

**Teacher Perceptions Regarding Academic Support Times within Public High School
Daily Schedules in the Suburban Midwest**

Jeanne A. Kuhlman
B.M.E., Central Methodist College, 1995
M.S.L., Baker University, 2003

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Harold B. Frye, Ed. D.
Major Advisor

Verneda Edwards

Verneda Edwards, Ed. D.

Kristel Barr

Kristel Barr, Ed. D.

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Abstract

American schools have been tasked to ensure students are prepared for success in life after graduating from high school due to the increasing demands of educational legislation, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. In response, many schools have implemented in-school academic supports to help attain this goal. However, it is unclear if these in-school academic support programs are worthy of their time within an already crowded schedule of a typical large public high school. This qualitative study, guided by a central question and 3 supporting research questions, sought to obtain teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support time programs, specifically the utilization, challenges and outcomes of the programs. Individual interviews with 12 teachers from 2 large Midwest public high schools were conducted. An analysis of the responses from the individual interviews resulted in 4 findings and 10 themes. The study found that the in-school academic support program is used for both academic and non-academic purposes. Challenges of the program arise mostly from the non-academic elements of the programs, and outcomes were perceived as positive for both the academic and non-academic aspects of the program. Overall, teachers liked the inclusion of the in-school academic support time within the schedule but offered advice to structure the program on a commonly agreed purpose to attain buy-in and success for the in-school academic support time program.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wonderful, loving and supportive husband, Scott. I began this journey towards a doctoral degree at the same time our world was turned upside down. It was uncertain times for sure, with many unexpected events that challenged us in many ways. Some days I pressed forward thinking it would be necessary in order to support our boys, and other days I paused to enjoy my precious time I have with you. Through God's miracles and the support of many others, you are with me today, encouraging me to finish and attain my goals. This doctoral degree is not just mine, it's ours, for without you, I don't know that I would have been able to make it to this point. I am so blessed to have you in my life.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Public education of the 19th and 20th centuries utilized a factory-like model of organization to prepare students to become productive citizens of society. As DuFour and Eaker (1998) stated, “ready to function efficiently in the industrial world” (p. 22). However, the American educational system has been an on-going focus for reform and improvement since approximately the 1950s when Russia beat the United States in launching a spacecraft for the first time (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). As a result of the reform movements of the late 1900s and significant legislative changes of the 21st Century, including the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the role of education has changed. DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Karhanek (2004) indicated United States public school educators now must accomplish more than previously required: ensure all students learn at high levels. No longer are public schools simply to provide a free educational opportunity for students, but are held to a higher level of accountability to make certain all students learn and are prepared for college or a career after high school.

In response to education meeting rigorous standards of success, schools and educators have been searching for solutions to accomplish the task of educating all students at a high level. Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (2009) identified educational research that provides guidance for improvements by using the ideas and structural concepts of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), implementing effective instructional strategies, and the incorporation of academic interventions. One structural component of a PLC is questioning what to do when students are not learning (DuFour et

al., 2004). DuFour et al. (2004) continued to explain that some students will require additional time and support to achieve mastery of the academic tasks. Additionally, utilizing a Pyramid of Interventions (POI) or a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach provides for the schoolwide implementation of tiered intervention plans of increasing intensity to offer students additional academic support (Buffum, Mattos, & Weber, 2009). While intervention times and support programs are implemented differently at various schools, after-school tutoring programs are not always accessible for secondary students as many secondary level students rely on school transportation, participate in extracurricular sports or activities, or have family responsibilities or jobs (Bennett & Blanton, 2016). Therefore, both PLC and RTI indicate that students should receive intervention support time within the regular school day structure (DuFour et al., 2004; Guskey, 2010).

Recognizing the need to incorporate time in the school day for academic interventions or supports, several suburban Midwest area high schools have developed and implemented structures in attempts to meet this need. However, despite the increasing popularity of such programs being included in high school schedules, the question of the program's effectiveness remains. This qualitative study sought to explore perceptions from teachers regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support times within two suburban Midwest area high schools.

Background

Public schools are continuously seeking methods to increase student achievement, raise graduation rates, and better prepare students to enter college or the work force after completing high school as a result of educational legislation and reform. As high schools

provide rigorous curriculum to prepare students for college or career readiness, schools are also striving to ensure all students learn. Finding appropriate methods to provide for the learning needs of all students is challenging, especially at the high school level where the factory model structures and traditions are deeply engrained. One response to provide additional academic support to the majority of students within high schools is the use of a specified intervention time during the school day. While schools implement the time in different formats, the primary purpose is to provide academic support for all students.

District R, a Midwest suburban school, sought to incorporate an academic support time within the regular school day schedule that could benefit all students. During the 2018-2019 school year, District R was comprised of over 6,200 students and 490 certified staff members across 8 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school with a secondary level alternative school. The district high school, housing grades 9-12, educated approximately 1,955 students with 135 certified staff members (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). The high school student demographics consisted of 77.6% White, 10.1% Black, 5.9% Hispanic, and 5.0% multiracial ethnicities along with a 23.8% free/reduced lunch population (MO DESE, 2019). Additionally, District R high school had an average attendance rate of 88.5%, a dropout rate of 1.8%, and a graduation rate of 91.45% for the 2019 school year (MO DESE, 2019).

The academic support program District R high school set up was part of a school restructuring with a renovated building and new schedule. The new structure included a traditional 7 period class schedule with the inclusion of a 25-minute academic support time three days each week. The remaining two days each week were structured as a

block schedule, with odd numbered classes and an advisory class on one day and even numbered classes and teacher collaboration time on the other day. The main purpose of the 25-minute support time was for academic intervention or support. Students could be assigned to attend mandatory tutoring with a teacher due to a low grade, work completion, test make-up or redo, or other academic concerns. Students are informed of the mandatory assignment through an e-mail, generated when a teacher schedules the student, which is sent to both the parents and the student through the use of a district created program. Additionally, reminder e-mails are sent at the beginning of each week. Teachers are also instructed to take attendance for students who were assigned to attend a mandatory session through the district created program. A student is issued a consequence if they fail to attend an assigned mandatory session with a teacher. The district created program does not allow for a student to be double scheduled or scheduled without at least a 24-hour notice.

In addition to mandatory assignments by teachers, students may voluntarily seek assistance or homework help from teachers during this time. Students not meeting with teachers during this time have the privilege to self-select how to utilize the time with options including personal or group study sessions, attending club meetings, socializing, or taking a mental break in designated common areas of the building. Teachers, counselors, and administrators are scheduled to supervise in designated locations throughout the building a minimum of six times each semester. This allows teachers the opportunity to engage with students outside of the typical classroom setting and share the responsibility for supervision duty while also allowing ample opportunities for teachers to provide academic assistance on their non-supervision days.

While the intervention and academic support time is in its third year at District R high school, the impact and effectiveness of the program for greater student academic success remains to be seen. Other suburban high schools in the Midwest area have implemented similar programs for several years. However, despite the inclusion of in-school academic support programs being incorporated in area high school daily schedules, the question of the program's effectiveness remains. This study sought to obtain teacher perceptions regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the academic support time within high schools.

Statement of the Problem

High schools are tasked to prepare all students to be college and career ready. In order for students to be college and career ready, students must first have the academic success to graduate from high school. However, many students reach high school with well-established academic deficiencies that place students at risk of reaching graduation successfully (Canter, Klotz, & Cowan, 2008; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010). Furthermore, the secondary setting, with the traditional structures, presents challenges to providing academic interventions and supports (Elliott, 2008). For example, traditional high school structures often restrict time and schedules during the school day so that academic interventions or assistance is only available outside of regular school hours. The before or after school assistance, however, is not easily accessible to all students due to transportation issues, or other obligations such as extra-curricular activities, athletics, work, or family responsibilities. Additionally, unlike elementary settings, intervention processes for high school settings are somewhat new (Canter et al., 2008). Furthermore, there are limited evidenced-based intervention strategies available to use with secondary

level students (Sansosti, Notlemeyer, & Goss, 2010). Due to this, some schools in the Midwest area have implemented an academic support time built into the regular school day in order to provide tutoring, and academic supports to promote students' educational success. However, while several high schools have implemented academic support times within daily school schedules, questions regarding the use and effectiveness of this time within the regular daily schedule remain. For example, how is the time actually being utilized to support students' academic success; what challenges do schools and teachers encounter when attempting to implement the in-school support time; and is the in-school academic support time producing positive outcomes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of in-school academic support times within public high schools by exploring perceptions of teachers from two Midwest suburban area high schools. The study sought to explore teacher perceptions regarding the utilization of in-school academic support times within public high schools. Additionally, the study examined teacher perceptions regarding the challenges and outcomes of the in-school academic support time programs. By gathering, examining, and analyzing various perceptions of teachers regarding the in-school academic support times within high schools the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of the programs as part of a regular high school schedule.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study will contribute to research that informs secondary schools and districts on the inclusion of in-school academic support time programs built into the regular school day. The findings of this study will provide insight on the perceptions of

teachers regarding the use of academic support programs within the school schedule at two public Midwest suburban high schools. The perceptual information could inform other educators and high schools about how the public schools in this study utilized academic support time within the school day schedule. Furthermore, the study will provide insight on teachers' perceptions regarding the challenges of providing successful academic supports as well as the overall outcomes of the academic support times within the high school schedules. This qualitative study will add to the limited current research on academic supports that are intended to help ensure all students learn at the secondary level in public high schools.

Delimitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) define delimitations as, "self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (p. 134). This study was delimited to an examination of two public high schools of similar size to District R high school within the suburban Midwest area. Additionally, the study was delimited to individual interviews with teachers in face-to-face sessions during the 2019-2020 school year. Furthermore, interviews were delimited to six teachers from each school in the study, each from a different content area or level within their own school. Lastly, the participating teachers in the study were delimited to only those teachers who had at least two or more years of experience with the in-school academic support time within their respective school site. This helped to ensure the study obtained perceptions from informed participants with an array of experiences across subjects and grade levels in the high school setting.

Assumptions

Assumptions, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), are statements that reflect what the researcher determines to be true in conducting the study. This study included only one assumption. The one assumption of the study was that the participants provided honest perspectives and responses regarding the in-school academic support programs based on their personal experiences within their individual school settings.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was focused on a central question with supporting sub questions (Creswell, 2009, p. 141). The central question guiding this study was, “What are teacher perceptions regarding the in-school academic support time within high schools?” The following supporting questions were used to guide this research study:

RQ1. What are teacher perceptions regarding how the in-school academic support time is utilized within high schools?

RQ2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the challenges of in-school academic support times within high schools?

RQ3. What are teacher perceptions regarding the outcomes of in-school academic support times within high schools?

Definition of Terms

In order to help prevent misunderstanding or confusion, the researcher chose to define some terms and phrases that are utilized throughout the research study. The terms and phrases are defined to provide clarity and foster common understanding for the reader.

Academic Support Time. This term is used as a generic phrase to describe the time built in to a school's schedule, usually consisting of approximately 25 minutes, where academic supports and interventions are available to students. The intervention or support can be accessed on a mandatory or voluntary basis. Each school names this time differently within their schedule. Examples may include Panther Time or Intervention Hour. (District R High School, 2017).

Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs). Described by former NEA President Dennis VanRoekel (2008) as “a broad range of programs that provide children with academic enrichment and/or supervised activities beyond the traditional school day” (p. 1).

Flex Time. Pat Quinn (2019, Sept. 24) explained flex time as a popular model of in-school academic support within secondary schools in which set blocks of time are designated in the school day schedule for students to receive academic support or have privilege time in a common supervised area.

Instructional Intervention. Lee describes an instructional intervention as “a specific program or set of steps to help a child improve in an area of need” (Lee, n.d., “What an Instructional Intervention Is,” para 1).

Professional Learning Community (PLC). A model for educational organizations to seek and obtain school improvement characterized by a shared mission, collective inquiry, collaborative teams, action orientation, and continuous improvement as described by DuFour and Eaker (1998).

Pyramid of Interventions (POI). “A systematic program of supports that become increasingly more directive, intensive, and targeted” (Buffum et al, 2009, p. 210).

Pyramid Response to Intervention (PRTI). “The practice of implementing the structures and procedures of response to intervention within the culture of a professional learning community” (Buffum et al, 2009, p. 210).

Response to Intervention (RTI). “The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to students’ needs, monitoring progress frequently to make changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions” (Buffum et al, 2009, p. 210).

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided an introduction and background information to outline why in-school academic support time programs have been implemented in suburban Midwest area high schools. While academic support time programs have been included as part of the regular school day in many public secondary level schools, it is unclear as to whether the time is being utilized effectively to promote higher student success. This study sought to explore teacher perceptions of in-school academic support times within high schools to gain a better understanding of the use of time within public schools, specifically focusing on the questions regarding utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the program. This study is significant as the findings will contribute to the current research on academic supports intended for all students within secondary level public high schools. The study will provide perceptual information from teachers regarding the utilization and challenges of in-school academic support programs in addition to the perceived outcomes of the in-school academic support time within the studied schools. The research questions were noted along with the delimitations and assumptions of the study.

The next chapter includes a review of the literature. Topics discussed in the literature review include changes in education and legislation, needs for academic supports, intervention and support models, and factors that could impact the success of intervention programs. Chapter 3 discusses the research design of this qualitative study. Chapter 4 includes a summary of the collected data based on the interviews with teachers, followed by Chapter 5 with an analysis of the findings of this study.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 1 introduced the background and purpose of this study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature related to topics associated with this study. Examining educational legislative changes will help explain why schools are held to higher expectations in educating students than ever before. Furthermore, this chapter examines some of the responses that have developed in the educational realm to meet the demands of educating all students at high levels, including Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Response to Intervention (RTI) programs. Examining the current literature and research regarding academic support programs at the secondary level will provide further background and insight to some of the impacts and challenges that exist for public high schools as they attempt to provide academic supports to help all students succeed in our current educational systems.

History of Changing Educational Legislation

The American public education system has undergone major reform for improvement since about the 1950s when the United States fell behind Russia in successfully launching the first spacecraft (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Prior to this, and essentially to the present time, public education was organized to operate using a factory-like model to develop productive citizens for an industrialized world (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). However, while public education was previously intended to simply provide the opportunity for students to receive an education, legislative changes of the late 20th Century and early 21st Century have raised the expectations for public schools to not only provide educational opportunities, but to ensure all students learn at high levels.

The student populations and services within public schools have changed over the years, partially as a result of legislative changes. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, initiated by President Kennedy and signed into law by President Johnson, ended segregation in public places, and led to the desegregation and integration of students of racial diversity in public schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided federal funds to support schools in serving students from low-income families, promoting equal opportunities for all students in education, despite socio-economic status. This resulted in funding for programs such as school nutrition and Title I programs to provide academic assistance for schools with students from low-income homes. Furthermore, laws of the 1970s expanded educational opportunities for students with disabilities to have equal access to a free public education with appropriate accommodations or special education services with the passing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. In 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act passed, requiring schools to eliminate barriers within the educational systems in order to provide equal opportunities for all students. These laws expanded special education services within the schools and provided for the use of accommodations or modifications for students with disabilities through Section 504 accommodation plans or Individual Education Plans (IEPs). These changes substantially impacted the make-up of the American public-school student populations by increasing diversity of student ethnicities, socio-economic status, and student abilities and needs in addition to increasing the responsibilities and services provided through the educational system.

At the end of the 20th Century, educational legislation began to focus more on the outcomes of education while maintaining the inclusiveness of students and services in the educational systems. President Clinton signed the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), reauthorizing the ESEA of 1965. IASA enacted significant changes from the previous ESEA of 1965 by providing for the improvement of schools by raising academic standards and providing funding to help disadvantaged or at-risk students meet the same high standards as all other students ("Summary of Improving America's Schools Act," 1994). This was followed by another reauthorization of ESEA in 2002 by President G. W. Bush, known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. A main purpose of NCLB was to improve the academic achievement of all students, including disadvantaged students, through a system of high-stakes student testing over set standards (US Dept. of Ed, 2002). NCLB also included an accountability process for schools, reporting on individual schools' performance and imposing penalties for schools that did not meet established goals or expectations (US Dept. of Ed, 2002). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, was reauthorized in 2004, with some modifications to better align with NCLB including the requirement for schools to utilize an intervention model to address students' learning needs through increasing levels of interventions prior to determining the need for special education services (IDEA, 2004). The U.S. Department of Education stated that NCLB was beneficial in highlighting both the students' progress and the areas of academic need, as well as exposing achievement gaps amongst student groups of various diversities and backgrounds; however, the requirements of NCLB became increasingly difficult for schools to meet and implement

(n.d.). As a result, the Obama administration sought to improve NCLB by creating a “law that focused on the clear goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and careers” (U.S Dept. of Ed, n.d., para 4). In 2015, President Obama replaced NCLB by signing into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

For the first time in history, ESSA required that all students are taught at high levels in preparation to succeed in post-secondary education or a career (U.S. Dept. of Ed., n.d.). Furthermore, ESSA supported equity by providing protections for at-risk or disadvantaged students and promoting the use of evidence-based practices and interventions to provide quality instruction at the local level (U.S. Dept. of Ed., n.d.). These legislative changes have led to on-going reforms in the American public-school system in efforts to reach the increased demands to address all students’ unique needs to meet high academic expectations in order to be prepared for success in college or a career after graduating from high school. This is the challenge of the current educational system.

Needs for Academic Supports

Today, many schools are attempting to incorporate some type of academic interventions, not only for the sake of meeting legislative mandates, but also to help increase graduation rates, decrease drop-out rates, and better prepare students for post-secondary goals and life. The additional time and support is necessary partially due to the increased rigor and large amount of content and skills we expect students to master within the 13 years of a typical American public school educational experience (Balfanz, McPartland, & Shaw, 2002; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Additionally, Atwell, Balfanz, Bridgeland, and Ingram (2019) report high school dropout and graduation rates continue

to be an area of concern and focus for improving America's high schools. Despite improvements in increasing graduation rates over the last decade, significant gaps remain for students of different ethnicities, low-incomes, homelessness, English learners, and disabilities (Atwell et al., 2019). As Van Roekel (2008) pointed out in an NEA policy brief, our schools are comprised of students from differing backgrounds and various experiences. Some of these subgroups have a graduation rate below 70% compared to the nation's 2017 average of 84.6% (Atwell et al., 2019). Furthermore, Atwell et al. (2019) reported that approximately one-third of the nation's secondary schools have failed to increase graduation rates or make gains on specific academic indicators or assessment scores. Belfield, Levin, and Rosen (2012) further discussed that many youths belonging to the underperforming subgroups lack the knowledge, skills, and training to positively contribute to our society as adults, resulting in economic and social hardships for our nation. One remedy to address this problem is to proactively invest in all of our youth to provide them with the skills and training to be productive citizens through education (Belfield et al., 2012).

Furthermore, higher achieving students are also in need of and can benefit from academic supports. Conner, Pope and Galloway (2009) studied the perceptions of high performing students and academic stress. These researchers indicated, "more than 70 percent of students reported that they often or always feel stressed by their schoolwork" (Conner et al., 2009, p. 54). Academic stressors are greater for high performing students than social or family issues (Conner et al., 2009). As high achieving students often spend extensive time outside of school hours focusing on academics and activities, they frequently sacrifice sleep as well as their general mental and physical health (Conner et

al., 2009). Suggestions to help alleviate this high level of academic stress for students included considering scheduling options for longer class periods and fewer transitions as well as incorporating more time during the school day for tutorials or free time (Conner et al., 2009). In-school support times can offer assistance to higher achieving students by providing opportunities and time for students to complete work, seek assistance or clarification from teachers, participate in college or career preparation programs, or contribute to school activities and clubs (Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Williams, 2016).

Providing appropriate and effective academic supports for all students are ongoing challenges for educators (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Successful schools recognize when students need additional time to learn and then implement structures within the school day to provide supplementary instruction or support (Kaplan & Chan, 2011). As a regular practice, these schools adapt instructional time to meet the various needs of the students, often by incorporating a block of time within the school day for academic support (Kaplan & Chan, 2011). Maximizing and utilizing the instructional time within the school day “is a cost effective way...to raise student achievement for a large population of the nation’s students” (Carter, 2018, p. 100). Therefore, teachers and schools are compelled to find additional time and appropriate supports to help students successfully accomplish the curriculum in order to graduate high school with skills to move on to college or gain successful employment. Various structures of academic support systems have been attempted throughout schools across the nation, with ranges of challenges and successes.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Response to Intervention (RTI)

In past years, legislation such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and the more recent Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 have prompted ongoing educational reform to shift the focus in education towards student learning. NCLB sought to raise academic standards and provide accountability requirements for schools to ensure all students “achieve academic proficiency” (ESEA, 2011). ESSA expanded upon the goals of NCLB with the “goal of fully preparing all students for success in college and careers” (U.S. Dept. of Ed., n.d., para. 4). In response to the demands of these legislative acts, many schools turned to the practices associated with a Professional Learning Community (PLC) as first explained by education experts Dr. Richard DuFour and Dr. Robert Eaker. These experts discussed the necessary reformation of the American school system as a re-culturing of schools to work as a collective community with focused goals and purposeful structures to better educate all students, rather than teachers working in isolation within individual classrooms (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Through this model, the school shares the responsibility to educate students, working collaboratively to determine what students should know, assessing what students have learned, and refining instructional practices as well as developing appropriate responses for when students struggle to meet or exceed established expectations (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The PLC concept places the focus of education on the actual learning as a result of instruction (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker and Karhanek (2004) further explained that a Professional Learning Community school differs from other school models due to the incorporation of the following elements:

1. “Shared mission, vision, values, and goals” (p. 2) are the foundation of the model. The focus on student learning guides all actions of the school community.
2. “Collaborative teams” (p. 3) of educational staff work to accomplish common goals through collective, collaborative learning and discussion, providing continuous growth for the group and organization.
3. “Collective inquiry” (p. 4) of the teams focuses on seeking and attempting new methods to overcome the status quo to increase student learning.
4. “Action orientation and experimentation” (p. 4) are essential to finding what works or does not work in increasing student achievement.
5. “Continuous improvement” (p. 4) occurs as a result of the systematic processes of ongoing learning through collaboration, inquiry, and action.
6. “Results orientation” (p. 5) requires ongoing assessment of actual results of student learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and drives the work of the PLC teams.

Furthermore, a PLC model utilizes 4 essential questions to guide the work of the educational team and keep student learning as the central focus. These questions were listed by DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2010) as:

1. What is it we want students to learn?
2. How will we know if each student has learned it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
4. How can we extend and enrich the learning for student who have demonstrated proficiency? (p. 119)

These essential questions emphasize attention on the curriculum or standards to be learned, assessment methods, intervention practices, and enrichment practices of the educational process.

Focusing on the third question of how to respond when students are not learning is a crucial aspect to changing the school culture towards meeting the aggressive goals established by the legislative mandates of NCLB, ESSA, and IDEIA. In a traditional school model, teachers' inconsistent and various responses to struggling students may allow students to fail (DuFour et al., 2004). In contrast, the PLC model involves creating "a school-wide system of interventions that provides all students with additional time and support when they experience initial difficulty in their learning" (DuFour et al., 2004, p. 7). Additionally, the PLC approach is characterized by providing intervention as opposed to remediation, is systematic with consistent procedures across the school, is timely in identifying and providing support to students, and is directive in requiring students to receive intervention support rather than optional (DuFour et al., 2004).

The PLC model does not prescribe an exact program or specific interventions that must be followed by schools to provide academic support. Instead, DuFour et al., (2004) encourages schools to develop and utilize systems that will provide the time and support for students within each specific setting. However, a PLC model does utilize a Pyramid of Interventions (POI), with increasing levels of available supports listed from the bottom to the top, with the apex containing the highest level of support needed by the fewest number of students (DuFour et al., 2004).

McLaughlin (2014) indicated Response to Intervention (RTI) provides a similar approach to address the critical PLC question centered on how educators can respond to

struggling learners through the use of tiered levels of interventions, similar to the structure of the Pyramid of Interventions (POI). The collaborative culture of PLCs, with common goals, collective inquiry, and shared decision-making processes, provides an applicable framework for secondary schools to implement RTI (McLaughlin, 2014). Developing the school culture to focus on student learning through collective responsibility is a main commonality between PLC and RTI models (Buffum et al., 2009). Likewise, the concept that additional time or support is necessary for some students to learn is a basis for both models (Buffum et al., 2009). Furthermore, both models promote providing a systematic, timely and directive process for intervening to catch students before they fail (Buffum et al., 2009).

Many researchers describe the multi-tiered RTI approach as consisting of three basic levels of support (Buffum et al., 2009; Hoover & Love, 2011; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2010; Canter, et al., 2008). Tier 1 of the RTI pyramid consists of the core curriculum that is accessible to every student through the instruction within the regular classroom setting (Buffum et al., 2009; Hoover & Love, 2011). This base level has also been referred to as the primary prevention tier incorporating general classroom instruction, differentiation, accommodations, and instructional strategies (Fuchs et al., 2010). The secondary prevention tier, or Tier 2, typically entails tutoring sessions or supplemental instruction focused on specific skills or needs for smaller groups of students who do not show learning success within the general classroom setting of Tier 1 (Buffum et al., 2009; Hoover & Love, 2011; Fuchs et al., 2010). The most intensive level of support is found within Tier 3 of the RTI pyramid. This uppermost level of support provides specialized and individualized instruction for the 5-10% of students who do not

respond positively with Tier 2 interventions (Buffum et al., 2009; Canter et al., 2008; Hoover & Love, 2011). It is within Tier 3 that a student may be referred for additional support through special education services (Canter et al., 2008). It should be noted that while RTI has roots in special education programs, RTI is a general education practice that can have positive results in increasing student academic success and engagement while also decreasing special education referrals (Canter et al., 2008).

PLC and RTI models of intervention are similar; however, RTI differs from PLCs in some notable manners. Buffum et al. (2009) pointed out that RTI encourages universal screenings for behaviors as well as academics to identify students who may need additional support, recognizing that multiple types of data can be helpful in determining appropriate supports or interventions for students. Additionally, while PLCs utilize progress monitoring through formative assessment data, RTI emphasizes more frequent use of progress monitoring practices to measure minor changes in learning as a result of specific interventions or strategies (Buffum et al., 2009). Another significant difference between the two models is that, while both models utilize a pyramid structure of interventions, RTI stresses the utilization of “scientific, research-based interventions” (Buffum et al., 2009, p7). Research-based interventions refer to those strategies that are targeted to address a specific concern or skill, are implemented as intended, and produce desired results as evidenced by a large amount research (Evidence Based Intervention Network, 2011).

Furthermore, RTI can be implemented using two approaches: a protocol approach or a problem-solving approach (Buffum et al., 2009; McLaughlin, 2014). The protocol approach may be viewed as the implementation of the same intervention strategy across

the school for all students who meet the established criteria through a universal screening tool (Buffum et al., 2009). An example may include using a specific computerized program for all students who demonstrate low reading comprehension scores on a universal screening tool or assessment. The problem-solving approach, however, provides an individualized approach to specifically address each student's needs more directly (Buffum et al., 2009). Instead of relying on a specific score from a universal screening tool to place a student in an intervention, the team considers the individual student's performance and needs. From that information, the team develops a plan, pairing intervention strategies to target specific skills or concepts the student is lacking (Buffum et al., 2009).

Buffum et al., (2009) combined the elements of both PLC and RTI to create a Pyramid Response to Intervention (PRTI). This multi-tiered support system model utilizes the culture, philosophy, and collaborative processes from the PLC model and combines it with the structure, screening and progress monitoring, and research-based interventions of RTI. Both PLC and RTI are valid systems to provide systematic support to struggling students; however, combining the components from both systems creates synergy that fosters a school culture where all students are supported through best educational practices (Buffum et al., 2009). The PRTI model, as described by Buffum et al. (2009), with the PLC foundational structure and RTI tiered intervention process of increasing intensity is shown in figure 1 (see figure 1).

Figure 1. *The pyramid response to intervention model*

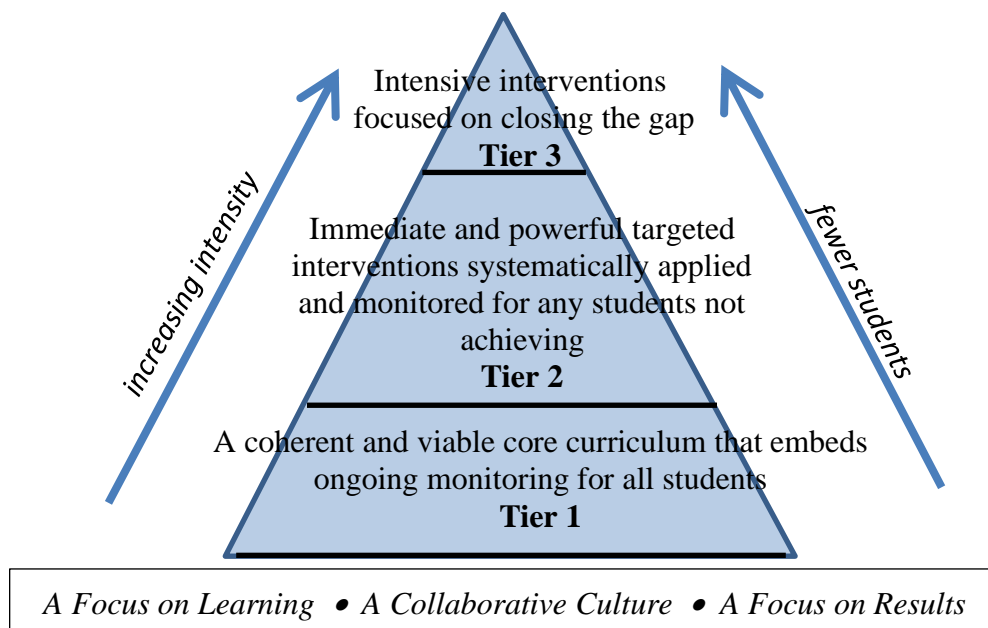


Figure 1. The pyramid response to intervention model. Adapted from *Pyramid Response to Intervention: RTI, Professional Learning Communities, and How to Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, by A. Buffum, M. Mattos, and C. Weber, p. 9. Copyright 2009 by Solution Tree Press.

Research of PLC and RTI Practices at Secondary Levels

Educational researchers have examined the impact of PLC practices and RTI processes within schools. Carter (2008) conducted a quantitative study using a pretest-posttest format to examine the effectiveness of utilizing interventions as part of the PLC practice to improve the performance of 100 teacher identified at-risk middle school students on the Georgia state test for math and reading. Using a repeated measures *t*-test of the mean scores of the pretest and posttest, the researcher found that reading scores increased significantly as a result of the PLC interventions; however, the math scores did not show a significant gain. Additionally, a comparison of student scores from one year to the next showed positive improvements as a result of the PLC intervention process.

Hughes and Dexter compiled and examined sixteen published field studies of RTI implemented programs for the RTI Action Network in 2011. The field studies included

in the examination must have shown use of multiple tiers of interventions of the RTI model as well as provided measurable outcomes and descriptions (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Within the findings of this study, the authors noted that all of the studies were from the elementary through 8th grade level, with none from the high school level (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). The authors indicated that while current research positively supported RTI processes, additional studies, focused on higher levels and in multiple content areas, was necessary to determine the true impact of RTI programs (Hughes & Dexter, 2011). Researchers including Canter et al. (2008), Ehren (n.d.), Elliott (2008), Prasse (2008), and Sansosti, Telzrow, and Noltemeyer (2010) concur that while RTI has been more widely utilized in the elementary grades, it is gaining momentum within the more complex systems of the secondary levels.

One study, conducted by Cartwright (2016), examined the use of RTI practices on the outcome of high school student scores in Alabama on the state high school graduation exam in the areas of reading and math. In this study, the test scores of 9th grade students with similar GPAs were compared between those students who received intervention supports and those students who did not receive intervention supports in reading and math (Cartwright, 2016). The analysis showed a significant association between the students' participation with the RTI services and the students' initial scores and overall number of test attempts (Cartwright, 2016). Furthermore, an ANCOVA analysis showed that even when considering GPAs, students who failed the state test initially, but participated in RTI services, received higher scores in math and reading than students who did not receive RTI supports (Cartwright, 2016).

After-School Tutoring Programs

Educational researchers have been examining and analyzing various intervention or support programs throughout the United States in search of answers to better help students achieve success. Dennis Van Roekel, past NEA President, discussed in a 2008 policy brief, the importance of providing extended learning opportunities (ELOs) before or after school to address the gamut of academic needs amongst the racially and economically diverse students in our schools. Barela (2015) stated within a review of literature that if students' academic needs are not being met during the regular school day, then ELOs are needed to meet the needs of the struggling students. These ELOs can come in many different forms to meet the specific needs of individual schools and communities (Barela, 2015). Some researchers have examined after-school tutoring programs as one form of addressing students' academic needs outside the regular school day. One study, conducted by Anderson in 2008, examined the after-school tutoring programs and intervention practices among several middle schools in Fresno County, CA. Anderson's descriptive study sought to identify the practices that positively impacted student achievement. Anderson discussed that there were many inconsistencies and differences in the practices utilized for entrance criteria, instructional approaches, technology use, motivation and reward, assessment practices, and curriculum materials between the different schools' tutoring programs. He concluded that while attendance in the after-school programs was a main focus, ongoing formative assessments and data analyzation throughout the students' participation in the program could lead to more effective practices in the after-school tutoring programs (Anderson, 2008).

Anderson found that while individual or small group tutoring was the most commonly used instructional practice, there were no specific instructional practices that were identified as the most effective based on the evidence and data that varied from each program and school. Anderson suggested that multiple instructional practices and data points be used in combination to best address students' needs. Anderson also concluded that technology use alone was not a contributing factor to improving student success, but the use of technology for instructional or measurement purposes could have a positive impact.

Another study of after-school tutorials was conducted by Isik in 2015. The purpose of Isik's study was to determine the effectiveness of the after-school program within an urban Kansas City elementary charter school by measuring third through fifth grade students' growth in reading and math scores using the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). Students identified as low-achieving comprised the treatment group by participating in a variety of tutoring opportunities including after school, Saturday programs, or a winter/spring break program for a minimum of twenty hours. Each program was facilitated by the school's own teachers rather than outside sources and incorporated best practices as described by the researcher. Additionally, some of the programs paid students to attend and provided meals. The results of the study found that there was not a statistically significant difference in reading scores, but that there was a statistically significant difference in math scores between the control and treatment groups. The author indicated that the mixed results of this study were not surprising based on the diverse findings of past researchers' regarding after-school tutoring programs (Isik, 2015).

Healy (2007) conducted research to compare an after-school tutoring program with adult tutors against an in-school peer tutoring program within a 9th grade high school setting. This mixed-methods study measured overall student gains in the area of reading comprehension within the content area of science using a pretest/posttest format during an eight-week time frame, followed by interviews of participating teachers and students. Healy (2007) reported that while both tutoring programs fostered some improvement in the area of science reading comprehension, he found the after-school, voluntary program with the adult tutors was the most successful. Healy (2007) did indicate that the small sample size and short time frame of the study limited the conclusions.

While after-school tutoring programs offer time to provide academic support for students, professionals and researchers have identified challenges that may impact the success of after-school tutoring programs. Mellard, Layland, and Parsons (2008) indicated secondary level students are likely to encounter outside of school distractions such as employment and dating. Bennett and Blanton (2016) added that many high school students often rely on school provided transportation, are employed with after-school jobs, or participate in after-school activities or sports. These factors can make after-school tutoring sessions difficult for high school students. Furthermore, for various reasons, parents of secondary students may be less involved in their students' academic lives and schooling (Mellard et al., 2008). This independence can negatively impact students' participation, motivation, and overall academic performance as students must take on the responsibility to plan for transportation, schedule, and attend after-school tutoring sessions (Mellard et al., 2008).

Other factors that negatively impact the success of an after-school tutoring program involve funding, proper training for tutors, and tutor availability (Anderson, 2008; Healy, 2007). As Anderson (2008) stated, “A national survey of preK-8 school principals across the country found the main challenge to sustaining after-school programs were a lack of funding and the difficulty of staffing the programs” (p.60). Furthermore, Anderson (2008) continued, “the number one challenge to operating after-school programs is money” (p.60). “Employ and adequately compensate qualified staff” and “receive adequate and sustainable funding” were among some of the key elements Van Roekel (2008, p. 2) identified as necessary for a successful ELO program. Proper funding is necessary to compensate quality teachers for their time and to provide training and appropriate supplies for the after-school programs (Anderson, 2008). As funding for after-school programs is not always available, schools must be creative and find ways to incorporate intervention and academic support during the regular school day.

In-School Tutoring Programs

A variety of attempts have been made at the secondary education level to implement schedules with tutoring or academic support time built into the school day. Gard (2014) examined and discussed the use of an academic advisory period, concluding that the program had no real impact on academic achievement. Presidio (2010) researched the use of a small learning community academy format to provide supports for groups of ninth-grade students during their initial year of high school. The results of the ninth-grade academy showed positive results for increasing students’ engagement in the academic setting through attendance and connections but did not show statistically significant results in the area of academic performance (Presidio, 2010). Academic

support and intervention through student enrollment in specific courses within the high school schedule were examined by Ruffin (2018). One of the school-based intervention courses studied by Ruffin (2018) included a mandatory study hall, providing students time to simply complete work within the school day, which proved to have some positive academic gains for students from the fall to spring semesters. Baggett (2009) discussed the positive impacts a lunch-time mandatory tutoring program had on student achievement in a high school setting. The mandatory tutoring program required the lowest 10% of academically performing students to attend a 25-minute session during the lunch hour, facilitated by select staff and volunteer peer tutors. Baggett (2009) reported that 71.6% of student participants improved their academic performance and 46.79% of those students attributed the higher academic success to the mandatory tutoring program. Baggett (2009) indicated that the mandatory tutoring program was viewed as a positive intervention tool across the school.

Pat Quinn, also known as the RTI Guy, shared examples of in-school intervention models that provide assistance outside of scheduled classes, but still within the regular school day. Quinn (2019, Sept. 17) described the additional support time could be facilitated by the regular teacher or another adult. Quinn (2019, Sept. 17) noted that secondary schools often opt to offer subject specific support in a common location, such as a math or reading lab, facilitated by several teachers throughout the day, where students can obtain additional academic tutoring or support. Quinn continued to explain that a more popular model of in-school academic support time within secondary level schools is the flex time model in which approximately 30 minutes of time is designated for students to either attend intervention groups with teachers or report to a supervised

common area of the school (2019, Sept. 24). Educational researchers and practitioners including Bennett and Blanton (2016), Jackson (2014), Keller (2013) and Nagel (2010) have reported the use of flex time schedules within their high school settings as an academic intervention support within the daily school schedule.

Bulldog Block, as discussed by Bennett and Blanton (2016), consists of a 40-minute intervention period in which approximately 15% of the student population is assigned to attend tutoring or remediation with specific teachers based on low grades. However, all students are encouraged to use the time to seek assistance, regardless of grades or level of courses in which they participate. The time is also used for ACT prep, credit recovery, implementation of occupational course projects and school stores, and club meetings. Data obtained after the implementation of Bulldog Block indicated a 2% increase in graduation rates, an 18.2% increase in ACT benchmark achievement, and over a 12% increase in the number of students eligible for participation in the highest-level math course (Bennet & Blanton, 2016).

In a mixed methods program evaluation study, Jackson (2014) described an in-school intervention program utilized in a small Missouri school, based on the concepts of a PLC. This flex time period occurred three times each week for a 3-week time period. Students with grades of Ds or Fs were assigned to mandatory intervention with a specific teacher while students with grades of Cs were assigned to mandatory study halls. Privilege time was earned by students with grades of all As and Bs. One day each week was used to allow all students to seek assistance or make up work with any teacher. The intervention sessions were fully facilitated by teachers and staff; however, both staff and student tutors were available to assist in the study hall areas. Jackson (2014) found the

in-school intervention program was marginally successful in helping students achieve better grades but was not necessarily successful in helping students achieve academic success overall. As a result, Jackson (2014) suggested several recommendations to improve the intervention program including basing intervention assignments on skill or knowledge deficits as opposed to grades as well as providing differentiated instruction training and strategies for teachers.

Keller (2013) described a similar flex time in-school intervention program in a study conducted in a small Missouri high school in which students with failing grades were assigned to attend 25-minute mandatory tutoring sessions for 3 weeks with a designated teacher while other students earned reward time for passing all their courses. Keller (2013) reported that during the initial implementation of the program, the number of semester failing grades decreased by 40%, however, students continued to fail courses, despite participation in the in-school flex time program. Keller (2013) determined that a major factor in student success was centered around positive teacher-student relationships. He suggested focusing on improving the teacher-student relationships in addition to increasing the tutoring time of the program as some of his recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the academic support program.

Another flex time intervention model utilized at the Charter School for Applied Technologies (SCAT) was described by Nagel (2010). Nagel (2010) explained the flex time program was instrumental in helping the urban and low-socio economic students achieve a 100% graduation rate in 2009. Utilizing daily and weekly formative assessment data to identify students in need of remediation was a critical component to the flex time intervention period, which consisted of a 45-minute block at the end of each

school day. Nagel (2010) indicated the time was used for targeted skill intervention and reteaching as well as work completion and retesting. Students who had shown mastery of the concepts and were not assigned to attend flex time earned free time and were allowed to leave school early. As a result of the flex time program, teachers were able to address student academic concerns and skill deficits quickly, before students fell behind, which resulted in greater academic success for students (Nagel, 2010).

While in-school academic intervention program structures may vary, the purpose is to help all students achieve greater success. As Balfanz, McPartland, and Shaw (2002) indicated students at all levels of learning need extra academic support to obtain the high standards of the current educational system. Peterson, O'Connor, and Strawhun (2014) noted that due to the numerous numbers of high school students needing academic assistance, high schools need to implement, expand, and improve structures for academic support. Time for this additional academic support should occur within the regular academic day; however, finding the time in traditional school schedules is a challenge (Balfanz et al, 2002). Individual schools must determine the structures that best fit the needs for their student populations and communities in order to provide the additional academic time and support (DuFour et al, 2004).

Need for Levels of Academic Supports

Although academic supports take on many forms within our public high schools, incorporating a variety of strategies and levels of academic assistance can strengthen the overall effectiveness in helping all students achieve greater success. For example, while mandatory tutoring or study hall programs can be beneficial for students who struggle to complete work outside of the school day, there is a need for more specific and targeted

intervention support for students with skill deficits. Casazza (2004) pointed out that assigning students to receive mandatory academic assistance after receiving a failing grade is only treating a symptom of a greater academic deficiency through a remediation process. His action research supported the concepts and philosophies of PLC and RTI in that early identification and targeted interventions for specific skill or academic deficits are necessary to positively impact student achievement. Casazza (2004) noted that multiple data points and a variety of intervention strategies besides traditional remediation for failure was essential to decreasing the number of students needing intensive interventions. Instead of typical remediation, academic supports that accelerate learning by developing higher comprehension and reasoning skills are needed in our current high school settings to help students attain mastery of the curriculum (Balfanz et al., 2002).

Student Perceptions Regarding Mandatory Academic Assistance

In addition to providing a range of academic supports to aid students at various levels of need, the aspect of mandatory versus voluntary assistance can greatly impact students' attitudes and thus, the overall effectiveness of the provided academic support. The U.S. Department of Education distinguished between the two types of tutoring in a 2017 issue brief regarding academic tutoring in high schools by defining "academic tutoring as supplemental instruction that is *required* for high school students who have fallen behind academically" (p.1). While required tutoring mandates students to attend academic assistance times, voluntary tutoring allows students to choose if they will participate in receiving academic assistance (U.S. Dept. of Ed., 2017). Students may view the mandatory academic assistance time as punitive instead of supportive (Nagel,

2010). Williams (2016) shared that his students perceived the flex time academic support program as a jail sentence punishment for students who needed the assistance while other students were allowed to play in the gym. Both Nagel (2010) and Williams (2016) discussed how the programs were revised so that all students across the building were mandated to use the time for academic work, allowing some students the time to complete homework while at school with the support of teaching staff. However, Baggett (2009), discussed in her mixed-methods research study of a mandatory tutoring program that students did not like giving up part of their lunch hour to attend mandatory tutoring, therefore, were more motivated to improve their work habits and earn better grades to gain back the additional lunch time.

Student Motivation and Student-Teacher Relationships

Student motivation is a key element for the successful impact of any intervention program or model. Research suggests that student motivation to do well academically is connected to and dependent upon the relationships between students and teachers. Knesting and Waldron (2006) found the factors of students' goal orientation, compliance towards school rules and procedures, and connections with caring teachers intertwined to have positive impacts towards students' academic success within a qualitative case study of at-risk students. Of these factors, students identified caring and supportive teachers as the main contributing factor to academic success as opposed to any specific support program (Knesting & Waldron, 2006). Furthermore, the elements of the teacher-student relationships that students described as beneficial included students developed a willingness to accept offered help and support from teachers, teachers communicated a genuine sense of caring for students, teachers recognized and understood students'

personal lives outside of school, teachers maintained high expectations and provided the support for students to reach the high expectations, and teachers created safe environments where students felt respected and encouraged (Knesting & Waldron, 2006). Knesting (2008) also discussed that a supportive environment in which students' voices were heard fostered a community of belonging and caring that helped to increase students' persistence towards academic success.

Aquino (2011), further discussed the impact of the student-teacher relationship on student learning when examining the study habits and attitudes of college freshmen through the use of the previously developed Brown & Holtzman (1969) Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes. This study utilized basic statistical measures including frequency counts, percentages, standard deviations and means to compare seven educational values amongst high to low achieving college freshman students. Aquino (2011), recommended that academic interventions can improve student success; however, like Knesting and Waldron (2006), she suggested that students were more likely to be successful if the students approved of their teacher and the teacher's methods and classroom management. Students need to feel comfortable with the teacher and the instructional methods within the learning environment for a positive impact on student learning. Likewise, Aquino (2011) noted the importance of teachers not only applying appropriate instructional strategies, but also that teachers must address and appropriately respond to student traits such as motivation, self-efficacy, and study attitudes and habits in order to promote academic achievement.

Perceptions of at-risk students, collected by Loomis (2011), also supported the concepts that students are more likely to show academic success if they are provided the

opportunity to participate in a learning environment in which the students felt connected, cared for, and supported. Loomis' study noted the differences at-risk students perceived between a large traditional high school and a smaller, alternative school. The students in the study all had performed poorly in the traditional setting, citing concerns with school culture, lack of teacher support and care, as well as large class sizes. The student responses indicated they lost motivation and felt hopeless in the traditional setting. In contrast, the students found success at the alternative setting through the contributing factors of feeling connected to the smaller learning community, receiving both personal and academic support, and having positive relationships with teachers who cared for them.

While teachers and schools cannot change all of the factors that may contribute to low student motivation, research does suggest that schools can help promote and foster higher levels of student motivation towards academic success (Aquino, 2011; Knesting, 2008; Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Loomis, 2011). Bryan et al. (2012) examined the effects of school bonding on academic achievement for high school students. Like the previously mentioned research, Bryan et al. (2012) found that students who felt connected and involved in the school, tended to like school more and performed better academically. Furthermore, the research pointed to the important impact the student-teacher relationship can have on the students' academic performance. If students felt teachers cared for them, listened to them, and believed in them, then students were more likely to accept teacher instruction and help, which resulted in higher levels of academic success, and ultimately increased student motivation towards academic work (Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Brayn et al., 2012). Bryan et al. (2012) suggested that interventions be

included within schools “to connect students with caring adults in and outside of the classroom, . . . improve school attachment and climate,” and “enhance student achievement” (p. 475).

Staff Development

Proper training and time for preparation is a key element for educators to facilitate and support learning in academic support times (Carter, 2018). Regardless of the type of academic support model used within a school setting, practitioners and researchers concur that continual training and staff development are essential for success (Baker, 2018; Bartholomew, 2016; Canter et al., 2008; Carter, 2018; Christiansen, Elliott, Fuller, Mahoney, & Pottage, 2016; Epler-Brooks, 2011; Hoover & Love, 2011; Rosenblatt, 2002; Sansosti et al., 2010b). Martin (2008) stated, “If we truly believe that teachers are central to improving student achievement, we have to also believe that they need the appropriate support and structures to be successful” (p. 144).

Unfortunately, research also indicates a lack of proper training for educators to effectively implement interventions for struggling students, especially at the secondary level (Baker, 2018; Calhoun, 2018; Canter et al., 2008; Cochran, Hamtil, & Lake, 2008; Sansosti et al., 2010a; Sansosti et al., 2010b). Cochran et al., (2008) conducted a study on Missouri teachers’ preparedness to provide interventions or differentiated instruction (DI). This study revealed that educators were not trained to work with struggling learners through pre-service university programs as the programs focused primarily on content area courses rather than special education, intervention, or DI practices (Cochran et al., 2008). Berkely, Bender, Peaster, and Saunders (2009) further agreed that regular core teachers are not trained to implement researched interventions or identify at-risk students.

Thus, the task of providing differentiated instruction or support for struggling students often falls on the special education teachers in most high school settings (Brozo, 2010). Further, academic intervention practices are limited at the secondary level as teachers are unfamiliar with the core concepts and knowledge of interventions, analyzing and utilizing data, and team problem solving (Sansoti et al., 2010a; Sansosti et al., 2010b).

Baker (2018), in a study of high school teachers' perceptions of the RTI implementation, further discussed the need for professional development as an essential component to successful RTI implementation at the high school level. Through Baker's perceptual study, interview participants repeatedly noted professional development needs as necessary to improve their building and individual perceptions about their ability to implement RTI with confidence and fidelity. Participants indicated professional development was necessary for all professional members of the school, including school leaders, in order to fully understand, implement, supervise, and support the intervention program. Additionally, training was suggested to help clarify the roles and responsibilities of the teachers, instruct for intervention implementation and fidelity, and inform on progress monitoring practices. Further, the study reported that all participants indicated that the current training was inadequate and more professional development training specific to the high school setting was needed on a more frequent basis. The participants indicated that with more appropriate training on all aspects of the intervention model, they would feel more capable and have more buy-in to implement the intervention program. The findings of this study were consistent with other studies, such as the National Center on Response to Intervention (2010), indicating challenges of implementing RTI at the high school level along with the need for schools to find ways to

provide training and professional development support for teachers to implement intervention programs with fidelity.

As high school teachers are reportedly not well-trained to provide interventions for academic support, job-embedded training must take place to provide teachers with appropriate knowledge and skills to assist struggling students. Cochran et al. (2008) claimed that comprehensive professional development must take place at the local level to prepare educators to implement intervention models. Carter (2018), Farbman (2015), and Kaplan and Chan (2011), all indicated that additional professional development and collaboration time is necessary on a frequent basis for teachers to effectively implement additional academic support time models. Teachers need to be trained on various instructional and intervention strategies to assist students at all learning levels (Reeves, Bishop, & Filce, 2010). Berkely et al. (2009) suggested content specific professional development for interventions or DI strategies at the secondary level to increase fidelity of the intervention or strategy implementation. Additionally, teachers need to be trained to analyze the effectiveness of the strategies and interventions, otherwise, the interventions are useless (Reeves et al., 2010). In addition to relevant and timely training on intervention and teaching strategies, staff training should also focus on the components of progress monitoring and data use to guide instructional decisions (Bartholomew, 2016). Providing job-embedded, ongoing professional development for teachers is worth the time, funds, and efforts as Cochran et al. (2008) stated, “Teachers’ ability to differentiate their instruction will depend on the quality of professional development they receive and the instructional support they receive from their building leaders” (p. 53).

Martin (2008) discussed how staff development should be job-embedded through the ongoing collaborative structures of Professional Learning Communities as suggested by DuFour and Eaker (1998) rather than traditional one-shot “sit and get” delivery methods. The PLC collaborative model requires the examination and evaluation of current teaching practices to identify areas of need for continuous improvement, thus leading to the concept that professional development is an on-going process for adult learning (Martin, 2008). Likewise, as curriculum continues to rapidly change to stay up to date with current knowledge, professional development must also be ongoing to keep educators current to adapt new knowledge and instructional strategies into practice as old practices may be inadequate (Christiansen et al., 2016). Furthermore, teacher professional development to implement academic supports such as RTI, is not a one-time event, but rather continuous trainings of various levels to meet teachers needs and experience levels (Canter et al., 2008). For example, Brody and Hader (2015) indicated novice teachers may need support to apply and improve their teaching practices while more experienced teachers may need support to change their engrained practices. Rosenblatt (2002) further described the need for continuous professional development stating that many educators are experienced and have learned much while on the job; however, “we cannot assume that experience itself equates with effectiveness” (p.25).

Rosenblatt (2002) supported collaboration within a learning community as a means of professional development for improving tutoring practices, discussing the importance of sharing good practices, ideas, strategies and techniques with colleagues in order to reflect and learn from each other. Christiansen et al., (2016) discussed that students benefit when teachers collaborate to develop instructional practices to support

continual growth. These concepts align with the PLC practices and RTI models of providing academic supports to students through collaborative school cultures. Along with collaboration as a main mode of professional development delivery, some researchers also support the concepts of utilizing teacher leaders, instructional coaches, mentors, and trainer-of-trainers models to support staff development (Christiansen, 2016; Sansosti et al., 2010b). “Embedding leadership within the teaching body provides opportunities for those on the front lines to take control of their own professional growth” (Christiansen et al., 2016). The practice of teachers identifying their needs, seeking, obtaining, and sharing their learning builds a shared sense of purpose and ownership in the process of continual improvement towards better instructional practices for increased student success (Sansosti et al., 2010b). Additionally, professional development and collaboration for both regular education and special education teachers together could foster more trusting working relationships, enhance professional practices, and build teacher capacity to meet the needs of all students (Calhoun, 2018). Furthermore, ongoing collaboration and training within individual teams or buildings can strengthen and empower educators to better address the specific issues within their schools (Hoover & Love, 2011). Ultimately, ongoing professional development and time for teachers to collaborate is essential for educators to effectively implement instructional and intervention strategies as part of extended academic support times within secondary level schools (Carter, 2018; Farbman, 2015).

Summary

Chapter 2 discussed the legislative changes that have impacted the public educational system within the United States including how the legislative changes have increased the diversity and populations of students served in the educational system, as well as increasing the demands for public schools to educate all students at high levels for success after graduation. Furthermore, the need to include academic supports in the school structures was discussed as these supports could promote graduation rates, decrease achievement gaps for subgroups, prepare students for better success after high school, decrease students' academic stress, or foster school connectedness. Academic supports have been developed and implemented within American schools using the concepts associated with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Response to Intervention (RTI) models and philosophies. In these multi-tiered support systems (MTSS), all students can benefit from Tier 1 supports, such as quality class instruction. A smaller number of students have access to the 2nd tier of supports which commonly includes targeted tutoring or specific skill development to address academic deficits. The most intensive level of Tier 3 interventions is reserved for the students with the greatest academic struggles. Intervention models, such as after-school tutoring and in-school intervention programs were examined. A popular model of intervention support used in many high schools is a flex time model which allows students opportunities to receive mandated or voluntary academic assistance or tutoring within the framework of the regular school day schedule. Regardless of the type of academic support model or program utilized, factors including student motivation and teacher-student relationships do have an impact on the effectiveness of the provided academic support. Finally,

research supports that time should be devoted to training and developing teachers in order to implement academic interventions and programs to best meet students' needs.

Chapter 3 describes the methods used for this qualitative study to examine teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times in secondary school settings. Chapter 4 discusses the responses of the qualitative interviews focused on the research questions of teachers' insights of the utilization of in-school academic support times, the challenges of the in-school academic support times, and the perceived outcomes of the in-school academic support times for high schools. Chapter 5 provides an analysis and discussion of the study's findings.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore perceptions of teachers from two suburban Midwest area high schools regarding in-school academic support times during the school day. The research questions guiding this study involved examining teacher perceptions regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the in-school academic support programs within public high school schedules. The central question of the study was, “What are teacher perceptions regarding the in-school academic support time within high schools?”

Chapter 3 presents a more detailed look at the overall research design and methods for this qualitative study. Specifically, this chapter will describe the research design, setting, sampling procedures, instruments, and procedures used to collect and analyze information for the study. Further, elements including reliability, the researcher’s role, and limitations of this qualitative study will be explained.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was utilized to conduct this phenomenological study as the researcher sought to explore in-school academic support times by gaining insight from the participants’ experiences. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) explain, “the purpose of phenomenological research is to investigate the meaning of the *lived experience* of people to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants” (p.48). This qualitative study sought to further investigate in-school academic support times within public high schools to gain deeper understanding through teacher perceptions on the use of the programs.

The qualitative approach using interviews as the primary method of data collection was chosen because interviews, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), have “the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions. Further, this method offers researchers an opportunity to clarify statements and probe for additional information” (p. 154). Likewise, Rubin and Rubin (2012) support the use of qualitative interviewing as a naturalistic approach to research as it allows the researcher an opportunity to view issues through the lens of others who have first-hand experience with the research topic. Interviewing provided a sound method to capture participants’ perceptions of the in-school intervention programs to obtain rich and in-depth data to inform the study. Additionally, individual interviews allowed for some flexibility in both the researcher and participants’ time schedules as opposed to focus groups, which would require several individuals to meet at the same time. Through the semi-structured interview format, the researcher intended to gain insight of the participants’ experiences through a non-confrontational, comfortable and supportive conversational exchange, which is a strength of this research strategy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Setting

The setting for this qualitative study took place among two suburban Midwest area public high schools, similar to District R high school. In order to establish validity of the data, it is more appropriate not to conduct research within the researcher’s own workplace. As District R only has one high school, the researcher sought to examine teacher perceptions of in-school academic support times within area public schools that were comparable to that of District R high school to obtain the most potentially relevant and applicable data to inform the study. The researcher identified two nearby schools,

comparable to District R high school, with similarly structured in-school academic support times and daily schedules. Not only were the schools comparable to District R high school in size, make-up, location, and programming, but also were known as high achieving schools, as evidenced by the MO DESE reported graduation rates, ACT scores, and post-secondary educational enrollments. Further demographic details about the schools can be seen in Table 1. Obtaining data from these two comparable settings allowed the researcher to gain pertinent information on the topic of in-school academic support times within high school schedules.

Like District R High School, the schools for this study are located in the suburban Midwest area and housed grades 9-12. One school utilized a mixed schedule format, like District R high school, with three days each week running a traditional 7-period schedule and two days operating on a block schedule, meeting with only half of the courses on each block day. The other school ran a traditional 7-period schedule. Additionally, the schools all utilized an advisory period one day each week and incorporated a flex-time academic support program three days each week for approximately 25-30 minutes each day. Furthermore, each school schedule also included a late-start one day each week to allow for teacher collaboration and planning meetings.

Table 1

School Setting Demographics compared to District R School for 2019 school year

Descriptor	District R HS	School A	School B
Student Population	1955.0	1898.0	2183.0
% White	77.6	70.7	77.1
% Black	10.1	16.0	11.7
% Hispanic	5.9	5.0	3.8
% Multi-racial	5.0	5.2	4.6
% Free/Reduced	23.8	21.1	8.1
Attendance Rate	88.5	89.4	92.1
Drop-out rate	1.8	0.4	0.5
4-year Grad. rate	91.45	95.99	97.94
Average ACT	21.4	21.6	22.5
Postsecondary enroll.	74.2	77.0	86.6

Note. Information obtained from the website of Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Comprehensive Data System (2019).

The researcher chose to utilize only large, high achieving, public high schools as the setting for this study to foster the most potential for the study to be applicable and relevant to the District R high school setting. Results of this qualitative study should not be generalized to other settings; however, the information could be applicable to other comparable sites with similar situations and characteristics. The schools within the study provided similar settings to that of District R high school in the suburban Midwest area. Thus, the researcher sought to examine teacher perceptions of in-school academic support times within area public schools that were comparable to that of District R high school to obtain the most potentially relevant and applicable data to inform the study.

Sampling Procedures

The target population to inform this study was secondary level teachers at public high schools in the suburban Midwest. Thus, the researcher sought perceptions of secondary level teachers across the two high schools for this qualitative research study. Purposive, criterion sampling was used to obtain participants for the study. Rubin and

Rubin (2012) emphasized the importance of choosing participants who are knowledgeable and experienced with the topic to enhance credibility of the research. Criterion sampling was chosen over random sampling to ensure all participants had experienced the phenomenon of the study in like manners based on specific criteria (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The following were the criteria used to identify potential research participants:

1. The participants must have experienced an in-school academic support time within their respective setting for a minimum of 2 years.
2. The participants must work in different departments or grade levels from the other participants within their respective schools.

Requiring the teacher participants to have a minimum of 2 years of experience with the in-school academic support time program ensured that participants had worked with the academic support program long enough to be able to discuss their perceptions more thoroughly as opposed to a teacher with less experience with the program. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to obtain a variety of teacher perspectives across the high school setting, including both core and elective subjects. Likewise, obtaining perspectives of teachers who work with struggling to high achieving students may provide additional descriptive information to inform the study.

Applying the purposive, criterion sampling method, potential participants for this study were identified based on the researcher's investigations and inquiry of the individual schools, utilizing the school websites, as well as communications with building level administrators or staff. From the pool of potential participants, the researcher separated the candidates' names by department or subjects that they teach. To

help ensure participants represented different academic areas or levels of instruction, the researcher purposefully sent invitations via an email communication to only one or two teachers in each department who might be the most responsive and willing to participate based on information obtained from the building administrators and staff, rather than sending invitations to all potential participants. The email invitation included the purpose of the study, an overview of the face-to-face individual interview session including the number of main interview questions that would be asked, the expected length of the interview sessions, and the process for establishing specific dates and locations for interviews. Further, the communication shared that the interview would be audio recorded, transcribed, and electronically shared with interview participants for review. The researcher provided assurance that the privacy of each participant would be protected and that the information obtained would only be utilized for the purpose of this study. The email invitation also included a Consent to Participate form. Finally, the email communication invited the teachers to voluntarily participate in a face-to-face individual interview for the study. Invited teachers were asked to respond to the researcher by signing and returning the Consent to Participate form through an email to indicate their willingness to volunteer as a participant in the study.

Once the researcher received a willing participants' response to participate with the signed Consent to Participate form, the researcher contacted the participant by either email, phone, or personal contact to set up specific interview sessions. The invitation process continued until at least 6 participants from each school representing different academic areas or levels of courses had been obtained for the study. If more teachers volunteered than what was needed for the study, the researcher responded with an email

communication to thank them for their willingness to participate and notified them that the participants for the study had been filled. While twelve participants for this study was not a large sample, this number was manageable and sufficient to obtain perceptions from a range of teachers across the two schools in the study.

Instruments

Qualitative research relies heavily on perceptual information, which is often obtained through interviews to acquire descriptions of participants experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are often used by qualitative researchers (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Rubin & Rubin 2012). This study utilized individual interviews to obtain information from participants as this was the best method to gain rich perceptual data. The interview format was semi-structured, with scheduled meeting times to discuss a few pre-determined questions developed by the researcher as well as the inclusion of additional probes or follow-up questions to provide clarity or depth of the response (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This method allowed for structure and consistency in the main questions, but also allowed for some flexibility with follow-up or clarifying questions as the conversations developed and ideas were explored.

After examining previous studies and literature pertaining to in-school academic support time and related topics, as well as literature regarding qualitative interviewing, the researcher began to draft potential interview questions for this study. These interview questions were originated by the researcher and were not taken from other studies. The questions were then organized according to the central guiding question and the research questions pertaining to the utilization, challenges, or outcomes of in-school academic

support times. While developing the interview questions, the researcher utilized the input of research advisors and professional colleagues to review and refine the interview questions. This process helped to ensure the questions adequately addressed the intended research questions of the study and would provoke applicable responses. Drafts of the interview questions were reviewed by professional colleagues to ensure thoroughness of the topic was addressed. Any suggested revisions of the interview questions were made to ensure proper alignment with the study's research questions and to provide clarity for the participants. Once the interview questions were established, prompts and potential follow-up questions were developed. The interview questions were tested through a mock interview with a teacher colleague of the researcher, and revisions were made based on the feedback from the interviewee.

The final protocol for the face-to-face interviews began with a brief introductory section in which the researcher stated the purpose of the study, reiterated the participant's involvement was voluntary, and provided an opportunity to obtain official consent if not previously received. Parameters of the interview were also shared, such as the audio recording of the interview, and general instructions provided to the participant such as to answer the questions freely. The interview participant was provided an opportunity to address any questions or concerns before proceeding. Next, the researcher asked the interviewee to complete a short paper/pencil form to gather demographic and background information from the participant such as race, gender, and years of teaching experience, as this information could be used in analyzing the data obtained for the study.

There was a total of 12 pre-constructed interview questions, followed by probes or clarifying questions. The first research question pertaining to teachers' perceptions

regarding how in-school academic support time is utilized within high schools was addressed by 4 questions. These questions sought to gain insight on how teachers actually use the in-school academic support time within their own setting and the factors teachers consider in order to facilitate academic support with students. Questions in this section included the following: “Can you please describe what the in-school academic support time looks like in your school?” and “As a teacher, how do you typically utilize the in-school academic support time to assist your students?” The second research question was addressed through 3 interview questions. These questions focused on obtaining teacher perceptions regarding the challenges of in-school academic support times through questions such as, “From your perception, can you describe any concerns you have encountered with your school’s in-school academic support time program?” The third research question was explored through 3 questions including, “From your observation, what impact has the in-school academic support time had for your students?” The interview questions finished by asking teachers to share their overall thoughts of in-school academic support times and to share any suggestions they may have about in-school academic support times to address the central question.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study was collected using a qualitative research methodology consisting of semi-structured, individual interviews. The process for this study is described in the following steps:

1. The researcher requested permission to conduct this qualitative study within the participating school district by first completing an electronic form (see Appendix A). Permission was granted by the district office to conduct the

study at the selected high school buildings within the district (see Appendix B). The principals at each participating school building were contacted via email communications to obtain approval to conduct the study within their school building (see Appendix C). The purpose of the study and a brief explanation of the expectations for the participants was provided.

Furthermore, assurance was provided that the schools' and individual participants' identities would remain anonymous and the data collected would only be utilized for the purpose of this study. Each principal responded in support of the study (see Appendix D).

2. Once the district and schools granted the initial permissions to conduct the study, the Baker University Internal Review Board (IRB) form for approval was submitted (see Appendix E). Approval to move forward with the study by the Baker University IRB was granted on February 17, 2020 (see Appendix F).
3. Next, potential participants from each school were selected based on the selection criteria. The researcher obtained e-mail addresses from school websites or directories and contacted potential participants via an email communication to invite them to voluntarily participate in an interview (see Appendix G). The e-mail communication explained details of the study and invited volunteers to participate in an individual interview. If they agreed to participate voluntarily, the participants were asked to sign an informed consent (see Appendix H). Follow up e-mails were conducted with potential participants if they did not respond or to provide additional explanation and

clarity on the study. This process continued until six volunteers from each school agreed to participate in the study.

4. Next, specific times and locations for individual interviews were established between the participants and the researcher via e-mail communications and/or phone contacts.
5. A total of twelve individual interviews were conducted. The individual interview sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes unless additional time was necessary for clarification. Each interview followed the interview protocol questions to address the three research questions focused the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support times; however, additional probes or clarifying questions were included as necessary to ensure the researcher fully understood the participants' responses and perceptions. A copy of the complete interview protocol and interview questions can be found in the appendix (see Appendices I and J).
6. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted. Responses were recorded using a digital recording device. The audio files were then backed up to a MacBook Pro. Any additional notes taken by the researcher during the interview were kept in electronic files for each interview participant by either scanning in handwritten notes or typing notes using Microsoft Word or Google Docs on a MacBook Pro.
7. The researcher transcribed all interviews directly from the audio recordings and electronically shared the transcription with each interview participant to

ensure accuracy of the information. Participants were asked to notify the researcher of any corrections via email.

8. After the electronic copies of transcriptions had been proofed by the interview participants through email communications and all corrections had been made, the researcher uploaded the interview transcripts to the Dedoose Research Analysis software program.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) stated, “the process of data analysis begins with putting in place a plan to manage the large volume of data you collected and reducing it in a meaningful way” (p. 159). The researcher utilized the Dedoose Research Analysis program as computer software programs can aid the researcher in managing and analyzing the data obtained from the transcribed interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Creswell (2009) also stated that while a computer program provides an efficient and faster means for working with qualitative data, it is still important for the researcher to personally “go through each line of text (as in transcriptions) to assign codes” (p.188). Creswell (2009) suggested a step-by-step process to conduct qualitative data analysis utilizing the following steps:

1. Organize the data in a systematic format to prepare for analysis.
2. Review all data to gain an overall sense of the main ideas and tone.
3. Create a coding system to organize the data into sections and categories for manageable analysis.
4. Identify themes that arise from the coding process.
5. Determine how the themes will be applied in the study.

6. Interpret the data to derive meaning.

After the transcripts were uploaded to the Dedoose Research Analysis program, the researcher reviewed all transcripts and began developing a coding system by combining similar ideas from the interview responses to create codes. Creswell (2009) explained this is a traditional approach for coding in which the codes are developed based on the information obtained from the study participants. From the codes, themes were developed that provided descriptions of the various perspectives of the phenomena of the study related to the research questions (Creswell, 2009). The themes of the perceptual data were compared for further analysis and interpretation. An excerpt of the coding system can be found in the appendix (see Appendix K).

Reliability and Trustworthiness

Throughout the research process, it was imperative that the researcher employed practices to ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of the study, as suggested by Creswell (2009). In order to establish credibility of the study, the researcher utilized a couple of strategies such member checks and peer debriefing. To include member checking in the process, transcripts were provided to interview participants to review for accuracy. Participants were asked to inform the researcher of any mistakes or errors. In this manner, the researcher ensured the data obtained for the study were as accurate as possible. Additionally, the researcher shared the findings of the study with a professional peer, for the purpose of reviewing the findings. The professional peer, who currently acts as a building level administrator, has obtained several degrees in the area of education, and has previously conducted a qualitative study in the process of acquiring an educational doctorate degree. Furthermore, the professional peer is not associated with

the participants or the participating schools and did not have access to any identifying information of the participants. Utilizing this practice of peer debriefing, according to Creswell (2009), provided an opportunity for the peer to review and question the findings of the study to ensure the content was appropriately interpreted by others, outside of the original researcher.

The researcher utilized purposive sampling to obtain teacher participants from different subject areas and course levels for this study. While the sample was relatively small, the researcher attempted to gain perceptions from a variety of teachers across the high school settings. Including descriptions and perceptions from an assortment of high school teachers on the topic of in-school academic support times provides potential opportunity for other educators to make some connections with the information; however, due to the small sample size, the results of this study are not transferable and should not be generalized to other settings.

To establish reliability, confirmability, and to help diminish any personal bias of the researcher impacting the data interpretation, the researcher utilized an interview protocol and created an audit trail during the collection and analysis of the interview data. The interview protocol ensured consistency in the data collection process. Further, in addition to recording the interview sessions, the researcher wrote notes and memos during the interview phase of data collection to reflect upon, summarize, and highlight information obtained from the interview sessions. During the data analysis phase, the researcher kept memos to document the coding process, including descriptions and examples for the codes. These memos were consistently referred to during the analysis and decision-making process to ensure consistency and accuracy in the results of the

study. Through these various methods and strategies, the researcher attempted to establish reliability and trustworthiness of the research study.

Researcher's Role

Qualitative research requires the researcher to be an interpreter of data obtained by interacting with the research participants (Creswell, 2009). In this particular study, the researcher will be an active participant in creating, facilitating, documenting, and analyzing the responsive interviews with participants. Therefore, it is important for the qualitative researcher to share personal aspects which may impact the final interpretation of the study, such as biases, values, and background (Creswell, 2009).

First, it is important for the audience to understand the researcher engaged in this study with some potential bias on the topic based on the researcher's personal work experiences. Creswell (2009) commented, "Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background..." (p. 192). The researcher approached this study as a 25-year veteran of the educational profession, having taught in only two major school districts within the state. However, the researcher has worked in multiple schools within each district incorporating experience with a wide range of diversity, socio-economic, and grade levels within each district. Previously, the researcher taught for 14 years as both an elementary and secondary level vocal and instrumental music teacher, but currently is in the 11th year of serving as a building level assistant principal in District R high school. The researcher was tasked with overseeing the development and implementation of an in-school academic support time within District R high school. Presently, the researcher is the building coordinator of the in-school academic support program, working on a daily

basis with district and building level staff, as well as students, ensuring the operation of the program.

To avoid any pre-conceived ideas or perceptions about the researcher's personal workplace skewing the data, the researcher specifically studied schools from other nearby districts outside the researcher's workplace. Further, perceptions for the study were obtained from teachers with whom the researcher did not have working or personal relationships. However, it should be noted that the researcher or the participants potentially were aware of each other due to the schools' proximity, family members' employment, or family members' enrollment in one of the schools as a student. The potential awareness of each other between the researcher and participants could have presented some unintended bias, unintentionally impacting the research in some manner. Throughout the research process, the researcher sought to be an unbiased participant, learning about the phenomenon through the lens of each interview participant.

Limitations

Limitations are factors of the study which the researcher has no control over which may impact the overall interpretation or generalizability of the study results (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016)). As this qualitative phenomenological study utilized an interview methodology, it is possible the participants' dispositions could have impacted their perceptions and responses to the interview questions on the specific date of the interview. It is also possible that participants may not have been fully forthcoming in their responses. Additionally, each school within the study was located within the same general geographical location and were all considered to be high-performing suburban schools within desirable

communities, thus, results may not be transferable to all high school settings. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, the researcher or participants potentially were aware of each other prior to the study, thus leading to the possibility that some unintended biases impacted the research in some manner.

Summary

This study was conducted to examine teacher perceptions regarding the use of an intervention and support time built into the academic school day schedule of suburban Midwest area public high schools. This qualitative study utilized a central question with three supporting questions to guide and inform this phenomenological study. A semi-structured interview method was conducted to gain perceptions of study participants. Purposive, criterion sampling was used to identify a range of knowledgeable participants to provide perspectives through interviews. The data collection process was described as well as the method for analysis. Additionally, actions taken to support the reliability and trustworthiness of the study were shared. The role of the researcher was described and the limitations were presented. Chapter 4 provides a detailed discussion of the findings followed by the researcher's interpretation and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Results

The results of this qualitative study regarding teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times within public high schools are discussed within this chapter. The responses of twelve teachers from two Midwest suburban public high schools were obtained to inform this study. There were six participants from each school in the study, including one teacher from each of the core areas of English, math, social studies, and science as well as two elective teachers from each school. There were two additional elective teachers who indicated interest in participating in the study but were unable to participate due to time constraints or illness. Furthermore, ten of the twelve participants had participated in their respective school's in-school academic support time since the inception of the program at the school eight years ago. Table 2 represents a summary of participant demographics.

All interviews were conducted between February 21, 2020 and February 28, 2020. The interviews were recorded, transcribed by the researcher, reviewed by interview participants for accuracy, and coded by the researcher utilizing the Dedoose computer program. From the codes, the researcher identified the recurring themes that presented from the analysis of the interviews. The findings of the study are discussed in relation to the three research questions of the study and the central question pertaining to teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times through the relevant themes that emerged. Finally, the findings are

presented using aliases in place of interview participants' names to protect their privacy.

Table 2

Teacher Demographic Information

Name	School	Age	Race	Gender	Years Teaching	Years at School	Subject	Yrs. with Program
Amy	B	52	White	F	25	15	Elective	8
Betty	B	---	White	F	22	22	Core	8
Carrie	A	40	White	F	18	18	Core	8
Diane	A	41	White	F	19	19	Core	8
Emma	A	57	White	F	36	18	Elective	8
Frank	B	37	White	M	12	4	Core	4
George	B	46	Hispanic	M	24	6	Elective	6
Halie	B	40	Black	F	20	15	Core	8
Ilene	A	35	White	F	13	13	Core	8
John	A	43	White	M	21	12	Elective	8
Katie	B	35	White	F	14	13	Core	8
Larry	A	40	White	M	18	18	Core	8

Finding 1

The first research question of this study focused on teachers' perceptions of how the in-school academic support time is utilized within high schools. The responses indicated that the in-school academic support time is utilized for mixed purposes, both academic and non-academic, and is primarily driven by student and teacher choice.

Mixed use of time. All twelve participants within the study discussed some academic use of the designated time while all but one participant also discussed the non-

academic uses of the in-school academic support time within their specific settings. The idea of mixed use is evident from the following response from Diane:

During that time teachers can request that students attend a tutoring session with the teacher. We re-take assessments or take an assessment for the first time, um, they can also receive help from other students... And also, students can go to the library at that time. Sometimes we have guest speakers during that time. Clubs can meet. Um, coaches can meet with their teams once a month. We call it, or I tell my students it's sort of like a glorified recess for you because it's like an incentive. So, the students can go to the Commons, or they can meet in other areas where it's not in a classroom. And those students will just work on homework or just, um, talk to their friends and pass the time.

This explanation provides one description of how the schools in the study utilized the provided in-school academic support time to provide academic support as well as other non-academic opportunities for students and staff. Likewise, Amy indicated:

During this time students can seek out teacher assistance or teachers can request students to come in for assistance. If students are not with teachers it can be students' free-time or social time. It depends on the needs of the students.

Furthermore, respondents from both participating schools provided descriptions that included both academic and non-academic purposes and uses for the designated time.

Diane stated, "In our school, we allow students to use this time for both academics and for sports and clubs and activities." The mixed use of time was further described by

Katie as a system of support and rewards through the following description:

It's supposed to be mainly for academic support, but also like a reward system. If students are caught up, doing really well, then they can have a little bit of extra time with their peers or for activities that they maybe wouldn't have in a regular school day.

Academic uses. As academics are the intended focus for academic support time, it is not surprising that all twelve respondents discussed the academic uses of the designated time in some manner. Emma clearly stated, "Ok, one of the main purposes of [the designated time] is to provide extra help. That is really the main purpose." Likewise, Halie indicated, "So the kids have technically 3 days a week that they can come in and get extra help, re-take a quiz, re-take a test, um, during the school day." This academic use of time is further reinforced by other teachers' responses such as John's comment, "So you will see anything from tutoring, which is kind of the big one. Testing labs to allow kids to come in and take tests." Furthermore, Ilene described that, "some students use it for extra help with teachers." In addition, Betty's statement also described the academic use of time:

It is supposed to be a time where students can either just have a safe place to study if they want to go to a quiet place, or it is a time to make-up quizzes or short tests, or it is a time to get extra help or tutoring from a teacher. And that is how I utilize it.

Respondents from one of the schools also discussed throughout the interviews how their building utilizes the in-school academic support time to provide academic support to a targeted population of struggling students. This part of the program requires

students who are earning multiple failing or low grades to report to a designated location for supervised study hall with administrators. Frank explained:

I believe [students] that have two or more Fs or have other disciplinary issues... can be put on what's called a Red Card...and they go to a 180 Room during that time that I believe is usually staffed by one of the Administration.

This required practice is further described by George as a means to provide academic support to failing students by describing, "if they have 2 Fs...they are required to go to, I think it's called our Room 180 because we're trying to make a 180-turn for them." These descriptions show how the in-school academic support time is utilized to operate a building-wide process to support academically struggling students.

In addition to respondents discussing some of the common building academic uses of time, the teachers provided examples of how they utilize the in-school academic support time within their own classrooms. Ten of the twelve respondents specifically indicated that the time is used for open academic assistance or general tutoring and homework help. For instance, Larry shared, "But as far as my classroom goes and the classes I teach, it's kind of an open time for quick tutoring, make-up quizzes, make-up tests. I'm a science teacher, so they can also make-up labs during that time." It was common for both core and elective teachers to discuss having open classrooms during this time as a core teacher shared, "I announced at the start of the year that all of my students are welcome to come in anytime they have any questions regardless of what their grade is." Likewise, an elective teacher commented:

I personally, what I do, my room is always open.... I will, I always just keep my room open. I kind of listed, as when we do our six-week thing [schedule], I listed

as open studio. So, my art students can come in and they have 30 minutes...to work on stuff...I'd say 75% of it for me, personally, 75% of it is academic open studio.

Further, core teachers added the following comments, “[students come] to get help with tutoring, in math especially, I always have students in here, um, asking for help, um, most often on previous day’s assignments,” and, “During that time, I would give them, you know, just let them have like tutoring time. Um, that’s the main use for me, anyway.”

Ilene also described:

More often, it is students coming in with their work, or you know, something they have prepared ahead of time and asking for suggestions or help with that. Um, but often times it’s centered around a particular assessment or a particular homework assignment or task that we’ve done that they’re asking for extra help with.

These comments from participants reiterate the fact that many of the teachers utilize the designated time for general tutoring or to address specific students’ questions regarding academic content and assignments.

Teachers also mentioned other uses for the in-school academic support time during the school day such as absentee work or assessment make-up. Seven of the participants discussed utilizing the time to assist students who had been absent or missed class as described by Amy, “I also focus on skill development if I see a student who has been absent. I can reteach any missed skills and help them get caught up.” George also discussed, “Our students are so busy in activities that we have students that miss a lot of days for school purposes, and so I bring them in during that time.” George further

described, “during that time specifically, it’s usually one-on-one reteaching or teaching of the concepts they missed because they were absent.” Additionally, seven respondents also discussed the use of time for assessment work as Diane discussed:

I use it a lot for my students academically if they need to make-up quizzes or tests, or they need to come and get notes, or they have questions...I really like it as an opportunity for make-up quizzes and tests and things like that.

Although most of the teachers described their classrooms as open or using the time for general tutoring, absentee work, or assessments, 75% of the respondents described their room as being utilized for multiple academic purposes at one time. For example, Betty shared how she manages the multiple academic needs at once:

I totally have the mixed issues going...and sometimes I’ve even separated them like okay, everybody who’s making up a quiz, I want you to come to this side of the room. Anybody that’s a walk-in, can you just kinda go over there. Anybody who needs help with homework go over here. Then that way I can kinda make my way around and know what I’m dealing with.

This idea of managing the differing academic needs by grouping students was also discussed by Carrie who shared:

I do try to group students that are from the same class together. So, I’ll have Algebra 2 students sit together, my Algebra 1 students sit together, just so it’s easier for me to kind of pin-point. We don’t do anything whole group because there’s often times students from multiple classes in here. Um, and I just bounce around from table to table depending on how they are structured, how they are sitting in here and help them with things.

Diane also described the mixed use of academic time within the classroom, “And so I might have a table of IB [International Baccalaureate] students working over here on their upcoming IOCs [Individual Oral Commentaries] and then I might have a couple of stragglers around the room that are just simply making up a quiz.” Additionally, Larry shared what the in-school academic support might look like on a typical day in the classroom:

I’ve got a kid that’s making up a lab over here. And then I’ve got a little back prep room, kind of a quieter area, that kids might be taking tests or doing quizzes or that sort of thing. So, it’s, for me, and it might be different for other teachers, but for me, I definitely have multiple things happening during that time and so every day it’s a little bit different. But in general, it’s kind of that opportunity to do some make-up work, quick questions on assignments.

Based on the aforementioned descriptions from the study participants, the in-school academic support time is utilized for a variety of academic purposes throughout the buildings and within teacher classrooms, often with multiple academic uses occurring simultaneously within one class that the teacher is addressing.

Non-academic uses. The findings for RQ1 regarding how the in-school academic support time is utilized also revealed that eleven of the twelve participants mentioned non-academic uses for the designated time within high school schedules. Amy stated, “This time can be used for club time and meetings.” “Some use it for club meetings or meeting with groups of students,” according to Ilene. George added, “Clubs can meet. Um, coaches can meet with their teams once a month.... Sometimes we have guest speakers during that time.” “There’s also some extra-curricular activities that have

meetings during that time,” stated Larry. “Okay, so the [designated time] is a great brain break and it offers up the kids an opportunity to search an enrichment activity,” Emma shared. John included, “But then there’s also just a lot of like, activities that remind me a little bit more Middle School esque... microwave cooking.... People show movies.... We had a disc golf group.” Diane described how the teachers incorporate non-academic activities within the building schedule:

So, I can put in there [the schedule] half of my slots will say IB tutoring or assigned tutoring and then my other half of my slots I can make Student Council, or sports, or something fun. I could just have a Harry Potter movie day and kids that want to come in and unwind can...there are some teachers that do knitting and there are some teachers that do like Scattegories, you know. Like they try to do something that’s an interactive kinda brain break for kids.”

These statements all describe some of the non-academic activities that take place during the in-school academic support time within the high school buildings.

While the respondents shared various types of non-academic uses for the in-school academic support time, they also shared how they personally utilize the designated time for non-academic purposes. One of the more popular non-academic uses of the time for teachers is to host club, organization, or team meetings as eight of the participants shared their personal stories. As Diane shared:

It’s really been helpful with my Student Council, um, kids because we’re able to meet during the school day. And so, I mean yes, I understand that it has a strong academic tie to it, but for me, the activities portion of it is very helpful.

Ilene described that she uses the time for club meetings stating:

On any given day I'm hosting students for club meetings.... I sponsor a couple of things where we have meetings during that time. National Honor Society officers meet once a month during that time, so I'm involved with that. We have a History book club that meets a few times a semester, so that time is used [for those meetings].

Larry also shared that, "I have had some clubs that have met during that time. I've had an Eco Club that met for a few times. I also am an NHS sponsor, so sometimes we have meetings during that time."

In addition to the club and organization meetings, teachers also mentioned utilizing the time to meet with athletic teams or members of the teams. For example, Carrie stated:

I'm a tennis coach as well, so sometimes during that time, we have meetings. So, for instance last week, our boy's tennis season is getting ready to start next week, so we met with the boy's tennis team to disseminate information during that time.

This shows how coaches can utilize the time for informational meetings for their teams during the school day. Likewise, John described how coaches and teams benefit from using the time to meet with team members:

Coaches utilize it. I just had a meeting with my Varsity track athletes on Tuesday where they all came in and we talked about the season. Our season starts on Monday.... We talked about some...goal setting and stuff. Those things are nice, especially on the coaching standpoint. It's nice to do some of those things that we can do outside of practice. So, in practice I can focus on practice.

Using this time for athletic team meetings allows for coaches to address informational and managerial aspects of coaching teams and protects practice time for actual physical practice. Furthermore, the non-academic activity sometimes takes precedence over the academic use of time as Halie described:

The only activity for real that I've had, conducted during that time, is Step Team practice.... And so, there'll be times, especially if like Court Warming is coming up or something, I might close it [my classroom] down for math and Step Team is in there.

Outside of the clubs, activities, and athletic teams, nine of the twelve participants also discussed building student-teacher relationships or tending to students' social-emotional needs as a non-academic use of the designated time throughout the schools. Emma focused on this aspect of the designated time offering, "most of my [support time] is about building relationships with kids." Ilene supported this idea in describing, "there are definitely days where there are not students who come in for any kind of extra help, so a lot of that time ends up being relationship building with students." Diane also shared, "it gives us an opportunity to have more, um, I guess maybe venture more in our, um, conversations and our relationships because we're able to have some other time to connect more personally." Likewise, Amy also discussed relationships and why some students come to her room during the designated time in her following comments, "Many come in to hang with their friends or because we have built a good rapport." Amy also stated, "others are here for a safe place." Like Amy, 75% of the study participants also mentioned students come to their room as a consistent safe location to be during the designated time. Frank described this situation of students reporting to his room:

I have students that will come in and just kind of visit and it's, you know, you kind of build your group and you have a safe group of kids that this is their room that they come to. Sometimes they're your kids, sometimes they're not. So, um, you kind of get to know them.

These comments illustrate that students gravitate towards some teachers because they feel comfortable with the teachers and the teachers allow these students to be in their classrooms during the support time, even if not for academic reasons.

Amy further expressed, "It is a good time to meet with kids who just need to talk. Some kids tend to come to you because you've built a relationship with them over the years." Amy's statement exposes the concept of how the designated time is utilized to address student's social-emotional needs rather than academic needs. Frank expanded on this idea by discussing how students come to ask him questions or have conversations, not pertaining to academic content, but rather because he is the trusted adult for some of his students as he described:

I mean, you name it, we've discussed it. And my kids kind of know that I'm a fairly open book. Um, and I think that kind of happens with being a science teacher, is you get a lot of questions that other teachers would be like, "No." Like I can have a student come in, "I have questions about ..." Okay, what do you want to know?... It gives kids... a trusted adult that they feel like, I feel like if they are coming to talk to me...that's a big step for a teenager.

Halie also described addressing students' social-emotional needs during the designated time by sharing how she sometimes utilizes the time with her students:

If I feel like there's a situation that's happened at school, a death, something that's just crazy in the community, sometimes, we'll just have talk sessions so I can make sure that the kids are okay. That they can get off their chest whatever they feel they need to get off their chest and they don't feel like I'm gonna write 'em up or say something to somebody. I just try to get a feel for them, especially if there's a lot of stuff going on.

Further, Halie also described how her time is utilized as a trusted adult for her students:

There'll be a kid all of a sudden, they come up to you in tears, and you just missed a whole [support time] listening to the baby, making sure they are okay. So yeah, more counseling type work.... But being a trusted adult, I love that. I know I am one and so I have to be able, like when they said they need to talk to me, I feel like I need to be able to get away for a second, take them to a safe place and let them talk to me.

The comments from the teachers above make it evident that the in-school academic support time is utilized for a variety of purposes. Teachers provide a range of academic support, mostly in the form of open assistance or tutoring or addressing multiple academic needs at once. However, the designated time is also utilized for many non-academic purposes and activities as well. These include club and organization meetings as well as athletic team meetings. Further, teachers reported that often the time is utilized to build relationships with students or attend to students' social-emotional needs.

Choice in activity. In addition to the mixed use of time for both academic and non-academic purposes, nine of the twelve teachers in the study also indicated that both

students and teachers have some choice during the designated time, such as the opportunity to choose the activities they engage in during the given time. As Amy described the concept of choice, “During this time students can seek-out teacher assistance or teachers can request students to come in for assistance. If students are not with teachers it can be students’ free-time or social time. It depends on the needs of the students.” This statement indicates that both parties, the teacher or the student, can choose to utilize the time for academic purposes in that teachers can request students to come to them for assistance, but it also indicates that students can choose to use the time for either academic or non-academic purposes.

Ilene further described the concept of students’ choice, “Currently it is a very flexible time where students are allowed to spend their time.” Larry shared, “it’s kind of open time for the kids. So, they can choose where they want to go.” Carrie added, “students have free choice to where to go.” Ilene elaborated on students’ choice of location during the designated time:

There is a variety of choice involved in geographically, where they [students] are able to be. Outside. They’re able to be in the Commons, which is a supervised open area, uh, and they can be in classrooms. They are not supposed to be in our hallways, um, but, they are able to travel from place to place if there is purpose in their travel, uh, if they need to get help from one teacher and move on to another teacher.

Ilene’s statement provides some examples of where students can choose to be during the designated time, however, Ilene also shared that while it is the student’s choice, she still encourages utilizing the time for academic support for her struggling students:

It is the student's choice, but it is something too, that I will encourage parents, if a student is struggling, to encourage the student to use the time in that way [for academic support] as well. But it is student choice, so.

George also shared in the idea of students' choice in his statement:

So, the students can go to the Commons, or they can meet in other areas where it's not in a classroom. And those students will just work on homework or just, um, talk to their friends and pass the time.

This statement reiterates that students have the choice to use the designated time for either academic purposes or for non-academic purposes, such as free time or social time.

While students have some choice in how they choose to utilize the provided time, teachers also have choice in how they utilize the time as John stated, "We have pretty much absolute freedom to do whatever we want during it [the designated time]." Amy included, "It is up to individual teachers if they want to assign students." Therefore, teachers are not required to utilize the time providing academic support to students. As Larry shared, "There's kind of some autonomy as far as what teachers can do during that time.... It's up to each teacher...; teachers have an opportunity to kind of figure out what they want to do during that time." This autonomy permits teachers to choose to either provide academic support to students or to engage in non-academic endeavors, such as the previously mentioned club meetings and activities, that students may also choose to engage with during the given time during the school day.

Change in structural procedures. Both schools in this study have similar configurations for the in-school academic support time within their regular high school daily schedules, according to eleven of the twelve responses, in that both schools offer

the support time three times a week in addition to one day of an advisory class. Additionally, the designated in-school academic support time typically occurs after the 3rd period of the day. However, there are a few differences between the schools' overall structures. A minor difference is that typically the in-school academic support time is approximately 30 minutes; however, school A has one day each week where the support time is approximately 40 minutes due to the use of a block schedule during part of the week which school B does not incorporate. In addition to the minor difference of time allotted to the program one day per week, a more significant difference was revealed in the overall structural procedures that evolved with the programs over the years that have impacted the utilization of the programs.

All 6 participants from school A shared how the program at their school has changed from mandatory assignments for students needing academic assistance to more of a voluntary academic assistance program. Carrie described the change her school's program has experienced:

So, it has evolved over time. And initially when we first had the program, [students] were assigned. Um, if they had sub-par grades, Ds or Fs, they [students] were assigned to classrooms to remedy those grades. Now, um, students have choice. All students no matter what their grades are in any class, they get to choose where to go. So, they, some go to see a teacher, some go elsewhere. But there is no longer an assignment for them.

Ilene expressed the same idea of the evolution of the program over time, but also included, "It was hard when it was mandatory...; the disciplinary challenges of having a consequence when [students were] not showing up to tutoring was an overwhelming

disciplinary task.” Diane elaborated about the change in the mandatory academic support and resulting discipline:

It was nice for teachers because it was automatic. [Students] are failing or have a D, [they’re] supposed to be here. So, when they don’t come, it’s on them.... But let’s say they don’t come. That became a nightmare for administration because administration had to then meet with all of those kids that didn’t come and it became a huge time suck for administration. And it became something where I think that we might have felt that we were fighting a losing battle. Um, because they were spending so much time reprimanding kids for not showing up and it was the same kids all the time...; they then tried to switch gears over the last couple of years to where we don’t require students to come if they have a D or an F. It is optional and that’s where we can request for them to come.

Diane’s statement illustrates that the administrative work load dealing with the resulting discipline for students who failed to attend mandatory academic sessions was one reason why the mandatory academic support program at school A was revised. Emma shared a thought process behind the program’s change. Emma described:

When we started the [academic support time] business, the whole idea of what we did was mandatory tutoring. So, if you had a D or an F, then you were assigned by a teacher and you were supposed to go. And basically, if you didn’t show up there were punitive measures....and honestly, I don’t think tutoring should ever be associated with a punitive measure. I think that really goes against everything that tutoring is. So, punishing kids for not doing it seems funny to me. And we talked about that as lead teachers over summer and decided that we couldn’t

punish children for not going to that. It's their decision in the end. Making it available is one thing.

Emma's statement provides one perspective of how some educators may approach the idea of mandatory tutoring and how that perspective along with the disciplinary issues of the program lead to changes towards a voluntary academic assistance program as opposed to a mandatory structure.

As the approach towards academic assistance was altered in this school, the process of assigning students to mandatory tutoring sessions was eliminated and replaced with a voluntary system where teachers can request students or students can choose to seek-out academic assistance on their own. As John expressed his opposing perspective:

We were encouraged that first year when we saw the Ds and Fs starting to decline. We were like, absolutely, this is exactly what this is supposed to do....

And then we pulled that rug out and we quit using that part of it.

John continued to share how he could no longer require students to attend mandatory tutoring, but rather, he could only request for students to attend. He described that the assignment system, which involved teachers using a computer program that would send the students and parents an email notifying them of the mandatory assignment, "just went away" and he now has to verbally ask the students to come during academic support time. John continued to describe, "There's no record of it. It's just me talking to the kids." He indicated that the academic support time "certainly has felt looser for us because nobody is required to come to us anymore."

In contrast to John's perception of the assignment system disappearing, other teachers at the school indicated the assignment system is still available but is only used to

invite students to voluntarily come to a specific teacher to receive academic assistance. As Carrie described, “so teachers can still request students. They don’t have to come if they are requested. But they get an email and their parents get an email from what I’ve been told that says that we have requested them.” Carrie continued:

Sometimes that request system isn’t the most efficient because it’s not regulated by anything. If they don’t show up, they don’t show up. We don’t take attendance for it. Um, so I’ve just emailed the parents directly and said I would like to see your student during this [academic support] time.

As teachers are no longer permitted to officially assign mandatory academic assistance to students during the in-school academic support time, several of the teachers discussed that they rarely formally request students to attend in-school academic support sessions. Rather, teachers will either suggest to students that they should attend or treat it as the students’ responsibility to seek-out the assistance on their own. As Larry discussed, “If I’ve got a kid that I know is struggling...or needs to make up a test, ...or do an activity, I’ll approach them,” and ask them to come during academic support time. However, he continued, “I kind of put it on the kids as it’s their responsibility. They know that I’m available during that time.” Larry’s statement supports the idea of the choice that students have in either utilizing the time to obtain academic assistance or to utilize the time for other non-academic reasons.

Although most of the structural change occurred at school A, there have been minor changes at school B as well. Amy discussed that while her school also utilizes an email system to request students to attend academic support with a specific teacher, her school does have a discipline process for students who do not attend when a teacher has

requested them. She explained that if students “don’t show up I’ll usually do an office referral and they’ll just get a warning.” This illustrates the disciplinary action that may be taken for students who do not attend mandatory academic assistance sessions.

However, Amy elaborated:

At one point and time, if you sent in, because you do attendance during that time, if you sent in that [students] were absent, then administration would work it up. They would be referred by attendance or whatever. Now, you send in that [students] were absent and then it’s your job to kind of figure out why they were absent.... But the discipline referral is initiated by the teacher.

Amy further explained that this practice gives teachers more control in determining when and for what reasons students would receive discipline for not attending when requested for mandatory academic assistance. She stated, “It gives you more lenience and [allows you] to build rapport with the kids.”

Frank, from school B, also explained that he doesn’t usually assign students for mandatory assistance as he stated, “I kind of leave it more open to them and I’m going to have you [students] make that choice to come and do this as opposed to, you know, me assigning you to do it.” Therefore, some teachers at both schools place the responsibility of seeking academic assistance on the students rather than requiring students to attend the academic support sessions. Other teachers at school B also shared that they will assign students to attend a specific academic assistance session within their specific classroom at the request of the students who are avoiding being assigned by another teacher for mandatory academic assistance. Amy shared this idea, “I also will assign students if the student requests me to assign them, not always for [my class] work, but to avoid other

teachers requesting them.” These examples illustrate how even though school B does have a discipline process for mandatory assignments, the process does not require teachers to assign students for mandatory assistance nor does it require teachers to follow through with the discipline measures in place. Likewise, some teachers assist students in avoiding mandatory academic assignments from other teachers by allowing them to attend sessions within their classroom, even if not for true academic assistance.

Therefore, while the original structures of the in-school academic support time were designed to require students to attend mandatory academic assistance when teachers requested them to attend or receive a consequence if they did not attend, both schools’ structures have changed over the years and are no longer as focused on the original academic support. The looser structures the teachers described allow students and teachers to have more choice in how they utilize the designated time and the types of activities in which they choose to engage, either academic or non-academic.

Finding 2

The second research question of the study concentrated on teachers’ perceptions of the challenges of the in-school academic support times within high schools. Based on the responses of the participants, three themes emerged as perceived challenges. The most prominent challenge of the in-school academic support time stemmed mainly from concerns with the disordered common areas of the school outside of the individual classrooms along with supervision issues of these areas. This theme was mentioned by ten of the twelve participants in the study. Likewise, nine of the participants expressed a second theme pertaining to student issues that arise from the systems that allow students to opt out of utilizing the time for academic support. Additionally, a third theme,

identified by seven of the teachers, indicated providing adequate individual academic support for all students was an instructional challenge of the in-school academic support time program.

Common area concerns. Teachers from both schools shared concerns regarding the spaces outside of the classrooms where large numbers of students may choose to locate, as challenges for the in-school academic support time program. The areas teachers mentioned included the Commons, the Library Media Center, and hallways. As Frank described, “The Commons is...a pretty massive chunk of where I think most go.... The Commons is the big kind of collecting, it’s the biggest spot in the school that they [students] can go.” George shared that, “students can also go to the library at the time.” These areas are utilized at each school in the study. However, Ilene shared that students at her school “are able to be outside,” but “they are not supposed to be in our hallways” except “to travel from place to place if there is purpose in their travel.” Alternatively, at the other school, Frank indicated that students “can’t go outside” and Halie stated that there is a current rule that students should not be in hallways because “once [students] go someplace [they’re] supposed to stay there.” These common spaces present challenges because large numbers of students may congregate in these areas, creating crowding, excessive noise, or opportunities for poor student behaviors to occur. Furthermore, a lack of teacher participation in supervision duties contributes to the overall concerns that arise from these common gathering spaces where many students who are not participating in academic support activities congregate during the designated time.

Disordered gathering spaces. Nine of the twelve teacher respondents in this study mentioned specific concerns with the common gathering spaces within the building as

major challenges of in-school academic support time. For example, Frank stated, “One of the big issues that always comes up is we have a whole bunch of kids in our Commons.” Likewise, Diane shared, “when I’m in the Commons, I’m like there’s 400 kids in here...they’re rambunctious.” Diane further described the common gather spaces:

When they’re in the Commons, like they’re supposed to be sitting in a seat, like find a table and sit there... They play cards, and they’ll go grab snacks and they’ll eat. They’ll listen to music on their headphones and they’re talking and they’re laughing and they’re being loud. Uh, but they’re supposed to be relatively calm in one area. So, like running around or ...things like that, they’re really not supposed to be doing.

This scene of students in the Commons area is similar as Amy also shared about the setting at her school, “the Commons is a crazy place during that time.” She added, “the gym is not open anymore, so that puts all those kids that don’t have a place to be in the Commons. I think it’s crazy.... They [students] don’t have enough places [to go] because teachers don’t request them.” George also shared that he believes that “700 or 800 kids are down there” in the Commons on a typical day.

Because of the large number of students gathering in the Commons during in-school academic support times, several teachers mentioned concerns that arise. For example, Larry shared:

And just having a lot of kids that are not being productive, I think sometimes problems can arise.... I know that there’s been some fights that have happened ... down in the Commons during [the designated] time. Just, you know, it’s a large number of kids that are not being productive, sometimes problems arise.

John shared this same concern stating, “it becomes a little bit of a free-for-all. We’ve had some issues with fights during” the given time. Katie provided her perception of the Commons area concerns in her explanation, “I know that I’m not in the Commons, but I know ... why I get the students that I don’t have in class.... They don’t want to be in a crowded noisy place.” Katie was describing why several students come to her room during the in-school academic support time, even though they may not be her students nor are they needing academic assistance. They simply do not want to be in the chaotic environment of the Commons area during the in-school academic support time.

In addition to the large Commons areas in the schools, teachers also discussed the Library Media Centers as locations of concerns. Diane illustrated this concern:

In the LMC, the first couple years they let a lot of students in there and it was a freaking zoo. Like it was craziness. Like kids were throwing food, and they were jamming things in heat registers. And they finally got to the point that kids that genuinely wanted to go to the LMC cause they just wanted a place to study were like, it’s a party in there. And so, they now limit the number of students that get to go in the LMC and that’s way better. I mean, like an administrator stands at the door the whole time...they actually stand there and count the number of kids that can go in.

This practice of limiting the number of students in the library occurs at both schools as Halie also discussed concerns with students not being able to get into the library area stating, “Only so many people can get in the library.... It’s first come first served, they’re probably not going to be able to get in there anyway... so they’re coming to the Commons.... There’s nowhere else for them to go.”

Furthermore, seven of the teacher respondents also specifically discussed the hallways as a challenge of the in-school academic support time. Ilene stated, “I think probably the biggest one [challenge] is that hallway navigation. Um, the noise of people moving through the hallways.” She continued with a more descriptive explanation of the challenge of the hallways:

The fact that we do allow students some flexibility with moving between locations during that time has meant that there are some students who will take advantage of that and will just drift the entire time. And on occasion, that has become fairly distracting in the hallways for students who are trying to get something done...that has been a really big challenge with loosening up from the mandatory nature of [academic support time] and really just loosening up, allowing students to move.

Katie shared this concern about hallway noise being disruptive to the classrooms, “It can get loud in the hallways, and obviously, students that are trying to get enrichment or trying to get intervention, they don’t like the loudness. Nor do I.” George also agreed that a major challenge of the academic support time was, “outside our room, especially the hallways.” George discussed that although teachers are assigned to supervise to ensure students are not roaming the halls, he shared there is not supposed to be “a constant stream of students coming and leaving from the classroom. But I always have students coming in.” Furthermore, Amy concurred that hallways were a challenge with her statement:

Students who end up not being requested or they get out of it because they don’t show up, they create a log jam in the hallways.... We’re not supposed to let them

out ...unless they have a to go someplace. Um, but kids will just leave. Walking out of classrooms.

Frank also added, “there is a lot of hallway traffic. And when you do talk to the kids sometimes, a good majority of them do feel like it’s free time for them.”

Diane shared her perception of why the hallway issues of students roaming has become such a struggle:

We have students that never find a home during that time. They just use it to roam and I’m fine with that if that’s gonna be an option. But I remember when it was first introduced to us it was... [presented] to us as the idea of students had this time to really take it as their break. So, if they wanted to relax, they could. Which I interpreted as, if they want to walk the hallways, they can walk the hallways. Well then, I think that we had more students in the hallways than we did in locations and it became more of a supervision piece and then...that quickly shifted to find a home.... Just simply walking the hallways was not an option. And so, I find that our constant struggle is that the kids that just walk the hallways...they don’t go anywhere.

As students do not necessarily have a specific location to report to during the in-school academic support time and that the buildings’ expectations have evolved over time, it appears that many students may feel free to roam the halls or congregate in large areas, using the time as free time or a break. This evidently has created concerns for several of the teachers in the buildings as evidenced by their responses about the common areas and hallways being major challenges of the in-school academic support times within their schools.

Insufficient supervision. Along with the main concerns of the gathering spaces and hallways, is the challenge and concern of supervision within these areas. Ten of the twelve participants mentioned supervision concerns in some capacity as a challenge for the in-school academic support time. The supervision challenges include not having enough supervision for the number of students in an area to teachers not participating or performing their supervision duties adequately. When supervision is insufficient, concerns about student behaviors and liability develop.

Teachers from both schools described systems in which they are assigned to help with supervision duties during the in-school academic support time. As Betty explained:

We have to supervise once a semester, the hallway. So, I would have to put a note on my doorway and say [I'm] not available today...go somewhere else....

And it's only once a semester.... We're supposed to stop kids in the hallways and say, "Do you have a pass, where are you going?"

Larry also shared:

They assign us once a month, or maybe a little bit less often than that, we have supervision duties during [academic support time]. And so, it might be I'm supervising the Commons area or there's an outdoor picnic area, I might be supervising that. And it's just kind of that unstructured time. It's hard to supervise.

While the teachers often mentioned a specific schedule for supervision duties, some of the teachers also divulged that they do not pay close attention to the schedule and thus, may have missed their assigned supervision dates. As Halie described:

It's about once a month or once every couple months. It's once every couple months cause I haven't done it in a while, but then again, I probably didn't look up my name on the schedule.... So, I probably was supposed to, but I didn't.... When you're out there...make sure they're going somewhere, make sure they're not just loitering in the hallways.

George enforced this idea of teacher inattention to the assigned supervision schedule as he also admitted:

Once a semester we have one [academic support time] where we supervise the hallways, but since we have so many teachers, it's just once a semester. I think it's once a semester. That's all I've done so far this year. I don't know if I've missed my second appointment or not. But they have a master calendar, but I just need to look at it and see if I'm on there for second semester.

Therefore, while the frequency of supervision assignments is minimal, it is possible that teachers have missed their supervision duties due to this lack of attention to the assignment schedule. This leads to some teachers feeling like their colleagues are not doing their part to support the building academic support time, as Amy shared she perceives teachers "not doing their supervision duty" as a major challenge of the program.

Not only did teachers report the concern of teachers not performing their supervision duties, but also reported that some teachers may not adequately carry out the responsibilities of supervising and re-directing students to follow the guidelines. As John described:

Supposedly, [students are] supposed to be stopped from going place to place, but ...the staff is not all going to do it. And you know, we're not prison guards. The staff's not going to do their job really well about stopping people, and that's a waste of time.

Halie also commented on how some teachers "do the job better than others" as some do not treat all students in the same manner. For example, "you're [teachers] letting those kids go that you like and then those kids that you don't, or you have bias against, you're all up in their face asking them where they're going." This example shows a perspective of how teachers may approach certain students differently when they are found to be roaming the hallways during the academic support time. However, Frank provided an explanation of why supervising and confronting some students is difficult for some teachers stating:

It is incredibly difficult to try to tell a kid, or a kid that might kind of be one of your...lower kids that might have discipline issues, especially if they don't know you, and how you approach that student ... That was issues that I had with kids.

In addition to the lack of teacher participation or skill in performing supervision duties, some teachers revealed that there simply aren't enough supervisors to adequately perform the job. For example, George discussed, "it's usually our PE teachers that are down in the Commons and they're supervising 700 or 800 kids down there.... And, you can't watch what every kid is doing during that time." Furthermore, Ilene shared her perception as a core teacher who attempts to provide academic support and supervise hallways simultaneously:

I've got students that need help, but I also need to be supervising what's going on in the halls because ...there is so much going on out there. Um, so that's a challenge, too. Just knowing that they do assign us to supervision positions one time a month. We supervise, but it almost seems that we need more supervision. But then, that's difficult to be in both the role of trying to offer extra help and also supervising a hallway that doesn't have any adults in it. So that's definitely a challenge.

Likewise, John, an elective teacher commented, "I hate when I have to do supervision because then I leave my room open.... I have kids who are in here every day...and I don't want to take that space away from them." John continued, that if teachers close down the use of their room to students because of supervision duties, "then we're doing a disservice to kids" who utilize the room as "their spot" during the in-school academic support time. This provides another example of why some teachers perceive supervision to present challenges to the academic support time program.

Still, other teachers discussed concerns with liability concerns due to potential inadequate supervision of students in the buildings. As Betty shared:

I would just worry about liability, but again, that's why we have security and that's why we have teachers walking the halls. But with that many students I'm sure there are people who are going to sneak into...somewhere, bathroom, maybe hang out in there.

Frank also shared the concern of liability as he described his perception, "I feel like my biggest issue is, if [students] are not assigned, they really truly have free reign to go where they want to. And...that just scares me of what all the what-ifs." Frank continued

to share his concern stating, “this building is like a mall.... you can’t see all the way down [the hall], so it’s just that supervision piece of it, and places that kids can go. I mean there’s a lot of places that kids can wander.” Frank’s statement indicates that the building itself presents challenges with providing adequate supervision of all the students during the in-school academic support time.

John provided a similar perspective that combines the concerns of student behaviors, building size, and lack of supervision staff that contribute to the supervision liability concerns. He stated:

Fights, Juuling, you know, some illicit activities [students] shouldn’t be doing. They’re finding the time to do it and there’s not really the manpower in the building to get them all, to watch them all. Our building is too big, has too many nooks and crannies.

In summary, inadequate supervision occurs throughout the high school buildings for multiple reasons. These reasons include lack of teacher participation and attention to schedules, poor skills in addressing students, teachers attempting to supervise and provide academic support simultaneously, as well as having too few supervisors for the number of students or for the size of the buildings. The inadequate supervision leads to liability concerns for student behaviors that may occur during the in-school academic support time.

Student issues. A second theme that emerged as a challenge of in-school academic support times in high schools was the resulting issues from students opting out of utilizing the designated time as it was originally intended, for academic support. This resulted due to a lack of holding students accountable to attend academic support sessions

in addition to the struggles that are presented in working with students who are academically unmotivated. Larry explained his perception of this challenge:

I think one of the main challenges is not every student using the opportunity the way that it's intended. I think, I don't know for sure, but I would say if you were to take a survey of the students that are using [the designated time] to get tutoring, or to get extra help, or basically using it for a productive purpose, I don't know what percentage that would be. But I feel like it's less than half.... It is an opportunity to give the kids a break, have some socialization. But I just feel like that's the majority of what kids do during the ... time. There's some value to that, but I think we need to get to a situation where we're making sure that the majority of the student population is productive during [the academic support time]. And especially those kids that have Ds or Fs or lower grades. And I know that those are also the kids that are not using the [designated] time the way it could be, at least right now.

This theme was presented as a challenge by 75% of the teacher respondents during the interview sessions.

Lack of accountability systems. Eight of the twelve study participants shared ideas indicating that not having appropriate systems in place to ensure students utilized the designated time for academic support was a major challenge of the academic support program at their high school. Both Amy and John concurred that the challenge of the program was “not holding kids accountable.” Ilene elaborated by stating:

The fact that it is something that they can opt into or not means that some of those students who really do, grade-wise, do need to get caught up, um, there's nothing holding them to using that time in a way that is productive for school.

Ilene's comment referred to the practice at one of the high schools in which mandatory student assignments for academic assistance were no longer permitted. Rather, this school utilizes a request system that gives the students the option to attend for recommended academic assistance from teachers. Carrie also discussed the change in process at the building as the challenge for the program at her school:

My concerns go back to that we went away from the mandatory. It was time consuming to do, so I understand why the initial decision was made. However, I wish we could have come up with a system where there was still some accountability for the students. Um, for instance, it used to ...students with Ds and Fs used to be scheduled and then if they didn't show up, they got a detention for not coming. Um, now as I mentioned earlier, even if I scheduled them, they can come, they cannot come. And it's just, my motivated students that want to do better come, which is good. But it would be, I wish we had a happy medium in between where we could also encourage some people that maybe aren't so motivated, which is maybe why their grades aren't so great.

Carrie's description illustrates that while some more motivated students will still utilize the academic support, without the accountability systems, those that need the support the most can opt to not utilize the academic help offered by the teachers.

John was clear in expressing his frustration of this change in process that moved away from the mandatory assignments and holding students accountable. He described

how it would be nice if he could assign students to come in for help, rather than simply verbally suggest students come in for assistance. He indicated that a little time for academic support could help to raise student grades and make parents, students, and teachers happier. Further, he commented that using the free time as an incentive to get students to want to do better academically would be a great “carrot,” stating, “you want to hang out with your friends in the cafeteria? Don’t be failing classes.” However, he stated, “all you’re allowing us to do is tell them. Not schedule it and hold them to it.... You can’t require them to come. They can opt to do whatever they want to do.”

In addition to the teachers from the school that moved away from the mandatory processes, a couple of teachers from the other school also commented about the accountability systems. For instance, as Amy noted earlier, while there are processes in place for the office to handle discipline referrals for students who do not attend academic support time when requested, it is basically up to the individual teachers to determine why the student missed the session and determine if an office referral should be initiated. Additionally, Frank stated, “one issue that I’ve had personally...is what do you do with a kid that you assigned and they don’t come?” Frank goes on to share that he’s aware that administration supports teachers sending these concerns to the office to be handled as a referral, however, he expressed that perhaps he didn’t support this approach of using discipline as an accountability piece. Rather, he offered a suggestion of a different program structure that was used in a previous school in which he worked:

I would love to go back to where we had advisory every day. And then those 3 days, that would be the tutoring time. We would use more of that assigning piece,

and the kids would go. But then you would know where the other kids were at because they are in the advisory time.

The structure that Frank suggested would place every student under the supervision of an advisory teacher who would release students to visit other teachers for academic assistance during the designated time only if a teacher had assigned the student. This would generally eliminate students' ability to opt out of using the time for the intended academic support.

Diane's statement summarizes some of the teachers' perceptions regarding the lack of accountability systems for students in her comment:

Because there is no way to hold them accountable, um, those kids that I do occasionally need to see never come. I can suggest for you to come and if you are willing, um, and want to work on it, you will. But if you don't really care, you're not gonna come. You would rather socialize during that time.

This leads us to the next category within this theme, unmotivated students.

Unmotivated students. It is not only the accountability systems that prevent students from utilizing the designated time for the intended purpose of academic support. Nine of the twelve teachers in the study agreed that a student's personal motivation and desire to succeed academically present challenges for the use of the in-school academic support time. George explained which students may be considered as part of this concern:

Well, if a student is really struggling in class and you have a reluctant learner, they're reluctant in their regular class time and they're still going to be reluctant during that [academic support] time. And I have those students who just won't

even come when I assign them. Um, and it's just like everything in education, maybe...that 1% to 5% that makes it tough for everything that is going on in the school. But you have that same thing. Basically, those are the same students that you're dealing with that are not coming to the [academic support time]. They are also having other issues throughout the school.

Carrie adds to this description of the unmotivated students and in-school academic support time:

Students seem to go hand-in-hand. If they aren't interested in doing their homework for instance, or studying for tests, they just aren't necessarily academically focused, then they aren't going to voluntarily come to get help during that time when they have the option to hang out with their friends.

Both George and Carrie's descriptions indicate that those who may need the academic assistance the most, will likely be those who refuse to accept the help to improve their academic performance. Amy also expressed this sentiment:

Sometimes you have those academic intentional non-learners [who] just don't want to be there. And they don't have something done because they didn't want to work on it in class. So, the heck they don't want to be in there when they could be in the Commons with their friends.

Likewise, Ilene concurred, "I think the biggest [challenge] is those students who are failing, not because they don't get it, but because they are not motivated to do what they need to do." She continued, "For those students who are not motivated to do things, even in class, um, it's difficult to get them to use this time to benefit them."

All of these responses indicate that students who are unmotivated academically are likely to use the designated time to socialize or for other non-academic reasons. Part of this challenge stems from the fact that students are encouraged to engage in the various non-academic activities that are also offered during this time frame during the school day. As Ilene described:

Another big challenge is that, the fact that it's open to club meetings.... It seems that there are a lot of conflicts between, um, club meetings where a student is involved in multiple things and using that time, um, you know, they end up having to choose.

Carrie also expressed some frustration with the many club meetings that may interfere with students needing to obtain academic assistance. She stated:

Maybe [students] were at a club or activity meeting. Uh, sometimes I have, I want to say that academics come first. Um, so I would want to place heavier weight on that, um, but [students] went to their club meeting instead.

Once again, this exemplifies how students' choices impact the original intent of the in-school academic support time. The fact that students can choose to participate in the non-activities provides an option for the academically unmotivated students to opt out of receiving the suggested academic assistance.

John expands on this thought, expressing his perception and frustration of the program through the following statement, "There's just a lack of kids doing anything and using the time wisely and being encouraged and taught how to do it and how to use [the designated time]." John further elaborated on this challenge:

Helping the kids who really need the help, but don't know how to help themselves. Who aren't going to go get tutoring. They're going to opt out to just play and not do anything. I think we're doing those kids a huge disservice with what's available. We're missing those kids and I unfortunately feel like it's a whole lot.

While John feels like the schools are not successfully teaching students to utilize the time to their academic advantage, Emma, while also discussing the idea that students may be unmotivated to engage in the academic activities and opt for non-academic activities instead, offered a different perspective including potential questions unmotivated may need to ask themselves:

You definitely want all kids to participate in some way and you want them to find a place. You know, you don't want them to walk the hallways all the time. You don't want to be hanging out with your friends and walking the hallways and hanging out in the Commons if you're failing history, okay. But that also is that ... decision that you kind of have to make at some point. Is school important to me? Why would I rather...? Why is the impending doom of failing a class not bothering me enough to do something about it? So, I'm not even sure that is something teachers can fix.

Emma goes on to describe that teachers can help in this situation by personally connecting and reaching out to those students in need of the academic assistance. She suggests inviting them to come in for specific academic support and also shared the idea of offering some kind of treat or reward for those students, such as candy or chocolate. Emma continued to share her alternate perspective in stating:

A lot of teachers get upset that a lot of kids opt to not do anything and they end up in the Commons area sitting and chatting and eating with their friends. Who cares? They should be able to do whatever they want. I don't know why people get upset about that.

Several teachers indicated that students opting out of academic support activities in lieu of non-academic options due to lack of accountability systems or due to being academically unmotivated was a challenge of the in-school academic support programs. However, alternate teacher perspectives, such as Emma's, do exist, that offer different approaches to supporting students and allowing students the freedom to utilize the designated time how they wish, despite their individual academic performance.

Instructional concerns. While the themes above mentioned challenges that occur mostly outside of the classroom, there were some challenges that teachers discussed that deal directly with providing the academic support to students within the classroom. Over half of the study participants mentioned some instructional challenges in meeting the various needs of all the students who do seek academic assistance within their classroom during the limited time-frame of the in-school academic support time.

Insufficient individual academic support. The original intent of providing a designated time during the school day was to offer students an opportunity to seek additional academic assistance. As the programs have evolved, academic support is not the only use for this designated time and many students do not take the opportunity that is offered. However, teachers still report that they often have many students show up in their classrooms, either as a safe place to spend the time or to obtain the academic assistance. Unlike the regular classroom, where the entire class is focused on the same

topic, skill, or activity, the students attending the in-school academic support time may be attending for a variety of reasons. This presents a challenge for the teachers to adequately address the individual academic needs of each student during the short time allotted for the program within the school schedule. This challenge was discussed by seven teachers and was evident at both schools within this study.

The instructional challenge can arise from having many students needing assistance at the same time, as George described, “When I have a large number of students that need the same help at the same time, because it [the designated time] is only 27 minutes.” Likewise, Carrie stated, “if there’s a lot of students on a particular day, the challenge would be to get to everybody...if I have a lot of students in here, [I can] only answer 1 or 2 questions per student.” Further, Betty discussed the struggle she encounters when dealing with many students who need academic support and how it is easy for a struggling student to get lost in the crowd. She commented on her thoughts:

I’ve gotta assign them when I don’t have so many people in here to help because they clearly need my one-on-one, to sit and just literally watch them do it.... And then sometimes you forget because you have 150 students. And that’s how those kids get lost.... It’s not that you didn’t intend to help them. They just stay really quiet and never say anything and just drown in the process with their grade.

Not only is the challenge dealing with the number of students who may need help, but the limited time a teacher has to assist students during the designated time. As Frank discussed his instructional challenge, “it would be a short chunk of time.... It’s not quite 30 minutes.... If I get a lot of kids in here [with] a lot questions and they need a lot of help, you just run out of time.” Diane also mentions the issue of lack in time by stating,

“running into time restraints...we simply run out of time,” as an instructional challenge she faces.

Furthermore, teachers communicated the struggles to meet the different needs of students. Ilene discussed her challenge of managing the class environment for students who attend for academic help versus those who don't need academic support as she stated, “making sure that they can spend that time productively...but also being able to give them the individual attention that they need is sometimes challenging.” She goes on to describe, “trying to navigate the needs of different students...is sometimes challenging. Often times they'll have questions about different things,” and then she has to “prioritize” those student needs. George also shared the concern about differentiating instruction for his students as a challenge:

I would say just like in the classroom you have to differentiate in order to meet where each student is, and so that's the same situation that you have with your students that are assigned to your [academic support time]. They're not at the same spot and not struggling with, at the same level, at the same degree. So, to get to each of them so they get that individual help is sometimes difficult.

Finally, Larry explains the chaos of attempting to address the variety of student needs as he explained:

Kids are coming in for different purposes. So, I've got to get this kid's test or quiz...and make sure that this kid has what he needs for his lab activity, just kind of dealing with a lot of different kids that need different things during that time. So sometimes it can kind of be a bit hectic and kind of a mess to get started.

However, Larry also suggested his own solution to his problem in offering, “that could be just a structure that I need to change to where I have like this day is test and quiz make-up, this day is lab make-up, this day is whatever else.” Larry’s suggestion of creating a schedule where each day is designated for a specific type of academic support could eliminate some of the chaos of trying to meet too many students during a single academic support time session.

Consequently, although the intent of the designated time is to provide academic support to the students during the school day, teachers reported that providing that academic support is a struggle. The struggle stems from the short time frame of the support time session, the large number of students that may attend a session, and the variety of needs that students may have which teachers are trying to address simultaneously.

Finding 3

Research Question 3 posed the question, “what are teacher perceptions regarding the outcomes of in-school academic support times within high schools?” Teachers strongly agreed that improved student academic performance was the primary outcome of the in-school academic support time. Additionally, teachers also perceived the benefits of the time provided during the school day as well as the resulting relationships and connections with students to be significant non-academic outcomes of the program.

Academic outcomes. The theme of academic outcomes clearly emerged as eleven of the twelve teacher participants discussed the positive impact the in-school academic support time program had on students’ overall academic performance in some

manner. These positive academic impacts range from improved grades and decreased failure rates to increases in student confidence and improved skills.

Student academic performance. At least six of the eleven teachers who identified academic outcomes as significant specifically mentioned that student grades improved or the number of D and F grades decreased. It is interesting to note that five of the six teachers who specifically mentioned improved student grades as an outcome were from the school that utilizes the assignment system and supports imposing consequences for students who do not attend assigned sessions. Katie simply stated, “overall grades have improved.” Halie agreed with Katie by stating, “I would definitely say the impact on my school, we do have less Ds and Fs...since we started the program.” Amy shared, “for the whole school, I think the data overall show that the Ds and Fs have gone down.”

Amy further provided a more descriptive response to explain this change within her own classroom:

The number of Ds and Fs in my classes has gone way down. Cause usually in a situation like my class, [students] get those grades because the work didn't get done...but that doesn't happen as much anymore, rarely, because they have the time to come in during the day.

Like Amy, Frank also commented about how students are able to use the time to complete work, impacting their class grade. He commented, “They come in for some [academic support times], they get stuff caught up, they get it turned in, and all of a sudden their grade goes up.” These comments both demonstrate how students who utilize the time to complete work or get caught up from absences are able to improve their class grades.

George also commented about how the in-school academic support time has impacted the grades for his students:

I'd say for sure [the program] has lowered the number of students that are not passing my class or earning credit for my class. In other schools where I have taught, I've had a higher failure rate than I do here where we have this intervention time.

Based on George's statement, the in-school academic support time is a reason more of his students pass his class in his current school setting.

While these comments are from teachers from the same school, one teacher from the other school mentioned the improved grades of students prior to the building switching to the non-mandatory, voluntary format of academic support. John recalled, "the first two years, we were tracking Ds and Fs and we did see them drop. That's school wide, but we saw the Ds and Fs go down significantly." Again, this statement indicates that the in-school academic support program was successful in reducing the number of D and F grades students received at one time. Currently, John did comment that he receives less late work from his students, which also supports that the program is still having some success with supporting students' academic success.

Betty and Halie both shared perspectives that the academic support time has helped their students be more successful because students do not want to give up their free-time for academic assistance. As Betty described:

I do have a boy that literally never turned anything in and now that I'm staying on top of him all the time [assigning him to academic support time], he's started....

Maybe that carrot of getting to go to the Commons if they aren't assigned, I think that is a great incentive for them.

Halie also shared a difference she has seen in her students since assigning students to the academic support time, "It did make a difference, because...those kids do ask me questions now, in class.... They're also completing their homework assignments on their own outside of my class." She further explained that she thinks students have made this change to avoid being assigned to come to her room during the academic support time. In this way, the piece of assigning the students to come in for academic assistance is a motivator for some students to get their work done in exchange for some free-time during the school day.

Teachers also shared other examples of how the academic support time has brought about positive academic impacts for their students. Carrie shared an example of how the support time helps her students in math:

In math, if a student is struggling, sometimes they'll...give up or shut down or not do the things that they are asked to do. But if they can get just a little bit of help to kind of direct them in the right way, um, I've had more students find success than not. Having a way to get them a few extra minutes of support.... A lot of students just need to see like one more example, need one question asked, and they are too afraid to ask in front of the class. And then don't have the opportunity to come in before or after [school], so they can come in and use that time to help them out.

Betty shared a similar perspective about how some students do benefit from the support time as it provides an opportunity for more personal assistance without the audience of their whole class watching. Betty described:

I think the ones that need the special help love the fact that they can come in and get it from me without 30 people staring...while they raise their hand and wait. The whole class is waiting on them to catch up.

Likewise, Ilene shared a personal example of how the one-on-one extra help during support time has been beneficial to one of her struggling students:

I think it's really pretty life changing because I have one student in particular this year...that really struggles with writing.... We've had conversations about it and she is great about getting in during that time. Usually it's a 5-minute conversation that just gives her the clarity she needs to, um, to do what I am asking her to do. But it's time that just doesn't seem to exist during the class time always to the degree that it's helpful to her. So that time is incredibly beneficial.

The in-school academic support time provides “an opportunity for them [students] to get face-to-face interaction with teachers that maybe they wouldn't normally get to have during the day.” Sometimes it is this personal contact with teachers “that can improve [students'] academics for sure.”

Furthermore, when students begin to progress in their skills and improve their grades, their confidence level increases, as Betty stated, the academic support is a “confidence builder.” This perception was also reiterated by Frank who stated, “Just seeing the kids as they come in and they have an opportunity to re-take a test and you

start seeing them build that confidence that they have in their classroom.” This confidence is another positive impact on students’ academic performance.

Overall, the theme of improved student academic performance was prevalent in the teacher responses as an outcome of the in-school academic support time. While improved grades and decreases in D and F grades were the most common reported academic outcomes, teachers also shared personal perspectives of how the time was a kind of motivator for students to complete their work. Additionally, the designated time provided opportunities for teachers to assist struggling students with more personalized attention and increased student confidence in regards to learning in the classroom. These were the academic outcomes of the program identified in this study.

Non-Academic Outcomes. While the designated time was originally implemented to provide academic support for students, all twelve participants shared some kind of non-academic outcome as a result of having the designated time included in the regular high school schedule. The teachers described a variety of non-academic outcomes including the welcomed break and benefits of the time for both teachers and students to the improved student connections to the school through increased student participation in activities. However, one of the more prevalent non-academic outcomes that emerged was that of the opportunity the designated time presents for teachers and students to build relationships.

Time benefits. The simple fact of including a little chunk of time into the schedule on a consistent basis was perceived as beneficial. Four of the teachers specifically discussed the designated time as a break. As Larry shared, “I think giving students and, to be honest, teachers a little bit of a break in the middle of the day to kind

of change things up a little bit, I think is a good thing.” George also commented, “for me, actually, it does give me a mind break a little.” Emma explained how the time can also be used for additional plan time or break, stating, “we can just do other things...you can plan...activities or you can take that time to actually get some work done. It’s a break for the teacher, too, it definitely ends up being a little bit of a break.” Ilene described the time more as a moment to slow down, “it provides kind of just that breath in the middle of the day where you’re not rushing from one place to another and there’s just a little more grace in that time.” These statements all provide examples of how the designated time can provide an opportunity for a more relaxed moment for all within the typical busy schedule of a high school setting.

In addition to a short break in the middle of the day, at least eight of the teachers responded with comments about how the time built into the schedule is specifically appreciated and beneficial to them. One way the teachers described the time as being beneficial is that it allowed them to assist students during the contracted school day, protecting their outside of school time. As Amy shared:

I think it has been a time saver because I was staying after contract time at least 3 times a week to stay with kids who needed work time. Since they can’t take my work home, they have to do it in the ceramics studio. I was staying after school. But this has really cut that down.

Betty also commented about the designated time, “I know that it saves me from before and after school, such a line of people, when I actually utilize the time. So, for me as a core teacher, I think it is great.” Frank also commented about the use of time during the school as opposed to outside of school hours when he shared, “I’ve really enjoyed being

able to give kids time to do their work in the school day.... kids and I think we as teachers would prefer to do it in school. So, that's been the biggest benefit."

Furthermore, sometimes teachers have commitments after school, such as coaching duties, which make it difficult to provide academic assistance after hours, and thus, the in-school academic support time proves to help in these situations as Larry communicated, "I think that [the time] is very valuable. It's always hard sometimes to carve out that time for kids to come in and take tests after school if you've got activities to get to." Ilene discussed how she is not available after school hours because she works part-time, and therefore appreciates having the designated time built into the schedule. She described:

I'm not here in the afternoons to be available after school. So, I have really appreciated having the opportunity to interact with students on a one-on-one basis for...extra help, for making-up quizzes and tests, for study sessions. To have that built into the day where it's a given that [students are] going to be in the building is really, has really been beneficial to me as a teacher.

Teachers also commented about the time as a benefit in that it provided teachers additional instructional time to work with and be more available students.

Frank stated:

You have to go, go, go to get everything done. And then there was always the question of where do you go to find the time to go back over the things that kids don't know. I feel like our [designated time] gives us a chance...it is a built-in opportunity that's there.

Carrie also shared her perspective of how the additional time is an instructional resource that benefits her as a teacher:

It helps [me] to be able to help them...trying to do it in the class period, there's just not time for that.... I just feel like I'm a better, I can be a better teacher because I have this other resource that I can suggest for them. I think all teachers probably feel like they run out of time all the time in class.... So, here's this extra bonus time that we can use.

Halie also commented on her perception of the time as a valuable resource for her as it allows her to be more available to assist her students as she stated, "It has given me more of an opportunity to work one-on-one with students. Even if it's a small amount of time, I feel like I'm more available for my kids." Halie continued, "For my instruction...[it] gives me more time, if I didn't finish up a lesson, or if a kid had to leave to go to the nurse...it gives me that extra time during the school day."

According to the teachers' comments and perceptions, it appears that several of the teachers value the time of the program as a break, as a protection for outside of school time, and as an instructional resource. In addition to the benefits the time offers to teachers, eight of the twelve respondents also shared how they perceived the time to benefit the students. The students' benefits include students' accommodations and academic needs being met. Additionally, the students who rely on school bus transportation and are unable to meet teachers outside of regular school hours benefit as they are able to receive academic support during the day. Furthermore, teachers also perceived that the time is beneficial for students who are involved with after school activities, such as sports or jobs, as well as those students who are engaged in rigorous

academic courses that require a lot of additional study or preparation outside of the regular school day.

Katie mentioned the time as a benefit for her students who may require accommodations, such as those who have “an IEP or 504, especially. [The time] provides them with a quiet location to get that retake done and be able to ask questions or have it read to them very easily.” Halie described her thoughts on how the time can benefit students who need extended time to complete work:

If we have a test and a kid needs more time...or even if a kid I know later in my day that I know takes a little longer to work on some stuff, I will have them come in during [the academic support time] and start or finish.... I just need to give them opportunities when I feel like they need more time. Some kids are working diligently, but they need more time.... Us as educators...we gotta do better about that. Especially if we have built-in time during the day.... Give those babies an opportunity for a few more minutes.

These examples show how the time permits students’ accommodations or specific learning needs to be met, helping them to be more academically successful.

Five of the teachers discussed how the time benefits students who are unable to attend before or after school tutoring or academic support sessions because they do not drive and may rely on the school provided transportation. Often these are the younger students who do not yet have a driver’s license and their parents work, so are unavailable to pick-up students after school. Amy described that she is able to assist more students thanks to the designated time “because some kids just don’t have rides.” She continued to explain, “Most kids don’t have parents that can come pick them up at 3:30 you know.

And so, this is during the school day and they [students] are guaranteed to be able to be there.” Carrie also had a similar perspective as she shared:

It’s really helped me...to help the students that don’t have the transportation to come in before or after school or to stay after school. Which are typically my younger students, but also, I would say there is probably some lower socio-economic students that would fall into that category, too, that have to ride the bus. They don’t have the car available for them. And so, having that time for them to use has been beneficial.

Along these same lines, Diane also discussed that the built-in time helps students who don’t have rides. She commented that the designated time has helped these students to manage their time as they learn to utilize the in-school academic support time when they are unable to stay after school. Diane shared:

It helps give [students] a better idea of time management skills because they know and they plan on that time during the day, where that’s one of the first things they suggest...especially with my freshmen because they ride the bus, they can’t stay after school because they don’t have a ride. And so that’s one of the first things [students] suggest, “Can I come in during [academic support] time?”

While the in-school academic support time is perceived to benefit students who may be younger or lack transportation, five of the teachers also shared how the in-school academic support time is really beneficial to the students who may be the higher achieving students or those who are actively involved in various activities outside of school. With these students, the designated time allows students to seek academic support from teachers or provides time to complete school work during the school day.

John described that his upper level students who take his advanced college level course are the students who utilize the given time the most. John described:

They really utilize it. They will have busy enough lives and they have heavy workloads. They will come in daily to work on projects as an additional 30 or 40 minutes. Or come in...and ask questions and stuff that is supplemental to the class.

John continued to explain that these students are utilizing their time during the school day to focus on school work that would typically need to be done outside of school hours. However, with the use of the given time, John continued, “they’re hopefully reducing their stress a little bit and they’re freeing up... a little bit of time in their afternoon.”

Larry’s comments provided a similar message about the time being beneficial for busy students. Larry stated:

We’ve got students that might be in activities or something after school. So, making up a test or making up something that they missed or asking questions is going to be hard to do before or after school and they can do that during that [academic support] time. So, I think for the sort of kids that use it and are productive during that time, I think it’s definitely a benefit.

Halie further described that the in-school academic support time “has helped my students who are extremely busy. It’s had a great impact on my kids who are busy who don’t feel like they have enough time in the day.” She gave a more descriptive explanation of the students who benefit from the in-school academic time explaining that many of her students play multiple sports either through clubs or school, are involved in various clubs, and are maintaining higher grade point averages. She continued to

describe that these students are busy after school with practice, work, and homework and often do not get much sleep. These same students may miss class instruction because they left school early to compete in a sport. Halie stated:

Having that time in the school day where it doesn't affect their practice, it doesn't affect the stuff they know they have to do starting at 2:23. Woo! That has been a life-saver for some of those babies and I really love it for that.

Therefore, it is evident that teachers perceive the element of time to benefit many students, including those who may need special accommodations, those with limited transportation, and those who are academically engaged and active inside and outside of the classroom.

Increased student involvement. Another non-academic outcome of the in-school academic support time was that of increased student involvement in school activities. Four of the six participants from school A reported that more students were involved in clubs or activities due to the fact that students could engage with these activities during the in-school academic support time. According to Ilene, the number of clubs has grown as students are looking for a place “to belong during that time” and thus, students have begun to propose new clubs, “giving some purpose to” that time.

Larry's perspective was that more students were able to participate in activities because the club meetings were occurring during the school day rather than after school hours. He stated:

Kids that have issues with rides or kids that can't make it to certain things before or after school might have a connection to a club or activity that is primarily taking place during [the designated time]. I think it's a good thing.

Furthermore, Carrie shared how she thinks the increased student involvement in activities during the in-school academic support time has helped students make connections at school. She shared:

I think it really has helped a lot of students find different ...places to feel included. We have *so* many different offerings now than what we had before. Some of them are fun, some are academic, some of them are sports related, but it just gives students an opportunity to be involved.

John explained having club meetings during the school day allows students to explore new or different activities:

[It] allows the kids to be in a few more things.... Since there's meetings during the school day they actually can take part in it. So, it does allow them to dip a little deeper and try a few more things, which I think for most kids are good.

Each of these teachers' comments highlight that having club and activities during the school day allow for more students to connect or get involved. There are more opportunities for students to find places where they fit in or find new interests and are not hindered by schedule conflicts or transportation issues that may occur if club meetings were always taking place after school. Further, as Ilene shared, the increased student involvement in clubs and activities that meet during the designated school time "is providing more of a sense of belonging, which is one of our school goals."

Positive impacts on student-teacher relationships. A more prominent non-academic outcome of the in-school academic support time was that of the positive impacts the time has had on student-teacher relationships. Eight teacher participants within this study perceived that the time allowed for building relationships and

connecting with students. As Ilene declared, “I think the academic benefits are definitely there, but I think that there’s more relational benefits in terms of students, that are probably some of the most vital.” Likewise, Diane stated, “I do think that the relationship part of it is big and I think that’s one of the main things that administration wants us to get out of it.” Diane further explained that the time “does allow for us to build relationships, which is a nice thing for us, for our students...I think we are able to have a little more one-on-one time to build those relationships.”

Betty expanded on this perception of how she utilizes the time to build relationships with some of her students:

I get to know students a little better. If they come every day I can kinda just, you know, chat with them if I have time and I’m not working with a lot of people.

Kinda maybe get to know them on a more personal level.

Amy also shared that relationship building was a positive outcome as she shared about her students:

I’m closer to some of my students because I have the same kids that I’ll see [from class].... They are also in my [academic support time].... And I’ll have students that I know that will just always be there. They just hang out in my room. And that’s a personal thing...It’s a safe place for them to be. So, I think that the emotional interaction has increased for the positive.

This demonstrates how teachers build connections with the students that report to their classroom on a regular basis, even if not for academic purposes. This idea of connecting with students who may not be enrolled in a teacher’s class was also mentioned by Katie.

Even though Katie claimed she did not use the in-school academic support time for anything except academic purposes, she shared, “It’s been positive...Even the kids that I don’t have [in class], like I’ve made positive relationships as a mentor with some of those students, too.”

Ilene further provided a good description of how the in-school academic support time has fostered positive relationships between teachers and students:

I think it’s also great for relationship building. It allows for even those kids that are just hanging out, those kids end up being some of the ...people you have the greatest relationships with.... That was a great time to just get to know them and, you know, a lot of life happens during that sort of open time during the day. So, adding a little bit of that has been good for teacher-student relationships.

Therefore, while the in-school academic support time was originally implemented to provide assistance to increase students’ academic performance, teachers also perceived that non-academic outcomes have resulted as well. These outcomes include the benefits of the time for both teachers and students, increased student involvement and sense of belonging at school, as well as strengthening relationships between teachers and students.

Finding 4

The central question guiding this study asked, what are teacher perceptions regarding in-school academic support times within high schools? Overall, the study found that teachers generally feel positive about the inclusion of the in-school academic support time within their high school settings as it does have successes and positive benefits. However, while the teachers like the program, most offered that their program could be improved in some capacity and suggested developing common goals as a

foundational piece to the program's success. As Carrie summarized her perception of the in-school academic support time within her building:

I love it. Um, I think it is necessary.... But, I think it is a very beneficial thing to have, if it's run correctly. And ours is pretty good. So, a few tweaks here and there and we'll be closer to perfection. I don't think you ever get a perfect system when you're dealing with high school students.

Overall positive perceptions. In general, eleven of the twelve teacher participants in this study shared positive feelings and statements about the in-school academic support time at their high school. Betty stated, "I think it's pretty clear based on everything I've said that I think it's very beneficial to students." Halie also commented, "It needs to be there. In theory and in place, it's a good program...and it has had success." Likewise, Larry stated, "I think it's a good thing for kids.... I also think kids enjoy it. I think kids want it. But, I think it's a good thing for our school."

Some of the teacher participants provided more detailed descriptions, sharing the specifics of the positives they perceived about the program. Regarding academics, Larry stated, "I think for the most part teachers like it.... I think [kids using the time] and getting some things done and being able to talk to a teacher and have questions answered...is a good thing in the long run." On the other hand, Diane shared, "I like the opportunity that it allows me to use [the time] with my extra-curricular activities." Further, several teachers, including Ilene, Frank, and Amy, discussed how the relationship aspect of the program is as beneficial as the academic piece of the program overall, as Frank stated, "so that's my most positive outcome, is the relationship piece that you build...I enjoy the kids that come in." He added, "I definitely feel that on the

academic piece of it, the kids get an opportunity to do what they need to do.”

Additionally, the inclusion of the program within the school schedule may have benefits for students beyond what one can quantify, as Ilene described, “I do think that some of the other benefits of it in terms of relationships with students and possibly what it does for students in ways that we can’t really measure...overall it has been beneficial for our school.” She continued:

Overall, I think it has been an incredibly beneficial thing for us. I think there has been definite academic benefits for my students, relational benefits for students and teachers. And hopefully...that sense of belonging, sense of inclusion has been promoted by it. At least by the number of clubs, it seems to have been a success.

Amy also summarized her perception of the in-school academic support time:

I’m a huge proponent of it. I definitely feel it is worthwhile if it’s used the way it’s supposed to be used. I think it can help academically and social-emotionally for these kids. I think it can help to build relationships between teachers and students, where we just wouldn’t have time normally.

These teachers’ responses clearly provide an overall positive viewpoint regarding the benefits of the in-school academic support time within the high school setting.

Teachers agreed the program was worthwhile and liked by both students and teachers for academic reasons as well as non-academic purposes, including extra-curricular involvement and strengthening student-teacher relationships within the schools.

Develop common goals for the program. While eleven of the participants shared positive perceptions of the in-school academic support time overall, almost all of

the twelve participants also mentioned various concerns or offered suggestions to improve their program or for others to consider if implementing a similar program. While these concerns and suggestions varied widely amongst the participants, one theme did emerge consistently across the group. Nine of the twelve interview participants discussed the concept of needing to have common goals along with structures to support the goals of the program within the building. As John advocated for the program, “I think it would be great for any school as long as you guys as a staff know what your goals are and then make sure admin sticks to those goals with you.” But, he added, “you have to have a framework in place inside of it for it to really have its full effect.” Further, Ilene shared her perception and suggestion for the in-school academic support time, “I think there are a variety of expectations of how that time is going to be used and what management of that time will look like. So, I think that it needs to be constantly re-evaluated.” Thus, while the program is perceived as positive, the perception is that there are inconsistencies or differences in expectations for the purposes or goals of the program. These responses indicate that teachers recognize the need for the specific goals of the program to be clearly defined and that the operation of the program needs to include structures that support the attainment of the expected goals.

For example, if your goal for the program is to improve academics, then systems need to be established to urge students to utilize the time for academic support purposes. John shared this idea, “If your group goal...[is] to raise the Ds and Fs, I think you got to have a little bit more of a framework to hold those kids accountable.” He further explained that you “need to get all the stakeholders that are involved with it...and ultimately, that whole group needs to come up with a couple of major goals...cause

they're going to be the ones doing it and they've got to buy in." John continued, once you've established your goals for the program, the next step is to figure out the accountability pieces for all involved to make sure everyone is focused on accomplishing the set goals:

Then figure out your guys' accountability piece. How are we making sure the kids are accountable? How are we making sure our faculty is accountable for how they're doing it? And how are we making sure the admin is accountable and supporting it?

Along these same lines, Diane also made comments indicating, "I feel like we have to have a little bit more structure...maybe [we] need to set a few more ground rules," to clarify expectations. Or as Ilene shared:

Getting everybody on the same page as far as expectations of the variety of ways that time is meant to be used [would be] helpful. I think even being clear about telling our students our expectations with that on a regular basis is something that, if implemented in another school, would be really wise.

Ilene's comment further illustrates the importance of not only having established common goals, but also consistently communicating the goals and expectations with the students as an important aspect to the success of an in-school academic support time.

In the end, the main suggestion was to establish mutual goals for the program that work for your high school setting and to work together as a staff to accomplish those collective goals. This concept was reflected in Emma's suggestion, "I think if everyone were on the same page as to what the ultimate goal [of the designated time was] and you just agreed...and teachers kind of attacked it together in that way." Developing common

goals was the most prominent suggestion the teacher participants within this study provided for improving their current high school programs or for those considering implementing similar in-school academic programs.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings that resulted from the analysis of data that were obtained from the twelve teachers who participated in voluntary face-to-face interview sessions. These teachers, from two similar suburban Midwest public high schools, provided their perceptions of in-school academic support time programs based on their personal experiences with the program at their respective high school setting. From the data, four major findings with a total of ten themes emerged coinciding with the major research questions of the study. These themes and findings shared the teachers' perceptions of the in-school academic support times, specifically pertaining to the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the program as well as their overall thoughts of the program as a whole.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of this qualitative study, reviewing the problem, purpose, research questions, research method, and findings. Additionally, chapter 5 further discusses the research findings related to the literature followed by implications for action, suggestions for further research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

This chapter is organized into three major sections to summarize and discuss the interpretations of this qualitative study regarding teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times as part of high school schedules within the suburban Midwest area. The study summary includes an overview of the problem, the purpose and research questions that guided this study as well as a review of the research methodology and major findings. Next, the research findings related to the literature will be discussed. Finally, the chapter will conclude with implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks about this qualitative research study.

Study Summary

The major components of this research study including the problem, purpose, methods and major findings are briefly reviewed before the final conclusions and recommendations are presented.

Overview of the problem. The modern American educational system is responsible for ensuring all students learn at high levels and are prepared for success in post-secondary education or the work force upon high school graduation (DuFour et al., 2004). In response, many schools have incorporated various programs and strategies to improve instructional methods and provide academic interventions and supports to positively impact students' academic success (Buffum et al., 2009; DuFour et al., 2004). Unfortunately, academic supports and interventions are more limited at the high school level as many educators cling to the long-standing traditional structures (Sansosti et al.,

2010). Further, due to various obstacles and distractions that are present for secondary level students outside of the regular school day, researchers recommend that academic supports should be provided within the timeframe of the regular school day (DuFour et al., 2004; Guskey, 2010). Therefore, high schools throughout the nation have implemented various types of in-school academic support times, including several suburban Midwest area high schools. However, while the inclusion of such programs has become more common within high school structures, questions exist concerning the programs' effectiveness in providing academic support to all students. Therefore, research is necessary to obtain insight on in-school academic support programs' value as part of a high school's regular instructional schedule.

Purpose statement and research questions. This qualitative study sought to explore teachers' perceptions in order to gain a deeper understanding of in-school academic support times as part of a public high school's normal schedule. Specifically, this study sought to obtain teachers' perceptions regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support time programs within two suburban Midwest area public high schools.

The study was guided by a central question and three supporting research questions. The overarching central question of this study was, "What are teacher perceptions regarding the in-school academic support time within high schools?" This question was supported by the following specific research questions:

RQ1. What are teacher perceptions regarding how the in-school academic support time is utilized within high schools?

RQ2. What are teacher perceptions regarding the challenges of in-school academic support times within high schools?

RQ3. What are teacher perceptions regarding the outcomes of in-school academic support times within high schools?

Review of the methodology. The methodology utilized for this study was that of a qualitative research design in order to explore the phenomenon of in-school academic support times through teachers' perceptions of their personal experiences. In order to obtain rich data, individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with volunteer participants from two similar public high schools within the Midwest area. Six teachers from each school, having at least 2 years of experience with the current in-school academic support program and representing different academic areas across the building, comprised the total twelve volunteer participants informing this study. During face-to-face interviews, the volunteer participants responded to a series of open-ended questions as well as prompts or follow-up clarifying questions as part of the semi-structured interview format. The interview protocol consisted of 12 questions, organized by the main research questions and were focused on the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support time programs as well as teachers' general perceptions of the program overall. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

Data from the interviews were organized and analyzed by the researcher through the use of the Dedoose Research Analysis computer program. The researcher coded the individual interview responses, grouping similar responses. The coding process was conducted multiple times by the researcher to clarify and ensure accurate interpretation of

the data. From the data codes, common themes emerged within each research question area, resulting in the major findings of the study.

Major findings. This qualitative study, guided by three research questions pertaining to an overarching central question, sought to obtain teachers' overall perceptions of in-school academic support times within the high school setting, specifically regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the programs. The teachers' responses resulted in four major findings with ten total themes. These findings and themes are discussed and organized according to the major research questions.

The first finding of the study, containing 3 themes, indicated that the in-school academic support time is utilized for mixed purposes, both academic and non-academic. Likewise, the use of time is driven by the fact that both teachers and students have some choice in the activities in which they choose to engage with during the time. Furthermore, the theme of structural changes in procedures emerged as an element of the overall structure, especially in one of the schools within this study, which has led to more student choice in how the time is utilized.

The next finding addressed the perceived challenges of the in-school academic support times within high schools. The main finding in this area was that teachers perceived the non-academic components of the program to raise more concerns and challenges than the academic piece of the program. Again, 3 themes defined the challenges as perceived by the research participants. The first theme centered around the disorder in the common gathering spaces and the insufficient supervision as concerns within the common areas of the buildings, such as the hallways and large commons or cafeteria spaces where students congregated when they were not participating in

academic supports. The second theme concerned student issues associated with the configuration of the in-school academic support time. One issue is that of students choosing to not participate in academic support activities due to a lack of accountability structures within the program. Another student issue was that of unmotivated students also not engaging in the academic supports, but rather opting to utilize the time for non-academic reasons. The third theme that emerged as a challenge was that of teachers' instructional concerns because they are sometimes unable to adequately meet the differing needs of all the students during the academic support time due to the large number of students who seek the assistance within the limited time provided.

The third finding of this study revealed that teachers perceive improved student academic performance to be a major academic outcome of the in-school academic support time. However, a secondary theme of non-academic outcomes also was evident from the teachers' responses. These non-academic outcomes included the various ways the designated time benefits both the teachers and students as it provides a mental break for all, protects outside of school time, and permits additional instruction or support for students who may not be able to obtain the help outside of school hours due to issues such as lack of transportation or heavy involvement in other activities after school hours. The non-academic outcomes also included the increased student involvement in school clubs, activities, and organizations as meetings could be held during school hours when students are more available to participate. Finally, teachers reported that the designated time resulted in positive impacts for student-teacher relationships as the time permitted teachers and students more opportunity to connect and develop relationships.

The final finding related to the overarching central question about teachers' overall perceptions of the in-school academic support time program as part of the regular high school daily schedule found that almost all of the teachers perceived the time to be generally positive. However, while teachers reported that both students and teachers liked the designated time of the program, many voiced some concerns or suggestions for improvement. Even though the concerns and suggestions were highly varied, the teachers basically agreed that it was important for the building staff to establish common goals for the program and collectively determine and carry out the structures and expectations to strive towards the intended goals of the in-school academic support time.

Findings Related to the Literature

In-school academic support times have been implemented within many schools as one approach to obtain success in preparing all students for post-secondary education or career readiness upon graduation as mandated by current educational laws, such as ESSA. This qualitative study found that the two schools within this study utilized an in-school academic support time structure that permitted a mixed-use of the time for both academic and non-academic purposes. These academic support programs may have been a direct outcome of PLC practices and philosophies that encourage providing additional time and support during the school day for students to learn (Buffum et al., 2009; DuFour et al., 2004). This mixed-use of time aligns with the flex-time model of in-school academic supports as described by Quinn (2019) and other researchers (Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Keller, 2013; Nagel, 2010). The flex-time model involves allowing time for students to either receive academic supports during the school day or to

use the time for other purposes in supervised locations throughout the school buildings (Quinn, 2019).

Academically, the in-school support time described by the teachers in this study appeared to be part of a multi-tiered system of academic supports, such as the PLC or RTI pyramid consisting of increasing levels of academic supports. As many teachers reported offering open time for any student to attend their class during the in-school academic support time, this level of support could be considered as a Tier 1 support which is available to all students through general classroom instruction (Buffum et al., 2009; Fuchs et al., 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011). Like Bennet and Blanton (2016) discussed the use of the Bulldog Block, all students in the studied schools are encouraged to use the in-school academic support time for academic purposes, regardless of academic levels or mandatory assignments. However, some teachers also reported assigning or inviting individual or smaller groups of students to attend their class during the designated time in order to provide more specific or focused academic support, which is more in line with the Tier 2 level of support (Buffum et al., 2009; Fuchs et al., 2010; Hoover & Love, 2011).

While the academic supports are offered and available to students, the structure of the support systems are not fully aligned with the practices of PLC or RTI as some key elements of the structures are missing. For instance, DuFour et al. (2004) described a PLC model of academic support as being proactive, systematic, timely, and directive. The teachers in this study described the academic support was often assigned or students were invited to attend only after earning poor academic grades, scoring poorly on tests, or failing to complete and turn in assignments. Thus, the academic support is utilized as a

reactive strategy to help students raise grades rather than a proactive practice, as suggested by Casazza (2004), to improve skills or address academic weaknesses early on in the learning process. Likewise, teachers in this study were not systematic in identifying students for academic assistance or in prescribing specific academic interventions as there was little to no mention of any screening process nor any progress monitoring of student performance beyond basic academic grades, which are main components of RTI practices according to Buffum et al. (2009). This lack of identifying students and providing specific interventions goes against Jackson's (2014) recommendations to improve intervention by assigning students to receive academic supports based on identified deficiencies in skills or knowledge concepts instead of basic grades as well as training teachers to implement different instructional strategies to address various student needs. Furthermore, many teachers within this study did not or could not require students to attend the academic support sessions. Rather, the teachers indicated it was usually the students' responsibility and choice to seek out help from the teachers, especially in School A. However, it should be noted that School B in the study did have more structures in place to support directive, mandatory assignments for students to attend academic support sessions with possible consequences for those students who failed to attend.

The flex-time model of academic support time could be perceived as an incentive system which rewards students for academic performance by allowing students who are not required to attend academic tutoring to utilize the time for fun activities or free time (Quinn, 2019). However, over time, the schools within this study have relaxed their stance on the mandatory assignments and are less directive in assigning students to attend

mandatory academic assistance sessions. Thus, students and teachers now have more choice to utilize the designated time for many purposes, including non-academic activities. Therefore, the reward structure for student academic performance has decreased and the non-academic use of the time has increased. Teachers reported using the time for athletic team meetings, sponsoring various clubs, facilitating school organizations, such as Student Senate, or spending time connecting with students through fun activities, such as movies or coffee talks. These non-academic uses of the given time can positively impact student success by providing more opportunities for students to build relationships, explore interests, and connect with the school through various clubs, organizations, and activities. Students who are involved and connected with the school are more inclined to view school in a positive manner and perform better academically (Bryan et al., 2012; Loomis, 2011). Therefore, the connections and relationships students may develop within these non-academic activities potentially could have positive benefits that carry over into the classroom resulting in higher academic success.

The second finding of this study revealed that teachers perceive some challenges of the in-school academic support time programs to involve issues outside of the classroom, such as the common areas where large groups of students may gather for non-academic purposes along with insufficient adult supervision for these larger spaces. Further, teachers reported that a lack of accountability systems to require students to attend mandatory academic support sessions along with issues of academically unmotivated students contributed to their challenges of the in-school academic support time programs. The lack of mandatory assignments for academic assistance is in opposition to the ideas described in PLC and RTI formats which both are directive in

requiring students to attend academic supports (Buffum et al., 2009; DuFour et al., 2004). Likewise, the flex-time models examined in the literature all indicated the use of required, mandatory tutoring or academic assistance for at least some portion of the student population within their programs, typically based on grades or skill deficits (Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Keller, 2013; Nagel, 2010). As the schools in this study have reportedly moved away from some or all of the mandatory structures of their in-school academic support programs, students are allowed the opportunity to voluntarily choose to receive academic support or not. This option of choice may contribute to the fact that many students opted to not participate in the academic support offerings during the designated time in the studied schools, and thus, were more likely to congregate in common areas of schools for free time or other non-academic activities. Additionally, the non-academic activities and free time options that are offered during the designated times in the studied schools could present major distractions for some of the students as many secondary level students choose to participate in various school activities, sports, or are interested in socializing and dating. These same types of distractions create challenges for after-school academic support programs at the secondary level (Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Mellard et al., 2008). Furthermore, high school students are likely to have more independence, freedom, and responsibility to make their own decisions at school, which could negatively affect their academic performance and motivation (Mellard et al., 2008).

Additionally, the accountability systems and stronger mandatory structures may have been eliminated or revised to create a more positive student perception towards the offered academic support. Some teachers within the study discussed how the previous

mandatory process was time consuming and punitive as administrators spent a great deal of time handing out consequences for students who failed to attend assigned academic support sessions. Because consequences were issued for students who did not attend mandatory sessions, students may have perceived the in-school academic support time in a negative manner. This supports Nagel's (2010) comment that students may not perceive the mandatory academic time as a positive support, but rather as a punitive measure. Williams (2016) further explained that students in his studied school viewed the academic support as punishment because other students were allowed to use the time for gym play. As a result, both Nagel (2010) and Williams (2016) reported that the flex time structures of the schools they described were changed. However, instead of doing away with mandatory structures, all students were required to utilize the designated time for academic purposes only, such as a study hall (Nagel, 2010; Williams, 2016). On the contrary, Baggett (2009) shared that some of the students in her study indicated the mandatory assignments were a motivator to do better academically so that students did not lose their free lunch time.

Teachers within this study described that the academically unmotivated students would often not comply with mandatory assignments, creating an on-going cycle of consequences and punitive measures. Additionally, even when given the option to voluntarily participate in academic supports, less motivated students may opt out in lieu of free time or non-academic activities. Research suggests a variety of reasons why some students may be academically unmotivated or at-risk. Loomis (2011) described that at-risk students within a large traditional school setting performed poorly due to the school culture, large class sizes, as well as students feeling uncared for and disconnected from

the school. Likewise, research has repeatedly suggested that student motivation towards academic success is highly associated with student-teacher relationships and connectedness to the school (Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Bryan et al., 2012). One could perceive that the schools within this study shifted their focus of the designated support time by relaxing or eliminating the mandatory academic structures in order to decrease the negative view of the offered academic support and to strengthen school bonding, improve school culture, and to cultivate more positive student-teacher relationships through non-academic activities and options. This follows the suggestion that schools need “to connect students with caring adults in and outside of the classroom, ... improve school attachment and climate,” and “enhance student achievement,” (Bryan et al., 2012, p. 475). This coincides with the literature which indicates these factors, especially the relationships and connections with caring teachers, are more influential to students’ academic success and motivation than any academic support program (Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Bryan et al. 2012).

Aside from non-academic challenges and concerns, teachers in this study perceived some instructional struggles with managing the number of students and variety of needs at one time during the in-school academic support time sessions. This instructional challenge highlights the need for teachers to have training in implementing academic supports and interventions for better success, which is congruent with the literature and research that indicates teachers need on-going staff development to implement successful academic supports (Baker, 2018; Bartholomew, 2016; Canter et al., 2008; Carter, N., 2008; Christiansen et al., 2016; Epler-Brooks, 2011; Hoover & Love, 2011; Rosenblatt, 2002; Sansosti et al., 2010b). However, teachers in this study did not

discuss concerns with how to best support students academically nor did they discuss the implementation of any specific interventions. Rather, teachers in this study indicated they felt confident in providing support to students by simply providing time for students to complete or make-up work and tests, clarifying homework questions, or providing additional practice or test study sessions. Perhaps the teachers in this study struggled to meet the variety of needs of multiple students at one time as they did not have proper training to implement specific interventions or differentiated instructional strategies which coincides with Cochran et al. (2008) study which found that Missouri teachers did not receive training on how to support academically struggling students within their college teacher training programs. This lack of training to implement instructional strategies and interventions for struggling learners is especially prevalent for secondary level educators (Baker, 2018; Calhoun, 2018; Canter et al., 2008; Cochran et al., 2008; Sansosti et al., 2010a; Sansosti et al., 2010b). Therefore, research supports schools providing on-going, job-embedded professional development for teachers to effectively implement academic support time models (Carter, N., 2018; Cochran et al., 2008; Farbman, 2015; Kaplan & Chan, 2011; Martin, 2008; Reeves et al., 2010).

The third major finding of this study was focused on the outcomes of in-school academic support times in the high schools. This study found that most teachers perceived the in-school academic support time at their school did have some positive impact on students' academic performance. This finding aligns with past research findings of in-school academic support times and flex period programs (Baggett, 2009; Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Keller, 2013; Nagel, 2010). Generally, teachers in this study voiced that the academic improvements were evident by the decreased

number of D and F grades or improved letter grades students received as a result of being able to complete work and make-up tests during the school day. This result is similar to Jackson's (2014) study which found that the in-school flex time model of support was marginally successful in helping students achieve better grades. Likewise, Keller's (2013) study found the flex time model did initially help decrease the number of failing grades across the school. Perhaps the results of better grades occurred because students were provided time during the school day to complete homework, make-up missing work, and re-take assessments that they would not have done if students had to rely on after-school time to complete these tasks, similar to Ruffin's (2018) findings about a mandatory study hall period which resulted in some positive academic gains with grades.

However, despite some teachers reporting that the in-school academic support time also led to greater student confidence in the classroom, there was little mentioned of long term or ongoing academic gains such as better comprehension of concepts, higher standardized test scores, or higher graduation rates at the studied schools. This outcome is similar to the findings of Jackson (2014) and Keller (2013) that both found in-school academic support times helped improve students' letter grades to some degree but did not necessarily result in long term academic gains for students. This differs from the results reported by Bennet and Blanton (2016) who indicated their Bulldog Block resulted in increased graduation rates, increased ACT scores, and increased numbers of students eligible for higher level courses of study. Likewise, Nagel (2010) also reported that the in-school academic support time at his school resulted in 100% of the students graduating in the year 2009, even though a large percentage of the students were from low socio-economic groups.

Aside from academic outcomes, teachers in this study discussed several non-academic outcomes that resulted from the program including the benefits the actual time provided to the teachers and students within the school. Teachers discussed how the time is valued as it provides a break and protects outside of school time. Further, teachers in this study supported the need for the additional time, indicating that the designated time increased their availability to assist more students during the regular school day and was a valuable instructional resource as it provided supplemental time to finish lessons or work with students on a more personal level. Research indicates the additional time for academic support is essential due to the rigorous curriculum expectations of current American schools (Balfanz et al., 2002; DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Typically, academic supports are focused on and recommended for underperforming or at-risk subgroups of students in order to improve our nation's schools and prepare all students for success after graduation (Atwel et al., 2019; Belfield et al., 2012; Van Roekel, 2008). Teachers within this study discussed how the time is utilized to provide needed accommodations for some students or to assist students who aren't available for after-school supports as they rely on school transportation or have jobs or other responsibilities outside of school time. Likewise, teachers shared that the time is beneficial for high achieving students as these students utilize the time to get academic work done during the school day, perhaps reducing their academic stress and allowing them time for other after-school activities as well as needed sleep. This time as a benefit to high achieving students supports the research of Conner et al. (2009) who reported higher achieving students claim to have high levels of academic stress and often spend many hours outside of the regular school day focused on academics and activities at the expense of sleep and general well-being.

Literature suggests that the designated time in a school day can benefit higher achieving students by providing work time, tutorials, free time, or time to participate in specialty programs and school activities (Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Conner et al., 2009; Williams, 2016).

Other non-academic outcomes found in this study were that of increased student involvement in school activities, organizations, and clubs and improved student-teacher relationships. Although Bennett and Blanton (2016) discussed the Bulldog Block provided opportunities for students to participate in school club meetings and organizations, increased student involvement in school activities was not apparent in other studies of flex time academic support programs. However, literature did support the importance of students connecting and bonding to their school environment (Bryan et al., 2012). Specifically, research indicated that positive student-teacher relationships are a significant factor in fostering a school environment in which students feel connected and cared for, which results in better academic success (Aquino, 2011; Bryan et al., 2012; Knesting, 2008; Knesting & Waldron, 2006; Loomis, 2011). When students feel their teachers understand them outside of the classroom and genuinely care about them, students may be more approving of their teachers and thus, more willing to accept the academic assistance the teachers offer (Knesting, 2008; Knesting & Waldron, 2006). Therefore, the outcome of improved student-teacher relationships reported in this qualitative study could positively impact students' academic performance inside the classroom.

The final finding of this qualitative study revealed that teachers generally perceived the in-school academic support time as a positive inclusion to their regular high

school schedules, which aligns with other research and studies of flex time support programs (Baggett, 2009; Bennett & Blanton, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Keller, 2013; Nagel, 2010). Despite the general positive feelings towards the program, the teachers in this study offered a variety of suggestions for improving their program or for others to consider if implementing a similar in-school academic support time at their school. The most frequent suggestion from teachers in this study highlighted the need to establish common goals for the support time and to develop and implement the necessary structures to support the success of the common goals. This suggestion clearly aligns with the work of DuFour and Eaker (1998) who developed the framework for PLCs. DuFour et al. (2004) described one of the essential elements of a successful PLC school is to develop a “shared mission, vision, values, and goals” as the foundation of the PLC (p.2). The teachers in the current study shared perspectives that indicated operating with a clear understanding of the goals for the program would decrease the inconsistencies or differences in expectations across their building staff. Having this clear understanding of the goals and expectations for the program could increase staff buy-in and support of the program. The teachers further shared the need to continually re-evaluate the program and make adjustments to ensure the program is meeting the intended purpose. This on-going evaluation also aligns with the PLC elemental structures of continuous improvement and results orientation which requires assessing the outcomes of the program, determining the strengths and weaknesses, and making adjustments to make the program more effective (DuFour et al., 2004). Likewise, other researchers have supported the need to conduct program evaluations on similar support programs in efforts to ensure the programs are effective (Baggett, 2009; Jackson, 2014).

Conclusions

The American educational system has been in a state of on-going reform and improvement as a result of legislative changes and increased demands for academic rigor and student success. As a result, schools have developed and utilized various approaches, programs and methods in attempts to help students achieve academic success and prepare for post-secondary education or careers. As a result, many secondary level schools have implemented in-school academic support times within the regular school schedule to provide additional academic support to students. However, while secondary schools across the nation have included these programs within the school day, consistent evidence is lacking to show the programs are being utilized in effective manners. This qualitative study sought to obtain teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support time programs within 2 large Midwest area high schools to gain insight on how teachers utilize the designated time, the challenges they encounter with the programs, as well as the outcomes teachers perceive result from the inclusion of the program within their schools.

This study found that teachers generally like the designated time that is carved out of the regular daily schedule to provide academic support. However, it is apparent from this study that the time is not utilized solely for academic support, but also for many non-academic purposes that may not be directly associated with academics. This multi-purpose use of the time could be a result of a lack of clearly defined expectations and goals of the designated time. The ambiguity of purpose leads to a lack of stakeholder buy-in to the program, thus, provides more opportunity for staff and students to determine how to utilize the extra-time within their school day. Because of this

opportunity of choice, students most in need of the academic support are likely not utilizing the time for that purpose. If academic support is to be the focus and purpose of the designated time within the school schedule, then it is essential for structures to be in place to ensure the time is utilized as intended.

This study revealed that both schools initially implemented the academic support programs with structures that mandated some students attend academic support time with teachers or receive consequences. However, over time, the mandatory structures have dissolved or relaxed. This change could have occurred due to a change in philosophy about the perceived nature of academic support. The previous mandatory system may have been viewed as a punitive system, imposing consequences when students did not attend mandatory support sessions. However, the intent of the program was to be a positive academic support. As the task of assigning consequences was cumbersome and time consuming, the mandatory structure was eliminated and the academic support became optional for students at school A. However, at school B, the basic elements of mandatory structures, such as mandatory assignments and consequences, are still in existence, but are not consistently utilized and implemented across the building. Thus, some teachers utilize the mandatory structures and require students to attend academic support sessions while other teachers utilize it more as an option for students. Along with previous research and literature, this qualitative study illustrates that in-school academic support times are utilized differently from school to school and thus, may have different levels of success in improving students' academic performance.

Additionally, teachers in this current study divulged concerns of the in-school academic support time that stem from the fact that many students and teachers are not

utilizing the time for academic support. Therefore, students gather in crowded and chaotic common spaces that are difficult to supervise appropriately. This becomes a management and liability issue for the schools as students have ample time for potential mischief and schools must ensure students' safety. Thus, if schools allow the designated time for student free-time, it would be beneficial to have appropriate spaces and activities available with supervision structures in place for students to diminish any potential negative outcomes of the non-academic use of time.

Likewise, teachers reported that when they are offering academic support during the designated time, they often have many students in their classrooms for a variety of reasons. Many students, according to teachers, utilize the time simply to complete or make-up work during the school day. The academic support time is providing time for students to complete tasks but may not necessarily be impacting students' knowledge or skill levels. Generally, teachers are not utilizing the time for targeted academic interventions to support students. This could be because teachers have too many students in their room to assist properly, or because teachers do not have the necessary training to provide specific interventions to support students at the high school level. Therefore, it could be concluded that secondary level teachers need training and professional development to implement and utilize targeted interventions and academic supports to impact student learning.

However, teachers do perceive that the in-school academic support time has had a positive impact on students' academics. In most cases, teachers discussed that fewer students received grades of Ds and Fs in their classes as a result of the in-school support time. Although grades are perceived to be impacted positively, the question of what the

grades are actually reflecting arises; are the grades a reflection of compliance and work completion or a reflection of knowledge and skill attainment?

Other outcomes of the in-school academic support time are perceived to result from the gift of time itself within the day for all. Teachers report the time provides a break in the schedule and routine, allowing a moment to catch up, rest, socialize with students, or take care of other responsibilities outside of classroom obligations, such as coaching or clubs. Likewise, the time decreases the amount of time that teachers or students would need to stay after school for academic purposes. This benefits younger students and possibly those from lower socio-economic groups who rely on school bus transportation or who need to work after school hours. Additionally, older students and high achieving students benefit from the time as they have an opportunity to focus on homework or studies during school hours, allowing them more time for after school activities, jobs, or much needed sleep.

Other positive outcomes as reported by the teachers in this study are that of student engagement and connection across the school building. When students are not utilizing the time for academic support, many choose to get involved with various clubs or organizations that meet during the designated time within the school day. This opportunity for increased student involvement and connection can have a positive impact on the overall school culture as students may be more invested in the school community. Further, teachers reported that the in-school academic support time has allowed them opportunities to get to know their students on a more personal level. The improved student-teacher relationships are a valuable outcome of the program that may impact the

overall culture of the school as well as improve students' motivation and willingness to work towards academic success within the classroom.

In conclusion, this qualitative study supports the inclusion of in-school academic support times as part of a regular public high school schedule, based on teachers' perceptions. However, it is evident that the programs may be unique to each individual school site based on school needs, goals, and cultures. Likewise, it is likely the academic support programs will evolve over time, just as the school community, needs, or views adapt to current situations. Nevertheless, a common goal and the structures to support the goal should be developed and clearly understood by all stakeholders within the school for the in-school academic support program to have the greatest impact and success as suggested by the literature, previous research, and teacher perspectives within this study.

Implications for action. District R High School is the researcher's home school in which an in-school academic support time has been implemented for three years. Each year the program has evolved in efforts to improve the program to provide better academic support to students. The current qualitative study provided perceptual information about in-school academic support times from teachers at schools similar in nature to District R high school. While the results of this perceptual study should not be directly applied or transferred to other schools, the findings do provide some insight as to what teachers think about in-school academic support times in large public high school settings in the Midwest area. Administrators and staff of other schools may find these teacher insights worthy of noting when developing or implementing in-school academic support times for their own school settings.

The first implication for action is to ensure the in-school academic support time is implemented and utilized with a commonly developed and understood purpose as its foundation. Schools should develop such programs utilizing the collective efforts and input of the building community to ensure the program has a common purpose and goal that is understood and supported building wide. Establishing the purpose as a collective group will provide focus and buy-in from the staff for the implementation and utilization of the in-school academic support program. Once the focus and purpose of the program is established, the collective group can better determine the structures and processes to support the identified goal of the program.

If the goal of the program is to provide academic support to students during the school day, the staff need to determine what type of academic support is needed to best help their students. The staff need to determine if they are wanting to improve overall grades or if they are wanting to address deficits in students' skills and understandings. This support could involve various levels or tiers of support to provide assistance to many different students. The supports could include targeted and specific academic interventions, general tutoring support, study hall time for work completion, mandatory assistance or voluntary assistance. If mandatory assistance is determined to be appropriate, then the staff need to determine the structures and processes that will support the mandatory assistance. These structures need to address how students will be identified for mandatory assignments, who will provide the assistance, what communication systems will be utilized, what instructional strategies will be utilized to support the students, what it will look like if students don't attend, and who will be responsible for following-up with those students?

If voluntary assistance is the chosen approach, the staff need to determine what they are willing to accept and how they will manage students and teachers who opt not to attend academic support sessions. Where will students go and what will they do during this time? Who will supervise? What are the expectations and boundaries for students and teachers during this designated time? Addressing these types of questions and issues proactively will help establish the framework and structures that will support the common goal for which the in-school academic support time was intended for the individual school setting.

The second implication for action would be to ensure teachers are provided appropriate training to provide the necessary academic support and interventions with fidelity. The teachers in this perceptual study indicated they typically utilized the academic support time for students to complete or make-up missing work or tests. This time for work completion does have a great impact on students grades at the secondary level. However, teachers indicated that they often had too many students with various needs simultaneously trying to obtain academic support. Perhaps if teachers were better trained to provide targeted interventions to small groups of students, teachers could make a greater impact for addressing the gaps and weaknesses in students' learning. Training should be offered and embedded during the regular contracted work time for teachers and should be ongoing as opposed to one-time learning events. Having a continuous system for training and supporting teachers will provide opportunities for teachers to implement instructional strategies, share their experiences, and learn from each other. Additionally, the ongoing nature of professional development will also allow opportunities for teachers to focus on the different needs of their many students. School leaders must understand

that if we want teachers to provide academic assistance beyond basic homework help, we must provide the teachers with the training they need to provide that academic support to the students effectively.

Further, schools should be encouraged to explore alternate methods of addressing many students' needs during an in-school academic support time. Teachers could partner or team up, each focusing on a different skill or concept, and work with each other's students. This would provide targeted intervention to specific groups while also meeting the needs of multiple students at one time. Another approach to alleviate the demands of the classroom teacher may be to enlist the assistance of student tutors. Student tutors could be assigned to work with specific students during an academic support time. These students could provide more one-on-one assistance to students who need basic homework or less demanding assistance, freeing up the teacher to focus their attention on those students who may need more intensive support.

A third implication that can be gained from this study is that teachers need time to build quality relationships and connections with students as the teacher-student relationship is one of the most critical elements to the academic success of students. Not only can teachers connect with students within the regular classroom setting, but teachers can also make efforts to get to know their students outside of the academic requirements and curriculum. Structures could be implemented within the in-school academic support time to allow some time for non-academic activities, such as clubs and interest groups, that would allow teachers the opportunity to engage with students in a different manner. However, it is important to establish a balance between the academic support and non-academic activities in order to ensure the main goal of the program is not compromised.

A final implication for action for in-school academic support times is to ensure the program is evaluated on a regular basis. A program evaluation will provide the opportunity to re-examine the purpose of the program as well as the structures and processes to determine if the program is effectively addressing the intended purpose. Based on the results of the program evaluation, strengths and weaknesses may be identified. It may become evident that a program needs to adapt or change in some manner to better meet the needs of the school and its students.

Recommendations for future research. Additional research and study of in-school academic support times within high schools is recommended to further inform educators and schools on best practices to help students reach success through our nations' secondary level school systems. While this specific study focused on the perceptions of teachers within two large public high schools within the Midwest area, additional research could provide insight to the perceptions of students, administrators, and parents of secondary level students regarding the in-school academic support time programs at the schools. Obtaining the perceptions of a wide range of involved stakeholders would help to create a more complete view of the programs within these schools.

Additionally, quantitative studies could be conducted to examine the effectiveness of the in-school academic support programs. These studies could involve not only short-term impacts on students' grades each semester but could also include long term studies which examine grade outcomes over longer periods of time, graduation rates, standardized test scores, and post-secondary college or career success of students who participated in high schools with in-school academic support time programs. In addition,

these studies could examine the effectiveness of the in-school academic support programs for different subgroups of students. These types of studies could show if the in-school academic supports are making a lasting impact on the success of students by improving their knowledge and skills and giving them the foundations to be successful in college or a career after high school.

Furthermore, as specific interventions for the high school level are lacking in quantity, researchers could explore specific interventions and strategies that could be most beneficial to implement within secondary settings. These types of strategies and interventions could be studied as content specific academic supports to inform teachers how to best support their struggling students within their specific content areas.

Future research could also involve studying various models of in-school academic support programs that are utilized across many schools to examine which elements of in-school support programs are most effective. These studies could explore and examine how the academic supports are structured, how non-academic, reward, or other school activities are structured during the designated time, and how these academic and non-academic elements impact the overall school culture. Studies could include programs at different sizes of schools as well as the wide range of involved stakeholders to inform a larger audience.

Furthermore, as recommended with any program implemented within a school setting, conducting a thorough program evaluation of any in-school academic support time program would be an essential study to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and needs for a program to fulfill its intended purposes. The results of a program evaluation could inform the school leaders and teachers as to if the program is successful or if

changes are needed in order to make the in-school academic support time program more successful in helping students achieve greater academic success.

Concluding remarks. In-school academic support time programs have been implemented throughout many public high schools to help schools meet the legislative requirements of preparing all students to be college and career ready upon high school graduation. While these academic support programs are widely utilized, it is unclear if the programs are successful and worthy of taking precious time within the already crowded high school day schedule. This qualitative study sought to obtain 12 teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times at two large public high schools in the Midwest. The results of this study found that teachers generally like the inclusion of the in-school academic support time program within their buildings, reporting the program has uses and positive outcomes for both academic and non-academic matters across the school. However, the greatest challenges of the program result from the non-academic uses of the time. A program based on a commonly agreed upon purpose amongst the school staff with structures in place to support the goal is a key element to a successful in-school academic support time program.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Request to Conduct Study in District Schools

Application to Conduct Research at [REDACTED]Identifying Information

<u>Name:</u> Jeanne Kuhlman	<u>Home Address:</u> [REDACTED]	<u>Phone Number:</u> [REDACTED]
<u>Grade/Subject:</u> High School administration	<u>Building:</u> [REDACTED]	<u>Email:</u> jeanne.kuhlman@[REDACTED]

Title of Project:

Teacher Perceptions Regarding Academic Support Times within Public High School Daily Schedules in the Suburban Midwest

Why are you conducting the study?

- Independent Research
- o Graduate Class Requirement
 - o Masters Thesis/Paper
 - o XX-Dissertation Research/Project
 - o Other (Please Describe)

University/College Affiliation: Baker University Faculty Advisor: Dr. Harold Frye

Proposed Participants

Grade Level (s): 9-12 teachers (6 teachers from [REDACTED] and 6 teachers from [REDACTED])

Subject Area (s): Core/Elective

Name of School (s): [REDACTED] High School and [REDACTED] High School

Demands on Participants

This qualitative study will involve 6 teachers from each school to voluntarily participate in an individual interview with Mrs. Jeanne Kuhlman for approximately 45 minutes. Potential participants will be invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Teachers will be asked to sign and return a Consent to Participate Form to indicate their willingness to volunteer in the individual interview. Interviews will be conducted at a location and time that is agreed upon between the interview participant and Mrs. Kuhlman, the interviewer. Interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device and/or iPhone technology. Mrs. Kuhlman will also take personal notes during the interviews. The semi-structured interviews will consist of about 12 questions pertaining to teacher perceptions on the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support times (such as [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]) in the secondary school setting. After interviews are conducted, Mrs. Kuhlman will transcribe the interviews and provide them to the participating teachers for review or correction.

Privacy Protection

Mrs. Kuhlman will keep all recordings, notes and transcripts of interviews secure in either locked files or a password protected computer. Specific school names and locations will not be utilized. Likewise, teachers' names or personally identifying information will not be used in the research paper, but will be replaced with a pseudonym or label such as Teacher A-1. Descriptive information of teachers, such as type of courses taught and years of experience, may be utilized within the final work. Upon completion of the study, all recordings and notes will be deleted or disposed within 5 years.

Benefits

Schools are held accountable to ensure all students graduate with the skills to be successful in college or a career. Many students need additional academic support or intervention to help attain college or career readiness upon graduation. Processes and models including PLC's, RTI, tutoring, and Flex time periods have been included in many schools to address student needs and provide additional academic support to students. Specifically, academic support times built into the regular daily schedule have been implemented in several high schools over the past several years. However, research is scarce on the overall impact of these programs within secondary school settings. This study intends to gather teacher perceptions on how the academic support times are utilized within the high school settings to gain insight on how the time is utilized by teachers to support students, the challenges of the academic support times, as well as the overall outcomes of the programs within the school day. While the information obtained from this study should not be generalized to all settings, the information can be useful to school districts and administrators as high schools seek out and plan for the best manners in which to use school time to support students to reach academic success at the secondary level.

Timeline

Once approval is granted from both Baker University and [REDACTED], I intended to conduct interviews during February 2020. I hope to complete all research and dissertation requirements during the Spring 2020 semester.



School of education – Graduate Department
7301 College Blvd., Overland Park, KS 66210
913-344-1220

February 3, 2020

[REDACTED]

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is sent as a precursor to the approval of an investigative study by doctoral candidate Jeanne Kuhlman. Ms. Kuhlman's study involves an examination of similarities and differences in teacher perceptions of in-school academic support time. She is currently drafting chapters 1, 2, and 3 and upon final approval by the faculty research analyst and myself as her major advisor, the Baker University Institutional Review Board will consider approval of the study. Until that occurs, this letter serves as acknowledgement that her study is being carefully monitored. With that, we support her request for permission to conduct the study in the [REDACTED] School District. Questions regarding the study are welcome.

Sincerely,

Harold B. Frye

Harold B. Frye, Ed.D.
Associate Professor

Research Proposal

NOTE: Approval Letter If you are a doctoral degree candidate or pursuing a master's degree, enclose with your application: (1) a letter of authorization from your major advisor or committee chair; (2) an approval form or letter from your university's human subjects committee, if appropriate.

Please read each of the following statements and place a checkmark in the box indicating that you have read and agreed to each of the statements:

X I understand that acceptance of this request in no way obligates [REDACTED] Schools to participate in this research. I also understand that approval does not constitute commitment of resources or endorsement of the study or its findings by the school system or by the School Board.

X I understand that participation in this research by students, parents, and school staff is voluntary. I will preserve the anonymity of all participants in all reporting of this study. I will not reveal the identity or include identifiable characteristics of the schools or the school system.

X If approval is granted, I will abide by all the policies and regulations of [REDACTED] Schools and will conduct the research within the stipulations accompanying any letter of approval.

X At the completion of this study, I will provide [REDACTED] Schools with a copy of the results.

Applicant's Signature: Jeanne Kuhlman

Advisor's Signature: David B. Jones

Date: 2/2/20

Date: 2/3/2020

PLEASE EMAIL OR FAX ALL REQUESTED TO:

Amanda Russell - amanda.russell@[REDACTED] or Fax: [REDACTED]

Appendix B: Approval to Conduct Study in District Schools



Dr. [redacted]
Associate Superintendent
Academic Services



February 5, 2020

Jeanne Kuhlman
jeanne.kuhlman@[redacted]

Dear Mrs. Kuhlman:

Thank you for submitting your research application titled:
Teacher Perceptions Regarding Academic Support Times within Public High School Daily Schedules in the Suburban Midwest.

It is my privilege to inform you that the [redacted] Instructional Operations Team has approved your research proposal. Participation is voluntary, and participants should clearly understand the time commitment associated with this project. Also, remember you must maintain the confidentiality of all students, and staff information collected.

I support this effort and will provide any assistance necessary for the successful implementation of this study. If you have any questions please contact my Administrative Assistant, Amanda Russell, she can be reached at [redacted] or by email amanda.russell@[redacted] she will be happy to address any concerns.

Sincerely,

 [redacted]

Dr. [redacted]
Associate Superintendent
Academic Services

cc: Mr. [redacted] Principal, [redacted]
Dr. [redacted] Principal, [redacted]
Dr. [redacted] Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education

Appendix C: Letter to Principals

Principal Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Study

Dear Dr. [REDACTED],

My name is Jeanne Kuhlman and I am an Assistant Principal at [REDACTED] High School. I am currently working to complete my doctoral program through Baker University by completing a qualitative dissertation study regarding teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times as part of the regular school day. I am contacting you as I have obtained permission from [REDACTED] to include teachers from [REDACTED] High School as interview participants for the study.

I am in the process of identifying and inviting teachers to participate in an interview about your school's [REDACTED] Time. I hope to interview at least 6 teachers, one from each core area and two from elective areas. All interview participants need to have at least 2 years of experience engaging with the [REDACTED] Time program. I would invite teachers to voluntarily participate in an individual interview session to answer approximately 12 questions pertaining to their perceptions regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the in-school academic support time. The identity of the school and the participants will be protected within the study through the use of aliases. Further, the information obtained will only be utilized for the purpose of this study.

If you are willing to grant permission for teachers within your building to voluntarily participate in this study, please respond to this email indicating your consent. I am happy to answer any further questions or discuss this with you further. Feel free to contact me via email or at the number listed below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeanne Kuhlman

Jeanne.kuhlman@[REDACTED]

Office: [REDACTED]

Cell: [REDACTED]

Appendix D: Email communication from Principals

Thu, Feb 20, 8:32 AM

to Jeanne

Hi Jeanne,

Thank you for the email. I am supportive of your request and you have my permission to proceed at [REDACTED]. Would you be comfortable with me forwarding your message to my staff? I would like to let them know this is coming and they have permission to participate if they choose to do so.

Thank you and good luck with the study.

[REDACTED]

Tue, Feb 18,
9:59 AM

to Jeanne

Sounds good. Let me know if you need any assistance.

Jeff

Appendix E: IRB Request Form



IRB Request

Date 1/29/20

IRB Protocol Number _____
(IRB use only)

I. Research Investigator(s) (students must list faculty sponsor)

Department(s) School of Education Graduate

	Name	Signature	
1.	<u>Jeanne Kuhlman</u>	<u>Jeanne Kuhlman</u>	Principal Investigator
2.	<u>Dr. Harold Frye</u>	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
3.	<u>Dr. Li Chen-Bouck</u>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor
4.	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check if faculty sponsor

Principal investigator contact information

Phone _____

Note: When submitting your finalized, signed form to the IRB, please ensure that you cc all investigators and faculty sponsors using their official Baker University (or respective organization's) email addresses.

Email

jeanne.kuhlman _____

Address

Faculty sponsor contact information

Phone _____

Email

harold.frye@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: Exempt Expedited Full Renewal

II. Protocol Title

Teacher Perceptions Regarding Academic Support Times within Public High School

Daily Schedules in the Suburban Midwest

III. Summary:

The following questions must be answered. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm.

A. In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research. High schools are searching for best methods to provide academic support and interventions to help all students achieve higher levels of success to meet college and career readiness standards. In an attempt to achieve this goal, several schools in the suburban Midwest area have implemented specific times within the daily school schedule to provide interventions and academic support to students. However, there is little research on the outcomes of these in-school academic support times. This study seeks to obtain teacher perceptions of in-school academic support times regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes that have resulted from the use of the in-school academic support time programs.

B. Briefly describe each condition, manipulation, or archival data set to be included within the study. There are no conditions, manipulations, or archival data sets utilized for this study.

IV. Protocol Details

A. What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Individual semi-structured interviews will consist of 12 main questions to obtain teacher perceptions to address the central question and three main research questions of the study regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support times within high school daily schedules. Interviews may include follow-up questions or probes to obtain clarity and clear understanding. A copy of the interview questions are attached.

B. Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

The interview participants will not encounter risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk by participating in this study.

C. Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

There should be no stress to any subject involved in the voluntary interview process for this study.

D. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.
The subjects will not be deceived or misled in any way.

E. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.
Demographic information such as name, age, gender, years of experience, and subjects taught will be requested for the researcher's use in analyzing information. Any information provided by the participants will be at the discretion of each participant. Participants identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. A copy of the requested information is attached.

F. Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.
The subjects will not be presented with any materials which could be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

G. Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?
Interviews are anticipated to be approximately 45 minutes. Later, interview participants will be asked to review interview transcripts to check for accuracy and to report any needed corrections to the researcher. This review is expected to take minimal time consisting of 15 minutes or less.

H. Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.
A purposive-criterion method will be utilized to obtain the sample participants for this study. Potential participants from both core and elective courses who have met the criteria of participating in the schools' in-school academic support program for at least 2 years, will be contacted via email and invited to participate in an individual interview. Potential participants will be informed of the main purpose of the study, the focus of the questions, and the approximate time commitment. Participants will also be made aware the interviews will be recorded and informed of the opportunity to review and approve the transcripts. Willing participants will be asked to sign and return a Consent to Participate. Sample emails and Consent to Participate forms are attached.

I. What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?
A consent form will be provided to all participants as an attachment to the initial invitation email. Consent forms must be signed and returned for participants to indicate their willingness to voluntarily participate in the individual interview. A sample Consent to Participate form is attached. Prior to conducting the interview, the participants will again be verbally reminded they are voluntary participants and are not obligated to participate in any manner.

No inducements will be offered to the subjects to participate.

J. How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

A consent form will be provided to all participants as an attachment to the initial invitation email. Consent forms must be signed and returned for participants to indicate their willingness to voluntarily participate prior to participating in the individual interview. A sample Consent to Participate form is attached.

K. Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

There will be no aspect of the data made part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject. Pseudonyms will be used in place of school and participants' actual names.

L. Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer? If so, explain.

The fact that a subject did or did not participate in the study will not be made part of any permanent record that is available to the supervisor, teacher, or employer.

M. What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with the data after the study is completed?

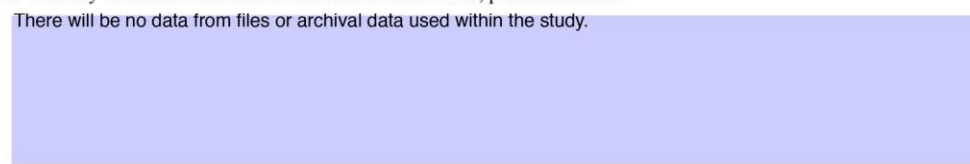
The data obtained through interviews will be transcribed and stored on the researcher's password protected computer and personal flash drive. The data will only be shared with the specific research committee members for this study as necessary. The data will be stored for five years after the successful completion of the dissertation process. At that time all data will be deleted from the computer and flash drive.

N. If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks involved within this study.

O. Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

There will be no data from files or archival data used within the study.



Appendix F: Baker Approval to Conduct Study



Baker University Institutional Review Board

February 17th, 2020

Dear Jeanne Kuhlman and Harold Frye,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nathan D. Poell".

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Scott Crenshaw
Sara Crump, PhD
Jamin Perry, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix G: Email Invite to Potential Participants

Teacher Invite to Participate

Dear Mr. _____

My name is Jeanne Kuhlman and I am an Assistant Principal at [REDACTED] High School. I am currently working to complete my doctoral program through Baker University by completing a qualitative dissertation study regarding teachers' perceptions of in-school academic support times as part of the regular school day. I am contacting you to invite you to voluntarily participate in an individual interview session as part of this study.

The interview session will consist of approximately 12 pre-determined questions pertaining to your perceptions of the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the in-school academic support time at your school. Follow up probes or questions may be included for clarification or to obtain deeper understanding. I anticipate interview sessions will last approximately 45 minutes, unless additional time is needed for clarification purposes. The date, time, and location of the interview will be determined and mutually agreed upon by both parties. The interview will be audio recorded and notes will be taken during the interview. Afterwards, transcripts of the interview will be provided electronically through email for your approval. The identity of you and your school will be protected through the use of an alias. Further, the information obtained will only be utilized for the purpose of this study and will not be permanently stored.

Your participation in this study is purely voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. If you are willing to voluntarily participate in an individual, face-to-face interview session for this study, please respond to this email indicating your consent by signing and returning the included Consent to Participate form. I am happy to answer any further questions or discuss this with you further. Feel free to contact me via email or at the number listed below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jeanne Kuhlman

Jeanne.kuhlman@[REDACTED]

Office: [REDACTED]

Cell: [REDACTED]

Appendix H: Consent to Participate

Consent to Participate

Research Title: Teacher Perceptions Regarding Academic Support Times within Public High School Daily Schedules in the Suburban Midwest

Researcher: Jeanne A. Kuhlman

Advisor: Dr. Harold Frye
School of Education
Baker University
8001 College Blvd.
Overland Park, KS 66210
(913)-344-1220
harold.frye@bakeru.edu

My name is Jeanne Kuhlman and I am a doctoral student at Baker University in Kansas. I am conducting research on teachers' perceptions of academic support times as part of a regular high school schedule.

You will be asked to answer approximately 12 questions pertaining to your perceptions and experience regarding the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of the in-school academic support time program in your school. You may decline to answer any question at any time. Moreover, you may discontinue your participation at any time for any reason.

All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Interview transcripts will be password protected and only the research advisor and analyst will have access to the raw data.

Consent to Participate:

I understand that my participation in this research study is completely voluntary. I also understand that I am able to discontinue my participation within this study at any time for any reason. I understand that the principal investigator can be contacted at [jeanne.kuhlman@\[REDACTED\]](mailto:jeanne.kuhlman@[REDACTED]) should I have questions or wish to discontinue my participation.

I have read and understand the above statement. By signing, I agree to participate in the research study. The Baker University Institutional Review Board approved this study on _____ and will expire on _____ unless renewal is obtained by the review board.

Participant

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix I: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Introductions and Pre-Interview Info

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview session to share your perceptions regarding in-school academic support times in high schools. This interview will consist of approximately 12 questions focusing on the utilization, challenges, and outcomes of in-school academic support times. Probes or follow-up questions may be asked to obtain clarity of your response. This session is expected to last approximately 45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and I will take notes. After the interview, I will transcribe the interview and provide an electronic copy to you via email for your review and approval.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study and are welcome to stop or decline to answer at any time. You have indicated your willingness to participate by signing the Consent to Participate form. A pseudonym will be utilized in place of your name and your school to protect your privacy. The information from this interview will only be utilized for the purpose of this study.

Would you please take a moment to fill out the demographic information before we begin?

(Allow a few moments for participant to complete demographic information.)

Do you have any questions before we begin?

(Answer any questions)

I will start the audio recording now.

Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview session regarding in-school academic support times in high schools. The first set of questions I will ask you pertain to your perceptions of how the in-school academic support time is utilized.

(Ask questions 1- 4)

The next set of questions concern your perceptions regarding the challenges of in-school academic support times within high schools.

(Ask questions 5-7)

The following questions pertain to your perceptions regarding the outcomes of in-school academic support time within high schools.

(Ask questions 8-10)

The final questions seek to obtain your overall perceptions of the in-school academic support time within high schools.

(Ask questions 11-12)

Closing

Thank you again for volunteering your time to participate in this study. As a closing reminder, the interview will be transcribed and shared with you electronically via email

in the near future for your review and approval. The information from this study will only be utilized for the purpose of this study. If at any time you have questions or concerns about this interview process, please feel free to contact me.

Appendix J: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Central Question: What are teacher perceptions regarding the in-school academic support time within high schools?

RQ1: What are teacher perceptions regarding how the in-school academic support time is utilized within high schools?

1. Can you please describe what the in-school academic support time looks like in your school?
2. As a teacher, how do you typically utilize the in-school academic support time to assist your students?
Possible Follow Up:
 - a. What types of activities do you conduct within your classroom during the in-school academic support time?
3. Can you describe the things you consider when preparing to use the in-school academic support time?
Possible Follow Up:
 - a. How do you determine which students should attend the in-school academic support time?
 - b. Are there limits on the number of students you work with during an in-school academic support time?
 - c. Can you describe how often you typically assign a student to attend the in-school academic support time?
4. Do you ever spend the in-school academic support time doing something besides providing academic support to students? If so, please share how else you spend this designated time.

RQ2: What are teacher perceptions regarding the challenges of in-school academic support time within high schools?

5. From your perception, can you describe any concerns you have encountered with your building's in-school academic support time program?
6. Can you share any challenges you have experienced during the in-school academic support time?
Possible Follow Up:
 - a. Can you describe any instructional challenges you have experienced during the in-school academic support time?
 - b. Can you share any challenges outside of the classroom you have experienced during the in-school academic support time?
7. Can you describe any difficulties you have experienced in getting students to participate in the in-school academic support time?

RQ3: What are teacher perceptions regarding the outcomes of the in-school academic support times with high schools?

8. How has the in-school academic support time impacted you as a teacher?
9. From your observation, what impact has the in-school academic support time had on your students?
 - a. Can you describe any evidence that supports your observation?
10. Please describe any other outcomes that you perceive have resulted from the use of the in-school academic support time within your school.
 - a. Can you describe any evidence that supports your observation?

Closing Questions: pertains to the overall Central Question: What are teacher perceptions regarding the in-school academic support time within high schools?

11. What are your overall thoughts regarding the in-school academic support time as part of the regular school day?
12. Please share any suggestions you have about in-school academic support times.

Appendix K: Coding Sample (excerpt)

make-up labs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Test study session	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	5
skill development	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Content enrichment	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
peer tutoring	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Multipurpose/mixed use of time	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	7
Open work time	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	4	1	1	12
Reteach	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	6
Absent/ Make-up	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	1	8