 88.5% of students were identified as needing remediation in English.

The high school is located approximately 3 miles from the college in a densely urban area of Los Angeles. According to the grant request, students from the high school frequently enroll and drop out of remedial programs at the college. For this reason, a partnership that focuses on transitioning students from the high school to the college is much needed and was appropriate for this study.

Sample Selection

The sample consisted of participants in a second-generation partnership. Second generation partnerships are collaborative, innovative, and complex interventions that facilitate the development of new institutional designs for schools and colleges (Lawson, 2013). In order to grasp this partnership’s goal of increasing college readiness, the researcher included English department chairs and co-chairs, lead partnership instructors, the school principal, the assistant principal, and the high school college counselor. All the individuals mentioned previously had been involved actively in the partnership. Stakeholders collectively wrote the partnership grant and developed partnership strategies; in addition, they met weekly to discuss the coordination of the partnership and provided background information in addition to giving a detailed account of the process of implementation and the early outcomes of this collaboration.

At the high school, the researcher selected six high school 12th grade ERWC high school instructors. These courses reflect the recently implemented California CCSS in English; the
ERWC includes modules developed by instructors to include critical thinking and research skills (Cline, Flachmann, & Street, 2008).

At the community college, the researcher selected one English instructor as well as the department chairs and/or co-chairs, the college counselor(s), and the dean. These individuals had been involved actively in establishing this partnership. They met regularly and were responsible for implementing the program at the community college campus.

In addition, the researcher selected the partnership facilitator. Studies have noted the importance of an outside intermediary (Barnett et al., 2012) and intermediary leader (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012) or external stakeholder (Kerrigan & Slater, 2010) in coordinating between institutions. However, the facilitator died in the winter of 2016, precluding a formal interview of him.

Finally, the researcher recruited four community college students who graduated from the high school and took an ERWC class or benefited from the Partnership’s counseling services. With the assistance of the college counselor, the researcher was able to identify these students. The researcher contacted these students through their instructor and counselor and asked that they consent to being interviewed. These students were recruited in the winter quarter when students had already taken the community college English class. They were offered movie ticket gift cards for participating in the study.

**Data Collection Methods**

Multiple data methods included student interviews, classroom observations, observations of meetings, and document review.
Classroom Observation

Classroom observations at the high school took place in winter of 2016. Classroom observation identified methods employed by ERWC instructors that helped students become college ready in English. Classroom observations provided a direct and powerful way of learning about instructors and students’ behavior and the context in which this occurs (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher recorded in detail observations of students learning critical thinking and research skills, since these were required skills in a college English class. Entering college level students must write organized essays that include a thesis statement, a summary of the reading material, an opinion, and examples; the essay may have some errors in grammar and usage, but these errors must not interfere with what the student is saying. In addition, students should be able to use quotations, refer to texts, and paraphrase.

Meeting Observations

Observations of meetings between administrators, counselors, and instructors took place in fall of 2015. These meeting took place at both sites and included stakeholders from both institutions. Meeting observation identified the kind and degree of collaboration within this partnership. To measure collaboration, the researcher used LaFasto and Larson’s (2001) characteristics of leadership that build a collaborative climate. These characteristics include staying problem-focused, listening to and understanding one another, feeling free to take risks and making communication safe. The researcher noted these characteristics as they were occurring at meetings using a similar scale used in classroom observations.

Interviews

Although observations allowed the researcher to measure collaboration and students’ college readiness skills in English, interviews allowed the researcher to identify effective
partnership strategies that included not only ERWC but also direct placement in college level courses and an increase in student support services as well as partnership collaboration. All interviews were audio recorded. To ensure accuracy and to gain familiarity with data, all recorded interviews were transcribed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews of instructors, department chairs, counselors, and administrators allowed the researcher to study in-depth the third year of the implementation of this partnership. Interview questions derived from list of questions but did not include predetermined wording or order (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Each interview was approximately 30 minutes in length.

Questions asked stakeholders to provide an overview of each person’s participation in the partnership. This was an important question as it provided a narrative of how these stakeholders tailored the partnership to the needs of students, to the budget of the program, and to the challenges of inter-institutional collaboration. Four questions were directed to the different kinds of collaboration occurring in varying degrees between different stakeholders and gave the researcher an idea of which collaborative efforts were most effective. Two questions addressed direct placement of students in college level English and stakeholders’ perspectives on whether this seemed appropriate. Two additional questions were directed toward increased student support services and whether stakeholders felt that it has made a difference in accelerating students into college level English.

Interviewees had different protocols that differed by job classification. Teachers had a protocol that focused on ERWC curriculum and bottom-up leadership. Counselors had a protocol that focused on recruitment, enrollment, and bottom-up leadership. Administrators had a protocol on inter-institutional communication and leadership. Finally, community college
students were interviewed about ERWC. Questions probed whether students felt ERWC helped them become college ready. Questions addressed their current college level English class and whether they felt they were ready to be placed in college level English. If they said they were, the researcher followed up with questions about ERWC. The researcher specifically asked them about whether ERWC helped them build research and critical thinking skills. This method of interviewing allowed greater specificity into the role of each person in this partnership.

**Document Review**

The researcher collected documents pertaining to the evaluation and review of the Partnership by an outside agency. These documents were valuable because they identified all the major components of the Partnership and indicated their progress. In addition, the researcher collected the ERWC training guide, which helped identify and explain each module and explained how each module should be taught. In addition, the researcher collected the high school WASC Accreditation Report, which was completed in 2015 and had detailed demographic information about the school; it included a short section on the Partnership, explaining what the school sought to gain from the Partnership. Also included in the document were several promotional and recruitment documents provided to me by the facilitator; they explained the intent of the Partnership and detailed the strategies as they developed. Finally, the researcher found online several documents about the Partnership, such as legislative notes and project summaries as well as conference agendas and reflections, that helped backtrack the course of events during the three years of implementation.

**Field Notes**

The researcher took field notes throughout fall quarter when she attended partnership meetings. The implementation of this partnership involved many issues (instructional strategies,
support services, evaluation requirements, scheduling challenges, etc.) and involved many stakeholders. Apart from the checklists used in classroom observations, field notes allowed for deeper reflection of what the researcher saw during meetings and conference workshops.

**Data Analysis Methods**

**Interviews**

Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed immediately after each interview was conducted in order to ensure accuracy. Categories were divided further by research question themes such as ERWC, direct placement, student support services, and collaboration. From listening to stakeholders give me an overview of the partnership, the researcher was able to identify key strategies of the partnership, which collaborative efforts were most important, whether stakeholders felt that direct placement was appropriate, and whether increasing student support services helped transition students into their first year of college courses.

For instructors and students, the researcher coded for ERWC and the specific skills for which she was searching in student work and classroom observations. From recurrences in student and instructor responses, the researcher was able to infer what aspects of the ERWC helped students the most, if at all.

**Classroom Observations**

In high school classes, the researcher observed how the new ERWC curriculum was addressing students’ college readiness in English. Three classes were observed in total. Units of observation included posted work, student handout, pages from class text(s), instructors’ questions, and student responses as well as class discussion. The researcher noted whether students were engaged in a collaborative activity and looked at students’ discussion and responses and reaction to activities.
The researcher conducted a follow-up visit toward the end of the term to see if students demonstrated critical thinking and research skills during their Senior Project Presentation. This information was used to corroborate with observable student learning in the earlier classroom visits and to triangulate with instructors’ interviews about the implementation of the curriculum and students’ learning of writing.

Field Notes

The researcher kept a two-column journal for note taking at meetings and for conference calls, in addition to keeping notes on her iPhone. The journal was categorized according to the main themes of my research questions: ERWC, direct placement, increased student support services, counseling, tutoring, and collaboration. The researcher printed out and kept a binder of emails from various stakeholders that detailed the development of the partnership. In the journal, the researcher tried to connect findings in data collection methods in order to help with data analysis and noted the recurrence of themes to create additional codes. In addition, the researcher noted issues of validity such as reactivity and researcher bias, in order to remain aware of these issues as they presented themselves.

Access

At the high school, the researcher met the principal, the high school lead teachers, and department chairs. As she attended meetings and a summer conference, the researcher got to know more instructors and administrators and became more familiar with the ERWC. At the community college, the researcher met weekly with the department chair to discuss the partnership. Agendas at these meetings include brainstorming ways to transfer high school students to the college, and how to recruit and select instructors to teach partnership classes. The researcher also attended administrative meetings that concerned the partnership. Meeting topics
included summer bridge programs, counseling and scheduling issues, book vouchers, and enlarging the partnership to include students from other neighboring high schools. In addition, the researcher was given access to data that had already been collected regarding the partnership. These included a binder of the ERWC curriculum, a video of a conference presentation on the partnership, and a PowerPoint presentation that detailed the partnership’s goals.

**Role Management**

My role was solely as a researcher of the partnership. At the time of the study, I presented myself as a graduate research student, although most stakeholders knew that I am also an instructor. Since I am an insider-researcher, it was important to communicate and if necessary clarify my role to stakeholders. The advantage to being an insider-researcher was having a greater understanding of how each institution functioned, in addition to possessing knowledge and experience of the subject matter. While greater familiarity with the institutions may lead to loss of objectivity (Unluer, 2012), explicit awareness of the need to carefully balance this dual role ameliorated this problem.

**Validity**

**Researcher’s Bias**

Risks to this study included researcher bias since the researcher as not an impartial observer. The college is my work site, and I was actively advocating for the partnership. As a researcher, I understand that my responsibility is to report both successes and challenges, which included identifying areas for growth. To minimize bias, I was transparent in my intent.

**Reactivity**

Interviewees spoke candidly about the partnership. There was no indication that they feared the interviews might adversely affect their jobs. All high school instructors were tenured
and spoke with an interest that seemed genuine about smoothly implementing the curriculum and not withholding the ERWC weakness. If instructors did have some reservations, anonymity helped protect them. The researcher omitted participant names and titles in the study, quoting transcripts with generic references such as participant or stakeholder, which was intended to help address the issue. Another way of addressing this was by searching for discrepant evidence doing a member check, so the researcher had the most accurate understanding of interviewees’ feeling about the partnership.

**Ethical Issues**

Ethical concerns permeate every aspect of the research design (Maxwell, 2005). Keeping a journal was a way for the researcher to maintain self-awareness and identify ethical conflicts. A two-column field note journal helped capture verbal description and direct quotations in one column and the observer’s comments in the other. Another way was to ask for help. Sharing any ethical concerns with her co-chairs helped the researcher identify possible solutions that she alone may not have considered. Member checks ensured that what participants said and did was not being misinterpreted (Merriam, 2009).

**Dissemination**

Because this study aimed to conduct an in-depth exploration of remediation and the process by which students can become college ready, participants had access to online and hardcopy summaries of the study’s purpose and methods, which they were encouraged to share with other stakeholders. This study will be published online to be used as a resource for other colleges with similar programs or for colleges considering pilot programs of this nature. A letter will be sent out to all California community college administrators and high school stakeholders.
summarizing the study and with a web link so that those who are interested can download the study easily.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

The problem this study addressed is the alarming extent of English remediation necessary for a high percentage of high school students entering community college. The high school/community college Partnership studied in this research addresses the lack of college readiness through interventions at both the community college and high school. In the 2014-2015 school year, 88.5%, or 62 of 70 students from the high school in the study were placed in remedial English courses at the community college. Of the 62 students, 46.7% or 29 students placed two levels below college English.

The Partnership high school/community college campuses, located 3 miles apart, serve low-income, primarily minority students. Historically, these schools have not interacted. Students targeted at the high school are seniors who may not otherwise attend college. The primary intervention investigated is an English curriculum, ERWC (Expository Reading Writing Course), introduced to high school seniors in two small classes with a total of 14 students. This single class enabled high school instructors to pilot the ERWC curriculum and monitor students’ progress. Innovative interventions included inter-institutional collaborations such as student assessments, curriculum trainings, conferences, and classroom observations. Partnership members worked together to recruit, enroll, and counsel students at the community college. At the time of this data collection, the Partnership was in the spring semester of its third year. The following is a narrative of the Partnership’s implementation from 2014-2016 followed by findings responding to the research questions and findings for each.

1. What partnership strategies have helped 12th grade students accelerate into college level classes?
2. What kinds of collaboration or collaborative leadership between institutions are necessary for implementing and developing a partnership of this kind?

3. If at all, what do stakeholders say most helped students become college ready in English as a result of participation in this partnership?

**Narrative of Partnership Project**

In 2013, the high school was awarded a grant by a state agency to partner with a community college. The purpose of the grant was to enhance the quality of high school English instruction and increase the number of students ready for college credit bearing courses. The high school stakeholders identified the nearest community college as a potential partner since it was only 3 miles from the high school campus. At the first meeting, which was in the summer of 2014, stakeholders reviewed data relating to community college remediation rates. After discussing the lack of college readiness among high school students entering community college, stakeholders agreed to establish a partnership. Later this year, high school instructors and the community college English Department Chair attended the ERWC training in preparation for implementing the curriculum. The high school counselor also established objectives for the year, which included having all high school seniors (a) complete a college application by November 30th, (b) take a math and English placement test, and (c) have an academic plan for their first year of college. Moreover, the high school counselor proposed to have every senior who planned on attending the community college participate in a college orientation and school tour. All of the high school students met these objectives by the end of the year.

In 2015, the high school implemented the ERWC in a pilot program of two classes. ERWC instructors stated that they observed students’ improved academic literacy and ability to complete more rigorous writing assignments. All 16 students enrolled in the two courses passed
the course. Seven of these students enrolled at the community college the following year. Of those seven who enrolled, four students took the course.

Also in 2015, stakeholders continued to meet to monitor students’ progress in the ERWC program. In early spring, instructors from the high school and the community college met to norm and co-grade students’ essays from these ERWC classes. In interviews, high school instructors stated that they felt they better understood college essay standards after having met with the community college instructors. As the year ended, students had help completing their community college enrollment application at the high school college center and then toured the community college campus. In late spring, seven students enrolled in the community college. Three students dropped out. Community college administrators monitored the progress of the remaining four students in the English 101 class. Three of the four students completed the course with passing grades of one A and two C’s.

The summer of 2015, stakeholders attended a summer conference and assessed the year’s achievements. In order to achieve this implementation, high school instructors needed to work together closely; thus, the implementation created greater intra-department collaboration and leadership. Data supporting this collaboration came from teacher interviews and classroom observations. The implementation also created greater inter-department collaboration between administrators and instructors, as well as between instructors and the counseling department, a finding supported by interviews and by classroom and meeting observations.

In the fall of 2015, an inter-institutional meeting was held to hear the feedback of the community college English 101 instructor who had taught the former high school students. The instructor addressed students’ college readiness, noting that while students passed the class, they still needed additional support services, in particular in college counseling. In the spring of
2016, several cross-institutional observations took place that involved high school instructors visiting community college classes and community college instructors visiting high school classes.

However, not all the Partnership elements—such as the collaborative assessments, inter-institutional classroom observations, and counseling support services—were implemented smoothly. For example, at times, it was uncertain whether the college would continue to waive the English placement exam, which caused consternation among the high school instructors. Other elements, such as the cross-institutional collaboration of counselors, were planned but never implemented. The greatest challenges were the buy-in of community college instructors and counselors who did participate actively in the Partnership.

Findings

Research Question #1: What Partnership Strategies Helped 12th Grade Students Accelerate into College Level Classes?

The purpose of the partnership under study was to accelerate transition high school graduates into college level English courses as easily as possible to promote college going of minority students. The strategies used by the partnership were crucial to assess the success of the partnership. These strategies addressed curricular and institutional practices. ERWC was the primary strategy in establishing a partnership between the two institutions. Other strategies, although ancillary and provisional in nature, also helped increase communication among Partnership members. At a minimum, the Partnership strategies allowed stakeholders to meet and discuss their goals. Within 3 years, they established inter-rater reliability and increased an interest and motivation among their colleagues to facilitate communication. This was a formative challenge considering that none had existed before, and that the impetus to develop the
partnership came from a state grant, and not from the schools themselves. Nonetheless, given these challenges, the high school stakeholders endeavored to engage and implement effective strategies and succeeded in establishing a relationship with the community college. This section focuses on (a) the co-grading of the high school students’ essays; (b) cross-institutional classroom observations; (c) offering transfer students support services, such as early enrollment and college campus visits; (d) waivers of the placement test; and (e) offering transfer students an intensive summer English 101 class at the community college. A discussion of ERWC will follow in the discussion of the next finding regarding collaboration.

Co-graded assessments to measure college-readiness at the high school. Instructors frequently discussed how high school instructors could measure the college readiness of ERWC students. In spring 2015, the second year of implementations, high school teachers agreed that instructors across institutions proctor and grade ERWC students’ essays to monitor progress and establish a benchmark for college readiness. Two adjunct instructors from the community college met with two ERWC lead instructors to perform grading. The instructors discussed each department’s standards and procedures for evaluating the essays and then discussed the strengths and weaknesses of students’ essays. Each time they indicated whether they felt, based on the student’s writing sample, that the student was ready for English 101, a transferrable college course. After a brief discussion of each of 17 students’ writing samples, the graders determined that none of the essays indicated that the students were ready for college English. The college instructors estimated that if these students had taken the placement test, they would most likely test into English 28, the remedial course students take before English 101.

The high school lead instructor felt that the meeting between instructors was a significant step in establishing the Partnership because it allowed all to get beyond the “blame game” and
concentrate on assessing and monitoring students’ progress. Three of the six high school instructors similarly stated that the grading was reassuring. As one said,

So the encouraging thing was that we scored, more or less, singularly. I would say that the [college] professors showed more leniency than we did because we wanted to show that we are strict and they wanted to show that we actually could allow certain freedom.

While the sample size of 17 essays was not very large, essays indicated that students still were not able to write effective persuasive essays mid semester, which indicated to the high school instructors the need to emphasize essay writing, as opposed to reading and vocabulary exercises, in their classes for the rest of the quarter.

This was not the outcome that the high school instructors were seeking, but they felt they benefitted from the grading sessions because the college instructors had given them a better sense of English 101 standards. It especially clarified for them that the emphasis is on writing persuasive essays in college English courses and gave instructors an opportunity to discuss English 101 essay grading rubric in depth, which was useful for high school instructors. Further, it allowed the two institutions’ staff members to get acquainted. For the college, getting acquainted with the grading practices of the high school was important since the English department had agreed to waive the ACCUPLACER placement test, a test on which it had relied heavily to place students, without really knowing how effective ERWC was going to be. Meeting with the high school instructors and receiving feedback from the instructors gave the community college English chair reassurance that the high school was on task in preparing the high school seniors for the English 101 class. At that point in time, at the very least, the two lead high school instructors understood where students needed to improve their writing ability. However, after the grading session, there was still some confusion about whether the college was going to continue waiving the placement test.
Cross-institutional observations. Cross-institutional classroom observations began in late spring 2015. The community college sent three instructors to visit high school classes, and the high school sent two instructors to observe English 101 classes at the college. Two high school instructors who were interviewed had participated in the observations and each had found the visits helpful in understanding the focus of English 101 classes, such as the emphasis on reading and analysis. One lead instructor stated she was interested in the “different spin” each teacher put on the same class, which she found “kind of exciting.” She stated that the class reading resembled that in the ERWC curriculum; it seemed thematically based, which was “not the way we are used to doing it in high school.” She emphasized the importance of visiting classes because high school instructors did not normally have the opportunity to visit college English classes, and she believed that there was a lot to glean from such visits.

Scheduling was a challenge of cross-institutional observations. Although high school administrators supported instructors’ professional development, instructors had to take time away from classroom instruction during a busy spring schedule to visit classes. There also was the cost of substitute instructors. The community college instructors had the support of their English Department Chair, but had to work around their teaching schedule to visit high school classes. From both perspectives, classroom observations took a lot of effort to organize and execute.

Because follow-up discussions of the observations had not occurred by the end of the academic year, it was not possible for stakeholders to measure the benefits of these visits. However, two instructors felt satisfied that they had taken “the first steps.” Two other instructors expressed the opinion in their interviews that, while they had not been selected to visit college classrooms in the spring, they were looking forward to visiting in fall. In sum, the instructor
observations appeared to benefit the high school teachers by allowing them to: (a) see first-hand how the college professors conduct English instruction, (b) identify differences in instruction that could potentially be aligned, and (c) reflect on how this knowledge might impact and improve their own individual teaching styles.

**Support services: Filling out a community college application early, giving placement exams, and campus visits.** In spring 2015, all high school seniors completed a community college enrollment application with the help of the high school college counselor and the community college dean. The Dean of the local community college travelled to the high school campus to administer the placement exam, to offer tuition scholarships to some students and to assist them in getting book waivers. The high school assistant principal described the dean’s activities as “cutting edge.” The Dean, assisted by the high school counselor, also arranged for students to visit the community college campus. Two of the four students interviewed for this study had completed such a visit while they were students at the high school. Both stated that it had been a valuable experience and for one of them, coming to the campus helped her feel that attending college was “doable” and motivating.

Five of the stakeholders interviewed emphasized the importance of the high school’s college counselor establishing a relationship with the college. The lead high school instructor praised the counselor for providing Partnership members with statistical information, which helped them prepare for “all the high school’s college bound activities.” She was actively involved in helping students register for the community college, administered placements tests, and identified students who might transfer to the college. During the time of this study, there was no counseling counterpart at the community college who could offer students such a level of direct attention. This gap proved a serious challenge for the Partnership and made monitoring
student success hard because there was no one to track students once they enrolled at the community college. By six stakeholders’ accounts, the college dean, the facilitator, and the department chair did the work that would normally have been the responsibility of the community college counselor. Since the time of this research, a new first-year student counselor at the college has been hired. However, by her account, the counseling department at the college remains seriously understaffed.

Four of the four students interviewed reported that receiving help with completing an application made the transition to college much easier. The community college English Department chair stated, “We were paying attention to them; so when instructors said they’re not coming, I contacted them.” Nonetheless, sustaining this level of attention was difficult. There were not as many interested stakeholders at the community college. The college Dean stated, “I’m sure part of the research is, you have to have motivated people…who are willing to put the time and energy into it to make it happen.” He stated that the high school had five or six people who were heavily invested in making ERWC implementation a success, but that the college had only two or three. Thus, he said,

If you don’t have that [more committed personnel], the project falls apart very quickly. It doesn’t really matter if you’re paying them stipends, or you’re not paying them stipends. You have to believe in the mission or in the project to actually get it done.

In sum, in order to enable a smooth transition for the high school students, the college required more Partnership personnel, especially in the counseling department, to help provide students with support services. Although the Partnership members have many innovative strategies, the college lacks the budget and, in some instances, the motivation to make the Partnership function more fruitfully for students.
Waiving the placement test. The Partnership stakeholders agreed that students who passed the ERWC with a C or better grade would be allowed to waive the ACCUPLACER placement test and enroll directly into English 101 (the transferrable to 4 year colleges, credit-bearing English course). However, this was not the policy of the community college district, and it subsequently caused confusion among the stakeholders. It is unclear why the community college district chose not to make a district-wide policy in this regard since local 4-year universities were already waiving their placement tests with high schools that had implemented ERWC.

The community college English department still relies heavily on the ACCUPLACER. Consequently, the idea of waiving the placement test in the ERWC context was approached with caution. At an inter-institutional meeting, two community college instructors raised the concern that students who passed the ERWC still might not possess the writing ability to pass a college English course and that failing these students could negatively affect their transferring to a 4-year university. For this reason, the community college English department chair participated in the ERWC training and closely followed the implementation of the curriculum by the high school instructors. She stated that she had tried to persuade her co-chairs and other tenured instructors to waive the placement test, and they had not been convinced.

Absent a district policy, the department chair and the dean authorized the waiving of the test and the direct placement of students in English 101 on the condition that students needed to pass ERWC with a grade of C or better. This agreement was not binding. The community college English department chair and dean were depending on the effectiveness of the ERWC class to adequately prepare students for English 101.
The community college department chair’s attendance of the ERWC professional development helped convince her of the strength of the curriculum. However, the issue of whether to continue authorizing the waiver came up later when the chair saw that none of the students had passed the initial co-assessments. Based on the essays they had written, all seventeen students tested would have been placed in English 28, a remedial English course. Waiving the placement at this point appeared too much of a risk for the community college, and there was some mention of withdrawing the waiver; however, students still needed three months of instruction before the term ended, so it was possible for students to gain the necessary skills by the end of the term. After lengthy discussion at inter-institutional meetings, the community college reaffirmed its waiver agreement.

At the end of the term, all seventeen students who took ERWC passed the course. Four of the seventeen enrolled in English 101. Three of these four passed English 101. While the English 101 instructor felt that the students would have benefitted from support services such as an orientation and counseling services, his feedback was that students were adequately academically prepared for the course.

At the end of the third year, it still was not clear to high school instructors that the ACCUPLACER would continue to be waived for students transferring from the high school to the community college. One high school instructor who was upset by this lack of clarity stated, “There’s some talk about an additional exam. I can tell you if that’s the case, our kids will go someplace else…. They’ll go to some place that says they’re ready.” She expressed frustration at the inconsistency and indefiniteness of these clouded policies. The table of remedial placement demonstrates that most students from the college were placed in English 28, one level below English 101, the credit-bearing course. Whether or not the waiving of the placement test
will be effective at accelerating students cannot be determined until the community college unequivocally waives the placement test for the Partnership students. An unsettled impasse remains with no resolution in sight.

**Intensive summer English class for high school students.** In summer 2015, the community college placed four ERWC students directly into English 101 with a total enrollment of 26 students. The Dean and the English Department chair designated a specific class with a specific instructor to teach these incoming high school students. The Dean explained that the Partnership was, in this case, “controlling for that faculty factor,” which was not always possible. This adjunct instructor was chosen because he was “conscientious” and had experience working with high school students. This 5-week course was a much more intensive course than the traditional 16-week semester course. The Dean and English Department chair had hoped the summer course would to accelerate students as early as possible by giving them a “head start.”

The college instructor in this intensive course was requested to keep records of what assignments were given to the four students and monitor their progress. In the fall, the instructor gave a detailed report how the students had performed. He stated that the instructional challenges he saw among the four students appeared less to do with their academic ability and more to do with maturity levels and family issues. He observed that one student was habitually late and missed quizzes. The instructor met with the student almost daily to help him complete research assignments because the student had relied on Wikipedia and Google for his research (not original sources), plagiarized portions of another essay, and had neglected to include a Works Cited page. Although the instructor determined that the student had not plagiarized knowingly, he gave the student a D on his paper and a C in the class.
The same instructor gave another student a final grade of a C because although the student was very engaged in class, she missed several days of class because she had to go to her grandmother’s home, and she did not have computer access there at that time, so she did not turn in one of the four required essays. Although the instructor allowed her an opportunity to make up the essay, she chose not to do so. She got As on all essays except that missing essay, which brought her grade down to a C. The instructor explained that missing a few days in a 16-week course is different than missing a few days in a 5-week course. A third student received a final grade of A. She was quiet but engaged in her work.

The fourth student failed the class. The student did the first of four essays, one of which did not require research, and then stopped coming to class. The instructor commented, “When she did come, she really didn’t do work, [and] somewhat slipped through the cracks.” Based on the work the student turned in, the instructor inferred that the student probably dropped out for personal reasons, not because of academic inability.

To summarize, three of the four students placed directly into English 101 passed the course. Both the summer English 101 instructor and the two ERWC/English 101 students interviewed for this study seemed to agree that the summer course was intensive for the high school students, especially since they did not receive counseling or an orientation before starting the course. Other services that could have helped them for the transition to college course taking (especially intensive summer formats) include tutorial services and access to a writing lab.

This community college instructor did not collaborate with other instructors or administrators except to attend an inter-institutional meeting where the instructor was able to report on how the four students did in his English 101 course. He stated that it would have been
more helpful if he had met with the students’ high school teacher more than once, preferably before he had taught the course.

When we did have the meeting, you know, one of the [high school] teachers I spoke with regarding [student’s name], she mentioned, “He had a problem with doing research in my class as well.” Had I contacted this instructor initially and known that, perhaps I could have headed off that problem.

So, notwithstanding the special placement of these four students in a particular class, the instructor seemingly was not sufficiently prepared to assist several of these student with potential problems. This underscores a “lack of connect” that should be remediable.

The three high school instructors who attended the fall inter-institutional meeting and heard feedback about their former students all stated that they thought the feedback showed that students could place directly in English 101 and pass. “We discussed what worked...it seemed that those who came and regularly attended were able to pass.” The community college instructor stated that the three takeaways from his experience teaching the intensive summer English class were:

One, it’s very, very difficult on the students if it’s only a five-week semester. For the first time, I don’t think that’s correct. Second, we would really want to meet ahead of time, you know, people from the high school, administrators from the college and the teachers themselves. And the last point would be probably more emphasis on the first day, what is expected from those students.

This instructor felt that the students needed an in-depth orientation about what to expect in college. He felt that perhaps the students needed more preparation such as how to obtain academic support, information about financial aid, and other non-academic support services.

One high school teacher stated that obtaining feedback from the community college instructors had shifted her focus from getting students into college to asking herself if students were ready for college and perhaps provided with such information and services to maximize success.
Below is a summary of Partnership successes, which were taken from interviews, document analysis and from meeting and classroom observations. They reflect the statements from stakeholders from the community college, high school, as well as from the four students interviewed for this research.

Table 1

**Summary of Partnership Successes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of ERWC curriculum</td>
<td>It took the high school three years to fully implement the curriculum. The first year focused on training the instructors. The second year focused on piloting two ERWC classes. During the third year, the high school was able to require either ERWC or AP English for all high school seniors, a significant achievement for high school stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>High school instructors felt that they were well prepared for the new curriculum. The community college department chair felt she learned valuable information about the curriculum and that the curriculum aligned with what was taught at the community college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hiring of a facilitator</td>
<td>The facilitator played a key role in the partnership by (1) providing outside expertise, (2) playing the role of an objective third party when stakeholders were not in agreement, (3) keeping stakeholders focused on student achievement, (4) building capacity among the high school instructors, and (5) recruiting the community college English Department Chair and Dean of Academic Affairs, both of whom were identified as effective leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing experienced English high school instructors to implement ERWC.</td>
<td>Experienced high school instructors were able to take a “lead” role in the Partnership, especially evident when the facilitator was no longer a part of the partnership. The facilitator effectively helped build capacity among instructors, an example of bottom-up leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiving the placement test.</td>
<td>Although the community college at times vacillated as to whether they were going to allow the placement test, the decision to ultimately waive the placement test built trust between the institutions; the willingness of the community college to place ERWC high school students in English 101 demonstrated that the community college felt the curriculum was aligned enough to merit the waiving of the test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The co-assessment of high school student essays</td>
<td>High school instructors felt that grading high school senior essays with community college instructors clarified the expectation of students’ writing abilities once they were in English 101. Working together, the high school and community college instructors were able to identify specific writing problems that still needed to be addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of ERWC students in the English 101 class</td>
<td>Due to low enrollment in pilot ERWC courses, only four students were placed in English 101. However, students stated that being placed in the English 101 accelerated them into English 102 within a quarter. For both the community college and high school stakeholders having the community college instructor who taught the English 101 summer course give feedback, proved helpful in knowing that students could succeed in the course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question #2: What Kinds of Collaboration of Collaborative Leadership Between Institutions Are Necessary for Implementing and Developing a Partnership of This Kind?

An inter-institutional partnership requires collaborations of different kinds and between different participants to operate and succeed. Collaborative partnerships are complex interventions characterized by levels of collaborations occurring synergistically (Lawson, 2013). As such, they require the establishment and development of new relationships among people and among organizations (p. 639). Here, the units of analysis were (a) the relationships among individuals as stakeholders at each school site, (b) the practices among institutional units - departments at each school site, and (c) the relationships among stakeholders and departments across institutions. Table 2 illustrates the kinds of collaboration identified for this Partnership.

Collaboration has also been classified according to the degree or level of involvement (Sanders, 2006). Complex partnerships require “multidimensional exchange, high levels of interaction, and extensive planning and coordination” (p. 8). In this Partnership, the high level of collaboration was evident among high school stakeholders and in their outreach to the college; however, the community college tenured instructors and counselors did not reciprocate this level of outreach. The following sections provide a detailed description of the collaboration at all levels starting with English instructors at each institution, then across departments at each institution, and then across institutions.
Table 2

Partnership’s Kinds of Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of Collaboration</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between instructors at each school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between departments at each school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English Department and Administration</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>• English Department Chair and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• English and Counseling Departments</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>• Counseling Department and English Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between institutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Active outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Less outreach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collaboration at the high school between English instructors.** High school instructors were actively involved in the implementation of the ERWC curriculum. Six of the six instructors indicated a high level of involvement by either attending the professional development, teaching the course or by being department chairs and leading the implementation. Four of the six instructors viewed the curriculum favorably and felt the implementation was successful. The two others were undecided about the implementation. Presented subsequently are the findings from the two primary collaborations: instructors’ training in the ERWC training and the implementation of the curriculum.

**ERWC professional development for all high school instructors.** Seven high school instructors were trained in the new ERWC curriculum. Six of the seven ERWC instructors stated that the training gave them knowledge of the new curriculum and brought consistency to teaching the course: for example, after the training instructors formed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which allowed them to discuss ERWC in greater detail. One instructor noted, “The partnership also gave us an opportunity to meet by grade levels in PLCs, and that
helped establish rigor at all levels.” They felt that they previously had not had many opportunities to communicate across grade levels, but the training and the meetings that followed helped streamline instruction within grade levels and differentiate instruction because in the PLC teachers had students with different writing abilities. One instructor felt there were not enough post-training meetings and opportunities to jointly discuss topics. “We have all these other things. We haven’t really had a chance to discuss, like ‘What do you think of ERWC?’” Three instructors stated feeling overwhelmed by the department’s implementation of the new curriculum.

In spite of teachers’ positive views of the ERWC training, two felt the implementation of ERWC was challenging and chaotic. One described the implementation this way,

We just rolled it through, so I think that within the classroom teachers have had to adjust, and they also had to adjust to putting it together with the senior projects. Do I think that it has been worth it? Yes. Do I think that you will talk to teachers that will talk about some of the struggles? I also think that’s true.

Another lead instructor noted that there simply was not an easy way to implement a curriculum; it was a significant undertaking and “mistakes were going to happen” referring to the ERWC scheduling problems they had had before implementation.

**ERWC: From nothing to an English curriculum for all 12th graders.** In 2015, the high school required all high school seniors to enroll in either ERWC or AP English. Twelve of the 16 Partnership members spoke proudly of strategies developed by the Partnership and the hard work they had invested over 3 years in the program; they felt the teamwork and leadership were both top down and from the ground up. One instructor stated that choosing ERWC “made sense” because (a) it allowed for waving of their placement test, (b) was an approved A-G course, and (c) incorporated the California CCSS. Another instructor noted that ERWC had brought “consistency to our classes and expectations.” The first year of collaboration was focused on
professional development, the second year on piloting the curriculum with two classes, and the third year on scaling up the curriculum to incorporate all English classes that were not AP English courses, each year training more instructors and including them in the Partnership.

One of the benefits of the collaboration is the streamlining of the high school department’s instruction in rhetorical devices across grade levels. Because of the implementation of ERWC, instructors were able to work across grade levels to align ERWC with what was being taught in other grade levels. One instructor noted, “We meet a lot at all different levels to try and communicate and share information that’s necessary for the benefit of our students.” Four of the six instructors felt the collaboration allowed for beneficial self-reflection about their teaching of grammar and rhetoric, what non-fiction should be taught, and how ERWC could be better aligned to the Senior Projects.

Four instructors remonstrated about how busy they were and how challenging it can be to engage in the Partnership. All high school instructors mentioned involvement in activities other than ERWC and the Senior Projects, such as a WASC evaluation, a media partnership, AP classes, journalism classes, and developing a middle school partnership, as well as having to attend Restorative Justice meetings. Complicating these time demands, four of the six instructors recognized that developing a relationship was a “process” of identifying the key players in each school and “demystifying” preconceptions each institution had of the other institution.

**Tenured community college instructors did not participate in the collaboration.**

Unlike the high level of collaboration at the high school, tenured community college instructors were not involved in the planning and/or coordination of programs within the department during the first 3 years of the Partnership. The absence of tenured instructors’ involvement caused a setback for the Partnership since tenured instructors generally teach more
classes, spend more time on campus, have greater access to professional development, and have more control in scheduling than adjuncts (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). The involvement of tenured faculty, therefore, would be crucial in a partnership creating and implementing academic interventions for students.

However, at this college, Partnership involvement was limited to the English Department Chair whose role in this regard was more administrative than instructional. Particularly missing was tenured instructors’ collaboration on how to assist students academically once they transferred into college English courses or other kinds of support services that may have been offered to students, such as a first-year orientation. In a written statement, tenured instructors attributed students’ need for remediation “to their secondary educational experiences and/or their history as language learners.” The quote suggests that the English department did not see the problem of students getting stuck in remedial education as “their” problem. The position paper identified the relationship with the high school as a “dialogue” rather than a partnership, even though the Partnership had already been in existence for 3 years.

Tenured instructors felt current acceleration models reduced the number of courses taught at the community college, a serious issue for a department already facing low enrollment. While tenured instructors did attend some inter-institutional meetings, only the community college English department chair participated in the ERWC training. Tenured instructors did not participate in the co-assessment of the high school students’ essay, nor did a tenured instructor teach the English 101 class with ERWC students. And while tenured instructors attended three inter-institutional meetings, they were not consistent in their attendance. They did, at the end of the third year, visit high school classrooms but did not provide feedback as to their visits. As stated in a position paper dated October 16th, 2016, tenured instructors expressed concern that
“poorly designed acceleration models speak more for the state’s covert desire to reduce the budget for developmental instruction.” They stated that acceleration should only be implemented “if additional hours and units are appended to the original course.” They further stated that decisions regarding placement and curriculum changes should originate from faculty expertise and not from the mandates from the district or the state.

**Community college counselors did not participate in the partnership.** Also missing from active participation in the partnership were the community college counselors. Two of the four students interviewed stated that they felt they needed more counseling. One student stated that she did not really understand what she was getting into and felt nervous about whether she was in fact enrolled in the course. Not having a community college counselor actively involved in the Partnership created problems with scheduling campus visits, enrolling students, and tracking students once they were at the college. As a result of this gap, in the second year, the college English Department Chair and the Dean counseled students and accessed data. Late in the third year of this Partnership, a counselor was hired at the community college to offer guidance counseling to first year students. Absent counselors, a great deal of the work was left to the English Department Chair and the Academic Dean.

**Collaboration at the college between the administration (community college Dean) and the English department chair.** The intra-institutional collaboration served to temporarily strengthen ties at the community college between the English Chair and the Dean of Academic Affairs, who worked closely to plan inter-campus events, such as organizing an event at the high school where community college alumni spoke to seniors at the high school campus and answered questioned about college and transferring to a 4-year university. The Dean authorized several Partnership activities such as student campus visits, scheduling assessments, and
approving payment for instructors to grade high school students’ essays. In the absence of clear District policy, the Chair and the Dean agreed to waive the placement test and increase support services. In the first and second year of implementation, the Dean and English Department Chair were in constant communication, sometimes meeting weekly to determine what the community college could do to facilitate the enrollment and placement of ERWC high school graduates. The promotion of the dean and his leaving the community college in the summer of the second year of implementation left a significant gap in leadership for the Partnership at the community college.

Table 3

List of Community College Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community College Stakeholder</th>
<th>Role in the Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Department Chair</td>
<td>Lead contact person for the Partnership. Worked closely with the dean and the facilitator. Involved in all aspects of the partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>Lead contact person for the Partnership for the first two years. Worked closely with the high school counselor to lend student support services and provided funds for field trips, books and student waivers. Left in the fall of the third year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Was not involved the first three years of the Partnership. At the time of this research, she had been assigned all First Year Experience students but had not joined the Partnership as an active stakeholder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Approved and supported the Partnership but deferred to the chair and the dean for programmatic implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Director</td>
<td>Initially was recruited by the facilitator but after he left did not become an active participant in the Partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One adjunct instructor</td>
<td>Taught the ERWC summer course and gave feedback at an inter-institutional meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two adjunct instructors</td>
<td>Normed and scored high school students’ essays. They did not participate, otherwise, in the Partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five tenured professors</td>
<td>Attended yearly inter-institutional meetings. Two of the five visited high school classes. At the time of this research, they had not given feedback at an inter-institutional meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collaboration between departments at the high school: High school counselor and ERWC instructor’s development of module #1. Two high school instructors and the high school counselor had the opportunity to collaborate and expand one ERWC module titled “What’s Next? Thinking About Life After High School.” This collaboration served to strengthen the relationship between the English department and the counseling department and improved the college center’s ability to serve students. The module includes readings where students must “confront” post-high school choices, such as school and work alternatives and how to prepare for the future. The objective is to make students more familiar with college and career choices through exposure to the high school college center. Two instructors met with the college counselor to create activities that would make readings more relevant to students’ understanding of the college application process and increase access to the high school’s college center. Three instructors stated that working with the counselors resulted in increased students’ awareness and accessibility to the college center. One instructor noted,

We created a kind of checklist of what needs to be done because there is that lesson on life after college, which really lends itself to working with a college counselor because they go to the college center and there they do research on college, and actually many things they didn’t know about colleges because everyone talks about ‘oh, you are going to college.’ And then there are the practical things. How much is it going to cost? How do you look for things? Where do you compare? Where do you look for money? And yes, they’ve done that before in an employment center, but it seems now it’s more streamlined.

Working with the counselor and the college center gave students a direct application to what they were learning in the classroom. The high school instructor noted that working with the counselor expanded students’ access to the high school college center and taking the college placement test, the ACCUPLACER, for practice at the high school. It gave students a better idea of what to expect at the end of the year if they had to take the test again. Meeting regularly with the instructors also helped the counselor keep students more informed about what the college
center offered. Students benefited from the counselor and teacher collaboration because they got credit for their classroom assignment and, at the same time, learned more about what the college center had to offer them, including how to schedule visits to the community college campus.

**Cross-institutional instructors’ collaboration included regular meetings, co-assessments, facilitating students support services, and classroom observations.** Instructor collaboration included (1) meetings, (2) co-grading of essays, and (3) cross-institutional classroom visits. At Partnership meetings, there were in-depth conversations about college textbooks, practice placement assessments, students’ grammar and research skills, and students’ writing strengths and weaknesses. Five out of nine instructors and three out of five administrators stated that they were able to freely exchange information on curriculum and instructional strategies, and to identify common goals at these meetings. At one meeting, college instructors stated their expectations from college English students and shared syllabi with the high school instructors.

High school instructors also noted the necessity to spend more time on writing and focus on the length of essays that students are writing. My classroom observations confirmed that reading activities (including vocabulary building and annotation exercises) rather than writing activities dominated class time. However, college English is a composition class where the focus is on writing expository and persuasive essays with less emphasis on personal narratives. One instructor stated that in ninth and 10th grade, there is a lot of reflective writing and personal writing, and “it’s not until junior year that you really get into some expository writing. Then senior year is their last chance.” Neither writing exercises observed in high school classrooms reflected the more complex writing assignments required of students in a college English class.
The component of the ERWC class that more closely reflected a college composition course was the Senior Project, which required students to identify an issue they felt was important and then dedicate 20 hours to addressing/researching it. Students then wrote a research paper and prepared a PowerPoint presentation. This is more typical an assignment of a college English class. The researcher observed six Senior Project presentations, a 2-hour event that demonstrated students’ critical thinking on topics, such as a 7-minute student PowerPoint presentation on the effects of pollution on local beaches, which included graphs showing how trash can make its way to beaches and how non-recyclable trash creates dumps in the ocean. This student argued for greater awareness of the toxicity of non-biodegradable trash.

One high school Partnership instructor described the nature of the collaboration at these meetings:

So in addition to this collaboration, which were always constructive, and on both sides there was always the question, “What else could we do?” …I would say in addition to these regular meetings, more or less regular, what was useful was our feeling that we have partners who understands where our students come from.

To this instructor and three others, it was important to “understand” that students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and are predominantly first-generation students. A 2013 WASC Accreditation on this high school reported that minorities made up 87% of the student body, 78.8% received free or reduced lunch, and approximately 50% were English language learners.

All nine instructors interviewed voiced their concern that they find alternative ways to help their students succeed in college. One instructor stated, “We have a lot of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and if we don’t help them build the bridge between high school and the community college or any other university, sometimes they don’t try to build it themselves.” This researcher’s high school classroom observations of three classes and the
Senior Project Presentations indicated that approximately 90% of students were Latinos, along with a small percentage of Armenian and African-American students.

Two of the six high school instructors stated they would have preferred to meet and discuss the implementation of the new curriculum more often, especially regarding which modules to teach and how to combine ERWC with the Senior Projects. Arranging to meet more frequently posed challenges at both sites. At a joint meeting, the high school principal explained that the high cost of substitutes and the disruption to classroom instruction precluded ERWC instructors from attending many inter-institutional meetings. Stakeholders advised that although email and text communication helped to schedule meetings, the agendas of those meetings were best served by meeting face-to-face, which made strategizing easier.

The timing of trainings and meetings was a recurrent problem with instructors. The ERWC training, for example, was instituted before instructors had any knowledge of the curriculum. Two instructors stated that this prevented in-depth discussions of the curriculum during the training since they did not know what to inquire. Questions surfaced after the training about how many modules should be taught in one semester and how many activities from each module should be taught. One community college instructor reported that it would have been better if he had attended more inter-institutional meetings before teaching the English 101 course with ERWC students and would allow “everyone to be on the same page.” Another community college instructor reported the importance of more meetings. He pointed out that teaching is not only about talking or explaining but also about listening. Two interviewees were not hesitant to state that talk was “cheap” and that the focus of the Partnership should be on getting things done.

Certainly, listening was a crucial component of the collaboration since a good part of the first 2 years focused on exchanging information. At two inter-institutional meetings, high school
instructors shared the California CCSS, which define English Language Arts content and skills required for successful entry-level college bearing classes and that promote collaboration to align curriculum.

Inter-institutional collaboration addressed misinformation and misconception across institutions. One high school instructor related that a community college instructor approached her about the high school’s AP courses. She inquired how it was possible that students who were in AP classes could not pass their college English classes. The high school instructor stated,

There wasn’t recognition that all of our students who want to be AP students are AP students. And that some of these students were getting Ds in our classes, and that a D was a passing grade and the expectation or understanding of what the conditions were, weren’t very clear. I think the clarification has been very useful.

Without a doubt, understanding the policies of the partnering institutions is necessary to building respectful relationship (Horowitz & the California Academic Partnership Program, 2005). Speaking openly about the realities of what is actually happening allows instructors to avoid the blame game. Allowing high school instructors to explain to community college instructors about high school students self-designating themselves as AP students clarifies the community college instructors’ confusion about students’ abilities and can both encourage understanding the necessities of remedial English and enable the community college instructors to be more effective and sympathetic.

One result of the inter-institutional collaboration was that instructors had the opportunity to visit each other’s classrooms, which allowed them to better understand how the curriculum was taught. One high school instructor explained that what impressed her most about the community college classroom visits was seeing instructors teach the same English Composition class differently. The “political” nature of one college lesson particularly caught her attention and caused her to rethink her own curriculum.
The CCSS encourages students to think independently, to build on others’ ideas and to “articulate their own ideas” (California Common Core State Standards, 2015, p. 5). ERWC modules also encouraged students to form their own opinions on topics such as the rhetoric of the op ed page, racial profiling, and juvenile justice. Classroom observations by community college instructors who seldom venture into high school classes give them the opportunity to learn about the new Common Core Standards and give feedback about how these standards should be implemented. In that regard, the English Department chair noted that:

If the students take the ERWC course, we know that it is taught the way the curriculum was developed for people to teach, then they will have met the goal’s objectives for our English 97 and English 28 courses which are the courses that lead to English 101. Therefore, if they complete all that and pass them with a C or better, just like our students at LACC, then they are qualified for our 101 classes.

Most importantly, two high school instructors found such observations helpful because they had the opportunity to see college instructors teach. Such interactive observations would not have occurred without the Partnership and, as one teacher noted, was an indication that the Partnership was evolving.

Inter-institutional classroom visits took place in winter of 2016. Unfortunately, the follow-up meeting had not occurred due to the facilitator’s death, which caused communications to break off and led to miscommunication in scheduling of visits since the high school wanted only a certain number of visits so as to not overwhelm instructors. From a third party perspective, it appeared that the high school principal was trying to “protect” her instructors from too many observation sessions. A facilitator might have been able to avoid this kind of miscommunication, especially as it was reflected in instructors on both sides guarding their time.

**High school counselor and community college dean collaboration.** The high school counselor and the community college dean worked together to help high school seniors complete
college applications and facilitate student visits to the community college campus. The

counselor identified students and arranged the meetings at the high school; the dean brought the
applications and provided guidance for filling out applications. He brought the applications to
the registrar’s office and had them processed. Having never been the practice in the past, these
new procedures were practical and effective.

Without a community college counselor component in the “core” Partnership team, there
had been a large gap in the Partnership’s ability to give students support services as they
transitioned to the community college. The community college has attempted to address this
counseling gap by hiring a full time First Year Enrollment (FYE) counselor to work with first
year students and college instructors. The counselor stated that she intends to develop further
support services by holding orientation sessions and having students meet one-on-one with her.
The FYE counselor stated that although she intended to work directly with students and
instructors who were willing to teach first year courses, she and her small staff could not address
this problem alone. Consequently, students who require more academic and support services do
not receive them because funds are not earmarked appropriately. In this regard, the FYE
counselor pointed out the necessity also for developmental services for students who are
disruptive in class and do not understand what is expected from them in college; one counselor
may not likely be able to solve the problem. Studies demonstrate that community colleges are
understaffed in regard to counselors and that students may see counselors once during their stay,
if at all (Fowler & Luna, 2009).
Research Question #2: What Kinds of Collaboration or Collaborative Leadership Are Necessary for Implementing and Developing a Partnership of this Kind?

Collaborative leaders share a mutual belief in working together for the common good and creating democratic communities in which power is shared (Kochen & Reed, 2005). They offer leadership that is concurrent, collective, and compassionate (Raelin, 2005) are involved in the distribution of power (Kochen & Reed, 2005; Raelin, 2005) and create capacity for new leadership (Davison et al., 2013). In a study of the best practices of high school partnerships at underachieving California schools, researchers found that the single most successful strategy to improve student learning was teachers working together to strengthen curriculum and instruction (Horowitz & the California Academic Partnership Program, 2005). The two strongest examples of collaborative leadership in this Partnership were of the Partnership’s facilitator and the high school instructors, both of which are described subsequently.

The facilitator. The facilitator fostered new relationships by meeting individually and in small groups with each institution’s team members. He recruited new members, networked on behalf of the Partnership, and helped build trust. One stakeholder described him as “persistent and focused.” Another described him as committed to overcoming obstacles and resistance to the creation of this partnership. Three instructors and two administrators spoke about his encouraging them to fulfill leadership roles. He was also a transformational leader in that he was charismatic and had a strong connection to the greater purpose of a partnership (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Two high school instructors talked about his willingness to talk to students, and his insistence to “think about what the students need.” Seven stakeholders interviewed stated that he had inspired them to engage in the Partnership.
The process of recruiting stakeholders at the community college was not easy for the facilitator since he was an outsider and was unfamiliar with how the community college system worked. For example, early on in the Partnership he recruited a retired tenured instructor, whom he had mistaken as the English department chair, to be a “lead” Partnership contact person, an error that made it difficult to recruit the real department chair later. While he was constantly trying to recruit new Partnership stakeholders, he had difficulty identifying individuals willing to participate in the Partnership. Recruiting at the community college was contentious because some instructors felt that remediation was not a community college problem; it was the problem of the high school that had inadequately prepared students for college level courses. Consequently, some community college instructors felt the need for a large number of remedial courses was justified. In one regard, being an outsider served the facilitator in that he was well known as an expert in creating partnerships, having been a key stakeholder in a highly successful partnership, and, therefore, stakeholders wanted to work with him.

Partnership stakeholder turnover was also a challenge; for example, the facilitator and the community college dean left the Partnership in the fall of the partnership’s second year. These two individuals met regularly to plan and shared an enthusiasm for follow through. Their presence was all the more important because the Partnership lacked the participation of the community college counselor and of tenured instructors. Because the facilitator and the dean were in effect “wearing several hats”, their leaving was a significant loss to the partnership. The community college department chair was essentially left alone to maintain the partnership, a task she felt overwhelming. With key members gone, two high school instructors took the initiative to contact the community college department chair to continue the partnership.
**High school teacher led implementation.** Partnership members were involved in shared leadership. Four of the six high school instructor participants identified themselves as like-minded professionals working for the common good of students. To differing degrees, all felt that members of the Partnership had exhibited leadership skills. Five out of six instructors stated that they valued the collaboration over the past 3 years. One instructor said of the core members of the Partnership:

> We’ve had a tremendous success with this so far. We’ve got the right people. We’ve got the right attitude. We’ve got the right work ethic. We’ve got the right leadership in our school for it. We’ve got the right mix of everything. We’re going to keep going, and any little part I can play, I promised them I’ll play any part I can because my heart is in this. It’s not just a job for me.

One common characteristic of the high school stakeholders is that they spoke of the Partnership with enthusiasm and optimism. Eight of them attributed at least one improvement to the department and/or school because of the Partnership. It was clear that the goal of helping students was worthwhile and motivating for them. Students were visibly engaged in the readings and assignments during two of three classroom observations and at the senior project presentations. In one, students reenacted a scene from a novel with difficult themes. Instructors were asked to implement a curriculum that met new Common Core standards. The curriculum was more challenging than what students were used to, but instructors showed commitment and enthusiasm to make the scenario work. In the other, the instructor probed students’ responses for greater analysis, repeated key vocabulary terms, and engaged in a dialogue with several students. This situation also demonstrated the instructor’s commitment to helping the students improve their English skills.
The high school instructors showed strong leadership. Five of the seven instructors felt that they had a chance to lead in this partnership. They used words such as “pioneered” and “boots-on-the-ground” to describe their role in the partnership. Another stated,

There are those of us who want to be in on things and know what’s happening. And I do feel that I had the opportunity to lead. Particularly that first and second year – a lot of professional development and a lot of getting involved in learning about ERWC and making sure people were supported.

The same instructor noted, “I have had the ability to respectfully interact between staff and administration and I think to help smooth things in some ways, which is leadership.”

Four of the six instructors felt the implementation of this new curriculum challenged them to reflect on their teaching practices and their department’s overall mission. Moreover, instructors demonstrated bottom-up leadership in that they took charge of the ERWC implementation by self-assessing progress, discussing challenges, and creating strategies to resolve them. One administrator stated that he did not need to be present at department meetings since instructors were succeeding in the implementation on their own.

Two instructors who did not feel they were leaders explained that this was their choice because they had other projects to which they were committed. One explained, “I have a lot of things on the burner… and so I’m spread thin.” The other felt that he had not had a chance to lead because he took on “leadership roles in other ways.” Like these two high school instructors, the community college instructor said that his ability to lead was limited to the classroom. Although he was the instructor chosen to teach the ERWC summer students, he was not asked to observe high school classes, nor was he involved in the assessment of the practice essays. He participated in one inter-institutional meeting. As an adjunct instructor, he felt limited in his ability to participate in the partnership.
An example of collaborative leadership: Looking at the data. In the first year of the Partnership, stakeholders from both institutions gathered to review data, which indicated that 62 students of the 70, 88.5%, of students who enrolled and took placement tests were placed in remedial courses. The Dean presented these statistics to stakeholders and challenged them to do something about them. He stated, “I think that started the conversation.” Two high school Partnership members recalled that they were shocked at these high remediation rates, and that the data motivated them to do something about it. One high school instructor said that looking at the numbers helped him to expand his focus on students’ performance beyond high school.

The information presented in Table 2 was the data provided to the stakeholders at their first inter-institutional meeting. It indicates that, while the number of students enrolling from the high school into the community college had increased (37 to 70), the percentage of students placing in English 101 did not improve significantly (8.3% to 11.4%); most entering students continued to place in English 28 (N=33; 47.1%) , which is a remedial course, one level below English 101. Based on the four students interviewed, it was evident that students did not find anything wrong with being placed in English 28. In fact, one student pointed out that the norm was English 28, not English 101, and it was quite unusual for a student to place directly into English 101. No one she knew from her class had placed directly in English 101, which exemplified how entrenched the culture of remediation was at the community college. The partnership, therefore, faced not only the obstacles of implementation but also the wider culture of underachievement at the community college. In spite of these alarming statistics, the inaction of the community college English faculty suggests their unwillingness to take ownership of the problem.
Table 4

*Placement of Students From the High Schools in College English Courses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Fall 2012</th>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English 101</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 28, Remedial</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 21, Remedial</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 20, Remedial</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tested</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not Tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question #3: If At All, What Do Student Stakeholders Say Most Helped Them Become College Ready in English as a Result of Participation in this Partnership?**

According to both community college and high school stakeholders, the most successful aspect of the partnership was the implementation of the ERWC curriculum, the hiring of the facilitator, co-assessment of high school senior essays and the direct placement of ERWC students in the English 101 course. High school instructors identified the ERWC professional development, the waiving of the placement test and the cross-institutional classroom observations as key in helping their students become ready for English 101. Six of the seven strategies are summarized in Table 1 Summary of Partnership Successes on page 63. Below is a description of what student stakeholders stated was most effective for them.

Two former ERWC students who were placed directly in English 101 and two students who had not taken ERWC and had been placed in remedial English were interviewed. All four students had graduated from the high school the previous year.
Two students who were placed directly in English 101 stated that being placed in English 101 accelerated their progress through college. Both passed the English 101 course and took the next level of English, English 102, the following quarter. Each student was in good academic standing and was planning to transfer to a 4-year university after their expected two-year completion at community college. When asked about their experience in the class, these two students stated that they felt relieved that they had passed the course and, in retrospect, would have liked being better informed of the intensive nature of a 5-week summer course. Although they felt somewhat overwhelmed by the experience, neither student found the class requirements excessively difficult. One stated,

The reading wasn’t hard. The grammar wasn’t that hard. It was just the amount of work. We had more than five essays in a couple of weeks. Every other day we had to do another essay. It was like, “Whoa!” Other than that, it was pretty good.

The other student had a similar opinion of her college English class. “I think it was not quite difficult for me. I did the work. I asked for help.” These students stated that their instructor spent a good amount of time explaining grammar (see bottom of p.7), which they felt they needed. “It’s definitely not that much. It’s like riding a bike without training wheels.” When interviewed, the summer English 101 instructor recommended that students not take the 5-week course right after graduation, and he felt that the students needed more orientation into college life. With a less intense class load and more guidance counseling, he felt that students would have done even better.

Both students who were placed directly in English 101 felt they benefited by being accelerated. One student stated, “It was good for me even though it was hard for me. I mean I passed, and… I retained the information. I’m in English 2 right now, and the stuff that I learned from the first class is helping me.” In his interview, the instructor described the out-of-
classroom challenges of some of the students; for example, one student did not have Internet access, missed class because she had to stay with her grandmother, and, as a result, failed to turn in an essay. Interestingly, this student would have been placed in remedial English—she had tested into English 28—but because of the Partnership she was able to place directly into college English. She stated, “I placed one level below at [the college]…but then they placed me…straight into English 101. I did pass, so I’m glad I wasn’t placed lower.” She stated that her grades were “all right.” In all, at the time of her interview, this student had received college grades of “one A, two Bs, and two Cs,” and appeared to really want to continue her education at a 4-year university.

Both students felt that taking the ERWC in their senior year in high school helped them prepare for English 101. According to these two students, the most useful experience was working on their senior project. They also stated that learning research skills in ERWC had prepared them for their college papers. One student stated, “The [high school] teacher helped us find the proper sources, which was hard for me because I didn’t know if it was a good source or not.” Both students recommended that future community college students do more writing in their classes to better prepare themselves for their college English course. One student explained,

We could have done more writing because [in ERWC] we did a lot of reading and then we would write a little reflection on it, but it wouldn’t necessarily be an essay…I never really was able to do pages of writing…[and] that’s what I had to do every day. I had to write lots of pages. I feel like if they added more of that, that might help.

After the co-assessment meeting and inter-institutional meetings, the high school instructors seemed to understand that in college English classes, essay writing was much more demanding, and that they had to increase the amount that students had to write in ERWC.

In spite of Partnership members intervening on their behalf, one of the two students had enrollment problems.
It was a problem because I wasn’t registered until after 3 weeks. I kept calling one of the people who were in charge of it, and they finally fixed it, but I was always thinking, “What if this doesn’t count because I am not registered?”

The person who finally fixed the problem was not a counselor but the Partnership facilitator.

Neither of the English 101 students saw a counselor at the community college, something that might have given them better direction. The other two students had seen the first-year college counselor and said they were satisfied with the academic counseling they received.

Both former ERWC students mentioned how important the tuition and book waivers were to them. The Dean and English Department Chair had collaborated to get these students these special waivers. The student said,

It was free for us, basically, and I think that was a really good opportunity to get over the summer. I’m already going to have my last English class. I think that’s really helpful for the [high school students] who took advantage of it, and I think maybe more students should take advantage of it.

This student understood how quickly she had accelerated in the college system. She understood that most students take English 28, and if they do not pass the course, can delay their progression, for, at least two quarters. Her placement in English 101 greatly benefited her progress. If this Partnership could scale up their program, there is the potential for many more students to enter a 4-year university more rapidly.

The two other students interviewed for this research did not accelerate into college English and were placed in remedial English. They transferred into the college through the typical route of being placed in English 28, one class before English 101 and in English 97, two courses before English 101.

The English 97 student was particularly disappointed with the instruction he received in high school. He felt that he had made the wrong decision by dropping a high school class he felt was too difficult for him. A business major, he indicated that he had entered high school as an
ESL level-four student and was placed in English 97. He stated he was satisfied with the quality of his college education. He said that he had received counseling in high school, and that his mother was attending the community college, which had prevented him from feeling too lost. As an English 97 student he had been set back at least two quarters. Although he was completely orally fluent in English, he stated that his being an English as a second language learner had set him back.

The English 28 student interviewed for this research had successfully completed the course with a B. She stated that she did not have difficulties in the class. The workload was manageable, and she was doing well in her current English 101 class. She had also received counseling services from the high school college counselor, which had really helped her. She said she felt comfortable at the college and was not sure that going directly into English 101 would have been a good idea for her. “It’s hard to say. I think I’m doing ok now.” She felt that the high school had prepared her well and did not believe that being placed in English 28 was a problem.

**Summary of Findings**

There were four major findings from the study:

1. Five kinds of collaboration were necessary for the implementation of this partnership between the high school and the community college.
   
a. Instructors from both the English departments at each institution met to discuss and develop curriculum and instructional strategies

b. Collaboration between the community college dean and the high school counselor addressed student support services across institutions
c. At the high school, instructional collaboration occurred among the English instructors who attended the ERWC training and piloted the ERWC curriculum.

d. The high school English instructors and counselor collaborated to develop the ERWC Module #1 (titled “What’s Next? Thinking About Life After High School,”) which provided reading and writing activities to help students think critically about college options.

e. At the community college, collaboration between the dean and the English department chair addressed developing strategies to improve support services for students who were enrolling at the college from the high school. Such collaboration was necessary as it established concurrent validity and addressed misconceptions between stakeholders at the respective institutions.

2. Although the primary objective was implementing ERWC, corollary strategies included the co-proctoring and assessment of student essays to monitor students’ progress and instructor observations of classes across institutions. At least nine high school instructors and the community college department chairs attended ERWC trainings. Strategies that offered support services to students focused on seniors filling out a community college application while still in high school and fostering visits to the community college campus before enrolling. Four students in the pilot ERWC course enrolled in college English 101. All tuition and book costs were waived for them.

3. Three of the four ERWC students placed directly into English 101 passed the class. Two of the four students interviewed felt their ERWC classes prepared them for their
college writing course, but they felt they should have been advised of the rigor of a 5-week summer English course.

4. This study found that the Partnership promoted collaborative leadership by encouraging teacher leaders and administrators to make operational decisions together that benefited the Partnership and utilize data to develop strategies.

The two primary interventions for this Partnership were (a) the professional development of all high school instructors of the ERWC curriculum and (b) the implementation of the ERWC curriculum in the second and third year of the Partnership. Stakeholders felt strongly that the partnership had evolved and had shown strong collaboration and collaborative leadership. Stakeholders worked together across institutions to become familiar with each other’s curricula and instructional styles. At the high school, a team of ERWC instructors successfully implemented the new curriculum to high school seniors in a pilot program and then, in the third year, scaled up the program to include the entire English Department at the high school. One ERWC module, which focused on life after high school, was developed further with the collaboration of the high school instructors and the high school college and career counselor.

Administrators across institutions collaborated to increase student support services including campus visits, help with enrollment, and other student support services. In spite of the success of the Partnership’s implementation, the involvement of the tenured community college faculty and the counselors was missing and caused significant challenges for the stakeholders. Several stakeholders—notably the facilitator, the community college Dean and the English Department Chair—stepped in to address the gap created by the tenured faculty and counselors’ absence. From the pilot program, four ERWC students took and passed English 101. These two students felt the ERWC had helped them. Two other students interviewed for this research had not taken
the ERWC and had gone through the traditional route of remedial English. They stated that were
unaware of the advantages of acceleration and did not think that being placed in English 28 was
detrimental to them. In fact, they believed that being placed in English 28 was the norm for
students graduating from their school.

**Significance of Study**

The significance of this case study is the in-depth description provided on the
implementation of a K-16 Partnership, a kind of partnership for which there is little research.
This case study provides valuable information for educational leaders interested in creating a
similar kind of high school/community college collaboration. It provides a list of strategies,
which allowed the Partnership to be successfully implemented and details stakeholders’
assessments of what they felt were the most effective strategies, describing not only what these
strategies were, but also how these strategies were implemented. It also details the kinds of
collaborative leadership demonstrated by stakeholders and identifies key roles needed for
successful collaboration.
CHAPTER FIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS

This research used a case-study method to understand how a community college partnership addressed the problem of remediation. Five studies (Barnett et al., 2012; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Jarsky et al., 2009; Wang & Hodara, 2014; Valadez & Snyder, 2006) discussed the broad strengths and challenges of partnerships of this kind; however, this study focused on one partnership’s implementation highlighting specific challenges and strengths of a community college partnership.

The findings underscore the importance of identifying counterparts willing to engage in high levels of collaboration (Sanders, 2006). In this Partnership, although administrators from both schools wholeheartedly supported the Partnership, community college counselors and tenured instructors did not. This resistance caused problems with producing data, developing student support services, and providing the high school instructors with feedback. Time and energy of the facilitator and administrators were needed to circumvent challenges caused by reluctant participants. The high school would have been better served by finding a community college English and counseling department willing to engage in the “high levels of interaction” and “extensive planning and coordination” (Sanders, 2006, p. 8) required of a community college partnership. In spite of this formidable challenge, the partnership had its successes, including effective professional development for high school instructors and the implementation of a new curriculum. What follows are detailed recommendations, the limitations of this study, and the researcher’s reflections.
Recommendation #1: Build on Successes that Include the Training of High School Instructors in ERWC and the Pilot Implementation of the ERWC Curriculum

Partnership members who were involved directly in implementing the curriculum identified inter-institutional meetings, professional development, and the implementation of ERWC as most beneficial elements of the program. None of the high school instructors believed the content of ERWC was exceptional. However, they did think that a yearlong mandatory English course was a significant advancement. It addressed a serious gap in students’ high school course offerings, since prior to ERWC, the high school had not required 12th grade English. Further, high school instructors felt the inter-institutional meetings allowed them to receive valuable information from the community college chair about college English assessments and curriculum. All Partnership members who attended the ERWC training also believed that the professional development helped them implement the curriculum because it exposed them to the curriculum before they had to teach it, gave them an opportunity to ask the trainer questions about it, and provided the opportunity to work in groups to familiarize themselves with the curriculum. For example, one instructor commented on the usefulness of the materials given to her at the workshop, such as graphic organizers and scaffolding lessons, which she frequently used in her ERWC classes and other non-ERWC classes as well. Two instructors also mentioned that the ERWC professional training also allowed them to create professional learning communities, which helped them collaborate and align the curriculum within their department. One instructor noted that the learning communities, which were organized by grade levels, allowed instructors from different academies to streamline their instruction and also develop lessons. She stated that instructors had not had many opportunities to meet by grade level and, as department chair, found the learning communities helped the Department overall.
All ERWC instructors were sent to the training, which helped ensure the quality and consistency of it being taught in the high school English department. One instructor noted that at the end of the year, because of the ERWC training and instructors’ own professional development in the learning communities, she felt students were writing more effective senior project essays.

Interestingly, although this study did not involve an evaluation of the ERWC, high school instructors spoke positively about implementing the curriculum. One instructor described ERWC as being similar to AP English and journalism classes. She noted that students write more, learn to cite sources, and paraphrase; these are “the things that they are going to need to learn for college.” They urged that more writing be done earlier to prepare students for the rigor of persuasive essay writing. Students confirmed that they felt well-prepared for college English after having taken the high school ERWC course; however, they volunteered that more essay writing would have given them a better idea of the quantity and quality of work required in English 101. They were unaware that college English classes typically require four to five expository and persuasive essays per quarter. This response suggests that ERWC students should write several essays each semester to become accustomed to the rigorous pace of college English courses.

Students at the community college progressed rapidly after having been placed directly into an English credit course. One student who had originally tested into remedial English passed the ERWC course and was allowed to take English 101. She took English 101 (the university transferable, three-unit course) the summer after high school graduation. The following fall she took English 102 and received a B on her first essay assignment. She felt confident she could pass the course as well. Another student who took ERWC and was placed in English 101 also
passed the transferrable course. She took and passed English 102 in the fall at a different community college.

The other two students interviewed for this research who had not enrolled in high school ERWC were placed in remedial English. One had to take two remedial classes before enrolling in English 101, slowing his progress by 1 year; the other student had to take one remedial class, slowing her progress by one semester. While small in number, these examples demonstrate that this type of partnership can reduce the need for remediation.

Another success was the alignment of the ERWC and community college curriculum. Through the co-grading of essays and inter-institutional meetings, the high school instructors better understood the college English curriculum. Two high school instructors also noted that visiting college classrooms gave them a better sense of English 101 requirements and the way classes were structured. Three high school instructors stated that these activities helped them modify their classroom teaching.

**Recommendation #2: Maintain the Partnership’s Unifying Vision of Ensuring Students’ College Success**

According to Lawson (2013), partnerships allow organizations to look outside of their own institutional problems and focus on students. In this Partnership, high school ERWC instructors focused on improving students’ writing skills so students could succeed in their college English class. For this reason, they valued the feedback from community college instructors on the college writing curriculum. Two of the six high school instructors mentioned misconceptions they had about the college curriculum and practice. While this seemed elementary, knowing how each system functioned was necessary before they could identify and discuss ways in which misconceptions had affected students. This was a necessary step in
aligning the curriculum. High school instructors stated that they felt the exchange had improved their teaching and students’ academic performance for college readiness.

Focusing on students requires instructors to think beyond their classrooms. A Partnership, such as this one, requires high school instructors to prepare students post high school graduation to ensure their college-readiness. An ERWC instructor noted that it was “not just about getting [students] accepted into college” but helping them get ready to succeed in college English. At the college level, it requires the community college instructor to think of the type and quality of his/her students before they reach the college classroom, anticipate the students’ needs, and recognize that community college is probably not the ultimate stop for these students. The English Department Chair stated that it was important to know where the students were coming from, and participating in the ERWC training demystified the curriculum for her. These sentiments encompass what Grubb (2012) refers to as a “whole system” (p.265) approach to reducing community college remediation.

One study of a high school/university partnership found that faculty saw their role of student learning more holistically and felt a heightened responsibility for the education of secondary students; the same study also found that the partnership increased engagement of both high school teachers and their students (Forrest et al., 2012). High school instructors in this partnership clearly experienced a heightened responsibility for students and desire to improve their writing skills. All six high school stakeholders were receptive to feedback. They all felt they held leadership roles, although not necessarily in the Partnership, and were concerned about their students’ college success. This concern prompted them to get involved in the Partnership and other innovations taking place at the high school.
Interestingly, this Partnership also allowed the high school to look within the school and identify areas of growth. After reviewing the high rate of English remediation at the college, high school stakeholders realized how important it was to develop interventions. ERWC provided a way for the high school to address students’ acquisition of college-level writing skills. From the ERWC training, instructors formed learning communities that helped them align curriculum across grades, something that they had not had a chance to do before. This opportunity strengthened the English department. It also strengthened the communication between the English Department and the counseling office, which resulted in the development of the college-readiness module in ERWC.

**Recommendation #3: Ensure Direct Communication about Project Objectives by Community College Instructors and Counselors. Key Members Should Be Identified at the Time of the Partnership’s Establishment**

Partnerships should look for collaborative leadership qualities when recruiting team leaders. These team players should be identified at the onset of the Partnership. Kochen and Reed (2005) named four factors that facilitate or hinder collaborative leadership: (a) coming to consensus on values and purposes, (b) balancing power, (c) dealing with time constraints and persistence, and (d) identifying transcendent leaders who have the ability to build trust and high levels of communication skills. Applying Kochen and Reed’s criteria, Partnership stakeholders reached consensus on the importance of creating a high school-community college pathway. This belief helped stakeholders persist in spite of busy schedules and heavy workloads; however, the Partnership needed team members with high levels of communication and networking skills, as exemplified by the Partnership’s facilitator.
During his tenure, the facilitator would meet in small groups as well as larger inter-institutional groups to identify new Partnership members; for example, he met with the community college honors program advisor to see if there was a way to partner with the honors program. He also met with the high school students’ parents to develop a leadership program for them so they could participate more actively in their children’s college application process. His inclusivity served the purpose of expanding the Partnership and finding resources to sustain it. However, at the time of his departure, the facilitator had not found a community college counselor or tenured English faculty members to become involved in the Partnership. As a result, when students were ready to transfer into the community college, there were no support services to help them in their English 101 class.

These findings demonstrate that the quantity of team members was not as important as having the key members at the time of the Partnership’s implementation. The participation of tenured faculty was crucial because, as implementers of the curriculum, instructors were best situated to identify students’ needs. Counselors also played a pivotal role in providing support services. Four years into the Partnership, the community college still had a team composed mostly of administrators.

Like the English department, the community college counseling office should, as one administrator noted, “Step up.” Without a counselor, the Partnership was not able to codify policies about early enrollment, campus visits, and individual academic and developmental support services. One study found that credit-based transition agreements between high schools and local colleges decrease high school dropout rates through a variety of strategies and activities including counseling and mentoring and college preparation and application assistance (Fowler & Luna, 2009). Another study found that many students make the transition more easily when
exposed to deliberate efforts to prepare students for college and that these experiences instill college attendance expectations, shape students’ ideas about college life, and create beliefs and attitudes about behaviors that lead to college success (Oliver et al., 2010). Credit-based transition agreements and other deliberate efforts at establishing policies must begin in the counseling department. During the third year of the partnership’s implementation, the community college hired a full time counselor/program coordinator for first year students. The following year the counselor and her staff planned to implement mandatory orientation sessions for students. These orientations would review, for example, the differences between high school and college as well as the college’s expectations of students. In addition, the counselor planned to have students take a college study course to further inform students of necessary study skills. Both the orientation sessions and study course are important first steps in delivering support services to community college students.

**Recommendation #4: Continue alignment activities such as the co-assessment of high school student essays, cross-institutional classroom observations, and sharing of information at inter-institutional meetings.**

All instructors, but especially high school instructors, stated that they benefited from several Partnership strategies, which helped them align the ERWC curriculum to the English 101 college composition course. These strategies included co-assessment of high school student essays, cross-institutional observations, sharing of syllabi at inter-institutional meetings, and giving feedback on the performance of ERWC students once they had taken English 101.

High school instructors who participated in the co-assessment of high school student essays stated that they benefited greatly from a mid-term grading session; they felt that jointly norming essays with the community college instructors gave them insight into areas of writing
focused on in English 101. As a result, they were able to return to their classrooms and modify their instruction. Writing issues such as developing a thesis statement, summarizing, critical reading, transitions, using specific evidence, quoting, addressing run-on sentences, fragments and comma splices were addressed during this session. After norming, instructors collectively read each essay and then discussed strengths and weaknesses, finally determining whether the student would be placed in English 28 (remedial English) or English 101 (credit-bearing college composition).

High school instructors who participated in the cross-institutional observations also stated that visiting college classes made them aware of writing issues that they needed to address in their classroom. This experience helped them align their own instruction to what they saw in the classroom. One high school instructor stated that although she was an experienced instructor and had, in fact, taught college English, she had never had the opportunity to observe a college English class. She felt high school instructors needed to know what was taught in college, and this was an effective way for teachers to inform their instruction.

At inter-institutional meetings high school instructors shared their syllabi with college instructors who gave suggestions about how to modify the syllabi to incorporate writing issues that better addressed English 101 course objectives. They also discussed the academic performance of the ERWC students who had been placed in English 101. High school instructors heard from the community college instructor who had taught the ERWC students in the English 101 course. Because the high school instructors had had these students in the semester-long ERWC course and were familiar with their writing abilities, both college and high school instructors were able to have in-depth discussions regarding students’ specific writing weaknesses and how to address them.
Recommendation #5: Partnerships Need the Guidance of a Facilitator

Studies have found partnership facilitators play a key leadership role in establishing communication among stakeholders (Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Jarsky et al., 2009). In this Partnership, the facilitator helped others create and implement strategies. He kept stakeholders focused on student achievement by helping build a unified mission, which studies have identified as crucial to the success of a partnership (Barnett, et al., 2012; Bathgate et al., 2011; Domina & Ruzek, 2012; Wang & Hodara, 2014). The former facilitator, in this instance, modeled leadership by listening, giving feedback, and problem solving. He exhibited a high level of energy and enthusiasm. His involvement in the week-to-week planning of the Partnership was evident throughout the first 2 years of the Partnership. Jarsky et al. (2009) found that strong collaborative leadership requires a balance between prescriptive measures that guide instruction and allowing instructors the freedom to discover what works best for them. One administrator, in this study, referred to his style as “organic” and helpful in avoiding personnel resentment because instructors were being asked to do so much more work. The facilitator was quite vocal at inter-institutional meetings although he did not necessarily facilitate them. In many circumstances, he let Partnership stakeholders lead the discussion. But the facilitator strove to include all stakeholders, even people who were not usually included in Partnership meetings, such as parents and students. It is unknown what would have occurred in the Partnership’s fourth year of implementation if the facilitator had not died. However, since his leadership had so inspired stakeholders’ persistence to the Partnership success, it is plausible that the Partnership would have had more success in achieving greater involvement in developing a pathway if he had lived. This finding emphasizes a facilitator’s role in the effectiveness of a partnership. In this Partnership, the facilitator was the glue that held the inter-institutional pieces
together by seeking ways to develop effective strategies, recruiting team members, and encouraging the high school to scale up the teaching of ERWC. He did so by borrowing best practices from other partnerships, such as the Santa Ana Model, seeking ways to establish student support services at the college, and personally counseling incoming college students.

Recommendation #6: Both Institutions Should Continue to Monitor Students Closely as They Transition from One Institution to Another, which Includes the Enrollment Process, the First Year Orientation, and Counseling Services. Doing so Would Provide Valuable Data for the Partnership

Although the community college only tracked four students, the process offered valuable data for the purposes of knowing the effectiveness of ERWC, understanding the community college enrollment and placement process, and identifying students’ support services needs. Grubb (2013) argued that it was crucial for community colleges to foster cultures of inquiry and evaluation around basic skills education and gather information to discover where students were having the most difficulty. Administrators stated that guiding students from high school to community college informed them of the college-readiness process. Particularly beneficial was the feedback given to high school instructors about the writing abilities of students who were placed in English 101 during the summer. This would not have been possible if the facilitator, the community college English department chair, and the English 101 instructor had not tracked each student’s progress in English 101. Speaking to students allowed administrators to learn about students’ experiences. Administrators stated that these encounters helped them understand the importance of the need for first-year orientation sessions and individual counseling.
Limitations of the Study

As this study was limited by the death of the facilitator, the Partnership hit a regrettable impasse in the third year. The facilitator was an expert in the area of partnerships, having worked on them over a 35-year academic career. At least half of the interviewees spoke at length about his leadership style and his positive approach in developing the Partnership. He believed in fervently assisting students and ensuring the success of the Partnership. He left his imprint on several stakeholders who stated in interviews that they had received insight from his facilitation and felt inspired to follow his style of leadership.

In times of resource scarcity, funding can make or break an intervention. According to the facilitator, the funding model for this Partnership was flawed since it provided grant funds to the high school but not the community college. To an extent, it stands to reason that the collaboration was one-sided. Funding allocation to the community college might incentivize more stakeholders to participate in the Partnership. One report noted that budget constraints have prevented the community college budgets from expanding student support services (The Century Foundation, 2013). In a position paper, instructors claimed that acceleration programs threaten the funding allocated to community college’s remedial classes (p. 1). Grant funding for community colleges could encourage participation in a partnership of this kind and dispel concerns about class closure and funding shortfalls. Furthermore, grant funding for professional development, like faculty learning communities, could bring together like-minded faculty to promote innovation around technology, curriculum, and support services.

Another limitation was the fact that there were only four students who participated in ERWC during the first year. It was difficult to track the four students, and only two of the four agreed to an interview. The other two students who were interviewed both participated in other
Partnership interventions. One went on a campus visit and the other took advantage of filling out a college application early. However, both of these students tested into remedial classes. They represent the very kind of students the Partnership was attempting to help. The extensive interviews provided by these students amplified what other participants reported and provided valuable insights from different perspectives. Thus, it was important and useful for the researcher to give these students a voice in this research; however, it proved to be a formidable task.

Reflection

As a community college English instructor, I have witnessed how remediation has affected students’ self-esteem and motivation. Former remedial students often confide in me that they are not very good at English, and that they are happy just passing my English 101 class. Remediation discourages students who feel stuck in remedial courses. This dissertation research has shown me that through collaboration instructors can take a greater leadership role in addressing these students’ needs. I was inspired by the willingness and energy of the high school English instructors to come together and improve their students’ writing skills. It was exciting to witness.

Grubb (2013) noted that one instructor changing his/her classroom instruction does not have broad impact. It takes a deliberate effort on the part of the English and counseling departments and, ultimately, the institution in order to effect change. Change begins in the classroom. Instructors and counselors need professional development and training to expand their knowledge of innovative teaching practices and support services. As shown in this research, the ERWC training resulted in the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Students from a low socioeconomic status suffer significantly from the lack of support services at community colleges. This is likely to become exacerbated as students attend
community colleges in greater numbers. Given that many of the entering community college student are first generation students, many of whom come from limited or non-English speaking homes or backgrounds, are unaware of the process of enrolling and uninformed of the necessity of an educational plan, it is crucial that students receive more support services, such as intensive first-year orientation and individualized academic counseling. Echoing the comment of one high school instructor who was a participant in the Partnership, students “are not going to build these bridges themselves.” If institutions are to ensure the successes of their students, they must be the ones to create bridges and pathways to such success.
APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO PROTOCOLS

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

We have planned this interview to last no longer than one half hour. During this time, we have several questions that we 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.

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as a key participant in this partnership. Our research project as a whole focuses on the improvement of teaching and learning activity, with particular interest in understanding how students progress through ERWC and into community college. Our study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, we are trying to learn more about partnerships, and hopefully learn more about ways to help improve student learning.
APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTOR PROTOCOL

Please state your name, title, and work place.

1. Can you give me an overview of your participation in the partnership?

2. From your involvement, how has collaboration between Hollywood High School and Los Angeles City College evolved, if at all? When has it been most effective? Can you please give me an example? [RQ2]

3. Do you feel direct placement has been effective? How so? [RQ1, RQ3]

4. Was collaboration with community college instructors [or high school instructors] helpful? Why or why not? [RQ2]

5. Were there opportunities for instructor/counselor collaboration? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not? [RQ2]


7. Has the collaboration involved in the implementation of ERWC modules influenced your teaching? If so, can you describe how? [RQ2, RQ3]

8. How has staff development helped you improve students’ college-readiness, if at all? [RQ2]

9. Do you feel you had an opportunity to lead in this partnership? If so, how? [RQ1]
APPENDIX C

COUNSELING PROTOCOL

Using this protocol, I will conduct semi-structured interviews of the partnership counselors.

Please state your name, title, and work place.

1. Can you give me an overview of your participation in the partnership?

2. From your involvement, how has collaboration between Hollywood High School and Los Angeles City College evolved, if at all? When has it been most effective? Can you give me an example? [RQ2]

3. Do you feel direct placement has been effective? How so? [RQ1, RQ3]

4. Was collaboration with community college instructors [or high school instructors] helpful? Why or why not? [RQ2]

5. Were there opportunities for instructor/counselor collaboration? If so, was it helpful? Can you give me an example? [RQ2]

6. How about counselor/administrator collaboration? Why or why not?
   Can you give me an example? [RQ2]

7. Please explain how you helped, if at all, increase student support services? How did that evolve as part of the partnership strategy? [RQ1,RQ3]

8. Do you feel increased student support services has been successful in helping students transition into Los Angeles City College? [RQ1, RQ3]

9. Can you talk about the challenges, if any, of implementing this partnership? How did the members of this partnership dealt with overcoming them?

10. Do you feel you had an opportunity to lead in this partnership? If so, how? [RQ1]
APPENDIX D
ADMINISTRATOR PROTOCOL

Using this protocol, I will conduct semi-structured interviews of the partnership administrators.

Please state your name, title, and work place.

1. Can you give me an overview of your participation in the partnership? What are the specific goals of the partnership?

2. From your involvement, how has collaboration between Hollywood High School and Los Angeles City College evolved, if at all? When has it been most effective? Can you give me an examples? [RQ2]

3. How did the idea of direct placement come about and how was it implemented? [RQ1, RQ3]

4. Do you feel direct placement has been effective? How so? [RQ1, RQ3]

5. Was collaboration with community college instructors [or high school instructors] helpful? Why or why not? [RQ2]

6. Were there opportunities for counselor/administrator collaboration? If so, was it helpful? Why or why not? [RQ2]


8. How about increasing student support services? How did that evolve as part of the partnership strategy? [RQ1,RQ3]

9. Do you feel increased student support services has been successful in helping students transition into Los Angeles City College? [RQ1, RQ3]
10. Can you give examples of collaborative leadership, if any, during the implementation and development of this partnership?
APPENDIX E

STUDENT PROTOCOL

1. Are you a graduate of Hollywood High School and take the ERWC course in your senior year?

2. Are you currently enrolled or recently taken English 101 at Los Angeles City College?

3. How difficult do you feel this college level class was? [RQ3]

4. Did you feel ready for the level of difficulty of this class? [RQ3]

5. Did you feel the ERWC class helped prepare you for your college class? [RQ3]

6. If yes, can you give me an example of how the ERWC class helped you most prepare for your college class? For example, tell me about a specific task or assignment in your college class that you were already familiar with because of your ERWC class. [RQ3]

7. Do you feel you had the research and critical thinking skills necessary to do well in this class? [RQ3]

8. Do you feel that the ERWC lessons helped you think about and connect your personal experiences to your writing? [RQ3]

9. Do you feel, overall, that you were correctly placed in this class? Or do you feel that perhaps you should have started with a lower level class? [Take into account that if you were to start at a lower level, you would have to take more classes to earn college credits] [RQ1, RQ3]
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