COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS IN RURAL IDAHO: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF THE CURRENT CULTURE, STRUGGLES, AND SUCCESSES IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT

DISSERTATION

This dissertation of Jennifer Walters, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership with a major in Educational Leadership and titled "College and Career Readiness in Rural Idaho: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Current Culture, Struggles, and Successes in Middle Schools," has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies.

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ABSTRACT

College and career readiness research largely focuses on the implementation of programs such as AVID, Gear Up, and TRIO in high schools and some urban middle schools. Many studies suggest the possibility of increasing college readiness in high school students especially if at-risk students were identified in elementary grades to receive interventions geared toward their likes and interests. Early interventions could better prepare students for advanced placement (AP) courses in high school by teaching them study skills, time management, and career options, as well as provide more interest in attaining a college degree or trade skill. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of college and career readiness (CCR) and the impact of CCR standards and programs, or lack thereof, on faculty/staff in public rural Idaho middle schools. This explanatory sequential research study utilized a mixed-methods self-reporting survey of the college and career readiness culture of public rural Idaho middle schools in each region and the struggles and successes faced in creating a CCR culture among students. Results indicated that while an average of 20% of participants have fully implemented a college and career readiness program, many are not sure what that should look like and how they can access funds and manpower to fulfill the need. As Idaho's go-on rate remains stagnant, districts can use the results of this study to implement instructional changes in curriculum at an early age to increase college access, enrollment, and completion in all student groups.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Highly effective, knowledgeable, and well-prepared administrators, counselors, and teachers are the foundation for building a strong school culture of college and career readiness (CCR). Educators are fundamental in providing the means for students to successfully complete the requirements for a high school diploma, which is a catalyst for college and career readiness. Education provides an avenue for career opportunities, career advancement, financial security, and more (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016).

High school graduation rates have been a focus in the United States since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 (Aldeman, 2020). The national high school adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) in 2017-2018 was 85%, which was the highest it has been since it was first measured in 2010-2011 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In Idaho, the ACGR for the 2017-2018 school year was 80.65%; up from 78.91% in 2014-2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Idaho's graduation rates remained idle in 2018-2019 at 80.7% (*Student Achievement*, 2021) until 2021 when it fell back to 80.7% after a 2% increase in 2020 (Bodkin, 2022). In 2016, Idaho legislated that every public-school serving students in grades 8-12 would establish a college and career advising program (Idaho State Department of Education). Despite efforts by districts, schools, administrators and teachers, Idaho's graduation rate has remained stagnant and the go-on rate increased only slightly from 45% in 2016 and 2017 (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.) to 45.6% in 2019 (*Student Achievement*, 2021). Since 2019, Idaho's go-on rate has continued to decline from 39% in 2020 to 37% in 2021 (Richert, 2022).

Increasing high school and college graduation rates is important to higher education institutions, individuals, and the nation as a whole. Many employers require a minimum of a high school diploma and many others require postsecondary certifications or industry credentials (Chen et al., 2017; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Without a diploma and/or other credentials, there are fewer opportunities to ensure a comfortable livelihood, establish career path connections, and lead happy and healthy lives (Chen et al., 2017; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Students who do not graduate from high school usually face lower earnings and higher unemployment rates over their lifetime because they are not prepared for the modern workforce (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013). In today's world a high school diploma does not hold the same weight as it did more than twenty years ago. A bachelor's degree can invoke almost twice as much earnings as a high school diploma. Workers with a bachelor's degree are less likely to be unemployed, are more likely to have health and retirement benefits, be active citizens, and lead overall healthy lifestyles (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013). Additionally, more than 50% do not seek education beyond high school (*Student Achievement*, 2021). These percentages substantially increase with low socio-economic status (SES) and minority populations. In 2016, approximately 20.5% of Black, Hispanic, Asian/pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaska Native and roughly 22% of economically disadvantaged students did not complete high school (IES National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). In 2018, approximately 56% of minority students did not seek post-secondary education (IES National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) and only 67% of low-income student sought higher education in 2016 (IES National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

Schools and educators are fundamental to the growth process of preparing students for adulthood (Cassidy et al., 2018; Nagaoka et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2013; Stone, 2017). Research links a correlation between the integration of career development instruction, student self-efficacy, and high school completion, especially when started at an early age (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Glessner et al., 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007; Stone, 2017). Bridgeland (2006) discovered that over 80% of the drop-outs he surveyed would have been more likely to stay in high school if provided more work-related and real-world learning. This research suggests the importance of career development in engaging students in their education. If students can see the connection between their studies and substantial opportunities, high school retention may be greater (Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011). This idea has found a positive correlation between school engagement and greater participation in career planning and the combination was especially effective for younger school students (Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011). Research demonstrates a greater effectiveness with career development when it is started early and integrated with academic achievement to support students in understanding life after high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007).

Idaho supports career planning and engagement in grades 9-12 with their Career Technical Education (CTE) program which assists in preparing high school students for high-skill, in-demand careers by advocating for applied learning, connecting students to careers, and providing a pipeline for Idaho's businesses (2020). CTE training is offered in Idaho's six technical colleges, Idaho public high schools (grades 9-12), and online across seven program

areas (2020). Idaho CTE also supports several student organizations such as Business Professionals of America (BPA), DECA, and Future Farmers of America (FFA) by offering high school classes that align to the organizations' standards and requirements (2020).

While rural America has made some great educational gains, they are still lagging when compared to their urban counterparts, which is closely related to higher poverty and unemployment rates. In 2015, 15% of rural community members did not have a high school diploma (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). Racial and ethnic minority groups in rural America continue to be only half as likely to graduate high school and obtain a postsecondary education (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). Many rural schools serve low-income populations and underrepresented students (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019), including rural schools in Idaho (Idaho State Department of Education). The largest underrepresented group in rural Idaho middle schools are Hispanics/Latinos with an average of 18.9%. At least 27 rural districts serve a Hispanic/Latino population of greater than 30% (Idaho State Department of Education). Along with populous underrepresented and low SES populations in rural districts, many rural schools have deficits in the options available to students for successful college and career readiness preparations (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). Students in rural districts often have less access to rigorous and AP courses (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). If they do offer advanced courses, they are often taught by teachers who are not qualified (Bernhardt, 2013). Rural districts also often have less counseling support and fewer resources for attending college; they may also believe that college is not necessary to find jobs within their community (Mokher et al., 2019). Cultural barriers can also affect the likelihood of rural students attending college, such as being willing and/or able to move away from home in order to participate in higher education (Mokher et al, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Extensive research confirms that a K-12 education is critical to happy, healthy, comfortable, and productive lives (Chen et al., 2017; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Without a high school diploma, students can expect to earn lower wages and face higher unemployment rates over their lifetime because they are not prepared for the modern workforce (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013). Research has also shown a relationship between college and career readiness and the integration of career development and school retention starting at an early age. (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007). Providing engaging career development opportunities and a connection to the real-world builds anticipation in students that correlates to high school completion and college and career preparedness (Bridgeland, 2006; Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011).

Although widespread understanding of the importance of a high school diploma exists, as well as nationwide initiatives aimed to increase graduation rates for all students, an analysis of national and local trends shows that Idaho is lagging. In 2017-2018, the national high school ACGR was 85% compared to Idaho's 80.65% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). In 2018-2019, Idaho's graduation rate remained idle at 80.7% (*Student Achievement*, 2021). Nationally, 28.5% of schools are rural (Showalter et al., 2019) whereas in Idaho, roughly three-fourths of school districts are defined as rural (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). This equates to approximately 234,000 of the 312,000 students enrolled in a K-12 Idaho public school in the 2019-2020 academic year (Idaho Ed News, 2021). Nationwide high school dropout rates

were reported at 13.1% (US Department of Agriculture, 2021) compared to 15% in rural Idaho schools (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). Data analyzed from Idaho education reports disclose that rural education districts should be a focus for high school completion and college and career readiness (Idaho State Department of Education).

In 2009, the United Stated implemented the Race to the Top federal grant program that began shifting the focus of college and career readiness and self-efficacy to middle school students (Glessner et al., 2017; Howell, 2020). Race to the Top was implemented to assist schools in initiating policies that would help them achieve the national goals of college readiness (Glessner et al., 2017; Howell, 2020). Numerous studies have been done demonstrating the effectiveness of college and career readiness programs, such as AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO, at the high school level (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017). Research has pointed out the lack of attention on the development and research of college and career interventions for middle school students and believes the development of self-efficacy in middle school students towards college readiness—including those in rural areas—can provide valuable information for key stakeholders in education as well as increasing the likelihood of higher education pursuits (Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard et al., 2011; Mokher et al., 2019; Sampson et al., 2011). Despite the enormous amounts of evidence that AVID is successful at the high school level (Black et al., 2008; Peabody, 2012; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011), the challenge is to bring the success to the middle school for earlier intervention (Kolbe et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017).

In 2017, the Idaho State Board of Education approved ten competencies for college and career readiness (Idaho State Board of Education, 2019) and adopted Workplace Skills for Career Readiness Standards in 2016 (Idaho State Board of Education, 2019). Idaho legislated that each public school must establish a college and career advising program for their students. The model of the program is left up to individual schools but can include advising personnel, peer/college mentors, student ambassadors, virtual coaching, etc. (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). Next Steps Idaho provides learning plans and resources to assist in the implementation of these programs on their website, but does not require specific programs or ideals to take place (Idaho State Board of Education, n.d.).

Of all the studies that have been done demonstrating the effectiveness of college and career readiness programs at the high school level (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017), only a few have sought to demonstrate the effectiveness and benefits of implementing college and career readiness indicators at the middle school level and in rural areas (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). Although the implementation of college and career readiness strategies haven been proven to be beneficial at the high school level, researchers are calling for more studies to be done in regards to the effectiveness of long-term exposure starting in middle school (Bailey, 2015; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017).

A solid and structured college and career readiness program could greatly impact Idaho, especially in the dominant rural communities where underrepresented students make up a majority of the population (Idaho State Department of Education). Increasing graduation rates in

rural Idaho communities could provide better living situations, happier and healthier lives, and potentially establish career paths for students (Chen et al., 2017; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). With guidance, rural schools could implement career development programs and community partnerships starting in younger grades to help engage students in their education and allow them to see the possibilities if they finish high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Hackmann, 2018; Harris, 2020; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007). The purpose of this study was to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and to assess the struggles and successes of college and career readiness based on input from faculty and staff.

Background

Many organizations have been driven to sponsor college access programs for several underrepresented groups since the need for higher education has been brought to the forefront (Kolbe et al., 2018; Sanchez et al., 2018). However, Kolbe et al. (2018) believes that if college and career readiness programs are successful, they should be available to all eligible K-12 students, not just those from disadvantaged backgrounds or who are identified as at-risk. College and career readiness programs should be student driven based on their perceptions of transitioning from high school to college. The programs should remove barriers, instill the value of higher education, provide essential knowledge and skills for educational success, and convey the possibility that everyone can attain a college degree (Glessner et al., 2017; Huerta et al., 2013; Kolbe et al., 2018; Sanchez et al., 2018).

Low completion rates in higher education are attributed to a lack of college and career readiness skills, most of which are not introduced to students until high school (Bailey, 2015;

Glessner et al., 2017; Mattern et al., 2016; Sanchez et al., 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Limitations to being college and career ready include the need for students to understand the seriousness of the programs in order to foster active and effective participation, the need to focus less on test scores and academic performance, the need to provide access to these programs earlier than high school, and the need to include community involvement opportunities such as college tours, cognitive skills, and study skills (Bailey, 2015; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016; Peabody, 2012; Sanchez et al., 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Wooldridge, 2017).

Many current college and career readiness programs seek to serve underrepresented students and prepare them for the rigorous coursework and long-term benefits of higher education (AVID.org, 2020; Hackmann, 2018; Jackson, 2018; TRIO Home Page, 2020; US Department of Education, 2019). Research indicates successful implementation of many college and career readiness programs at the high school and college levels (Bailey, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). The literature has also identified specific indicators of college readiness strategies schools can employ to build a college-ready culture and set all students on the path toward success. Successful indicators include students enrolled in AP courses, teaching study skills, providing peer tutoring and collaboration, and college/university research and visits (Bailey, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016).

Research Questions

The intent of this study was to explore research questions that would help the researcher determine the overall state of the college and career readiness culture in rural Idaho middle schools. Research questions are instrumental in narrowing and informing the purpose of the

study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). When determining research questions for this mixed-methods study, the researcher placed significance on selecting questions that would provide the best chance of acquiring meaningful answers. The following questions were attempted to be answered:

1. To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture?
2. How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum?

Description of Terms

Continuous changes in education and educational identifiers make it important to create a clear understanding of the terminology utilized in this research. Describing and assigning meaning to specific terminology adds clarity in a research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The following is a research-based list of educational terms and their definitions used in this study.

Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR). ACGR is calculated by the state education agencies by identifying first-time ninth-graders. The number in the cohort is adjusted by subtracting students who transfer, move, or die and adding students who transfer in from another cohort or move in from another country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

At-risk students. A group of students that have experienced difficulties and/or failures as learners and are typically less engaged not only academically but also in the school community (Ohrtman et al., 2016).

AVID. Advancement via Individual Determination. A widely adopted, long-standing college access program in the United States and internationally that targets low to middle achieving students in fourth grade through high school to prepare them for college (AVID.org, 2020; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Kolbe et al., 2019; Mendiola et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013).

Career Academies. Small learning communities comprised of students taking career-focused courses for a minimum of two years that exist within regular high schools that provoke a career-focused, college preparatory program dedicated to connecting students to real-world applications and establishing partnerships with businesses to provide students with opportunities for work-based learning and mentoring (Hackmann, 2018).

College Readiness. When a student can enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution and possesses sufficient mastery of key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual knowledge (Huerta et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Wooldridge, 2017).

College and Career Ready. When students have the knowledge, preparation, skills, and academia necessary to enroll and succeed in introductory college courses and postsecondary workforce education without the need for remediation (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.).

College Success. Any second semester freshman with a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average who did not need any remediation; an examination of student's credit accumulations to assess whether they are on track to complete college within six years (Huerta et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017).

Cultural Capital. A central part of the schooling experience that shapes how students view themselves overtime and influences how they think and act. It is both consciously acquired and an implicitly inherited process of socialization to certain cultural practices, norms, expectations, and assumptions either within the family unit or in school (Bernhardt, 2013).

Economically Disadvantaged. Students whose parents do not have a high school diploma or who participate in the free/reduced price meal program because of low family income (Allen, 2018).

First-generation College Students. Students who are first in their families to attend college (Watt et al., 2011).

GEAR UP. Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs. The GEAR UP program was authorized under the 1998 amendments to the Higher Education Act to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in higher education (Sanchez et al., 2018).

Looping. Contexts where teachers stay with their students for two or more years (Llamas et al., 2014).

Resilience. The heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences (Huerta et al., 2013).

Rural Schools in Idaho. Rural schools in Idaho are defined as having fewer than 20 enrolled students per square mile, or school districts within a county that contain less than 25,000 residents (Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), n.d.).

Self-efficacy. A person's beliefs about their capabilities to perform at a level that influence events in their lives. Self-efficacy determines how people feel, think, behave, and motivate themselves (Bandura, 1994).

Social Support. A multi-dimensional construct that describes the physical and emotional comfort given to individual's by significant people in their lives such as family, friends, and teachers; the degree to which a person's basic needs are gratified through interaction with others (Llamas et al., 2014).

Socioeconomic Status. The social standing or class of an individual or group measured by a combination of education, income, and occupation (apa.org, 2020).

TOPS. Teens of Promise. The TOPS initiative expands the AVID program to incorporate a summer internship, community-based mentoring, and college transition support (Jackson, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018).

TRIO. TRIO programs are federally funded and arose during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960's from the war on poverty (Ohrtman et al., 2016; TRIO Home Page, 2020). TRIO began as three federally funded programs, and now includes eight different outreach and support programs aimed at assisting students in progressing from middle school to postsecondary programs (TRIO Student Support Services, 2017).

Underrepresented Groups. Student groups who are historically underrepresented in college including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income/poverty families, parents who did not attend college, students with disabilities, and English language learners (Kolbe et al., 2018; Making a Difference, 2015; Schaefle, 2017).

Significance of the Study

Multiple studies address the possibility of increasing college readiness in high school students if at-risk students were identified and provided interventions as early as third grade (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Huerta et al., 2013; Llamas et al., 2014; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Wooldridge, 2017). Early warning indicators could alert teachers of a students' likelihood of succeeding after high school and allow for early interventions to help change the students' behaviors and academic performance, getting them back on track, and thus providing a potential increase in college readiness (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016; Wooldridge, 2017). The longer a student is exposed to and engaged in college preparation activities, the greater their academic achievement in high school and beyond (Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mattern et al., 2016; Wooldridge, 2017).

The benefits of earlier interventions are numerous. Middle school students are more likely to be better prepared for and take AP courses in high school, exhibit greater academic achievements, successfully transition to and graduate from high school, be more interested in attaining a college degree, and move successfully forward on a path to college success (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Huerta, Watt, & Butcher, 2013; Huerta, Watt, & Reyes, 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Other results include positive self-efficacy, earlier access for parents of the college preparation process, and better study habits (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017).

The researcher desires to bring recommendations to the Idaho State Department of Education as to how rural Idaho middle schools can be better supported to create a college and career readiness culture based on the analysis of the data collected. Parent and teacher training, critical college and career readiness component implementation, and administrator support will

help rural middle schools learn and implement the CCR tools necessary for creating a college and career ready culture. Early implementation provides numerous benefits such as greater academic achievements, positive self-efficacy, better study habits, and more (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Huerta, Watt, & Butcher, 2013; Huerta, Watt, & Reyes, 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Such benefits have the potential to increase the possibility of more students from rural schools seeking higher education.

The results from this study may provide the state and districts further insight to the barriers rural educators and students face when considering college and career readiness due to the lack of research available to and for rural middle schools. It may also provide recommendations for better support in rural Idaho middle schools to encourage greater completion and go-on rates. As Idaho's go-on rate remains stagnant, districts may use the results of this study to implement instructional changes in curriculum at an early age to increase high school graduation rates, workforce knowledge, college access, enrollment, and completion in all student groups.

Overview of Research Methods

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and to assess the struggles and successes of college and career readiness based on input from administrators, counselors, and teachers. Because public charter schools and private schools typically have more flexibility in curriculum and academic focus (Fischler, 2021), they were not included. This research study analyzed a self-reporting survey of the college and career readiness culture of public rural Idaho middle schools in each region and the struggles and successes they face. Eighteen schools that were representative of every region in the state were asked to participate. The 43 participants fell into

three categories: administrator, counselor, or teacher. Participants completed the self-reporting survey and qualitative open-ended questions to provide a greater perspective of the school's college and career readiness focus and culture. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted and recorded via video-conferencing at the convenience of the participants.

In order to determine the implementation of college and career readiness components in rural Idaho middle schools, quantitative data were collected using the self-reporting survey "College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Middle School Reform" with a 4-point Likert scale of four phases. The phases included: the Planning Stage, the Pilot Stage, the Evaluation Stage, and Full Implementation Stage (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). To determine how middle school faculty/staff articulate their struggles and successes of college and career readiness, two short-answer questions were included at the end of the survey (Appendix B). To complete the quantitative analysis, survey results were collected in Qualtrics and recoded on a scale of one to four. The data was then imported to and analyzed using SPSS 26 software. The qualitative data from the survey was exported into a Word document and cross-checked to ensure the data was identical to what was saved in Qualtrics. It was then coded to form descriptions and broad themes to assist in making sense of the responses. The qualitative data from the interviews was transcribed into a Word document and cross-checked to ensure the data was identical to the recording. It was then coded to form descriptions and broad themes to assist in making sense of the responses. The analysis of the short-answer qualitative data from the survey and the analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews were then cross-checked for similar themes and analyzed together for more robust results.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Introduction

College and career readiness (CCR) programs seek to serve underrepresented students and prepare them for the rigorous coursework and long-term benefits of higher education (AVID.org, 2020; Hackmann, 2018; Jackson, 2018; TRIO Home Page, 2020; US Department of Education, 2019). The literature has also identified specific indicators of college readiness strategies schools can employ to build a college-ready culture and set all students on the path toward success (Bailey, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Numerous studies have been done demonstrating the effectiveness of college and career readiness programs, such as AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO, at the high school and college level (Bailey, 2015; Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). However, only a few have sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing college and career readiness indicators at the middle school level and in rural areas (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017).

This literature review provides a greater understanding of the college and career readiness programs available, their implementation in high schools and colleges, and indicators of successful college and career readiness strategies. It examines the following six categories: (1) CCR at the college level, (2) CCR in high schools, (3) college and career readiness programs, (4) underrepresented groups in higher education, (5) self-efficacy and other college readiness indicators, and (6) CCR in middle schools.

CCR at the College Level

While the research on college and career readiness is plentiful at the high school level, there have been a few that focus on supporting students while in college, particularly with the launch of AVID at the collegiate level (Avid.org, 2020). Only about half of all students attending a community college will complete a technical certificate or degree within eight years of enrolling (Huerta et al, 2013; Watt et al., 2012). Having a support system, like AVID, at the college level could help students be more successful in higher education, especially those who are academically challenged (Bailey, 2015; Watt et al., 2012). This would provide students support and a continued relationship that is advantageous to their success in the realm of postsecondary education (Bailey, 2015; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013)

Students who participated in AVID and went on to college have found multiple strategies and components they learned in the program valuable to them during their higher education studies. Cornell note-taking strategies, organization, regular tutoring sessions, collaborating with their peers, and time management were cited as having staying power as tools that helped students be successful (Bailey, 2015; Huerta et al., 2013; Mendiola et al., 2010; Watt et al., 2011). It was also noted that learning to accept tutoring and support in high school made it easier for students to seek out the same support in college, which also made a difference in college attendance and completion (Kolbe et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2011).

Building networks between high schools and colleges are essential in helping students persist in higher education. Networks help encourage students to overcome difficulties they may encounter in academic courses, maintaining financial aid and other resources, and resisting negative messages from others to give up (Brooks, 2018; Kirk & Watt, 2018). In three different studies, college students were enrolled in a support class their freshmen year. The classes

focused on allowing students to thoroughly investigate their degree, support through peer study groups and collaboration, organization, and motivation and focus to continue in their studies (Kirk & Watt, 2018; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013). Other studies focused on the progress of students who completed AVID in high school and went on to participate in a support class in college. The results indicated these students had higher GPA's and retention rates over comparison groups, higher numbers of passing grades in the first semester, and greater self-efficacy and desire to have a successful career (Bailey, 2015; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Watt et al., 2013). Factors that affect the persistence of higher education, such as commitment from the student, jobs, housing, and social and academic integration, could potentially be avoided with the integration of college success programs in postsecondary institutions (Huerta et al., 2013; Kirk & Watt, 2018; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013).

CCR in High School

Creating a college and career readiness culture within high schools is the goal, getting there is the challenge. A CCR culture requires change, reform, and transformation (Hackman et al., 2018). To ensure high school students are effectively prepared for higher education, college readiness needs to be linked with measure of college success. High school should prepare students academically, but it should also support and encourage their aspirations of college; high school should prepare students for the expectations and demands of higher education and guide them in the process of applying for college and financial aid, therefore setting them up for success (Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012). Students at risk of foregoing the college experience often graduate from high schools without strong college and career readiness cultures. These students tend to be inadequately prepared for the academic rigor of college, lack counseling and knowledge about college, do not have the support of family for attending college, and are less

informed about financial aid options which makes them believe that college is unattainable (Bernhardt, 2013; Kolbe et al., 2018).

Providing students with opportunities to learn about career options, college admission requirements, activities, financial aid, etc. allows them to be better prepared to make decisions toward pursuing higher education (Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Wooldridge, 2017). AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO are just a few examples of the programs available that have been proven to successfully prepare underrepresented groups to continue on to college and face the rigorous demands of higher education by teaching them study skills, collaboration, peer-tutoring, and other essential life skills (Black et al., 2008; Hackman et al., 2018; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Wooldridge, 2017).

There are several predictors of college success at the high school level. The most common ones include academic preparation such as rigorous curriculum and AP courses (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011), standardized test mastery, completing four years of math in high school, and dual credit enrollments (Huerta et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011). Students participating in a college and career readiness program during high school are exposed to many, if not all, of these predictors and have greater numbers continuing on to colleges and/or universities than students who do not (Black et al., 2008; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Wooldridge, 2017).

College and Career Readiness Programs

Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID)

AVID is a widely adopted, long-standing college access program in the United States and internationally (AVID.org, 2020; Black et al., 2008; Kolbe et al., 2019). The AVID program

targets low-middle achieving students in fourth grade through high school to prepare them for college (AVID.org, 2020; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Kolbe et al., 2019; Mendiola et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013). There are several requirements students must meet to participate in AVID: (1) a 2.0 to 3.5 grade point average, (2) minor attendance and/or discipline issues, (3) and are either low income, from an underserved population, a potential first-generation college student, homeless, or being from foster care (AVID.org, 2020; Huerta et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2013). AVID provides students with the support necessary to be successful in rigorous and advanced placement (AP) classes, knowledge of scholarships, financial aid, and postsecondary entrance requirements, and the acquisition of social skills that assist in transitioning from high school to college (AVID.org, 2020; Bailey, 2015; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Kolbe et al., 2019; Mendolia et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013). The AVID mission is to ensure that students will be successful academically, be prepared for college or university attendance, be productive citizens within their communities, and attend a four-year college or university (AVID.org, 2020; Parker et al., 2013). AVID students are supported through an elective AVID class, college tutors, and trained AVID teachers (AVID.org, 2020; Mendiola et al., 2010).

For a school to be considered an AVID site, they must implement eleven AVID essentials: student selection, the AVID elective class, voluntary program participation, rigorous coursework, data collection, budgeting for resources, instruction focused on writing, emphasize inquire and collaboration, and an active interdisciplinary site team (11 Essentials; Watt et al., 2008). The most critical aspect of the AVID program is the site team's strength and the lead AVID teacher/coordinator. They are in charge of student eligibility, tutoring, curriculum for college preparation, professional development for other AVID teachers, fund raising for the program, and parental factors (AVID.org, 2020; Watt et al., 2008). The student selection process

starts with students who have been recommended by their teacher(s) and/or parents and students willing to put for the effort to be successful (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008). Once students have been recommended, they are asked to interview with the AVID teachers to ensure their interest and determination to succeed in the program's purpose and mission (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008).

AVID was created to help underrepresented students in the academic middle who might otherwise fall through the cracks or who are at risk for not continuing their education after high school. Typically, these students coming from lower socioeconomic families, are from underrepresented groups, and/or are first-generation college students (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Brooks, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mendiola et al., 2010; Watt et al., 2008; Wooldridge, 2017). The most common way AVID prepares students for college is by placing them in AP courses and showing them that they can be successful in advanced, rigorous coursework, with academic supports in place (Black et al., 2008; Peabody, 2012; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011).

AVID also supports students by providing academic and social skills. Students participating in the AVID elective will also learn to connect with academically focused peer groups, self-advocate, and develop meaningful relationships and collaborate with teachers, peers, and other school personnel (Bernhardt, 2013; Parker, 2013). The AVID program also creates opportunities and provides students with a strong understanding of how schools function and operate. Students develop a web of strong relationships with classmates and school personnel that foster connection, encouragement, and purpose in continuing education. AVID students also tend to be more involved in extracurricular activities and learn about the college application

process and financial aid from professionals outside of the school (Bernhardt, 2013; Kirk & Watt, 2018).

Time management, study skills, planning, organization, and critical reading skills are some of the other skills AVID students develop (Black et al., 2008; Mendolia, 2010; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011). Cornell note-taking strategies have been said to have 'staying power' as a study tool that students repeatedly use in college (Watt et al., 2011). As students learn these academic strategies, they report increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy; which leads to motivation to be successful and greater problem-solving skills (Llamas et al., 2014; Wooldridge, 2017).

Peer inquiry-based tutoring is an important skill taught in the AVID program. The inquiry-based tutoring is modeled by AVID teachers until students are comfortable leading the peer study groups themselves, thereby increasing social, academic, and personal supports for students (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Llamas et al., 2014; Peabody, 2012; Watt et al., 2008). Students also touted having time in class to complete assignments and after school tutors as predictors of successful program completion (Peabody, 2012). AVID students could not be successful without the support of their family and parents. The AVID program reaches out to parents and guardians in an effort to provide them with ways to be actively involved, to support their child's academic pursuits, and to create a college going culture at home. Parents and guardians are also provided basic information on college readiness and how to prepare for their student attending college (Bernhardt, 2013; Peabody, 2012).

The most referenced benefit of participating in AVID, according to students, is the 'family-like atmosphere' that ensues from spending a lot of time with their peers and working closely with their AVID teacher (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Llamas

et al., 2014; Mendolia et al., 2010; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017). AVID teachers work to get to know students on a personal, as well as academic, level to develop strong relationships and build trust. Students reports this family-like atmosphere offer motivation, safety, connection and encouragement that support the students' academic goals (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Huerta et al., 2013; Llamas et al., 2014; Mendolia et al., 2010; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017).

Another component of AVID that increases the likelihood of college matriculation is the favorable social capital students experience because of the family-like support in the AVID classroom (Parker et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012). Students who benefit from these positive relationships are more likely to graduate from high school, seek support when it is needed, enroll in college, be more economically stable, and avoid trouble than students who have less social capital (Parker et al., 2013; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012). Several studies support the benefits of the AVID program in urban high schools showing positive effects such as higher student retention rates, school attendance, higher overall GPA's, an increase in college enrollment numbers, and an increase in enrollment in AP courses (Bailey, 2015; Black et al., 2008; Peabody, 2012; Watt et al., 2008; Wooldridge, 2017).

While the many benefits of AVID may not exude all AVID students, they do provide a substantial and variety of resources and support to assist underrepresented students in fulfilling their dreams of a college degree. Despite the support given, students understand the burden of accomplishment is on them; such is the 'individual determination' of the program. A critical influence toward the positive outcomes of AVID students could be the consistency students experience while in the program (Bernhardt, 2013; Llamas, 2014; Watt et al., 2008).

It is evident from the literature that AVID has many great long-term benefits for underrepresented students and Kolbe et al. (2018) found the program to result in a positive return on the investment. However, the average cost per student is approximately $300 per year (Projected Avid Program Costs, 2012; Spring, n.d.) which many districts, especially in small rural areas, may find impossible to fund.

TRIO

The TRIO programs are another example of programs that exist to help provide college success and educational services to underrepresented students such as those from low-income families, students with disabilities, or students who are the first in their family to attend college (Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011: Sabay & Wiles, 2020). TRIO programs are federally funded and surfaced during the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960's from the war on poverty (Ohrtman et al., 2016; TRIO Home Page, 2020).

TRIO began as three federally funded programs (TRIO Student Support Services, 2017), and now includes eight different outreach and support programs aimed at assisting students in progressing from middle school to postsecondary programs (Ohrtman et al., 2016; TRIO Home Page, 2020). The eight programs now supported through TRIO include: Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Veterans Upward Bound (TRIO Home Page, 2020). While TRIO programs only serve about 10% of students eligible because of limited funding, their programs have a positive effect on college access and success for disadvantaged students (Ohrtman et al., 2016; Sabay & Wiles, 2020; TRIO Home Page, 2020).

Grant recipients of TRIO funds are higher education institutions and organizations experienced in serving underrepresented youth. The recipients are responsible for planning, developing, and carrying out student services for eligible students (TRIO Home Page, 2020). The programs goals are to support students through increasing college acceptance rates, retention, and graduation. The positive effect TRIO has had on college access and underrepresented student is evident in research (Castenell, et al., 2018; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Sabay & Wiles, 2020).

Programs in TRIO offer many benefits to underrepresented students including an increase of college awareness and preparation, college preparatory courses, and counseling, mentoring, and tutoring on financial aid and the admissions process (Castenell, et al., 2018; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Sabay & Wiles, 2020). TRIO can start in middle school in some areas and once students have enrolled in a community college, they are guided and encouraged to transfer to a four-year university to complete a baccalaureate degree (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). When students transfer to a university with a TRIO program, they receive the same guidance and assistance as they did in high school and the community college in order to help them be successful. These practices have shown to lead to an increase in a bachelors degree completion for first-generation and low-income students (Sabay & Wiles, 2020).

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) program was created in 1998 to address the gaps in successful transition into higher education (Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018). GEAR UP is a federally funded program that provides college preparation, tutoring, mentoring, and assistance in college admissions for underrepresented and at-risk groups of students, typically starting in middle school and

continuing through high school (Huerta et al., 2013; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; US Department of Education, 2019). GEAR UP is typically implemented school-wide in schools with higher populations of minority students, at-risk students, and socioeconomic distress (Schaefle, 2018). Scholarships are also awarded from GEAR UP funds to low-income students (US Department of Education, 2019).

GEAR UP is unique in the college and career readiness spectrum because it follows students from the seventh grade into their first year of college. GEAR UP programs are designed to be long-term, whereas other CCR programs are short term, discontinuous after high school, and narrowly focused. The long-term design of GEAR UP allows the program to address multiple areas of student development and college preparation. For the greatest improvement in academic outcomes, students have to spend a considerable amount of time in the GEAR UP program (Schaefle, 2018).

Knaggs et al. (2013) compared two sets of students in an urban high school; one group participated in the GEAR UP program and the other group did not. The researchers found significant differences in college attendance and persistence between both groups, as well as between low SES-groups. It was also noted that more students who participated in GEAR UP attended four-year institutions than those who did not (Knaggs et al., 2013). The students who participated in GEAR UP expressed more confidence in taking risks, engaging in new activities, and interacting with those outside of their normal social circle. This indicated that GEAR UP students are learning to overcome social isolation which is common in students in poverty (Knaggs et al., 2013).

Sianjina & Phillips (2014) examined the components of GEAR-UP to determine if PSAT, SAT, and GPA scores were improved in African American participants. The researchers reported

that low-income high school students were not prepared for 4-year colleges because they lacked the tools necessary to be successful (Sianjina & Phillips, 2014). GEAR-UP is designed to provide tools to help students be successful in post-secondary institutions such as mentoring, tutoring, college preparation, financial aid, and scholarships (Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Sianjina & Phillips, 2014).

Sianjina & Phillips (2014) found that participation by African American students in the GEAR-UP program was vital to raising academic performance predictors of college readiness. They stressed the importance of incorporating the college readiness components of GEAR-UP in the regular classroom throughout the entire school day and suggested this would reap the most benefits if done in a systematic model (Sianjina & Phillips, 2014). African American students who participated in the GEAR-UP program showed greater success in college, especially in student retention (Sianjina & Phillips, 2014).

Successful CCR Programs in Other Communities

Career academies are small learning communities comprised of students taking career focused courses for a minimum of two years. They exist within regular high schools and courses are taught by teachers across all disciplines. Career academies provoke a career-focused, college preparatory program dedicated to connecting students to real-world applications and establishing partnerships with businesses to provide students with opportunities for work-based learning and mentoring (Hackmann, 2018; Harris, 2020).

There are four components of successful career academies: (1) effective principals, (2) cross-sector collaboration, (3) career-focused interdisciplinary curriculum, and (4) regularly collect and analyze data (Hackmann, 2018). Effective principals know what is happening within the community, encourage teachers to take risks when exploring ways to make curriculum

relevant and engaging, ensure there are sufficient resources, and are fully committed to the concept of career academies. They ensure the culture of college and career readiness is the norm throughout their school and look for ways to eliminate any barriers that might stand in the way of student success (Hackmann, 2018).

Community partnerships are critical to the success of career academies. The commitment of community businesses and industries ensure work-based learning experiences for students and improved learning outcomes (Hackmann, 2018; Harris, 2020). Partners from businesses and industries help ensure curriculum is career-focused and relevant so students will qualify for industry certifications when needed. Career-focused curriculum also allows teachers to develop project-based activities that will project students to successful application of real-world learning (Hackmann, 2018; Harris, 2020).

Finally, collecting and analyzing data within career academies allows principals and teachers to monitor student progress, participation, and success. Multiple outcomes for career academies should be identified. Continuous data collection and analysis will allow appropriate modifications to be made to ensure the success and sustainability of the career academies (Hackmann, 2018; Harris, 2020).

A Wisconsin school district combined AVID with a local initiative called Teens of Promise (TOPS). The TOPS initiative expands the AVID program to incorporate a summer internship, community-based mentoring, and college transition support (Jackson, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018). They found the combined efforts to be promising for promoting high school graduation and college attendance for underrepresented groups. The highest returns in the AVID/TOPS programs were with minority and low-income students. They found that students who participated met or exceeded the benchmarks set at predictors for college and career

readiness, including differences in GPA from participants to non-participants and involvement in AP and honors courses (Jackson, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018).

Underrepresented Groups in Higher Education

Student groups who are historically underrepresented in college include racial and ethnic minorities, low-income/poverty families, parents who did not attend college, English language learners, and rural students (Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Callow, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018; NCES, 2015; Schaefle, 2017). Despite the efforts of college and career readiness reform, these groups continue to enroll in college at much lower rates than their peers (Kolbe et al., 2018; NCES, 2015; Schaefle, 2017). Nontraditional methods to promote college and career readiness to underrepresented students must be tried for schools to continue moving forward and for all students to succeed (Peabody, 2012). With the implementation of early intervention programs, college is becoming a foreseeable goal for many students, regardless of their economic background or ethnicity. Intervention programs, such as AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO, have provided underrepresented students access to college resources, AP courses, strong peer and teacher relationships, and study skills that continue to help improve college matriculation rates within these groups (Black et al., 2008; Brooks, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mendiola et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Peabody, 2012; Wooldridge, 2017).

Low-income or socio-economic status, popular in rural communities, is one of the most common underrepresented groups and continue to enroll in college at lower rates than higher income students (Bernhardt, 2013; NCES, 2015; Sanchez et al., 2018; Schaefle, 2018). Low-income students face many barriers including lack of enrollment and/or access to advanced level courses, inability to secure financial aid, insufficient academic preparation, a lack of support in applying, and minimal emotional support from home (Bernhardt, 2013; Peabody, 2012; Sanchez

et al., 2018; Schaefle, 2018). It is also common for low-income students to not complete and/or return homework or study outside of school. The role of family is critical in establishing encouragement, support, and expectations of college success (Kirk & Watt, 2018; Peabody, 2012).

Rural and ethnic diversity are areas that are also underrepresented in postsecondary academia (Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Brooks, 2018; ERS, n.d.; Slama, 2004). Some existing college readiness programs take a 'color-blind' approach and miss the mark by sidestepping students' cultures in conjunction with supporting them academically. If these programs redirect their approach and embrace the part that culture plays, college attendance and persistence of students of varying ethnic groups would increase (Brooks, 2018).

African-American students who participated in the AVID program cited peer to peer relationships and support groups, positive school experiences, organizational, study and note-taking skills, teacher encouragement, and the close, caring relationships established with key stakeholders as fundamental features of successful intervention programs (Parker et al., 2013). One young man explained how the AVID program helped him draw the connection between high school academics and career success later in life (Parker et al., 2013). Minority students who participate in AVID for three or four years matriculated into college at higher rates than the national average for respective student subgroups (Kolbe et al., 2018).

Hispanic students represent the highest proportion of any racial or ethnic group of first-generation college students at universities even though they are enrolling at a rate of about 10% lower than that of white students (Mendiola et al., 2010; Schaefle, 2018). As students become aware of the large number of Hispanics who did not complete college, they gain a greater desire and commitment to be one who does. The percentage of Hispanic students with college degrees

has been increasing; however, the overall population with bachelor's degrees or higher remains lower (Kirk & Watt, 2018; Schaefle, 2018).

Self-Efficacy and Other College Readiness Indicators

Research has identified specific indicators of college readiness. Many college readiness programs focus on underserved populations such as at-risk students, low-income, ethnically diverse, and first-generation college students. However, there are specific strategies schools can employ to build a college-ready culture and set all students on the path toward success (Bailey, 2015; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016).

The most prominent indicator throughout most programs is the quality of teachers and the relationships between them and their students (Brooks, 2018; Gillmore & Sullivan, 2014; Parker et al., 2013). How teachers respond to families and the community, along with their belief in students, has a substantial impact on the academic and personal achievements of students. Teachers have the power to increase a student's self-efficacy and influence their ability to succeed (Brooks, 2018; Gillmore & Sullivan, 2014; Parker et al., 2013).

Other indicators include applying what the student learns to real-world situations, collaborating with key stakeholders, and modeling strategies and expectations (Bailey, 2015; Peabody, 2012; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). By modeling reading strategies and collaborating, students could be pushed harder to read different and more complex material than they were used to. This would allow them to consider reading connections and think for themselves (Peabody, 2012; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Collaborating with key stakeholders and applying what students are learning to real-world situations requires students to think critically and begin to build a bridge to the existing achievement gap (Bailey, 2015; Peabody, 2012; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Mentoring, both peer and professional, is another significant indicator of college readiness.

Pairing students with current college students provide a positive role model and positive perceptions and aspirations of going to college (Bailey, 2015; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011).

The standard definition of college and career readiness tends to not address such things as attitudes of students that are equally as important as knowledge of college preparation. Students might be knowledgeable and skillful but lack confidence in their ability to succeed which then impedes their ability to be college and career ready after high school (Martinez et al., 2017). Martinez et al. (2017) found that students who were exposed to a CCR curriculum that focused on their knowledge of college readiness, their aspirations for college, and enhancing self-efficacy, scored higher on measures of college and career readiness and self-efficacy than students who were not (Martinez et al., 2017). Pugh & Tschannen-Moran (2016) did a similar study with students participating in the AVID program. They found a positive correlation to the amount of time a student was involved in the program to their self-efficacy (Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016).

Community partnerships can help create learning opportunities for students, and foster relationships that can help provide information about potential career choices in their future. There are also opportunities for mentoring and job shadowing which helps provide low-income students a sense of identity and stability, increasing self-efficacy (Alleman & Holly, 2013). Communities can also help provide social capital to students through mentoring, job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships. Throughout these opportunities' students will learn the importance of being successful academically as well as being part of a community (Alleman & Holly, 2013). It only takes a small number of community members, businesses, and resources to positively impact all students, especially those from rural, low-income families. The relationships with community members help reinforce what school personnel work to build in

their students: self-efficacy, career vision, and safety for those students need additional support or encouragement (Alleman & Holly, 2013). College and career readiness mindsets for students should include confidence in their ability to be successful, positive attitudes towards learning and working, and the ability to understand that lifelong learning and higher education is essential for a successful career (Allen et al., 2019).

Mindsets and behaviors are important in college and career counseling (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Allen et al., 2019; Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Martinez et al., 2017). This includes learning strategies, effective time management, having a positive outlook, and cultivating social skills (Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017). School counselors can use goal setting, self-regulation skills, and the encouragement of seeking assistance in order to support development and decision-making. Several strategies have been identified for working within rural communities: consistent instruction in self-regulatory skills, classroom guidance to promote career development, and community collaboration for social/emotional development (Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017). It is also important that students' identities and backgrounds such as SES, social class, family, and gender are understood and how those things impact their career perceptions and aspiration's (Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017).

Just as educators need to be aware of their students' backgrounds in order to provide the best support for them (Glessner et al., 2017; Kolbe et al., 2018; Peabody, 2012), students also need to be informed about their role in their educational journey and the effects of their participation, or lack of, in that journey (Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al., 2017; Kirk & Watt, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Working together creates a network for success to be established and foster cultural capital and increase student self-efficacy (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Allen et al., 2019; Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al., 2017; Kirk & Watt, 2018;

Martinez et al., 2017). This ultimately leads to student persistence and achievement in high school and beyond (Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al., 2017; Kirk & Watt, 2018).

CCR in Middle Schools

The benefits of earlier interventions for college and career readiness are numerous. Middle school students are more likely to be better prepared for and take AP courses in high school, exhibit greater academic achievements, successfully transition to and graduate from high school, be more interested in attaining a college degree, and move successfully forward on a path to college success (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Huerta, Watt, & Butcher, 2013; Huerta, Watt, & Reyes, 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Other results include positive self-efficacy, earlier access for parents of the college preparation process, and better study habits (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017).

Two studies considered the middle school AVID program and its benefits of starting early versus waiting until high school (Huerta et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Huerta et al. (2013), who surveyed almost 1,200 AVID coordinators, teachers, and administrators at an AVID Summer Institutes workshop, found two ways the implementation of AVID was beneficial at the middle school level. First, it encourages schools and districts to expand their offerings of rigorous courses. Second, students are more prepared for high school and college when they participate in AVID starting in middle school. They also were more likely to take honors and AP courses, and demonstrated greater academic performance (Huerta et al., 2013).

Wooldridge (2017) focused on eighth grade students from a large east coast school district. His study showed that students who participate in AVID have the ability to score higher on college entrance exams than their peers which increases the likelihood of them meeting the requirements for college and career readiness. AVID students also had higher GPAs in the 4th

quarter than those students who did not participate in AVID which implies the program helps underrepresented students increase their chances of attending and being successful in a 4-year university. This study also reported higher levels of self-esteem and problem-solving skills for students who were part of the AVID program. The family-like atmosphere that AVID provides is a constant and motivator for AVID students to work hard and succeed (Wooldridge, 2017).

Schaefer & Rivera (2012) researched a career institute program in an urban school district that included multiple interventions to help middle school students relate social, academic, and personal attributes to college and career pathways. The researchers believe that the impact career development interventions can have is significant, especially when implemented at the middle school level (Schaefer & Rivera, 2012). They found that students were able to connect personal and social development to academic and career development. Students also demonstrated a growing sense of possibilities when considering future colleges and careers (Schaefer & Rivera, 2012). Students who participated in the program were more aware of their future and were more willing to consider how choices they make and interests they have will impact their future and the options available to them (Schaefer & Rivera, 2012). “Career development interventions in the [middle] schools can provide a powerful vehicle through which to engage students in the process of becoming aware of who they are and what they are capable of accomplishing today and in their future” (Schaefer & Rivera, 2012).

In light of minimal research in middle and rural schools on college and career readiness, authors have called for further study in these areas (Bailey, 2015; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Glessner et al. (2017) pointed out the lack of attention on the development and research of college and career interventions for middle school students and believes the development of self-efficacy in middle school students

towards college readiness—including those in rural areas—can provide valuable information for major stakeholders in education. Wooldridge (2017) points out that despite the enormous amounts of evidence that AVID is successful at the high school level, the challenge is to bring the success to the middle school for earlier intervention.

Many rural schools serve low-income populations and underrepresented students (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). Many rural schools have deficits in the options available to students for successful college and career readiness preparations. Students in rural districts often have less access to rigorous and AP courses (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). If they do offer advanced courses, they are often taught by teachers who are not qualified (Bernhardt, 2013). Rural districts also often have less counseling support and resources for attending college; they may also believe that college is not necessary to find jobs within their community (Mokher et al., 2019). Cultural barriers can also affect the likelihood of rural students attending college, such as being willing to move away from home in order to participate in higher education (Mokher et al, 2019).

Career Readiness

The phrase college and career readiness is repeated often, but usually without a clear definition of what it really means. This vagueness has led to skepticism by recipients and opposition to reforms centered around increasing standards for students (National High School Center, 2012). Achieve is a nonprofit, nonpartisan education reform organization that works with individual states to improve assessments, strengthen accountability, and raise academic standards (Achieve, 2021). Over the past several years, Achieve (2021) has focused on the critical English and mathematics skills high school graduates need to be successful. Problem

solving, critical thinking, reading, writing, and teamwork are recognized as non-negotiable skills by colleges and employers that are required to be successful (Achieve, 2021).

Some states have combined college and career readiness, while others have left the terms separate (American Institutes for Research, 2014). The Idaho State Board of Education (2017) says students are college and career ready when they have the knowledge, preparation, skills, and academia necessary to enroll and succeed in introductory college courses and postsecondary workforce education without the need for remediation. Idaho defines college and career readiness as the ability for high school graduates to acquire and demonstrate core competencies that will allow them to successfully transition into a skill certification program, postsecondary education, and/or career (Assessment & Accountability Team, 2018). Achieve (2021) describes college ready as being able to qualify for and succeed in entry-level courses without remediation. They describe career ready as having the knowledge and skills necessary to qualify for and succeed in a job training and/or education program necessary for a specific career (Achieve, 2021). States that have opted to define college readiness and career readiness separately have created a definition to support the term college *or* career readiness (American Institutes for Research, 2014). To combine college and career ready means students are ready for the next step, whatever that may be (Achieve, 2021).

Idaho's definition of college and career readiness supports their Career Technical Education (CTE) program which assists in preparing high school students for high-skill, in-demand careers by advocating for applied learning, connecting students to careers, and providing a pipeline for Idaho's businesses (2020). CTE training is offered in Idaho's six technical colleges, Idaho public high schools (grades 9-12), and online across seven program

areas (2020). However, not all CTE programs are offered in every high school, limiting what students have access to until they graduate (CTE Programs Directory).

Conclusion

The following themes are a result of the literature review:

1. College and career readiness programs seek to serve underrepresented students and prepare them for the rigorous coursework and long-term benefits of higher education (AVID.org, 2020; Hackmann, 2018; Jackson, 2018; TRIO Home Page, 2020; US Department of Education, 2019). Programs such as AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO have been proven to be successful and beneficial at the high school level (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017).
2. Research shows successful implementation of college and career readiness programs at the high school and college levels with long-lasting benefits for participating students (Bailey, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017).
3. College and career readiness programs focus on underrepresented groups in higher education by providing resources and study skills to help them pursue successful postsecondary certifications and degrees (Black et al., 2008; Brooks, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mendiola et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Peabody, 2012; Wooldridge, 2017).
4. The literature has identified specific indicators of college readiness strategies schools can employ to build a college-ready culture and set all students on the path toward

success in higher education institutions (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Allen et al., 2019; Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Bailey, 2015; Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al., 2017; Kirk & Watt, 2018; Martinez et al., 2017; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016).

5. Few studies have sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing college and career readiness indicators at the middle school level and in rural areas (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). Idaho's CTE program focuses on career preparation for grades 9-12, excluding Idaho middle schools (Bradford, 2021).

Call for Research

In 2009, the United Stated implemented the Race to the Top federal grant program that began shifting the focus of college and career readiness and self-efficacy to middle school students (Glessner et al., 2017; Howell, 2020; Huerta et al., 2013). Race to the Top was implemented to assist schools in initiating policies that would help them achieve the national goals of college readiness (Glessner et al., 2017; Howell, 2020). Numerous studies have been done demonstrating the effectiveness of college and career readiness programs, such as AVID, GEAR UP, and TRIO, at the high school level (Bernhardt, 2013; Black et al., 2008; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Huerta et al., 2013; Ohrtman et al., 2016; Radcliffe & Bos, 2011; Schaefle, 2018; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wooldridge, 2017). Only a few have sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing college and career readiness indicators at the middle school level and in rural areas (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). Glessner et al. (2017) pointed out the lack of attention on the development and research of college and career interventions for middle school students and

believes the development of self-efficacy in middle school students towards college readiness—including those in rural areas—can provide valuable information for key stakeholders in education as well as increasing the likelihood of higher education pursuits. Wooldridge (2017) points out that despite the enormous amounts of evidence that AVID is successful at the high school level, the challenge is to bring the success to the middle school for earlier intervention.

In summary, researchers agree further examination is necessary regarding the implementation of college and career readiness in rural middle schools (Bailey, 2015; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Parker et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). As a result, the work conducted in this study focuses on the current state of rural Idaho middle schools in hopes of shedding light on the needs of these schools for the future success of their students and increasing Idaho's go-on rate.

Chapter III

Design and Methodology

Introduction

The steps in research design and methodology include determining the research design, identifying participants, choosing a data collection method that is appropriate for the study, explaining the analytical methods used, and defining the limitations (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This chapter describes the research design used for this study and the procedures used to collect and analyze data related to college and career readiness in rural Idaho middle schools. Chapter 3 also includes a description of the participants and limitations of the study.

Many rural schools serve underrepresented students (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019) and are unable to provide the programs and classes necessary to prepare students to be college and career ready (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). Students in rural districts may also come from homes that believe a career is not necessary to find jobs within their community because they plan on staying home, taking over the family business or working at a minimum-wage job. Therefore, students may not find a need for support in career training or a post-secondary degree (Mokher et al., 2019).

Hispanics/Latinos, with an average population of 18.9%, are the most underrepresented group in rural Idaho middle schools. At least 27 rural districts serve a population of more than 30% Hispanic/Latino (Idaho State Department of Education). The options available to students for successful college and career readiness preparations are often limited in rural school districts for many reasons, including a lack of funding and unqualified teachers (Bernhardt, 2013; Mokher et al., 2019). Other impacts of lower funding and location include less counseling support and resources for attending college and the belief that college is not necessary to find

jobs within their community (Mokher et al., 2019). Cultural barriers can also affect the likelihood of rural students seeking career training or post-secondary education, such as being willing and/or able to move away from home (Mokher et al, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the implementation of college and career readiness and the impact on administrators, counselors, and teachers in rural Idaho middle schools. Through the use of a self-reporting survey instrument, short answer questions, and this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture?
2. How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum?

Research Design

This mixed methods study utilized a self-reporting survey, short answer questions, and phenomenological interviews to investigate the implementation of college and career readiness components in rural Idaho middle schools. Creswell & Guetterman (2019) argue that a mixed methods research design provides a better understanding of a research problem than qualitative or quantitative data alone. For this study, quantitative data were collected to determine to what extent rural Idaho middle schools are creating a college and career readiness culture and the existence of a CCR program based on a self-reporting rubric. The quantitative data was analyzed and interpreted to determine the trends in college and career readiness cultures among rural Idaho middle schools (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research allows us to view and understand the world in terms of individuals, circumstances,

events, and processes, as well as how some situations and events impact other circumstances and events. Qualitative data for this study were collected through open-ended questions and phenomenological interviews to identify and assess the struggles and successes of implementing college and career readiness standards based on input from administrators, counselors, and teachers.

The quantitative style of research applied in this study was a cross-sectional self-reporting survey. Creswell & Guetterman (2019) describe survey research as a set of research procedures in which a survey is administered to a sample or the entire population in order to describe the attitudes, behaviors, characteristics, and/or opinions of the population. A cross-sectional survey is one where the researcher collects data at one point in time to examine attitudes or opinions, evaluate programs, and/or assess educational community needs (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

A Likert-scale survey design was developed from the "College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Middle School Reform", which included a 4-phased rubric that was modified to resemble a Likert-scale survey (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). The survey was administered anonymously using the Qualtrics software through an online link that was provided to the participants via email, by the researcher. Qualtrics is a web-based software that collects data anonymously and generates reports for research purposes (What is Qualtrics?, 2020).

All middle school administrators, teachers, and counselors at the targeted schools were asked to participate. Basic demographics were collected including region, position, percentage of low SES students, percentage of non-White students, 2018-2019 graduation rate, and Idaho certification status. Demographics were collected to help sort the data by region. The main focus

of the research was to determine trends of the implementation of college and career readiness in rural Idaho middle schools.

The phenomenological qualitative style of research applied in this study was open-ended response questions at the end of the cross-sectional survey and guided, topical interviews. Phenomenological qualitative research is typically an effort of the researcher to understand and/or change a complex social phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The open-ended and interview responses allowed the researcher to explore reasons for participants selections in the survey and identify comments that extend the survey questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The participants shared their struggles and successes of implementing the college and career readiness standards through open-ended questions in order to reveal common trends that rural Idaho middle schools face. The short answer questions asked participants to provide examples of things they are doing in their school to implement CCR for students and to share what resources they feel would help their school successfully implement a CCR program.

The researcher also asked for voluntary participation in a follow-up interview for additional clarification or information to answer the research questions. The interviews asked participants for a greater understanding of where their school stands on implementing college and career readiness, successes and challenges they have seen, and specific support that would assist them in meeting the CCR standards. Together, this mixed methods research design provided the researcher with a greater understanding of the struggles and successes administrators, teachers, and counselors of CCR programs in rural Idaho middle schools face.

The full, anonymous survey was completed in Qualtrics XM (2021) and divided into sections. The survey began with the Informed Consent Form and basic demographic information. The next section was the modified “College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment

Rubric for Middle School Reform" survey (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015) followed by the researcher developed short-answer questions. The Qualtrics report provided the short-answer responses verbatim of the participants answers. The researcher coded the short-answer statements to determine common themes in order to provide a greater understanding of their experiences that the Likert-scale questions could not provide (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

The follow-up interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants via video-conferencing online. Interviews were recorded, transcribed into a Word document, and then coded and themed to assist in adding more robust qualitative data to help answer research question two. The follow-up interviews allowed the researcher to ask for clarification of answers and/or follow-up questions, allowing the researcher to better understand the challenges and successes rural Idaho middle schools are experiencing in implementing the college and career standards (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The researcher provided the details of the study in an application to the Internal Review Board (IRB) committee at the researcher's institution for approval prior to the research taking place. A research plan that included detailed research techniques, protections to guarantee the anonymity of participants, and prior authorization of the 23 participating schools was included in the IRB application. The researcher also detailed data collection methods, including dissemination of the survey and follow-up reminders to the participating schools for completion. The IRB committee gave full approval of the research prior to any data collection. The researcher is also certified by the Association of Clinical Research Professionals to be able to conduct research with human participants.

Participants

In early fall, the researcher received approval from 23 rural Idaho school administrators to participate in the research survey and possible interviews. There were five schools from Region 1, four schools from Region 2, one school from Region 3, four schools from Region 4, three schools from Region 5, and six schools from Region 6 who gave permission to participate. The chosen schools had to be considered rural by the Idaho definition and also meet the criteria of more than 20 miles from a more urban area with a population of 15,000 or more because the researcher wanted to focus on the most rural schools.

The researcher selected ten middle schools from each region based on the above criteria, except for Region 3 in which only nine schools qualified, and emailed 59 Idaho middle school administrators with the intent of the research, research questions, details about the survey, participation requirements, and contact information for the researcher and their committee chair. The email also asked the administrators to sign and return the attached site permission letter allowing the researcher to disseminate the survey to them at a later date. A week later, the researcher followed up with a reminder email. The researcher then began calling the schools who had not yet responded in hopes of answering any questions and receiving more administrators willing to participate. Many schools noted that teachers were overwhelmed with the additional duties and requirements of COVID and declined to participate. A couple of the most remote schools that house K-12 in a single building declined to participate because they did not currently have any students in grades 6-8.

This mixed methods study was conducted at 23 public rural Idaho middle schools throughout the state. The schools were determined to be rural if they had a population of fewer than 25,000 in the county they reside or where the student enrollment per district square miles

was less than 20 (Idaho State Department of Education [SDE], n.d.) and were more than 20 miles from a more urban area with a population of 15,000 or more.

Quantitative Survey Participants. A total of 43 administrators, counselors, and teachers from the 23 schools completed the survey and five provided follow-up interviews. In order to determine the implementation of college and career readiness program components in rural Idaho middle schools, quantitative data were collected using the self-reporting survey, "College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Middle School Reform", which included a 4-phased rubric. The phases included the Planning Stage, the Pilot Stage, the Evaluation Stage, and Full Implementation Stage (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). To determine how middle school faculty/staff indicated their struggles and successes with college and career readiness, two researcher-created short-answer questions were included at the end of the survey (Appendix B) and follow-up interviews were completed with five of the survey participants (Appendix I). Permission to modify the instrument for the purposes of this study was granted by one of the original authors, Dr. Chery Wagonlander (Appendix C).

Purposeful sampling was applied in the selection of the research participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) based on the criteria set forth. Through the use of maximal variation sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), the survey population included middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers in public rural Idaho districts. Written approval was obtained from the administrator of each participating middle school (Appendix D) prior to the dissemination of the survey.

The researcher disseminated the email to the selected districts inviting their participation in the research study. The email contained a link to the survey and open-ended question

instrument (Appendix F). Upon entering the survey, participants were provided with an informed consent (Appendix A) that articulated their right to not participate without incentive or penalty. If a participant declined to give consent, they were immediately departed from the survey.

Survey participants provided electronic consent when they entered the survey and were allowed to opt out at any time by closing out of the survey. Qualtrics did not collect names, IP addresses, or emails in order maintain participants' anonymity. Demographic data were collected in order to allow the researcher to break down the data by region. No other identifying information was provided in order to protect the participants' identity. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. If they answered yes, they were instructed to enter their email address which would reveal their identity. This was optional, so only those who were willing had their identity revealed.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Idaho Region	Current Position	% of Low SES Students	% of non-White Students	2018-2019 Graduation Rate	Idaho Certified
1	Teacher	21-30%	6-10%	76-85%	Yes
1	Teacher	31-49%	< 5%	51-75%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
1	Administrator	31-49%	6-10%	96% or more	Yes
1	Counselor	> 50%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
1	Teacher	31-49%	< 5%	51-75%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%	< 5%	51-75%	Yes
1	Teacher	11-20%	< 5%	76-85%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%	6-10%	76-85%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%1/	6-10%	86-95%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%	6-10%	76-85%	Yes
1	Administrator	> 50%	6-10%	76-85%	Yes
1	Administrator	21-30%	6-10%	86-95%	Yes
1	Teacher	> 50%	< 5%	< 50%	Yes
2	Administrator	21-30%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
2	Administrator	21-30%	< 5%	51-75%	Yes
3	Administrator	31-49%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
3	Administrator	31-49%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
4	Counselor	31-49%	21-30%	86-95%	Yes
4	Teacher	31-49%	21-30%	86-95%	Yes
4	Administrator	31-49%	21-30%	86-95%	Yes
4	Counselor	> 50%	31-49%	86-95%	Yes
4	Administrator	> 50%	6-10%	86-95%	Yes
4	Administrator	11-20%	31-49%	96% or more	Yes
5	Teacher	6-10%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes

5	Counselor	21-30%	< 5%	86-95%	No
5	Teacher	6-10%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
5	Administrator	31-49%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
5	Teacher	6-10%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
5	Teacher	21-30%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
5	Teacher	6-10%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
5	Administrator	6-10%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
5	Teacher	6-10%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
5	Teacher	< 5%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
5	Administrator	31-49%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
6	Administrator	31-49%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes
6	Administrator	> 50%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
6	Teacher	31-49%	21-30%	86-95%	Yes
6	Teacher	> 50%	11-20	96% or more	Yes
6	Administrator	> 50%	21-30%	86-95%	Yes
6	Administrator	> 50%	< 5%	96% or more	Yes
6	Administrator	> 50%	< 5%	86-95%	Yes

Qualitative Interview Participants. The researcher emailed potential interview participants who provided their email at the end of the survey to request their participation and schedule an interview time. The researcher requested approximately 20-30 minutes from each interview participant and provided a $20 Amazon gift as remuneration for their participation upon completion of the interview. Once a date and time was scheduled, the researched emailed the Qualitative Method Informed Consent form (Appendix H) to each participant to sign prior to the interview. The only demographic information collected from interview participants was the region their school is in and if they are a counselor, teacher, or administrator.

Table 2

Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Region	Current Position
John	3	Teacher
Mike	5	Administrator
Jane	6	Administrator
Joe	5	Counselor
Mary	6	Counselor

Data Collection

This research analyzed a self-reporting survey of the college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools in each region and the struggles and successes faced by educators. Fifty-nine schools that were representative of every region in the state was asked to participate; 27 signed permission letters to actually participate. The 43 survey participants fell into three categories: administrator, counselor, or teacher. Participants completed the self-reporting survey and qualitative open-ended questions to provide a greater perspective of the school's college and career readiness focus and culture. Qualtrics was used to administer and collect the electronic self-reporting survey and short answer responses. Follow-up interviews were conducted with willing participants via video-conferencing. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the participants in order to provide a better understanding of a research problem that qualitative or quantitative data alone does not provide (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

The quantitative items in the survey allowed participant self-reporting on a 4-phased rubric to provide data for the researcher to compare and evaluate responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 395). The self-reporting quantitative statements were originally part of the "College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for High School Reform"

evaluation rubric (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). The survey instrument (Appendix B) was modified by the researcher, with permission (Appendix C), to fit the specific research method and questions of this study. Two short-answer questions were added to the research instrument to better understand the struggles and success of college and career readiness in rural settings by the faculty/staff. Follow-up interviews were conducted to help further identify challenges and successes of implementing college and career readiness standards in rural Idaho middle schools.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected for this mixed methods research study following all privacy and ethical procedures. The researcher completed the ACRP Ethics and Human Subject Protection training (Appendix E) and received approval from the Internal Research Board at Northwest Nazarene University (Appendix G). The researcher contacted 59 rural public Idaho middle schools inviting their participation in the research study, in which 23 consented (Appendix D) that met the conditions of a rural school as set forth by the Idaho State Department of Education (Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), n.d.) and the other parameters set forth by the researcher.

The researcher disseminated the email to the 23 approved schools that included the purpose of the research and a link to the College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform survey (Appendix B) in Qualtrics. The survey asked participants to rank their school in four different areas of college and career readiness using a self-reporting 4-point ordinal scale as described in the survey. The researcher sent three follow-up emails, once per week, in the four weeks following the initial dissemination of the survey. At this time the researcher had 51 participants. The researcher opted to extend the deadline for the survey another two weeks and sent a fourth email alerting the schools of the

extension. At the end of the extension, the researcher had 61 total responses.

After reviewing the 61 responses, the researcher rejected any who did not fully complete the quantitative portion of the survey. This resulted in 35 completed and usable responses and a response rate of only 12%. This resulted in the researcher modifying her IRB and adding qualitative interview protocol along with remuneration options for survey participation and interview participation. Once the IRB was approved (Appendix G), the researcher extended the survey window for another three weeks and disseminated the survey link to the 23 participating schools with updated information about the availability of eight $25 Amazon gift cards for participants and a $20 Amazon gift card for interview participants. Upon completion of the survey, participants were given the option to provide their email address to be put into a drawing for one of the eight $25 Amazon gift cards. The researcher randomly selected eight participants from the pool of emails and sent the gift cards electronically.

The second data collection window resulted in a total of 11 new survey responses in which five were completed bringing the total survey participants to 43 and a new response rate of 15%. Considering the extremely low response rates, the researcher extended the survey window for another week and notified participating schools via email. During this time the researcher focused on scheduling and completing interviews. The researcher conducted and recorded five interviews via tele-conferencing. No new survey participants were recruited during the week extension.

Analytical Methods

Quantitative Analytical Methods. The survey responses were collected using Qualtrics XM, a fully online application. The survey began with the participant informed consent and the risks to them. Participants gave informed consent when they affirmed they were 18 years or older

and continued with the survey. The consent statement guaranteed anonymity and informed them of their right to withdraw from the survey at any time by closing it out. If a participant did not give consent, they were exited from the survey with no further information collected.

The response options for the survey included a self-reporting 4-phased rubric with the following choices: the Planning Stage, the Pilot Stage, the Evaluation Stage, and Full Implementation Stage (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). Each stage was described in detail at the beginning of each section of the survey to fully inform participants of the survey content. This 4-phased rubric was turned into a Likert-scale survey and was used to allow administrators, school counselors, and teachers to indicate where they felt their school fits in regards to being college and career ready.

Quantitative data collected from the self-reporting survey was electronically transferred into an Excel spreadsheet. The data from the ordinal scale was recoded on a one to four scale with one representing the “Planning Stage”, two representing the “Pilot Stage”, three representing the “Evaluation Stage”, and four representing the “Full Implementation Stage”. The data was then imported to and analyzed using SPSS 26 software. The Chronbach’s alpha test was run to determine consistency in responses and Frequencies was run to determine any statistically significant differences between each region and survey sections.

Qualitative Analytical Methods. Qualitative data collected from the two short answer responses was exported into a Word document and cross-checked to ensure the data was identical to what was saved in Qualtrics. Qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed into a Word document and cross-checked to ensure it was identical to the saved recordings. During the cross-checking process, responses were read multiple times and themes were developed. Inductive coding was used to form descriptions and broad themes to assist in making

sense of the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The process of coding data allows the researcher to divide it into segments, look for overlap and redundancy, and make sense of the text. The code is a researcher-generated construct that translates the data into themes and categories for the researcher to interpret (Saldana, 2016). “Discerning the trends is a way to solidify our observations into concrete instances of meaning” (Saldana, 2016, p. 6). The coding and theming process assists the researcher in the selection of data to use and disregard in respect to the research questions being answered (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The researcher opted to use inductive, open-coding to code each response. Axial coding was used to infer themes within the qualitative data. The themes were then used to determine how middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers articulate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum. The qualitative data were also split into the six regions to determine if the themes were specific to a particular region or characteristics.

Validity and Reliability

Quantitative Validity and Reliability. The survey College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015) was used and adapted with permission (Appendix C) for the purposes of this research study. To minimize risk to the participants, the researcher validated the survey using the Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) system prior to using it. Nine content experts were chosen to validate the survey on its content. The experts included five rural middle school teachers not in the participation pool, three College Technical Education (CTE) administrators for the state of Idaho, and one CTE university professor. The experts were sent the Microsoft Excel version of the survey via email.

They were fully informed of the purpose of the research, the research questions, and the purpose of the survey. The experts were asked to rate the survey questions on their clarity and relevance to the research study. If the survey questions were relevant, they were rated as a three or four; if they were irrelevant, they were rated as a one or two (Polit & Beck, 2006). Upon receiving the results from the experts, two expert's ratings were eliminated because of opposing and conflicting feedback regarding relevancy.

Once each survey item was rated, the researcher calculated the I-CVI by putting an X in the Excel chart for those items marked as highly relevant or relevant and dividing the number of experts who rated the item as valid by the total number of experts. Items rating .80 or higher were considered to be validated (Polit & Beck, 2006). To meet this rating, a minimum of six experts were required to agree the item was highly relevant or relevant. The experts rated all of the Likert-scale statements and short-answer questions in the survey. If an item was rated as highly relevant or relevant, an x was placed on the I-CVI Excel chart. Once all experts had responded, the researcher calculated the validity to determine which items were valid and which needed to be revised or thrown out. Table 3 below shows the validation charts for each section of the survey and the short-answer questions. Items that received a score of less than .80 were deemed not valid and were not used.

Table 3

Survey Questions Content Validity Index: Expert Ratings and Initial Findings

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 5	Expert 6	Expert 7	Expert 8	Expert 9	Number in Agreement	Item CVI
I 1	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
I 2	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
I 3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
I 4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
I 5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
I 6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
I 7	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
II 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
II 2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
II 3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
II 4	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	6	0.86
II 5	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	4	0.57
II 6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
II 7	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 6	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
III 7	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
IV 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
IV 2	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
IV 3	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	6	0.86
IV 4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
SA 1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
SA 2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00
SA 3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	7	1.00

Section II, question 5 scored as invalid with a score of 0.57. The researcher felt this question was important to the research questions and could make it relevant and clearer with some modifications. The original question read “Does the administration support using teachers’ reflections as the basis for collaborative action research to help all students achieve college

academic or career certification readiness and success?" The modified questions read "Does the administration utilize teachers' reflections to help all students achieve college or career readiness and success?"

The validation results of the survey were accessible to the researcher only. All data collected were stored on a password protected computer in password protected files. Calculations for validity were completed using the Microsoft Excel software and met the guidelines required by Polit and Beck (2006) to be relevant and valid.

To ensure reliability of the survey instrument, the researcher performed a pilot study with 11 rural middle schools across regions 3, 4, and 5 who were not part of the main research participant pool. The Qualtrics survey link was sent out via email to teachers, counselors, and administrators in the middle schools to be completed within a 30-day time period.

The Cronbach's alpha was run on each section of the survey to ensure reliability of the results and the survey. Section I resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .945. Section II returned a Cronbach's alpha of .927; Section III of .904; Section IV of .914 and an altogether reliability total of .967. Based on the guidelines in Field's (2013) text, the results assure the survey's reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 or higher.

Table 4

Pilot Study Results

Section	Cronbach's Alpha Result from SPSS	N of items
I	.945	7
II	.927	7
III	.904	7
IV	.914	4
TOTAL	.967	25

Qualitative Validity and Reliability. The interview questions were developed and written by the researcher. To minimize risk to the participants, the researcher validated the questions using the Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) system prior to using them. Six content experts were chosen to validate the survey on its content. The experts included two rural middle school teachers not in the participation pool, one College Technical Education (CTE) administrator for the state of Idaho, two Idaho rural school administrators, and one Idaho rural school district superintendent. The experts were sent the Microsoft Excel version of the interview questions via email. They were fully informed of the purpose of the research, the research questions, and the purpose of the interviews. The experts were asked to rate the survey questions on their clarity and relevance to the research study. If the survey questions were valid, they were rated as a three or four; if they were invalid, they were rated as a one or two (Polit & Beck, 2006). Upon receiving the results from the experts, two survey questions were modified and simplified to one questions to avoid bias. The original questions read "What are some things that make [CCR] difficult?" and "What are some things that would make [CCR] easier?". The

new question asks, “Have you seen or heard of any challenges and/or successes in implementing the CCR standards in your school? What has been successful? What would help make it easier?”

Once each interview questions were rated, the researcher calculated the I-CVI by putting an X in the Excel chart for those items marked as highly relevant or relevant and dividing the number of experts who rated the item as valid by the total number of experts. Items rating .80 or higher were considered to be validated (Polit & Beck, 2006). To meet this rating, a minimum of six experts were required to agree the item was highly relevant or relevant. The experts rated all of the interview questions. If an item was rated as highly relevant or relevant, an x was placed on the I-CVI Excel chart. Once all experts had responded, the researcher calculated the validity to determine which items were valid and which needed to be revised or thrown out. The table below is the validation chart for each interview questions. No items received a score of less than .80 and no items were deleted.

Table 5

Interview Questions Content Validity Index: Expert Ratings and Initial Findings

Question #	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Number in Agreement	Item CVI
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1.00
2	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1.00
3	X	X		X	X	X	5	0.83
4	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1.00
5	X		X	X	X	X	5	0.83
6	X		X	X	X	X	5	0.83
7	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1.00

To ensure reliability of the interview questions, the researcher performed a pilot interview with two rural middle school educators from region 4. One participant was an

administrator and the other participant was a counselor. Upon completion of the pilot interviews, the researcher asked for feedback on the questions and interview techniques. Both participants stated the interview questions were relative to the research questions and the protocols set in place allowed for a smooth and succinct interview and data collection.

Limitations

Limitations in research are potential flaws or issues with the study that the researcher has noticed. They frequently pertain to loss or lack of participants, inadequate measures of variables, small sample sizes, and other data collection and analysis aspects (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Although the mixed methods research approach is a strong analysis of data, one limitation is the small sample size which could impede the generalization of the population (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants' honesty, or lack thereof, is also a limitation as that cannot be detected or prevented. The length of the survey instrument could also be a limitation. If participants felt it was too long or expended too much of their energy, they may not have completed it, therefore skewing the collected data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Another limitation was the distribution of the survey to the participants. The administrators agreed to allow themselves, their teachers, and counselors to participate in the survey; they also agreed to disseminate the survey one they received it from the researcher. The researcher had to trust that the invitation to participate and all follow-up emails were distributed to the administrators, counselors, and teachers by the administrator receiving the information from the researcher. The researcher also had to trust that the survey was being distributed to only administrators, counselors, and teachers as outlined in the parameters of the research study and invitation email.

The lack of research on career-focused readiness could also be a potential limitation.

Most research found for the literature review focused solely on preparing students for some sort of post-secondary education such as a trade school, community college or a university. Idaho's CTE program in the high schools provides students an opportunity to begin preparing for high-skill and in-demand careers starting in the ninth-grade (2020). However, this program is not available in the middle schools at this time to help them attain the CCR standards.

This survey research had a low response rate of 15%, which is a limitation but does not invalidate the results received (Anseel et al., 2010; Keeter et al., 2006; Visser et al., 1996). Keeter et al. (2006) compared the results of two surveys, the first being administered over a 5-day period and the second over a greater period of time. He found that the results were statistically indistinguishable (Keeter et al., 2006). Anseel et al. (2010) found that lower response rates were common in specific samples along with the popularity of surveys being a deterrent to respondents. Response decisions can be affected by a participant's social climate such as responsibilities and/or concerns about privacy (Tourangeau & Plewes, 2013). Educators have many demands of their time which has been amplified with the pandemic. These demands classify the sample population as potentially being influenced by their social climate, thus resulting in fewer responses. Visser et al. (1996) demonstrated that lower response rates of about 20% on surveys actually produced more accurate results that surveys with response rates of 60% or greater.

This researcher tried to encourage greater responses by offering the possibility of remuneration if educators completed the survey and interview. The low response rate could also have been due to relying on administrators to distribute the survey link and research information rather than the researcher requesting teacher, counselor, and administrator emails to disseminate the survey to them herself.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's responsibilities were to conduct the research in a professional and ethical manner, to not bring harm to the participants, and to analyze the level of college and career readiness of rural Idaho middle schools based on the collected data from the survey. Being a first-generation college graduate from a rural Idaho district gave some bias. Her current position as a Clinical Instructor for Idaho State University's College of Education teacher preparation program may also provide bias as she has a large connection to Region IV school districts and may know some of the participants in the study, although the participants' actual submissions were anonymous. The researcher's educational background and experiences were used to conduct this research professionally, anonymously, and ethically.

The researcher is a professor for a teacher preparation program in the state of Idaho, so there is potential for researcher bias. There is a possibility of the researcher to develop a bias toward a particular school, university, and/or program based on participants' responses. Also, the researcher's own bias toward CCR programs may limit the study. This researcher believes CCR programs should begin in elementary school and include the options of trades, certificates, and technical schools along with post-secondary degree-required careers. The researcher will act professionally and ethically in all correspondence and reports of findings in order to lessen the biases.

Chapter IV

Results

Introduction

The emphasis on high school graduation and go-on rates has required a significant focus on college and career readiness by educators at the high school level (Aldeman, 2020; Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Although substantial effort was made in Idaho's high schools, the graduation rate remained stagnant and the go-on rate continues to decline (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.; Richert, 2022; Students Achievement, 2021). With the increased emphasis on post-secondary education and/or vocational training, students must be prepared for some type of education beyond the traditional high school diploma (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013). When starting at an early age, there is a significant correlation between student self-efficacy, the integration of career development instruction, and high school completion (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Glessner et al., 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007; Stone, 2017). Making the connection between what students are learning and substantial opportunities would result in greater high school retention (Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011). In turn, when career readiness training starts early and is purposefully integrated within academics, it is more effective in assisting students to understanding life after high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007).

The lower graduation rates common to rural America contributes to a great disadvantage in the high unemployment and poverty rates associated with not completing high school (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). As many as 15% of rural community members do not have a high school diploma and only about half of the racial and ethnic minorities within those communities are likely to graduate from high school (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). The rural statistics in Idaho similarly reflect the national rural data. With over 75% of the state being defined as rural communities (Idaho State Department of Education), it is even more critical that college and career readiness is emphasized earlier in Idaho schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Student Achievement, 2021; US Department of Agriculture, 2017 & 2021). Data analyzed from Idaho education reports disclose that rural education districts should emphasize high school completion and college and career readiness (Idaho State Department of Education).

The examination of literature found that earlier implementation of college and career readiness standards and ideas were beneficial in increasing graduation rates as well as post-secondary and/or career training education (Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al. 2017; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). Rural schools are at an even greater disadvantage (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). With over 75% of Idaho's communities being rural, the focus on high school completion and college and career readiness is even more critical (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.). There is not a wide understanding of the methods Idaho schools are currently using to accentuate high school graduation or if college and career readiness is a current educational focus.

This study aimed to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and assess the struggles and successes of college and career readiness

based on input from administrators, teachers, and counselors. This mixed-methods study utilized an explanatory sequential design, and the following questions guided this research:

1. To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture?
2. How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum?

Chapter IV aims to provide results of the quantitative survey data and interview qualitative data for each of the research questions. The quantitative frequency results are presented first, followed by the resulting themes of the qualitative findings.

Quantitative Data Collection Instrument

Survey Instrument. The survey instrument utilized for this study was the College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform, developed by Mott Middle College and The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships. With permission, the survey was modified, eliminating questions unrelated to the population focus of the current study. The modified instrument includes four sections and 25 statements asking the participant's perceptions of their school culture regarding college and career readiness within the following defined ratings: The Planning Stage, The Pilot Stage, The Evaluation Stage, and Full Implementation Stage. Participants convey their perceptions concerning their school's college and career readiness implementation by selecting the stage that best reflects their school. The opportunity for participants to indicate their school struggles and successes of college and career readiness was made available through the short answer questions

to encourage the sharing of examples in current school performance and the resources schools needed for future implementation.

Validation Process of Quantitative Instrument

The modified survey instrument was validated using the Content Validity Index (CVI) procedure (Polit & Beck, 2006). The process requires evaluation by experts within the field to ensure the relevance of each instrument question to the study utilizing a rating system (Polit & Beck, 2006). The expert panel chosen for the study consisted of: five rural middle school educators, one university Career Technical Education (CTE) professor, and three state-level CTE program administrators.

The next step in the validation process required the calculation of the CVI. The results indicated the validity of each question in the instrument with a score of < 0.78. Apart from the rewording of one question based on expert panel feedback, the College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for High School Reform (Mott Middle College, 2015) was considered a valid and reliable instrument for use in this research.

Validation Process of Qualitative Instrument

The interview questions were validated using Content Validity Index (CVI) procedures (Polit & Beck, 2006). The researcher assigned six rural middle school educators and/or college and career readiness experts with rating each of the interview questions. The original interview questions written by the researcher consisted of seven questions related to demographics, overall status of college and career readiness at their school, and successes and/or struggles. The seven questions were sent to the expert panel who rated each question on its relevancy to the research questions. All experts agreed the questions were valid and relevant based on the guidelines as determined by Polit and Beck (2006). Comments left for the researcher regarding three of the

questions caused the researcher to rewrite them in order to make them clearer and eliminate potential bias.

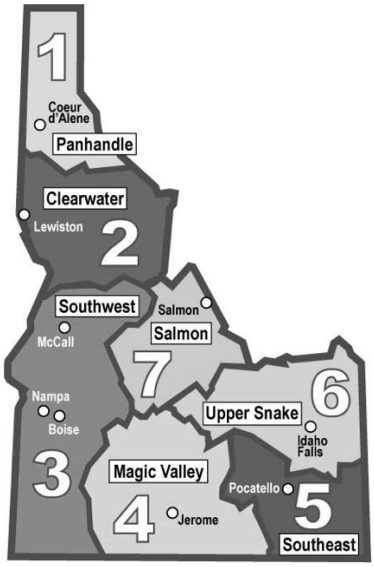
After calculating the CVI, all interview questions scored at .83 or higher and were found to be relevant and valid. The details of the CVI process were outlined in Chapter 3. After rewriting the three questions, the final interview questions included six total that was asked of each interviewee and received a mean I-CVI rating of 0.93, which exceeded the necessary 0.83 for content validity. Therefore, these researcher-developed interview questions were rated as relevant by the expert panel and considered a valid and reliable instrument for use in this research.

Survey Participant Profile

The survey was distributed electronically to 21 rural Idaho middle school administrators throughout the six regions in the state of Idaho. Figure 1 illustrates the six regions of Idaho.

Figure 1

Outline of Idaho Regions



The request for administrators to share the survey link with their staff enabled the possibility of approximately 270 rural middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers to participate in the survey. Responses indicated that educators from all three categories participated in the study. The final *n* of 43 represents this study's respondents.

Participant Demographics

The respondent demographics collected assisted in evaluating the educational characteristics of both the participants and their schools for a greater understanding of the data. Other demographics were collected, including the percentage of low SES students, percentage of non-White students, the 2018-2019 graduation rate, and certification status of participants but considered irrelevant to the research questions. Table 6 includes the frequencies of respondents and percentage results to the sample for the demographic items about Idaho regions represented and the respondent's job title.

Table 6

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Idaho Region	Region 1		Region 2		Region 3		Region 4		Region 5		Region 6	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Teacher	11	26%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	7	16%	2	5%
Counselor	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	2	5%	1	. 2%	0	0%
Administrator	3	7%	2	5%	2	5%	3	7%	3	7%	5	12%

Quantitative Data Analysis Results

The first question this study sought to answer was: To what extend are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture? To fully answer this question,

participants were asked to rate their school on a rubric that consisted of The Planning Stage, The Pilot Stage, The Evaluation Stage, or Full Implementation Stage. There were four sections to the survey. Each section consisted of five to seven statements the participants would read and rate their school based on where they felt they were at. This section outlines the quantitative analysis' findings in relation to the focus of the research. Descriptive statistics and frequency analyses were applied to the quantitative data by individual question and by the mean of each section of the survey. The quantitative data is displayed and analyzed in the tables below for each section of the survey.

Subtest Section I

Section I of the survey focused on each school's creation of a culture of caring, understanding, safety, trust, and connection and community. It sought to provide evidence of the school's commitment to create a nurturing culture in which all members of the staff feel appreciated, needed, and connected to each other in a common goal and assume their responsibility to extend that culture to all students. The questions sought evidence for commitment, processes, programs, responsibilities, and empowerment in efforts towards building a positive college and career readiness culture (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015).

Planning Stage. Of the respondents, 37.2% reported that their school has not developed a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all staff and students in its effort to achieve success. 39.5% of respondents indicated their school has not developed a process to ensure staff and students see evidence of appreciation and connectedness to each other. Of the respondents, 37.2% reported the lack of programs that ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring and connected community. Nearly half, 46.5%,

reported the present status, interests, needs, and goals of staff and students is not a focus. Of the respondents, 27.9% did not view their responsibility as quasi-counselors to students. Of the respondents, 25.6% reported they do not feel empowered to serve the needs of individual students. 37.2% of respondents reported the school has not developed a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school.

Pilot Stage. Of the respondents, 37.2% reported that their school has talked about developing a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all staff and students in its effort to achieve success. 39.5% of respondents indicated their school is considering processes to ensure staff and students see evidence of appreciation and connectedness to each other. Of the respondents, 37.2% reported the knowledge that programs are needed that ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring and connected community. 14% reported the present status, interests, needs, and goals of staff and students is a future focus. Of the respondents, 18.6% are considering they may have some responsibility as quasi-counselors to students. Of the respondents, 18.6% reported they do not necessarily feel empowered to serve the needs of individual students but would like to. 18.6% of respondents reported the school has begun talking about a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school.

Evaluation Stage. Of the respondents, 25.6% reported that their school has begun developing a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all staff and students in its effort to achieve success. 27.9% of respondents indicated their school is working toward a process to ensure staff and students see evidence of appreciation and connectedness to

each other. Of the respondents, 25.6% reported the implementation of programs that ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring and connected community. 16.3% reported the present status, interests, needs, and goals of staff and students is mostly a focus. Of the respondents, 16.3% are beginning to see their responsibility as quasi-counselors to students. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported they are mostly empowered to serve the needs of individual students. 23.3% of respondents reported the school has started developing a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school.

Full Implementation Stage. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported that their school has developed a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all staff and students in its effort to achieve success. 18.6% of respondents indicated their school has developed a process to ensure staff and students see evidence of appreciation and connectedness to each other. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported the use of programs that ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring and connected community. 23.3% reported the present status, interests, needs, and goals of staff and students is a focus. Of the respondents, 37.2% viewed their responsibility as quasi-counselors to students. Of the respondents, 32.6% reported they feel empowered to serve the needs of individual students. 20.9% of respondents reported the school has developed a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school.

Summary of Section I

The highest frequencies for each question in section I indicated that the majority of schools were in the planning stage. The greatest area of concentration needed was to focus on the status, interests, needs, and goals of each individual staff member and student as indicated by

46.5% in the planning stage on question four. Many participants (32.6%) felt they were able to serve their students' needs as they understood them. It is important to note that an average of 22.61% and 25.6% of participants felt their schools were evaluating and fully implementing a culture of caring and trust where staff feel appreciated and connected towards a common goal. Table 7 below shares the quantitative data described above.

Table 7

Survey Frequency Results of Section 1

Survey Question	Planning Stage	Pilot Stage	Evaluation Stage	Full Implementation Stage
Has the school developed a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all its staff and students in its efforts to achieve success?	37.2	14	25.6	23.3
Has the school developed a process to ensure that all staff and students see evidence that they are appreciated, needed and connected to each other?	39.5	14	27.9	18.6
Has the school developed specific programs to ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring, connected community?	37.2	14	25.6	23.3
Does the school focus on each individual staff member and student—his/her present status, interests, needs and goals?	46.5	14	16.3	23.3
Do the educators in the school view their responsibility as quasi-counselors to students, to support them as members of a caring, connected community?	27.9	18.6	16.3	37.2

Do the educators in the school feel empowered to serve individual students' needs as they understand them?	25.6	18.6	23.3	32.6
Has the school developed a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school?	37.2	18.6	23.3	20.9
Section I Average	35.87	15.97	22.61	25.6

Subtest Section II

Section II of the survey sought to provide evidence of the school's commitment to engage all administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and students in its core mission. It focused on the preparation of all students for college and career readiness. The questions sought evidence for a clear definition of college and career readiness, documentation of a mission and commitment to CCR, the understanding of staff responsibilities, reflective practices, level of expectations, and the assistance to students in learning about CCR and the options available to them (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015).

Planning Stage. Of the respondents, 37.2% reported that their school has not developed a comprehensive definition of college and career readiness. 39.5% of respondents indicated their school has not documented its mission and commitment to the success of college and career readiness for all students. Of the respondents, 39.5% reported the lack of understanding their responsibility in helping students to become college and career ready. 39.5% also reported they do not engage in reflective practice about their own teaching of college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 34.9% indicated administration does not support using teachers' reflections for

collaborative action research to help all students be college and career ready. Of the respondents, 41.9% reported the school does not have high expectations for students to achieve college and career readiness. 23.3% of respondents indicated the school does not help students learn about the college and career options available to them.

Pilot Stage. Of the respondents, 14% reported that their school has begun to develop a comprehensive definition of college and career readiness. 14% of respondents indicated their school is in the beginning stages of documenting its mission and commitment to the success of college and career readiness for all students. Of the respondents, 18.6% reported the early phases of understanding their responsibility in helping students to become college and career ready. 14% also reported they are learning about reflective practice of their own teaching of college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 18.6% indicated administration is beginning to support using teachers' reflections for collaborative action research to help all students be college and career ready. Of the respondents, 11.6% reported the school is determining what high expectations look like for students to achieve college and career readiness. 23.3% of respondents indicated the school is determining ways to students learn about the college and career options available to them.

Evaluation Stage. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported that their school has mostly developed a comprehensive definition of college and career readiness. 23.3% of respondents indicated their school is working on documenting its mission and commitment to the success of college and career readiness for all students. Of the respondents, 20.9% reported some understanding of their responsibility in helping students to become college and career ready. 30.2% also reported they are beginning to engage in reflective practice about their own teaching of college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 14% indicated administration tries support

using teachers' reflections for collaborative action research to help all students be college and career ready. Of the respondents, 16.3% reported the school is working towards having high expectations for students to achieve college and career readiness. 11.6% of respondents indicated the school is helping students learn about the college and career options available to them.

Full Implementation Stage. Of the respondents, 18.6% reported that their school has developed a comprehensive definition of college and career readiness. 16.3% of respondents indicated their school has documented its mission and commitment to the success of college and career readiness for all students. Of the respondents, 14% reported complete understanding of their responsibility in helping students to become college and career ready. Only 9.3% also reported they engage in reflective practice about their own teaching of college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 25.6% indicated administration supports using teachers' reflections for collaborative action research to help all students be college and career ready. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported the school has high expectations for students to achieve college and career readiness. 34.9% of respondents indicated the school helps students learn about the college and career options available to them.

Summary of Section II

The highest frequencies for each question in section II indicated that the majority of schools were in the planning stage. The greatest area of concentration needed consists of multiple areas including documenting the schools mission and commitment to college and career readiness (39.5%), outlining the responsibilities of staff for implementing college and career readiness (39.5%), engaging in reflective practice (39.5%), and setting high expectations for college and career readiness and success (41.9%). Many participants (34.9%) felt they were helping students learn about college and career options at the middle school level. It is important

to note that 20.29% of participants indicated their school was fully implementing the preparation of students for college and career readiness. Table 8 below shares the quantitative data described above.

Table 8

Survey Frequency Results of Section II

Survey Question	Planning Stage	Pilot Stage	Evaluation Stage	Full Implementation Stage
Has the school developed a comprehensive definition of college academic or career certification readiness and success?	37.2	14	23.3	18.6
Has the school documented its mission and commitment to college academic or career certification readiness and success for all students?	39.5	14	23.3	16.3
Has the administration helped all staff understand their responsibility to help all students become college academic or career certification ready and successful?	39.5	18.6	20.9	14
Do all teachers engage in reflective practice about their own teaching for college academic and career certification readiness and success?	39.5	14	30.2	9.3

Does the administration support using teachers' reflections as the basis for collaborative action research to help all students achieve college academic or career certification readiness and success?	34.9	18.6	14	25.6
Does the school have high expectations with incentives and support systems to help all students achieve college academic or career certification readiness and success?	41.9	11.6	16.3	23.3
Does the school help all students learn about the college and career options open to them?	23.3	23.3	11.6	34.9
Section II Average	36.54	16.3	19.94	20.29

Subtest Section III

Section III of the survey sought to determine if the school has a comprehensive program college and career readiness by providing documentation of the integration and implementation of key components and skills required for college and career readiness. The questions in Section III acquired evidence of the knowledge and skills of teachers to design and deliver lessons that assist students in developing critical attributes that lend to college and career readiness. The questions also considered transitions from middle to high school to college, the support of counselors, and opportunities for learning outside the classroom (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015).

Planning Stage. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported that not all teachers have the knowledge and skills to help students develop critical attributes for the success of college and

career readiness. 18.6% indicated that not all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, reflect on and modify course content, assignments, and rigorous grading to prepare students for college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 23.3% indicated the school does not design and implement academic interventions to help prepare students for college and career readiness. 41.9% reported the schools has not embedded programs to help students seamlessly transition between high school and college and 46.5% also indicated the school does not incorporate CCR programs to prepare students for the culture, norms, and choices of colleges and careers. Respondents indicated that 23.3% of the schools do not offer college and career counseling to help students clarify interests, talents, and goals. Of the respondents, 39.5% indicated the school does not provide opportunities beyond the classroom for student learning such as internships, volunteer opportunities, or service learning.

Pilot Stage. Of the respondents, 23.3% reported that some teachers have the knowledge and skills to help students develop critical attributes for the success of college and career readiness. 32.6% indicated that some teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, reflect on and modify course content, assignments, and rigorous grading to prepare students for college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 20.9% indicated the school is considering the design and implementation of academic interventions to help prepare students for college and career readiness. 16.3% reported the schools has a desire to embed programs to help students seamlessly transition between high school and college and 14% also indicated the school is considering incorporating CCR programs to prepare students for the culture, norms, and choices of colleges and careers. Respondents indicated that 20.9% of the schools are attempting offer college and career counseling to help students clarify interests, talents, and goals. Of the respondents, 16.3% indicated the school would like to provide opportunities

beyond the classroom for student learning such as internships, volunteer opportunities, or service learning.

Evaluation Stage. Of the respondents, 11.6% reported that many teachers have the knowledge and skills to help students develop critical attributes for the success of college and career readiness. 14% indicated that many teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, reflect on and modify course content, assignments, and rigorous grading to prepare students for college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 20.9% indicated the school is beginning to design and implementation of academic interventions to help prepare students for college and career readiness. 16.3% reported the school is beginning to embed programs to help students seamlessly transition between high school and college and 16.3% also indicated the school is starting to incorporate CCR programs to prepare students for the culture, norms, and choices of colleges and careers. Respondents indicated that 16.3% of the schools are beginning to offer college and career counseling to help students clarify interests, talents, and goals. Of the respondents, 16.3% indicated the school is starting to provide opportunities beyond the classroom for student learning such as internships, volunteer opportunities, or service learning.

Full Implementation Stage. Of the respondents, 34.9% reported that teachers have the knowledge and skills to help students develop critical attributes for the success of college and career readiness. 23.3% indicated that teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, reflect on and modify course content, assignments, and rigorous grading to prepare students for college and career readiness. Of the respondents, 23.3% indicated the school is designing and implementing academic interventions to help prepare students for college and career readiness. 14% reported the schools is embedding programs to help students seamlessly

transition between high school and college and 11.6% also indicated the school is incorporating CCR programs to prepare students for the culture, norms, and choices of colleges and careers. Respondents indicated that 27.9% of the schools are offering college and career counseling to help students clarify interests, talents, and goals. Of the respondents, 16.3% indicated the school is providing opportunities beyond the classroom for student learning such as internships, volunteer opportunities, or service learning.

Summary of Section III

The highest frequencies for each question in section III indicated that the majority of schools were in the planning stage; however, the other stages were closely distributed. The greatest area of concentration needed consists of programs and practices to assist students in transitioning between high school and college (41.9%) and the incorporation of college and career readiness programs within the school (46.5%). A majority of participants (34.9%) felt they had the knowledge and skills needed to help students prepare for college and career readiness success. All schools were well balanced across the stages in the area of designing and implementing multiple academic interventions to help prepare students for college and career readiness with 23.3% in the Planning and Full Implementation stages and 20.9% in the Pilot and Evaluation stages. Schools indicated their majority were in the Planning Stage regarding embedded programs to transition between high school and college, the incorporation of college and career readiness programs, and providing learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Although it was not substantially higher than the others, 27.9% of schools indicated they were at the Full Implementation Stage regarding college and career counseling support for students. The implementation of academic interventions was fairly evenly distributed among the survey stages

indicating this is also an area that needs some attention. Table 9 below shares the quantitative data described above.

Table 9

Survey Frequency Results of Section III

Survey Question	Planning Stage	Pilot Stage	Evaluation Stage	Full Implementation Stage
Do all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students develop the key cognitive strategies required for college and career success including problem solving, analytic research, interpretation, precision and accuracy, and critical reasoning?	23.3	23.3	11.6	34.9
Do all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, review, reflect on and modify as needed course content, assignments, and grading of enough rigor to prepare students for college academic and/or career certification success?	18.6	32.6	14	23.3
Does the school design and implement multiple academic interventions to help prepare all students for college and career readiness?	23.3	20.9	20.9	23.3
Has the school embedded programs and practices to help all students seamlessly transition between their high school and college environments?	41.9	16.3	16.3	14

Does the school incorporate college and career certification readiness programs to prepare all students for the culture, norms and choices of colleges and careers?	46.5	14	16.3	11.6
Does the school offer college and career counseling support to help students clarify their interests, talents and goals?	23.3	20.9	16.3	27.9
Does the school provide learning opportunities beyond the classroom, such as work internships, volunteer service learning and work?	39.5	16.3	16.3	16.3
Section III Average	30.91	20.61	15.96	21.61

Subtest Section IV

Section IV of the survey sought to determine if the school has gathered evidence of its success in preparing all students to be college and career ready by providing evidence that the school has successfully prepared all students for future success in college and career readiness. The questions in Section IV acquired evidence of an evaluation process of measuring CCR success and the design and implementation of a follow up process to determine whether students are college and career ready. The questions also asked about the collection of data to measure the success of the schools efforts over time and the implementation of reflective practice (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015).

Planning Stage. Of the respondents, 46.5% reported the school has not designed and implemented an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing students to be college and career ready. 53.5% also indicated the lack of a follow-up process to determine if students complete college or a career training. Of the respondents, 41.9% indicated the school does not

gather longitudinal date to measure the success of its efforts over time. 48.8% of respondents reported the school has not implemented reflective practice and data collection concerning the college and career readiness of its students.

Pilot Stage. Of the respondents, 9.3% reported the school has considered the design and implemented an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing students to be college and career ready. 7% of respondents also indicated the contemplation of a follow-up process to determine if students complete college or a career training. Of the respondents, 14% indicated the school does is working toward gathering longitudinal date to measure the success of its efforts over time. 11.6% of respondents reported the school has begun to outline steps for implementing reflective practice and data collection concerning the college and career readiness of its students.

Evaluation Stage. Of the respondents, 18.6% reported the school has begun the design and implementation of an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing students to be college and career ready. 16.3% of respondents also indicated the school is developing a follow-up process to determine if students complete college or a career training. Of the respondents, 9.3% indicated the school does has begun gathering longitudinal date to measure the success of its efforts over time. 14% of respondents reported the has outlined steps for implementing reflective practice and data collection concerning the college and career readiness of its students.

Fully Implementation Stage. Of the respondents, 11.6% reported the school has designed and implemented an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing students to be college and career ready. 9.3% of respondents also indicated they have a follow-up process to determine if students complete college or a career training. Of the respondents, 20.9% indicated the school is collecting longitudinal date to measure the success of its efforts over time. 11.6% of

respondents reported the school has outlined steps for implementing reflective practice and data collection concerning the college and career readiness of its students.

Summary of Section IV

Almost half of participants (47.68%) indicate their school is in the planning stage of gathering evidence of its attainment in preparing students to be college and career ready. The highest frequencies for each question in section IV indicated that the majority of schools were in the planning stage. The greatest area of concentration needed consists of following up with students to determine if they have completed college or attained a career (53.5%). While this was the area of highest need, all areas indicated a need for assistance in moving beyond the planning stage. Table 10 below shares the quantitative data described above.

Table 10

Survey Frequency Results of Section IV

Survey Question	Planning Stage	Pilot Stage	Evaluation Stage	Full Implementation Stage
Has the school designed and implemented an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing all students to be college academic or career certification ready?	46.5	9.3	18.6	11.6
Has the school designed and implemented a follow up process to determine whether students are college completers or career qualified?	53.5	7	16.3	9.3
Does the school gather longitudinal data to measure the success of its efforts over time?	41.9	14	9.3	20.9
Has the school implemented reflective practice and data collection concerning college and career readiness of its students?	48.8	11.6	14	11.6
Section IV Average	47.68	10.48	14.55	13.35

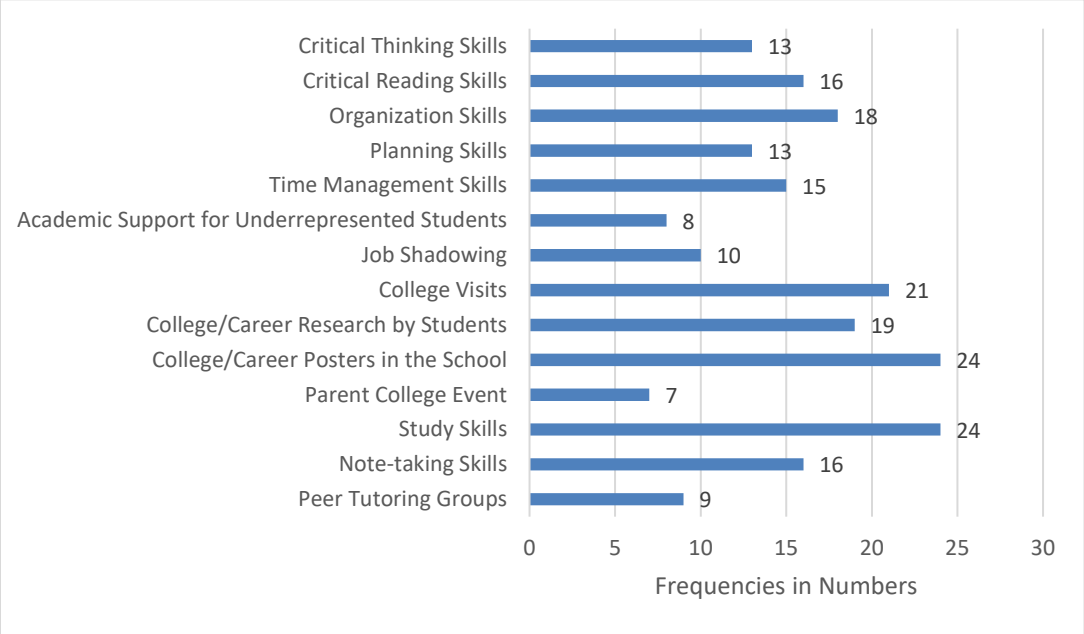
Subtest Checklist

The final quantitative question in the survey was a checklist of items that indicated progress towards preparing students to be college and career ready as suggested by research from the literature review in Chapter 2. The results in Figure 2 below indicate that 24 of the total participants in rural Idaho middle schools are including study skills in their courses and have college and career posters hanging in the school. Of the respondents, 21 indicated college visits as part of their college and career readiness focus. While many other skills and events are taking

place within the participant's schools, areas such as academic support for underrepresented students (8), job shadowing opportunities (10), parent college events (7), and peer tutoring groups (9), others could be implemented to assist in creating a more robust college and career readiness culture. The frequency analysis results of this data align with the participants' ratings in Section III of the survey indicating the need for programs and practices to assist students in transitioning between high school and college (41.9%) and the incorporation of college and career readiness programs within the school (46.5%).

Figure 2

Idaho's Rural Middle School Current Implementations for College and Career Readiness



Quantitative Analysis of Research Question One

Research Question One: To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture? This research question was answered by analysis of the quantitative data collected. While each rural Idaho middle school displayed strengths in their focus on college and career readiness, the overall data from the survey responses indicated that most (and average

of 37.75%) are still in the Planning Stage. A small percentage (an average of 20.21%) indicated they were in the Full Implementation Stage. While this cannot necessarily be statistically representative of all rural Idaho middle schools based on the low response rate, there is evidence for more support for implementing college and career readiness.

Schools in the Planning Stage would not have specific policies or procedures in place or would be just talking about what they could do to begin bringing college and career readiness to the school and the students. Of the respondents, 35.87% felt their school was in the planning stage of building a college and career readiness culture. They are beginning to have discussion about what it means to build relationships with students and staff and provide evidence of appreciation and connectedness. Schools in the planning stage are also considering what college and career readiness means and what responsibility the staff has in helping students work towards becoming college and career ready. An average of 36.54% of respondents felt they were in the Planning Stage in these areas. An average of 30.91% of respondents place their school in the Planning Stage for providing learning opportunities beyond the classroom and embedding college and career readiness programs. These schools may also have teachers who are new to the profession or from various certification programs as 23.3% said not all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to help students develop the strategies required for college and career readiness and success. Considering this data, it would make sense that an average of 47.68% of respondents felt their school was in the Planning Stage for data collection since so many are still figuring out what the implementation of college and career readiness actually looks like.

Those schools reporting in the Pilot Stage have started taking steps towards creating a college and career readiness culture by implementing college and career readiness practices and

defining data collection processes. An average of 15.97% indicated the staff was beginning to feel needed and connected to each other, and empowered to meet the needs of students. Schools in the Pilot Stage are also beginning to understood their responsibility as quasi-counselors to support students in building a college and career readiness culture. The school's commitment to engage all staff and determining responsibilities for assisting in creating a positive culture for the school was indicated with an average of 16.3% in the Pilot Stage. This demonstrates that schools might have a committee that is in the beginning stages of outlining skills and classroom roles to be incorporated into daily or weekly lessons that will contribute to the college and career readiness culture. As with other critical aspects of a college and career readiness culture, schools in the Pilot Stage are also considering programs, counseling, and opportunities outside the classroom (average of 20.61%) for students to pursue in an attempt to help them become college and career ready.

The Evaluation Stage puts schools in a great position of attaining a college and career readiness culture. They are analyzing collected data, revising current programs, and implementing revisions to continue to build the current college and career readiness culture. An average of 22.61% of respondents indicated their school in making positive connections with staff and students, feel cared about and connected to each other, and are comfortable meeting the needs of individual students in order to further the current college and career readiness culture. Teachers are defining ways to help students learn about college and career options and supporting students' goals through collaboration, research, and engagement (average of 19.94%). In the Evaluation Stage, teachers are knowledgeable of the skills needed for successful college and career readiness and can incorporate them into their classroom. Teachers are also providing academic interventions as needed to ensure students are successful (average of 15.96%). Data

collected is being analyzed and there is progress towards reflection and revision of current practices (average of 14.55%) in order to enhance the current college and career readiness culture.

Schools that reported being in the Full Implementation Stage understand their responsibility as a quasi-counselor (37.2%) to supporting students as a member of the caring community and college and career culture. These schools are incorporating critical skills into their classes to help prepare students to be college and career ready. Based on the checklist question, critical thinking (13), critical reading (16), organization (18), planning (13), and time management (15) skills are being integrated within classes. Some schools even reported the implementation of peer tutoring groups (9) that will certainly help build a college and career readiness culture. They also feel empowered to serve students' needs as they see and understand them (32.6%) such as providing academic support to underrepresented students (8) as indicated by the checklist question. Schools in the Full Implementation Stage also feel supported by their administrators in helping students be college and career ready (25.6%) and have high expectations of students to achieve college and career readiness (23.3%). In schools where college and career counseling is offered (27.9%) you might also see opportunities for students to experience internships or volunteer service-learning prospects (16.3%). As reinforced by the checklist data, college visits (21), research (19), and posters hung in the school (24) also supports full implementation of a college and career readiness culture in the school. An average of 13.35% of respondents indicated their data collection for college and career readiness was in the Full Implementation Stage and helping them to determine if their students are college and career ready.

While some schools are making great attempts at successful implementation of a college and career readiness culture, most indicate through the qualitative data analysis that additional help and/or resources is needed in order to effectively move from the Planning Stage to the Full Implementation Stage.

Qualitative Data Collection Instrument

Short-answer question protocol. Short-answer questions at the end of the College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform survey (Appendix B) were also used to collect qualitative data from participants and were validated through the process explained above. The two questions asked were Explain or provide an example of the evidence that demonstrates your school is successful in implementing college and career readiness for your students, and What resources (or additional resources) do you feel would help your school successfully or more successfully implement a college and career readiness program? The researcher downloaded the short-answer responses from Qualtrics into a Word document and compared each entry to the response in Qualtrics to ensure it matched exactly what was provided by the participant in the survey.

Interview Protocol. The second research question asked, How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum? Participants in the survey helped answer this question by responding to two short answer questions: Explain or provide an example of some of the evidence checked above that demonstrates your school is successful in implementing college and career readiness for your students? And, What resources (or additional resources) do you feel would help your school successfully or more successfully implement a college and career readiness program?

This research also utilized interviews from voluntary participants of the survey for further data and clarification of the needs of rural middle schools in Idaho. Interview participants were selected first on their willingness to participate by providing their email address at the end of the survey, and second by region location. By evaluating the current stages of college and career implementation in rural Idaho middle schools, this research has the possibility of providing support and resources to rural districts in order to increase graduation rates and potential college or career goals of their students and community.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher at an agreed upon scheduled time with the participant and recorded via zoom. The interviews consisted of six questions written by the researcher, validated by six experts in the field, and piloted by a rural middle school counselor and administrator. The researcher had the flexibility to ask follow-up questions if necessary. Data from the interviews assisted the researcher in answering the second research question.

The researcher requested approximately 20-30 minutes from each interview participant and provided a $20 Amazon gift card as remuneration for their participation upon completion of the interview. Once a date and time was scheduled, the researcher emailed the Qualitative Method Informed Consent form (Appendix H) to each participant to sign prior to the interview. The only demographic information collected from interview participants was the region their school is in and if they are a counselor, teacher, or administrator. Interview participants included one teacher, two counselors, and two administrators from rural Idaho middle schools in three different regions. Each interview lasted approximately 30-minutes and was conducted, recorded, and transcribed using the Zoom software. The researcher then replayed each interview to ensure 100% accuracy of the transcriptions and made any necessary changes. The interviews were reviewed a second time to ensure accuracy before the coding and theming process began.

Interview Participants

Through email and information voluntarily provided at the end of the survey, the researcher secured five interview participants. Interview participants included one teacher from Region 3, a counselor and administrator from Region 5, and a counselor and administrator from Region 6. Both counselors were in their first year at that particular school and the administrators had been in their schools for many years. The teacher was also new to the school, but not the profession or grade level. The researcher used pseudonym's to protect the privacy of the interview participants.

The completion of the final interview marked the end of the data collection process and the researcher began initial coding of the interview and short-answer responses.

The Coding Process

Step 1: Frequency Table. During the first read of the coding process, the researcher created a frequency chart from the short answer responses and interview transcripts. A frequency chart is beneficial in informing qualitative data by identifying similar terms and displaying the number of times the word or phrase appeared within the data (Saldana, 2016). "A code frequency report can help identify which themes, ideas, or domains were common and which rarely occurred" (Saldana, 2016, p. 100). The frequencies of the initial analysis of the qualitative data are demonstrated in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Frequencies of Reoccurring Terms in Qualitative Data

Short Answer/Interview Code	Frequency of Codes
CCR Adviser/Counselor/Teacher	12
Funding	10
Career Explorations Class/Advisory	9
College Visits	8
CTE courses/programs	6
Study Skills	5
Parent Night	5
Support to start CCR earlier	5
Organization	4
Planning/Time Management	4
More specific direction & training from the state	4
Critical reading skills	3
Job Shadowing	3
College Door Decoration/Research Contest	3
Technology Classes	3
College Posters	2
AP Courses/Dual Credit	2
CCR Counselor/Teacher	2
Gear Up	2
Additional classes	2
More information/training	2
Renew GearUp	2
Alumni visits/Disadvantages of rural parents not educated	2
Critical thinking skills	1
College Fair	1

Focus on Underrepresented Students	1
Notetaking Skills	1
College Shirt Days Monthly	1
Academic/Career Portfolios	1
4-Year Plan	1
Rigor	1
Makers Space	1
Partner w/ Close Rural Schools	1
Counselor talks to 8th graders	1
Teachers w/ Masters for dual credit	1
Scholarships	1
Campus visits	1
Time	1
Understanding from the community	1
More info on Underrepresented groups	1
University scout presentations	1
Info for online CCR programs	1
Better vertical alignment of middle/high school	1

Once the frequency table was completed, the researcher categorized the data from frequent words into categories. The categorical groupings assisted the researcher in discovering parallels within the participants responses and helped to bring “meaning, structure, and order” to the data (Saldana, 2016). Table 12 delineates the categorical groupings.

Table 12

Categorical Groupings of Frequency Data

Classes Provided in School	
Career Explorations Class/Advisory	9
Technology Classes	3
AP Courses/Dual Credit	2
Makers Space	1
Partner w/ Close Rural Schools	1
Skills Being Taught	
Study Skills	5
Organization	4
Planning/Time Management	4
Critical reading skills	3
Critical thinking skills	1
Notetaking Skills	1
Outside of School Opportunities	
College Visits	8
Parent Night	5
Job Shadowing	3
College Fair	1
Whole-School Efforts at CCR	
College Door Decoration/Research Contest	3
College Posters	2
CCR Counselor/Teacher	2
Gear Up	2
Focus on Underrepresented Students	1
College Shirt Days Monthly	1
Academic/Career Portfolios	1
4-Year Plan	1

Rigor	1
Counselor talks to 8th graders	1
People	
CCR Adviser/Counselor/Teacher	12
Alumni visits/Disadvantages of rural parents not educated	2
Teachers w/ Masters for dual credit	1
University scout presentations	1
Resources	
Funding	10
CTE courses/programs	6
Additional classes	2
Scholarships	1
Campus visits	1
Time	1
Understanding from the community	1
State Direction and Training	
Support to start CCR earlier	5
More specific direction & training from the state	4
More information/training	2
Renew GearUp	2
More info on Underrepresented groups	1
Info for online CCR programs	1
Better vertical alignment of middle/high school	1

Step 2: Identification of Reoccurring Themes. The second step of the coding process required the researcher to review each word in the frequency table and analyze the participant's statement that contained the keyword. The researcher then identified common reoccurring themes from the words and phrases around the keywords from the participants' statements.

The researcher then used structural coding to "code and initially categorize the data corpus to examine comparable segments' commonalities, differences, and relationships" (Saldana, 2016, p. 98). Saldana (2016) suggests that structural coding is more suitable to interview transcripts and short-answer responses than other methods of coding. Codes were then assigned to the common themes. A code is a word or short phrase that assigns a summative attribute to that portion of the language-based data (Saldana, 2016). The data was counted for occurrences within the groups and reported in the frequency table. A term was recorded as a single occurrence in the frequency table if it was used by the same respondent numerous times within the same statement and around the same concept.

Table 13

Assigned Category Groupings of Qualitative Data

Groupings from Participant Statements	Frequency
Critical reading/thinking/study skills, planning, organization, time management	10
Campus tours, college visits, posters, research, job shadowing, career exploration class, homeroom/advisory	28
Additional class, teacher, counselor, interventionist, funding, Gear UP	36
Training, understanding, information, learning, guidelines	13

Step 3: Pattern Codes. Pattern coding was used in the third stage of the coding process to conduct a complete and in-depth assessment. Pattern coding is defined as the process of extracting data from the first cycle of coding and transforming it into more relevant units of analysis (Saldana, 2016). Pattern coding allowed the researcher to collapse the codes into common patterns, which led to the development of the final codes from the qualitative data in a methodical manner. The first code of Characteristics of College and Career Readiness in Rural

Middle Schools, for example, defined skills that are currently being taught in some of the middle schools that are critical for student success at all levels, but especially in a career and/or college. Table 14 illustrates the final pattern codes developed from the qualitative data.

Table 14

Final Codes Developed from Participant Perspectives of Short Answer Questions & Interviews

Code #	Code
Code 1	Characteristics of college and career readiness
Code 2	College and career readiness opportunities for students
Code 3	Rural middle schools' needs for greater opportunities for students
Code 4	Rural middle school's needs for administrators, counselors, and teachers

Step 4: Development of Themes. Collapsing the four emergent codes into themes was the final step in the qualitative data analysis procedure. The themes are characteristics of respondents' statements that illustrate perspectives or experiences that the researcher deemed relevant to the research topics. The researcher gathered quotes from participants to substantiate the data's topics. When the qualitative data was analyzed, three primary themes emerged: Critical Attributes for CCR, Current CCR Implementations and Requests for Greater Impact. Table 15 illustrates the overall themes developed from the qualitative data.

Table 15

Overall Themes from Short Answer Questions & Interviews

Themes Developed from Participant Perspectives	Corresponding Codes
Critical Attributes for CCR	Code 1
Current CCR Implementations	Code 2
Requests for Greater Impact	Codes 3 & 4

Theme 1: Critical Attributes for CCR

The first theme, Critical Attributes for College and Career Readiness, emerged as participants detailed their perception of what is currently happening within their classrooms and schools. The researcher's initial impression was that most rural Idaho middle schools are attempting to expose students to skills that would help them be successful not only in high school, but also in college. Several teachers are including study skills, critical reading/thinking skills, planning and organization, and time management strategies within their regular academic courses. A few schools have attempted to utilize advisory classes or a set amount of time each week for college and career exploration with guidance from the counselor, if the school has one. Participants described practices within their schools as "all teachers focus on critical reading and thinking skills along with planning, organization, time management and study skills". They also detail practices such as providing agenda books and teachings of "how to use them" in order to work on "organizational skills".

Respondents used numerous adjectives to define what they consider to be critical attributes for success. Many responses indicated that teachers are incorporating necessary skills into their courses in order to help better prepare students for college and/or careers. Study skills were the most represented, but could also include others that were itemized such as organization strategies, time management, critical reading and thinking skills, and notetaking skills. One participant described how teachers are showing students how to "look critically at different stories and texts" and using a variety of "questioning techniques" to prepare students for their futures. Another participant expressed the consistency in promoting students to think about their future and working on "skills for taking notes, organizing, and planning". Other respondents reported offering "study hall classes" and classroom lessons on "study skills, organization, and

time management". Table 16 includes other participant perceptions of Critical Attributes for college and career readiness.

Table 16

Evidence for Theme 1: Critical Attributes for CCR

Code: Characteristics of College and Career Readiness
• "All the teachers at the school focus on critical reading and thinking skills along with planning, organization, time management and study skills."
• "Many of the classes our students take have critical reading and teaching skill taught."
• "We work on organization skills by supplying students with agenda books and helping them learn how to use them."
• "We also teach students to look critically at the different stories and texts that we read."
• "We use a variety of different questioning techniques to help prepare our students for their upcoming tests and future classes."
• "We consistently promote students thinking about the future and working on skills for taking notes, organizing, and planning."
• "The students had classroom lessons on study skills, organization, and time management."
• "Study hall classes."
• "We have study skills classes where students can finish work and study in a quiet atmosphere."

Theme 2: Current CCR Implementations

The second theme, Current CCR Implementations, emerged as participants detailed their perspectives of what is currently happening in their middle schools and what opportunities are available to students. Many participants expressed that two things are consistently happening in

rural middle schools to assist students in being college and career ready: career exploration courses/advising and college/university visits.

Nine participants stated they have some type of career exploration class or offer the opportunity for students to explore various careers in an advisory class at least once a week. The advisory pieces are typically offered by the school counselor while those fortunate enough to have a career exploration class also have a dedicated teacher. One interview participant, Jane, explained that she was instrumental in creating the career exploration class at her school which introduces 6-8th grade students to the different career clusters, jobs that are possible within them, and incorporates a hands-on learning experience. Approximately 75% of her students take the course in middle school and many desire to take it more than once. Other participants also describe "career exploration" classes, posters hung on the walls, and homeroom/advisory classes where a portion of the time is spent "choosing a university to research" as an effort to promote college and career readiness.

Eight participants expressed that they have taken students on college and/or university visits starting in the 8th grade. Mary expressed the convenience of being able to do this with a large university and technical school only 35 minutes from the middle school. According to Joe, not all rural schools are as fortunate and do not have the influence of post-secondary education and/or career training all around them. A few schools expressed that they have also incorporated opportunities for job shadowing in the 8th grade, parent nights for college and career information, and one school attended a college fair to expose students to multiple opportunities and careers. Multiple participants discussed the option of visiting colleges, especially for eighth graders, and if there is a college and/or university close by. They describe such opportunities as

students being “bussed to a college fair”, “campus tours”, and “trips to local colleges and universities”.

Other opportunities some rural Idaho middle schools are providing for students during the school day include technology classes such as coding and office applications, advanced placement or dual credit courses, a makers space lab with new technology available for use such as a 3-D printer, and partnering with other nearby rural schools in order to offer multiple opportunities for students to experience courses introduce them to college and career readiness concepts.

While the numbers are minimal, there are many efforts being made within Idaho’s rural middle schools that should be noted. Participants discussed career research opportunities that are sometimes combined with contests such as decorating the classroom door with information about an assigned college and opportunities it presents. Other things being done within the schools as a whole include college posters being displayed, the presence of a college and career readiness counselor or teacher, the use of the GearUp program, monthly college t-shirt days, focusing on underrepresented students, and academic/career portfolios that include a 4-year plan.

Other activities happening within the middle schools include the promotion of college thinking. This was described by one participant as “we have college shirt days every month. We have a career unit they complete their 8th grade year where they research, job shadow, and then present to community members. We also do a March Madness competition where each homeroom class gets assigned a college or university. They are required to research the school and then decorate the door based on the information they found. The doors are then presented to judges by the students”.

It is important to note that 28 respondents felt they were currently addressing college and career readiness in some fashion at their middle school even if it was as simple as hanging "posters by the counselor's office". Table 17 includes other participant perspectives of Current CCR Implementations in their language.

Table 17

Evidence for Theme 2: Current CCR Implementations

Code: College and Career Readiness Opportunities for Students
• "Students were bussed to a college fair 2 hours away."
• "Posters can be found in the hall and in the counselor's room."
• "Students have visited ISU (preCovid) for tours, ISU has visited and will visit our small school to recruit students into programs, both academic and vocational."
• "Even though we are a middle school, we offer a career explorations class for our students."
• "We have college shirt days every month."
• "We have a career unit they complete their 8th grade year where they research, job shadow, and then present to community members."
• "We also do a March Madness competition where each homeroom class gets assigned a college or university. They are required to research the school and then decorate the door based on the information they found. The doors are then presented to judges by the students."
• "The 8th graders do a job shadow every spring."
• "Study hall classes and poster on wall by the counselor's office."
• "We do work with students at our school to understand and invest in their future careers."
• "Our students partake in career exploration starting in junior high and through their senior year."

- "We have advisory classes that have to choose a university to research and emulate for the year."
- "We also have trips to local colleges and universities."
- "Our field trips each year are college and career based."
- "Our electives are based on career opportunities based on STEM."
- "Academic and Career Portfolios."

Theme 3: Requests for Greater Impact

Requests for Greater Impact, the third theme, emerged from two different but similar frequency groupings when participants described the things that would help their school successfully or more successfully implement a college and career readiness program. One first-round grouping consisted of being able to offer additional classes, hire teachers specific for CCR, additional counselors, more funding, and reinstating the GearUp program. The second grouping consisted of a greater understanding of CCR, training and more information on how to implement it, and additional support surrounding the guidelines set up by the state. These two categorical groups merged to form Requests for Greater Impact.

Unanimously, a college and career readiness advisor or teacher (12) and additional funding (10) was expressed as the greatest need for rural Idaho middle schools to progress towards preparing students for college and career readiness. Joe and Mary, the two counselors interviewed, voiced their lack of availability to assist in a greater capacity with college and career readiness because they are the only counselor at their school. Joe stated "Now the problem is there is only one of me, and in our school we have 250 or so kids, so I kind of have to use my time well and spread myself out as much as I can".

There were three critical subcategories attributing to what schools say they need; resources were at the top. Resources does not only include financial, although that was the greatest source identified. Other resources such as career technical education (CTE) courses and program offerings, scholarships for students, more opportunities for campus visits, time, and understanding from the rural community of the importance of college and career readiness were also identified as desired opportunities within their schools. Many expressed a great desire to see CTE programs and courses offered at the middle school level. As John stated, this would expose students to career exploration earlier than high school and provide incentive to successfully transition to the 9th grade. Having the funding to pay for teachers and counselors to help with these programs is also critical.

The second subcategory most substantiated within the qualitative data was people. The lack of physical bodies to help with the implementation of college and career readiness is draining on the current administrators, counselors, and teachers who are expected to add this on top of their regular duties. Twelve participants expressed the need for a CCR advisor, counselor, or teacher that could focus on implementing college and career readiness standards and ideals within the schools. This would take the pressure off the already taxed counselors, teachers, and administrators from trying to incorporate this into their regular curriculum and obligations. Multiple participants expressed the need for an additional teacher and/or counselor in their schools in order to focus more on college and career readiness. Teachers and counselors are having to spread themselves among many responsibilities rather than doing two or three really well. Another expressed their concern about the lack of personnel when they shared they have to have the “high school counselor come over” to talk to students about career paths. Another

participant expressed “we could be doing more” when asked about preparing students for college and/or careers.

The final plea from Idaho’s rural middle schools was more direction and training from the state level. Participants expressed the need for support for earlier implementation of the college and career readiness standards which could include more specific direction and training from the state, the renewal of GearUp in all the schools, additional training and information on underrepresented groups in Idaho, and a better vertical alignment of middle school to high school. Preparing and coaching educators in the importance of college and career readiness would likely lead to greater gains in the overall performance of Idaho schools. One administrator participant explained that they would be interested in “learning more about what some of the most integral parts of such a program are, and how to develop a program as a team”. Another detailed they would like “a more clear understanding of what that means in middle school” and that having “a specific teacher or group of teachers” to focus on college and career readiness would “give them [students] more hope” of seeing it as a possibility.

The researcher also feels it is important to note that Joe and Jane also discussed the lack of exposure that many rural communities have to colleges is a disadvantage. Joe stated “maybe they aren’t exposed as much like you know if you grew up next to Boise State University…you might be exposed to Boise State sporting events…you might hear about them on the radio”. Jane said, “when we talk to the kids about it, they often always want to bring up that their parents did not go to college, and they have a good job and that’s a bit of a disadvantage I think we have here over, say, schools in the Boise area”. Some rural schools have the benefit of being closer to a college community as Mary expressed when she discussed the career day her students get to

attend each year at a nearby technical school. The technical school "has a kind of career day that they [students] go and learn a little bit more about that trade school and what's available there."

The idea of implementing college and career readiness at an earlier age was also discussed in a couple of the interviews. Mike stated that he does not know if there is a "reason why we don't start earlier" which was also supported by John who stated we should "manifest college and career readiness at the middle school level". Joe, a counselor, shared that when he was working in an elementary school, he was "trying to talk to kids as young as kindergarten about potential interests they might have [and] potential skills they could develop to use for a career". Joe also believes that incorporating CCR at a younger age helps students be more successful when they get to high school or college because they do not think "Oh, I should probably think about what my interest and skills are…now it's time to pick a major and I have no idea what to do". Jane also agreed that "middle school is not too early to start thinking about it [college and career readiness]". Table 18 includes some participants' viewpoints of Requests for Greater Impact in their own language.

Table 18

Evidence for Theme 3: Requests for Greater Impact

Code 3: Rural middle schools' needs for greater opportunities for students
• "Reorganizing counselor's duties to free up her time for classroom lessons."
• "More money and mentorship/information sharing with schools that have a successful program."
• "Renew the GearUp program."
• "Funding for a teacher to teach a class on the topic."
• "University scout presentations."

- "Additional funding for more administrators and counselors."
- "Some sort of wood shop or metal shop class in our school. Even a small engine repair would be nice."
- "More college ready classes for students."
- "More CTE credit."
- "Having a specific teacher or group of teachers involved in creating a program to help students prepare for college and careers."
- "The majority of our students feel college is out of reach for them. Additional funds for visits and actual attendance at post-secondary schools and opportunities would give them more hope."
- "More advanced opportunities in 6th grade and 7th grade."
- "…love to have another counselor."
- "I wish that we had more options to be able to put a kid on a path…that you felt like working towards. You might do a lot better."
- "I would love to see some more elective classes or programming."
- "A college and career readiness advisor."
- "Additional classes to impact more students."
- "An interventionist would be really beneficial to our school and would help our students get the extra support they need."

Code 4: Rural middle school's needs for administrators, counselors, and teachers

- "OTUS plans development will help."
- "I would be interested in learning more about what some of the most integral parts of such a program are, and how to develop a program as a team."
- "More information about the under represented youth."
- "Renew the gear up program."
- "A more clear understanding of what it means in middle school."

- "Bring a version of the "Gear Up" program back to our school."
- "I think more specific direction from the state would help."
- "Maybe the career focus would give us a different perspective to consider."
- "Getting a better vertical alignment between high school and middle school."
- "And it would be helpful to have some kind of training…something on how to incorporate that kind of stuff [CCR] into the students learning."
- "I am unaware of any funding that exists or programs that exist that would say, 'Hey, here's how we do this at the middle school level'."

Qualitative Analysis of Research Question Two

Research Question Two: How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum? This research question was answered by analysis of the qualitative data collected and is outlined below by each theme in relation to the focus of the research.

Rural Idaho middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicated they are attempting to expose students to critical attributes necessary for college and career readiness throughout academic courses, advisory hours, and career exploration classes. "Even though we are a middle school, we offer a career explorations class for our students." Some successes that have been implemented include study skills, critical reading/thinking skills, and time management strategies are just some of the elements middle school students are being exposed to. "All the teachers at the school focus on critical reading and thinking skills along with planning, organization, time management and study skills." One school touted that about 75% of their students take a career exploration course that is offered and many ask to take it more than

once. Jane stated, “I originally set this class up and taught this class and the person who’s teaching it now is still using my curriculum”.

College and/or university visits were also cited as attempts to successfully implement college and career readiness standards and curriculum. This is especially convenient when they are nearby to a college, university, and/or trade school. Mary said, “Utah State University is 35 minutes away”. Unfortunately, this is not always the case for many rural schools. “Students were bussed to a college fair 2 hours away.” Visiting colleges that are not close is a challenge for many schools because of the cost and time away. Job shadowing opportunities were also presented as options in a couple of the schools. “The 8th graders do a job shadow every spring.” This allows students the chance to explore careers they may be interested in. Some schools have course options such as coding, technology classes, and honors courses to assist students in preparing for college or a career. Mary shared “we did add just recently a coding elective to the middle school”. These are successes shared by participants of implementing college and career readiness.

Other successes include posters can be seen displayed in the hallways and counselor’s office and monthly college t-shirt days provide students the opportunity to see the vast number of opportunities available to them. Participants shared the implementation of college shirt days once a month and college research contests to help students begin thinking about their future. One school focuses on researching a college and decorating their classroom doors as a competition which engages students in learning about the college and considering what options might be offered. Other schools use advisory classes to focus on college and career readiness. “We have advisory classes that have to choose a university to research and emulate for the year.”

Multiple middle schools conveyed they do as much as they can and have the resources for to encourage their students to begin thinking about college and careers. The greatest struggle indicated by rural Idaho administrators, counselors, and teachers in implementing college and career readiness was the scarcity of resources. Additional funding and people were the top needs identified. “More money and mentorship/information sharing with schools that have a successful program.” “A college and career readiness advisor.” Many rural middle schools have only one counselor or share the counselor with the high school. This makes it difficult for a focus on CCR when there are so many other duties that are required of them. “Additional funding for more administrators and counselors.” “…love to have another counselor.” Multiple participants expressed the desire for the Gear Up program to be reimplemented to assist with funding for college visits and other activities that focus on college and career readiness. “Bring a version of the “Gear Up” program back to our school.” “Renew the gear up program.”

The final plea from participants was more direction and training from the state. “And it would be helpful to have some kind of training…something on how to incorporate that kind of stuff [CCR] into the students learning.” Classes or professional development opportunities that better define what CCR looks like at the middle school level would assist rural middle schools in preparing their students for life after high school. “Maybe the career focus would give us a different perspective to consider.” “Getting a better vertical alignment between high school and middle school.” Better preparing educators means better preparing students, which would likely lend to greater achievements in the performance of Idaho schools. A remedy of these shared struggles to implement college and career readiness at the middle school level could impact student success.

Conclusion

Overall, the quantitative data investigated the perceptions of rural Idaho middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers and the college and career readiness culture of their school. The qualitative data explored the how rural Idaho middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicated their struggles and successes in implementing the college and career readiness standards and curriculum. The data analysis accentuated the following summative findings.

Of the quantitative respondents, 41.9% indicated the school does not have high expectations for students to achieve college and career readiness. This could also be reflected in the average of 35.87% of respondents who felt they were in the planning stages of creating a nurturing environment of caring, understanding, safety, and trust. If educators do not believe students can be college and career ready, this will be reflected in their practices and pedagogy in the classroom and will affect the overall college and career readiness culture of the school. This was supported by a respondent who stated “I work in a middle school, so our college readiness isn’t really the huge focus at our school” and another who stated “Students may adopt a defeatist attitude that doesn’t reflect reality”.

The quantitative data reported 39.5% of respondents did not understand their responsibility in helping students to become college and career ready. This is support by qualitative statements such as “A more clear understanding of what it means in middle school.” And “I think more specific direction from the state would help.” There was no indication that participants did not want to help prepare students for college and career readiness, just that they did not know where to start and did not know what their role was in doing so. “I am unaware of any funding that exists or programs that exist that would say, ‘Hey, here’s how we do this at the

middle school level'." This is substantiated with the quantitative data indicating an average of 30.91% of respondents' schools are in the planning stage of implementing a college and career readiness program. The qualitative data suggested they are willing, but need additional training and a better understanding of what this means at the middle school level. "I would be interested in learning more about what some of the most integral parts of such a program are, and how to develop a program as a team." Classes or professional development opportunities that better define what CCR looks like at the middle school level would assist rural middle schools in preparing their students for life after high school. Better preparing educators means better preparing students, which would likely lend to greater achievements in the performance of Idaho schools.

The greatest area of need according to the quantitative data with an average of 47.68% in the Planning Stage, is providing evidence of schools' accomplishments at helping students be college and career ready. While some schools are making great attempts at successful implementation of a college and career readiness culture, most indicate through the qualitative data analysis that additional help and/or resources is needed in order to effectively move from the Planning Stage to the Full Implementation Stage..." One participant stated "An interventionist would be really beneficial to our school and would help our students get the extra support they need". In many rural schools, there is only one counselor, or the counselor is shared with the high school. This makes it difficult for them to focus on college and career readiness when they have so many other responsibilities.

Chapter V

Discussion

Introduction

Since the Race to the Top initiative was introduced in 2009 by President Obama (US Department of Education, 2019), the attention given to high school graduation and go-on rates has necessitated a consequential focus on college and career readiness by educators at the high school level (Aldeman, 2020; Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). Idaho put forth significant energy toward college and career readiness but failed to see any substantiated gains from their efforts when their graduation rate remains stagnant and the go-on rate continues to decline (Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.; Richert, 2022; Students Achievement, 2021). Just as rural America tends to be at an even greater disadvantage from their urban counterparts, rural Idaho is also susceptible to the increased disadvantages that most rural areas are faced with. High unemployment and poverty rates are just the beginning (US Department of Agriculture, 2017). As many as 15% of rural community members do not have a high school diploma and only about half of racial and ethnic minority groups in those communities are likely to graduate from high school (US Department of Agriculture, 2017).

When considering how far behind Idaho is compared to the nation and with Idaho being over 75% rural communities, the necessity for implementing college and career readiness at an earlier age becomes even more urgent (Idaho State Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Student Achievement, 2021; US Department of Agriculture, 2017 & 2021). Data analyzed from Idaho education reports disclose that rural education districts should

be a focus for high school completion and college and career readiness (Idaho State Department of Education).

Preparing students for some type of training and/or education beyond the traditional high school diploma is essential with the increased emphasis on post-secondary education and/or vocational preparation (Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2013). There is a substantial relationship between student self-efficacy, the integration of career development education, and high school graduation when started at a young age (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Glessner et al., 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007; Stone, 2017). Making the connection between what students are learning and real-world opportunities would increase high school retention rates (Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011). As a result, it is more beneficial in supporting students in understanding life after high school when it is started early and integrated with academic success (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007).

With limited research demonstrating the effectiveness of implementing college and career readiness standards at the middle school level and in rural areas (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017) and Idaho's CTE program only available to high schools (Bradford, 2021) this study analyzed the current condition of rural Idaho middle schools with the desire to illuminate the needs of these schools for the future success of their students and increasing Idaho's go-on rate.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and to assess the struggles and successes of college and

career readiness based on input from administrators, teachers, and counselors. This mixed methods explanatory sequential design study examined the following questions:

1. To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture?
2. How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum?

Question one was measured quantitatively through the College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform survey (Appendix B) and question two was measured qualitatively through short-answer questions at the end of the survey and follow up semi-structured interviews. In Chapter V, the overall results will be analyzed and interpreted in relation to each research question. In addition, the researcher will make recommendations for further studies in early implementation of college and career readiness.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and to assess the struggles and/or successes of college and career readiness implementation based on input from administrators, teachers, and counselors. The College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform survey (Appendix B) was used to measure the current college and career readiness culture and implementation of CRR standards in rural Idaho middle schools. Two open-ended survey questions and five semi-structured follow-up interviews with current rural middle school administrators, teachers, and counselors were effective in evaluating the struggles and successes of college and career readiness.

An explanatory sequential design was used to gather the data in two independent stages. The first stage involved the data collection and analysis of the quantitative survey and the two short-answer qualitative questions. The qualitative follow-up interviews were in the second stage and were designed to provide further understanding of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In stage one, 43 administrators, counselors, and teachers completed the survey regarding the current culture of their school. The survey focused on creating culture, preparing students, CCR programs, and evidence of success. SPSS 28 was used to analyze the quantitative data using frequency analysis to determine how many times each score occurred in order to determine the extent of college and career readiness in the schools based on where each participant ranked their school (Field, 2013).

Following the survey data collection, participants were asked if they were willing to participate in a semi-structured interview. Five participants (two administrators, two counselors, and one teacher) agreed to the follow-up interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through Zoom, and analyzed by the researcher using a frequency chart, structural coding to categorize the data, and pattern coding to develop the final codes, which were collapsed into three themes. The researcher triangulated all of the data collected for validity purposes and to provide a greater understanding of the findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Research Question #1: Summary of Results and Discussion

The first question the researcher sought to answer was, “To what extent are rural Idaho middle schools creating a college and career readiness culture?”. Quantitative data analysis suggests the majority of participating rural Idaho middle schools are in the Planning Stage of creating a college and career readiness culture in their school, preparing students to be college and career ready, implementing CCR programs, and providing evidence of success. The College

and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform survey (Appendix B) was used to analyze this question. Participants were asked to complete the survey based on their current perspective of their school's college and career readiness culture. The Planning Stage indicates that schools who participated in this study are developing policies and procedures, they recognize the need to address college and career readiness, and are working towards setting goals to do so.

Research has shown successful implementation of college and career readiness programs at the high school and college levels with long-lasting benefits for participating students (Bailey, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017). Specific indicators of college readiness strategies schools can employ to build a college-ready culture and set all students on the path toward success in higher education institutions, such as study skills and critical thinking strategies, has also been identified by literature (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Allen et al., 2019; Arrastia-Chosholm, 2017; Bailey, 2015; Bernhardt, 2013; Glessner et al., 2017; Kirk & Watt, 2018; Martinez et al., 2017; Mattern et al., 2016; Schaefle, 2018; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). However, few studies have sought to demonstrate the need and effectiveness of implementing college and career readiness indicators in rural middle schools (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). Survey results indicated that rural Idaho middle schools are in great need of assistance in creating a college and career readiness culture in their school, guidelines to assist in preparing students to be college and career ready, and help in implementing CCR programs at the middle school level which would allow them to begin providing evidence of success. The qualitative interviews also provided evidence of the need for additional trainings and resources to make a greater impact on future students.

Table 19

Overall Averages of Survey Sections I - IV

Survey Question	Planning Stage	Pilot Stage	Evaluation Stage	Full Implementation Stage
Section I Average	35.87	15.97	22.61	25.6
Section II Average	36.54	16.3	19.94	20.29
Section III Average	30.91	20.61	15.96	21.61
Section IV Average	47.68	10.48	14.55	13.35
Overall Average	37.75	15.84	18.27	20.21

The data provided in table 19 indicates that almost 54% of the participating rural Idaho middle schools are either in the planning or pilot stages of college and career readiness. This suggests that while some schools feel they are in a good place, the majority are needing further resources to boost their school culture and implement better practices for meeting the college and career readiness standards.

Each survey section individually can be broken down even further. Section I of the survey was focused on creating a culture of caring, connection, community, understanding, safety, and trust (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). The results indicated that schools are not focused on the individual needs of staff and students, evidence is not present that makes students and staff feel appreciated or needed, and programs are not available to help develop a connected community. Recent studies show a positive correlation between a strong school community and student success (Cope et al., 2021; Prati & Cicognani, 2018). Cope et al. (2021) states that the more sense of community students

feel, “the more they ‘buy in’ to the goals, values, and programs” which promotes a more positive reception of what they are learning.

Section II focused on the preparation of all students for college and/or career certification readiness and success (Mott Middle College & The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships, 2015). The results indicated that over 41% of schools do not have high expectations of student college readiness and success, administration has not helped stuff understand their role and responsibility in CCR, and almost 40% of school do not have documentation of their commitment to assist students in being college and career ready. Morrison et al., (2021) found that challenging activities, student goals, and a strong teacher mentorship increased student engagement and learning. High expectations such as these would lead greater success in CCR in middle schools and connects to Section I where students and teachers want and need a strong sense of community. A recent study found that school-wide expectations involving all staff led to teaching and reinforcement in the classroom which resulted in student behaviors that were conducive to academic and social success (Royer et al., 2021).

Section III of the survey was all about a comprehensive college and career readiness program in which more than 46% responded their school does not incorporate CCR programs to help prepare students for the future. We know these programs have been successful in the high school levels (Bailey, 2015; Glessner et al., 2017; Hackman et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2013; Wooldridge, 2017) and even some urban middle schools (Bernhardt, 2013; Huerta et al., 2013; Mokher et al., 2019; Wooldridge, 2017). However, rural Idaho does not have the funding and privileges that many urban education systems do. Almost 35% of participants stated their teachers are competent in helping students develop key

strategies required for CCR success, but we are not using this knowledge to better our rural students' opportunities for post-secondary education or vocational training.

Documentation was the focus of Section IV of the survey and was also the highest percentage in the planning stage. This is to be expected if college and career readiness is not currently being implemented as they would have very little to document. Overall, survey results indicate that participating rural Idaho middle schools are not successfully creating a college and career readiness culture nor implementing CCR programs to assist in meeting the college and career readiness competencies adopted by the Idaho State Board of Education in 2017, starting in grade eight. These findings align with previous studies that indicate there is a lack of attention on the development and research of college and career intervention at the middle school level (Glessner et al., 2017; Wooldridge, 2017). Evidence supports the effective implementation of college and career readiness at the middle school level in our rural communities to help students increase their chances of attending and being successful in a post-secondary or career education program (Huerta et al., 2013; Schaefer & Rivera, 2012; Wooldridge, 2017). Based on this evidence, providing strong guidelines and required supports for college and career readiness programs in rural Idaho middle schools could help improve school culture, student preparation, and implementation of successful CCR programs thereby increasing the overall graduation and go-on rates.

Research Question #2: Summary of Results and Discussion

The second question the researcher sought to answer was, "How do middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers indicate their struggles and successes of the implementation of college and career readiness standards and curriculum?". Qualitative data analysis from the two short-answer survey questions and follow-up semi-structured interviews

suggests that some rural schools are teaching critical attributes to students that are needed for college and career readiness and implementing some current practices to create a positive CCR school culture. However, the data also indicates multiple areas of need to better prepare rural middle school students for successful college and career readiness. Participants were asked to answer two short answer questions at the end of the survey and interview participants answered six pre-determined questions, two of which were demographic information, that helped the researcher determine the current successes and struggles of implementing college and career readiness in rural Idaho middle schools.

The qualitative data collected through short-answer questions and semi-structured interviews confirmed that some practices are already in place for assisting students in becoming college and career ready. Statements such as "All the teachers at the school focus on critical reading and thinking skills along with planning, organization, time management and study skills" provided validation that schools are aware of the need for educating students in these critical attributes that contribute to college and career readiness success. Current CCR programs focus on the development of skills such as time management, study skills, planning, and organization as they have been proven to be essential in future careers (Black et al., 2008; Mendolia, 2010; Watt et al., 2008; Watt et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2021). Wilson et al. (2021) conducted a study that supports the use of AVID in middle school as an intervention to improve executive function skills in students which could result in increased college and career readiness and completion. Providing stronger guidelines, programs, and supports to Idaho middle schools would increase the critical attributes in students that are necessary for college and career readiness success. Other statements that support the teaching of these critical attributes include:

- “We work on organization skills by supplying students with agenda books and helping them learn how to use them.”
- “We consistently promote students thinking about the future and working on skills for taking notes, organizing, and planning.”
- “The students had classroom lessons on study skills, organization, and time management.”

Other qualitative data collected also confirmed that there are current college and career readiness practices being implemented to help create a positive CCR culture within the schools. Statements supporting current implementation of CCR practices such as “We also do a March Madness competition where each homeroom class gets assigned a college or university. They are required to research the school and then decorate the door based on the information they found. The doors are then presented to judges by the students” demonstrate just one school’s attempt at helping students learn more about specific colleges and careers to generate interest and possibilities at potential outside of high school. Programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP were established to help schools bring an increased awareness of college, careers, and financial aid and we all offering counseling and mentoring for students. The implementation of these programs brought an increase in college completion for first-generation and low-income students (Sabay & Wiles, 2020). Many qualitative data asked for the reinstitution of the GEAR UP program as a way to reach rural middle school students. The desire for rural educators to implement the college and career readiness standards is evident by the statements share below, but the resources to do so is often inhibiting these practices. This is further substantiated by other statements such as:

- "Even though we are a middle school, we offer a career explorations class for our students."
- "We have college shirt days every month."
- "We have a career unit they complete their 8th grade year where they research, job shadow, and then present to community members."
- "The 8th graders do a job shadow every spring."
- "We have advisory classes that have to choose a university to research and emulate for the year."
- "We also have trips to local colleges and universities."

Additional qualitative data collected indicated the substantial needs for rural middle schools to successfully implement effective college and career readiness programs in order to begin working toward meeting the competencies set in place by the state of Idaho in 2016 & 2017 legislation. The call for a college and career advising program in each public school housing grades 8-12 is commendable, the lack of direction and resources is not. When asked what resources they felt would help their school in successfully implementing a CCR program, one participant stated "Not a clue. I already use Idaho CiS because I'm required to." This indicates a desire to assist students, but no clear direction as to how to do so.

The legislation that set forth CCR competencies for the state of Idaho left many holes. The model of the program is left up to individual schools and specific programs or ideals are not required (State Board of Education). Next Steps Idaho provides learning plans and resources to assist schools in implement programs and ideals, but there is no training for administrators, counselors, or teachers on how to carry it out. This was reiterated by a participant who stated "And it would be helpful to have some kind of training…something on how to incorporate that

kind of stuff [CCR] into the students learning." As indicated by the supporting statements below, Idaho's educators are asking for help. They need additional resources, trainings, and direction on how to move students forward in being prepared for future education and/or training. If the goal is to increase graduation and go-on rates in the state of Idaho, educators need to be trained, prepared, and provided the necessary resources to assist with that goal.

The following statements from the survey's short-answer questions and interview participants continue to support the need for assistance in preparing students for their futures:

- "The majority of our students feel college is out of reach for them. Additional funds for visits and actual attendance at post-secondary schools and opportunities would give them more hope."
- "I wish that we had more options to be able to put a kid on a path…that you felt like working towards. You might do a lot better."
- "Funding for a teacher to teach a class on the topic."
- "I would be interested in learning more about what some of the most integral parts of such a program are, and how to develop a program as a team."
- "A more clear understanding of what it means in middle school."

Given the evidence provided above, it is clear that administrators, counselors, and teachers acknowledge the need and benefits of college and career readiness in middle school, but do not have the resources, training, or ability to carry it out. The state should be supporting these efforts if they continue to maintain their stance on the importance of increasing high school graduation and go-on rates.

Conclusions

The recent and current emphasis on high school graduation and go-on rates make college and career readiness a critical focus for schools in the twenty-first century (Aldeman, 2020; Chen et al., 2017; Gaertner & McClarty, 2015; Hackmann et al., 2018; Idaho State Department of Education, n.d.; Parker et al., 2013; Torkzadeh et al., 2016). As we look at improving these rates and preparing our students for life after high school, we must put in time, resources, and effort starting at an earlier age (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Glessner et al., 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007; Stone, 2017). This has been done in some areas across the United States and has been shown to be more effective in assisting students in understanding adulthood (Bridgeland et al., 2006; Gee et al., 2020; Glessner et al., 2017; Gottfried & Plasman, 2017; Harvard, 2011; Kenny et al., 2006; Plank et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 2011; Solberg, 2007). Two benefits of early implementation found by Huerta et al. (2013) include encouraging schools and districts to expand their offerings and better preparing students for high school, which in turn prepares them for the post K-12 world. This research sought to provide factual evidence that early implementation of college and career readiness was needed to create better school cultures and better prepare students for success by acknowledging the successes and addressing the struggles of rural Idaho middle schools.

The focus of this study was to investigate the current college and career readiness culture of rural Idaho middle schools and to assess the struggles and successes of college and career readiness based on input from administrators, teachers, and counselors. The quantitative results showed that more than half of the participating schools are struggling to create a positive culture and prepare students for post-secondary or career training. The qualitative data indicated that while some schools have successfully implemented teachings of critical attributes and attempts

at creating a positive CCR culture, most participants are searching for resources in order to make a greater impact on our future students. Statements such as “We also teach students to look critically at the different stories and texts that we read” and “Our students partake in career exploration starting in junior high and through their senior year” provide support of the efforts currently being made. Statements such as “More college ready classes for students” and “I think more specific direction from the state would help” further substantiate the needs of our rural middle schools. Pitts (2017) said it best, “While students of all grade levels should be afforded opportunities of exposure to college and career readiness, it’s the needs of middle school students that have been ignored for far too long”.

While this studied focused solely on college and career readiness as defined by state and federal laws, it is important to note the lack of attention on career paths as options for graduating students and the effects it could potentially have on the economy when important roles, such as framers or truck drivers, are not filled. If everyone has a college degree there will be an abundance of college graduates who cannot find jobs. The Idaho go-on rate only measures college-enrollment and does not take into account a high school graduate who chooses to pursue a professional certificate, serve a church mission, enlist in the military, and/or take a “gap year” to earn money to go to college (Richert, 2020).

With the current US unemployment rate is at just 3.6% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.), one would think job openings are minimal. However, as of February 28, 2022 there are 11.3 million job openings (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.). It is likely that some of the available jobs are unappealing to college graduates, applicants do not have the skills needed, or employers are hesitant to hire because they will probably not have learned what they need in order to do the job (Chamorro-Premuzic & Frankiewicz, 2019). In fact, approximately 53% of

college graduates are either unemployed or working in a job that does not require a bachelor's degree (University of Washington, 2021). If the same amount of emphasis and respect that is emphasized on college readiness was also emphasized towards career-related paths, it would help equalize the job market and ensure we will always have access to skilled laborers who are essential to our economy and may not see college as a viable option.

Recommendations for Further Research

The results from this mixed methods study offer insights into the current cultures and needs of rural Idaho middle schools. This study was designed to bring awareness to the lack of college and career readiness in middle schools and the need for more resources and trainings to assist administrators, counselors, and teachers in bringing more awareness to middle school students and targeting critical attributes that would benefit students in high school and beyond. Further research will be critical to determine the impact of strongly developed and supported college and career readiness programs on high school graduation and go-on rates. Therefore, the first recommendation for further research is to expand the sample size for the rural population. Focusing on all rural schools as defined by the state code would provide a more generalizable depiction of the current culture and implementation of college and career readiness in rural Idaho middle schools.

Further expanding this research study into the more urban areas of Idaho would provide insight as to what benefit additional resources and exposure to a vast variety of careers would be. Replicating this study with larger groups and with its urban counterparts would provide a more generalizable depiction of Idaho middle schools CCR culture and current implementations.

A second recommendation would be to further expand this research in other states and potentially even rural USA as a whole. This study could be duplicated and expanded to rural communities across the United States to determine at a national level what is working and what is needed in rural middle schools to help increase student success, high school graduation and go-on rates. This would allow vast insight into underrepresented populations and the effects a college and career readiness focused middle school might have on their futures. Past college and career readiness programs have focused on underrepresented students and shown great success (Black et al., 2008; Brooks, 2018; Kolbe et al., 2018; Mendiola et al., 2010; Parker et al., 2013; Peabody, 2012; Wooldridge, 2017). Idaho is not greatly diverse; expanding this research into other states and rural communities with more diverse populations would provide another angle.

The lack of research on career focused pathways in middle and high schools is an opportunity to determine the long-term impacts of so many college graduates. While we are seeing a slight rise in students pursuing college certificates and degrees, we are also seeing a rise in the number of those degrees not being used upon conferment. According to the University of Washington (2021), approximately 53% of college graduates are employed in a position that does not require a bachelor's degree, if they are employed at all. There are consistent reports of a shortage of truck drivers, construction workers, and skilled laborers; is this because the pendulum has shifted too far towards college and career readiness? Future research could determine the effects of the push for college and career readiness and what that could mean for the United States long-term.

Future research on classes that are the most effective and beneficial at the middle school level would also help direct future college and career readiness programs. Some participants noted the implementation of career exploration classes at their schools, but what else would help

middle schoolers learn about career options and how to obtain them? A research study on what other middle schools are doing could help reveal skills and classes that would benefit that age group and move them towards being college and career ready.

A final recommendation for future research would be to study how self-efficacy impacts college and career readiness, high school graduation, and go-on rates. Several previous studies identified self-efficacy as a key indicator of CCR in students (Alleman & Holly, 2013; Allen et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2017; Pugh & Tschannen-Moran, 2016). One research participant indicated that "students are not reflecting on college much. Our students are struggling with personal lives". This indicates minimal self-efficacy in some middle school students and the belief that they can be successful in their future. Researching the current self-efficacy in middle school students, implementing tools to improve it, and following the students through high school graduation and their career choices would provide great insight into where a focus in middle school needs to be.

Implications for Professional Practice

The results of this study provide stakeholders with valuable data regarding college and career readiness cultures and needs in rural Idaho middle schools. This should be reviewed by education stake holders at the state level along with rural Idaho superintendents and middle school administrators. The results of this study would help them make data-driven decisions as to the next steps in creating a better college and career readiness culture in middle schools and providing the necessary resources.

For the Idaho State Board of Education and Office of the State Board of Education, this data provides evidence to support the need for greater focus and direction from the state level. A state College and Career Readiness Middle School Director would be advantageous to both

the rural and urban communities in Idaho. This person would be in charge of designing a CCR program for grades 6-8 and training the appropriate educators in how to carry it out in their middle schools. Multiple participants expressed the need for clarity and direction as to what college and career readiness looked like at the middle school level which would be provided by such an advocate.

The Idaho State Board of Education should consider the long-term effects of focusing solely on college readiness pathways and standards. Providing career paths starting in middle school could help balance the need for skilled laborers and college-educated personnel without making either feel inferior for the path they choose. This would allow students as young as twelve years old to begin considering the things they enjoy doing and how that could lead to a potential career. It might also provide incentive to students who are struggling academically, but see the benefits of persevering and working hard in order to graduate with a trade skill. Idaho could set the precedence for moving in this direction thereby influencing other states to follow.

Since it was shared by a state employee that there is $10 Million in college and career readiness funding available to schools, and participants expressed the need for more funding, the availability of these funds should be disseminated on a regular basis to middle schools. The State Board of Education should be encouraging schools to access this funding in order to implement changes that will benefit students in moving towards college or a career. It appears many are not aware that funds are available and/or do not know how to access these funds. Additional funding would assist schools in creating new classes and helping students gain the skills necessary to be college and career ready.

Along with a director, additional resources are needed to effectively make positive changes. A trained teacher(s) at each school who could successfully carry out the vision of the

middle school college and career readiness program would free up current counselors' and teachers' time to focus on their areas of expertise. Monies to support the program and teacher(s) would relieve a financial burden that most rural middle schools would face if they had to support this position out of their current budgets. Students would benefit from additional resources by having opportunities to discover potential careers, learn about colleges and degrees in a structured setting, and explore possible trades and interests that can provide them with a sustainable life beyond high school graduation. Opportunities such as this would also spur them to successfully complete high school, therefore increasing the overall high school graduation rate for the state.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Jennifer A. Walters**,** a doctoral student in the Department of Graduate Education at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the impact of college and career readiness in middle school grades.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a healthy volunteer, over the age of 18.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.

2. You will be asked to complete an online survey.

These procedures will be completed at the location of your choice utilizing a device and Internet connection and are estimated to take approximately 20 minutes.

C. ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

If you are unable to complete the online survey due to a disability, you may also participate via telephone by contacting the researcher to make other arrangements.

D. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the discussion questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. For this research project, the researcher is requesting demographic information. Due to the make-up of Idaho's population, the combined answers to these questions may make an individual person identifiable. The researcher will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank.

3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, audio tapes, and disks will be kept in a locked file cabinet, password protected computer or in password protected files. In compliance with the Federalwide Assurance Code, data from

this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

E. BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help educators to better understand the factors that enhance the school environment to be a place of positive staff relationships.

F. PAYMENTS
There are no payments for participating in this study. However, each participant will be entered into a drawing for two $50 gift cards to benefit your classroom or school.

G. QUESTIONS
If you have questions or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the investigator. Jennifer A. Walters can be contacted via email at jwalters@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-312-0688. If for some reason you do not wish to do this you may contact Dr. Bethani Studebaker at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at bstudebaker@nnu.edu via telephone at 208-467-8802or by writing 623 S. University Blvd, Nampa, Idaho 83686.

Should you feel distressed due to participation in this, you should contact your own health care provider.

H. CONSENT
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status as a student at Northwest Nazarene University.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**
Jennifer A. Walters	May 23, 2021
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	**Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix B

Research Instrument

College and Career Readiness School-Wide Self-Assessment Rubric for Rural Idaho Middle School Reform

developed by

Mott Middle College

and

The Center for Michigan Middle and Early College Partnerships April 2015

modified by

Jennifer A. Walters, doctoral candidate

with permission from

Dr. Chery Wagonlander, Mott Middle College High School

Demographic questions:

- In which Idaho region does your current school reside?
- Which role best describes your current positions?
    - Administrator, Counselor, Teacher
- What is the percentage of low SES students in your school?
- What is the percentage of non-White students in your school?
- What was your districts high school graduation rate for 2018-2019 school year?
- Are you certified to teach in the state of Idaho?

The following Phase descriptions apply to each section:

- **Planning Stage** The program is developing policies and procedures, engaging in goal-setting, recognizing a need to address the component.
- **Pilot Stage** The program is in its initial year or years of implementation. Initial data is being collected.
- **Evaluation Stage** The data is being evaluated, and the program is revising plans and implementing revisions based on the data.
- **Full Implementation Stage** The component is fully embedded into and implemented across the design, language, culture, structure, and pedagogy of the program.

Section I: Is the school focused on the creation of a culture of caring, connection and community, understanding, safety, and trust?

Description: Evidence of the school's commitment to create a nurturing culture in which all members of the staff feel appreciated, needed and connected to each other in a common goal, and assume their responsibility to extend that culture to all students.

Questions

1. Has the school developed a statement of its commitment to care about, connect with and include all its staff and students in its efforts to achieve success?
2. Has the school developed a process to ensure that all staff and students see evidence that they are appreciated, needed and connected to each other?
3. Has the school developed specific programs to ensure the inclusion of all staff and students as members of a caring, connected community?
4. Does the school focus on each individual staff member and student—his/her present status, interests, needs and goals?
5. Do the educators in the school view their responsibility as quasi- counselors to students, to support them as members of a caring, connected community?
6. Do the educators in the school feel empowered to serve individual students' needs as they understand them?
7. Has the school developed a process of seeking and obtaining feedback from staff and students as to their perception of their sense of connection with the school?

Section II: Is the school's culture focused on the preparation of all students for college academic and/or career certification readiness and success?

Description: Evidence of the school's commitment to engage all administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, and students in its core mission.

Questions

1. Has the school developed a comprehensive definition of college academic or career certification readiness and success?
2. Has the school documented its mission and commitment to college academic or career certification readiness and success for all students?
3. Has the administration helped all staff understand their responsibility to help all students become college academic or career certification ready and successful?
4. Do all teachers engage in reflective practice about their own teaching for college academic and career certification readiness and success?
5. Does the administration support using teachers' reflections as the basis for collaborative action research to help all students achieve college academic or career certification readiness and success?
6. Does the school have high expectations with incentives and support systems to help all students achieve college academic or career certification readiness and success?
7. Does the school help all students learn about the college and career options open to them?

Section III: Does the school have a comprehensive program for college academic and/or career certification readiness and success?

Description: Documentation of integration and implementation of the key components of college academic and career certification readiness.

Questions

1. Do all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students develop the key cognitive strategies required for college and career success including problem solving, analytic research, interpretation, precision and accuracy, and critical reasoning?
2. Do all teachers have the knowledge and skills needed to design, deliver, assess, review, reflect on and modify as needed course content, assignments, and grading of enough rigor to prepare students for college academic and/or career certification success?
3. Does the school design and implement multiple academic interventions to help prepare all students for college and career readiness?
4. Has the school embedded programs and practices to help all students seamlessly transition between their high school and college environments?
5. Does the school incorporate college and career certification readiness programs to prepare all students for the culture, norms and choices of colleges and careers?
6. Does the school offer college and career counseling support to help students clarify their interests, talents and goals?
7. Does the school provide learning opportunities beyond the classroom, such as work internships, volunteer service learning and work?

Section IV: Has the school gathered evidence of its success in preparing all students to be college academic or career certification read, and eventual college completers or career

qualified?

Description: Documentation of evidence of the school's success in preparing all students for future success in college academic or career certification programs.

Questions

1. Has the school designed and implemented an evaluation process to measure its success in preparing all students to be college academic or career certification ready?
2. Has the school designed and implemented a follow up process to determine whether students are college completers or career qualified?
3. Does the school gather longitudinal data to measure the success of its efforts over time?
4. Has the school implemented reflective practice and data collection concerning college and career readiness of its students?

Short answer questions:

1. What evidence demonstrates your school is successful in implementing college and career readiness for your students?

2. What resources would help your school successfully implement a college and career readiness program?

Appendix C

Jennifer Walters <jwalters@nnu.edu>

Re: Written permission needed

1 message

Wagonlander, Chery <cwagonla@geneseeisd.org> Mon, Feb 22, 2021 at 4:36 PM
To: Jennifer Walters <jwalters@nnu.edu>

I am so sorry this fell through a crack
Working from home has its drawbacks
Yes Per our telephone discussion, you have permission to both use and alter the College Readiness Rubrics developed by MEMCA action research educators
Please keep in touch and remember we do not charge fees for sharing tools and curricula that move early college work forward
Good luck!
Dr Chery S. Wagonlander

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 22, 2021, at 5:43 PM, Jennifer Walters <jwalters@nnu.edu> wrote:

External Email

Good afternoon Dr. Wagonlander,

I email back in January requesting written permission to use and modify the College Readiness Rubrics as we discussed on the phone before Christmas and haven't heard anything. I am unable to submit my IRB application to the review board without this written permission. My chair stated that even just an email reply stating I have permission would be sufficient.

Please let me know if this is possible or if I need to start looking for another research instrument.

Thank you in advance for your time,

Jennifer Walters
NNU Doctoral Student
jwalters@nnu.edu

Appendix D

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] Middle School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] Middle School. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] County Middle School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] School District middle and high schools. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] Middle/High School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] Middle/High School. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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Nampa, ID 83686

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
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623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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Nampa, ID 83686

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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Attention: IRB Committee Helstrom
Business Center 1st Floor623 S.
University Boulevard Nampa, ID
83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. WaltersDear

IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] Jr/Sr High School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] School District middle and high schools. The authorization dates for this research study are August2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

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[redacted]

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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Respectfully,

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[redacted]

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-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

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[redacted]

[redacted]

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Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee Helstrom
Business Center 1st Floor623 S.
University Boulevard Nampa, ID
83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] Jr High School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] Jr High School. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

September 20, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that [redacted] Elementary/Jr High School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] Elementary/Jr High School. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully,

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 25, 2021

Northwest Nazarene University
Attention: IRB Committee
Helstrom Business Center 1st Floor
623 S. University Boulevard
Nampa, ID 83686

RE: Research Proposal Site Access for Ms. Jennifer A. Walters

Dear IRB Members:

This letter is to inform the IRB committee at Northwest Nazarene University that the [redacted] High School administrator has reviewed the proposed dissertation research plan including subjects, assessment procedures, proposed data and collection procedures, data analysis, and purpose of the study. Ms. Walters has permission to conduct her research study at [redacted] High School. The authorization dates for this research study are August 2021-January 2022.

Respectfully

[redacted]

Appendix E


ACRP
FOR LEARNING FOR LISTENING FOR LIFE
Certificate of Completion
This is to certify that
Jennifer Walters
has successfully completed
NO CREDITS - Ethics and Human Subject Protection: A Comprehensive Introduction
Date of completion: Jan 19, 2020
Jim Kremidas -- Executive Director
ACRP
The Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP) provides contact hours for this educational activity.
zoom.us

Appendix F

Dear Educator,

My name is Jennifer Walters. I am a doctoral student in Northwest Nazarene University's Educational Leadership program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research study that I am conducting titled: College and Career Readiness in Rural Idaho: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Current Culture, Struggles, and Successes in Middle Schools. The purpose of this study is to bring recommendations to the Idaho State Department of Education as to how rural Idaho middle schools can be better supported to create a college and career readiness culture to assist the possibility of more students from rural schools seeking higher education.

The linked survey involves completing basic demographic information, a self-reporting survey, and two short-answer questions. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. The survey responses are completely anonymous and does not ask for your name or any other identifying information.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please click on the link below and read the Informed Consent letter. Once you click accept, you will be taken directly to the survey.

Your participation will be of great importance to assist in working towards more support for Idaho's rural communities in the implementation of the college and career readiness standards.

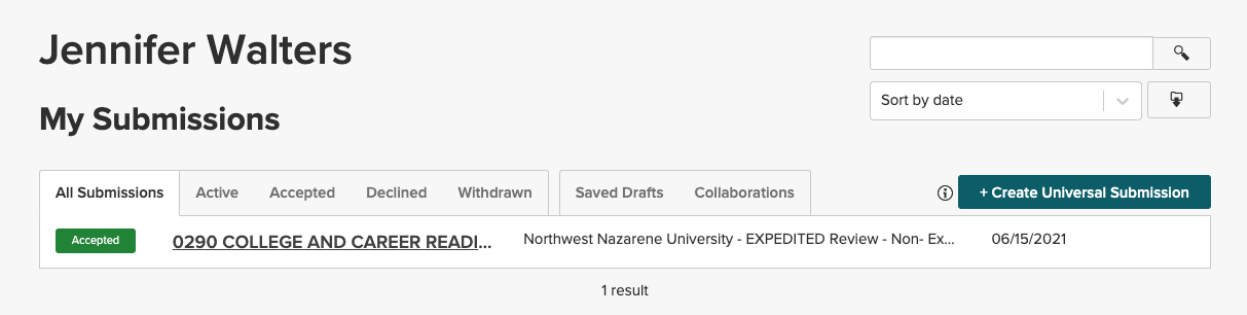
Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer A. Walters
Doctoral Candidate
Northwest Nazarene University

Appendix G

IRB Approval



Appendix H

Qualitative Method Informed Consent
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Jennifer A. Walters, M.Ed., and Ed.S., a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Northwest Nazarene University is conducting a research study related to the current culture, struggles, and successes of college and career readiness in rural Idaho middle schools. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the implementation of college and career readiness (CCR) and the impact of CCR programs, or lack thereof, on faculty/staff in public rural Idaho middle schools. You are being asked to participate in this study as a volunteer because you are an educator who works in a rural Idaho middle school as defined by the research study.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form, volunteering to participate in the study.

2. You will answer a set of interview questions. Your response(s) will help to provide ways that rural Idaho middle schools struggle with implementing college and career readiness and ways that it is successfully implemented.

3. There are several questions prepared for this study. I may also ask additional questions for clarification such as, “can you expand on that issue?’ or “how it made you feel?’ If you are uncomfortable with any questions I ask, please let me know immediately and I will move to the next question. You may choose to end your participation in any part or all of this study at any time.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. Some of the questions may make you uncomfortable or upset, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.

2. For this research project, the researchers are requesting demographic information. The researchers will make every effort to protect your confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may decline.

3. Confidentiality: Participation in research may involve a loss of privacy; however, your records will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study. All data from notes, digital recordings, and documents will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher’s

password protected computer. In compliance with the Federal wide Assurance Code, data from this study will be kept for three years, after which all data from the study will be destroyed (45 CFR 46.117).

4. Only the primary researcher and the research supervisor will be privy to data from this study. As researchers, both parties are bound to keep data as secure and confidential as possible.

D. BENEFITS
There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information you provide may help decision and policy makers understand the needs of rural Idaho middle schools in order to implement the college and career readiness standards.

E. PAYMENTS
Each interview participant will receive a $20 Amazon gift card.

F. QUESTIONS

If you have questions or concerns about participating in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. Jennifer Walters can be contacted via email at jwalters@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-312-0688. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact Dr. Bethani Studebaker, Doctoral Committee Chair at Northwest Nazarene University, via email at bstudebaker@nnu.edu, via telephone at 208-467-8802, or by writing: 623 University Drive, Nampa, Idaho, 83686.

G. CONSENT
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep upon request.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

_____ _____
Signature of Study Participant Date

I give my consent for the interview to be audio taped in this study:

_____ _____
Signature of Study Participant **Date**

I give my consent for direct quotes to be used in this study. No person identifying information will be used in the report from this study:

Signature of Study Participant	**Date**
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	**Date**

THE NORTHWEST NAZARENE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTE HAS REVIEWED THIS PROJECT FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH.

Appendix I

Interview Questions

1. What Idaho region is your school in?
2. Are you a counselor, teacher, or administrator?
3. How do you feel your school is doing with college and career readiness at the middle school level?
4. Have you seen or heard of any challenges and/or successes in implementing the CCR standards in your school? What has been successful? What would help make it easier?
5. Is there specific support from the state that would assist you in meeting the college and career readiness standards?
6. Is there anything else about college and career readiness at your school you would like to share?