Title
Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program through Action Research

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Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program through Action Research

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

by

Casey Miner

2016
ABSTRACT

Better Prepared for Adulthood:
A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program
Through Action Research

by

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Doctor of Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2016
Professor Christina A. Christie, Co-Chair
Professor Eugene Tucker, Co-Chair

The purpose of this study was to address the problem of high school students graduating unprepared for the rigors of college and a career. This study centered on the relationships and processes needed to implement a public high school pilot internship program to offer interested students a work-based learning opportunity. A key element of the study included student perceptions to inform best practices in order to grow the pilot program in scale for the 2015 school year. As colleges, employers, and students themselves complain about readiness post-high school, and literature concerning work-based learning opportunities continues to grow, it seemed the perfect time to conduct this study. La Playa High School identified a gap in this area of education and school leadership agreed that this program would provide a great opportunity for interested students.
The aims of the study were self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills model was used to identify skills within the program as it aligned with current school language as well as with leading educational scholars who study 21st century education approaches. The evidence supported a positive growth in skills from the students, better self-advocacy, and lessons about getting to deeper learning.

Students helped identify a different understanding of self-directed learning, one that included preparatory education and support which afforded a more effective experience at the internship site. Although most of the students performed well in school and had strong family networks, very few were truly ready to engage with adults in a real, accountable environment. A disconnect was discovered between conceptual knowledge and practical application. At-risk students were targeted, but few enrolled. The demographics of the class reinforced the dynamics of the school.

Findings indicated definitions with relevant research, prepared guest speakers using the same language with personal experiences, small and large group discussions, modeling exercises and reflective, and directed journal prompts offered a strong combination to get at deeper learning opportunities for program students. Lastly, the evidence reinforced the role and expectations of site mentors who overwhelmingly wanted to be connected to the school’s aims yet felt not enough information was passed to them. Aligning mentors early with program goals can more quickly assist in student self-advocacy.

Key words: self-advocacy, 21st century skills, adult mentorship, internship, work-based learning, self-directed learning
The dissertation of Casey Miner is approved.

Howard S. Adelman

Wellford W. Wilms

Christina A. Christie, Committee Co-Chair

Eugene Tucker, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the students willing to take a risk with this pilot internship program and who provided such great input to this study, along with the superintendent, class teacher, and community leader who were so integral to this opportunity for the students. Thank you all for your commitment and desire to connect work-based learning to traditional education to better prepare young adults for adulthood.

I also dedicate this work to those students and soldiers who inspired me to dig deeper and ask questions about how we prepare young adults in America. I have been impacted on a daily basis during this journey by your hopes and dreams and am thankful for the time spent with each of you. The military has created unbelievable opportunities in education for me and helped shape a call to action that led to this study.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my community of friends and family. Without you, this study would stand incomplete. My wife Robyn never allowed me to give up on this dream. My children understood my need to dedicate time to this project. Dr. Linda Rose accepted me back into the program after an extended leave of absence due to military duty. My community is responsible for this study. Thank you all!
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey to this point has been one of personal patience and resilience. As I questioned whether to apply to the program back in early 2008, if I would be accepted, and then what would interest me to study, there were many unknowns. Once I started the program, focusing on the transition to adulthood seemed to stand out from the onset. I never imagined requesting a leave of absence to accept a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity on the east coast, but I was presented with this option as the first year in the program came to an end. The ELP faculty was very supportive. One year turned to four years, including a deployment to Afghanistan, and there were moments I didn’t think I would get the chance to continue with the program. Once back in the program with a new — and awesome — cohort, I completed my second year and really honed in on the transition to adulthood due to reinforced experiences while in Washington, D.C.

During the summer prior to the third year I suffered a stroke and struggled with a course requirement. Later, after recovering and slowly getting back on track, my study was delayed and difficult to get some data due to consent and the audience of students and employers. My family then decided to move once again this summer during the heaviest writing phase of the project. It has been a long journey!

My wife, Robyn, and children, Corey and Emilie, have been consistently positive supporters through every obstacle and doubt I encountered. Dr. Lindsay Burt and Dr. Michelle Perrenoud were the best partners in the cohort. They accepted me and supported me for the past two years. They continue to make this world better. Dr. Eugene Tucker, Dr. Tina Christie, Dr. Howard Adelman and Dr. Wellford “Buzz” Wilms all agreed to help guide my study as members of my committee. You have each motivated me to ensure the voice of the student was heard.
loudly during this study. Thank you for sticking with me. Dr. Cindy Kratzer is an amazing and
caring person and the most effective teacher at the higher education level I have ever met. Her
guidance was continually spot-on and timely. Dr. Michael Matthews, Penny Bordakas, and Andy
Caine gave their time and effort to provide a program to better prepare high school graduates.

I have been blessed with a strong community who believed in me, even in times when I
had doubt. This program has continually pushed my comfort level and stretched my
understanding of education for much needed growth. No one completes a journey alone, and I
am no exception. My passion for education, this dissertation, and my future endeavors are part of
something greater than myself. I have and will continue to serve a purpose that makes a
difference in people’s lives. The people listed above, and countless others, have and continue to
inspire and support me, and that means the world to me.

I want to acknowledge those young adults out there who are disconnected from
traditional education. I have learned through this study that there are thousands of dedicated
educators out there working every day to improve education to better prepare you for adulthood.

Lastly, I want to say thank you to all the men and women who put their lives at risk every
day to keep this uncertain world safe. To many of the humanitarians, non-profit workers, police
officers, firemen, and veterans who have served and continue to serve, and to those who have
paid the ultimate sacrifice during their service, I indebt my continued efforts to you. To those
who doubt themselves, you are special and are made for great things: suicide is never the answer.
In trying times, I pray you reach out. Many of us are ready to receive you and help.
VITA

1999  B.A., Political Science, with minors in History and Peace & Conflict Studies, University of Southern California

2002  M.A., Negotiation & Conflict Management, California State University, Dominguez Hills


2012  Certificates, United States Army and Department of Defense Inspector General Courses. Training: develop leaders, conduct investigations and provide assistance.

2012  M.M.S, Operational Studies, Marine Corps University

1991-Present  Positions of Greater Responsibility: Intelligence Analyst, Signal Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Commander, Secretary of the General Staff, Assistant Professor of Military Science (UCLA), Aide de Camp, Command Inspector General, and Chief, Executive Communications
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Publications


Presentations

Miner, Casey J. (December 2012-August 2013). *Mitigating Negative Deployment Cycle Trends and Fostering a Healthy Command Climate.* Presented over 40 times to various commands throughout Afghanistan during a deployment as an inspector general.

Miner, Casey J. (February 2013). *Mitigating Negative Trends and Fostering a Healthy Command Climate.* Presented at a commander’s conference, Riverside, CA.


Miner, Casey J. (March 2015). *Building a Healthy Command Climate.* Commanding General’s Senior Leader Offsite, Ventura, CA.

Miner, Casey J. (June 2015). *The Future of the Army Reserve.* Officer Professional Development Seminar, Los Angeles, CA.

**Honors**

1999  Awarded the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship for Service and Leadership, Los Angeles, CA.

1999  President, Scabbard and Blade Honor Society, University of Southern California Chapter, Los Angeles, CA.

2001  Certificate of Appreciation for participation on School Advisory Review Board and instructor of Character Education, Silver Valley School District, CA.

2005  Awarded the Bronze Star Medal for service during a military deployment to the Middle East, U.S. Army.

2012  Selected as a member for the 2011-2012 President’s Currently Serving Board, Military Officers Association of America, Alexandria, VA.

2013  Awarded the Bronze Star Medal for service during a military deployment to Afghanistan, U.S. Army.

2013  Designated as a Distinguished Alumni for the class of 2013 at Mira Costa High School, Manhattan Beach, CA.
Public high schools remain much the same today as originally created by Carnegie units in 1906: “focused on preparation for college, largely insulated from real-world experiences, and as boring to most students as it was in the 1890s” (Grubb, 2008, p. 199). Unfortunately, even though progressive educators have spent decades trying to tie real-world experiences to the classroom, numerous recent studies increasingly suggest that young adults are graduating from high school unprepared, without the skills required to be successful in postsecondary education and the world of work (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2008; The Conference Board, 2006; Hart, 2005; Wagner, 2008). No one reform idea is likely to completely reshape public high schools, but internship programs offer one potential pathway “to increase student engagement, and promote skills and knowledge needed for achieving life, career, and civic goals” through hands-on, real-world experiences (Levine, 2010).

As my review of the literature in the next chapter shows, thus far the internship pathway has grown tremendously through practical examples and research; therefore, this was the perfect time to study these incomplete programs. With this in mind, this study explored the implementation of a pilot internship program in a public high school with the intention of using and growing in scale the most effective practices that engage enrolled students and offering them as an example for other schools to use to improve or implement their own programs. The research was guided by the following questions:

1. What relationships and connections facilitate the implementation of a pilot internship program designed to better prepare public high school seniors for college and careers?
2. What practices support self-directed learning of 21st century skills and external adult mentorship in a public high school pilot internship program?

3. What are students’ perceptions about how the internship experience prepares them for post-graduation pathway choices?

**The Promise of Internships**

Leading educational scholars Tony Wagner (2008) and Howard Gardner (2007) have both recently written books that outline the critical skills our young adults need and in which they are currently deficient. For example, in a recent study about work readiness of 400+ employers, less than 25% reported that new employees with four-year college degrees had excellent basic knowledge and applied skills (Wagner, 2008). Likewise, among those who employ young people right out of high school, nearly 50% defined their overall preparation as “deficient” (p. xxi). Another trend noted by business leaders was the inability of younger employees to handle stress or communicate effectively: Southwick & Charney (2012) argued that youth do not learn how to solve problems, regulate emotions, or manage stress constructively. Thus, students are graduating from both high school and college unprepared for the world of work.

Work-based learning through internships exposes students to career fields, encourages postsecondary education, and develops crucial skills needed in the 21st century workplace (National Academy Foundation Gold Standards Handbook [NAF Handbook], 2013). In fact, the lack of opportunities in public schools for real-world, work-based learning—such as through internships—is a leading reason students drop out of school (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morison, 2006). Eighty-one percent (81%) of the students interviewed for this same major study
confirmed that opportunities for real-world learning, like internships, make education and the classroom more relevant (p. 12).

Internships have also proven to provide necessary external adult interactions that support students’ transitions to adulthood and better prepare them for post-high school life (Levine, 2010). Internships have increasingly become crucial in employers’ processes of hiring employees. A 2010 study on the marketability of individuals who had recently completed internship programs confirmed that they had more full-time opportunities, higher starting salaries, and greater continued participation by employers (Gault, Leach & Duey, 2010). Internship programs have been shown to greatly impact students’ development of required workplace and life skills. There is evidence that student-driven involvement within an internship program – specifically one lasting at least one semester for maximum adult interaction – can be effective while serving a large population of students (Highland Park Independent School District [HPISD Handbook], 2013). For the purpose of this study, the term “program” applies to intentional coursework and assessments which help to focus student development and add rigor to the workplace internship experience.

Even the best intentions of providing great internship opportunities for students may not achieve the total desired effect because many programs are highly-selective and faculty-driven. Although many internship models are available across the country, most are established through select academies or organized for select populations and are short-term or school-driven. Access to internships must include all populations of students, regardless of background, socio-economic status, or regional location. As previously noted, currently the U.S. is not properly preparing its students for the requirements of 21st century adulthood because internship opportunities are not available for all interested students. This has increasingly affected our
national security and the United States’ place in global commerce—in the most recent Program for International Student Assessment findings, the U.S. performed below average in mathematics and only average in reading and science as compared to the other 33 countries included in the study.

**Research Design**

The goal of this study was to develop an understanding of the process and relationships necessary to execute a public high school internship program. Through a qualitative action research approach to the implementation of a pilot program, I effectively captured the dynamics of the internship process— from ideas to execution – while emphasizing relationship and process adjustments. Members of the system were both the subjects of and participants in this study (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007). The collaborative nature of this project produced concurrent changes requiring an action researcher to balance between a detached observer and an agent of change (p. 6). Two action research cycles included the three steps of planning action, taking action, and evaluating action with a committed action research team ensured effective school processes and established relationships.

The study took place at La Playa High School, a public school in an affluent Southern California beach city. La Playa is part of a high-performing consortium consisting of five elementary schools that feed into the city’s one middle school and one high school (another elementary school and another middle school in an adjacent city also feed into La Playa). The resident population is overwhelmingly Caucasian, with small percentages of other ethnic groups, and over 68% of residents have college degrees (Manhattan Beach Chamber of Commerce, 2013). The school district accepts inter-district attendance permits at all La Playa schools (Manhattan Beach Unified School District [MBUSD] Administrative Regulation 5117, 2011),
therefore students who may not fit the high-performing, affluent reputation of the La Playa district schools may attend them through commuting. By comparison to the resident population, non-Caucasian enrollment at La Playa High School is 41% (US News & World Report Education Report, 2014).

Despite the advantaged status of the overall student population, school leadership believes that a large number of La Playa students are considered “at-risk” or disconnected from the traditional classroom environment, and it attributes the significant gap in how these at-risk students prepare for adulthood to not offering them real-world, work-based opportunities like internships as part of the La Playa curriculum. The administration agreed to pilot an internship program during the 2014-2015 school year in order to offer work-based, real-world opportunities for interested students, specifically those who are considered at-risk; the intent was to develop a pilot internship program that could be grown in scale the following year for all interested students.

The desired student sample for the pilot program was 20 seniors. Although all interested students were allowed to enroll in the program, school leadership indicated that at-risk students would be considered a priority in order to help provide a better connection to their education process. La Playa administrators believed that these internships would give these at-risk students the hands-on, real-world experience that would entice them to continue their post-secondary education and secure more satisfying work.

The administration felt an internship program would help link interested students, especially at-risk kids, with ideas of going to college and starting a career. Part of this belief was that internships would provide an opportunity to self-direct and learn hands-on outside the traditional classroom setting. The aim of this study was to capture what these kids learned
during the internship process. The actual recruiting and retention of at-risk students was difficult, even with specific targeting and school assistance. Those students who did enroll and were tracked as progressing or high performing within the school had surprising difficulties. There was much to learn for all students, regardless of status.

The theories of student “self-directed learning” and “work-based learning” align with the aim of this study in order to assess the association between high school internship practices and students’ perceptions of post-graduation opportunities. For high school students, *self-directed learning* is the process of being proactive and responsible for one’s own learning, as opposed to a dependent learner who needs “more introductory material and appreciates lecture, drill and immediate correction” (Merriam, 2009). A self-directed learner can engage in discovery learning through student-directed discussions and independent projects (p. 10). *Work-based learning* is about learning, not teaching, and occurs in the workplace instead of the classroom. It is not vocational program training that is often employer-determined: “Work-based learning can, and should, be distinguished from the notion of work related learning” (University Vocational Awards Council, 2005) and can take many forms for different purposes. Twenty-first century skills, as defined by the “Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) and reinforced by Wagner (2008) and Gardner (2007) (described in more detail in Chapter 2), along with external adult mentorships, are measurable outcomes from this study that inform future processes within the internship program framework.

The research focus includes the review and evaluation of several current internship programs and considers best practices to implement and evaluate the La Playa pilot internship program. As described in Chapter 3, informal interviews were conducted, along with school site visits and an extensive literature review as an informative precursor to the actual study. The
internship classroom discussions at the school focused on intentional skills development and the internship experience. Students regularly reflected through journal prompts during the process, and these entries, as well as answers to questionnaires administered to students and internship site mentors, were analyzed. Observations of internship sites, action research team meetings and one student focus group were also conducted and analyzed.

**Significance of the Study**

The immediate goal of this study was to enable La Playa High School to implement and study a pilot internship program that could be scaled up in subsequent years. As school and district leaders have noted, such an internship program would provide a crucial development opportunity for students to better prepare them for the transition to adulthood. This program could provide a large-scale difference in interest in college and traditionally harder career paths, as well as produce more productive and engaged citizens and caring leaders through the aims of self-direction, skills development and adult mentorship. All areas of readiness identified as lacking among high school graduates.

Beyond this immediate goal, the findings from this study can be easily utilized by other school districts interested in creating, developing, or improving their own internship programs. The potential for this study to reach state and national interest and dissemination is very likely. La Playa has already shared the study’s preliminary findings and recommendations with its seven collaborative districts. I presented these preliminary findings to the collaborative in April 2015. Future opportunities also exist to share with fellow educators interested in external learning opportunities and linked learning concepts.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

“You learn from your experience of doing something and from your analysis of that experience.” – Myles Horton

Introduction

Many high school graduates are unprepared for adulthood in the 21st century as confirmed by colleges, employers, and students themselves (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Furstenberg, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012; Wagner, 2008). New skills are required of high school graduates as they transition to service, college, or the workforce after graduation (Oaks & Saunders, 2008). It is no longer sufficient to prepare students for only college or a career – 21st century skills are needed for college AND career, and thus require educational support. The U.S. is in a strategic period for educational change as new school models produce engaged citizens and competitive young adults. As the younger generation grows up, conventional careers are less likely to exist. Educating students must evolve to preparing young adults for the changing world (Wagner & Compton, 2012). Traditional school frameworks are not meeting the 21st century requirements to properly prepare students for the rigors of adulthood (Littky & Grabelle, 2004).

In this literature review, I first explain how the transition to adulthood has evolved then I list the current trend of multiple pathways for students, which includes a new set of required skills and a focus on real-world connections and self-directed learning. Internships provide a great opportunity to address this evolution and obtain these needed skills. I end this literature review by showing how my study helps fill the gap of research on public high school internship programs.
Career academies are a growing way of approaching personal education, and I review career academy examples, among others, and the lessons learned from utilizing them as part of this literature review. Career academies have grown in scale throughout the U.S., challenging traditional school structures to address the issue of personalized, real-world connected education through smaller cohorts, individualized curriculums, and a collaborative school culture (Levine, 2010; Littky & Grabelle, 2004; Maxwell & Rubin, 2000; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). These academies — and many charter or independent high school programs — provide hands-on projects and external internship opportunities that afford students the chance to: 1) develop relationships with adults as mentors; 2) build the 21st century skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) required in the workforce; and, 3) explore career fields that, together with skills and mentors, may affect college and career choices. Student-involved learning and multiple pathway opportunities have countered the traditional way of American education because traditional public schools have not, as a rule, provided this learning environment. If interested students have the opportunity to learn real-world skills, they will have a better opportunity to transition to adulthood and make educated decisions about their futures.

The Transition to Adulthood

“In the past several decades, a new life stage has emerged: early adulthood. No longer adolescents but not quite ready to assume full responsibilities of an adult, many young people are caught between needing to learn advanced job skills and depending on their family to support them during the transition.” — Frank Furstenberg, 2004

After high school, most young adults are expected to adjust very quickly to the requirements of adulthood. With the ever-evolving global career market, this is not an easy task. New adult relationships outside families are more complex and interactive. Young adults are expected to understand and display non-cognitive skills in both formal and informal settings.
Peer relationships may mature with an expectation to collaborate and problem solve for the good of a group (Wagner, 2008).

Arnett (2007) coined the term “emerging adulthood” in 2000, drawing attention to the paradigm shift that Erikson’s 1959 “young adulthood model” – of ages lasting from the late teens to about age 40 – “no longer fit the normative pattern in industrialized societies” (Arnett, 2007). Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) assert that, “young people can no longer count on a predictable future and cannot expect that a set of skills learned in school will be sufficient to ensure a comfortable future” (p.19). American college students are not graduating at the rate of comparable students in other countries. “Among the thirty-four member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development,” the United States ranks second to last, ahead of only Italy of the percentage of entering college freshmen who go on to graduate” (Tough, 2012).

In his address at the annual Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) education conference in Los Angeles, Sir Ken Robinson (2014) commented that, “the old school designed for the industrial age has not changed,” and “businesses cannot recruit creative people.” Robinson believes that schools are not giving students the opportunities to explore and thus are stifling creativity (Robinson, 2014).

High schools in particular remain much the same today. Conventional subjects designed by Carnegie in the early 20th century, “focused on preparation for college, largely insulated from real-world experiences” (Grubb, 2008). Students continually reported being bored. A study on nationwide dropouts concluded that 47% cited boredom and disengagement as the main cause for quitting high school (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Leading global educators agree on the cultural
paradigm shift for our young adults and the need to approach education differently to prepare them for real-world application upon graduation.

Current approaches to preparing young adults for adulthood include the integration of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the idea of *multiple pathways*. These educational approaches are cemented in not only the traditional cognitive subjects, but also the need for developing strong non-cognitive skills for the unknown of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century workplace. It is immensely important for American young adults to remain competitive in an increasingly complex global economy and perhaps more significantly, on a national strategic level as such skills are imperative for the national security of the United States. A recent Harvard University study concluded that the U.S. has a “skill gap”: “[as] we end the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, there are profoundly troubling signs that the U.S. is now failing to meet its obligation to prepare millions of young adults” (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2011). A more demanding and evolving job market is making traditional careers a way of the past.

The Partnership for 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Skills (“P21”) is an organization comprised of educational, business, and governmental leaders with an aim to incorporate 21\textsuperscript{st} century skills into all aspects of student learning, teacher development, standards and assessments (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). The framework includes both cognitive and non-cognitive skills that educators must incorporate into lessons to ensure students that are ready for post-high school graduation choices. After a 2007 nationwide poll indicated that critical thinking, problem solving, computer and technology skills, communication, and self-direction skills were “important to the country’s future economic success,” a growing number of leaders and states signed on with the P21 organization and the “3 R’s and 7’C’s” was born (p. 169). In relation to internships and external classroom learning opportunities, P21 includes career and life skills that ensure students are
work-ready and prepared for life after high school. Many of the learning and innovation skills also detailed within the framework are developed during internships, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration, and creativity and innovation. Internships afford students the opportunity to apply P21 skills beyond the conceptual realm of the classroom in real-world workplace scenarios. As research findings suggest that students need more real-world problem solving, internships help ensure authentic learning experiences make learning last and more useful (p. 31).

The multiple pathways concept has grown in response to student studies as well as to global realities. It is now a common debate that our students must be educated in preparation for college AND a career instead of the old model of one or the other. Multiple pathways include opportunities to engage all students and help them find their passions and talents while preparing them for the 21st century workforce. These pathways can include career academies, cluster classes, or themed magnet or charter schools. Research supports that young adult engagement and motivation to learn occur when close adult relationships, student autonomy in active learning, and real-world connection to future goals exist and high expectations are set. Conventional high school frameworks contradict most of these findings (Grubb, 2008).

There are two common threads to the literature on the 21st century pathway to adulthood for our high school graduates – that real-world connection and self-directed learning are desired by students for engagement and motivation and are needed by employers for required skills in the workplace. Regular public high schools are not reaching all students, and are not preparing young adults for post-graduation choices. Wagner (2014) recently said in a presentation to educators at the annual ASCD conference, “the world doesn’t care what we know, but what we can do with what we know.” According to Quaglia (2014), as we help students find their purpose
and who they want to be, we have to listen to their voices and support pathways to their aspirations through “engaging the balance of interest and opportunity.”

The two common threads listed above are reinforced in many schools through internships. Different models and frameworks exist, but the research is conclusive that internships support adult relationship opportunities, 21st century skill development, and the exploration of career and college choices (Levine, 2010).

The Internship Experience

“To ‘learn from experience’ is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence.” —John Dewey, 1916

Internships have provided students a needed opportunity to explore the vast career arena while developing required 21st century skills in a real-world interactive approach. These opportunities also connect students back to education, and provide crucial interaction with external adults in the workplace for mentoring and personal development. Students want to explore their interests in real settings and educators are increasingly recognizing the power of internships for student learning and engagement (Levine, 2010).

Internships are not apprenticeships. Strictly developing trade skills in one or two career fields is not the intent of internships. Apprenticeships may also limit student creativity and exploration as the focus is on specific skills development for employment. But, work-based learning opportunities may offer a connection to traditional classroom education. “There should not be this differentiation between vocational and academic, anyway. Every child should use his or her hands and mind while learning” (Littky & Grabelle, 2004).

There are myriad internship models within high schools, organizations, colleges, and international institutions. Internships are not new. Even the career academy model is approaching
30 years since its first small scale efforts (Maxwell & Rubin, 2000). Big Picture, founded in 1995, has remained tied to individual pathways grounded in their philosophy of “one student at a time” (Wagner, 2008). Robinson notes that “to succeed as it has to, education must engage the curiosity, creativity, aptitudes, and passions of every student (Washor & Mojkowski, 2013). A longitudinal study among career academies concluded that “over 90 percent of the individuals stated that the internship made them realize the importance of doing well in school (Maxwell & Rubin, 2000).

Internships differ in length, requirements, and expectations. Many high school programs are very selective and differentiate between high performers and other students, even though research has confirmed that extracurricular activities and cooperative learning have connected normally disconnected populations (Monahan, Oesterle & Hawkins, 2010). Selection criteria could include grade point averages, school participation, specific schedule availability, small cohort numbers, and/or specific interests (Saunders, 2013). Some programs are much more structured (NAF Handbook, 2013) and mandatory (Littky & Grabelle, 2004), while others may be optional and less structured, allowing for “rich learning opportunities” to emerge as the internship unfolds (Levine, 2010). Even at career academies, many internships are coordinated and supervised by faculty leaders (Saunders, 2013), while an emerging approach guides student-directed choices and opportunities (HPISD, 2014. Reports from some students at themed academies indicate a lack of involvement in an internship because they are not interested in the offered opportunities (Saunders, 2013). Some programs have continually grown as processes and administration issues work themselves out (Quartz & Washor, 2008; Saunders, 2013; HPIHD, 2014; APUSD Handbook, 2013 allowing for a greater population to participate.
The objective of many programs is to grow to scale and implement best practices. It is a common recommendation to pilot a small program during the first year (Levine, 2010). Although it is more prevalent in college or apprenticeship programs, some high school internships are paid (NAF Handbook, 2013). Most educators discourage this practice because it may detract from the purpose of an internship and concentrate more on productivity to earn a wage (Washor & Mojkowski, 2013). Lastly, internships are set up in many different time spans. Some schools believe that an internship should be more of an “exposure” for those seniors who have met all graduation requirements. Other schools, like academies, incorporate the internship into the weekly curriculum wherein students spend one or two days a week at the internship site. Still others block specific periods of time for internships so that students can spend several weeks or months away from the classroom during the school year. Finally, as is the case in most public school environments, there are semester- or year-long internships that may include several “work study” periods and other before- or after-school commitments, depending on the site requirements.

All of these criteria affect the culture of the internship program. School leadership must decide on the objectives of the program and the target audience to engage when creating and establishing a program. All sites continue to make difficult decisions regarding distribution (Saunders, 2013). If leaders decide to limit enrollment or recruit select elite students, the outcome will be that many students will miss out on an opportunity for a real-world experience and to better connect with their traditional educational role. An effective program to prepare all students for adulthood must be accessible for all interested students.

Mentorship is a key part of most internship programs, as objectives often include adult relationships at the internship site (Saunders, 2013). The Met Implementation Plan developed in
1995 states that “A mentor’s role extends beyond teaching about his job; through a genuine relationship with the student, he teaches his work ethic and models what it means to be an adult” (Littky & Grabelle, 2004). The site contact must understand expected roles and responsibilities, and agree to accept these conditions in order for an effective mentor relationship to develop. Program coordinators report that there are numbers of willing mentors in the community and that finding them works best when there is a collaborative school effort (Levine, 2010). If established effectively, “studies have revealed significant associations between youth involvement in mentoring relationships and positive developmental outcomes” (Rhodes & Ryan Lowe, 2008).

Reaching disconnected students, dropouts, or marginalized populations is at the heart of the academy approach to real-world experiences and to offering multiple pathways for graduation. A recent survey wherein 81% of the respondents affirm that disconnected youth regain interest in education and future options if experiences like internships for real-world learning are available report that these experiences will very likely improve these students’ chances of graduating high school (Bridgeland, et al., 2006). Robinson confirms this concept: “the current system is failing so many of them because it is impersonal and standardized” (Washor, 2013). The Conference Board (2006) released a study of both college and non-college graduates confirming that employers don’t think employees are ready for the rigor and requirements in the workplace, and thus effectively created the collective push for 21st century skills research in education and beyond. Self-directed and real-world experiences like internships, “to the extent that teenagers have had experiences that demand discipline, require the skillful use of mind and body, and give them a sense of responsibility and involvement with useful goals, we might expect the youth of today to be ready to face the challenges of tomorrow” (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).
In the past decade, the development of workplace skills has become of increased interest as more studies conclude that American youth are not prepared for the rigors of 21st-century adulthood requirements (Gates Foundation, 2009; Hart, 2005; Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2012; Tough, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Wagner, 2008). Many buzzwords explain deficient and required skills: 21st century skills, soft skills, applied skills, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, life skills, resiliency skills, new survival skills, emotional intelligence, grit, social-emotional learning, and growth-mindset. Many of these terms overlap in definition and are identified by leading researchers and educators in current articles.

The P21 framework, as discussed earlier, is arguably the most noteworthy among educators because most states have worked to align CCSS in their school systems (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). P21 includes the categories of learning and innovation skills, and the life and career skills that can align with both internship outcomes and efforts in the classroom. Outcries from leading educators and business figures have increased concerning the lack of creating innovators in America and how it affects jobs, as well as America’s competitiveness; thus school leaders have instituted many inclusive models, such as academies and small learning communities, as an answer to provide project-based and real-world learning opportunities. Innovative education is not acceptable for the select few in the 21st century. “We have become a country that produces more ideas to solve more different kinds of problems. We have become the country that leads the way in developing the new technologies for a sustainable planet and affordable healthcare” (Wagner & Compton, 2012). This has occurred with dramatic changes in our school structures, through hands-on experiences like internships that help students explore careers and understand expectations as they enter the workforce. Many of the careers that are
students may have in his or her lifetime may not even be created yet, that’s how fast technology and global dynamics affect innovative education.

Although the P21 skills don’t directly correlate with the social-emotional skills of resiliency, grit, emotional intelligence, and growth mindset, evidence has developed within the past few years that calls into question the current American cognitive development for success as an adult. This evidence focuses not on how much information children learn in the first few years of life, but on “whether we are able to help her develop a very different set of qualities, a list that includes perseverance, self-control, curiosity, conscientious, grit, and self-confidence” (Tough, 2013). Research on these other non-cognitive skills has helped explain why Americans have increasingly grown unable to “emotionally or psychologically… handle adversity, which means that instead of facing our problems bravely and confidently, we risk giving up and feeling helpless” (Reivich, 2002).

There seems to be a collective worry about how our youth deal with personal issues – how they advocate for themselves and how they handle adult relationships. Grit explains how some people are able to display “a passionate commitment to a single mission and an unswerving dedication to achieve that mission” (Tough, 2013). A 2013 U.S. Department of Education report further explains grit as “essential to an individual’s capacity to strive for and succeed at long-term and higher-order goals, and to persist in the array of challenges and obstacles encountered throughout schooling and life” (Shechtman, 2013). There are myriad tests and surveys to evaluate levels of grit, resiliency, and emotional intelligence (EQ). EQ has replaced – or at least accompanied – the usual IQ scores in many employee portfolios, much like non-cognitive skills have identified with cognitive skills. EQ includes social awareness, self-regulation, self-awareness, and relationship management, skills employers expect employees to develop.
Internships allow high school students the opportunity to understand the P21, non-cognitive, and EQ skills in the context of the workplace, and to practice them with a mentor who can help – an opportunity most students in public schools do not get.

**Internship Models**

The recent movement of educational reform known as “school-to-work” calls for “restructuring America’s high schools to become ‘high performance’ arenas of achievement,” and aims to create small schools within schools to help prepare students for college AND a career (Maxwell & Rubin, 2000). The intent of this version of educational reform is for students to master “a rigorous academic curriculum, as well as new versions of the skills that were the hallmark of stand-alone vocational courses,” and “these reforms are grounded in the growing body of research demonstrating the connections among learning, social relationships, and engagement in authentic tasks” (Oakes & Saunders, 2008). The response from academy leaders for breaking the traditional education paradigm of differentiating between academics and vocation in order to “build more active student-centered learning,” strives to improve motivation and “help students achieve scholastically and to provide them with marketable workplace skills” (Maxwell & Rubin, 2000).

Big Picture Learning was established in 1995 by Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor in an effort to help students “take responsibility for their own education. They would spend considerable time doing real work in the community” with the help of administrators and mentors (Littky & Grabell, 2004). The authors’ approach is “one student at a time” so that the experience is personalized and connected to the community. Students participate in regular long-term internships for all four years of high school as part of the curriculum, “pursuing and carrying out internships related to their interests” (Levine, 2010). Big Picture’s Learning
Through Internships (LTI) model was designed as “real work integrated into the everyday world of the school,” and its philosophy is that “internships are the best way to create opportunities for kids to do real work and learn the things that are really important for a successful life” (Littky & Grabelle, 2004). The internships are conducted every Tuesday and Thursday, with the developers believing that there should be a connection to career and technical learning because they “view internships as an essential learning experience for all students” (Washor & Mojkowski, 2013).

The National Academy Foundation (NAF) believes that rigor and relevance are intertwined for all of its academy students. NAF leadership understands that not all internships look alike, and that there are many methods to create work-based learning experiences. Its mission statement (NAF, 2013) reinforces that they are dedicated to preparing young people for college and career success using its proven educational model. Work-based learning includes all four years of study, moving from career awareness through career exploration to career preparation. According to NAF President J.D. Hoye, “In 2009 NAF convened a task force of business, education, and workforce experts to develop “Preparing Youth for Life: The Gold Standards for Internships” (NAF Handbook, 2013). NAF’s vision includes internships as a culminating, paid, work-related experience as a key standard in practice. Gold Standards is an in-depth program to assist schools in implementing internship programs that provide “clear and measurable standards to ensure that young people receive the experiences that will most benefit America’s workforce” (p. 4). After completing relevant high school courses, students complete a “summer internship program related to their academy’s theme” (Levine, 2010).

California Partner Academies (CPAs) support the career-and-college educational model, “bringing together rigorous academics, demanding career technical education, and engagement with the world of adult work through a multi-year program of study in industry-themed
pathways” (California Department of Education, 2011). CPAs are “schools-within-schools” that “represent a high school reform movement that is focused on smaller learning communities with a career theme,” and include “rigorous academics and career technical education” (California Education Code, Section 54690-54697, 1993). CPA components also include mentorship and internships. At least half of the applicants must come from the state-developed “at-risk” category. “After their junior year, students performing well enough to be on track for graduation are placed in internship positions,” through a work-related process that includes a resume, application and interviews (CDE CPA Overview, 1993). State funding is available for CPA program but is tied to student performance improvement in the areas of attendance, credits, GPA, and graduation rates.

Michigan’s Livonia Public Schools developed a district-wide internship program in 1976 designed for high-performing, self-motivated students; it is very selective because “participation by high-achieving students in these real-life experiences expands awareness of their own goals, abilities, and interests, relative to future careers” (Livonia Unified Public School District Career Internship Handbook [LUPSD Handbook], 2013). The students participate in one or two nine-week terms, three to four hours a day, four days a week. The program coordinator selects the sponsor sites “based on the nature of their business and their willingness to meet Program objectives” (LUPSD Handbook, 2013).

Palo Alto Unified School District in Northern California has had an established internship program for over fifteen years. This “exploratory experience is an unpaid off-campus course that provides students with an opportunity to explore their specific career interests by direct observations and hands-on experience” (Palo Alto Unified School District Exploratory Experience Program Handbook [PAUSD Handbook], 2013). The students meet with the program
coordinator before any contact with an organization is made, and parents must sign the agreement as well. The class is worth credit toward graduation and “is for students who have some idea of eventual occupational goals and who would like to sample an occupation during the school year or in the summer” (PAUSD Handbook, 2013). The program is open to all interested students in Grades 11 and 12 and covers many professional skills to help students prepare for interviews and expectations at the workplace. The program director finds and approves the internship sites, and excludes any clubs or non-career-focused service.

Highland Park High School in Dallas, Texas, has had an internship program for over five years. The emphasis of its program is in self-direction, in that the student must research and secure the internship with the support of the program coordinator. Once the site is found and initial contact is made, the student works with the community partner to develop goals and objectives for the internship. Interested juniors meet with program coordinator in the spring prior to their senior year, and students must attend a fall internship showcase and participate in the formal spring presentation with their site contact to review growth and achieved contributions (HPISD, 2013).

There are many other high school internship models throughout the United States. These include academy, charter, private, and public school models. Programs exist in both wealthy, high-performing schools, and in struggling underrepresented schools. Programs stand at many different stages of implementation and capability, depending on school culture and funding. Some programs vary in length from several weeks, to full-time, to semester- or year-long, to summer-only, however, very few internship programs pay high school students. Most of these high school-based programs require some type of prerequisite before approval, including a few who advertise the opportunity to only high-performing students. Only the NAF program has
incorporated a formal assessment of progression on learning, although most programs ask key stakeholders to complete a survey at the conclusion of the internship.

Every program discusses the benefits of skills development and the current research on hands-on, work-based programs; yet very few have intentional course curriculum and site development objectives for career skills. Highland Park High School in Dallas is the only school that promotes self-direction, asking the student to reach out to secure his or her own internship site and subsequently set objectives with the site contact. Very few programs detail expectations of workplace personnel as mentors for the students, although almost every program lists adult professional relationships as an integral part of their program. Some programs ensure that site contact background checks and parental support are achieved before approval of a site selection.

The commonality among all these programs (and others that were reviewed during this process) is that none are complete programs nor include all “best practices.” More interesting is that very few programs have any metrics to measure development and program success. While the personalized and supportive culture of an academy does not provide the freedom and flexibility of choice that a public high school program can provide, the highly selective requirements of some public schools do not provide the inclusivity to reach every student as seen in academies.

There is a great opportunity to study all these programs and then grow the best practices in scale within a public high school. The U.S. public high school system is where the majority of American students learn, and large percentages of these students remain disconnected. Imagine a public high school that collaboratively offers multiple pathway opportunities for all students, and that students self-direct their learning with workplace mentors for an extended time while
attending intentional skills training and reflecting on opportunities that assist in post-graduation attitudes toward career and college choices. It is possible!

**Conclusion**

Not every high school with an internship has great results and this is for various reasons. Developing a sustaining internship program takes school leadership commitment, relationships with community partners, and student support. Exposure opportunities that only last a few weeks or exist in only the last part of the senior year after all other requirements are met do not effectively develop the student. Several program coordinators have listed “helicopter parents” as an obstacle to student internship experiences in wealthy and high-performing schools because of their fear of child failure. Not every student who is interested in an internship opportunity will easily find a workplace site, and many will either change sites several times or not meet personal expectations. Some students will complete an internship that is not in his or her career interest area, but the benefits of professional adult relationships, workplace behaviors, and 21st century skills development may still result from the internship.

Many high school graduates are unprepared for adulthood in the 21st century (Bridgeland, et al., 2006; Furstenberg, 2004; NCES, 2012; Wagner, 2008) and research also confirms there are new 21st century skills required of high school graduates as they transition to service, college, or the workforce after graduation (Oaks & Saunders, 2008). It is no longer sufficient to prepare students for only college or a career: U.S. education must prepare them for both. We are in a strategic period for educational change and traditional school frameworks are not meeting 21st century requirements to properly prepare our students for the rigors of adulthood (Littky & Grabelle, 2004).
The transition to adulthood has evolved and the current trend of multiple pathways for students includes a new set of required skills and a focus on real-world connections and self-directed learning. As internships provide a great opportunity to address this evolution and obtain needed skills, there is still need for more research on how to implement an internship program in a public high school environment.

Student-directed learning through internships that reaffirms the chance to develop relationships with adults as mentors, build the 21st century skills required in the workforce, and explore career fields that together may affect college and career choices is an effective multiple pathway educational model that counters the traditional way of American education through real-world, work-based experiences. The “Old World” of classrooms and “New World” of work force educational leaders to creatively approach teaching survival skills for “lifelong learning and active citizenship” that isn’t taught or tested in the classroom (Wagner, 2008). Part of this concept is the question What does every high school student need to know and be able to show upon graduation in order to succeed in the 21st century workplace? The logical answer is that students must have real-world connections to career and college developments and expectations, and that internships provide a great opportunity to achieve those goals.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Although there are many internship program models throughout the United States, a review of the literature on high school programs reveals no evidence of any study that documents the implementation of a pilot internship program within a public high school to incorporate best practices and/or measure student perceptions to evaluate effectiveness. Thus, the goal of this study was to give a sample population of interested high school seniors the opportunity for work-based, self-directed learning with adult mentorship and 21st century skill development through a pilot internship program. “Successful high school internships occur when key partners are working together to maximize outcomes for all involved” (NAF Handbook, p. 11). This research adds to existing literature by employing action research that includes best practices and ensures students’ voices were an integral part of the process.

I conducted an action research study to develop and implement a pilot internship program at a public high school in Southern California. School leadership agreed to make practical changes and adaptations during the study period with the intent of utilizing overall findings the following year to grow the internship program in scale for all interested students.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What relationships and connections facilitate the implementation of a pilot internship program designed to better prepare public high school seniors for college and careers?

2. What practices support self-directed learning of 21st century skills and external adult mentorship in a public high school pilot internship program? and,
3. What are students’ perceptions about how the internship experience prepares them for post-graduation pathway choices?

This qualitative study used a classic action research model to implement the pilot internship program. The intent of the internship program was to connect all interested students in order to change understanding of the educational experience through self-directed learning and to better prepare students for post-high school pathways. Another reason for implementing this pilot program in this specific type of school was the incredibly high expectations of students who, even with all the resources available, were not all ready for adulthood.

The school site I worked with did not have an internship program and expressed interest in implementing a small pilot program to offer students a self-directed, work-based learning opportunity in order to better prepare them for adulthood. School leadership approached this reform pilot initiative to generate new knowledge concerning student learning and engagement at the school. A pilot program is essential to provide school leadership the opportunity to evaluate processes (Maxwell, 2013) before growing in scale the following school year.

**Qualitative Action Research Design**

Action research is a deliberate, evidence-based reflective process “that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community” (Herr & Anderson, 2005). It is “a sequence of events and an approach to problem solving,” and a “collaborative democratic relationship” that involves being “in” action rather than “about” action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). According to Kurt Lewin, traditional (or classic) action research, “involves a collaborative change management or problem solving relationship between researcher and client aimed at both solving a problem and generating new knowledge” (p. 44).

Kurt Lewin was involved in the origins of respected action research within the social
sciences in the 1940s through creating knowledge “from problem solving in real-life situations” (Herr & Anderson, 2005). The collaborative relationship he described incorporates a research cycle that includes planning, taking action, and evaluating through a deliberate reflective process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Inspired by Lewin, I used this cycle to organize and inform this study. There were two cycles of action and reflection executed during this study, with immediate feedback opportunities and requirements that fed into needed decisions, policies, actions, and resources. The research team helped analyzed data during each meeting to improve the content and processes of the pilot internship program.

Quantitative research tests objective theories to be measured on instruments for analyzing using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). Action research is fluid, however, avoiding rigid cycle adaptation thus “so denying spontaneity and creativity” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Qualitative research was therefore appropriate here because it “involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). A quantitative study, or other qualitative study, would not have personally affected and included all key stakeholders while trying to implement a pilot internship program. There would have been a significant chance for missed opportunities for new knowledge without an action research study as the pilot program was implemented.

This approach ensured that school leaders would elicit and hear an active student voice which would help facilitate effective policies and relationships. As the researcher, I assisted school leadership by recommending processes and feedback mechanisms, observing both students and key educational leaders to monitor progress. Scheduled research team meetings were used to assess implementation and to facilitate immediate adjustments as necessary. My role during these team meetings included discussions of my observations and feedback from
stakeholders and eliciting input from team members to help guide the team to actionable and grounded ideas for the next iteration of the cycle. I then reflected on each research team meeting and added any observations or specific guiding questions for the next meeting.

Several worldviews connected with the purpose and implementation of this study. Action research is typically associated with the participatory worldview because individuals “develop subjective meanings of their experiences” during research that “relies as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2014, p. 9). However, a transformative worldview “contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life” (p. 9).

Although the pilot program was open for all students to enroll, the school site administration attempted to identify specific students for the internship program. These students were identified as needing student academic support from counselors and were considered at-risk. This study fell short on focusing strictly at-risk students. Very few students in this category enrolled and completed the class. Several students who appeared connected on paper were found to struggle with the application of this program. Many students were unsure of his or her future, but felt that college was the next logical step. The educationally-disconnected students, who were maybe present for class but unsure of their future after high school, were also often matriculation concerns: “Transformative research provides a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives” (Creswell, 2014, p. 10). Transformational learning posits that “as students move toward a concrete conceptualization of the innovation, they undergo a significant change in perspective” which includes self-examination, exploration of new roles and relationships, planning a course of action, acquiring new knowledge, building competence and self-confidence in new roles, and a
reintegration of these experiences into one’s life (Wetzel & Ewbank, 2013). In this regard, this entire study and desired outcomes were transformative in nature.

**Internship Program at La Playa High School**

The study site, La Playa High School, is a high-performing public high school in a wealthy beach community of Southern California. Although many of the students live in an affluent area and the school has been identified as high-performing, the school administration was concerned that some students were not getting the most out of their high school education experience. Even for some of the affluent population, the students are “so overly protected from adversity that they weren’t developing the ability to overcome failure and learn from it” (Tough, 2012). The affluent students face challenges, albeit often different from those of their lower socio-economic counterparts, some of whom attend La Playa. This study’s findings and recommendations could offer generalizability to other school districts with differentiated student populations.

The idea to implement an internship program began with the district leadership. Discussions evolved into regular meetings with school board members and the high school leadership. The school leadership desired to implement a pilot program in the fall of 2014 which included 21st century skills development through course facilitation, student-driven processes, and adult mentorship roles of employer site contacts. The campus was near a multitude of employers who could serve as great internship sites in very diverse career fields.

The school leadership was willing to embrace an action research study that incorporated best practices to apply to their school. All key leaders were in agreement and their timeline to implement a pilot program fit my study timeline. I was assured that I would have full access to
classrooms, student interns, and site locations, and I did for the entire study; however, student information was difficult to obtain as discussed in the next chapter. Identified key stakeholders agreed to be part of the action research team and it worked out as a very informative process. An outgoing teacher-leader was identified, connected with students, and was excited about the program reaching more students for better post-graduation preparation for career, college, and/or public service opportunities.

The internship program was set up as a course in which the students earned credit. They were expected to participate in a weekly one-hour on-campus class designed to develop key skills and allow for professional experience discussions. Once a student solidified an internship and objectives were established, he or she spent seven to ten hours at the intern site each week. Times and length varied depending on career field and location. The intent was to have site mentors background checked and briefed on expectations, but this didn’t happen for several reasons. The school internship coordinator planned to make contact with site mentors through periodic site visits or phone calls, but this only happened as an initial contact when an internship was secured. The students made a formal presentation at the school at the end of the spring semester as a culminating project. The intent was to invite the site mentors to the final presentations, but the internship coordinator did not feel comfortable inviting them. School leaders were invited, but no one showed up. The internship coordinator planned to invite a few students to help prepare and inform enrolled students for the following year.

**Study Sample**

High school seniors were the preferred pilot population because they are in the decision-making period for choices after graduation. In addition, seniors meet age requirements for many internship opportunities and they are more apt to have access to reliable transportation. All
students who were seniors in the 2014–2015 academic year were made aware of the program through the course catalog and in consultation with their counselors. There was a major communication disconnect with the counselors that affected the target population, as discussed in next chapter.

A sample of 20 senior students was the goal for the pilot program to ensure that tangible processes and conclusions could be drawn. Twenty-eight (28) students enrolled in the program during the fall semester with 10 students eventually dropping the class. Five at-risk identified students enrolled and one student completed the program. Although random enrollment was preferred, depending on the number of students who applied to the pilot program, special targeting of at-risk students occurred. School leaders believed the program could serve as a pathway to reengage students’ educational experience, thereby influencing post-graduation decisions, which was an aim of the program. Throughout the entire school year, students received training and support in the classroom in order to self-direct their internship at the site.

**Figure 1: Recruiting Demographics Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Students Enrolled</th>
<th>Total Students Disenrolled</th>
<th>Students Completed Program</th>
<th>At-Risk Students Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5 (*Out of 75 Pop.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males/Females</td>
<td>Males/Females</td>
<td>Males/Females</td>
<td>At-Risk Students Completed Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16</td>
<td>1/9</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>1 (Male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An internship program coordinator, approached by the school principal from a pool of qualified teacher-leaders, led the pilot program. The coordinator’s responsibilities included creating program requirements, maintaining resources, and developing skills. He also participated on the action research team as the direct link between students and school leaders.
leadership. In order for more students to experience this pathway next year as the program is planned to grow in scale, outcomes of the program reinforced that school leadership should support this work-based learning opportunity, as well as the connection between education and the workforce during the pilot program.

Research Methods

Action Research

The classic action research model I used incorporated “collaborative cycles of planning, taking action and evaluating” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). There were two action research cycles within this study. The research team included the internship coordinator, a school board member, one site mentor, two enrolled students, and me as the researcher. The plan was for the high school vice principal to periodically join the research team to ensure that the administration was kept up-to-date and that any support requirements were addressed. Because the vice principal was not able to attend the research team meetings, he received email updates instead. All site mentors were given the opportunity to participate on the research team but, due to scheduling and responses, we chose one site mentor for the team and used feedback from other mentors during site observations to include mentor data. Initially, two students were supposed to be chosen in coordination with the internship coordinator factoring in their interest, availability, and constructive participation in the program. During the first research team meeting both students stated they had scheduling conflicts for the next meeting. We decided to invite two other students to the second meeting. It went so well engaging the students in productive conversation that we continued with open invitations for different students for the last two research meetings. Students reported at the last meeting that they appreciated being part of the process and that they learned a lot.
Each research team cycle involved the methods listed below, as well as a constant reflection of the processes and relationships within the program. Scheduled meetings occurred every other week for four weeks directly after the weekly Skills Class because everyone but the mentor and community were already present. The information gathered during the first cycle (the first two meetings) informed short- and long-term action that included immediate processes, class topics, and relationship considerations for the current year. The second cycle (the last two meetings) included identified short-term actions needed, but mostly focused on long-term processes for the following fall semester and reflective discussions on the program itself.

As shown in Figure 1, each action research cycle included the four steps of diagnosing, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Reflection was applied throughout the action research process to form “the meta cycle in inquiry” through the forms of content, process, and premise that reviewed both intended and unintended consequences (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p 10-12). These steps were guided by protocols that allow freedom of input and reflection.

**Figure 2: Action Research Cycles**
Data Collection

I used five different and overlapping qualitative data collection methods during the two action research cycles: 1) student journaling; 2) student and site mentor questionnaires; 3) class and site observations; 4) action research meeting notes; and, 5) a culminating student focus group. By drawing from these multiple sources, I was able to triangulate the data and increase the credibility of the findings.

Obtaining consent from the students and the mentors was much more difficult than planned. It took six weeks to receive all needed consent forms; in the end I collected 17 of 18 student consent forms and 13 of 18 mentor consent forms. Adding the consent forms to the front of the online questionnaires helped obtain the final consent forms needed. Before I decided to put the consent form online connected with the questionnaires, I had to drive to numerous mentor sites during convenient times with the mentor and remind the students each week in class. The community leader was very helpful with consent forms from mentors who were otherwise non-responsive; without her assistance, I would not have obtained five of mentor consents. Some students were reluctant to sign the consent form until I assured them that I would not include any data or visit their intern site if they were uncomfortable, and that they could stop participation at any point during the study. The bottom line was that the process had to be as easy and convenient as possible to get better participation, and I had to take the time needed to really explain what “consent” meant and what I would do with their data. The most time spent was assuring students and mentors that their input would remain anonymous.

Student Journaling. Because “journal keeping is a significant mechanism for developing reflective skills” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 25), I instituted weekly student reflection journaling from prompts, intending to help the students step back and understand how
they felt about an experience and translate it to future experiences over time. A critical link exists between the concrete experience, judgment, and planning for any future action. Journaling was initially not very successful given the lack of depth and number of student responses, so we focused our journal prompts to the skills class and reflection on how that skill was applied in practical application. Student feedback and depth of responses were thus much stronger during the study period. I also followed up with several students to explain some reflection thoughts that seemed pertinent to the study. Journal prompts were given to the students during class, posted on Edmodo, an educational software program familiar to students because it was used for other classes, and the students were required to either hand their responses to the teacher in class, or email them to her by the next class.

**Weekly Skills Class.** I developed the agendas for all six weekly skills classes during the study. I took the lessons from the fall semester classes and from student feedback to draft an effective agenda for each week. Each agenda included a specific skill from the P21 model, contrasted with what skills we noticed to be in more need. By the time the study started, most students had internships and numerous classes had been conducted. We repeated several skills during the study using an improved method of instruction with intentional outcomes. Classes started with a definition and discussion of a skill. We followed up with small group discussion, then large group discussion/reflection, and a modeling exercise, then finished class with review. During several of the skills classes during the study we also had the students complete the directed journal prompt before leaving in order to get more relevant information and better response rates. Attendance for the class was never 100%. Out of the 18 students enrolled in the class during the study period, the best attendance we had during any given week was 15 students, with attendance as low as 12 students one week. This greatly affected the purpose of the class,
which was skills development, as well as effective journal responses. The skills class took place on Monday nights at 7pm because no better time could be scheduled.

**Questionnaires.** A follow up questionnaire at the end of the study period for the students was distributed. It aligned with a pre-study questionnaire that focused on 21\textsuperscript{st} century skills perceptions about workplace dynamics, internship expectations, and learning outcomes. The results of the questionnaire helped drive instructional topics and priorities during planning for the following year. The pre-study questionnaire was updated for clarity due to feedback from the students. Site mentors also completed a different questionnaire at the end of the study period that focused on students’ experiences, as well as their own. This also informed school leaders for possible adjustments or adaptations to the program concerning site mentors and student work-based learning processes through student perceptions. Both questionnaires were extremely difficult to collect: I had to drive to multiple mentor locations and continually remind students. I ended up putting both questionnaires online and it proved to be highly effective.

**Observations.** Two different opportunities for observations shed light on key stakeholders. First, I observed the Weekly Skills Class several times and produced field notes to describe specific experiences, as well as reactions, feelings, and any further questions to be addressed. I also observed several teacher-student engagements that occurred before and after selected classes for designated students. My role varied from external observer to participant-observer, depending on the situation; but the overall intent was to conduct careful watching until I noticed continuing patterns or trends (Alkin, 2011). These observations and field notes informed necessary in-progress changes and recommendations for the future. I completed four site observations in order to monitor the interaction and rigor of the student experience. Two of the observations were incomplete due to short visit periods, so I followed up with two extra
phone calls with mentors to help gather site data. Some students were very reluctant to have me visit their sites, and others’ internships were not conducive to site observations due to the nature of the work or the size of the location. My field notes specifically focused on adult mentorship, professional workplace behavior and contributions, skills recognition, and utilization of approved objectives. These visits were determined by scheduling and overall student interest, both positively and negatively, in order to appropriately gauge concerns or best practices.

**Action research meeting notes.** Field notes from both action research cycle meetings, four meetings in total, allowed reflection on the actual internship program process as it was implemented and affected by relationships. The notes and guiding questions informed the research team, and eventually key school leaders, as to what worked for their particular school model what did not work as designed, or what did not work at all. The notes helped with later reflection during meetings about what affected immediate changes and planned changes in the future. The community leader played an integral role during the research team meetings by giving perspective as a local employer, a parent, a local government leader, and a resident. It proved extremely effective to have her present during every research team meeting.

**Student Focus Group.** At the end of the study I conducted one focus group session to allow students to reflect on their experiences. Questions explored their frustrations, changes, lessons learned, personal experiences, and suggestions for the program in the future to help fill the gap of information for the research questions and to help triangulate the data. The results are included in the findings section of the study and informed recommendations. There were 6 students scheduled to attend the focus group, but 3 students had to cancel the week of the scheduled focus group. I could not reschedule the event, so we conducted the focus group with only 3 students and I followed up with the same questions from the focus group with the 3
students who couldn’t attend in order to ensure we collected the right amount of data. The community leader was chosen to lead the student focus group in order to ensure objectivity of the data as I was too close to the study and subjective data may have resulted. It proved very effective since the focus group was videotaped. I followed up with the community leader for her thoughts as well.

The timing of data collection was as follows:

- **Each Week:** Review student journal reflections, conduct on-site observations (one research team meeting, one classroom observation).
- **Four Times During the Study:** Observe and facilitate research team meeting.
- **End of the Study:** Administer post-internship questionnaires for student perceptions and site mentor experiences; conduct one focus group.

**Answering the Research Questions**

In order to answer the first and second research questions, I facilitated development opportunities with the internship course teacher. I observed the interactions during the action research planning meetings, in class with students, and with site mentors during site observations. I reviewed journal entries completed by students during the study period, comments from faculty, reviews from site mentors at the conclusion of the study, and questionnaires from key audiences on perceived experiences, growth, and recommendations. I conducted research team meetings to discuss current progress, to determine which areas were emphasized, and to make any necessary changes to previous plans or processes. I used both sets of questionnaires to inform the research team for final recommendations for the fall semester processes and the overall student internship experience.

I was present and engaged during meetings and when completing observations. Resulting
relationships were based on communication, tone, body language, collaboration, and output. These specifics were important to answer the first and second research questions because not all practices from other programs and research applied to this study. New methods and issues came up during this study that were particular to the school site. These areas and practices were identified and noted for the program to grow in scale, and so that other schools can understand and address their own particular dynamics.

In order to answer the third research question and obtain an accurate student voice, I observed internship experiences over time, reviewed journal entries and questionnaires, and observed action research meetings and classroom sessions to evaluate 21st century skills development and student self-directed educational efforts. The use of survey questionnaires greatly assisted in getting feedback from key personnel without taking time that was better used for process review and training as the action research cycle process continued. A post-questionnaire followed up to a pre-study questionnaire and allowed the action research team to compare some of the data for the last research team meeting. Two major areas were discussed: perceived skills growth and self-direction of the experience. At minimum, the post-internship survey covered key audience member perceptions from the beginning through the end of the study period, with the emphasis on the program framework, student skills growth, professional workplace experiences, and student self-directed learning opportunities. Lastly, I contacted several students who dropped the class in order to get their perceptions and feedback. I also conducted numerous follow-up discussions or sent email requests to specific students who could help fill important data gaps during the study.

Data Analysis

The overall analysis goal for this study was to compare what the literature review
provided to what was actually feasible and effective while implementing the pilot internship program. Timely data was collected and organized to inform research meetings and actionable plans. Observations and key meetings allowed for in-progress changes, while journals, surveys, and the focus group allowed for reflective analysis to recommend best practices for the site. Both sets of methods were coded and analyzed in context, with observations providing and requiring more timely feedback. Triangulation of the data was possible and allowed for credibility through the multiple collection methods that answered each question. I used in-person and email follow-up questions to ensure I completely answered the research questions. Because of some unexpected changes from the initial methods plan, these follow-up questions were crucial in providing effective data analysis.

Themes that were established through the convergence of data and perspectives of participants added validity to the study (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Observation notes, survey questionnaires, action research meetings, and journal reflections were examined for patterns and themes that coincided with or diverged from the literature review and other current internship programs in order to ensure students’ voices were included in the findings and recommendations. The student questionnaires were coded for post-skill and experience perceptions, and the mentor questionnaires were coded for experience perceptions and evaluation of student interns. Data gathered during the study was fed back into the process to make any further changes and re-coded as applicable. All field notes and participatory data were validated with the person or persons involved to ensure “member checking” assists with accuracy (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010, p. 201).

I used a field notes to capture the action research team discussions and videotaped the focus group. I analyzed the notes and video recording, looking for patterns and themes related to
changes in perceptions and development breakthroughs that support student development and program effectiveness. The data collected from the action research group was examined for patterns and themes related to how the participants felt about the program. Field notes were used and analyzed during site and classroom observations. Finally, the pre-program questionnaire helped inform the post-program questionnaire given at the end of the study period.

**Ethical Considerations & Credibility**

The intent of this study was to assist school leaders in implementing an internship program, while ensuring that the methods and findings were externally credible. I aimed to ensure that students had an opportunity to engage in real-world education through a work-based program and that other public high schools could share in this opportunity. I ensured that all participants were aware of the aims and goals of this study. A study agreement was completed after the study was approved to commence.

Maintaining confidentiality was a high priority throughout the study. I kept all documents and personnel information on my laptop, controlled with password protection and backed up on my personal Dropbox folder. The videotape was deleted by the community leader after I was able to get a copy of it. I gave pseudonyms to all action research participants for confidentiality. Even though the school leadership can share the data with its high school, any identifying information will be removed.

I initially chose this particular public high school after a discussion with the district leadership about my research focus on the transition to adulthood. Although I had a connection with the school district, I did not have any relationships with any of the current stakeholders in this study that would affect any outcomes or concerns. In order to ensure credibility with this study, I was given open access to all participants and information by the school leadership. This
ensured all required research methods were completed and that data was triangulated. Working with the internship coordinator to validate journal entries, observation notes, and questionnaire results ensured that personal bias and subjectivity did not affect trends and key findings. These methods also allowed for student perception confirmation that decreased reactivity. Including the site mentor in site observations, a post-internship questionnaire, and the formal presentation in the spring ensured the site mentor’s voice and perceptions were known. There were opportunities throughout the study for key stakeholders to give input and be part of the change. I was not involved in selecting students for the program and the internships were self-directed; these two key points helped ensure my own objective participation as the researcher.

I ensured internal reliability by informing key participants, ensuring preparation for meetings, giving timely feedback, retaining confidentiality, and acknowledging efforts. I obtained external credibility by incorporating effective practices from the field while citing sources and ensuring that we gathered new knowledge to be shared with the field. I secured all release forms and agreements in my safe at home. I continued to guard against my own bias by communicating with key leaders and expressing any concerns during the action research meetings. Students bought in to the program and site mentors understood their role during the study through trust and transparency.

Finally, school and district leadership agreed on and desired this program, but some school faculty members were needed in order to reach, engage, and support students to make this program successful for the long term.

**Summary**

Many newer school models view internship opportunities “as an essential learning experience for all students” (Washor & Mojkowski, 2013, p. 94). Through shared experiences
with adults, students see “the connections between interests, work and the larger world” (Quartz & Washor, 2008, p. 60). The methods in this study, through action research cycles, aligned proper process implementation of a pilot internship program within a public high school, as well as offered an opportunity to hear and incorporate the student voice for effective school reform and meaningful adult mentorship while learning necessary 21st century skills. By observing classroom interactions and internship site experiences, surveying students and site mentors for their perceptions, conducting a student focus group to flesh out more details, and involving the key stakeholders on the action research team, I was able to effectively answer the three research questions and provide La Playa High School with reliable data for their pilot internship program. The findings of this action research project ensured the internship program could grow in scale the following year and offer new knowledge to existing literature on internship opportunities.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

Colleges and employers continue to complain that high school graduates are not ready for the rigors of adulthood, and public high schools largely remain focused on college-only curricula. Work-based opportunities like internships offer interested high school students the opportunity to gain real-world experience and learn expectations of the workplace. This study implemented a public high school pilot internship program using best practices from many different models across the nation. My research addressed three questions:

1. What relationships and connections facilitate the implementation of a pilot internship program designed to better prepare public high school seniors for college and careers?

2. What practices support self-directed learning of 21st century skills and external adult mentorship in a public high school pilot internship program? and,

3. What are students’ perceptions about how the internship experience prepares them for post-graduation pathway choices?

This chapter begins with the stories of two students enrolled in the internship program who had very different experiences. The aims of the program included self-direction, skills development, and adult mentorship. Christina missed the aims of the program due to an overestimation of her skills and lack of self-advocacy. By contrast, Cathy had an exemplary experience wherein she integrated into the staff and led an important city project. These two stories represent different ends of the internship experience, whereas most students fell somewhere in between. The relationships, practices, and perceptions learned from the
experiences of those involved in this study afforded new data about implementing a high school pilot internship program and about how to better reach students in order to get the most out of this work-based learning opportunity to better prepare for post-graduation paths. After contrasting student experiences, this chapter includes a brief summary of the study. The three research questions are then addressed, followed by significant other findings before concluding.

**Christina’s Story**

Christina presented as an incredible opportunity because in all aspects she prepared to have an effective internship experience as the school year began. She earned great grades, participated in many activities both in and outside of school, and had involved, successful parents. She was an active participant in the internship skills class from the beginning and attended most classes. She routinely gave feedback that she was proficient in the required skills that were reviewed in the skills class. After several months of attending skills classes, communicating about what internships entail, and reviewing requirements of the program, Christina’s journal entries included reflective comments like “…a majority of things we practice in class aren’t put to use in my internship. I am a good and focused worker and do what is asked of me with little trouble.” Her mentor confirmed this statement during a visit to the internship site; but, after over two months, the mentor was unfamiliar with the program’s expectations of high school interns and had not discussed any objectives nor reviewed broad aspects of the organization.

It was discovered that the mentor was told by a senior employee who was familiar with Christina’s family to mentor her, but the mentor was not given any guidance or assistance in mentorship. Christina wrote in journal entries that she did not have to exercise self-direction at her internship: “Being self-directed does not mean you take initiative but it means you are able to
finish tasks on your own.” She checked off in the student post-program questionnaire that she “strongly agreed” that she played an active role in self-directing her internship experience. Again, observing her during a research team meeting, she stated, “I work under the people who need to get stuff done. They are young girls, but I am not being mentored. It’s not her job.” This comment was made at the end of the study after six or seven discussions and journal prompts directly relating to the requirements of the class and definitions of skills reviewed in the program.

In the student post-program questionnaire Christina noted that she has learned directly applicable information in the class. Observing her in class, her responses to practical application exercises invariably included having someone else deal with or avoid certain decisions. At times her written and verbal responses could almost be categorized as “combative.” Christina journaled that she never needed to explain anything in a short period of time, “nor would… have anything of the sort to say. I don’t pitch ideas or projects… I AM AN INTERN.” During a discussion at a research team meeting, she reinforced that she did not feel it was her place to offer ideas, input, or improvement strategies as an intern. This reinforced her stance that the skills covered in class and assignments were not relevant to her situation.

Christina did not set objectives with her mentor because she did not want to bother her. She felt her mentor was too busy. This was revealed during a discussion with her in class. She was not self-directing her experience and was not being mentored to learn broader aspects of the business. Even though the people at the internship site liked her, her lack of self-advocacy negated a complete internship experience, that which was intended by the program. Christina declared that she was disciplined and motivated to get tasks complete, which was confirmed by her completion of required class assignments and comments from her mentor regarding her
internship. She took pride in accomplishing tasks, noting in a journal entry that “My mentors are usually surprised at how quickly I finish my tasks and am ready to start a new one.” Her reflective assignments often dismissed requests for deeper learning.” In response to a journal prompt asking to discuss any learning opportunities at the internship site which dealt with self-awareness and responsibility, she wrote: “I have never been addressed about an aspect of responsibility at my internship”; for a prompt concerning setting objectives that her, she continued: “objective is to do what I am supposed to do” (emphasis added).

Although on the student post-program questionnaire Christina disagreed that her internship aligned with her career interests, she strongly agreed that she felt “prepared for college or career expectations.” Her observations in class, comments in journaling and on the questionnaire, observations during a site mentor meeting, and comments made during a research team meeting illustrated that Christina’s perception of her conceptual knowledge affected her ability to reflect, learn, and model the skills taught in class. She also appeared to have missed the main objectives of the internship program, which included self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship. She stated in a research meeting that this program would be great for people who don’t know what they want to do, but she later admitted that she didn’t know what she wanted to do after college. She didn’t connect her earlier comment.

A follow-up email to Christina after our last research meeting asked if she felt there was any way the program could better help students like her who had young mentors not engaged in mentoring; she replied: “I think it’s important if you want students to have interactive relationships with their mentors that you or [the teacher] maybe have preset internships with people/companies willing to do what you want for the students.” The focus of self-directed learning discussed in class, setting objectives with your mentor, and having conversations with
mentors throughout the process were main goals of the program from the beginning, things many
other student interns were able to accomplish. Toward the end of a research team meeting,
Christina admitted that “It would be better to have students get internships from people who will
dedicate time to actually mentor, not just have do stuff.” She strongly agreed that her
“contributions at the internship site made a difference” and that she “believe[d] the skills [she]
developed in the internship program may change my future plans.” After all her interesting
experiences and challenges about the program, in the end Christina did appear to get something
from it that could motivate her in a different direction. It took a lot of work to get her to a place
to convey that.

Cathy’s Story

Cathy is a soft-spoken and contemplative student. She is interested in business and
attempted several contacts with possible internship sites. She was ignored from one location after
submitting a résumé and leaving messages, and she was not chosen at another site. She finally
called a third location and was accepted as an intern. Although her site mentor was asked by a
supervisor to mentor a high school student, and the mentor was busy and fairly inexperienced
with interns, Cathy’s mentor accepted. Cathy’s mentor was immediately willing and interested in
how to help Cathy get the most out of the experience, and Cathy was able to advocate her desired
objectives. A partnership was formed because the mentor could rely on Cathy to show up on
time, contribute to a major project, and become part of the team during meetings and decision-
making opportunities. Cathy said that “people ask [my mentor] for her opinion and then she asks
me. It makes me feel good that they value my opinion.” The site embraced Cathy by showing her
broad aspects of the department, trusting her to help with an upcoming festival, and supporting
Cathy’s objectives. During my site visit, Cathy’s mentor stated that “we have a very open line of communication.”

Cathy admitted that the initial process of gaining an internship was difficult, but she was ultimately happy with the outcome, excited to be part of something, and was happy at a site where her input mattered. She rated herself “low” in effort on a pre-study student questionnaire and agreeing that she played an active role in self-directing her internship experience. The process and ultimate success changed her perspective about her active participation in the program. She stated in a journal entry: “I got to sit in on a couple of meetings and got to contribute ideas for the festival which was a really awesome opportunity.” During a site observation she discussed how she was initially shy and hesitant to talk to others in the office area, but she now felt very comfortable. Cathy specifically talked about improving her “people skills” including communicating better and following up. She was no longer nervous when calling on community leaders and businesses. This was confirmed on her post-program questionnaire wherein she strongly agreed to being able to better express herself and contribute to classroom activities. In a follow-up email concerning her experience, Cathy responded that she “never realized how much of a responsibility I would have in the workplace. I did not realize that I would be part of really important tasks.”

On a pre-study student questionnaire completed during the fall semester, Cathy graded her understanding of workplace technologies as “average.” On the post-study questionnaire she marked that she “strongly agreed” that she understood workplace technologies. Cathy was present at each skills class and completed required assignments. In direct contrast to Christina’s experience, Cathy indicated in a journal entry that “Everyone listens to what people have to say
and the ideas they have. This makes is way easier to bounce ideas of people and think of new ideas for whatever task is at hand.”

Cathy met with her mentor each time she was scheduled to report, and they reviewed outstanding tasks and developed a plan of what needed to be accomplished. During a site observation, Cathy exhibited critical thinking as she worked with her mentor to develop courses of action concerning the upcoming festival requirements. She also exhibited strong collaboration skills with other employees in the section and clarified required tasks before moving to her desk to get started on them. Her mentor asked for her input about creating the festival’s flyer.

Cathy’s mentor stated that she wished she could give her more but that limited time dictated what issues Cathy could complete. She admitted that mentoring was a lot of work but that she enjoyed it and really wanted Cathy to get the most out of the experience. At the conclusion of the site visit, the mentor indicated that this experience was eye-opening for the department. She felt lucky to have Cathy and they are using this experience to develop future criteria and processes for accepting volunteers and interns. The festival was a huge success and Cathy was excited to see all the months of planning coming to fruition. This is the type of experience that all students interested in internships should receive. She met all three focus areas of the program including self-directing her experience. Even though she wasn’t directly interested in the field of her internship, Cathy established an opportunity to learn business practices and built professional contacts.

**Study Summary**

Although other high school internship programs exist to help answer the need to better prepare youth for adulthood, and there is current literature pertaining to establishing high school internships, there seems to be a lack of data about implementing a program in a public high
school environment. Very early on in the study, it became apparent that many other factors must be considered and included when implementing an internship program at a public high school. The action research process allowed for immediate feedback and changes, identification of struggles that affected evaluating and improving the program, and assurances that all interested parties had a voice in the pilot program. The students were often only focusing on immediate life requirements, and often the internship class was not a priority for assignments and best efforts. This was identified by most of the students during their final presentations, with many reflecting that they wish they had put more effort into the class and their internships in order to affect a better outcome. The pilot program’s findings, struggles, frustrations, missed opportunities, and success stories have informed La Playa’s administration as they look to grow the program in scale in the fall.

**Review of Research Questions**

**Research Question #1:**

*What relationships and connections facilitate the implementation of a pilot internship program designed to better prepare public high school seniors for college and careers?*

The implementation of a public high school pilot internship program hinges on relationships and connections. Unlike private, independent, or charter schools, or career academies, which often build a school culture around a theme or work-based opportunities for students, public schools offer external classroom opportunities to interested students that must not interfere with the typical classroom subjects. An internship program could compete with numerous other programs and opportunities at public schools, thereby limiting faculty and student interest. Unless the school administration, involved faculty, and interested community
members see the collective benefit and work together to offer an internship opportunity, the program may not last or reach those students who may benefit greatly from the experience.

**Administration and Faculty.** As the idea for an internship program moved from the district office to the La Playa administration, the single point of contention from the beginning surrounded who to got to lead it. The Administration had an idea for a teacher to do so, and as we waited to hear if he would accept the request to start the pilot internship program, all the school leadership involved seemed very interested in this opportunity. In the end, the Teacher accepted the offer and he proved to be a great choice to bring a real-world experience to the students; the students who stayed enrolled in the program the entire year engaged him with internship questions and concerns that affected their internship experiences.

Of the 14 students who completed the post-study questionnaire, 13 agreed that they were comfortable with the internship coordinator, with 12 reporting that they “strongly agreed.” Only 1 student reported that he disagreed, and no student (0) reported having “strongly disagreed.”

George reported that he was not comfortable, and his story is discussed in greater detail later. Although George repeatedly gave feedback that he was “already proficient” in the skills taught in class and that the class was a waste of time, his reflection during his final presentation concluded that he grew in self-directing his internship and his communication and that he wished he would have been more engaged in the process from the beginning.

Another student worked with the Teacher on numerous occasions because she was having difficulty with her mentor. The mentor was “putting a lot of pressure” on her and not very supportive; he communicated negatively and this upset the student. The Teacher worked with her to ensure it was a safe environment, and took on the responsibility of addressing the situation. In the end, this student decided to end her internship early. As I discussed the experience with her,
this student was still positive with what she had learned and was very appreciative of the support from the Teacher. She concluded that her difficult experience forced her to improve her communication and advocacy skills.

Of the 10 students who both disenrolled from the program and provided feedback, none (0) of them listed the teacher as a reason for doing so. Although classroom requirements were a common reason for disenrollment, and ultimately fell under the responsibility of the Teacher, he continually evaluated assignments and grading and made numerous changes over the course of the year. The Teacher was very flexible and engaging during the study period in order to get feedback on how to improve the experience. During a research team meeting, he discussed how the grading for the class was frustrating for him and that it seemed frustrating to the students too. He wanted their input to figure out how to get their best effort with effective grading aligned with assignments. The students gave him great input which promulgated changes over the school year, as well as in planned changes for the following year. The Teacher not only connected with the students to assist them with self-directed learning, he was also a great contact in the community in regard to bringing in guest speakers who ranged from small business owners to investors to marketing executives.

The relationship between the Teacher and the La Playa administration seemed very supportive as the school year started. Once it got underway however, it became very difficult to get responses to questions from the administration and address concerns. Some responses from administrative leaders would take weeks, if at all. The Teacher sent key class forms to be approved by the Administration, yet it took well into the second month of the school year to get a response. During the study period, I requested several pieces of information but did not receive any feedback after several attempts to reach different school leaders and counselors. It was not
until the Community Leader, who was part of our research team, made contact with the Administration that I received some assistance.

The last internal school administration relationships regarded Counselors. Two classes of at-risk students were briefed in coordination with their counselors in order to recruit students who could greatly benefit from the opportunity to re-connect with education and think about post-high school options differently. In the end, 5 of 75 students from this group enrolled in the class. We were not able to meet with all Counselors prior to school starting. It was discovered during a later research team meeting that some Counselors had only targeted students with strong records and good grades – the Teacher felt this was a missed opportunity to include more at-risk students in the program; however, we focused on the fact that so many known high-performing students ended up on the class’s final roster.

Two (2) students on the team reported being told by Counselors to sign up for the internship program because, given their strong grades, an internship would be a great addition to their college applications; this was not the intent of the program nor was it part of the discussion we had with the Administration prior to starting the program. We found this aspect very unfortunate and did not get any further feedback from the Counselors or Administration during the study. If not for the significant findings that: 1) high-performing students tended to overestimate skills, and 2) it was difficult to get to deeper learning opportunities, the lack of counselor connection and support could have greatly affected the study and the overall program. The Teacher expected to engage the Counselors over the summer to better align the program goals to the right students, still with the intent to support any student who enrolled in the program.
Community Leader. One of the greatest relationships during the study pertained to a community leader who agreed to be part of the study by volunteering to assist students with internship issues and serve on the research team. She was very well-known in and well-connected to the community, and proved to be a great sounding board for questions and as data developed. Having a community leader who could engage the Administration, provide support to the students, use relationships and connections within the community for student internship opportunities, and help contact site mentors as needed was extremely beneficial.

The Community Leader also provided great perspective during our research meetings because she was aware of the dynamics of the city leadership, student schedule conflicts and priorities, and because she personally saw the benefit of this internship program for students. I would not have been able to get the site mentor feedback with my post-study questionnaires without her help, and their input was an important part of the study. Although the program centered on self-direction in order to obtain internships, it became apparent as the spring semester started, wherein 3 students did not yet have internships, that something needed to be done. Either these students needed secured positions quickly or they would have to disenroll from the program. The Community Leader was able to secure each of them a warm lead for an internship interview in a very short period of time and within the parameters of the intended program goal of self-direction, although the students still had to interview and sit down with their site mentor to develop objectives, two key parts of the self-direction experience.

There was a discussion during the study between the Teacher, the Community Leader, and me to determine if students who did not obtain an internship should be allowed to remain in the class. After reviewing data from the benefits of internships from research and the experiences that the students were reporting, it was decided that obtaining an internship for each student was
crucial to the goal of a real-world, work-based learning experience. The growth and lessons the students would experience were undeniable. If the class allowed students to remain enrolled without an internship, it would greatly affect grading, perceptions, and support of other more limited conceptual learning opportunities. Knowing that there was a disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application (or modeling), there was no way this program could attain its aims if a student did not actually have an internship.

**Local Employers.** Local Employers were an important aspect of the internship program for two reasons: 1) serving as guest speakers to inform students of career specifics and opportunities, and 2) providing mentorship opportunities for students within desired businesses. The Teacher had guest speakers come in about every other week in the fall, and about once a month in the spring. He chose area business leaders he knew and their career fields were varied. The students enjoyed the guest speakers and most of them reported that the speakers were one of their favorite parts of the class.

A few students responded that they wished there had been a greater variety of speakers. During follow-up conversations with some of these students, it became apparent that none of the speakers fell within their interests. One of the research meeting topics included guest speakers, and three changes to the class were decided at that meeting. First, the teacher would get input from the students early in the fall semester concerning their areas of interest, both for internship ideas and for guest speakers. Second, the teacher would take time in the beginning of the year to explain the expectations of evaluating a guest speaker, even if he or she was not working in an interested area of some students. This topic arose after some students complained about the types of speakers, specifically that there were two restaurant owners who visited the class within a short period of time and the students were not interested in the restaurant business. We used this
as a learning opportunity to explain the tangible takeaways from speaker visits, such as one restaurateur having retained many of the same employees for over 20 years as (a sign of good leadership), and the other surviving for over 30 years in a fad-driven area (showing a knack for marketing, service, and understanding your clientele). During this discussion, one could see the light bulbs go on in many of the students, and this became a pivotal moment for the Teacher and our research team to work on deeper learning opportunities instead of students quickly dismissing ideas as irrelevant or already-known. Most students expressed affirmation that they understood “leadership” and had heard about it all their lives, but few had actually applied leadership, as we learned during discussions in class. It was important to review this with the students because some of them were not completing an internship in a career field they planned to pursue and we did not want them to miss out on potential learning opportunities regardless.

Third, the Teacher agreed to better prepare the guest speakers for more effective engagement with the students. Where he had previously allowed them to talk about their experience and businesses, the Teacher asked the Local Employers to present how they got to where they were, what they learned along the way, what skills aligned with their fields, the expectations of a new hire, and a broad sweep of areas to focus on within a certain career field. These topics assisted guest speakers in connecting better with the students regardless of the actual career field discussed.

During the fifth week of the study, we had a guest speaker from an advertising firm whom the Teacher better prepared by outlining the aims of the program and student demographics. This Local Employer was better prepared to address the internship students than had been the other speakers. He was dynamic and seemed to connect very well with the students. He discussed how many of his employees came from different backgrounds and that their
diversity added a crucial component to collaboration. He had employed interns and discussed some of his experiences with them. Of the 15 students present that night, 11 asked a question or made a comment; it was a very active dialogue. Tommy asked, “Would you advertise something you don’t agree with?”—many of other students shook their heads in anticipation of this Local Employer’s response, but he said “no” and gave a specific example. Up to this point, another student, Keith, had spent most class time talking to others and not paying attention, but this format and speaker intrigued him; he asked two questions, the most engaged he had been in any previous class. Several students expressed interest in the advertising field after the class. It was an obvious conclusion from watching interactions with speakers throughout the course that properly selecting and preparing the speaker, while also properly instructing students on the takeaways from speakers regardless of their career field, were two key points in allowing deeper learning opportunities.

**Site Mentors.** The second important connection with employers was to provide adult mentorship opportunities during the internship. Students reported having had difficulty with self-advocacy, so engaged Site Mentors provided a great learning opportunity for students in a real-world, accountable setting. Although it was discovered during a research team meeting, and confirmed through dialogue in class, that most students found internships through some type of connection, this was not the case for all students and it didn’t always negatively impact the self-direction learning opportunity.

Many students were not accepted at their first—or even second for a few—internship sites. In a follow-up discussion after the focus group, Brad discussed his failed initial attempt at securing an internship, noting that “even though I didn’t get the internship, it made me more comfortable when interviewing for an internship.” Greg was also grateful when reflecting on his
failed internship interview experience. During our first research team meeting, Greg mentioned that he really hadn’t failed at anything and that this failure “actually helped [him] learn.” He expected that internships would be set up for students and, when class started in the fall, was surprised to learn he had to find his own internships. This feedback afforded several conversations during team meetings concerning self-direction and what it meant in regard to the class. What seemed to be developing were groups of students who would have preferred more assistance and other students who appreciated the literal self-directed definition. This was important to know as we received feedback from Site Mentors, and helped us plan how to better engage and prepare them in the future.

The intent of the Site Mentor agreeing to mentor the intern and completing the required documents was to afford the intern an otherwise unavailable opportunity to learn from experience while being held accountable for real work expectations. All Site Mentors were contacted as internships were secured. It was discovered during the study that this aim had mixed results: some of the Site Mentors were told to mentor by higher-ups or agreed to mentor as a favor; some had never mentored an intern before and some were not given the forms to review with their intern (as we heard in Christina’s story), while others readily accepted the responsibility, completed the forms, incorporated the intern into the daily rhythm of the office, and communicated a positive experience from mentoring (as we heard in Cathy’s story). The findings are clear that all the Site Mentors did not develop a relationship with the school to work in concert with the goals of the class through providing a more enriching experience. This data reinforced that relationships and engagement with Site Mentors was crucial to understanding affected involvement levels.
First time Site Mentors were the most vocal concerning the desire for a relationship with the school and the support to better provide a great internship experience for the student intern. Support included: defining mentor expectations for a high school student, clarifying strategies for effectively communicating with the student intern, knowing the goals of the program, how to complete forms in order to establish objectives, and wanting periodic contact from the school which noted skills topics and included reminders for any desired actions or input.

During my site discussion with Christina’s Site Mentor, I very quickly realized a few things that we failed to consider. First, no one from the program ensured that Christina had completed her forms. No one followed up with the Site Mentor to verify any questions when the forms weren’t received. There was no discussion about strategies with students who were having self-advocacy issues until the study revealed these data.

Relationships with some of the Site Mentors improved just from our contact for consent forms and in completing the questionnaire. Not only did I receive information about student performance, but I also learned about Site Mentor frustrations, which led to explanations of the aims of the program and how important their feedback was to improving the program. Although Dean’s Site Mentor indicated he was not interested in mentoring future high school interns in the future, he was appreciative of my phone call and explanation of the program’s intent. Both Dean’s and Greg’s Site Mentors felt more at ease during this contact, which allowed them to relax and vent for a few minutes giving me great feedback.

During the course of the study, the Community Leader also engaged Site Mentors on several occasions. Her ability to connect with those she didn’t know, or use her relationship with others, proved extremely effective to resolving communication issues and obtaining internship contacts for students in need. One Site Mentor in particular noted that she would not have been
willing to mentor without the call from the Community Leader to better explain and coach her, as she was a new mentor and had no idea of the expectations in mentoring a high school intern. Along with the Community Leader as a great contact, having the program forms for the Site Mentor to review were crucial to providing effective Mentor support.

**Student Interns.** Lastly, in regard to relationships and connections, it became obvious during the study that if a Student Intern did not connect with the course’s Teacher, it affected attendance, effort, and enrollment. Although the Teacher was flexible on class structure and assignment due dates as we figured out the best methods for the program at the school, he was not flexible on effort. He supported the aims of the program and expected Student Interns to turn in completed assignments. As some Students struggled with time management, they would turn assignments in last minute or late, sometimes in grouped responses or from multiple weeks.

Student Interns who disenrolled from the program often stopped attending class and/or communicating with the Teacher. The Teacher reached out to several Students during the early part of the spring semester in order to try to help them remain enrolled, but they were not responsive. They were not as connected with the Teacher as were the Student Interns who remained enrolled in the program. The enrolled Student Interns felt comfortable asking questions and presenting issues, and the Teacher could communicate with them about expectations and work through issues that arose.

In order for future Students to feel comfortable enough to enroll and remain enrolled in the program, and have a good learning experience, it appears the connection starts with an informed Counselor, a positive relationship with the Teacher, focused classroom activities that connect with the students, a good relationship with an program-educated Site Mentor, and support from the Teacher.
**Conclusion.** As learned during research for this study and through analyzing the data, relationships and connections greatly matter when offering external classroom opportunities to high school students. Lack of support or miscommunication – like with the Administration and Counselors – can greatly affect the classroom dynamics and outcome. Failing to connect with and include Site Mentors affected the student experience and future mentoring opportunities. Including a key Community Leader can add great value for connections with the community and Administration. The lessons learned from this action research study greatly informed the importance of key relationships for the school to better develop the program for coming years.

**Research Question 2:**

*What practices support self-directed learning of 21st century skills and external adult mentorship in a public high school pilot internship program?*

Many high school internship programs have practices that support their specific aims. While gathering research for the best practices to consider for this pilot study, there were a lot of data to sift through. Each program seemed to have particular practices that were similar in nature to other programs, but they had been adapted to a particular site. This made it difficult to adapt a “right way” at the beginning of this pilot study. While engaging several comparable high schools with existing internship programs, I learned that they were still evolving and still adapting effective practices. Many practices during this study were attempted and altered for effectiveness and to provide an even better experience for students next year.

**Forms.** Two forms were developed for the Students to use at the internship sites to get a better idea of their workplaces and to help self-direct the internship experience. The “Internship Agreement Form” was adapted from several other forms found during research in order to assist Students to initiate face-to-face discussions with Site Mentors, and agree to workplace
expectations and objectives. Both the Student Intern and the Site Mentor were responsible for signing the form and revisiting the objectives periodically throughout the internship in order to make any necessary adjustments as those objectives were reached or changed.

The purpose of the “Intern Site Sheet” was to allow the Student Intern the ability to ask about and observe focused areas in order to get a deeper understanding of the culture and mission of the organization. Both forms were assigned to the Student Intern to complete and return to the Teacher within the first few weeks of obtaining an internship. There were mixed results with the actual completion of these forms.

Although there isn’t a direct correlation between completing these forms and satisfaction with internship outcomes, Students who reported that they did not complete the forms were more likely, upon reflection, to regret not completing them and feel they could have gotten more from the internship experience. Brad ended up at a site that had a formalized internship program after several attempts to obtain other internships. He wrote in a journal reflection that he was following the site’s internship guidelines and had not completed the class forms. During his final presentation he specifically noted that he only learned one area of the organization and wished that he would have communicated that he was more interested in another area. He did not feel he got the most out of the experience. Christina, who regretted not self-advocating, wrote a journal reflection about believing the forms didn’t apply to her because “since I am an intern, I work to help others and not vice versa, so my objective is to do what I am supposed to.”

Four Site Mentors I spoke with stated that they had not known about setting objectives and, upon reflection, agreed that establishing them would have helped focus efforts for both the Mentor and Student Intern for a better internship experience. Bryan and Greg both reported that they sat down with their mentors and reviewed objectives. During the first research team
meeting, Bryan noted that he revisited the objectives and re-wrote them with his Mentor, thus allowing for better focus. Tommy wrote in a journal reflection that, after securing his internship, sitting down with his Mentor to complete the forms allowed him to communicate what he wanted to get out of the internship and he was able to concentrate on what he wanted to learn.

Having the students complete a pre- and post-study questionnaire allowed for measuring perceptions of relationships and practices in order to evaluate the program. The data gathered from these questionnaires were very beneficial in informing needed changes. Although the questionnaires were not used for personal counseling by the Teacher for each Student due to the confidential nature of the protocol, having the questionnaires as part of the class requirements in the future was discussed. Through the questionnaires we were able to decipher which skills and practices needed to be covered in more detail, each Student’s perception of the internship experience at the site, and which were the reasons Students disenrolled from the course. The questionnaires helped track the growth of self-advocacy and allowed for feedback on best practices. They reinforced observations and feedback from journal reflections.

One form that was discussed in detail and not used by the Administration was the “Background Check Form.” Many schools require a completed background check for anyone dealing with high school students in the workplace, especially students who are under 18, which included about half of the Students in the class. There were many forms used by the various schools with internship programs to conduct a background check within the school district, while other schools just required the internship site to submit a copy of its own background check. Many attempts were made to have the La Playa Administration approve and implement the background check for Site Mentors, but with no response. For both legal and security reasons, it
is highly recommended as the program moves forward that a background check is on record for all Site Mentors.

**Target Audience.** In the initial planning of the program, the district administration stated that this pilot program should be targeted for students who may be at-risk or unsure of their future after high school, but be open to all who are interested. A goal of the Administration was to evaluate if a work-based, real-world external learning opportunity would change a student’s plans. As a result of the miscommunication with some of the Counselors, potentially targeted students were not informed nor encouraged to enroll in the class. Coupled with the added variable of self-directed learning as a program aim, the student demographics of who self-selected for the program further limited the population.

Out of the 10 students who disenrolled from the program, a common reason given involved having to find their own internship. The Teacher and I spoke at great length about the Teacher’s tone during the first class session – he was very direct about the requirements – and perhaps he did not spend enough time discussing the aims and benefits of the program. The discussion frankly scared some students who were already busy with other commitments or wanted an internship set up for them without any class requirements.

Two other considerations dealt with during the study were students who either already had internships when they enrolled in the class or had a paying job for which they wanted to get internship credit. One (1) student who had a job and 2 who already had internships remained enrolled in the program so that the Teacher could evaluate if these types of situations were feasible in the future. For example, one student had been previously hired to hostess at a restaurant, and she therefore wasn’t given the opportunity to learn about different aspects of the restaurant business. Her journal reflections and contributions in class were not relevant to the
aims of the program. Between her school schedule, work schedule, and other homework, she also continually fell behind with her class assignments. One of the students who already had an internship did not complete the entire course; he disenrolled at the semester break. The other student, Bryan, had a great internship as the class began, but he was able to adapt the course requirements and complete all his work. His relationship with his Site Mentor was strong and supported him in the class to complete the forms and provide feedback on the mentor post-study questionnaire.

The data collected about the outcomes from the demographics within the pilot program reinforced keeping the internship program open to all interested students but, in particular, spending more time with Counselors to reach at-risk and undecided students. Students who may already have an internship may complete the program, but they must be willing to complete the requirements of the class and their Site Mentor must also support the requirements. After one research team meeting, it was decided that students who had a paid job would not be allowed to enroll in the internship program. As long as students could attend the classes, obtain an internship, and complete the assignments, the Teacher agreed that trying to use a job as an internship would be the only exclusion for interested students.

**Communication.** During the planning of the program, discussions included how to communicate with students and how to best share information and assignments. Some other programs used the school website with a secured link to a secured class page, while others used outside software. The Teacher had already used the Web program Edmodo and was familiar with how to best use it, so the pilot program used Edmodo during the study. Even though high school students are very electronic communication-oriented, many students did not use Edmodo to track class updates, verify assignments, and communicate with the Teacher. Even after the Teacher
reinforced the use of Edmodo on several occasions, he still had to address several Students who reported to class without completed assignments because they had failed to check Edmodo. It was decided that using Edmodo would constitute part of the grade next year to ensure that Student Interns were using it.

Student Interns used email for almost all communication with the Teacher regarding internship issues or to turn in assignments. Besides a few Students who turned in handwritten journal reflections and those written in class when prompted during the study to evaluate better completion rates and content, most journal reflections were completed through emails sent to the Teacher. Because of the timing of the class (Mondays from 7-8 p.m.), most Students would arrive from home just before class and have to return home to complete homework, so email often proved to be the best method for any follow-up questions. Emailing Students would often give them time to think about a response, although it usually took several reminders to elicit responses. I grew to use the method of briefly speaking with the Students face-to-face in order to initiate the request for information, then followed up with an email because I wanted them to clearly understand what I was asking of them. This system worked well with the quality and return of responses.

**Obtaining Internships.** One of the aims of the program was self-directed learning. Those involved in the development of the program at the school site defined *self-direction* as requiring Student Interns to research and contact a site on their own, interviewing for the internship, establishing objectives, and taking an active role in the progress of the experience to reach those objectives. With these concepts established, it was believed that Students should have to “cold call” potential mentors and organizations. Although some Students reflected that “cold calling” was beneficial to their growth in self-advocacy, those who “warm called” or used
a contact from someone else were also successful: they still had to schedule an interview, obtain
the internship, establish objectives, and take an active role to reach those objectives.

Many of the Student Interns who enrolled in the program really struggled with self-
direction, from the onset of applying for an internship, through the interview and confirmation
process, and through most of the stages of completing the internship. As the study began in early
spring, 5 students had only recently obtained their internships and the last 2 students who had
difficulty doing so dropped the class. I was able to gather data on the struggles and experiences
of those in the program, as well from some students who disenrolled from the program either in
the fall or as the spring semester started. There were two main themes that came out of the data
concerning self-directed learning – different meanings for self-direction, and that self-advocacy
improved with experience.

**Self-Direction has Different Meanings.** As the pilot program started, the expectation
was that each student would research, apply for, interview for, get accepted to, and then set
objectives for an internship with an assigned Site Mentor. This initial plan was negated as soon
as the class started meeting in the fall. Counselors had miscommunicated class expectations and
targeted only high-achieving students; students misunderstood class requirements; and, some
students already had internships or jobs and were hoping to get credit for this class through them.
Immediate adjustments had to be made and continued through the fall semester.

As the study began in the early spring, there were very mixed results with the internship
experience. Several things were very clear. Many students were overcommitted as they tried to
incorporate this internship into their schedules. One student, who had to disenroll, replied to my
request for feedback with “I had to disenroll because I was already taking three APs, so I didn’t
have time and had soccer on weeknights when the class met.” Another disenrolled student
responded that she felt the class was too focused on skills so she “felt like [she] had better things to do with [her] time so went on [her] own to get a job.” With the weekly internship hours and required assignments, only those who were serious about the experience remained enrolled.

Those who did remain often expressed difficulty in obtaining the required 8 to 10 hours per week; Carol noted in a journal reflection during the early spring semester: “Last night I finalized my internship and I’ve realized how hard it’s going to be to balance school with my rehearsals and with my internship. I’m not going to have any me time anymore.” Placing this realization in context, Carol had been in the program for over five months, among classmates who had internships much earlier, and had attended about 15 internship classes. It was surprising that she had this realization about her schedule and time management so late in the class year.

The issue of terminology was brought up by external adults on the research team which led us to use the terms cold, warm, and hot concerning leads for internship opportunities. As stated above, the intent of the program was for Student Interns to develop “cold leads” and make cold calls to express interest and request an interview. This meant that many Students would be contacting a Site Mentor who may have never had a high school intern; indeed, many of them had not.

As my study began in the spring, all the students had secured internships but their lengths of time varied greatly, as did the process each Student went through to confirm the internship. Although each Student had been briefed on the expectations of the course, it was discovered during the research meetings – and confirmed during the final presentations – that most of the Students had at least obtained a contact, or a “warm lead,” being that they somehow knew someone at the internship site, their parents knew someone, or they knew their Site Mentor. The Students who worked with a “cold lead” reported that the process was frustrating and difficult,
but they had learned from the process and had incorporated many of our class topics into their interview preparation.

The Community Leader coordinated the last internship contacts for a few Student Interns. These “warm leads” were often successful but they still required a form of self-direction because the Student was still required to make the contact, interview, and set objectives once accepted.

A few of the Students received “hot leads.” If “cold leads” refer to contact with someone with no prior connection to the Student, and “warm leads” refer to contact with someone through a type of connection, then “hot leads,” we surmised, referred to an agreement to mentor before the Student even made contact with the Site Mentor. Dean fell into this category. In discussion with his Mentor and after reviewing the Mentor’s post-study questionnaire, it was obvious that Dean did not take the internship seriously and was not getting the intended outcomes from the experience. His Mentor agreed to provide an internship as a favor to Dean’s father. Dean failed to show up when scheduled and did not complete any work that was agreed upon and needed by the Site Mentor; the Mentor was understandably upset and checked “disagree” on numerous questions pertaining to Dean’s effort, including belief that he “made a difference,” that “the intern’s performance improved,” that he “had some great ideas,” and that attendance was “a priority for the intern.” This Site Mentor emphatically reported that he would not mentor another high school intern. Although future Student Interns would still be required to sit down to establish objectives, engage in the process of calling, and interview, the research team decided that these types of “hot” leads would be highly discouraged in the future.

All Students on the research team agreed that a key component of internships was the initial process. Final briefs included comments from several previously outspoken critics of the “cold lead” concept about having learned a lot about themselves and workplace dynamics.
Feedback from students who dropped the class, particularly those who did so early in the fall, was that they thought the internships were going to be given to them. The effort of obtaining internships and the required assignments was not worth the effort for them. They were not willing to self-direct their learning. The research team spent time during each of the meetings discussing the topic of leads. After much deliberation and input from Students, the Teacher, a Site Mentor, and the Community Leader, it was concluded that the program should be flexible between cold and warm leads, depending on a student’s situation. Although an aim of the program was self-direction through students’ using cold leads, it was obvious during the study that some students struggled and with warm leads they were able to confirm an internship and still greatly benefit from the experience. Self-direction, as the data indicated, had different meanings depending on a situation.

**Self Advocacy.** Many students did not complete the “Objectives” form as required to help establish communication between the Student Intern and the Site Mentor. Those who were able to set objectives were able to communicate growth and understanding of their contribution, and final presentations included comments to support this finding. Some of those who did not complete the form, nor address desired outcomes with their Mentor, did not report succinct contributions. This lack of self advocacy existed at some level with most of the Students, at least in the beginning. Depending on when and how they were able to confront the fear to communicate with their Mentor, the Students reported different levels of satisfaction. During their final presentations, all Student Interns reported that self-advocacy grew throughout the internship process. Those students who still weren’t able to advocate well in the end, as in Christina’s case, and did not schedule an outgoing meeting to review objectives and contributions, in retrospect wished they had done so. It was recommended to these Students that
they make an appointment with their Mentor to have better closure. I think in Christina’s case her placement in the final presentation order also played into her reflection perspective. She followed two students who had incredible internship experiences wherein they played an important role in real projects. Christina’s comments were often framed in response to a lack of experience and they did not follow her presentation outline. Her body language and tone suggested that she was uncomfortable giving the brief, especially in light of her having been an outspoken contributor throughout the class and was friends with many of her fellow Student Interns.

Although feedback from the Students reinforced that Mentors were very busy so they were reluctant to interrupt them, feedback from the Mentors indicated that it would have been possible to schedule time to review objectives and show the Intern other aspects of the business if they had known the expectations of their role. They wanted the clarification and interaction. Although nervous, Cathy was able to communicate effectively with her Mentor. They established objectives, hours, and ground rules which built trust. As a result, Cathy felt free to ask questions and was given an important project. Cathy stands out among her peers concerning self-advocacy because, although she was not the only Student Intern with a positive experience, she was one of the only to totally self-direct her process and thus was able to have an experience in line with the aims of the internship program. During the post-study questionnaire and final presentation briefs, Student after Student indicated the growth of self-advocacy and beginning missed opportunities due to fear.

Greg reported during the last research team meeting wherein we discussed some of the challenges the Students faced that “asking to clarify something with my mentor was tough and uncomfortable, but I had to do it. I felt it was better to do it right than get mad that I didn’t ask.”
We have seen other examples, as with Christina, where the effect of not asking led to an unfulfilled experience. Brad reported that he was “comfortable now communicating with adults,” and felt more equal as his internship was completed.

While setting up site observations as the study began, I announced to the Students that I would be asking to visit some sites to watch interactions and note the internship experience from the perspective of the Student and the Mentor with minimal interruption. I received immediate comments from Students indicating they would not be comfortable with a site visit. I noted who made the statements and was very curious why they were so against a visit. Some of the Students reported that their internship sites were very small and the work they did was not conducive to an observation. The other Students who balked, I realized as I gathered more data, were generally not having a great experience because they had not self-advocated to align with the objectives of the program. I used follow-up questions with these Students and had discussions with Site Mentors to verify the data.

**Skills Development.** After deciding to use the Partnership for 21st Century Skills framework for the classes during initial discussions and research about the course content because of the connection to what employers desired from high school and college graduates, we discussed what was needed to prepare the Students to obtain an internship. Other internship programs reported included skills development for résumés, making cold calls, interviewing, following up, and developing elevator speeches. The Teacher gave the Students examples of résumés and assigned them the responsibility to create one.

During the study, many Students initially indicated that they would never need an “elevator speech,” even though real examples were discussed in class and several guest speakers gave personal stories of how explaining who they were and communicating an idea in a short
period of time had greatly helped them in their careers. It wasn’t until the Students had to apply this technique that they realized the benefit, and thus the responses were much different. During journal reflections on elevator speeches using a technique called “Bottom Line Up Front” (BLUF), George, who normally gave negative feedback about the skills topics and class assignments, wrote that after applying the BLUF technique at his site to pitch an idea, “everyone loved my idea and it got incorporated into the show.” He concluded that “BLUF came in super handy in this situation and I assume I’ll be using it more in the near future.” The exercise allowed Greg to reengage his Mentor on a previous idea after trying to discuss an event promotion. He reflected, “I probably said too much and got my boss confused because there was a miscommunication. I should’ve gotten right to the point, so that’s what I did the second time.” Christina wrote in her journal reflection on the same subject: “I have never had to BLUF. I am an intern and do what is asked for me. I never need to explain anything in 15 seconds, nor would I have anything of the sort to say.” David, one of the quietest students in the class, reflected on how he felt empowered and his BLUF method was effective in explaining a point he wanted to make. It took a practical application to put the conceptual idea to work, and a focused reflection prompt for the Students to get to a deeper learning that connected the utility of the skill. These moments during the study were pivotal in guiding the Students to listen and apply the skills to grow.

The teaching methods in the class to get better interaction and participation evolved throughout the study. Discussions with the Teacher and Students during research team meetings affected the design of the delivery methods. So it just didn’t affect what we discussed in class, but how as well. It was clear from reflections, questionnaires, and feedback during the research team meetings that lecturing was not effective, as weren’t long periods of small group breakouts.
Bryan, Cathy, and Greg reported that small groups would often evolve into chatter about daily activities. Although bonding and relationships among the Students was important for trust to share and talk about issues, the class was only an hour each week. As the Teacher and I noticed prior to the study that certain Students were more reserved, we wanted to find ways to get them better involvement.

Once we realized the disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application among the Students, the format of the study changed to incorporate several modeling methods we had tried before with better focus and accountability. A normal class session during the study included a verbal prompt of the skill definition from the Students’ understanding, a reinforcement of the definition of that skill, a storyline with that skill that led to small group discussions, and Students’ personal examples of the skill and modeling exercises, followed with large group discussion and closing with a reflection prompt in conjunction with the class topic. Students were able to express their perceptions, get counter or reaffirming evidence, a chance to see the skill in practical application, often applying the skills themselves and then reflecting on the experience and perception. Regardless of a preferred learning style, all Students participated in an experiential method that connected them at some point in the process. This format also ensured that all Students had the opportunity to participate and give feedback, not just the outgoing Students. Erik provided a perspective during a research team meeting that “a lax class doesn’t allow students to focus and concentrate.” The other two Students present at that particular meeting agreed with his statement.

Guest speakers were an important part of the skills class and it was evident that the Teacher needed to better prepare the speakers in order to align them with the aims of the program and the perspective of high school Student Interns, as was done with the last guest
speaker of the year. Speakers had mixed results with the Students, depending on their topic and their charisma. Although Students often dismissed some speakers at first because of perceptions that their career experiences didn’t align, once we had the discussion with the Students about taking something from every speaker, interactions generally improved. During research team meetings concerning better preparing students for the internship, we discussed bringing in local professionals to help with résumés, interviewing, and workplace expectations. The Community Leader was able to offer great assistance with the last few Students for whom she helped obtain internships early in the spring. She refined résumés with each of them. The Teacher plans to invite other local professionals to present and provide assistance to the Students. This process will also better connect local leaders with the school program.

During the focus group and with some follow-up questions at the end of the study, Students reported that they saw the practicality of the skills topics. Keith, who was often distracted in class and rarely contributed—although he was viewed as a high performer by some student peers—commented during the focus group that he applied many of the skills and that the topics covered in class gave him the confidence to deal with adults at the site. He said his communication improved and he was better able to interact with his Mentor. When reviewing the topic of setting objectives with Mentors, Keith reported that his Mentor was busy but he had more confidence to sit down with her. At first, he didn’t plan to set any objectives. Brad reported during the focus group that he wished there was more time spent reviewing the résumé and interviewing skills in the beginning because it would have made the process easier for him, which was interesting to hear because most Students, at that time, felt we were spending too much time preparing them to obtain an internship. This declaration from Brad seemed to be in
line with other Students’ perceptions about the skills class which, upon reflection later in the
study, became more positive.

Student comments from the focus group, post-study questionnaire, and final presentations
overwhelming supported the process and aims of the program. Mentors reported the skills
covered in class were important to them as well, and commented that if they had been better
informed of the class objective and topics, they could have better supported the Student Intern at
the internship site. The Teacher adopted the class format for the remainder of the year and plans
to use this method in the design of the program next year. This includes requiring all Student
Interns to complete and present a brief on their experience. The final reflective experience
seemed to provide closure and awareness for the Students about what they really accomplished.
Having the Students debrief in front of each other and prepare a formal presentation also helped
develop oral communication skills. As I observed both class sessions of briefs, the other Students
were more engaged as they listened to peers’ experiences and reflections.

**Journal Reflections.** Research repeatedly confirmed the importance of students being
able to form coherent thoughts upon reflection. From the beginning of this study, journal
reflections were a planned inclusion in the class format; however, the action research process
afforded us the chance to evaluate a more effective method in order to get better Intern
responses. During the pre-study reflections, most Students reported that they didn’t understand
the benefits of journaling and the effort put into journal reflections was minimal at best. Prior to
assigning focused journal prompts during the study, the guidance given to Students about
journaling was to simply write about their experience that week. Even though effective
journaling practices were discussed in class twice, Students continually turned in minimal work,
often without any substance except to check the block for a completed assignment.
For the study, the focused journal prompts directed students to write out how they thought differently about the skill, how they applied the skill in a real situation, and often how they believed the skill could be integrated into their lives; we even included in-class reflection writing to gauge better response and input. Although all Students present turned in the assignment, there wasn’t enough time for many to put the reflective thought into it, and a few students gave feedback that they liked doing the reflection later in the week to try to apply the skill from class to better respond to the prompt. Even with these attempts to change Student perceptions, through the post-study questionnaire we came to understand that some Students had still not come to understand the benefits of journaling.

But many Students did, in fact, change their perspective on reflective journaling. Carol, a very quiet student, “strongly agreed” that she understood the requirements and benefits of journaling. During a research team meeting discussion about journal reflections with focused prompts, Erik and Greg agreed that they were better connected with the student experience and had learned something about themselves each week. It wasn’t until after all the Students had presented and my closing remarks that more Students connected the relationship and meaning of journaling during their journey. I pointed out that most of the them had given tough feedback on skills topics and journaling for most of the year and, even though feedback dramatically improved during the study, as it was obvious in their reflections that they were growing in understanding and application, most still reported on the questionnaire that they didn’t see the benefits of journaling. I asked them to reflect on the briefings they each just gave and the connections with a deeper learning that evolved throughout the class once they were accountable to model the skills. I told them I had seen it in their journaling because I was able to review their entries over a period of time, while most of them concentrated on just completing weekly
assignments. It was obvious during this discussion as the Students watched me that connections were occurring as they reflected on all that happened. Body positions improved, facial expressions changed, and total focus appeared. Some of the Students even shook their heads up and down in recognition.

The final presentations were important for the Student Interns to use to reflect on the internship experience, but the close-out review with the Teacher and me, which helped walk them through their growth, got them to that deeper understanding of their experience. The Teacher concluded that better examples and exercises earlier in the school year and more focused reflection prompts were lessons learned from the study that would be applied next year. I developed the slide topics through review of the research questions and reflections that were made by the students. Having the Students follow the same slide topics really helped focus Students’ briefs, their reflections, and their ability to follow along with each other. Slides included reflections on what they would do differently if they could, and what work would look like if they were boss for a day. These slides resulted in creative responses, from “better self-advocating” to “firing many employees” to changing the structure of the workspaces for better interaction among people. The Teacher plans to retain this process and slide topics next year.

**Mentor Interaction.** The lessons learned concerning Mentors were some of the strongest findings from the study. As an aim of the study was adult mentorship, the expectation was that these Mentors would provide real-world growth opportunities while investing time to show the Intern multiple facets of an organization and career field. The intent of the Site Mentor agreeing to mentor the Intern and completing the required documents was to afford the Intern an otherwise unavailable opportunity to learn from experience while being held accountable for
real-work expectations. All Mentors were contacted by email by the Teacher as each internship was secured.

During the study, it was discovered that mentorship had mixed results. Some of the Mentors were directed by supervisors to take on this mentorship assignment or agreed to as a favor; some had never mentored an intern before, and some were not given the forms to review with their Intern (as we heard in Christina’s story). Other Mentors had the opposite experience; they readily accepted the responsibility, completed the forms, incorporated the Intern into the daily rhythm of the office, and communicated a positive experience from mentoring (as we heard in Cathy’s story). The findings were clear that not all Mentors developed a relationship with the school to work toward the goals of the class. Findings also showed that Mentors did not understand their role expectations during the initial process and that completion of the forms was an important part of the process. This data produced a theme that understanding of roles affected involvement and experiences for both the Student and Mentor. Likewise, the differences between high school interns and more mature college interns was apparent; high school students did not have deeper subject knowledge and, though the ideas and effort from high school interns can greatly contribute to the organization. Understanding the high school internship experience was not well known among Mentors.

**Mentor Understanding of Role Affected Involvement.** Even if the Mentor was engaged and reported having had a positive experience, all Mentors reported on the post-study questionnaire that they would have welcomed contact with the school early in the year – to better understand the requirements and expectations, – with periodic contact about how they could support the experience and development of the Intern. For almost every Mentor there was virtually no contact with the school. As one of the Mentors reported to one of the research team
members, “some employers need input and support.” She suggested that such support could include “help[ing] to inform and remind site mentors and students on a regular basis” about the requirements and focus of the class; she added that she felt it was important for the Administration and Mentor to work together. This Mentor admitted that this was her first time as a mentor and thus she “didn’t know what to do or expect.” During a research team meeting and discussion about better preparing Site Mentors for their roles and expectations, she agreed that something written should be given by the school early in the process to educate them about the overall program.

As I analyzed the data concerning adult mentorship as gathered from the research team meetings, site observations, journal prompts, Mentor post-study questionnaires, and final Intern presentations, it was clear that the majority of Students did not receive consistent and effective feedback from the Mentors, even if the Mentor engaged the Student. During the focus group, Brad noted that he was not initially being mentored and it took a while to get up his confidence to approach his Mentor. Upon reflection he felt that, once the Mentor became more accessible in his eyes, the internship experience became better. Keith added that, although his internship took a long time to finalize, once he started, his Mentor took the time to explain why tasks were assigned, allowing Keith to understand the bigger picture.

Although Cathy’s Mentor expressed excitement about the experience and other students’ Mentors reported engagement and willingness to mentor again in the future, not all Mentors had positive feedback. Some lacked understanding of his or her role, and a few listed “intern professional behavior” and being assigned the mentorship by a superior as reasons they had a negative experience. I followed up with two Mentors in particular and a Student who dealt with a difficult Mentor in order to get specific feedback about their situations.
When collecting consent forms and the post-questionnaires from Mentors, I had to often make several follow-up attempts. I spoke to one Mentor who was very reluctant to participate because he said the experience didn’t go very well. After assuring him that I valued his input regardless of whether it was positive, he relaxed and detailed his frustrations. He admitted that he had agreed to take the Student Intern as a favor and the Student had turned out to be unreliable and not very productive. The Mentor was very busy and couldn’t rely on the Intern to show up or complete any work. He listed in the post-questionnaire that the Intern failed to make the internship a priority and he felt the Intern had wasted his time. He didn’t think he would mentor another intern in the near future.

Another Mentor felt his career field was not conducive to high school interns because of the depth of knowledge needed, even though he indicated that he had excellent analysts to support the development of the intern. The Mentor was very busy, so I didn’t get a chance to follow up to ensure he understood his role as a high school mentor. He checked that he “strongly agreed” that he understood the role of a mentor and that he was comfortable volunteering as a mentor. As with other feedback from Mentors, the data showed that many of the internship experiences for the Intern and the Mentor could have improved and been more effective with engagement from the internship class Teacher. The Teacher readily realized this and, during the research meetings, stated that for the next year he planned to engage the Site Mentors from the beginning of the project and throughout the year.

Carol’s Mentor felt that the opportunity to mentor was positive, but he noted in his post-study questionnaire that Carol did not exhibit strong communication and collaboration skills nor contribute to any workplace projects, and that she was not vocal in her wants and expectations. He had her observe several areas of the business, but she was quiet and didn’t ask many
questions. He was unclear about what she wanted and how they could better support her. Carol would call at the last minute and cancel because of other priorities, so he was very hesitant to give her any projects. She did not self-advocate in the beginning to set objectives as per the requirements of the class. As previously stated, he was also very supportive of more involvement from the school in the future and feels his business is the perfect place for an internship. Carol noted in her post-study questionnaire that she felt the class didn’t offer her anything. She felt she could look up skills online. This Mentor’s feedback, coupled with Carol’s disconnected perspective, reinforced the previous points of overestimating skills, lacking deeper learning, and not self-advocating to get more out of the experience.

Greg’s Mentor was also frustrated as was apparent when I engaged her by phone and in reading her feedback on the post-study questionnaire. This feedback was very surprising because, by all appearances, Greg was a stellar performer in class and at school. He was always in class and gave great feedback. I was able to use quite a bit of data from him during our research team meetings. When I spoke to his Mentor by phone, she had just sent him a note outlining her frustrations, their agreement and commitment, and a call for him to remain reliable. She had given him fairly substantial authority and really needed his commitment to the internship. She did not agree that he had played an active role in self-directing his internship and she disagreed that Greg had progressively improved in performance and effectiveness. During discussions with Greg, he always mentioned how he felt his internship was making a difference and, even though his Mentor was demanding at times, he understood why. After receiving the negative feedback from his Mentor, I engaged Greg about his current internship experiences and he again relayed that everything was going fine. He mentioned that his hours changed due to projects and school requirements, but he didn’t mention missing assigned hours and calling off
by text right before he was supposed to show up, as his Mentor told me he had done several times.

After getting this feedback, I met with the Teacher and brought my findings up at a research team meeting. Two things were decided on to include in the internship program next year. The Teacher admitted that he had not closely monitored intern hours and he would require that as part of the grade in the future. The other action resulting from the meeting was a shift in the skill lesson for the next class. We decided on *responsibility* as an important skill to review and would add a reminder of workplace etiquette and expectations for the students. This included how to communicate when one needed to change hours, honoring commitment, and reevaluating the objectives.

Since it had become obvious to me from recently speaking with Mentors that many of the Students had not established initial objectives, we wanted them to actually sit down with their Mentors regardless of how long they were into their internship. Greg admitted during a research team meeting that he needed to revisit his objectives. He said he had not been following them and it was affecting the focus of his internship. It was decided at the meeting that the initial internship forms would be included in the grading of the class now and in the future. If communication with the Site Mentor started earlier, and he or she expected the Intern to schedule a meeting to review objectives, we could expect better communication and better outcomes from the experiences of both parties.

Mentors continually reinforced their desire to be better connected with the program and the expectations of the Students in order to provide a better internship experience. Leslie’s Mentor reported that “I’m a first-time mentor I didn’t know what to do or expect.” Many of the first-time Mentors responded in the same manner. Christina’s Mentor was a first-time mentor as
well and, when I conducted a site observation, her Mentor was very surprised by the program aims, the forms requirements, and the expectations of a mentor. She had given Christina work and appreciated her efforts, but she had no idea that she should have set objectives and allowed Christina to experience more areas of the business. Even Greg’s Mentor responded on the post-study questionnaire that she would be willing to mentor again, but she would have liked better coordination with the school and to ensure the interns understand commitment. These are all perfect examples of how self-directed learning must involve some communication of expectations, especially to ensure that new Site Mentors understand their responsibilities and that Students may not yet be ready to self-advocate at the needed level to deal with adults in the workplace.

Mentor understanding affected involvement and ultimately the Student Intern experience. Positive experiences from Mentors generally led to a positive experience by the Student and an affirmation that a Mentor would agree to mentor another high school student. A missing ingredient during the final student presentations were the Mentors. Some high school internship programs include mentors during the final presentations, and a few even have the students present in front of a larger school audience. It was decided early in the study, as we outlined the timeline and requirements for the pilot program and worked out a feasible schedule, that this first year we would only include Students in the final presentation stage of the program. Including Mentors could have provided closure for them and the student, as well as could have provided a connection with the school for future opportunities. Several Mentors asked about attending the final presentations and agreed they would be interested in attending at the end of the internship experience.
Class Structure. Two remaining areas discovered in the study that affected effective practices to support the internship aims included grading and the scheduling of the class. Students were very focused on class requirements from the very first class, and several Students provided feedback that these requirements were the reason other students had dropped the class. There were discussions throughout the year concerning what and how to grade. Three discussions concerning grading occurred during research team meetings, with several more occurring during various classes, especially as official grade periods approached. No Student wanted to get a B in an elective class, especially the fall semester, because those grades could affect college acceptances. The student feedback consistently included holding students accountable for attendance and assignments, and to be as descriptive as possible as to the desired outcome from each assignment. This feedback aligns with the feedback we received concerning journal reflections and may be why students reported that they preferred the focused journal prompts over the previously vague prompts.

The Teacher made several grading adjustments with the feedback from our meetings and from class discussions. Trying to grade subjectively was not working. Some students took a long time to confirm and begin their internships, some did not complete many hours each week as expected, some did not complete the forms as directed, some only attended class sporadically, some put more into their internships and were given much more responsibility than others, and effort on assignments was across the spectrum. During the year, the Teacher allowed Students to turn work in late and re-do poor work because he wanted the Students to get the expected aims from the program. After much discussion and debate and input from me with ideas from other programs, the Teacher decided to implement a point system next year which would take away much of the subjectivity and put more of the responsibility on the Student. The point system
would also help support the self-directed learning aim of the program. Mentors were supportive of more accountability as well since many reported that a lack of consistency and expected weekly hours affected the internship experience and their ability to full incorporate the Student Intern.

The scheduling of the class was a great initial point of contention, so much so that some students had to drop the class because of the finally agreed upon time to meet each week. Because of the unknowns of who would enroll in the program, it was decided to wait to schedule the time of the class until the school year started. The Teacher took several polls among the students to figure out when everyone could meet. Because of external commitments and sports, there was no time within normal school hours or at night when all students could meet. In the end, the Teacher scheduled the class for Monday nights. Those who could not attend regularly would have to schedule opportunities during the week to meet with the Teacher to review the class content and review assignments on Edmodo. This was not the best solution for the Students because missing the skills class prevented opportunities to take part in the exercises and better understand assignments. The schedule was also changed several times when the Teacher had to travel or during other school requirements such as a break in the spring during Advanced Placement exams.

The Teacher and I discussed quite a few times the subject of class scheduling as he planned to allow more students enroll the following year, affecting his ability to spend more personal time with those who missed class. Student feedback during research team meetings and the focus group concluded that finding a time during the day would be the best solution to avoid conflicts with night commitments and required internship hours. A few Students felt that offering two classes during the week would provide more opportunities for student schedules, but it
would make it difficult logistically with guest speakers and local professionals to provide assistance. In the end, the Teacher did not make a decision on class scheduling as we completed the study; it was one of the outstanding issues not resolved.

**Conclusion.** The methods used to gather data concerning effective practices that support the aims of the study provided solid findings as indicated above. The action research process allowed us to address the need to add, change, or delete practices pretty easily throughout the study. The expectations before the study, the initial implementation and study of the program, and any final changes or decisions that affect the program in the future occurred in a fluid process. Throughout the study, key stakeholders were involved and affected change in practices.

**Research Question 3:**

*What are students’ perceptions about how the internship experience prepares them for post-graduation pathway choices?*

The aims of this study directly aligned with the aims of the internship program because they were agreed upon prior to the start of the pilot program. Self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship were areas that research showed colleges and employers felt were lacking or needed from high school students. The student voice was a priority of this study from its inception. Understanding what was effective for them to learn and get the most out of the opportunity were driving forces behind the methods of the study. The Students provided great feedback during the study, some of it unintentional. Many activities and relationships were adjusted during the study to provide a better experience for the students. Numerous other changes were made to improve the program for next year. Student input was essential for improving the program, but it also provided us with feedback on what they were getting out of the program and how this experience was changing them as well.
Participation. The Students who participated on the research team reflected at the end of the last meeting that being part of the team allowed them to get insight into much more of the experience than just the internships. They all reported that they enjoyed the opportunity and being able to voice their opinions with visible outcomes from that input was very motivating. One of the most insightful responses of all the incredible discussions and data we collected during our research team meetings came from Charlie who, upon reflection of the previous class on leadership and critical thinking said, “We have heard all our lives about leadership, but we haven’t done it.” Charlie was not considered a high-performer but he was very action-oriented. During my site observation with him, I watched him naturally take charge of a meeting between numerous peer volunteers to organize an event. His comment about the lack of practical application opportunities reinforced exactly what the data were telling me.

Bryan and Troy, who were extreme success cases among this group, were very familiar with the skills we covered but they understood the need to continually improve these skills. Their perceptions of the Skills Class were that we didn’t go deep enough. They were willing to discuss what they felt and how they were learning, a position that many of the Students were just not ready for. Both students received positive recognition from their Mentors for bringing real results to the organization. Their internship experiences affected their decisions about what to study in college. Troy reflected during some follow-up questions that his internship experience “hasn’t led me to pursue something different, but has strengthened my desire to pursue my original vision for my working life.” He also appreciated the advice and career experience from the guest lecturers noting that they “taught us a few key lessons that took them years to learn.” He felt his internship opportunity was one to explore what he loved to do. Both Bryan and Troy, along with many other active participants, were responsive to questions pertaining to the study, using their
internship experience for serious development of skills and contacts, and freely discussing their experience.

**Better Prepared.** Although her internship experience wasn’t perfect, Karen enjoyed the self-direction experience and she noted that “I have learned what I will focus on in theater in college next year.” Leslie also wrote in a journal reflection that “This class is better preparing me for life after high school graduation by FAR.” Dean reflected that the class “is helping to prepare me for life after high school.” He added that the knowledge he gained was something few high school students get to experience and that his reflecting and time management skills have improved. Time management was a specific skill that many students felt was a strength at the beginning of the year and, after reassessing this during the internship, they felt they really learned better time management skills. Nine (9) Students reported during final presentations that time management was a weakness starting out and that they were working on improving this skill; they realized how important it was and how poorly some of them had been doing. Keith felt the internship experience had “definitely helped prepare me for life after high school.” Most important to him was that “I have learned to manage my time effectively.” Cathy learned skills that she would “take with [her] to college and beyond.” Her time management skills were developed as well. Lastly, Darrell, who was a very quiet student and gave negative feedback about the skills classes, checked “strongly agree” that he believed the skills he developed in the internship program could change his future plans, as well as “strongly agree” that his career field interest “increased because of this class.” That was not the case of several other students.

**Reality.** Kari, Tommy, and George responded on both questionnaires and within journal reflections that the internship process and class was not beneficial to them. Their feedback throughout the study surrounded a belief that the skills and reflections, and the support for
obtaining internships were lacking. George and Tommy completed most of their assignments. Their journal reflections included more language about the use of taught skills and learning later in the study, but both of them checked “disagree” on the post-study questionnaire in response understanding the benefit of journaling. Kari did not complete most of her assignments. She did not complete the post-study questionnaire. She did not participate much in class, arrived late most weeks, and spent time after several classes talking to the Teacher about her grades even though she failed to turn in required assignments. Kari was also one of the few students with a paid internship which, in reality, was a previous job for which she was trying to get class credit. She did not establish objectives with her Mentor and didn’t get any opportunities to learn more about the business for which she worked. In her final presentation, she stated that she wished she would have learned more about the business but she had come to realize that she doesn’t want to work somewhere “that takes away her individuality” and that she likes working with people.

Sarah made almost exactly the same comment; she had reflections of not setting objectives and wished she would have learned more, though she was told she was a “good worker.” Although many Students made huge contributions to their site and experiences were very positive overall, they were the only two who made this comment. It appeared that being a “good worker” was the marker for them more so than any of the other aims of the program. Even George and Tommy, who repeatedly reflected negatively on the class experience, noted in their final presentations how much they learned. Most Students who gave negative feedback concerning the Skills Class were able to later realize their growth during final presentations and close-outs with their mentor. Getting at deeper learning took time and effort from the Teacher and discussions with the research team. But once a student was confronted with facts during
class and an opportunity to apply skills in a real situation, discussions and journal reflections were much better products because that conceptual disconnect was no longer a barrier.

**Responsibility.** The overwhelming perception from the Students as they reflected on their experience through the questionnaire and final presentations was that they never imagined how much responsibility they would have and that people would listen to and incorporate their ideas. Ten (10) students listed it on their presentation slides and a few more mentioned it in their comments. Whether it was for small tasks, larger projects, or major developments, Students thrived when they were able to contribute and when people at the site considered their opinions. Cathy, Troy, Charlie, David, Greg, Bryan, and George all worked on major developments at their internship sites, and these students reported about the great amount of responsibility they were given. Cathy discussed with me during a site observation that people asked for her opinion and it made her feel good. As her project neared completion, she felt it was “cool” to watch all the work along the way.

**Learning Process.** As noted in several sections of this chapter, the Students often felt parts of the program did not directly apply to them. With competing obligations and a lack of deeper learning awareness, Students provided feedback that it was easier to contribute when the subject was relevant. A particular topic may have been useful to their internship experience, or a dynamic speaker made a connection to them. Class format, journal prompts, and research team meetings often revolved around methods to ensure the Students were engaged. When reading journal prompt responses it was obvious when a Student perceived a connection with the material through both length and content. During the focus group, Greg, Keith, and Brad all agreed that they didn’t realize how beneficial the assignments and skills topics were until they had to apply them at their internship site in a real situation. The elevator speeches that Students
had to prepare received negative feedback until some of the Students reported having used them, and guest speakers included such scenarios in their presentations. These activities allowed for a deeper learning that changed the perception of the student experience for most of the Students. Keith felt the Collaboration Skills Class wasn’t relevant until he had to apply it at work, then he realized how important it was and how much work he needed.

**Lessons.** No matter what contributions some Students felt they made or didn’t make at the site, or how the Mentor reported the intern performed, Students continually reported that they learned what they did not want to pursue in adulthood. Deborah said that she thought she was interested in music production, but realized that she was more interested in journalistic writing. Dean reflected that he was not interested in business acquisitions because of the type of computer work and the dynamics of the people in that field. Christina noted that she did not want to just sit at a desk, and she felt her internship was often boring and isolated because of the type of work she did. Karen discovered that she did not want to be a stage producer. Leslie did not want to work at a desk and do regular office work. Brad realized that he did not want to work in a field that is computer heavy because he felt it was boring. These negative lessons provided great insight for these Students. Greg’s, Keith’s, and Cathy’s initial failures in trying to obtain internships resulted in three positive internship experiences and they learned grit to hang in there when things became frustrating. Greg reflected during a research team meeting discussion about leads that the cold calling experience resulted in “some failed internships that actually helped me learn.” The Community Leader expressed her opinion to keep the focus on cold and warm leads in order to help Students go for their dream jobs and not settle. Their experiences directly led to the discussions and decision to negate hot leads within the program in the future.
Another lesson most Students reported was the benefit of learning workplace dynamics through working with other people in a professional environment. The work environment cannot be simulated in the classroom so, until the students were involved in the workplace under accountable conditions, the real learning and growth didn’t occur. Leslie spoke in detail during her final presentation about how her “real-life look into the professional world” was an incredible experience. Brad dealt with a lot of different dynamics at his internship site because of the nature of the organization, how “compartmentalized” it was, and how disconnected people seemed from each other. He didn’t enjoy the atmosphere and lack of people’s engagement. Troy led many team meetings at his internship site and realized early on that he needed to improve his communication and team building skills. We discussed many scenarios in the Skills Class and he felt his skills had developed because of the internship.

Hank was one of the shyest students in the class. His internship experience stretched his comfort zone in many ways. He thought that he “had good marketing skills and it would be easy; I was wrong.” His confidence and communication development made it easier to talk to adults, and getting recognition for his efforts motivated him. He had “previously [known] almost nothing about working in the real world.” Karen learned patience and improved communication with adults as she dealt with their children in her internship. She also felt she had to self-direct her experience much more because her Mentor was extremely busy all the time. Karen had to be proactive to communicate and plan necessary tasks. Dean reflected in a journal response that he grew to enjoy the conversations with clients about their businesses, experiences, and how business plans were really working.

During a site observation visit, Cathy relayed to me that she was very nervous about engaging with adults prior to taking this internship but, because of the requirements for her
project, she was pushed to communicate with many people and she was very comfortable with the skill now. She added that she knew this experience would also benefit her at college. Even Students who provided some negative feedback on practices of the internship or negative experiences at the internship site reported that they had grown in some way and were better prepared for post-graduation. As told above in their own words and stories, some Students decided to change their college focus, while other experiences reinforced what Students wanted to study.

Student perceptions spurred discussions and affected change, both immediately applicable and for next year. Significant changes that Student input affected pertained to class structure, grading, Mentor contact, and assignments. Greg presented an idea at the second research team meeting about getting input from the Students on careers of interest early in the fall and then recruit guest speakers that better related to student interests. Another lesson that will be implemented refers to how the class is explained in the beginning to help retain students who may not see its benefits. The Teacher now has tangible experiences to help explain and guide Students in the beginning to address perceptions. He can also discuss how Students who discounted the process or experienced tough internship situations all grew and felt better prepared for life after high school.

Conclusion

Now that the study is finished and the data have been analyzed, I feel strongly that the study addressed the right questions to better prepare students for adulthood and will help develop an effective work-based opportunity for interested high school students. Looking at the relationships, practices, and perceptions through action research allowed for immediate changes, as well as for planning to improve the program in the future. Lessons learned were captured
through different methods and discussed at the research team meetings. Feedback during the meetings provided a rich perspective to the aims of the study. Overcoming a conceptual knowledge disconnect with practical application was difficult to explain in order to guide the students to better understanding. Providing opportunities to reflect and address self-advocacy, communication, reflection itself, and getting to deeper learning proved successful as indicated from key individuals involved in the study.

Initial reluctance to discuss struggles ultimately resulted in Students feeling motivated and ready to handle other issues once they could relate to the purpose of the program and realized the benefit of developing grit. Having the real-world, work-based learning opportunity filled the gap from thought to practice. Watching the Students and analyzing the data proved essential to understanding that dynamic, and getting an opportunity to affect future decisions based on the internship program experience was satisfying for all the involved adults, including many Mentors who reported how the experience had impacted them. Providing a true metric from each Student’s path may take years, but the data demonstrate that this pilot program was beneficial to students as they begin their post-high school paths.

These findings were the result of many risks and attempts to try practices from research or from discussions during research team meetings. The findings conclude that relationships and activities are essential to providing an effective developmental experience for the Student Interns and to ensure they are engaged for deeper learning. I examine the implications of these findings and recommendations for practice in the next chapter. I also identify limitations of the study and discuss possibilities for future research pertaining to work-based learning opportunities for high school students.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Through this action research study, I helped implement a public high school pilot internship program for senior students interested in a work-based learning opportunity. The purposes of the study were self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship. I aimed to answer which relationships and practices provided an effective experience for the Student Interns and how they felt the internship experience affected their perceptions about post-high school plans. I was able to discover some key relationships and practices necessary for an effective program using some best practices from research. I also discovered Students’ key areas of concern, which posed barriers for deeper learning; these areas were addressed and practices were altered to provide opportunities of reflection and change.

In this final chapter, following a more detailed summary of the findings, I discuss the implications of the research related to work-based learning opportunities, emphasizing the struggles some students have with overestimation of skills and self-advocacy, and recommendations to get to deeper learning. Finally, I acknowledge the limitations of the study and summarize the contributions of the study to the field.

Summary of Findings

This study addressed the unpreparedness of high school students for adulthood expectations after high school and identified a gap in learning for students within La Playa High School. The data from the study suggest that a public high school internship can provide the developmental opportunities for interested students to improve skills and affect post-high school decisions. A public high school internship program should include strong relationships with
administration and employers, and activities that support self-directed learning, skills building, and adult mentorship. Self-directed learning should include students’ acquisition of internships and setting objectives with the school in the support role. Skills development should include methods that support self-advocacy, the connection between conceptual knowledge and practical application, and the benefit of reflection in the learning process to support deeper learning. Adult mentorship must include initial familiarization and expectations with mentors and periodic follow-up to support the program’s objectives, and provide students with a positive experience.

First, the evidence identifies the importance of relationships and connections among school administration, community leaders and employers. A key relationship is having a community leader who can provide support to students, act as a contact for guest speakers, and connect with mentors. Second, the evidence also identifies practices to develop students, inform mentors, and provide feedback for a continual improvement cycle. The practices of having Student Interns establish their own objectives and respond to focused journal prompts allow them to self-direct and reflect on that experience. Lastly, the evidence confirms that when Students are afforded work-based learning opportunities with a supportive program, all can report progression in preparedness for adulthood, regardless of type of career field or levels of self-advocacy. The implications of this evidence and recommendations for practice as a program can grow from pilot in scale in subsequent years.

This study shows that students of all performing levels and engagement grow in confidence and real-world skills during an internship. Evidence confirms that work-based programs like internships require engaged leadership at the school, a committed instructor, and support from the community if the aims of the program are going to be met for all students. Any student can obtain an internship on his or her own but, as the evidence shows, that may not result
in an effective learning experience. An internship program that prepares students for post-high school paths is much more than a résumé-builder; it takes commitment from the student and support from the school and community. The evidence supports that investing in high school students within an internship program affects student perceptions and their decisions after high school.

**Implications & Recommendations for Practice**

The findings from this study can inform administrators, students, and employers about the gap in work-based learning programs, and how offering these experiences can improve levels of self-advocacy, recognition for the need of practical application, and the benefits of reflection. These experiences can influence student engagement and future decisions. The implications that I review will not translate to a “silver bullet” to answer student disengagement, the struggle to transition to adulthood, and complaints from college and employers about the readiness of young adults for greater independent responsibility. They may, however, offer perspective on better reaching students interested in work-based learning opportunities through lessons learned from an action research study which identifies the effective relationships and practices that encompass a high school internship program. I will review these implications within the aims of the study, which correspond to the objectives of the program: self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship. Within each objective, I review the evidence aligned under the research questions in the areas of relationships, practices, and student perceptions.

**Self-Directed Learning**

During initial discussions with school administrators, *self-directed learning* was the first priority as the pilot internship program was developed. Administrators had received feedback from another school that highlighted this skill as a key objective and they felt it would be a good
fit for La Playa as well. Once I was able to confirm that self-directed learning was one of the P21 skills, it solidified my belief that an objective of the program would be self-direction. The P21 model identified many of the educational standards adopted by most states and aligned with the tenets of two key educational researchers on the transition to adulthood, Tony Wagner (2008) and Howard Gardner (2007). Self-directed learning proved to be a skill with which many students struggled and was redefined by the research team in order to provide opportunities to a wider audience of students.

Relationships. In order to provide an environment of self-direction, several relationships must exist to inform and support the student. It may sound counterintuitive, but the evidence confirmed that many students are not ready for self-directed learning without some preparation and support. If an internship is going to succeed after a pilot year, administrators must support all faculty and staff involved with the students. The Program Teacher struggled multiple times during the year because La Playa Administrators were non-responsive, and he included developing more appropriate forms and better education of Counselors as areas of improvement. The lack of clear Administration support affected getting forms out to those students who already had internships or were waiting for one, and ensuring that all students – regardless of performance level – were given the opportunity to enroll in the program. Those relationships and processes were not put into place last year as expected; luckily, this teacher has agreed to continue the program and has already reached out to Counselors and others for better support.

The study also defined the relationship with Site Mentors. It is not always easy to have a student cold call an employer, advocate for an interview, and set objectives for an internship without mentor contact by the school. There are two reasons for this. First, not all employers have worked with high school students and there can be significant differences in maturity, skill
set, and available hours that can be the case with college and adult interns. Second, the Site Mentors may be inexperienced in the role of mentoring. Conclusions from the study proved this to be true among many of the Site Mentors. A relationship must be established and nurtured with Site Mentors to ensure that they understand roles and expectations, and that these are aligned with school aims.

The last relationship necessary for piloting an internship program is a strong community leader who understands the benefits of internships and can reach out to the community for guest speakers, skills resources, and possible Site Mentors for students struggling to obtain an internship. This is especially true to help take the responsibility off administrators once the class starts.

**Practices.** Many methods for providing internship opportunities exist. Most schools either direct internship locations or provide an approved list of past and willing Site Mentors. As I completed my pre-study research, I visited a school that provided self-directed opportunities. I spoke with several students during the visit. One female student detailed her experience of having to cold call an employer and then scheduling an interview. She was nervous and shy, but that learning experience propelled her to establish objectives and engage in her learning. Another female student selected a name from a school-approved list which took away the initial self-advocating experience, but she said that she was still nervous to call, interview, and establish objectives. She discussed how her experience forced her to self-direct her warm lead. The evidence in this study reinforced both experiences of those two students. Every student may have a growth experience similar to either of these if those school leaders involved in the program understand the broad definition of self-direction and support both cold and warm leads. However, emphasis should be placed on cold calls to potential mentors, though supportive warm
leads for those students who really need more assistance is an option that worked very well for many Students in my study.

All interested students were allowed to enroll in the program, and this included students with prior internships, paid internships, or jobs. It was decided to try to incorporate these types of students in the pilot study to see if they could be supported while remaining aligned with the aims of the program. At least one Student Intern from each of these three categories started the program, but it difficult to support each one of them for different reasons. The Student who already had the internship was far into the relationship and commitment to the employer, so having him or her sit down and establish objectives was awkward. Also, in the beginning, the Student felt the class work wasn’t beneficial in preparing for internships because he/she already had one. Research showed that paid high school internships were difficult, even though some schools supported them to help teach students about finances, because the Site Mentor may have had to concentrate on product for the betterment of the organization over learning opportunities for the Student Intern. The evidence from my pilot study supported these data, as well as that trying to have a job also count as an internship was difficult to manage for many of the same reasons. One student with a job reported that she did not get a chance to learn anything else about the business because her “boss,” not her Mentor, required her to fulfill the duties for which she was hired. Obviously, there could be examples of employers who could also provide mentoring opportunities, but with high school students’ limited availability, I just don’t believe there is evidence to risk it for the Student or the employer.

During the research team meetings, we discussed offering enrollment to juniors to help with the decisions pertaining to college. Although most Students in the program complained that the fall semester was busy with college applications and that it was tough to commit to an
internship, they overwhelming agreed that the junior year was even harder for them with academic commitments and college applications. Some Students also reported that their Site Mentors seemed reluctant to mentor senior students, and strongly felt it would be very difficult to get employers to mentor junior students; some of the Mentors involved with the research team agreed. La Playa Administrators did not support offering the program to juniors in the next year. But because of the data from the study, they did change the program for the current year by using the fall semester, when students are still very busy with commitments and college applications, to build skills and prepare students to obtain internships with the requirement to start the internships after the holiday break through the spring. The evidence of the study supported this timeline. Most students held an internship for at least 12 weeks. This was enough time to establish objectives, take part in meaningful workplace learning, reengage objectives, and complete the internship. The Mentors also supported this timeline. The Students and Mentors both agreed that 8 to 10 hours per week, although tough to find, was about the right amount of time at the site to ensure that the Student Intern could get involved in substantial workplace activities and projects. The evidence concluded that setting objectives early in the internship, and reengaging those objectives to make adjustments, is an integral part of self-directed learning.

**Student Perceptions.** The Students were not shy about relaying their opinions and frustrations throughout the study. Their feedback made for great conversations about effective practices needed in the program. Students reported that they learned from cold leads and needed warm leads in different situations. Students who disenrolled from the class early in the fall reported that they would have liked to have had a list of approved internships and this was a factor is dropping the class. The evidence was clear that Student Interns grew in self-advocacy and self-directed learning during the study. Although Students reflected on their growth in self-
directed learning, they appreciated and desired support from the school. The evidence from student perceptions concluded that, in order to achieve deeper learning, grow in desired skills, and reach the desired aims of the program, the self-direction portion of the program must remain. The evidence supported that high school students often struggle with self-advocacy without some development and support.

**Recommendations.** In summary, the evidence from the study supports students obtaining their own internship with the support to research and initiate contact in an area that really interests them. The intent is not to obtain any internship that is easy to find, including those within organizations that have well-established internship programs. The students should obtain an internship that will affect a decision for life after high school, such as higher education, focus of study, or employment. The program must ensure that students are ready to be successful and that a mentor prospect fully understands roles and is committed to support self-directed learning. Relationships between school administrators and community leaders are also important for continuity among students and employers in order to support the Skills Class and students struggling to obtain an internship. Lastly, school leaders must ensure that all students are aware of the opportunity, that they are reassured the school will be supportive, and that the students understand the proven benefits of a school-supported internship that they complete on their own. The final presentations are a great opportunity to highlight the Student Intern’s growth, and the opportunity should be shared with parents and Site Mentors if at all possible. The Students listened to every presentation and there was a collective experience growth among the group.

**Skills Development**

Research supported having a *skills class* as a pivotal part of a high school internship program. Without a skills class, there is really no way to develop the students’ preparation for
adulthood. The evidence from the study spoke loudly in support of the research that skills development must be part of the program. The P21 model was very effective in providing an outline for those skills to incorporate into the program. It supported the language used in the school and the research on required skills for adulthood. In order to properly prepare students for the world of work (in place of or after college) in a work-based learning opportunity, students must be given knowledge, methods to apply that knowledge, practical application of that knowledge, reflection, opportunities to reengage application, and reflection in a safe but accountable environment. In a situation wherein students are just surviving to the next assignment or commitment, an effective way to attain deeper learning is through accountability and support with reflection. The skills class offers that opportunity to pause and learn through reflection to evaluate practical application.

**Relationships.** The evidence supported students desiring periodic guest speakers who discussed all aspects of a career field, career progression opportunities, and career requirements. The guest speakers in the study were all local employers and their career fields varied greatly. The community leader can provide great support in obtaining guest speakers. For this study, the Teacher was also an established community member and he obtained most of the guest speakers. Connections with the community not only benefit the Student Interns in their decision and learning cycles, but also help employers better relate to the education system. Connections with employers from a wide variety of career fields ensure that students get a broad understanding of the world of work.

**Practices.** The most effort of the study was spent on effective practices to support skills development. The research team spent a majority of each meeting discussing specifics of the Skills Class. The data gathered during the study continually supported changes within the Skills
Class, and the evidence confirmed the lessons learned from the study support an effective high school internship program. Once it was obvious that the data were showing Students’ disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application, and that many students initially struggled with self-advocacy, the focus of the Skills Class adjusted to attaining deeper learning. The Skills Class was altered in format to include discussion of definitions and indisputable research facts about the skill relating to students, directed small group discussion topics, large group de-briefing, a practical application exercise, and directed reflection journal prompts usually relating to the skill used in a real internship experience. The skills were emphasized multiple times over the period of the study.

The class structure was also fluid throughout the study. Evidence confirmed the changes were supported by the Students, and provided a more effective learning environment for them. Unstructured small group discussions led to Students talking about daily life instead of the program objectives, and non-facilitated large group discussions most assuredly allowed quiet students to avoid contributing. Adding focused time, accountable de-briefing, and practical application forced all Students to participate and get feedback.

Prior to the study, guest speakers were allowed more freedom about content and time, often with no reflection discussion before the end of class. During the study, however, guest speakers were better prepared about topics to include and their length of speaking time in order to ensure there was reflection discussion time. Student feedback supported this change, as did feedback from the Mentors who felt better focused to speak.

The class structure was altered quite a few times, especially in regard to grading and assignments. Student feedback consistently included frustration with subjective grading and vague assignment directions. The expectation was that a self-directed program would include
disciplined journal reflection responses, attendance, and in-class participation. The evidence flipped these assumptions and affirmed that focused journal reflection prompts, facilitation of the class discussion to include everyone, and the decision to grade on points for all assignments to help remove subjectivity were more effective. This improvement also included attendance for the Skills Class and required internship hours. Some students were missing the Skills Class fairly regularly and others were not completing required internship hours which caused frustration with Mentors and Students who were sacrificing their time to complete the required hours.

The focus had to change to substance over only submission. The format for the Skills Class proved more effective for student input and Students repeatedly confirmed that focused journal prompts helped them give better responses. The Teacher assigned, but did not count, the completion of necessary forms as grades. As all Students who did not complete these forms concluded that they wished they had, and the Students who reported completing of the forms displayed positive experiences, it was decided that all forms would be required to be completed early in the process of confirming an internship and would be graded.

Upon reflection, Students confirmed the evidence that proper preparation was necessary before engaging prospective Site Mentors. Effective training on résumés, cold calling, interviewing, following up, and workplace expectations were all skills that Students reported having either improved upon, underestimated, or greatly appreciated. For Mentors who are not familiar with the role of mentoring high school student interns, effectively preparing Students for that engagement must be formalized during the beginning of the school year.

In contrast, requiring Student Interns to make a formal presentation at the end of the year allows for reflection on personal growth, and if the Mentors are invited, they can realize how much they contributed to that growth. The evidence confirms that Site Mentors were not
involved at all during the study and they clearly wished to be through being better informed of program objectives in order to support student experience. The formal final presentation is a great way to share experiences and initiate a close-out discussion with the Mentor.

**Student Perceptions.** Student perceptions of the Skills Class was very negative during much of the class prior to the study. This feedback caused a significant shift in the class format to better engage the Students and get to deeper learning opportunities. The evidence is very clear that Students had a disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application. As we conducted the Skills Class with more focus and included focused journal prompts, the Students reported better connection with the material. Unfortunately, some of the Students did not realize their own growth and disconnect until the final presentations. As the data from the presentations confirmed, some Students grew in self-advocacy and confidence from practical application of skills and many realized their skill levels were not as strong as they had originally stated. This guided us to better format the Skills Class for next year in order to reach the students much earlier for deeper learning.

Journal reflection was not well-received by the Students throughout the study until the focused prompts helped guide them. Not all Students reported better connection with journal prompts, but the content within later journal reflection responses and reflections during the final presentations supported journal reflection as a key component in student development. The Teacher did not use the reflections in personal counseling, but he often replied with feedback as needed. Teacher response and engagement with the Students led to positive perceptions of their experience, especially when a few struggled with obtaining internships, their Site Mentor, or a situation at the site. Although many Students initially reported wasted class time for preparation
in obtaining internships, in one way or another all students reported gaining valuable skills upon reflection.

**Recommendations.** The evidence overwhelming supported the inclusion of a Skills Class as part of an internship program. Aligning the skills with the P21 model ensures that students are using the same language found in school and developing the same skills, but with a real-world, work-based practical application instead of classroom scenarios and vignettes. The evidence in the study supported the research on the need to get high school students real-world experiences to better prepare them for adulthood. The format of the class worked well after much deliberation and feedback from the Students. In order to get to deeper learning, Students must be confronted with facts, reinforced with definitions, given opportunities for practical application, and be offered focused reflection. The class instructor must give feedback to the Students, and require attendance and timely completion of assignments to ensure student engagement, otherwise Students will have regrets upon reflection during the final presentation as was the case during my study for several Students. Questionnaires for Student Interns and Site Mentors are effective for gauging perceptions and issues, and the evidence shows that they should be included in the program; however, the required forms must be completed up front to help establish the expectations and relationships from the beginning.

The structure of the class must include different discussion formats and periodic guest speakers to better inform Students about career fields. The Students were very supportive of guest speakers and wanted to learn about different career fields. This gave some Students better internship ideas and others the opportunity to research different career fields.

The bottom line is that the evidence from this study showed that some students will not effectively engage the program without development of skills and support, so the instructor must
ensure that class format allows for all student voices. Quiet students often have incredible insight, and this held true during this study. Many quiet students provided great insight in small groups when called on by the teacher and during journal reflections.

**Adult Mentorship**

**Relationships.** Mentors repeatedly gave feedback that they felt disengaged from the school, and many reported they had no idea about their responsibility to set objectives. The evidence clearly identified that better relationships with Mentors would provide a better opportunity for Students. Desired contact with Mentors included an introduction, explanation of roles and expectations, review of the forms, periodic updates, reminders about key topics and assignments, close-out activities that could include a meeting between the Student Intern and the Mentor, and final presentations. Mentors reported that they could better support Student Interns if they were better informed. Even if the Student led the periodic meetings for development, the Mentors still desired contact with the school in order to ensure the aims of the program and objectives were being met.

**Practices.** In regard to specific practices for adult mentorship, evidence supported that initial and subsequent communications between the Mentor and the school were extremely important. Mentors who reported that they did not sit down with their Student Intern felt they could have provided better support if they had known. Periodic reminders and updates were desired by all the Mentors in the study. Personally contacting the Site Mentor, visiting the workplace, and requiring the Student to schedule an out-brief on his or her experience were all ideas wanted by Site Mentors.

**Student Perceptions.** Student perceptions in regard to adult mentorship changed over the course of the study. Many Students were initially weary of engaging adults in the workplace and
of how to engage them on a professional level. In all cases, the evidence shows that once the self-advocacy grew within a Student, the more he or she participated and reported a positive experience. Comments continually included reflections of disbelief with the amount of responsibility they were given and how much more comfortable they felt engaging with adults since the internship. The Students must perceive that the adults interacting with them really care, and they must perceive that their time isn’t being wasted. The Students agreed that objectives should be confirmed at least once during the internship. Once they were able to get past self-advocacy concerns, reflections changed from not wanting to bother a Mentor to clearly understanding their own role in the student-mentor process and how that made them feel. Students needed to experience these things firsthand, with a supportive teacher who could help deconstruct relationships and offer support when needed.

**Recommendations.** Recommendations to contact and engage mentors is pretty straightforward. The evidence from the study supported that both the Teacher and Mentor must initialize contact and keep the communication line open through periodic updates and reminders as needed. Mentors must understand their role in the internship process, and forms must be completed in order to ensure that the student-mentor relationship remains strong and supports the Student Intern’s experience. The Community Leader is a great source for handling Site Mentor issues or questions, as well as for assisting those Students who are struggling with cold leads to obtain internships. Mentors should be invited to the final presentations and help schedule closing meetings with the Students in order to provide constructive feedback.

**Implications for Future Study**

The value of work-based learning opportunities for high school students in better preparation for adulthood cannot be discounted. The amount of research supporting real-world,
work-based education greatly informed this study, and the evidence overwhelmingly supported that research. Upon reflection at the conclusion of the internship, every Student noted growth in some area and that he or she was “better prepared” for post-high school life. Most admitted that in some way this opportunity had impacted their future plans through a change in college focus or confirmation of their focus choice.

These opportunities appear to be easier to offer and manage through career academies and themed charter schools than through public schools, but most American students attend public schools. Internship opportunities can be made available in public high schools and it is feasible to operate on a limited budget with limited interference with major classes. Initiating a pilot program using the findings from this study can be a great start to a successful public high school internship program.

Colleges may increasingly expect high school internships as part of their applications and employers may look favorably on successful interns for employment over hiring unknowns. The benefits for the Student Intern are undeniable as part of better preparation for adulthood. As high schools increasingly prepare students for college and careers, work-based learning opportunities may be expected from more high schools. The school administration must buy into the idea, support the initiative, and spend the time to develop relationships within the community. There are lots of opportunities and programs available for students, but most reinforce the two main findings of this study: lack of self-advocacy and disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application. Most available programs are one-directional without any accountability for action. Students who do not have to model skills may ignorantly believe they possess them, and this formulates into their discounting opinions otherwise.
There were two areas of future study that were not feasible due to lack of focus and time constraints. First, out of the original 28 students who enrolled in the class and the 18 who completed the entire class both semesters, 9 of the 10 students who disenrolled were female. Although the final study demographic included 11 male and 7 female students (actually fairly even), more females originally signed up and significantly more disenrolled. Also, out of the 5 at-risk students who began the class, only 1 remained enrolled through completion. I was not able to capture any correlation with this data.

Second, a longitudinal study with these same 18 students over the next few years may truly show benefits and issues with work-based learning opportunities, although many variables could cause variations in outcomes. Some schools offer a questionnaire to alumni after one-year post-graduation, but even these questionnaires may not be reliable as my study found numerous accounts of Students overestimating their skills. If Students still overestimate their skills or are not transparent enough to be honest on the questionnaire, the data will be skewed.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are a few limitations to this study that may affect any generalization for other schools. Although the pilot program attempted to recruit a broad-based student population, because of some confusion with the Counselors, not all students were offered the opportunity to enroll. Although we learned a tremendous amount about issues surrounding middle- to high-performing students in regard to their readiness for adulthood, that wasn’t the original intent of the program. The study fell short of recruiting and retaining the significant numbers of at-risk students as intended. The study was conducted in an affluent area where students were expected to explore and supported in exploring learning opportunities, and the area was extremely
conducive to high-paying careers and supportive parents. These dynamics do not exist in all areas of the country and may affect how a pilot program is implemented.

Although the findings in this study lay out effective relationships and practices, students need opportunity and parental support. I received limited responses from students who disenrolled so, even with questions to Student Interns in the program about perceived reasons of why the other students dropped the class, I could not ascertain why all of these students left the program.

This study included a pilot program from only one public high school. Although data were used from other schools, including other public high schools, the study focused on a pilot program rather than implement a large-scale program all at once. The intent of the study was to get the relationships and practices right for this particular school to grow in scale at a later date, and to offer lessons learned for other schools, but it is limited in its generalization because of the venue and scope.

Great attempts to avoid bias were taken during this study, including adding the Community Leader to the research team in order to ensure a balance of voices heard during research team meetings and that interpretations of the data by the Teacher and I were not skewed. The Community Leader also led the focus group to ensure that my personal involvement did not influence questions or data interpretation. She also greatly contributed as an employer as well, since I was only able to recruit one reliable mentor. Due to lack of proximity to the school, hours that the class met and some interns only recently starting his or her internships, it was difficult to get commitments from mentors. I contacted several for follow up questions.
We decided during recruiting of students for the research team to have different students attend the meetings to offer a wider range of perspectives. This proved effective to cover the discussion points in detail with more students. But, not all students were involved.

Even with these considerations, my personal assumptions and connection to the study may have affected the analyzed data. I purposefully used multiple methods of collection to help triangulate the data, often finding similar data among observations, journal reflections, and during research team meetings. Having the focus group as the last method of collection afforded me the opportunity to clarify some of the data that was collected. Also, collecting the Student and Mentor questionnaires at the end of the program ensured that any observations I made were supported – or not – by other data. Focus of the findings and recommendations were heavily drawn from lessons learned and input from key stakeholders.

**Contributions of the Study**

Although there is a lot of literature concerning work-based learning and high school internship programs, I could not find any data that evaluated such an implementation in a public high school setting. The evidence from this study will add to the literature on better preparing youth for adulthood for two reasons. First, the student voice was a large part of this study, and very apparent in the findings and subsequent best practices used in developing the program to grow in scale next year. Second, the findings of student disconnect with practical application and lack of self-advocacy afforded me an opportunity to address and eventually reach deeper learning with the students.

Through consistent feedback during the study we were able to confirm the data we received, and we attempted different ways to approach students in order to help them realize the disconnect between practical application and their growth in self-advocacy. These two themes
affected many Students’ self-directed learning and their ability to recognize the benefit of intentional reflection. The impact of this study is that all students were affected by their internship experience and it caused them to think about their futures differently. It also identified an opportunity within the school, as well as those schools with similar demographics or concerns, to consider how to address this gap in 21st century skills preparedness for life after high school.

**Difficulty with Systems Change**

This study began as a conversation and an agreement. The entire administration at the district, school and community level seemed to all have interest in this program. As the program unfolded in the fall, it became apparent very quickly that the school administration did not place this pilot program high on the priority list for the students. This pilot program was directed from higher and the school administration appeared to comply as needed, but very little effort was given to the needs of the internship coordinator. Getting information from administrators for my study was very difficult and time consuming. The miscommunication with the counselors to target at-risk students was very clear to the school leadership. Although the school leadership was present at all early meetings, it took a while to realize that they did not support this pilot because of other programs going on, but they would not speak up to the superintendent about their concerns. This resulted in mixed recruitment for the class, frustrations from the internship coordinator, and to complete my study. The success of the pilot, the connection from the community, a strong internship coordinator, and the approval from the students will keep this program alive. This was a painful reminder that systems change must have buy-in from all interested and affected parties, especially the leadership who allocates resources.
Conclusion

The public high school pilot internship program offered interested students a work-based learning opportunity. Incorporating self-directed learning, skills development, and adult mentorship as the aims of the study proved to be effective in identifying areas of need and offering opportunities to grow for all the participating students. Although the study setting took place in an affluent area wherein higher education was expected of all students, and the local community was extremely conducive to high-tech and professional careers, the practices and relationship implications outlined in this chapter could be adapted to other community scenarios as well. As supported by the research, public schools in lower socio-economic areas can offer internship opportunities through career academies and charter schools. The key to implementing an internship program is to have a plan with aims, and the proven relationships and practices reviewed in above sections. All interested students should be encouraged to enroll.

I set out to answer what relationships and practices provided an effective experience for La Playa students and how students’ post-high school perceptions were changed by the internship experience. These questions were answered and, along the way, also brought to bear the significant barriers students face toward deeper learning. The disconnect between conceptual knowledge and practical application was difficult to identify at first, and very difficult for many Students to admit. Identifying skills and definitions is not enough. Students connected better when scenarios directly applied to them. Coaching the Students to model the skills in practical exercises, and then reflect on how the skills were later used at the internship site, provided them an opportunity to participate in a learning cycle. Holding Students accountable in a real-world situation was difficult, but each Intern grew from it in some way.
Another barrier was self-advocacy. Even the most outgoing, high-performing Students initially struggled with self-advocacy. The amounts of time it took each Student to recognize, confront, overcome, and reflect on his or her experience was independent of each other. Some Students were able to confront their fears much more quickly than were others, and some Students improved very little over the course of the internship. During final presentations, those Students who were able to overcome self-advocacy early into their internships often noted reaching objectives, contributing to the workplace mission, and enjoying the adult mentorship, and they reported a much better self-direction of the experience. Several Students who did not report much self-direction, setting or reaching objectives, or contributing to the organization’s mission, also displayed low self-advocacy. One of the best closing opportunities for the class involved having every Student Intern listen to each other during final presentations. Although this was finally the “aha” moment for some Students, most reported significant learning growth and perceptions of being better prepared for the transition to adulthood.

This study was difficult. The timing changed, the methods changed, getting consent took much longer than anticipated, there were school administration difficulties and working with so many participants was daunting. But it was worth it. The evidence is undeniable. At the most basic level, every Student Intern who participated reported having been positively impacted and most Site Mentors responded that they were interested in mentoring again. The opportunity to better prepare students for adulthood in a public school environment was very rewarding for me. In the end, the study was a success and it will start at La Playa in the fall under a much stronger framework in order to provide an even better experience for interested students. The school administration must realize the value of the program to allocate resources and get involved.
Appendix A

Internship Agreement Form

Student Name: _____________________________________________________________
Internship Organization/Department: ___________________________________________
Reporting Address: __________________________________________________________
City: _____ Zip: ____________________________________________________________
Direct Internship Mentor (First and Last Name):

___________________________________________________________________________
Email: _____________________________________________________________________
Wk Phone: _______________________ Cell Phone (Optional): ______________________
Internship Title: ___________________________________________________________
Start Date: ___________________________  End Date: ____________________________
Weekly schedule (Days and Times):
Required Dress:
Student Learning Objectives
1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
Student Learning Outcomes:
1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
Student's Major Responsibilities and/or Deliverables:

Required Orientation, Training & Projects:

Mentor: __________________________________________________________ Date:        
Internship Instructor: ___________________________________ Date:________________
Student: ________________________________________________ Date:________________
Appendix B

Intern Site Sheet

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<tr>
<th>Intern Site Sheet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentor's name</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization/Workplace</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Address</td>
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<td><strong>Phone Number</strong></td>
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</table>

These questions will help you understand your internship workplace. Ask your mentor to help you answer these questions. Also ask your mentor who else you can speak with at the organization. Answering these questions will help you sharpen your observation skills and help you better understand your interest. Develop your own questions as well to better understand your internship site.

1. What is the main purpose of this organization/business/workplace?

2. What different kinds of jobs go on here?

3. Who are the customers or clients, or who is served by the work of this organization?


5. What is it like for people who work here? When do people arrive and when do they leave? How long is lunch? Is there a dress code? In what kind of spaces do people work?
PART 2: STRUCTURE

6. Is this organization broken down into departments? If so, how does the work connect?

7. If there are different parts of the organization, what are the ways they use to communicate with each other?

8. How are decisions made in your part of the organization?

9. Which part of the organization do you find most interesting? Why?

10. What kinds of jobs could you see yourself doing in this organization?

PART 3: ASSESSMENT

11. How is work evaluated at your site?

12. Do co-workers critique or review each other’s work? How is this done?

13. Do people seem to have high standards for their work? How can you tell?

14. What are 3 to 5 skills or personal qualities that seem to be important for all employees in order for them to do quality work and receive a good evaluation?

15. What skills and personal qualities are important for you to work on in the next few months
Appendix C

Student Post-Internship Questionnaire

STUDENT: ______________________ STUDENT NUMBER: ____________

Thank you for taking a few minutes to help inform us of your perception of certain experiences and skills as you end the internship program. Your honest feedback will not only assist you in recognizing your experiences, but it will also assist us in improving the internship program. Your responses will remain confidential. Only the combined trends will be shared to external audiences.

Please answer the questions to the closest category that represents how you feel at the time of the survey. Please complete ALL questions. While you are free to not answer any question, leaving questions blank may affect a complete picture of your experiences. Please submit your questionnaire to the facilitator once you have completed the survey. Thank you for your assistance and congratulations on completing your internship!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My educational experience in high school outside this program is connected with real-world relevance?</td>
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<td>I was strongly committed to the requirements of this program</td>
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<td>I feel prepared for college or career expectations</td>
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<td>My internship aligned with my career interests</td>
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<td>I believe my contributions at the internship site made a difference</td>
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<td>I believe the skills I developed in the internship program may change my future plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing and understanding the internship site’s mission and values was important</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand workplace dynamics and expectations</td>
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<td>I understand the requirements and benefits of journaling</td>
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<td>I have strong written communication skills</td>
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<td>I have strong verbal communication skills</td>
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<td>I understand critical thinking and problem solving skills</td>
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<td>I played an active role in self-directing my internship experience</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand basic workplace technologies</td>
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<td>I have been told I have strong collaboration skills</td>
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<td>I feel prepared to deal with others in difficult workplace situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>I understand workplace productivity expectations and requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with the internship coordinator</td>
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<td>I feel the school was supportive of the internship program</td>
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<td>I have made professional contacts from this class</td>
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<td>I have learned directly applicable information in this class</td>
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<td>The internship coordinator effectively guided this class</td>
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<td>My interest of career field(s) has increased because of this class</td>
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<td>My efforts at the internship site benefitted others</td>
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<tr>
<td>The classroom requirements were not very time consuming</td>
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<td>The internship coordinator was helpful</td>
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<td>I am able to better express myself and contribute to classroom activities</td>
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<td>My classroom attendance was a priority</td>
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<td>I have received support in completing my internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>This program has affected some decisions for after graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have had a positive experience in this program</td>
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</table>
1. What do you believe were the causes for any responses in the “D” column?

2. How do you explain average responses (B or C), and how do you feel the internship program can better assist a student in the future?

3. What are some best practices that you felt led to your positive experiences and results in the “A” column?

4. Are you aware of any reasons that students have chosen to drop the internship program? If so, what are those reasons?

5. What topics or discussions would you like to see in this internship program?

6. Any other comments?
Appendix D
Post-Site Mentor Questionnaire

Mentor Name: __________________Internship Site Name:________________________

Thank you for taking a few minutes to help inform us of your perception of certain experiences and skills as you end your role as an internship mentor. Your honest feedback will not only assist you in recognizing your experiences, but it will also assist us in improving the internship program. Your responses will remain confidential. Only the combined trends will be shared to external audiences.

Please answer the questions to the closest category that represents how you feel at the time of the survey. Please complete ALL questions. While you are free to not answer any question, leaving questions blank may affect a complete picture of your experiences. Please submit your questionnaire to the facilitator once you have completed the survey. Thank you for your assistance and thank you very much for participating as an internship mentor!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was comfortable volunteering as an intern mentor</td>
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<td>I understood the role of a mentor</td>
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<td>I was strongly committed to the responsibilities as a mentor</td>
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<td>I feel my intern’s overall experience was very positive</td>
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<td>My intern’s experience aligned with his/her career goals</td>
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<td>I believe my intern’s contributions at the internship site made a difference</td>
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<td>I believe the skills my intern developed in the internship program may change his/her future plans</td>
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<td>My intern knew and understood the internship site’s mission and values</td>
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<td>My intern understood workplace dynamics and expectations</td>
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<td>My intern understood basic workplace technologies</td>
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<td>My intern had strong written communication skills</td>
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<td>My intern had strong verbal communication skills</td>
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<td>My intern understood critical thinking and problem solving skills</td>
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<td>My intern had strong collaboration skills</td>
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<td>My intern played an active role in self-directing his/her internship experience</td>
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<td>QUESTIONS</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>My intern understood and used workplace skills vocabulary</td>
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<td>My intern progressively improved in performance and effectiveness</td>
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<td>I feel my intern is prepared to deal with others in difficult workplace situations</td>
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<td>My intern understood workplace productivity expectations and requirements</td>
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<td>I am comfortable working with the internship coordinator</td>
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<td>I feel the school was supportive of the internship program</td>
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<tr>
<td>The internship coordinator was helpful</td>
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<td>My intern accomplished his/her internship objectives</td>
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<td>I was able to include intentional time to provide feedback to my intern</td>
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<td>I ensured that I answered questions and concerns from my intern</td>
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<td>The efforts of my intern at the internship site benefitted others</td>
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<td>The internship site requirements did not cause student schedule conflicts</td>
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<td>My intern had some great ideas that contributed to workplace projects</td>
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<td>My intern was able to better express himself/herself and contribute to site activities</td>
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<td>My intern’s attendance was a priority for him/her</td>
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<tr>
<td>My intern received support at the site to complete his/her internship</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have had a positive experience participating in this program</td>
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<tr>
<td>My experience as a mentor has positively affected my leadership approach</td>
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1. What do you believe were the causes for any responses in the “D” column?

2. How do you explain average responses (B or C), and how do you feel the internship program can better assist a student in the future?
3. What are some best practices that you felt led to your positive experiences and results in the “A” column?

4. If you did not have a positive experience with your intern or the program in general, what are some reasons?

5. Would you be interested in being a site mentor in the future for another high school student? If so, what are some benefits? If not, why not?

6. Any other comments?
Appendix E
Action Research Team Guiding Questions

Cycle One
1. How are the relationships with the school and district administration?
2. How is attendance in the classroom and at the internship sites? Any concerns?
3. How is participation by all students in the classroom?
4. Are there any issues that need to be addressed with external personnel?
5. Are the class topics eliciting meaningful discussions and applicable skills? How are they beneficial? What signs did you notice that made you feel the classroom sessions are effective?
6. Is there anything so far in the program that we could have done better?
7. Are the students self-directing their internships?
8. Are the students contributing to the classroom topics and process refinement?
9. What components of the classroom sessions are most effective?
10. Is the level of journal prompt responses appropriate? Why or why not?
11. What is the site mentor feedback from the internship experience?
12. Are the internship mentors providing effective opportunities and feedback?
13. Are the students meeting his or her internship objectives or altering as needed?
14. Are 21st century skills noticeably used in discussions at the internship site?
15. What has really worked well?
16. What is something that could have been better as the program started this year?
17. Are there any decisions that must be made by external personnel?
18. What are our next steps?

Cycle Two
1. How are the relationships with the school and district administration?
2. How is attendance in the classroom and at the internship sites? Any concerns?
3. How is participation by all students in the classroom?
4. Are there any issues that need to be addressed with external personnel?
5. What classroom topics were beneficial and what topics weren’t useful?
6. Is there anything so far in the program that we could have done better?
7. Are the students contributing to the classroom topics and process refinement?
8. What components of the classroom sessions are most effective?
9. Are the journal prompts appropriate for student development? Why or why not?
10. What is the site mentor feedback from the internship experience?
11. Are the students meeting his or her internship objectives or altering as needed?
12. What has really worked well?
13. What are some things that we should consider for the program next fall?
14. Are there any decisions/actions that must start now for the fall?
15. What processes must be worked out to grow this program in scale in the fall?
16. What are our next steps?
Appendix F
Internship Site Observation Protocol

Purpose: The purpose of this protocol is to provide general categories for observation. Descriptive and reflective notes will be included in each observation.

What is the site mentor doing?
- What types of activities is he/she leading?
- How has the site mentor evolved as a mentor since the beginning?
- How is he/she interacting with the student intern?
- Is the student intern speaking up with questions and desires?
- Is the site mentor giving timely and effective feedback to the student intern?
- How is he/she using the agreed upon objectives to guide the experience?
- What is the perception of the site mentor’s enjoyment? Why?
- What is the site mentor’s command of the required skills and tasks at the location?
- Is the site mentor using 21st century skills vocabulary during interactions? How?
- Are they saying or asking anything that suggests that we should make changes to the internship program processes for next year?
- How did he/she respond or refine after student intern questions?
- How did that help him/her change what they did the next time?
- Does the site mentor establish a trusting environment for learning?
- Does the internship site appear to be physically safe for the student intern?
- What appears to be a detriment to the goals of the internship program?
- What processes appear to be supporting the intent of the internship experience?

What is the student intern doing?
- Ways of engaging in activities
- Is the student intern dressed appropriately, arrive on time, and appear ready?
- Ways of interacting with site mentor
- What types of questions is he/she asking?
- Do his/her questions appear to support the agreed upon learning objectives?
- What topics spark emotion or interest?
- Is the student intern using 21st century skills vocabulary taught in class?
- Is the student assisting in the self-direction of his/her internship experience?
- Is the student intern only assisting in workplace tasks? How? Why?
- Is he/she saying or asking anything that suggests that we should make changes to the internship program processes for next year?
- Does he/she appear to feel safe to engage workplace members and offer input to the site mentor?
- How does the student intern react to stressful situations and unknown answers?
- Does he/she make any suggestions for improvement? Do these align with his/her objectives?
Appendix G
Internship Class Observation Protocol

**Purpose:** The purpose of this protocol is to provide general categories for observation. Descriptive and reflective notes will be included in each observation.

**What is the internship coordinator doing?**
- What types of activities is he leading?
- Has he changed anything as he has implement the program?
- How is he engaging students?
- How are the students interacting with him?
- How has he responded or refined delivery after action research team meetings?
- How were student meetings organized? Were student concerns addressed?
- How did that help him change what he did in the classroom the next time?
- What was discussed concerning site mentors and established objectives?
- How is the feedback from site mentors expressed in classroom delivery?
- Overall confidence with material, flexibility with delivery

**What are the students doing?**
- Ways of engaging in activities
- Ways of interacting with instructor and guests
- What types of questions are they asking?
- Are their questions along the same lines with class themes (site mentorship, skills development, self-direction?)
- Does the class format and topics need to change next time to better meet the needs of the students?
- What topics and formats spark emotion or interest?
- Are they saying or asking anything that suggests that we should make changes to format or topics for next time?
- Do they make any suggestions for further changes
- Were any concerns brought up concerning site mentors or the internship experience?
- Are the students using 21st century skills vocabulary during discussions in class?
- What activities seem to cause students to disengage?
- What did they find exciting?
Appendix H
Focus Group Protocol

Intro: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me about your internship experience. The goal of this focus group is for me to find out a little more about your participation in the internship program and how your experience has shaped your decisions after graduation, and to elicit feedback on what we can do to improve the internship program in the future. This focus group should take about an hour and your names will not be attached to any data linking back to you. Your answers will be used to brief school and district leadership, and assist other public high schools who may express an interest in an internship program. I would like to record this session. The research team will be the only ones listening to any recordings. Is this ok? Do you have any questions before we start? You may choose to stop participating at any time.

1. Are you more confident in your preparation for college and/or career? Why or why not? Have your plans changed? How?
2. Since you began this internship program, what has changed in your understanding of workplace expectations?
   a. 21st century skills? (leadership, critical thinking, influence, social interaction, collaboration, communication).
   b. Adult mentorship? (Probe for specifics)
3. How was your experience having this self-directed with you finding your internship and setting your own objectives? Was this process useful? How?
4. Since you began the internship program, has your behavior changed at the internship site? (Probe for specifics) What have you done differently?
5. How is your relationship with your site mentor? Is he/she effective and approachable during your internship? Are you accomplishing your objectives?
6. What activities and formats seemed to work well for you to remain engaged and motivated in class and at the internship site?
7. Do you feel that your voice was heard and that your input helped with the direction of classroom topics and processes?
8. How could the internship class teacher better support your experience at the internship site?
9. What processes in the class were most helpful?
   a. Forms?
   b. Training?
   c. Assignments?
   d. Class format?
   e. Reflection journaling? How effective has journaling been for you?
   f. What is still missing?
10. What can we do in the future to improve the internship program and student experience?
11. Any other closing comments before we end this session?
Appendix I
Student Journaling Protocol

**Purpose:** The purpose of having the student’s journal is to reflect on experiences and note how they think about those experiences and the reflection process. This develops reflective skills, captures experiences and may change opinions or future behaviors.

**Specifics:** Each student will receive a prompt from the internship coordinator each week that will either cover classroom topics, internship experiences, response to a designated article, or a combination of the three. The internship coordinator will review these journals with each student during student-teacher meetings and provide feedback. Each student was given an introduction session to journaling at the beginning of the program. Although the guiding themes of adult mentorship, skills development and self-directed learning will encompass overall journaling input, each week’s prompt may also include student feedback. There must be flexibility in the prompts during the year.

**Guiding Questions:** (may or may not be used each week)
1. What was discussed this week that may be a great teaching point?
2. What sparked interest and dialogue with the students?
3. What article or research could support our themes or discussion?
4. How can we incorporate the internship site experience?
5. Have we given the students opportunity to express feelings on a current subject?
6. Was there a student interaction that others could relate to and reflect on?
Appendix J
Study Skills Class Agendas

Week One – Mar 2

- Skill Topic (Initiative and Self-Direction) - Definitions
  o Self Direction
    ▪ Explore and Expand Learning Opportunities
    ▪ Learning is Lifelong Process
    ▪ Advance Skills toward professional level
    ▪ Reflect Critically on past to inform future
  o Initiative
    ▪ Time Management
    ▪ Set and Achieve Goals
    ▪ Balance short and long term goals
    ▪ Work Independently
  o “We need self-directed people who can find creative solutions to some very tough, challenging problems”

- Method
  o Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
  o Students discuss in small groups internship experiences of skills, then share examples/experiences
    ▪ Growth in understanding
    ▪ Misunderstandings
    ▪ Expectations at internship site
    ▪ Skill development still needed?
  o Teacher asks about objectives progression – same as started? Met them and readjusted? Why/why not?
  o Time Management Exercise
    ▪ Share results with partner
    ▪ Share with class
    ▪ SMART goal format (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time Bound)
      • IF TIME – WRITE A SHORT GOAL AND SHARE

- Journal Prompt Homework
  o Journal one paragraph each on your growth in understanding and use of the skills from class this week (initiative and self-direction). Where are you doing well and where are you falling short?
  o Discuss in one more paragraph how the time management exercise helped you realize where you are effectively managing your time and where you could put some effort. Why are time management and setting goals important skills for you to incorporate into your life?
Week Two – Mar 9

- Skill Topic (Social and Cross Cultural Interaction) - Definitions
  o Know when it’s appropriate to listen and speak
  o Conduct self in a professional and appropriate manner
  o Respect cultural differences
  o Work effectively with people from different backgrounds
  o Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values
  o Leverage differences to create new ideas and quality of work
    o “The ability to work effectively and creatively with team members and classmates regardless of differences in culture and style is an essential 21st century life skill.”

- Method
  o Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
  o Students discuss in small groups internship experiences of skills, then share examples/experiences
    ▪ Growth in understanding
    ▪ Misunderstandings
    ▪ Expectations at internship site
    ▪ Skill development still needed?
  o Emotional Intelligence Review – REMEMBER?
    ▪ Social Awareness – those around you
    ▪ Self Awareness – how/why you feel/react certain way
    ▪ Relationship Management – healthy?
    ▪ Self Regulation – How do you interact?
  o Exercise
    ▪ “It’s hard for people in the US to work globally because they are used to being in control.”
    ▪ Globally, youth are raised to work and solve problems in teams, whereas US students are judged on individual achievements.”
    ▪ Break the room into four groups to each review one of these researched findings (two groups each quote)
      ▪ What is their experience with this quote?
      ▪ How could they see different perspectives? List some of them.
      ▪ What can they do to improve their cultural understanding and better teamwork dynamics?
    ▪ Brief back to the class on each of these questions

- Journal Prompt Homework
Journal one paragraph each on your growth in understanding and use of the skills from class this week (social and cross cultural interaction). Where are you doing well and where are you falling short?

Discuss in one more paragraph how the exercise allowed you to frame your understanding of cultural interaction within the workplace context, and how you plan to work on better understanding and interactions in the future.

**Week Three – Mar 16**

- Skill Topic (Communication and Collaboration)
  - Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal skills
  - Listen effectively to decipher meaning
  - Communicate to inform, instruct, motivate, persuade
  - Demonstrate ability to work respectfully with others
  - Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful
  - Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work

  - “80% of employer respondents report high school graduates as deficient in written communication. About 50% of college graduates are deficient.” (writing memos, letters, complex reports that clearly explain importance.)

- Method
  - Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
  - Students discuss in small groups internship experiences of skills, then share examples/experiences
    - Growth in understanding
    - Misunderstandings
    - Expectations at internship site
    - Skill development still needed?
  - Emotional Intelligence Review – REMEMBER?
    - Social Awareness – those around you
    - Self Awareness – how/why you feel/react certain way
    - Relationship Management – healthy?
    - Self Regulation – How do you interact?
  - Exercise
    - First Exercise
      - Small group of four people or less
      - Discuss ideas of how you solve a problem when people you need involved don’t report to you? How do you influence things that are out of your direct control?
• Share real examples and ideas with class

  Second Exercise
  • Pair Off – Take turns in the role of the supervisor and ask your intern, “What do you want me to take away from this discussion?”
  • The intern is to clearly and effectively respond with one or two internship concerns, ideas, resolution of a concern
  • The supervisor then responds back on what he/she believes what was heard (effective listening)
  • The intern restates or confirms
  • Share with class what the interaction felt like

  Communication Skill Explanation
  • BLUF
    o Bottom Line Up Front
    o Like you read an article
    o What is the primary details and then back it up
    o Being told you only have certain time limit, or notice by physical signs to “be quick” – knowing people may not listen long or read a long email/note
    o Elevator speech is one example of BLUF

  - Journal Prompt Homework
    o Journal one paragraph about your perception and experience with influencing in your internship program. Include an example of growth and understanding concerning effective listening. What happened? What did you learn?
    o Discuss in one more paragraph how you have used or learned the importance of BLUF in a real situation. Relate what occurred and restate the BLUF statement or situation in one or two sentences to effectively communicate your point.

Week Four – Mar 30

  - Skill Topic (Responsibility)
    o Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind
    o Advocate for yourself
    o Communicate issues/concerns for clarity
    o Fulfill required obligations
    o Active participation in a process
    o Adhere to policies and social norms
- **Method**
  - Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
  - Students discuss in small groups internship experiences of skills, then share examples/experiences
    - Growth in understanding
    - Misunderstandings
    - Expectations at internship site
    - Skill development still needed?
  - Emotional Intelligence Review – REMEMBER?
    - **Social Awareness** – those around you
    - **Self Awareness** – how/why you feel/react certain way
    - **Relationship Management** – healthy?
    - **Self Regulation** – How do you interact?
  - Exercise
    - **Studio Exercise**
      - Small group of four people or less
      - In 5 minutes, each member must take a share of required workload for a given project and then develop a course of action. Everyone must participate; utilizing strengths. Members must agree on the chosen course of action. Identify what needs to get done and then assume responsibility for a role.
      - Share process and ideas with class
      - Establish new teams, each student can’t have more than one other person that was from a previous group on the new team. Repeat dividing up the workload using member strengths. Brief the course of action.
        - Add personal perceptions and experiences to the class.
      - Repeat one more time if time is available.
      - **Intent of the exercise is dividing up work, take roles that play to your strengths, have everyone contribute to a creative outcome, and celebrate the results.**
    - **Project #1**
      - Your team is responsible for conducting a morale assessment at your work place of about 80 people in the next week so that the boss can discuss any findings at the quarterly training session in about 10 days. How do you plan to ensure this morale assessment includes all five directorates that work day shift only in two locations about five miles apart?
    - **Project #2**
      - Your team is responsible for hosting the senior partners of the firm for an afternoon that includes lunch and a brief on the
current strategies to raise profits, because the company ended last quarter in the red and there are rumors of cutting jobs. Who else do you include in this? Where do you recommend for this to take place? What’s on the agenda?

- Journal Prompt Homework
  - Journal one paragraph about your internship experiences in regards to responsibility. Have you experienced any learning opportunities from self-awareness or from being addressed about an aspect of responsibility at the site? What happened? How did you handle it/them? What did you learn from it? What could you have done differently?
  - Journal a second paragraph - How is your relationship with your site mentor, and your understanding of your responsibilities? Did you use the internship site documents from the class to establish objectives and expectations, and if so, did this help you with understanding your responsibilities? Are you keeping up with those responsibilities?

Week Five – April 13th

- Skill Topics
  - Leadership
    - Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal
    - Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal
    - Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness
    - Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power
  - Critical Thinking
    - Use various types of reasoning as appropriate to the situation
    - Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems
    - Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view
    - Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis

- Part I - Method - Skills Development
  - Leadership (10-15 minutes)
    - Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
    - Students give first-hand examples of leadership practically applied
- Students in large group individually respond to article comments giving examples from internships (will print off)
  - Critical Thinking (10-15 minutes)
    - Students define understanding of terms, teacher reinforces
    - Students discuss first-hand examples of thinking critically practically applied
    - Students in groups assess the scenario and provide feedback as to some considerations and courses of action

- Part II – In-Class Journal Prompt (10 minutes)
  - Journal one paragraph about an experience where your perception or understanding of leadership was changed or reinforced when you were required to apply leadership yourself. Give some details.
  - Journal one paragraph about how your experience with applying critical thinking was changed or reinforced during this class in regards to the discussion and the exercise

- Part III – Online Questionnaire Completion In Class (10 minutes)

- Part IV – Other Journal completion (TBD)

- Part V – Collect consent forms prior to departure from class

**IN-CLASS CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE – 10 minutes**

**SCENARIO:** Your team at work has just been briefed that your company has been sold to another corporation. The current owners and stockholders are set to make a lot of money in this transaction. You are each a member of the transition team to act as liaisons between the new owners/leaders and the current employers of your company. There has been no update as to why the company was sold and what the new company plans to do in regards to employees and the company name. Rumors are starting to develop. Employees want to know what will happen to them. What should you be thinking about? Use your internship experiences to help answer the questions listed below.

1. What is the worst-case scenario for the employees?

2. What is the best-case scenario for the employees?
3. What questions should you ask the new leadership at your next meeting?

4. What concerns do the employees have?

5. What are your top three priorities as the company transitions?
Appendix K
Adult Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program Through Action Research

Introduction
My name is Casey Miner. I am a doctoral student at UCLA, and I would like to tell you more about a research study I will be conducting at La Playa High School.

La Playa High School was identified as a research site based on recommendations from administrators who realized a gap in educational opportunities existed within the high school.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are enrolled in the internship class. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
Research shows that the transition to adulthood for many young adults is very difficult and that many high school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of college and work. The purpose of this study is to focus on better understanding perceptions of graduating students and employers, and reinforce skills within students to become better prepared for post graduation requirements. Internship programs are a part of work-based and external classroom learning models that allow students to build 21st century skills, develop external adult mentorship relationships and participate in a self-directed learning environment where the student explores interests. I also believe this internship program affords the administration and employers an opportunity to learn more about how students learn and to connect the real world with student classroom education. The intent of this study is to evaluate relationships and processes during this pilot year to grow the program in scale next year for any interested student to participate. All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the focus group between the participants only. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to understand more about how students relate to external adults in a workplace environment, how students model workplace skills, and how school administrators support an external classroom learning opportunity.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, as the researcher I will ask you to participate in several possible activities. You have the choice to participate in all or none of the following
activities, and you may opt out at any time. Your responses may be audio recorded for research transcribing only. No personal information will be contained in any releasable material. The study will last from four to six weeks depending on data collecting requirements.

**Activities:**

1. **Research Team Member:** Some students will be approved to participate on the research team. The research team will meet four times over the study period. This participation is voluntary and will require an additional amount of time outside of the work place. Each session will last about one hour, with a total of four hours commitment as part of the research team. Research team voices are an important part of the research team to ensure any experiences and discussions for changes or structure include your perspective. Any team member who volunteers and is approved to become part of the research team may opt out of any discussions or as part of the research team at any time. If confirmed to participate, your voice could make significant contributions to the internship program process. The research team will meet at La Playa High School.

2. **Participant Survey:** You will be asked to participate in a short participant survey because their opinion matters. The survey is short and will take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

3. **Observations:** During class and internship site observations, I might ask you quick verbal question as a follow-up to learn more about what you said or did in an activity to gain perspective. For example, when you chose an action, asked a question or made a comment, I might ask later, after the activity at break, why you chose what you did, or ask you why you said what you did and what you think about it. This would take about a minute. This will include asking permission to digitally record your verbal response if applicable. Four sites will be visited each twice during the study period. Site mentors and student interns will confirm each site will be confirmed prior to any visit.

4. **Focus Group:** You may be asked to participate in a focus group to learn more about your perspective on why students would participate in the internship program and your perceptions. The detail and descriptions you share may help me better understand the context of site observations and adult interactions, and skills development. The focus group will take place in a public space within the school property and take about an hour to complete. This will include asking permission to digitally or video record your verbal response. Not all students will participate in the focus group and any student may opt out of this session before or during the focus group.
5. **Journal Prompts:** You are already completing journal prompts as part of the internship class curriculum. During the study, I will assist in the focus of the journal prompts to better focus and use responses to indicate perceptions and modeling of skills and experiences. The journal prompts will continue to be weekly during the study, given by the class teacher during class and then received through email or by hand the following week in class. Only pseudonyms will be used if any comments are used during the study.

**Digital, Audio and Video Recording:**
With your approval, I may ask you if I can record our conversations as necessary so that I can remember what you said. Most observations will be completed with field notes and without the need for recording comments. You can always tell me that you do not want me to record what you say and can ask that any part of the recording be erased. These recordings and all other information about you will only be available to me. Those students participating in the focus group may be video taped for proper response coding. I will also write field notes about what I observe in the classroom and at selected internship sites. You will never be identified by your real name in any notes or written reports. I will always identify you and other participants by pseudonym. Sometimes I might want to include something you said in a report or presentation, but you would only be identified as a participant, not any name or your organization.

If you decide you do not want to be in the study after you have started, you can tell me you do not want to be part of the research anymore. You can stop being in any or all parts of the project at any time. Remember, all aspects of this study are completely voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without repercussion. If you decide not to be in this study, I will still observe the internship program, but I will not ask you any questions.

**How long will I be in the research study?**
Total participation will equal no more than a total of about four to six hours. The research study will take place over a six-week period as part of the internship program.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**
There are no anticipated risks for you by participating in this research study. Your participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, you are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**
The potential benefits to society include the importance of knowledge gained from participants about how internship programs can be better designed for high school students.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission, or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing a pseudonym for you. All data, digital recordings, and transcripts will be maintained on my personal password-protected laptop and
backed-up on my password-protected external hard drive. Any hard copies will be locked up in a filing cabinet at my house when not in my immediate possession.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**

- **The Research Team:**
  
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the Researcher or Faculty Sponsor. Please contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Faculty Sponsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casey Miner</td>
<td>Eugene Tucker, Ed. D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310-XXX-XXXX</td>
<td>310-XXX-XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

**What are the next steps if I agree to participate in the study?**

Complete and Sign the ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH Form and return to Casey Miner.
**STEP 1: SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

I agree to participate in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant (print)</th>
<th>Work Title</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**STEP 2: RETURN FORM** to Casey Miner.

**STEP 3: SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casey J. Miner</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
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<th>Name of Person Obtaining Consent (print)</th>
<th>Contact Number</th>
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Appendix L
Parent Permission Form

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

PARENT PERMISSION FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program Through Action Research

Dear Parent or Guardian,

My name is Casey Miner. I am a doctoral student at UCLA, and I would like to tell you more about a research study that I will be doing at the high school your child attends.

Your child’s high school was identified as a research site based on recommendations from administrators who realized a gap in educational opportunities existed within the high school.

Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he/she is enrolled in the pilot internship class. Your child’s participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
Research shows that the transition to adulthood for many young adults is very difficult and that many high school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of college and work. The purpose of this study is to focus on better understanding perceptions of graduating students and employers, and reinforce skills within students to become better prepared for post graduation requirements. Internship programs are a part of work-based and external classroom learning models that allow students to build 21st century skills, develop external adult mentorship relationships and participate in a self-directed learning environment where the student explores interests. I also believe this internship program affords the administration an opportunity to learn more about how students learn and to connect the real world with student classroom education. The intent of this study is to evaluate relationships and processes during this pilot year to grow the program in scale next year for any interested student to participate. All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the focus group between the participants only. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

What will happen if my child takes part in this research study?
If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, I would ask him/her to continue to be their normal self and do what they usually do in the program: have fun and learn new things. Their participation is voluntary and will not impact their relationship with the internship class or the school. You have the choice to allow your child to participate in all or none of the following
activities, and your child may opt out at any time. Your child’s responses may be audio or video recorded for research transcribing only. No personal information will be contained in any releasable material. The study will last from four to six weeks depending on data collecting requirements.

**Activities:**

6. **Participant Survey:** Your child will be asked to participate in a short participant survey because their opinion matters. The survey is short and will take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

7. **Observations:** During class and internship site observations, I might ask your child a quick verbal question as a follow-up to learn more about what he/she said or did in an activity to gain perspective. For example, when he/she chose an activity, asked a question or made a comment, I might ask later, after the activity at break, why he/she chose what he/she did, or ask him/her why he/she said what he/she did and what he/she thinks about it. This would take about a minute. This will include asking permission to digitally record his/her verbal response if applicable.

8. **Focus Group:** Your child may be asked to participate in a focus group to learn more about his or her perspective on why students would participate in the internship program and his or her perceptions. The detail and descriptions your child shares may help me better understand the context of site observations and adult interactions, and skills development. The focus group will take place in a public space within the school property and take about an hour to complete. This will include asking permission to digitally or video record his/her verbal response. Not all students will participate in the focus group and any student may opt out of this session before or during the focus group.

9. **Journal Prompts:** Your child is already completing journal prompts as part of the internship class curriculum. During the study, I will assist in the focus of the journal prompts to better focus and use responses to indicate perceptions and modeling of skills and experiences. The journal prompts will continue to be weekly during the study, given by the class teacher during class and then received through email or by hand the following week in class. Only pseudonyms will be used if any comments are used during the study.

10. **Research Team Member:** Two students will be chosen as part of the research team that will meet four times over the study period. This participation is voluntary and will require an additional amount of time outside of the classroom and internship. Each session will last about one hour, with a total of four hours
commitment as part of the research team. Student voices are an important part of the research team to ensure any experiences and discussions for changes or structure include the student perspective. Any student who volunteers and is approved to become part of the research team may opt out of any discussions or as part of the research team at any time. If confirmed to participate, your child’s voice could make significant contributions to the internship program process.

Digital and Video Audio Recording:
With your approval, I will ask your child if I can record our conversations as necessary so that I can remember what he/she said. Most observations will be completed with field notes and without the need for recording comments. Your child can always tell me that he/she does not want me to record what he/she says and can ask that any part of the recording be erased. These recordings and all other information about your child will only be available to me. I will also write field notes about what I observe in the classroom and at selected internship sites. Your child will never be identified by his/her real name in any notes or written reports. I will always identify him/her and other participants by pseudonym. Sometimes I might want to include something he/she said in a report or presentation, but he/she would only be identified as a participant, not any name or the school or organization he/she participates. A video recording may be used only for the focus group to allow me to better understand comments and experiences, where audio alone may not allow me to recognize comments and perceptions.

If you decide you do not want your child to be in the study after he/she has started, you can tell me. You, on behalf of your child, or your child can decide to stop being in any or all parts of the study at any time. Remember, all aspects of this study are completely voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without repercussion. If you decide for your child, or your child decides, to no longer participate in the study I will continue to observe the internship program but I will not ask your child any questions and I will not include any comments made by your child.

How long will my child be in the research study?
The research study will take place over a six-week period during the class sessions and selected internship sites. The survey and selected focus group will conclude the study period. I will be conducting on-site observations at selected internship sites program approximately two-days per week for the duration of the research. Participation in the survey portion will take ten minutes and the selected focus group portion will take an additional sixty minutes.

Are there potential risks or discomforts that my child can expect from this study?
There are no anticipated risks for your child in participating in this research study. Your child’s participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, your child is not required to answer questions that make him/her feel uncomfortable.

Are there any potential benefits to my child if he or she participates?
Your child may directly benefit from their participation in the study due to interaction and reflection opportunities, and having their voice heard during an approved study about students may be beneficial to them. The potential benefits to society include the importance of knowledge
gained from participants about how internships and work-related learning can be designed to better serve the needs of interested high school students in the delivery of future internship learning opportunities.

**Will information about my child’s participation be kept confidential?**
All information that is collected in connection with this study which could potentially be associated with your child will remain confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing a pseudonym for your child. All data, digital and video recordings, and transcripts will be maintained on a password-protected laptop and backed-up on a password-protected external drive. Any hard copies will be locked up in a filing cabinet when not in my immediate possession.

**What are my child’s rights if he or she takes part in the study?**
- You can choose whether or not you want your child to be in this study, and you may withdraw your permission and discontinue your child’s participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you or your child, and no loss of benefits to which you or your child were otherwise entitled.
- Your child may refuse to answer any questions that he/she do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**
- **The Research Team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the Researcher or Faculty Sponsor. Please contact:

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- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

**What are the next steps if I agree my child may participate in the study?**
I understand the information described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree that my child may participate in this study. I have a copy of this information for my records.

**BOTH of the following forms must be signed and returned in order for your child to participate in the project:** the Parent/Guardian Permission form and the Youth Assent form. Thank you for your consideration to support this research project.

**PARENT PERMISSION FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**
You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**STEP 1: SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN**

I agree my child may participate in the study:

________________________________________________________________________
Name of Child (print)

________________________________________________________________________
Name of Parent or Guardian (print)

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

**STEP 2: RETURN FORM(S) to the Internship Class Teacher or Casey Miner. Remember, both the Parent/Guardian Permission form and Youth Assent form must be completed, signed, and returned for your child to participate.**
Appendix M
Research Team Member Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program Through Action Research

Introduction
My name is Casey Miner. I am a doctoral student at UCLA, and I would like to tell you more about a research study I will be conducting at La Playa High School.

La Playa High School was identified as a research site based on recommendations from administrators who realized a gap in educational opportunities existed within the high school.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have expressed interest in participating on the research team. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
Research shows that the transition to adulthood for many young adults is very difficult and that many high school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of college and work. The purpose of this study is to focus on better understanding perceptions of graduating students and employers, and reinforce skills within students to become better prepared for post graduation requirements.

Internship programs are a part of work-based and external classroom learning models that allow students to build 21st century skills, develop external adult mentorship relationships and participate in a self-directed learning environment where the student explores interests. I also believe this internship program affords the administration and employers an opportunity to learn more about how students learn and to connect the real world with student classroom education.

The intent of this study is to evaluate relationships and processes during this pilot year to grow the program in scale next year for any interested student to participate.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to understand more about how students relate to external adults in a workplace environment, how students model workplace skills, and how school administrators support an external classroom learning opportunity.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, as the researcher I will ask you to participate as a research team member. You have the choice to participate in all or none of the following activities, and you may opt out at any time. Your responses may be audio recorded for research transcribing only. No personal information will be contained in any releasable
material. The study will last from four to six weeks depending on data collecting requirements.

**Activities:**

11. **Research Team Member:** The research team will meet four times over the study period. This participation is voluntary and will require an additional amount of time outside of the workplace. Each session will last about one hour, with a total of four hours commitment as part of the research team. Research team voices are an important part of the research team to ensure any experiences and discussions for changes or structure include your perspective. Any team member who volunteers and is approved to become part of the research team may opt out of any discussions or as part of the research team at any time. If confirmed to participate, your voice could make significant contributions to the internship program process. The research team will meet at La Playa High School.

**Digital and Audio Recording:**

With your approval, I may ask you if I can record our conversations as necessary so that I can remember what you said. Most observations will be completed with field notes and without the need for recording comments. You can always tell me that you do not want me to record what you say and can ask that any part of the recording be erased. These recordings and all other information about you will only be available to me. I will also write field notes about what I observe in the classroom and at selected internship sites. You will never be identified by your real name in any notes or written reports. I will always identify you and other participants by pseudonym. Sometimes I might want to include something you said in a report or presentation, but you would only be identified as a participant, not any name or your organization.

If you decide you do not want to be in the study after you have started, you can tell me you do not want to be part of the research anymore. You can stop being in any or all parts of the project at any time. Remember, all aspects of this study are completely voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without repercussion. If you decide not to be in this study, I will still observe the internship program, but I will not ask you any questions.

**How long will I be in the research study?**

Total participation on the research team will equal no more than a total of about four hours. The research study will take place over a six-week period as part of the internship program.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

There are no anticipated risks for you by participating in this research study. Your participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, you are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

The potential benefits to society include the importance of knowledge gained from participants about how internship programs can be better designed for high school students.
Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission, or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing a pseudonym for you. All data, digital recordings, and transcripts will be maintained on my personal password-protected laptop and backed-up on my password-protected external hard drive. Any hard copies will be locked up in a filing cabinet at my house when not in my immediate possession.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The Research Team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the Researcher or Faculty Sponsor. Please contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Faculty Sponsor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casey Miner</td>
<td>Eugene Tucker, Ed. D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>310-XXX-XXXX</td>
<td>310-XXX-XXXX</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program  
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694  
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

What are the next steps if I agree to participate in the study?
Complete and Sign the SITE MENTOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH Form and return to Casey Miner.
**STEP 1: SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

I agree to participate in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant (print)</th>
<th>Work Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Participant</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 2: RETURN FORM** to Casey Miner.

**STEP 3: SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casey J. Miner</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Person Obtaining Consent (print)</td>
<td>Contact Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Person Obtaining Consent</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N
Site Mentor Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

ADULT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Better Prepared for Adulthood: A Study of Implementing a Public High School Pilot Internship Program Through Action Research

Introduction
My name is Casey Miner. I am a doctoral student at UCLA, and I would like to tell you more about a research study I will be conducting at La Playa High School.

La Playa High School was identified as a research site based on recommendations from administrators who realized a gap in educational opportunities existed within the high school.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have expressed interest in participating on the research team. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
Research shows that the transition to adulthood for many young adults is very difficult and that many high school graduates are not prepared for the rigors of college and work. The purpose of this study is to focus on better understanding perceptions of graduating students and employers, and reinforce skills within students to become better prepared for post graduation requirements. Internship programs are a part of work-based and external classroom learning models that allow students to build 21st century skills, develop external adult mentorship relationships and participate in a self-directed learning environment where the student explores interests. I also believe this internship program affords the administration and employers an opportunity to learn more about how students learn and to connect the real world with student classroom education. The intent of this study is to evaluate relationships and processes during this pilot year to grow the program in scale next year for any interested student to participate.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to understand more about how students relate to external adults in a workplace environment, how students model workplace skills, and how school administrators support an external classroom learning opportunity.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you have the choice to participate in all or none of the following activities, and you may opt out at any time. Your responses may be audio recorded for research transcribing only. No personal information will be contained in any releasable material. The study will last from four to six weeks depending on data collecting requirements.
Activities:

12. Research Team Member: The research team will meet four times over the study period. This participation is voluntary and will require an additional amount of time outside of the workplace. Each session will last about one hour, with a total of four hours’ commitment as part of the research team. Site mentor voices are an important part of the research team to ensure any experiences and discussions for changes or structure include your perspective. Any site mentor who volunteers and is approved to become part of the research team may opt out of any discussions or as part of the research team at any time. If confirmed to participate, your voice could make significant contributions to the internship program process. The research team will meet at La Playa High School. Two site mentors are needed as part of the research team.

13. Observations: I will make two visits each to four approved sites during the study period. During internship site observations, I might ask you or the intern a quick verbal question as a follow-up to learn more about what you said or did in an activity to gain perspective. For example, you discussed an activity, asked a question or made a comment, I might ask later, after the activity at break, why you chose what you did, or ask you why you said what you did and what you think about it. This would take a few short minutes. This may include asking permission to digitally record your verbal response if applicable.

14. Participant Survey: You will be asked to participate in a short participant survey toward the end of the study period because your opinion matters. The survey is short and will take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

Digital and Audio Recording:
With your approval, I may ask you if I can record our conversations as necessary so that I can remember what you said. Most observations will be completed with field notes and without the need for recording comments. You can always tell me that you do not want me to record what you say and can ask that any part of the recording be erased. These recordings and all other information about you will only be available to me. I will also write field notes about what I observe in the classroom and at selected internship sites. You will never be identified by your real name in any notes or written reports. I will always identify you and other participants by pseudonym. Sometimes I might want to include something you said in a report or presentation, but you would only be identified as a participant, not any name or your organization.

If you decide you do not want to be in the study after you have started, you can tell me you do not want to be part of the research anymore. You can stop being in any or all parts of the project at any time. Remember, all aspects of this study are completely voluntary and participation can be discontinued at any time without repercussion. If you decide not to be in this study, I will still observe the internship program, but I will not ask you any questions.

How long will I be in the research study?
Total participation in the survey and possible internship site visits equal no more than a total of about four hours. Those sites not visited and those site mentors not on the research team have a commitment of the survey, which will take about ten minutes to complete. The research study will take place over a six-week period as part of the internship program. I will be conducting on-site observations at select internship sites approximately two-days per week for the duration of the research. Participation on the research team will total four hours over the duration of the study period. Internship site visits should minimally interfere with regular scheduled events.

**Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**
There are no anticipated risks for you by participating in this research study. Your participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, you are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

**Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**
The potential benefits to society include the importance of knowledge gained from participants about how internship programs can be better designed for high school students. Additionally, potential increased opportunities for professional development to help better serve the needs of the intern and staff at the workplace may occur as well.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission, or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing a pseudonym for you. All data, digital recordings, and transcripts will be maintained on my personal password-protected laptop and backed-up on my password-protected external hard drive. Any hard copies will be locked up in a filing cabinet at my house when not in my immediate possession.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**
- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?**
- **The Research Team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the Researcher or Faculty Sponsor. Please contact:

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• UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):
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  or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study,
  please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

  UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
  11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
  Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

  What are the next steps if I agree to participate in the study?
  Complete and sign the SITE MENTOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH Form
  and return to Casey Miner.

  **STEP 1: SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

  I agree to participate in this study:

  Name of Participant (print)  Work Title

  Signature of Participant  Date

  **STEP 2: RETURN FORM** to Casey Miner.

  **STEP 3: SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

  Casey J. Miner
  Name of Person Obtaining Consent (print)  Contact Number

  Signature of Person Obtaining Consent  Date
1. INTRODUCTION
My name is Casey Miner. I am a doctoral student at UCLA, and I would like to tell you more about a research study that I will be doing within your internship class.

2. WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
The purpose of this study is to focus on better understanding perceptions of graduating students and employers, and reinforce skills within students to become better prepared for post graduation requirements. Internship programs are a part of work-based and external classroom learning models that allow students to build 21st century skills, develop external adult mentorship relationships and participate in a self-directed learning environment where the student explores interests. I also believe this internship program affords the administration an opportunity to learn more about how students learn and to connect the real world with student classroom education. The intent of this study is to evaluate relationships and processes during this pilot year to grow the program in scale next year for any interested student to participate. I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to understand more about student experiences and perceptions in an internship program. For example, I would like to know more about what attracts you to the internship program, how your experiences affect your perceptions of college and careers, and what relationships and processes support an effective internship experience.

3. WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?
If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask you to continue to be your normal self and do what you usually do in the program: have fun and learn new things. I will be observing certain aspects of the program. Your participation is voluntary and will not impact your relationship with the internship class or the school. You have the choice to participate in all or none of the following activities, and you may opt out at any time. Your responses may be audio or video recorded for research transcribing only. No personal information will be contained in any releasable material. The study will last from four to six weeks depending on data collecting requirements. All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the focus group between the participants only. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Activities:
15. **Participant Survey:** You will be asked to participate in a short participant survey because your opinion matters. The survey is short and will take no longer than ten minutes to complete.

16. **Observations:** During class and internship site observations, I might ask you a quick verbal question as a follow-up to learn more about what you said or did in an activity to gain perspective. For example, when you chose an activity, asked a question or made a comment, I might ask later, after the activity at break, why you chose what you did, or ask you why you said what you did and what you think about it. This would take about a minute. This may include asking permission to digitally record your verbal response if applicable.

17. **Focus Group:** You may be asked to participate in a focus group to learn more about your perspective on why students would participate in the internship program and your perceptions. The detail and descriptions you share may help me better understand the context of site observations and adult interactions, and skills development. The focus group will take place in a public space within the school property and take about an hour to complete. This will include asking permission to digitally or video record your verbal response. Not all students will participate in the focus group and any student may opt out of this session before or during the focus group.

18. **Journal Prompts:** You are already completing journal prompts as part of the internship class curriculum. During the study, I will assist in the focus of the journal prompts to better focus and use responses to indicate perceptions and modeling of skills and experiences. The journal prompts will continue to be weekly during the study, given by the class teacher during class and then received through email or by hand the following week in class. Only pseudonyms will be used if any comments are used during the study.

19. **Research Team Member:** Two students will be chosen as part of the research team that will meet four times over the study period. This participation is voluntary and will require an additional amount of time outside of the classroom and internship. Each session will last about one hour, with a total of four hours commitment as part of the research team. Student voices are an important part of the research team to ensure any experiences and discussions for changes or structure include the student perspective. Any student who volunteers and is approved to become part of the research team may opt out of any discussions or as part of the research team at any time. If confirmed to participate, your voice could make significant contributions to the internship program process.

**Digital, Audio, and Video Audio Recording:**
With your approval, I will ask you if I can record our conversations as necessary so that I can remember what you said. Most observations will be completed with field notes and without the need for recording comments. You can always tell me that you do not want me to record what you say and can ask that any part of the recording be erased. These
recordings and all other information about you will only be available to me. I will also write field notes about what I observe in the classroom and at selected internship sites. You will never be identified by your real name in any notes or written reports. I will always identify you and other participants by pseudonym. Sometimes I might want to include something you said in a report or presentation, but you would only be identified as a participant, not any name or the school or organization you participate. A video recording may be used only for the focus group to allow me to better understand comments and experiences, where audio alone may not allow me to recognize comments and perceptions.

4. **RISKS**
   There are no anticipated risks for you in participating in this research study. Your participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms will be used. Additionally, you are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

5. **BENEFITS**
   You may directly benefit from your participation in this study due to interaction and reflection opportunities, and having your voice heard during an approved study about students may be beneficial to you. The potential benefits to society include the importance of knowledge gained from participants about how internships and work-related learning can be designed to better serve the needs of interested high school students in the delivery of future internship learning opportunities.

6. **PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGMENT**
   Please talk this over with your parents or guardian before you decide whether or not to participate. I will also ask your parents or guardian to give their permission for you to take part in the study. But even if your parents or guardian say “yes” you can still decide not to do this. **Note:** In order for you to participate in this study I need both a completed and signed Parent/Guardian Permission form and your completed and signed Youth Assent form.

7. **YOUR PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY**
   If you do not want to be in the study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don’t want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop. If you decide not to be in this study, I will observe your internship program but I will not ask you any questions.

8. **QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY**
   You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn’t think of now, you can call me at 310-XXX-XXXX or ask me next time.

9. **YOUR AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE**
   Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you have completed and signed it.
BOTH of the forms listed here must be signed and returned in order for you to participate in the project: the Parent/Guardian Permission form and the Youth Assent form. Thank you for your consideration to support this research project.

**STEP 1: SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

I agree to participate in this study:

Name of Youth Participant (print)

________________________________________________________
Signature of Youth Participant

________________________________________________________
Date

**STEP 2: RETURN FORM(S) to the Internship Class Instructor or Casey Miner.** Remember, both the Parent/Guardian Permission form and Youth Assent form must be completed, signed, and returned for your child to participate.
Appendix P

Final Presentation Topic Slides

1. Title Slide
2. Introduction
3. Internship Site Details
4. Internship Responsibilities and Accomplishments
5. What I Learned
6. What I Never Expected
7. If I Could Be the Boss for a Day
8. If I Could Do It Over Again
9. Thoughts In Conclusion
REFERENCES


California Education Code, Section 54690-54697, 2013


