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Academic Aspirations and Expectations: High School Guidance Counselor Perceptions of the Benefits Students Receive by Participating in Dual Enrollment Programs

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ACADEMIC ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS: HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE

COUNSELOR PERCEPTIONS OF THE BENEFITS STUDENTS RECEIVE BY

PARTICIPATING IN DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Submitted to The School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Marjorie A. Mattis

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Professional Studies in Education

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Title: Academic Aspirations and Expectations: High School Guidance Counselor
Perceptions of the Benefits Students Receive by Participating in Dual Enrollment
Programs

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine guidance counselor

perceptions regarding the benefits students receive as a result of participating in a dual

enrollment program. These perceptions were limited to guidance counselor influence, the

intrinsic benefits students received from participation in dual enrollment and the impact

dual enrollment participation has on a student's decision to attend post secondary

education. The guidance counselors in this study participated in a regional dual

enrollment program made up of seven school districts located in south central

Pennsylvania. Methods of inquiry for this study included data gathered through focus

groups, an individual interview and both document and historical analysis.

Findings of this study indicate that guidance counselors perceive their influence

on a student's post secondary planning very different than guidance counselors a

generation ago. However, guidance counselors were clear they see themselves as being

the most knowledgeable of secondary school curriculum, post secondary school

requirements and their students; they should be driving dual enrollment initiatives within

their school districts.

The findings also indicate that middle achieving students may have the most to gain by participating in a dual enrollment program. Historically, school districts have not invested in programs that support middle achieving students, and as a result districts may be missing a golden opportunity. By far, guidance counselors perceive a student's self-efficacy levels substantially increase as a result participating in a dual enrollment program. Additionally, when coupled with an improved sense of self-efficacy, students' attitudes and post secondary aspirations change as a result of their experience. Findings of this study indicate there is a positive and, in most cases, a cause and effect relationship that exists between students who participate in a dual enrollment program and their persistence to higher education.

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I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the faculty of the Administration and Leadership Studies program for their continued support and encouragement. Specifically, I want to thank Dr. Wenfan Yan, chair of my dissertation committee who has been both patient and motivating throughout this entire process. My sincere gratitude is extended to both Dr. George Bieger and Dr. Sue Rieg who took the time out of their busy schedules to sit on my dissertation committee and who throughout this journey have provided me with invaluable feedback and support.

Everyone has a source of inspiration, someone we want to emulate because of the type of person they are, and the type of person we want to be. For me, my grandmother, Ernestine E. Cooney has always been that inspiration. She has supported and encouraged me since the day that I decided to enter higher education at Mount Aloysius Junior College, and even today, she continues to be my biggest supporter. She has always instilled in me the importance of education and the doors that an education often opens. There is nothing in the world that is more important to me than making her proud, and I thank her with everything I am for "hanging in there" with me to see me finish. It's because of her constant love and support that I dedicate this dissertation to her. I love you, Gram!

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

The American Association of Community Colleges (2004) reports that community college enrollment has grown dramatically over the last forty years, from 200,000 in 1960 to 10,000,000 in 2004. This remarkable growth increase may be attributed to the foundation of and adherence to the community colleges' mission: promoting college access and opportunities to students typically not thought of as college bound. This population includes, among others, low-income, middle and underachieving high school students demonstrating low to average academic achievement, possessing little confidence in their own academic abilities, and showing little or no motivational intent to attend post secondary education.

The options to promote access to post secondary opportunities that community colleges provide vary from one community college to another. The open door admissions policy offered by most community colleges is one option that has increased access to a large underserved population by allowing them to pursue economically valued degrees (Rosenbaum, 1998). Open door policies were implemented and designed to be forgiving to students who do not possess high school diplomas or general equivalency exams or who may have a less than lustrous high school transcript (Reeder, 2004). Additionally, these open door policies are attractive to high school students, allowing students the opportunity to take classes in the evening, on weekends, or during the summer while still attending high school.

Accessibility options also exist at community colleges, bridging the gap between high school and postsecondary education. This approach is based on the research of Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio (2003), among others, who reported that success in postsecondary education is predicated on both rigorous academic preparation and a clear understanding of the expectations of college while in high school. Creating a link between high schools and postsecondary institutions is key to developing a transition process that allows for student success.

The contemporary high school reform movement has led to a restructuring regarding the way secondary school leaders engineer the academic rigor of their core curricula. School districts have been tasked with increasing high school graduation rates, improving the quality of their teachers, measuring outcomes assessment standards, and increasing the rigor of educational programs. This national reform movement is a direct result of the recent demand to evaluate or improve the criteria used by school districts to increase the academic rigor of high school courses as prescribed in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 ("Dual enrollment", 2004).

The lack of academic luster within secondary education was not exposed by the release of the No Child Left Behind Act. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education reported in the *Nation at Risk* study,

Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria-style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses. Students have migrated from vocational and college preparatory

programs to "general track" courses in large numbers. The proportion of students taking a general program of study has increased from 12 percent in 1964 to 42 percent in 1979 (para. 5).

School districts soon took note of the need to develop courses that would challenge students academically and provide them with more than an opportunity to earn credits toward their graduation requirements. Adelman, in the 1999 study, *Answers in a Toolbox,* reported that soon after the release of the *Nation at Risk,* high school students were taking more advanced courses of higher quality designed specifically with pre-college opportunities to learn within the regular context of a high school classroom. Dual enrollment programs between school districts and community colleges serve such a purpose by facilitating the transition from high school to post secondary education while providing academic intensity and rigor to the high school curriculum. Dual enrollment programs allow students to enroll in college level courses, and upon successful completion, students receive credit both at the high school and the college.

 Dual enrollment programs have existed for over thirty years, however, their enrollments have recently grown rapidly by encouraging high school students to take college credit classes while still in high school (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003). The introduction of college level material to high school students provides students with exposure to the academic expectations of post secondary education; at the same time, students gain both credit for high school graduation requirements and for college courses completed. Likewise, dual enrollment programs have the potential to compress the amount of time that is required to complete a bachelor's degree program. For example, in

the state of Utah, the governor has supported and embraced the dual enrollment concept by setting a statewide goal of encouraging students to complete high school with enough dual enrollment credits to enter post secondary education as juniors (Pierce 1996). In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, successful dual enrollment programs geared to non-traditional students have produced the following results: (1) assisted students earn high school diplomas, (2) provided students with the opportunity to earn dual high school and college credit for their college courses, (3) influenced students' educational and career goals, and (4) affected students' attitudes and beliefs about themselves and their abilities (Gougeon, 2004 p.180).

Dual enrollment programs vary in nature dependant upon the agreement secured between the community college and the local school district. Likewise, dual enrollment programs are different from other credit-based programs due to the fact that state legislation and policy governing dual enrollments also differ from state to state, whereas other types of transitional programs such as Advanced Placement Courses (AP) or the International Baccalaureate (IB) are governed and regulated by federal or private organizations. Dual enrollment programs require something currently missing in the promotion of successful transitions of students to higher education. The dual enrollment program relies heavily upon open dialogue and a high level of collaboration between the local school system and the institution of higher education.

According to the United States Department of Education (2004), dual enrollment programs may have distinct varying elements, including the location/facility in which

classes are held, the instructor teaching the course, and the method of payment for the course. As an illustration:

- Location: Courses can be offered on the community college campus, at a community college's off site location or at the participating high school.

- Instructors: Courses may be taught by college faculty or by qualified high school instructors holding Master's Degrees in their teaching disciplines.

- Student Mix: Many dual enrollment programs are administered to high school students in their own high school classroom, while others combine high school students with college students on a college campus.

- Payment: Many students are required to pay the tuition and fees required by the college for the credits earned. Numerous community colleges offer special discounted tuition rates to high school students. In some cases, school districts cover the tuition costs for their students (State dual enrollment policies, 2004). This concept is especially true in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania where funds have been allocated to support dual enrollment initiatives.

The intensity level of dual enrollment programs may also differ from one school district to the other (Bailey & Karp, 2003). There are two specific levels of dual enrollment participation as referenced in the United States Department of Education's *State Dual Enrollment* policy paper (2004). A high school student may choose to participate in only one or two dual enrollment classes while spending the rest of his or her day in traditional high school classes; this type of program is referred to as the singleton model. In the comprehensive model, students can enroll in dual enrollment courses that

virtually include an entire academic course load. In some cases, students may take these courses on a college campus, integrated with other college students. Those students participating in the comprehensive model taking courses on a college campus are exposed not only to college level academic rigor but also the college environment and culture (State dual enrollment policies, 2004).

Students participating in a dual enrollment program and completing the course of study (regardless of the dual enrollment model) receive an official college transcript from the sponsoring higher educational institution. Students have the benefit of taking the credits earned through dual enrollment and transferring them to the college of their choice. Other credit based transition programs (AP and IB) are contingent upon passing a standardized examination at the completion of the course. In these transitional programs, students must complete the course successfully and pass the standardized exam. However, historically, many students have problems passing the exam, and many are unable to afford the cost of the examination. As a result, they receive no credit for the time invested.

Providing students with options that enhance the academic rigor of their course work is not a new concept in secondary education. Advanced Placement (AP) courses have been offered for decades to high achieving college bound students (Bailey & Karp, 2003). Advanced Placement classes are designed to expose high ability students to a solid structured collegial experience (Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2006). Typically, these students are academically at the top of their classes and have established clear goals and objectives regarding their post secondary future. While numerous opportunities may be taken by the

higher achieving students, academically rigorous opportunities afforded to middle achieving or underachieving students are often passed up because they may lack the motivation and confidence necessary to succeed in higher education. In the past, this middle and underachieving student sector has been ignored by school district personnel, and students have not been provided opportunities to engage in classes or courses that may challenge them academically. Additionally, this group is often not considered by guidance counseling staff, resulting in a lack of direction and guidance regarding post secondary opportunities. Furthermore, many school districts have seen success when school personnel were open to providing non-traditional students with opportunities. However, in school districts where there is a lack of demand for dual enrollment opportunities they "tend to be more passive in their approach, citing numerous barriers to participation such as lack of qualified students, distance, or students' lack of interest" (Bugler & Henry, 1998 p. 15).

This dissertation study explored how guidance counselors perceive their role in selecting students for dual enrollment opportunities. Additionally, the perceptions guidance counselors have regarding the benefits that students receive as a result of dual enrollment participation will also be examined. This included the likelihood of post secondary persistence.

For the purposes of this study, middle and under achieving students were defined as high school juniors or seniors with a "C" grade average and little or no motivation to attend a post secondary institution.

With the rapid growth of dual enrollment programs in high schools, the impact on middle and underachieving students takes on a greater significance. Several studies have described the successful outcomes of students participating in dual enrollment programs as enjoyable and motivational. Most published literature is qualitative in nature and concentrated on student and parental opinions and beliefs. However, these studies are overwhelmingly based on high achievers enrolled in a dual enrollment program (Robertson, Chapman, & Gaskin, 2001). Bailey and Karp (2003) suggested that little research has been completed on the influence dual enrollment programs have on students who do marginal at best in high school. Greenburg (1988) argued that these types of accessible programs may not be appropriate for this population of students, resulting in high frustration levels for students and school district administrations as well.

Statement of the Problem

The need for reform in the United States' educational system has been the subject of several national reports (*A Nation at Risk, Raising Our Sights: No Senior Left Behind, High School of the Millennium*) and, most recently, national legislation *(No Child Left Behind)*. Central themes to the reform movement include providing students with rigorous academic opportunities, increasing the accountability measures of school systems, and providing for pathways and opportunities for student engagement in post secondary education. The majority of all reform initiatives has been targeted to high achieving, motivated students who take a carefully planned curriculum and complete their requirements both for graduation from high school and entrance to college during or by the end of their junior year. These students are often the focus of the high school

guidance staff and receive high levels of attention regarding post secondary options, scholarship availability, and individual career counseling.

Likewise, students of low academic ability, many diagnosed with learning disabilities, are provided with transition programming, specialized classroom instruction, individual counseling, additional academic support, and Individualized Education Plans. The federal government supports special needs education to the sum of 102 billion dollars annually ("IDEA Funding," 2005, para.5). However, very limited literature or research exists regarding reform initiatives for middle achieving students.

> In many high schools, these middle or academically average students constitute the largest group and yet their needs go largely unmet. Such students often lack direction and motivation and aren't sure whether they want to pursue a higher education goal or enter the job market. (Pierce, 2001, para.8).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions guidance counselors possess regarding middle and underachieving high school students who participate in dual enrollment programs. This examination was limited to reflection of the guidance counselor's role, the perceived intrinsic benefits students receive as a result of dual enrollment participation, and the relationship that exists between program participation and post secondary enrollment.

<center>Questions Researched</center>

During the course of this study the following inquiries guided the investigation:

1. How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a students' post secondary education plans?

2. How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?

3. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?

4. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?

Theoretical Perspectives

This study is theoretically driven and encompasses multiple theories to support the theoretical framework. These theories included: guidance counselor influence, self-efficacy theory, and achievement theory. All essential elements that are to be considered are the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and interest guidance counselors possess regarding middle and underachieving students participating in dual enrollment programs.

Today, most counselor influence literature focuses on the degree to which the guidance counselor impacts a students' post secondary choice. Counseling literature continues to promote the role of the counselor in helping students explore their postsecondary educational options (Hoyt, 2001; O'Dell & Rak, 1996). Furthermore, according to Bleuer & Waltz (2003) more current counseling research promoted differentiated counseling for specific student groups, including students categorized as underachievers.

Self-efficacy is of particular concern for students who struggle to learn and often resist the idea of academics (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). Schunk and Zimmerman (1997)

reported that students will not engage in activities they believe will lead to unsuccessful results. They easily give up on tasks similar to those that they have previously failed. Margolis and McCabe (2004) argued that one way for students to overcome low self-efficacy is to encourage them to take on challenging tasks; dual enrollment also serves this purpose. Thomas Bailey, Director of Community College Research Center, stated, "In programs around the country, dual enrollment experiences are inspiring some low-achieving students to become better prepared for college through more demanding academic coursework" ("State dual enrollment," 2004, p.1).

Achievement goal theory was examined in order to identify key elements that are the foundation of a student's decision to pursue higher education. A student's desire to participate in the learning process at any level is solely based on motivational factors. A 1988 study by Lepper suggested that students can be motivated intrinsically or extrinsically. Lumsden (1994), examining Lepper stated the following:

> A student who is INTRINSICALLY motivated undertakes an activity "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes". An EXTRINSICALLY motivated student performs "in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself, such as grades, stickers, or teacher approval" (para.4).

Lumsden suggested students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to earn higher grades, and are more likely to persist with and complete tasks. Additionally, these students are also more likely to be lifelong learners, continuing their education after external motivators such as grades and diplomas have been removed.

Significance of the Problem

The national education system has been under considerable scrutiny as a result of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation enacted by Congress in 2001. Based on the assumption that as a whole, school districts have not performed at the level acceptable to the federal government, school district procedures consist of a lack of accountability standards, and school districts are often lax in program offering to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, high school reform initiatives are spinning off in states throughout the nation in an effort to create bridges from secondary education to higher education. The National Governors Association (2004) reported that the "reforms efforts are intended to spur states to enact real, tangible system-wide reform that will make high school, particularly the senior year, more engaging, rigorous and relevant to the lives of America's youth" (p. 1) .

The National Governors Association launched a national initiative to *Redesign America's High School,* reporting that the American high school has not gone through any reform in the last hundred years. This reform's focus is built upon a dramatic change in the academic rigor of the senior year. This reform encourages states to develop legislation and policy promoting opportunities for high school seniors to take post secondary courses while still in high school.

Dual enrollment courses present opportunities in response to the national high school reform movement, allowing students to take college level courses while completing high school graduation requirements. As dual enrollment course opportunities are a relatively new phenomenon in regards to educational efficacy, it becomes

imperative to examine their effects. Therefore, the empirical questions of this research are: Which students are really benefiting from dual enrollment programs? Are students who are already college bound and of high academic achievement benefiting the most from these programs? Are students of middle achievement with little or no motivation to attend higher education the students who should be targeted for such programs? Does success in a dual enrollment program change the students' beliefs regarding their own ability to succeed in college level work and subsequently motivate them toward attending higher education?

The present study is believed to be of practical value in that the results identified specific beliefs and attitudes that guidance counselors have regarding a student's ability to succeed in college level work and obtain higher education. Outcomes of this study could stimulate independent knowledge associated with the relative importance attached to rapid increase in dual enrollment programs to college level administrators, school district personnel such as guidance counselors, principals, superintendants, and state departments of education.

It is anticipated that the conclusions reached in this study will be of interest to those post secondary institutions currently operating dual enrollment programs. Post secondary educational administrators may want to use the results of this study to apply, compare and contrast, adopt or analyze in order to redesign their own programs. Additionally, the results of this study may have a significant impact on secondary school administrators and guidance counselors regarding the selection of students who may receive a greater benefit by participating in a dual enrollment program.

Definitions of Terms

Advanced Placement (AP)- Overseen by the College Board, Advanced Placement

courses are offered at high schools and taught by high school faculty. The AP curricula

are standardized, and the exams are administered in May of each year. Students with

passing grades of three or better, out of a total score of five, earn course credit and/or

advance to higher-level courses at the colleges and universities where they enroll

("Postsecondary Options," 2001).

Dual Enrollment/Concurrent Enrollment-Programs allow high school students to enroll in

post secondary courses, usually for credit. Students are taught courses by college faculty

or high school faculty, either at the sponsoring college or high school ("Postsecondary

options," 2001).

International Baccalaureate (IB)- The IB program has a rigorous and specific curriculum

with several required areas of study. The comprehensive two-year curriculum fulfills the

requirements of various national education systems. Students, upon successful

completion of a national exam, earn an IB diploma and may receive college credit when

admitted to a college or university ("Postsecondary Options," 2001).

Self-Efficacy- Beliefs and expectations regarding the ability to successfully compete or

accomplish a particular task (Lemme, 2002).

Student Engagement- Learning encompasses student activities involving active cognitive

processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluation.

In addition, students are intrinsically motivated to learn due to the meaningful nature of

the learning environment and activities. Engagement theory is based upon the idea of

creating successful collaborative teams that work on ambitious projects that are

meaningful to something outside the classroom (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999).

Motivation-"The need or desire that energizes behavior and directs it toward a goal"

(Myers, 2004, p. 345).

Achievement-A desire for significant accomplishment: for mastery of things, people or

ideas; for attaining a high standard (Myers, 2004, p .371).

<div align="center">Brief Overview of the Methods</div>

A variety of methods were utilized to gather data regarding the beliefs and

implications of dual enrollment programs targeted to middle achieving students.

Conducting focus groups is a common method in gathering information from a

select group of individuals. In order to gain a personal understanding of the perceptions

guidance counselors possess regarding their students who participate in dual enrollment

programs, two focus groups were conducted. The participants in this study were selected

based on their employment as diversified occupation guidance counselors at the school

districts participating in a county wide dual enrollment program. The county dual

enrollment program specifically enrolls students that are labeled as middle or

underachieving students.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

This study was limited to the responses obtained through focus groups from the

diversified occupational guidance counselors who participate in the dual enrollment

program offered through the Advanced Skill Center located in York, Pennsylvania.

Therefore data collected through the focus groups were limited to the responses from the diversified occupation guidance counselors and assumed to be an honest response.

Additionally the HIT program has only been in existence for the three years and is a new initiative within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Consequently, this program does not have a lot of history behind it. Furthermore, many of the diversified occupational guidance counselors participating in the focus group do not have a dual enrollment program within their own school district. Therefore their experience with the traditional dual enrollment program may be limited.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the literature and research guiding the notion of dual enrollment programs, as well as guidance counselor influence, self-efficacy, and achievement theory. This study is theoretically driven and encompasses multiple theories to support the theoretical framework. Literature regarding self-efficacy, referring to an individual's perception of his or her skills and abilities to act effectively and competently, and the beliefs that influence their actions is extensive for students in an academic environment, as is the review of achievement theory. However, there is little current research supporting a guidance counselor's influence in middle and underachieving students.

This chapter is divided into four sections: (a) a overview of dual enrollment (b) an overview of guidance counselor influence research, (c) self-efficacy theory, and (d) achievement theory related to post secondary education. A summary concludes the chapter.

A Review of Dual Enrollment

For decades there has been much concern regarding the rigor of high school curriculum and more recently, the wasted senior year. Too often, high school students fulfill graduation requirements by the end of their junior year, resulting in many seniors biding their time and enrolling into non-essential electives rather than rigorous coursework (Duffy, 2002). In a recent national survey, the *National Commission on the*

High School Senior Year (2001) saw little if any coordination between high schools and post secondary institutions. The Commission describes the senior year this way:

> For a variety of reasons, student motivation drops in the senior year. Short of a miserable failure in the senior year, practically every college found that a student knows that what they have accomplished through grade 11 will largely determine whether or not they attend college, and if so, which college. As a result, serious preparation ends at grade 11 (p. 6).

According to Kirst (2001), the senior slump is cause for both economic and social concern. The lack of academic fortitude in the senior year has the following impact: (a) rising cost of remediation for English, math and science classes for entering college freshman (b) high college drop-out rates for students that are not academically prepared for college (c) poor academic readiness for those students who move directly into the workforce.

Within the last five years, dual enrollment programs have been developed to address these concerns by post secondary institutions such as community colleges, technical colleges, and universities (Andrews, 2004). Dual enrollment programs allow high school juniors and seniors to earn college credit by participating in college coursework while still in high school. In most cases, dual enrollment programs have been targeted to high achieving students by challenging them and allowing them to make the most of their senior year and to shorten the time spent earning a college degree. This initiative is of importance to parents, high school, and college officials because it

provides an opportunity for students to explore and assess their readiness for educational advancement (Duffy, 2002).

Throughout the United States there are examples of dual enrollment programs that have been created through creative partnerships between local school districts and post secondary institutions. These new programs have forged into new territory by creating unique transitional program for high school students.

Marshall and Andrews (1991) identified a pioneer program at Marquette High School in Ottawa, Illinois. This program saw record numbers of its high school students enrolled into a dual enrollment program with Illinois Valley Community College. By the time many of these students graduated from high school, they had already earned between 24-30 college credits. This program allowed many students to enter their first year of college with sophomore status. One very motivated student was able to take full advantage of the dual enrollment program by graduating from high school not only with her high school diploma, but also an Associate's Degree.

Andrews (2004) reported the University of Washington's Running Start Program promotes very successful statistics from the 88 students who had previously participated in their dual enrollment program. The University tracked high school students who participated in dual enrollment courses and then matriculated into the University upon graduation. Accordingly, "the grade point averages of freshman Running Start students were 3.42 compared to non dual enrollment freshmen who possessed 3.14 grade point averages"(p. 421). Additionally, the cost savings to students, parents and taxpayers was analyzed to be $37 million dollars.

Bailey, Hughes and Karp (2003) reported Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, New York boasts one of the nation's largest dual enrollment programs in the country, with nearly 5,000 students enrolled during the 2000-2001 academic year. The program, College Now delivers college courses to students at their high school. The program is offered at no charge to high school seniors and allows students the opportunity to take up to six credits per semester. Students who take the maximum credits during their senior year can earn up to a full semester's worth of college credits to be applied to their first year of college. Results of this program show students are less likely to need remedial course work and twice and as likely to graduate from college on time (Kleiman, 2001).

The state of Utah provides dual enrollment opportunities for students in every high school in the state (Hoffman, 2005). There has been a conscious effort to promote dual enrollment opportunities to students pursuing career and technical education. Many students take up to 30 credits per year, and students who earn an Associate Degree prior to graduating high school are eligible for a New Century Scholarship for baccalaureate study.

Further, Hoffman (2003) stated, students in advanced placement (AP) classes and accelerated tracks are provided with signals early on that they are college bound students. However, Hoffman notes there is much to be learned from providing a student who is on the verge of dropping out of high school with a dual enrollment experience. The research indicates students have flourished when in the company of and matriculated into classes with college freshman. However, only few provide opportunities to a wide range of

students. Adelman (1999) argued for the inclusion of middle and low-achieving high school students in dual enrollment programs because of the relationship that exists between rigorous academic coursework and post secondary education.

According to Hoffman (2005), the state of Florida has the most highly articulated and centralized dual enrollment system in the country while positioning dual enrollment as a transition mechanism for students. Florida legislation mandates that all 28 community colleges participate in the dual enrollment program. The program is often seen as a pathway to college for middle achieving students as well as students viewed as gifted. Several Florida community colleges such as Okaloosa Walton, Broward and Valencia have created innovative blended dual enrollment programs in which students receive a high school diploma and an Associate's degree concurrently.

According to Koszoru (2005), the Broward County public schools in Florida and the Broward County Community College partnered to create The College Academy (CA). This fulltime dual enrollment program housed at the Broward County Community College enrolls 300 high school students per year. The hallmarks of this program revolve around the four R's, rigor, relevance, relationships and responsibilities. The program draws on the "academically talented student and the apathetic outsider" (p. 27). Upon completion students receive a high school diploma and also finish their general education requirements for an Associate of Arts Degree.

The results of this program are encouraging. Students participating in CA have scored significantly higher on pre standardized achievement tests (PSAT) and on standardized achievement tests (SAT) than their high school counterparts.

In Florida, dual enrollment students are exempt from paying tuition and fees for the courses they take at any post secondary institution, per Florida law. Florida's funding allows school districts to count students in their average daily attendance (ADA), and although post secondary institutions lose tuition, they can still include the students in their full time equivalent (FTE) calculation.

North Carolina has opened the door to the middle of the road student through the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program (Jones, n.d.). The program targets students who are academically in the middle. Students enrolled into the program take advanced college credit classes and also receive additional academic support services through the partnering post secondary institution. In addition to taking classes, students are expected to attend college information nights and SAT review courses. These measures are intended to increase the likelihood students succeed in college.

Likewise, the Community College of Vermont at Middlebury has made a conscious effort to reach out to previously unmotivated, middle or below-average high school students. Administrators and faculty at Middlebury realized that students often lose interest in high school academics "as a result of formulaic teaching or the regimented pace of high school coursework" (Lords, 2000, para. 7). To increase the likelihood of success in their coursework, students participating in this program must take a non-credit workshop that introduces them to college studies. Within the last few years of the program, student interest has dramatically increased and as a result the enrollment numbers have more than doubled. Today, dual enrollment students "now make up nearly than 2% of the 9,000 people taking classes at the college" (para.10)

In contrast, there are studies that support the argument that middle and lower achieving high school students have a higher likelihood of not succeeding in post secondary education. This is contrary to the position of placing middle and underachieving high school students in a challenging college level course and allowing them to rise to the occasion. Additionally, a few studies argue negative early college experience can have a devastating effect on a student's self esteem and efficacy levels (Lords, 2000).

Accordingly, Olszewski-Kubilius (1995) argued the number of underachieving students in dual enrollment programs is generally not reported by program administrators. Subsequently, Janos et al., (1988), studied less successful students enrolled into a dual enrollment program and found that underachievers tend to be either very successful in their program or on the contrary, have a dismal academic experience. The findings indicated the major factor leading to the success of students in a dual program was a student's maturity level and ability to succeed in college despite his or her young age.

Upon review of the literature regarding dual enrollment programs, much of what has been studied varies from dual enrollment state and local policies, the administrative and legal aspects of the program, student outcomes linked to self concept and role theory, studies on student outcomes based on who teaches the dual enrollment course, a high school teacher or college faculty member, and even research studying the reason advanced placement (AP) students do not participate more in dual enrollment opportunities (Smith 2006). Further, much of the research under dual enrollment refers to

home school students dual enrolling into courses at their home high school, not dual enrollment with a post secondary institution for college credit.

Gougeon (2004) studied the Educational Transition Program (ETP) at Greenfield County Community College in Massachusetts. The Commonwealth created a dual enrollment program initially to provide an academic challenge and opportunity to a particularly successful group of students whose needs could not be met in high school and expanded it to a very different group for whom high school was not a good fit in other ways. The program provides an opportunity for academically able high school students at-risk of dropping out to attend GCC full-time while concurrently enrolled in high school. The findings of the study primarily focus on student outcomes and the positive impact the program had on at-risk students.

Karp (2006) examined dual enrollment from a college persistence lens as she interviewed students participating in New York City's College Now program. Karp found that dual enrollment often encourages students to learn about the college student role, and, under some circumstances, helps students integrate the role into their self-concepts. Her study, supported by the theoretical framework in identity theory, corroborates that the College Now program provides an environment in which students engage in anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal.

Similar to Karp's study, Jones' (2006) confirmed a linkage between persistence rates and increased grade point averages as a result of participation in a dual enrollment program at both Texas Tech University and South Plain College. Jones argued high school and college administrators need to have a better understanding of the importance

of dual enrollment in the preparation of the academic success of first year full-time college students.

Hebert (2001) found that student outcomes, specifically in mathematics dual enrollment courses may be dependent upon the instructor. The study, conducted in a Florida multi-campus community college found that students who had high school teachers for dual enrollment mathematics courses earned significantly better grades in subsequent coursework at the state universities than those taught by college faculty.

Dual enrollment research specific to middle and underachieving students is limited at best. Additionally, Orr (2002) (as cited in Bailey, Hughes & Karp 2003) stated that most research on dual enrollment outcomes data is limited at best. Subsequently, most of the research available today has been conducted by programs themselves and emphasizes positive student outcomes.

The review of the literature is very limited in regard to the perceptions guidance counselors possess regarding dual enrollment programs. In fact, the researcher was not able to locate any scholarly research on guidance counselor perceptions for high or middle achieving students. The research indicated guidance counselors have historically been the gate keepers to post secondary education; therefore it is imperative to study their perceptions of providing non-traditional students with dual enrollment opportunities. This dissertation study is significant, in that, it examined those perceptions.

A Review of the Studies on Guidance Counselors' Influences on Students' Post

Secondary Decision Making

Research has often reported conflicting evidence, however, about how and the

extent to which, guidance counselors influence a student's decision to attend post

secondary education. Rosenbaum, Miller and Krei (1996) cited evidence from interviews

with counselors who believe their roles are not to 'advise' but to 'provide information' to

students about college. Due to previous criticism that counselors often close off

opportunities for students, many counselors are now loathing offering any disparaging

advice to students regarding pursuing their academic careers (Krei & Rosenbaum, 2001;

Rosenbaum, et al., (1996). Further, the research of Krei and Rosenbaum (2001) argued

that the new concept of "everyone goes" to college may also have a negative impact on

students, and be detrimental to academic success. In this practice, students are persuaded

to attend college without having the interest or preparation to attend college. Their

research stated that high school students find career related information from high school

teachers more beneficial than they do from the guidance counselors.

Today, most counselor influence literature focuses on the degree to which the

guidance counselor impacts a student's post secondary choice. Counseling literature

continues to promote the role of the counselor in helping students explore their

postsecondary educational options, while others focus on the ambiguity of the

counselor's role (Hoyt, 2001; O'Dell, 1996). Furthermore, according to Bleuer & Waltz

(2003) more current counseling research promotes differentiated counseling for specific

student groups, including students categorized as underachievers.

Recent literature suggests the role of the guidance counselor is that of a personal counselor instead of a gate keeper. Bleuer and Waltz (2003) suggested the role of the guidance counselor has expanded to dealing with crisis situations such as gang violence, bullying, teen pregnancy, drugs and suicide prevention. The additional administrative responsibility limits the amount of time guidance counselors have to spend with students who need assistance, and many students find guidance counselors to be inaccessible. In fact, Lee and Ekstrom (1987) found that only 50 % of sophomores had met with the guidance counselor regarding college planning. They also found that students who have little access to the guidance counselor were more likely to be placed into non-academic tracks. Furthermore, Chapman, O'Brien, and DeMasi (1987) found that one in five students never discussed college plans with a counselor.

Historically, guidance counselors have been perceived as social selectors, holding the key for those deemed worthy of entering the gates of post secondary education. This autocratic method of elite selection was often based on the counselor's perception of a student's economic status, academic achievement level, and minority status (Rosenbaum et al., 1996). Guidance counselors had the reputation of unilaterally selecting which student was worthy of a recommendation, or which was encouraged to go onto post secondary education. This scenario was extremely popular prior to the 1960's when opportunities to attend post secondary education were limited to highly selective and competitive four year institutions.

Previously, Rosenbaum (1976) noted the role of the guidance counselor followed that of a social selection process with strong opinions about which students should follow

college preparatory tracks in high school. These opinions often included frank discussions with parents regarding their child's lack of discipline, academic ability, or work habits to be successful in post secondary education. Ultimately, guidance counselors often following these counseling strategies destroyed the hopes and career aspirations of many students.

Recent counselor research indicates that African American and Latino students are highly influenced by their high school guidance counselor when considering college as an option. This ever-growing population of students requires more intensive counseling time and requires much more than simply passing out college brochures and outreach material. The more time spent with a guidance counselor greatly increases the probability a student will attend post secondary education (McDonough, n.d.). Johnson and Stewart (1991) reported that African American students are more likely to utilize their guidance counselor than Caucasians, and less likely to obtain information from their family.

Chapman et al., (1987) found that low income and first generation college students are no different in their need for assistance. However, Lee and Ekstrom (1987) found that guidance counselors spend most of their time with college bound upper and middle income students. Consequently, African Americans spend more time with the guidance counselor accessing information specifically regarding financial aid programs. Conversely, low income, non college bound students spend less time with the guidance counselor than others do.

The National Association of College Admission Counseling (1990) suggested that student population have changed dramatically over the decades. Specifically, growing populations from ethnically diverse, racial backgrounds are accessing post secondary education. This population is large enough to constitute the majority of students in higher education in several states. These first generation college students are from families and communities with limited if any experience in education.

Clark (1960) argued rather than denying the opportunity to further one's education, guidance counselors propose an alternative to those unprepared for college level work. The alternative often recommended was to refer students to community colleges. Students who spent a year in a community college could take prerequisite courses in order to satisfy requirements to enter a four year college.

Subsequently, the inception of the community college drastically changed opportunities and accessibility to higher education in the United States. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, the 1960's proved to be fruitful for the growth of the community college system, including the opening of 457 community colleges (AACC, nd.). One current description of the community college is that it "acts as the neighborhood school of American higher education extending the reach of local school districts and connecting them to state university systems" (Palmer, 2000, p. 93). As a result of this growth, guidance counselors no longer needed to be selective in whom they recommended to attend post secondary education.

The establishment of a network of community colleges increased the accessibility to post secondary education through an open door admission policy. Such policies allow

students often passed over by guidance counselors an opportunity to enter post secondary education without meeting the often rigorous and competitive entrance requirements of four year institutions. Consequently, guidance counselors no longer have the dismal responsibility of informing students they are not college material. Open door admission policies removed this barrier and now allow underprepared students an opportunity to experience higher education (Rosenbaum et al., 1996). As a result, the role of the guidance counselor significantly changed from one of possessing powerful influence over a student's future to re-evaluating who higher education may benefit the most.

Today, guidance counselors now avoid discouraging students from attending post secondary education, and follow a "college for all" strategy. Rosenbaum et al., (1996) reported the new generation of guidance counselors not only promotes a college for all model, they also encourage students who have no higher education aspirations to attend college. This new era in counseling allows students who may normally not have considered post secondary options an opportunity to be exposed to the world of higher education.

Counselors confronted with the student who wants to go directly into the workforce generally advise students to consider working and attending college on a part-time basis. They provide students with scenarios which include the possibility of obtaining higher wages and advancing quicker with a college degree.

Shill (1987) concurred that access to counseling has historically been a social stratifier, and as a result has impacted the opportunities available to students. College bound students are more likely to seek counseling for planning their high school

coursework and post secondary education future, than are students without aspirations for higher education. Lee and Ekstrom (1987) reported that a student's ability to access counseling services can have a monumental impact on their decision to attend post secondary education.

A Review of Self-Efficacy Theory

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "People's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. It is concerned not with the skills one has but with judgments of what one can do with whatever skills one possesses" (p. 391). According to Bandura (1994), "people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided" (p. 1). The difference in self-efficacy characteristics directly influences one's learning experiences.

Upon the review of the literature, Bandura is the prominent key figure in self-efficacy research and social cognitive theory. Pajares (2003) reported that Bandura "broadened the frontier of social learning theory with now familiar principles of observational learning and vicarious reinforcement" (p. 139). This new view established "individuals to be proactive and self-regulating rather than reactive and controlled by biological or environmental forces" (p. 139). Furthermore, Bandura advocates that the way "people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing" (as cited in Pajares, 2003, p. 140).

Self-efficacy draws upon both cognitive and behavioral thought. Self-efficacy is of particular concern for students who struggle to learn and often resist the idea of academics (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). Research confirms that self-efficacy is a performance indicator for academic achievement in an academic environment (Olivier & Shapiro, 1993; Schunk, 1991). Furthermore, high school students who do not believe they are good in math, reading, or writing, are less likely to do well in those subjects. In particular, students who believe they are not able to successfully perform academically at the college level will most likely have no interest in post secondary education.

Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) reported that students will not engage in activities they believe will lead to unsuccessful results. They easily give up on tasks similar to those that they have previously failed. Similarly, Bandura (1977) suggested that in general people will only participate in activities that are in the realm of their self perceived capabilities, and avoid situations in which others will perceive as outside their capabilities. Likewise, Schunk (1981) stated "children who perceive themselves as inefficacious should tend to shun achievement tasks or to engage in them halfheartedly and to give up readily in the face of obstacles" (p. 94).

Alfassi (2003) argued that a student's self-efficacy level can have a considerable impact on a student's future goals, engagement level and academic achievement level. Equally, Bandura (1995) maintained that self-efficacy is a key factor in the establishment of intellectual developments as well as a predictor of future academic success. Likewise, and especially prominent in a high school setting, self-efficacy levels can influence the way in which students face failure and handle adversity (Jackson, 2002, p. 244). Current

self-efficacy research reports that students with high efficacy levels are more likely to remain focused on their task, will expend greater effort in achieving their task and will be more persistent than students who have low efficacy levels. Moreover, students with low self-efficacy levels show high levels of emotionality when dealing with overwhelming issues. Additionally, students often get frustrated and depressed easily and tend to give in easier when confronted with a perceived unachievable task (Pajares, 1996).

O'Hare (1992) reported that self-efficacy strongly influences the decisions students make, the amount of time they spend on a task and the amount of energy they expend on an assignment. The commitment level dedicated to the task can also be related to a student's persistence level. At-risk students, specifically minority students tend to have lower self-efficacy levels. Consequently, this may result in a student remaining at risk, failing to make academic progress and can be associated with the reason so many students fail or dropout of high school and withdraw from post secondary institutions (cited in Pajares, 2003).

Strauser (1995) stressed that a hallmark of self-efficacy theory is the notion of efficacy expectations as contrasted with outcome expectations. Efficacy expectations are defined as a student's belief that he or she can successfully achieve a goal. Conversely, outcome expectations are defined as a student's belief that a particular course of action, will eventually determine the outcome of the goal. Bandura (1977) conceptualized efficacy expectations into three distinct dimensions, each with their own performance implications. First, efficacy expectations differ in magnitude, thereby impacting the difficulty of the goal. Secondly, efficacy expectations differ in generality, influencing the

extent to which expectations will generalize one's performance while obtaining the goal. Lastly, efficacy expectations differ in strength, influencing the perseverance rate in obtaining a goal (p. 194).

In its broadest sense, self-efficacy can play a contributing role in a student's academic engagement level. Thereby influencing a student's engagement level may also improve a student's academic level. Margolis and McCabe (2004) argued that one way for students to overcome low self-efficacy is to encourage them to take on challenging tasks; dual enrollment may serve this purpose. Thomas Bailey, Director of Community College Research Center, stated, "In programs around the country, dual enrollment experiences are inspiring some low-achieving students to become better prepared for college through more demanding academic coursework" ("State dual enrollment," 2004, p. 1).

Recent research suggests that self-efficacy levels can be changed over time and require strategies involving both extrinsic and intrinsic approaches. Bandura (1977) recommended that self-efficacy levels may be elevated through one of the following sources: (a) performance accomplishments (successfully achieving the desired outcome), (b) vicarious experiences (observing others achieve the outcome), (c) verbal persuasion (encouragement, reassurance, motivational speech), and (d) emotional arousal (reducing physiological signs of anxiety) (p. 195). These sources can then form the basis of counseling intervention techniques, designed to aid a student's efficacy expectations (Strauser, 1995).

According to Fall and McLeod (2001), school personnel must take measures to accommodate and understand a student's efficacy levels in order to maximize efficacy. Pajares (2003) inferred that school personnel should pay as much attention to student's perceived confidence as they do to actual competence, for it is the perceptions that may more accurately predict students' motivation and future academic choices (p. 153). Furthermore, increased self-efficacy is a fundamental part of increased academic achievement. Unfortunately, low self-efficacy levels may infer that a behavioral issue exists within the classroom. These behavioral issues may be a result of a student giving up on an assignment because the student believes he/she cannot complete it successfully. As a result, students will often transfer attention from the assignment onto themselves in order to seek attention from fellow students and the teacher.

Bandura (1986) suggested that school personnel utilize modeling as a mechanism for improving self-efficacy. More specifically, given a situation where students are not confident in their ability to perform a task, students respond positively if they watch another student perform the task instead of the teacher. Schunk (1981) proposed peer modeling may be the most influential efficacy tool teachers have at their disposal.

School personnel may also provide low efficacy students with assignments that may assist the entire class (Fall & McLeod, 2001). An assignments given to the student should be one the student is certain to master and will feel good about when completed. Additionally, school personnel need to be cautious regarding the language they use around students with self-efficacy issues. The way in which a teacher or counselor speaks to a student may make a world of difference in the way a student responds to an

assignment or task. Providing choices to students allows for equal deliberation. If students are free to choose which task they can perform, and which task they can avoid, this may allow the students to determine their success rate. Because of the influential nature of efficacy beliefs, Pajares (2003) argued that school personnel are wise to take their role in nurturing the self-beliefs of their students seriously. These beliefs have a wide impact on a student's future decisions and choices.

The current research is reflective of self-efficacy studies in the academic areas of mathematics, reading, essay writing and career decision making. However, little research has been done explicitly in the area of self-efficacy and its relationship to a student's decision to attend post secondary education. Furthermore, recent studies show that middle and underachieving students who participated in dual enrollment programs are challenged academically leading to high levels of college success.

Likewise, Graham and Weiner (1996) validated that the beliefs students have regarding their academic ability are key to their success or failure in school. Consequently, they also state that self-efficacy is a better predictor of behavioral outcomes than other self beliefs. It is the school and the school personnel's responsibility not only to foster the development of competence, but foster the development of confidence for each of their students. Bandura (1986) noted:

> Educational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children's beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a

strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative. (p. 417)

Finally, the review of the literature confirms that a student's self –efficacy level is key to academic success. Much of the literature is based upon the creation of expectations. If a student's expectations are set high, many students will rise to the occasion. Accordingly, the review of the literature implies that self-efficacy levels may directly impact a student's ability to succeed in post secondary work.

<div align="center">A Review of Achievement Goal Theory</div>

The achievement goal approach began to emerge in the mid to early 1980's from motivational researchers such as Ames (1984), Dweck (1986), and Maehr (1984). Specifically, researchers studied the manner in which students determined goals in specific settings. In general, students' achievement goals have been described as a "program of cognitive processes that have cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences in a variety of settings" (Elliott & Dweck, 1988 p. 11). This study specifically looked at the way in which students set goals in an academic setting.

Achievement goal theory suggests that students must be motivated to engage in school activities for multiple reasons, and the goals students adopt have important implications for how they approach and engage in learning. Simultaneously, a student's self worth is often based upon his/her academic achievement (Harari and Covington, 1981).

As a result, achievement goal theory has emerged as a predominant framework for understanding students' achievement motivation (Midgley et al., 1998; Pintrich &

Schunk, 1996). Nicholls' (1984) study of achievement-based theory suggested that a

student's achievement behavior varies dependent upon the student's goals and his or her

perception of the motivational climate. Brophy (1987) stated, "it is essential for teachers

to view them themselves as active socialization agents, capable of stimulating student

motivation to learn" (cited in Lumsden, 2004, para. 16). Achievement goals are the

underlying reason for students to complete their academic work; therefore the

understanding of why students choose to perform is an essential question in the analysis

of their success.

     According to Harackiewicz and Linnenbrink (2005), achievement goal theory has

been an active area of research in psychology for the last 20 years led by researchers such

as Ames, Dweck, Maehr, and Nicholls. However, according to much of the literature,

Pintrich recently has made a substantial impact in the field of achievement goal theory.

     Accordingly, Pintrich (2000) established two types of goals that can impact

student motivational and achievement levels. Theory and research on achievement goal

orientations confirm two general goal orientations; mastery goals and performance goals

(Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2002). Some theorists view achievement goals as functions of

individual or personality characteristics and as such are stable across a variety of

situations. While Ames (1990) and others see achievement goals as influenced by the

social environment, this becomes especially positive in situations where the classroom

environment is nurturing (cited in Smiley & Dweck, 1994, p. 1742).

     Ames and Archer (1988) defined mastery goal orientation as possessing an

intrinsic focus, while performance goal orientation is considered to possess an extrinsic

focus. According to Grant and Dweck (2003) "different researchers have used different "labels" and terminology for these two categories of goals. Performance goals have also been called ego-involved goals or ability goals. Mastery goals have also been referred to as learning goals" (p 541).

Mastery goals are motivated by students' desire to learn and be part of the learning process, to seek out new knowledge or new skills, and to want to consistently improve one self. Covington & Mueller (2001) discovered through interviews with first year undergraduates that much of what students learn and retain is gained out of their own personal interests and undoubtedly not learned as a means to earn high grades.

According to Ames (1992) mastery goals often encourage learners by "developing new skills, trying to understand their work, improving their level of competence, or achieving a sense of mastery based on self-referenced standards" (p. 262). Likewise, intrinsic motivation is often defined as the pursuit of an interesting task without expecting or receiving a "tangible payoff of one's actions," or a "tendency to engage in activities for their own sake, just for the pleasure derived in performing them or for the satisfaction of curiosity" (Covington & Mueller, 2001, p. 162-163). Intrinsic rewards such as pride, self satisfaction, the pleasure of learning something new are inclusive to mastery learning and do not require a system of rewards to operate.

Bandura (1986) suggested that students can focus on their mastery goals as a means of improving motivation. Students can do this by (a) setting achievable sub goals (b) creating contingent rewards (c) setting personal standards (d) monitoring goals.

Conversely, performance goal oriented students are motivated by grades, by the hopes that their grades will get them into a good college or university, by potential career opportunities, by wanting to be the best or first in the class; motives that have nothing to do with the love of learning. Additionally, performance goal orientation extrinsic focus can also include motivation to avoid a consequence. Students are often motivated to avoid failing an exam, fear of success or to avoid being grounded by their parents. As a result negative reinforcement is often common, not for achieving something positive, but for avoiding something negative. For example, a student studies to avoid failing the exam. Students often struggle "to avoid failure, or at least the complications of failure," rather than to approach success (Covington & Mueller, 2001, p. 166).

Students that are motivated extrinsically have a higher rate of absenteeism and are more likely to drop out of school. Unfortunately, these students see their self worth as reflective of their grade point average and may also experience high anxiety when test taking. Covington & Mueller (2001) also argued, "if students are unsuccessful in achieving their grade goals, especially if they interpret their failures as evidence that they are unworthy, then the fear of being judged incompetent by others is potentially devastating" (p. 161).

Midgley, Middleton and Kaplan (2001) pointed out that the nature and quality of the effort must also be taken into consideration in regard to performance goals. Students often utilize study techniques that require effort and persistence, yet will not yield for them long term cognitive results. This is often accomplished through the use of a mnemonic device. For example, a student may memorize the names of the state capitals

through the use of a song. However, the nature of the learning strategy may not result in permanent learning for the student. Elliot, McGregor and Gable (1999) reported that most studies found performance goals are unrelated to deep cognitive processing.

The academic environment often lends itself to performance orientation. Educators charged with teaching students often ask themselves the following question: What do students need to do to be successful, and how is this information delivered to students? Every elementary, secondary, post secondary and graduate level course has requirements that students must accomplish in order to be successful, often resulting in the development of a performance oriented reward structure (Doyle 1983). Covington & Mueller (2001) sampled a group of college students asking for the reasons why they would spend more time and effort on a written assignment than was necessary for a good grade, or why would they choose to read supplementary text material that was not assigned to be tested. The most frequent response to either scenario was to satisfy their curiosity. However other responses included (a) material in the supplemental reading assignment may eventually be on a test (b) understanding of the outside material may help them achieve higher grades (c) the instructor would ultimately know they were serious about the information they were learning (d) they may possibly gain an advantage over other classmates (p. 162).

Furthermore, Covington & Mueller (2001) found that students will value the learning process more "when (a) the dominant reasons for learning are task-oriented, not self-aggrandizing or failure avoiding (b) they are achieving their grade goals (c) what they are studying is of personal interest" (p.173). On the other hand, Maehr and Nicholls

(1980) argued that "success and failure are not concrete events" (p. 228). They are psychological states consequent to perceptions of reaching or not reaching goals.

Harackiewicz and Linnenbrink (2005) reported that "the majority of the research conducted in the 1980's and early 1990's concentrated on mastery versus performance goal comparisons, and the theory and supportive findings have been summarized in countless places as "mastery goals are good, and performance goals are bad"(p. 76). However, upon thorough review of the literature, many are open to using achievement goals as a mechanism for change. Middleton & Midgley (1997) suggested using goal theory as a framework for school reform (Ames, 1992; Maehr & Midgley, 1996). This will allow school personnel the opportunity to understand the relationship between mastery and performance goals and their subsequent educational outcomes. As a result, researchers caution school personnel to integrate mastery and performance goals with other motivational measures.

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2002) reported that when following a social cognitive model approach, students can be motivated to do well in school in a variety of ways. Smiley and Dweck (1994) revealed that prior to a child entering the first grade, he/she has already developed mechanisms for identifying learning opportunities. Children with learning goals will seek opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge (p. 1742). Whereas children with performance goals will seek opportunities where they are very confident in their ability and will avoid situations where they lack confidence. Therefore much of the research indicates it is the school personnel's responsibility to find out how and why students are motivated. Furthermore school personnel should be cautious when

labeling students motivated or not motivated especially if using a one size fits all measuring assessment.

Summary

The current literature reflects a connection between self –efficacy theory and achievement goal theory, especially when applied to success in post secondary education. Much of the research on guidance counselor theory has changed over the last few decades. Historically, guidance counselors were seen as the gate keeper to higher education, offering their counseling services to a select few. More recently, guidance counselors have promoted a college for all theory. This notion promotes the idea that everyone should have an opportunity to access post secondary education.

The literature is very limited regarding the relationship between dual enrollment programs and counselor influence, self-efficacy and achievement levels. More specifically, the literature does not adequately address middle or underachieving students who participate in dual enrollment programs. Additionally, with the rise in popularity of dual enrollment programs and initiatives, no research could be found examining the perceptions of guidance counselors. If guidance counselors control the gateway to those who enter dual enrollment programs, their perception of dual enrollment programs and the students they attract is critical.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In 1983, the *Nation at Risk* commissioned report urged school districts to increase the rigor of their academic programs, especially in the twelfth grade year. This sentiment was also echoed in President George W. Bush's *No Child Left Behind Legislation* of 2001. As a result, high school reform initiatives have sprung up across the country. Some states have made efforts to link high school and postsecondary curricula in both technical and academic areas, trying to strengthen articulation agreements, increase students' and parents' knowledge about these agreements, and open access to dual-enrollment programs (Hughes & Karp, 2006 p. 2). As a result of these reform initiatives, school districts are collaborating and partnering with post secondary institutions to establish dual enrollment programs.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the perceptions that diversified occupational guidance counselors possess regarding their influence on students decisions to participate in post secondary education, and subsequently in dual enrollment opportunities, the intrinsic benefits students receive as a result of participating in a dual enrollment program and students' interest level in attending post secondary education as a result of participation in a dual enrollment program. This chapter provides an overview of the methods and a description of the participants used to collect data for this study. During the course of this study the following inquiries guided the investigation:

1. How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a student's post secondary education plans?

2. How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?

3. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?

4. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?

<div align="center">Rationale for Qualitative Methodology</div>

The research design of this study is qualitative. A qualitative design was selected because it best suites this particular type of study by exploring the perceptions of diversified occupational high school guidance counselors participating in a dual enrollment program. Qualitative research is appropriate when the research is on little known phenomena or innovative systems; and on informal and unstructured linkages and processes in organizations (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 53). Merriam (1998) described qualitative research as an "umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). This study aligns with Marshall, Rossman (2006), and Merriam's (1998) description of qualitative research.

Qualitative research utilizes multiple methods and approaches to explore phenomenon (Flick, 2002). Researchers pursuing qualitative methodology are typically

intrigued by complex social interactions and therefore are interested in the effects that interactions have on the participants they are studying. Therefore, most qualitative research is done in the participant's natural environment (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Creswell (1998) reported that qualitative research is an ongoing process of developing a detailed illustration of a participant's point of view and from that creating a linguistic portrait. The portrait is created from a collection of interviews, field notes, artifacts, and the intrinsic examination and analysis of data.

  According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005):

Qualitative research is an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on the processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. The qualitative researcher examines the intimate relationship that exists between the researcher and what is studied and the value-laden nature of inquiry. (p. 10)

This specific study examined the perceptions guidance counselors have regarding dual enrollment programs and their influence on a student's post secondary attendance. This study also examined the perceptions guidance counselors have regarding the relationship that exists between participation in dual enrollment programs and persistence to post secondary education.

<div align="center">Selection and Identification of Participants</div>

Participants for this study were diversified occupational guidance counselors participating in a new and innovative dual enrollment program located in York County, Pennsylvania, and championed by seven area school districts (Middletown School

District, Holiday School District, Lindy School District, Flowerhouse School District, Burnside School District, Star Valley School District and Cherry Hill School District). The diversified occupational guidance counselor from each of the school districts was invited to participate in the focus groups. The researcher sent letters to the principals of each of the participating school districts apprizing them of the nature of the research project and soliciting their permission and support (Appendix E).

In 2005, under the direction of leaders within the Lincoln Intermediate Unit (IU12), a groundbreaking program was developed geared specifically to undecided, middle and underachieving students interested in the healthcare field. This program has been promoted as an exemplary program throughout the Pennsylvania community college dual enrollment system and aligns with the strategic goals of *Project 720*; Pennsylvania's high school reform initiative.

Students attending any of the high schools participating within the Lincoln Intermediate Unit have the opportunity for recommendation and enrollment into this dual enrollment program. The dual enrollment program is facilitated by the Advanced Skill Center, a private licensed post secondary institution located in the outskirts of the City of York. Students recommended by their diversified occupational guidance counselors for this program must be either in their junior or senior year, and be undecided regarding their career or post secondary future. Additionally, students must possess a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average, much different than any other dual enrollment program in the region: as these programs offer opportunities to only those students with a high grade point average or high achievement levels.

Although it may have been interesting to research a student's perceptions of dual enrollment programs, it was even more appealing to research the perceptions of the diversified occupational guidance counselors. These perceptions include the influence guidance counselors perceive they have over a student's decision to attend post secondary education. Additionally, the researcher explored the perceptions that exist regarding a student's ability to succeed academically in a college setting where the academic rigor is intense. Finally, as a result of students participating in a dual enrollment program, the researcher examined the benefits diversified occupational guidance counselors perceive students gain from participating in this specific dual enrollment program.

Data Collection Methods

Marshall and Rossman (2006) reported that qualitative research relies quite heavily on the use of in-depth interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described interviews as a "conversation in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion" (p. 4). In order to reduce the risk of systematic biases or the limitations of a specific source, multiple methods of data collection are used (Maxwell, 2005). For the purposes of this study, data are collected through the use of focus groups, document analysis, and the collection of historical data in order to adequately answer the research questions.

Focus Groups

In order to gain the deep perceptual insight from the high school diversified occupation guidance counselors, focus groups and an individual interview were conducted. Two focus groups were conducted in order to provide enough time for in-

depth discussion. The first focus group was held in June of 2007, to correspond with the completion of the school year. The second focus group was conducted in October of 2007 to correspond with the beginning of the school year. This allowed for two different perspectives from guidance counselors in relation to issues occurring at the beginning of the school year and reflections of the program at the end of the school year.

Morgan and Krueger (1993) reported that focus groups are distinguished by the presence of group interaction in response to the researcher's questions (p. 13). Additionally, focus groups are used as an effective method of collecting data when any of the following conditions are present (a) a power differential exists between participants and decision makers (b) when there is a gap between professionals and their target audiences (c) when the research involves complex behavior and motivations (d) to learn more about the degree of consensus on a topic (e) when a friendly research method that is respectful and not condescending to the target audience (p. 15-19).

Albrecht, Johnson and Walther (1993) argued that focus groups frequently have a life of their own, often conducted in an environment where interpersonal communication and social influence are always present. As a result of this dynamic, data results may be limited. Yovovich (1991) stated, "interaction among respondents stimulates new ideas and thoughts, yet group pressure challenges participants to be more realistic" (p. 43).

Piloting

Prior to conducting the focus groups with the research participants, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with professional colleagues. Smith (1999) stated that piloting helps researchers eliminate or lessen the barriers that may exist in the

interviewing process. Examples of barriers may be the resistance to tape recorders, or mistrust of the researcher's agenda. Piloting allows emerging themes to develop while at the same time allows the researcher to retool any research questions that may be confusing or unclear.

The researcher piloted the interview questions with three current dual enrollment guidance counselors at high schools within western Pennsylvania. Data gathered during the course of the pilot study were used to refine the focus group questions proposed for the guidance counselors involved in the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program. The guidance counselors participating in the pilot suggested changes to a few of the focus group questions that they believed were difficult to answer. The changes included adding language that allowed for more open ended questions. Prior to this, the questions tended to be asked in a way that limited responses. Because data gathered from the focus group was paramount to this study, it was imperative the questions solicited multiple and thought provoking responses.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, the researcher informed the principal of the high school of the nature of the study. A letter was sent to both the principal and the diversified occupational guidance counselor explaining the purpose of the study and notifying them that the researcher would contact the guidance counselor responsible for recruiting and referring students to the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program to confirm the meeting time of the focus groups (Appendix B). Soon after, the researcher telephoned each of the guidance counselors and arranged a time and location for the focus group. The focus group interview took place in a conference room at the Advanced

Skill Center, an environment that was comfortable and familiar to all the diversified occupational guidance counselors. The researcher sent a letter of confirmation regarding the focus group date and time along with a list of sample questions to each of the diversified occupational guidance counselors.

The participants' permission to interview and audiotape was obtained prior to the researcher's arrival via an informed consent letter (Appendix C). The researcher used two tape recorders to ensure a back up recording was available in the event the first malfunctioned. Immediately following the interview, the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim and a copy of the transcript was sent via email to each participant to ensure the integrity of the dialogue.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) described qualitative interviewing as "not just learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied" (p. 15). As the researcher facilitated the focus group discussions the responses often morphed into an in-depth, almost advocacy like conversation based upon the level of knowledge and experience of the diversified occupational guidance counselor and the comfort level of the dialogue.

Participants

Diversified occupational guidance counselors who recommend students to the Advanced Skill Center's (ASC) dual enrollment program were invited to participate in the focus group. These diversified occupational guidance counselors have the primary responsibility for making recommendations and referring students to the ASC program. It was the researcher's intent to gain an insight from their perceptions of dual enrollment

programs, based on their experience as a high school diversified occupational guidance

counselors. These perceptions and insights may lead to a better understanding of the

problem statement and the research questions.

It should be stated that the school districts and the diversified occupational

guidance counselors involved in the research study were given pseudonyms to protect

their anonymity. Additionally, since two focus groups were held, several of the

diversified occupational guidance counselors were present at both focus group sessions.

Focus Group #1

Guidance Counselor #1 *Lauren* is a diversified occupational counselor from the
Middletown School districts and has been in this position for two years. There are
approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school.
The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill
Center.

Guidance Counselor #2 *Keri* is a diversified occupational/career counselor from the
Middletown School district and has been in this position for twelve years. There are
approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school.
The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill
Center.

Guidance Counselor #3 *Timothy* is a diversified occupational counselor from Holiday
School District and has been in this position for four years. He previously was in the
same capacity at the York Technology Center. There are approximately 2,760 students
attending the school district; 803 attend the high school. The school district is
approximately fifteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #4 *Susan* is diversified occupational counselor at the Flowerhouse
School District and has been in this position for eight years. There are approximately
2,598 students attending the school district; 804 attend the high school. The school
district is approximately six and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #5 *Anne* is the diversified occupational counselor in the Cherry Hill
School District and has been in this position for three years. There are approximately
5,369 students attending the school district; 1,472 attend the high school. The school
district is approximately thirteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Focus Group #2

Guidance Counselor #1 *Lauren* is a diversified occupational counselor from the Middletown School districts and has been in this position for two years. There are approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #2 *Susan* is diversified occupational counselor at the Holiday School District and has been in this position for eight years and 31 years in the school district. There are approximately 2,598 students attending the school district; 804 attend the high school. The school district is approximately six and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #3 *Anne* is the diversified occupational counselor in the Cherry Hill School District and has been in this position for three years. There are approximately 5,369 students attending the school district; 1,472 attend the high school. The school district is approximately thirteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #4 *Katie* is the diversified occupational counselor for the Burnside School District and has been in this position for five years. There are approximately 3,004 students attending the school district; 868 attend the high school. The school district is approximately four and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #5 *Josh* is the diversified occupational counselor and school to work coordinator for the Star Valley School District and has been in this position for twenty-six years. There are approximately 5,263 students attending the school district; 1,661 attend the high school. The school district is approximately eleven and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Guidance Counselor #*6 Ashley* is the guidance counselor for the Lindy York School District and has been in this position for eight years. There are approximately 6,461 students attending the school district; 1,648 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

One of the diversified occupational guidance counselors was unable to make the focus group session and instead was interviewed separately in her office. Her bio appears below.

Ellen is the guidance counselor for the Lindy School District and has been in this position for six years. There are approximately 6,461 students attending the school district, 1,648 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Focus Group Questions

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the focus group

questions. Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

1. How do dual enrollment programs help students?

2. How do dual enrollment programs hurt students?

3. How do you feel about the "college for all" model?

4. How do you see the dual enrollment program with the Advanced Skill Center affecting a student's choices after they graduate?

5. How have local educational institutions changed their delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of middle achieving students?

6. How will a successful dual enrollment experience impact middle or underachieving students?

7. In your judgment, what are the requirements that should be placed on students who want to take dual enrollment courses?

8. In your opinion, what motivates a middle or underachieving student's decision to attend post secondary education?

9. In your opinion, why would a student not participate in a dual enrollment program?

10. What is the connection between middle or under achieving students participating in a dual enrollment program and their desire to attend post secondary education?

11. Some believe students who are high achieving students in the high school classroom will also be high achieving student in post secondary education. How do you think this theory compares with the students you have experience with?

12. What are the challenges faced by students who participate in this program?

13. What do students learn from participating in a dual enrollment program that they may not learned if they did not participate in the program.

14. What experience do you have with middle achieving or underachieving students who want to attend post secondary education?

15. What is your name, the school district where you are employed; tell us how many years have you been employed as a high school guidance counselor?

16. What is your own personal philosophy of middle achieving student's ability to succeed in post secondary education, regardless of participation in a dual enrollment program?

17. What is your perception of how students feel about their ability to succeed academically among college students?

18. What role do guidance counselors have in promoting dual enrollment?

19. What students should be targeted to participate in dual enrollment capabilities? Why?

20. What was your initial reaction to the dual enrollment initiative in Pennsylvania?

21. Which students receive more of your time when preparing students for post secondary opportunities?

The proceeding matrix reflects the three research questions of this study and identifies which of the focus group questions will be used to answer each research questions.

Table 1   *Identification of Focus Group Questions that Support the Research Question*

Research Question	Focus Group Question
General Information	• What is your name, the school district where you are employed; tell us how many years have you been employed as a high school guidance counselor?
Dual enrollment	• What was your initial reaction to the dual enrollment initiative in Pennsylvania? • What students should be targeted to participate in dual enrollment capabilities? Why?
Research Question # 1 How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a student's post secondary education plans?	• What is your own personal philosophy of middle achieving student's ability to succeed in post secondary education, regardless of participation in a dual enrollment program? • What role do you see guidance counselors have in promoting dual enrollment? • Which students receive more of your time when preparing students for post secondary opportunities? • How do you feel about the "college for all" model?

Research Question #2 How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?	• How have local educational institutions changed their delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of middle achieving students? • In your judgment, what are the requirements that should be placed on students who want to take dual enrollment courses?
Research Question #3 What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?	• What are the challenges faced by students who participate in this program? • What is your perception of how students feel about their ability to succeed academically among college students? • What experience do you have with middle achieving or underachieving students who want to attend post secondary education? • How do dual enrollment programs help students? • How do dual enrollment programs hurt student? • What do students learn from participating in a dual enrollment program that they may not learned if they did not participate in the program? • How will a successful dual enrollment experience affect middle or underachieving students?

	• In your opinion, why would a student not participate in a dual enrollment program?
Research Question #4 What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?	• How do you see the dual enrollment program with the Advanced Skill Center impacting a student's choices after he/she graduates? • Some view students who are high achieving students in the high school classroom will also be high achieving students in post secondary education. How do you think this theory compares with the students you have experience with? • In your opinion, what motivates middle or underachieving students' decision to attend post secondary education? • Is there a connection between middle or under achieving students participating in a dual enrollment program and their desire to attend post secondary education?

Document Analysis

A review of documents was used as another method of data collection. A review

of documents was conducted in order to examine the type of material supplied to both

potential students and parents of potential students regarding the dual enrollment program

at the Advanced Skill Center. Content analysis according to Marshall and Rossman

(2006) is described as an "objective and neutral way of obtaining a quantitative

description of the content of various forms of communication" (p. 108). Material

considered in the document review included letters to students and parents, brochures

distributed to the guidance counselors from the Advanced Skill Center, newspaper articles, school district websites, and any other marketing material produced in support of the dual enrollment program. Although this study is geared to the perceptions of guidance counselors, results of post graduation surveys were examined to garner the students' persistence rates to post secondary education. All document analysis was directly linked to the research questions.

Historical Analysis

Finally, historical analysis was used to establish a baseline or background in addition to the information gleaned by the focus groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Historical analysis allows the researcher to fill in the gaps in unexamined areas as well as in reexamining questions for which answers were not as definite as desired (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 119). Through the review of the Advanced Skill Center records and data obtained by the partnering community college, historical analysis provided useful information to support the data gathered in this research study while at the same time answering the research questions.

Triangulation

Triangulation is defined to be "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence. Typically this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theory or perspective or produce a more

accurate, comprehensive and objective representation of the object of study. In order to check and establish validity in the proposed study, the researcher triangulated the data through the use of focus group data, data analysis, and historical analysis.

To summarize, this study utilized three methods of collecting data to answer the research questions. These methods include focus groups with diversified occupational guidance counselors, document analysis of the school districts or the Advanced Skill Center's marketing material, and historical analysis from the Advanced Skill Center and data from the partnering community college.

Summary

This chapter described the problem statement, research questions, design and methodology that will be used to understand the perceptions guidance counselors have regarding dual enrollment programs. A specific dual enrollment program with an innovative reputation among community college personnel was identified for this specific study.

This chapter also details the rationale for a qualitative study, selection of participants, justification for the site selection, data collection methods, piloting methods, interview protocol, document analysis, historical analysis, overview of the interview questions, and validity concerns through the use of triangulation. The next chapter will discuss the data collected and its analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Krei (1996) reported that the new generation of guidance counselors are following and more importantly, buying into a model that encourages open access to higher education for all students. This is contrary to the historical model guidance counselors followed which advocated that only a select few were worthy enough to enter post secondary education. In essence, guidance counselors had the reputation of unilaterally selecting which student was worthy of a recommendation, or which were encouraged to go onto post secondary education based upon the counselor's perception of a student's economic state, academic achievement level, and minority status (Rosenbaum et al., 1996).

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions high school guidance counselors have regarding the benefits students receive from participation in a dual enrollment programs within a particular educational setting. This study considered the following specific questions:

1. How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a student's post secondary plans?

2. How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?

3. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?

4. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?

This chapter presents the analysis of the data drawn from the study. It begins with a section of the brief professional profiles of the diversified occupational guidance counselors who graciously agreed to participate in the study. Following the profiles, the data are presented and formulated by themes related to each research question. Lastly, historical and document analysis were used to further examine and correlate data gained through focus groups as related to the research questions.

Findings from Focus Group Data

The perceptions of guidance counselors regarding the benefits students receive from participating in a dual enrollment program was explored through the use of focus groups. The researcher facilitated two separate focus group sessions both conducted at the Advanced Skill Center, the location of the York County Dual Enrollment Health Care program. The length of the focus group sessions varied from one and one-half hours to one and three quarter hours in length. Throughout the course of the discussion, the participants were attentive and spoke candidly about their view of dual enrollment programs. One guidance counselor who was unable to attend the focus groups because of another commitment was interviewed separately. The individual interview was one hour and fifteen minutes in length and was conducted in her office. Both of the focus group sessions and the interview were recorded through the use of a digital recorder. After each session the recordings were transcribed and subsequently provided to all diversified

occupational guidance counselors via email. This allowed the diversified occupational

guidance counselors an opportunity to review the transcripts and to ensure the accuracy

of the data. All quotations used as documentation, or to highlight examples were reported

verbatim. The researcher did not make any grammatical corrections within the dialogue

when reporting the comments.

<div align="center">Diversified Occupational Guidance Counselor Profile</div>

To protect the privacy of the diversified occupational guidance counselors and

their school districts, a pseudonym has been assigned to them and to the school district

they are employed by. Five diversified occupational guidance counselors participated in

the first focus groups, representing five school districts within York County. Six

diversified occupational guidance counselors participated in the second focus group

representing six districts within York County. The following are descriptions of each

diversified occupational guidance counselor:

<div align="center">*Profile of Focus Group Number One*</div>

Lauren is a diversified occupational counselor from the Middletown School districts and has been in this position for two years. There are approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Keri is a diversified occupational/career counselor from the Middletown School district and has been in this position for twelve years. There are approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Timothy is a diversified occupational counselor from the Holiday School District and has been in this position for four years. He previously was in the same capacity at the York Technology Center. There are approximately 2,760 students

attending the school district; 803 attend the high school. The school district is approximately fifteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Susan is diversified occupational counselor at the Flowerhouse School District and has been in this position for eight years and thirty-one years in the school district. There are approximately 2,598 students attending the school district; 804 attend the high school. The school district is approximately six and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Anne is the diversified occupational counselor in the Cherry Hill School District and has been in this position for three years. There are approximately 5,369 students attending the school district; 1,472 attend the high school. The school district is approximately thirteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

<center>*Profile of Focus Group Number Two*</center>

Lauren is a diversified occupational counselor from the Middletown School districts and has been in this position for two years. There are approximately 4,400 students attending the school district; 1,237 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Susan is diversified occupational counselor at the Flowerhouse School District and has been in this position for eight years and thirty-one years in the school district. There are approximately 2,598 students attending the school district; 804 attend the high school. The school district is approximately six and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Anne is the diversified occupational counselor in the Cherry Hill School District and has been in this position for three years. There are approximately 5,369 students attending the school district; 1,472 attend the high school. The school district is approximately thirteen miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Katie is the diversified occupational counselor for the Burnside School District and has been in this position for five years. There are approximately 3,004 students attending the school district; 868 attend the high school. The school district is approximately four and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Josh is the diversified occupational counselor and school to work coordinator for the Star Valley School District and has been in this position for twenty-six years. There are approximately 5,263 students attending the school district; 1,661 attend the high school. The school district is approximately eleven and a half miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Ashley is the guidance counselor for the Lindy School District and has been in this position for eight years. There are approximately 6,461 students attending the school district; 1,648 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

Profile of Individual Interviewee

Ellen is the guidance counselor for the Lindy School District and has been in this position for six years. She was previously employed as a guidance counselor in the state of Texas. There are approximately 6,461 students attending the school district; 1,648 attend the high school. The school district is approximately three miles from the Advanced Skill Center.

During the course of both focus groups and the individual interview, the diversified occupational counselors were excited to share their perceptions with the researcher. It was apparent from their responses to the open ended questions, that they were very proud of the work that they do and even more than happy to share their experiences.

Theme Formulations

Upon conducting and analyzing the data gathered through the focus groups and interview, the data began to reveal emerging themes and patterns as related to the research questions. Many of the themes to surface are similar to the existing dual enrollment research (Andrews, 2004; Duffy, 2002; Bailey, Hughes & Karp, 2003). However, the current research has not adequately explored dual enrollment opportunities from the guidance counselor's perspective. Researchers such as Rosenbaum (1976) advocated the role of the guidance counselor followed a social selection process with strong, personal opinions about which student should follow college preparatory tracks. Therefore, this study provides deeper insight to the benefits of dual enrollment

opportunities, especially in regard to middle achieving students, as observed through a guidance counselor's perspective.

The data presented in this chapter are presented in five sections, each discussing a particular theme. The first section of the data reflects the guidance counselors' overall reaction to the Pennsylvania's Dual Enrollment Initiative, and subsequently provides their thoughts as to which students this initiative should be directed. The second section focuses on the guidance counselors' perceptions of their influence on a student's post secondary plans. The third section focuses on the guidance counselors' perceptions of the intrinsic benefits students receive from participating in dual enrollment programs. The fourth section focuses on the guidance counselors' perceptions of the relationship that exists between a student's participation in a dual enrollment program and their persistence to post secondary education. The final section of this chapter includes the results of the historical and document analysis conducted for this study. Where appropriate, a matrix is provided summarizing the guidance counselors' perceptions of dual enrollment, specifically in regard to counselor influence, students' intrinsic benefits, and student achievement. In support of these perceptions, relevant statements from the research literature are also included.

Theme One: Guidance Counselor Perceptions of Pennsylvania's Dual Enrollment Initiative

In 1983 the *Nation at Risk* study, reported by the National Commission on Excellence in Education unveiled substantial problems within the current secondary education system; problems that were inherently at the heart of high school curriculum.

Among the inadequacies listed in the report included findings related to the lack of academic luster and rigor in the current high school curriculum. Additionally, the "wasted senior year" has been implicated as the down fall of the secondary school curriculum as students who have already met graduation requirements prior to their senior year bid their time by enrolling into non-essential electives and study halls rather than participating in rigorous coursework. As a result, Andrews (2004) reported that dual enrollment programs have been developed to address these concerns.

Pennsylvania's Dual Enrollment Initiative commenced during the 2005-2006 school year and was supported by the Commonwealth's budget with an allocation amount of five million dollars. Furthermore, when establishing guidelines and criteria, the Pennsylvania Department of Education broadened the scope of the program by permitting school districts to use the grant funds to support students who "are capable, not just exceptional." This notion is contrary to other programs that only allow high achieving students to participate.

Since its inception, the Commonwealth has steadily increased the budget allocation in support of dual enrollment. During the school year 2006-2007 the state budget included eight million dollars to fund dual enrollment, and increased the amount to ten million during the 2007-2008 school year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, Project 720, 2007 para. 4). However, it is important to note that individual school districts have the autonomy to decide which students will participate in their dual enrollment program. Further, the guidance counselors within the high school typically appear to be the group recruiting and referring students for dual enrollment opportunities. As a result,

it is important to understand the perceptions guidance counselors have regarding the dual enrollment program, and the students served by the program.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors in this study spoke early on about their feelings and initial reactions toward Pennsylvania's new dual enrollment initiative. It was apparent from the discussion that the counselors were optimistic and anxious about the Pennsylvania initiative. It was also clear that a program such as dual enrollment was needed to address some of the issues taking place in their own high school, most of which included options for students who had already met their graduation requirements, and were forced to take non-essential elective courses.

The following comments are representative of the focus group:

> *Susan*: I thought it was awesome. I mean, that was my first initial reaction. What a great opportunity for kids to take that senior year and do something productive with it. Not that there is not productive things going on in school otherwise, but this is just another opportunity, another option.

> *Carrie*: We felt the same way. The only other thing I can add is we get a lot of very good students that complete all of their classes and therefore were putting classes on their schedule that they really didn't want and this was another option for them to either take college classes or take some type of skills training. So it was very -very positive.

> *Ellen*: I was excited. I just thought this is great because so many of our kids think they want to go to college and then they are not sure. I have really taken the initiative to heart, the initiative, not to get the best and the brightest but to get students who show potential. Last year we got the kids who didn't do as well the second semester but they always do well the first semester. So we need to look at how we do that I just think it is a great opportunity for our kids. For the kids here in an urban setting, some they don't think, their self image and what they think they can do compared to kids from other school districts,. Is that they don't have the self confidence to believe that they can. Dual enrollment gives them a chance to find out- you know what- I can go in and sit and the less I tell someone that I am in high school they won't know. But most of the time they tell.

All the diversified occupational guidance counselors spoke positively about the initiation of Pennsylvania's dual enrollment program. In one specific school district's case, the diversified occupational counselor referred to it as a "win-win" for all involved. This counselor saw the dual enrollment program as a way for his school to address some internal curricular issues, and for his students to take advantage of a program that would challenge them academically. Likewise, another counselor stated that dual enrollment programs allowed for additional opportunities for students who previously have not had access to post secondary education.

The notion of the wasted senior year was a prominent systematic problem in most of the diversified occupational guidance counselors' school districts. In many cases, the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that students in their senior year have often completed a majority of their course requirements for graduation, and subsequently, avoid taking additional courses that may challenge them academically. Susan is one diversified occupational guidance counselor who expressed this.

> *Susan*: I have a lot of students who for some reason or another by the time they are in their senior year have decided that they are finished with high school. They don't need to be there, they don't want to be there, they don't see a purpose for being there. They are on to the next phase of their life and for those kids dual enrollment gives them something very productive to do that they actually appreciate.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors were outspoken and often even critical about the direction school districts have chosen to take with their dual enrollment program. Out of the six school districts that participate in the Advanced Skill Center dual enrollment program, each had a different set of criteria for students to meet in order to

participate. This type of autonomy is typical of dual enrollment programs throughout the

country. Duffy (2002) stated that in most cases, dual enrollment programs have been

targeted to high achieving students as it provides them with an opportunity to explore and

assess their readiness for educational advancement. Contrarily, Adelman (1999) argued

for the inclusion of middle and low achieving students in dual enrollment programs

because of the relationship that exists between rigorous academic coursework and post

secondary education.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors expressed great interest when

asked to provide their opinion of the type or caliber of student that should be targeted for

dual enrollment opportunities. It was particularly interesting to hear the opinions of the

diversified occupational guidance counselors whose school districts' were not open to,

nor practiced the true intent of Pennsylvania's program, which intended to serve "the

capable, not the exceptionable student." In many of the school districts, the dual

enrollment program is still only offered to those students participating in college

preparatory classes. However, it was clear that the counselors believed more students

could benefit from such an opportunity. The following are examples of their perceptions.

> *Susan*: In our school district a lot of kids will not take dual enrollment. They want
> to get their CP (college prep) classes in. They want to take AP, and that kind of
> stuff. We still have a student body that is very academically orientated. The kids
> who are National Merritt scholars, those are the kind of kids that we see actually
> going on taking college classes. It's not the norm kid in our school. And I think,
> again, its culture, clientele, and the whole nine yards. Each district probably sees
> that opportunity maybe used a little differently. I would like to see more kids who
> are CP, not necessarily just the honor students, but more CP kids take advantage
> of the opportunity, I think it would be exciting for them. I don't see that
> happening, not yet anyway.

Lauren: Students who are planning on attending post secondary education-that should be our target. We have block scheduling at our school so they can finish many of their math, and science requirements even going up thru Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Calculus and Statistics and not having any more courses to take.   They have taken all of them, those types of students being the ones currently targeted for dual enrollment.

Carrie: I think any student that wants to and is meeting the requirements for high school graduation should be permitted to participate in dual enrollment and here is my guidance counselor coming out. I'm not going to pigeon hole a kid, any kid can be anything they want to be if they are willing to be dedicated, be consistent and work hard and we have kids that want to go and are not always our top kids that are going. In fact, our top kids tend to want to take every AP class that comes along so there is no room for them to take dual enrollment. We are seeing more of the kids that are just meeting their requirement, and think they want to go to college and want to get started.

Timothy: I just think if they have the academic potential and have the desire to take a class that for me it would be exploratory. You know, some of the kids are not the top of the class and they want to see if they can handle a college class. I mean, I would steer them toward something they are interested in which is typically something we have here (Advanced Skill Center program).

Ellen's comment is an example of how one school district has agreed to target their dual

enrollment program to a specific population of students- the middle and underachieving

student.

Ellen: Who do I recommend for dual enrollment? Students with a minimum of a C grade; now I know that I sent some kids with a 1.9., but usually a minimum of a C. I have one girl, for example who is a gifted student whose GPA is in the pits. She doesn't even have a 2.0 which is a C. But we know in all her standardized tests she is proficient. I think you can say a minimum, but I think there will always be circumstances where a counselor may really know a student and what they are capable of and so I'm going to challenge a student. You know what? You really are capable of this and let's just see. To make it hard and fast, a C average or you can't go. I know some of the schools want to have a B average and 900 on their SAT, well come on. We are trying to get underachieving students, students who are middle of the road students who are maybe the first generation college student in their families. When you look at an urban setting the Latinos are the hardest group to crack to get them to college in the first place. However we have more Latinos in our building, and they will soon out number everyone in the building. Ok, you can set the family up, and say look, your child is college

material. They want them to go to a school right here in the community they don't want them to leave, I disagree with that, but that is their culture so you go with it. I did convince two to go to a school that is 45 minutes away, but they are still within reach of family. They may not get the whole college atmosphere, or experience.

In summary, the diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that historically, academic opportunities such as dual enrollment were for the select few, and typically included high achieving students. However, the general consensus of the group believed that any students who have the ability to "handle it" academically should be considered for such opportunities. This became even more prominent as the counselors were discussing recent changes to the length of their districts' class periods, and a move to block scheduling. The diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that block scheduling allows students a smoother transition both in and out of school day to participate in dual enrollment programs.

The perceptions of the diversified occupational guidance counselors regarding the Pennsylvania dual enrollment initiative were very clear and consistent with the current research. Andrews (2004) reported that the dual enrollment program was developed to address the serious concerns outlined in the *Nation at Risk Report*. Guidance counselors stated that many of their students often had all of their graduation requirements completed prior to the beginning of their senior year. In fact, many students were permitted to leave school after their first or second period class because there was nothing left for them to do the rest of the day. Still, other students filled up their schedule with study halls and extracurricular (non-academic) classes. Furthermore, the guidance

counselors stated the dual enrollment program allowed students to participate in an academically rigorous program that also provided an initial collegiate experience.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors confirmed the findings from Duffy (2002) indicating that in their school districts, high achieving students are typically the students targeted for dual enrollment programs. One of the diversified occupational guidance counselors mentioned that their school district seeks only AP students for dual enrollment opportunities, and have refused to sign a dual enrollment agreement with the local community college stating their students are of a "higher caliber". The reoccurring argument that continued to surface from the focus group dialogue was the notion that high achieving and low achieving students receive many more opportunities than do the middle achieving students. School districts offer AP courses and Early College Programs to high achieving students and remedial and support services for low achieving students. In fact, little or no opportunities are available to middle achieving students, and by far this is the biggest sector of the student population in the high school. Counselors agreed that the notion of inequity of services to all students has been intensified through the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

The diversified occupational counselors overwhelmingly expressed their feelings regarding the success that middle achieving students have when given the opportunity to participate in a program that has traditionally be set aside for academically superior students. These perceptions are consistent to the findings of Adelman's (1999) study that stated middle achieving students have much to gain from dual enrollment programs. These perceptions will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

The following table summarizes the research supporting the diversified

occupational guidance counselors' perceptions stated above.

Table 2   *Matrix of Guidance Counselor Perceptions of Dual Enrollment Programs and Supporting Research from the Literature*

Perceptions of Dual Enrollment Initiative   Supporting Research

Perceptions of Dual Enrollment Initiative	Supporting Research
▪ The diversified occupational guidance counselors believe dual enrollment opportunities allow for a productive senior year. ▪ Few school districts within the Advanced Skill Center's program allow for dual enrollment opportunities for all students. ▪ The diversified occupational guidance counselors found that all students can benefit from dual enrollment opportunities.	▪ Andrews (2004): Dual enrollment programs have been developed to address the concerns of the wasted senior year. ▪ Duffy (2002): Most dual enrollment programs are targeted to high achieving students. ▪ Adelman (1999): Low and middle achieving students have much to gain from dual enrollment opportunities.

Theme Two: Guidance Counselor Perceptions of Their Influence on Post Secondary

Plans

Students who have established a relationship with guidance personnel early on in

their high school education are more likely to attend post secondary education. In the

past, students who indicated they wanted to go to college were the same students who

took up the majority of the guidance counselor's time. Today, students who are on task,

high achievers, have parents that are educated, and have their sights set on a college

degree, will attend post secondary education, with or without the counsel of their

guidance staff. Students who attempt to take every Advanced Placement (AP) course

offered through their school district are often the students that guidance counselors never

worry about and as a result, take up very little of their time. These students typically have

their admission applications completed on time and are overzealous in regard to meeting deadlines for financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

Realistically, the need for high achieving, on top of their game students to spend time with a guidance counselor to gain access to information regarding academic programs at specific institutions, college admission requirements, or financial aid information has been diminished by the Internet. As a result, students no longer need to make an appointment to see a guidance counselor. They can gain all the information they need, literally in seconds by accessing a website. Consequently, the Internet nullifies the need for a student to see the guidance counselor in order to obtain college materials such as catalogs, applications, view books and other publications.

Diversified occupational guidance counselors who participated in this study argued that there is not a "one size that fits all" answer when determining who they spend most of their time with. For that matter, one of the participants indicated he spends as much time with the parents of students, as he does with the actual students. This is certainly reflective of the new millennium student whose helicopter parent is never too far away.

> *Timothy*: I spend a lot of time with the student with the helicopter parent. They are always hovering, always questioning, taking a lot of time, and not always driven by the student. Sometimes it's the parents and their own initiative.

What had traditionally been thought of as the typical student a guidance counselor spent the majority of their time with has evolved within the last twenty-five years. According to the focus group participants, today, they spend most of their time with students who have issues with discipline, absenteeism, or realize they want to go to college after they have

been out of school for one or two years. The following are occupational guidance

counselor perceptions of how their time is spent.

> *Ellen*: Who do I spend my time with? Traditionally you would say the kids who said for sure they want to go to college. Then the back side of that is in May, late May, or June students now decide they want to go to college. I explain to them, well you didn't take an SAT, you didn't do this, you didn't do that? You told me you didn't want to do that. They explain to me, well I changed my mind. As a guidance counselor, I try to get away from what has traditionally been done- which is just seeing the top kids. Now part of our school's mission statement is, every child is prepared for post secondary education. Whether they want to go to college, a four year school, a two year school, a trade school, and or the work field, they will all be prepared for post secondary education.

> *Anne:* I feel like I spend my time with in-school suspension, detention, students who are absent, that have behavior problems; that's where my time goes. I don't even have any AP students. Parents of my students, they never even come in for any conferences, so I feel like its behavior problems-that's where my time goes.

> *Lauren*: No it's the (in my experience) student that is not on task, one that is disruptive, absent continually that type of things, not the AP student.

Several of the diversified occupational guidance counselors spoke about the amount of

time they spend working with students that are needy. Susan's example is illustrated

below.

> *Susan*: Needy students come from lots of different groups. This year I had an AP student that was extremely needy. I had an AP student that had a helicopter parent which was extremely needy. Traditionally it is the often the kid that doesn't do so well academically who needs someone to help them graduate, and that you feel like you are pulling along all the time. Talk about biases, I usually have an easier time helping out the kids that have real needs. What I value are real needs, as opposed to the kid who I personally feel (and that's not saying it is correct, it's my personal evaluation of the situation) an AP kid or honor student who is having difficulty with responsibilities. I'm not as eager to help, but there are a lot of those kids who need us.

> Rosenbaum et al., (1996) pointed out that the new generation of guidance

counselors not only promotes a college for all model, they also encourage students who

have no higher education aspirations to attend college. This new era in counseling allows

students who may normally not have considered post secondary options, an opportunity

to be exposed to the world of higher education.

Furthermore, Pennsylvania's Project 720 initiative (named for the number of days

a student spends in school from 9th grade through 12th grade) requires participating school

districts to implement core components such as (a) creation of a rigorous college and

career preparatory program for all students (b) strengthening the academic infrastructure

with a focus on increasing achievement for all students (c) creation of personalized

learning environments with a focus on small learning communities and school counseling

(d) providing teachers with professional development in 21st Century skills (Project 720,

2007-2008, Program Guidelines, para. 5).

Several of the Advanced Skills Center's participating school districts are also

Project 720 schools and have embraced the notion of allowing all students the

opportunity to participate in college preparatory courses. Ellen, from a Project 720 school

expressed this statement about the change in their districts mission.

> *Ellen*: Do I agree with a college for all model? I would agree with from the
> standpoint that our high school is preparing kids for that. In the past if you
> weren't college bound, then the curriculum would not be as rigorous-cause you
> would have non-college bound courses. I am falling in with our principals
> because we are a 720 school. With 720 schools students have to have specific
> courses. Some of the research says those students who have Algebra 2 tend to be
> more successful in college. So we have pushed the student, so by the time they get
> out of high school they would have had Algebra 2, so it will give them a fighting
> chance. And then even though students may not be ready to go to college their
> first year out of high school I think you may find that they eventually trickle back
> through. We have kids now that have been graduated three years and they are
> coming back in and want to go back to school and they are asking us for stuff.

Rosenbaum et al. (1996) reported that a "college for all" model can be detrimental to students by allowing them to take college courses without having the interest or preparation to attend. Surprisingly, the diversified occupational guidance counselors that were not participants in Project 720 were not advocates of the "college for all" model. This may be related to the fact that as diversified occupational guidance counselors, one of their objectives is to provide the non college bound student with career counseling, coupled with job shadowing and internship opportunities. In essence, by their job function, their role does not support a "college for all" model. The counselors pointed out that college for all may not be the best route for some students. Another counselor was concerned about the message that "college for all" sends, especially to those students who choose not to consider post secondary education. By far, this was not a concept that all of the diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed with. Their perceptions follow.

> *Timothy*: I don't know that college for all is a fit for everybody, one size fits all. Is anyone ever happy with that?

> *Susan*: I have problems with the message that it sends that somehow you are not worthy or of value if you choose not to. I have obviously strong feelings and thoughts about things and that I am willing to share but at the same time I hope that I am open minded enough to understand that what I believe in or talk about, or push for is just my opinion and that everyone else's is valuable as well.

> *Carrie*: I remember when Timothy and I worked at the Tech School and he was opening the evaluations that he recently sent out. Students had to fill out where they were working at and he was reading to me some of the salaries. What the kids were making coming out of a tech school and what they were making one year, five year, and it was just amazing. I remember Timothy saying that to me and thinking isn't that wonderful that these kids have gotten skills and they are out there in the world being successful!

> *Lauren*: My point was going to be I don't know that the emphasis should be college is for all. I think the emphasis should be we all need to be lifelong learners and if that means college for some people, that's fine but there are many other

opportunities to be lifelong learners whether you are going after two year certificate programs, some type of post secondary education, two year technical degree, four year college, a doctorate degree whatever it might be, the emphasis needs to be on being willing to be a lifelong learner not a specific pigeon hole on the type of learner or degree you should achieve.

Anne: Our school's motto one year was we are lifelong learners and I agree. I look back to my own life and I did not go to college right out of high school. I was not ready to go to college right out of high school I wanted work and make money, and I did for four years. Then I started thinking I don't really want to do this job for the rest of my life. So then I went back and I was one of that middle student's who was lacking confidence and I did not have confidence to go onto college, I was from a farm. Farm girls don't go to college. They get married. After four years I got confidence in my job and that's when I had decided, I can go to college, I can teach.

Research has often reported conflicting evidence, however, about how and to what extent guidance counselors' influence a student's decision to attend post secondary education. Rosenbaum et al. (1996) cited evidence from interviews that counselors believe their roles are not to advise, but to provide information to students about college. Due to previous criticisms that counselors often close off post secondary opportunism for students, many counselors now loath offering any disparaging advice to students regarding pursuing their academic careers.

Certainly one of the themes to emerge from both the focus groups and the interview is the necessity for the guidance counselor to lead the dual enrollment charge within their high school. The diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that the only school personnel that has a broad based understanding of the school's students, current school curriculum and post secondary education offerings is the guidance counselor. In a few cases within the Advanced Skill Center's participating schools, the

guidance counselor was also charged with writing the grant to the Pennsylvania

Department of Education for the dual enrollment funding.

> *Susan*: I think that is our role. I don't know who else in the school would be the person. I would love to think that academic teachers or other teachers would encourage kids to do that. But to be honest, at this point and time anyway, the only person I see doing that would be the counselors, - at our school.

> *Anne*: I would like to think that some academic teachers would encourage that but it's the guidance counselor that meets with those students every year and looks at their goals on what they want to do and they have the opportunity to do that.

> *Carrie*: In our school district it is the guidance counselor, but we started an advisor program this year where each advisor has 10-15 students and they meet with them every 6 days and so I think there is a great opportunity there to encourage kids to think about dual enrollment also.

According to the diversified occupational guidance counselors, the challenge is

often selecting who will participate in dual enrollment opportunities. Unfortunately, yet

surprisingly, it appeared that concerns such as student schedules, sports or band

obligations and transportation issues were primary considerations and academic

relevance was a secondary thought when determining which students to select for a dual

enrollment program.

> *Ellen*: The role of the guidance counselor in promoting dual enrollment is that every one of their seniors they should be speaking to and letting them know this is an opportunity. We all should be pushing it. I know in our building, I look at the kids names in the alphabet and folks may say that she has a lot of kids in dual enrollment, but I push it out to everybody. The first year we did dual enrollment, dual enrollment came out the first year but the time that schools knew they got their grants it was already October so you could only do something the second semester. So that first year I had twelve 12 students and truthfully I got kids that were our top students. Because it was like OK, you had to arrange schedules. Those kids did well in dual enrollment and they went off to school and did well. Usually those top students who do dual enrollment go off to college and do well too. A few kids who were top students and did not do dual enrollment say they struggle in the sciences when they went to college because here we only have

limited science (Biology, Chemistry I, and AP Biology) and most kids from other schools have had more sciences. But most schools have more sciences, so the kids who can do dual enrollment, the top kids, pick up a science class to help them fare when they leave here.

Graham and Weiner (1996) argued that the beliefs students have regarding their own academic ability are key to their success or failure in school. Likewise, as diversified occupational guidance counselors refer students to post secondary educational opportunities this perception can be hard to overcome. They admit that special consideration must be made to a student's achievement level, academic history and more importantly their potential. The consensus of the diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that when attempted, the majority of middle achieving students will be successful in their post secondary pursuits. Further, they communicated to the researcher that middle achieving students are often underachieving students, for a variety of reasons. They cited that students are often bored with high school and the regiment of a daily schedule; classes are not interesting and as a result, students become complacent.

> *Ellen*: We have some underachieving kids that are really smart. We have one girl I'm having a hard time keeping her from dropping out of school and I keep telling her if you drop out of school then you can't stay in dual enrollment. Now she is doing great in the class, I'll wait to see her grade but she tells me all the time that she is going to class and she just loves the professor and it's really neat and she feels like they treat her like an adult. So you have underachieving kids that are really mature for high school and they don't want to sit in class and do tedious work, so they don't do anything. But they go to a college campus and the atmosphere, there is just difference. Those students are some of the students that we are going to find will really do well.

> *Susan*: I actually wish we could get more of the middle kids to get involved in opportunities available so they have the confidence in an environment where they can try something out, while they have the support they need. We could help support them in that, then they could get the confidence and skills they need to succeed and hopefully perpetuate the idea of post secondary education. When we talk dual enrollment, we start thinking college. I'm not just talking four year, I'm

talking training programs, two years, eighteen months, whatever they are. That's what our focus often is. We have an affinity for kids who are not necessary four year students. That doesn't mean we don't care about the four year students, we want all students to reach their potential. I think most of us say we have a real affinity for the middle of the road kids. Of course I would, I was one of those, and I went to college and did extremely well. But I do want to respect those who do not want to go to college and those who choose to go for other types of training. I would love to see some of those kids have the opportunity to try it out before they graduate.

Ellen: They are bored, that's what they claim. I hate school it's so boring. So when did you like school? In dual enrollment, even though they have to do classes in the core curriculum (NCLB) there is still leeway to take something of interest. Versus in high school you have to take US history, there is no getting around it. You take the required classes you can't get around it. In college they can take something of interest.

Carrie: I learned early on from somebody I used to work with, I had a student in my office that was a 2.0 student and he wanted to go to college, and I wanted to make sure I was doing the right thing for him and I went over to this guidance counselor with concerns and he said let me tell you a story. There was a guy that was the lowest student in our class and no one expected him to go onto any type of college. Today is a renowned doctor, so don't ever think twice about the student who says they want to do something, just support them and work with them and you never know where they are going to go. So that has been my philosophy of the middle and underachiever because of his story.

It was apparent in one of the focus group discussions that the topic of middle achieving students and their ability to succeed at the college level struck a nerve with a few of the diversified occupational guidance counselors. Perhaps the advocacy and affinity for middle achieving students is a result of a negative experience of their own with their guidance counselor. Susan's response to this question is especially telling.

Susan: My guidance counselor in high school looked at me and said why do you want to go to college to be a teacher, you're not college material? I was awful at high school but I was good at college. I had basic academic skills that were pretty good but didn't realize it. When I went to college I knew why I was there, I know exactly why I was there and what I was going to accomplish and what I needed to do. I wanted to be teacher, all four years -no major changes nothing. I stayed focused. When I got my Master's Degree with my honors I took it back and threw it in his face.

Timothy: I wanted to do the same thing too.

Anne: I'll jump on that because I have been a (middle achieving) advocate all along. I keep saying our schools are missing the middle student. We have everything in place for the students at the top; the student in the bottom and all the student in the middle get missed. I think in my own class I reach out to them as much as possible. But I really think we are missing the middle group. And yes, I was a middle student also and I did fine in college. And I think a lot of the middle student would do fine, maybe they would need a little backing because lots of time they don't have the support at home, but I think they would do fine in the right situation.

Jones (n.d.) reported that several initiatives have been launched throughout the country to promote dual enrollment programs for middle achieving students. North Carolina has opened the door to middle of the road students through their AVID (Advanced Via Individual Determination) program. Lords (2000) found that the Community College of Vermont has made a conscious effort to reach out to previously unmotivated, middle or below-average high school students.

As previously mentioned, Pennsylvania has encouraged school districts to target middle achieving students with access to post secondary education through the Project 720 initiative. Pennsylvania's motto of providing opportunities to the "capable, not exceptional" is consistent with Jones' research. However, outside of the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program and the Lindy School district, the consensus of the diversified occupational guidance counselors was that dual enrollment access to middle achieving students is not available in most school districts.

Susan: My school, highly academic, they barely give high achieving kids the opportunity to take college classes during the day. They have not done much of anything in terms of working, promoting, or working with post secondary to set up agreements. Even when we have been told they are not that difficult to set up. Our administrators pretty much have ignored the whole thing. If a kid wants to go

to college let their parents pay for it. So often time lower to middle achieving kids their parents can't pay for it. You can't get financial aid if a course is taken during high school. It's my opinion and feeling that our school does not support that for kids other than those who have the money and high academic standards to do so.

Carrie: I don't know. We have a lot of say. If they meet their criteria then they are interested in dual enrollment. For some reason I think one has a 3.0 GPA. I think we have 20-25 students doing dual enrollment, but then again if it is 3.0 then we are missing the student below.

Ashley: - I don't know that they changed anything, but they work with us to reinforce what we try to do with students. We make an effort to send all students. The days that our dual enrollment students don't have school we have required that they participate in the learning resource center or the counseling center so they can get the support that they need that they don't realize they need, or are too intimidated to ask for help. They have helped us to build that to track those students to make sure they do attend and they get those reports back and let us know if any of the students are on a danger list. So they work with us.

Susan: I need to be honest with you; I'm not sure that guidance counselors tap anyone other than the high functioning kids. Because that's how it has always been. That is so limited. It's almost always the top student who is a 4.0+ who want s to go on and knows what they want to take, can't find a class at Flowerhouse that is AP that they want. So it's very limited, but I don't know that our school is not limiting themselves. HACC, the local community college does target the middle of the road students. I think people are more willing to go out on a limb for the City students at this point. I can't imagine anyone coming in and doing that for the middle students at my school.

The literature is sparse when evaluating the requirements that students should meet in order to participate in dual enrollment. For instance, the Commonwealth of Virginia's dual enrollment policy states that any student can be eligible for participation in a dual enrollment program as long as they are "amply prepared for the demands of a college level course and can benefit from an enrichment opportunity" (Virginia plan for dual enrollment, para. 3). Additionally, Lords (2000) suggests the Community College in Vermont at Middlebury increases the likelihood of their middle achieving students'

success by insisting students take a non-credit study skills workshop prior to participating in a dual enrollment program.

Pennsylvania's eligibility determination is ultimately up to the local school districts and their post secondary partners. The diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that the current system of procuring the grant funding appears to be arduous, and as a result, two out of the six school districts participating in the Advanced Skill Center's program choose not to seek dual enrollment grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

> *Susan*: There an agreement that the school district needs to enter with the post secondary institution. See if you don't have administrators who are knowledgeable or willing to sign into an agreement, and I don't know what's in that agreement. Then that's where your problem lies. They are not going to come over to the guidance office and say, let's push dual enrollment if they are not going to sign an agreement.

Given that the local school districts and post secondary educational institutions are responsible for setting eligibility criteria, the diversified occupational guidance counselors believed that the eligibility criteria should be flexible enough to allow for greater access for students who are middle of the road students.

> *Susan*: It is kind of an independent study thing, so you need a kid who understands that there are requirements and things they need to do, whatever the schools requirements are. They need to understand it's an independent study; there is no one holding their hand. And making sure they are doing their college level class work. It is their responsibility. I certainly wouldn't want the kids with the .5 average leaving schools to do that. But it shouldn't be the 3.0 by any stretch and it shouldn't just totally by GPA either.

> *Anne*: Shouldn't motivation and desire be considered here? If they really want to do this if they are not motivated and if they don't have the desire they won't do well. We want them to succeed.

Lauren: Certainly, it should not put their ability to graduate from high school in jeopardy. They should still be able to meet their high school requirements. Obviously attendance and transportation are important and I think they need to demonstrate a willingness and ability to follow through.

Ellen: I think you can say a minimum but I think there will always be circumstances where a counselor may really know a student and what they are capable of and so I'm going to challenge a student, you know what you really are capable of this and let's just see. To make it hard and fast, a C average or you can't go. I know some of the schools want to have a B average and 900 on their SAT, well come on. We are trying to get underachieving students, students who are middle of the road student who are maybe the first generation college student in their families.

In summary, the diversified occupational counselors provided a unified voice when discussing their perceptions of the influence over a student's decision to attend post secondary education. Generally speaking, there was agreement that the relationship between students and guidance counselors has drastically changed over the last few decades. Once thought of as "social selectors" and "gate keepers" to higher education, guidance counselors now find most of their time spent on issues unrelated to post graduation plans. The diversified occupational counselors cited issues such as disruptive behavior, in-school suspension, students that have disability accommodations, students that are habitually absent and surprisingly, students with helicopter parents as the issues they spend most of their time on.

Moreover, the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that as students rely more heavily on information obtained through the Internet, students can access a vast amount of information about post secondary options. This has negated the need for students to visit the guidance office and ask questions about a college they are

interested in. Rosenbaum et al., (1996) confirmed that today guidance counselors do not advise students, they simply are providers of information.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions of how they spend much of their time is consistent with the research of Bleuer and Waltz (2003) who report that the role of today's guidance counselor has expanded to deal with issues unrelated to post secondary options such as attendance issues, gang violence, teen pregnancy and suicide prevention. The diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed students are more likely to access information about post secondary options from sources other than the guidance office.

Likewise, there was an overwhelming agreement that guidance counselors can use dual enrollment programs to provide middle achieving students and the student with no aspirations of post secondary education plans with an opportunity to experience college while still in the supportive environment of their high school. According to the diversified occupational guidance counselors, not all school districts are willing to allow middle achieving students to participate in dual enrollment programs. This notion is also well established in the research. However, Lords (2000) and Jones (n.d.) have reported that a few states and programs have expanded dual enrollment opportunities to middle achieving and under achieving students. Since all of the diversified occupational guidance counselors' districts provided middle achieving students with such opportunities at the Advanced Skill Center, they saw a great opportunity to influence a student's decision to attend a dual enrollment program which, in turn, they hoped would result in interest in continuing on after high school graduation.

The following table summarizes the research supporting the diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions stated above.

Table 3   *Matrix of Guidance Counselor Perceptions of their Influence on a Student's Post Secondary Plans and Supporting Research from the Literature*

Perceptions of Influence on Post Secondary Plans   Supporting Research

Perceptions of Influence on Post Secondary Plans	Supporting Research
- Diversified occupational guidance counselors do not select specific student populations for post secondary opportunities; they provide information to all students who are interested. - Diversified occupational guidance counselors report spending more time of issues non-related to post secondary options. - Diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that they can influence middle achieving student to attend dual enrollment programs. - Diversified occupational guidance counselors provide an opportunity for middle achieving students to attend the Advanced Skill Center programs. - All students who show an interest and are exposed to an alternative type of educational setting.	- Rosenbaum et al. (1996): Guidance counselors do not advise students, they simply provide information to students. - Bleuer & Waltz (2003): Role of the guidance counselor has changed as expectations of their role include dealing with bullying, gang violence, teen pregnancy and suicide prevention. - Rosenbaum et al.,(1996): Promotes the notion that everyone should be exposed to college opportunities - Jones (n.d.): Several states have begun to launch dual enrollment programs for middle of the road students. - Lords (2000): Dual enrollment programs have been developed to address the unmotivated and middle achieving student.

Theme Three: Guidance Counselor Perceptions of the Intrinsic Benefits of Dual

Enrollment

Margolis and McCabe (2004) reported that self-efficacy is of particular concern for students who academically struggle and often resist the idea of further education. With this in mind, school districts, and more specifically the selection process school districts use to determine which students participate in dual enrollment programs are

often value laden. Historically, school districts tend to value higher achieving students and, as a result, will support these students with programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and dual enrollment programs. Additionally, school districts have not invested heavily (either by budget allocations or staff resources) in programs supporting middle and underachieving students. Accordingly, diversified occupational guidance counselors agree that these students often feel neglected and devalued by the school system.

Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) reported that students won't engage in activities they believe they won't succeed in. Therefore, if a student does not think they are academically talented enough to compete at the college level, they often will not pursue dual enrollment opportunities. The diversified occupational guidance counselors agree that the real issue confronting school districts today is determining how to overcome the challenges faced by middle achieving students. A few of them revealed their perceptions in the following comments:

> *Susan*: Kids struggle with the transition at first because there is more freedom than being in the structure of being in a high school and you tell them, "step it up or you are done" and 99% of the time they rise to the occasion.
>
> *Kate*: Time is the biggest challenge I see with these kids. We have this discussion every day. Anytime a student adds something on that is outside of the norm, its enormous pressure. I've got a football star here in the auto tech program. He is in conflict every day, because in order to get to practice on time he needs to leave early. If he leaves early, he misses things that will hurt him academically. So it's an enormously wonderful thing, and it's a conflict. And I think it would be the same, well maybe not every dual enrollment situation but in many of them.
>
> *Timothy*: But those conflicts are what matures a person and make them successful. You can't hide that from them, they have to grow into it. And a lot of young people aren't getting that at home and they do not believe that it's really part of their existence. So when they get into a situation like that they may think of it as a

negative in full. But the fact of the matter is when they get to the outside they are going to have to do that again and again and again once they start having children and get a job.

Josh: I see middle achieving students struggle with time management, which is a lifelong learning skill. What they are learning are soft skills that probably aren't even put under the category of soft skills that, if I'm an employer, that I'm looking for in a human being that I would like to hire.

Timothy: Culture has so much to do with their success. What their family life is like. What their expectations are at home. All these things play into it and that can't be reinforced too much, the importance of those inputs. Many times we think that the peer has so much to say about it. But what I see here, really mom and dad, even if they are split, they still are the key decision factors for them. The one that they really want to impress and if the folks say they can't do it, it's really tough to overcome that mountain – that's a challenge.

Pajares (1996) reported students with low levels of efficacy will often display high levels of emotionality as they deal with overwhelming issues. Similarly, middle achieving students often have higher anxiety levels and often give up easier when confronted with a perceived unachievable goal, such as success at the college level. The diversified occupational guidance counselors from the Lindy City School District best exemplified this concept with the following:

Ashley: One of the things that I have seen, especially this year- with the Advanced Skill Center's HIT program. A couple of students came in and "from the door", and said that they couldn't do it, even though they chose to pursue it. They came into the program thinking that they were at a disadvantage and that puts a lot of stress on students. As a result, the students withdrew from the program within the first week.

Ellen: We can't lose ten students like we lost this year; they were already paid for and now we are not going to be able to use them. The students dropped out because they said the other kids (from other districts) had pre courses before we did. The director out there said, not really. But in their minds eye that's what they think, so part of it is working on a kid's self esteem.

Margolis and McCabe (2004) argued, when a student is challenged, especially through programs like dual enrollment, their low self-efficacy levels can improve. Diversified occupational guidance counselors agree that dual enrollment programs, specifically the program located at the Advanced Skill Center can inspire students to become better prepared for any post secondary option.

> *Ellen*: We have one girl now that I'm having a hard time keeping her from dropping out of school and I keep telling her if you drop out of school then you can't stay in dual enrollment. She is doing great in the class, I'll wait to see her grade but she tells me all the time that she is going to class and she just loves the professor and it's really neat and she feels like they treat her like an adult. So you have underachieving kids that are really mature for high school and they don't want to sit in class and do tedious work, so they don't do anything. But they go to a college campus and the atmosphere, there is just a difference. Those are some of the student that we are going to find as years go on will really do well.

Current research in self-efficacy theory reports that students with high efficacy levels are more likely to remain focused on their tasks and will expend greater effort in achieving their goals. However, the diversified occupational guidance counselors agree that even the student with low self-efficacy can persist through a dual enrollment opportunity. This is especially true when coupled with support services from either the high school or the post secondary institution.

> *Ellen*: I think dual enrollment is a help because it help them to see that they really can achieve after high school. Now we do hold their hands a little bit, we force them to use the learning center. So if nothing else, they will be a little savvier when they go off to college and are on their own.

When diversified occupation guidance counselors were asked how dual enrollment programs help students, the responses were plentiful. The responses related directly back to the variety of intrinsic and extrinsic benefits students receive as a result of their participation. Above all, there was unanimous agreement that the issue of self

confidence (self-efficacy) was a premier component to the success of dual enrollment

experience. Interestingly enough, many of the comments made by diversified

occupational counselors indicated that students in dual enrollment programs are not the

only ones that are helped. Several of the counselors mentioned that teachers and other

classmates are also helped throughout the process. The following are a sample of

responses that indicate dual enrollment programs help students and others in many

different ways.

> *Ashley*: For our students it's a reality check, because they really have no clue about the difference between high school and college. I think it sets their expectations higher, the demands are greater. I also think at some levels the appreciate the high school experience a little more because they see that more is required and they also need to expect more from their high school teachers to prepare them. We have had some students that have said they didn't tell me that I had to. We may have told them that they would have to do those things but they don't get the same thing from the teachers, so I think it's a double thing – it holds our teachers to a higher standard as well. As we start talking with the faculty about what the students face when they get to college; then it makes them step their game also up they know where the gaps are they will work a little better.

> *Katie*: I really just believe in the wakeup call thing especially. They don't have a clue and we standing up in front of a classroom don't give them that clue. They have to feel it and experience it themselves. And I think that, in fact it helps the teacher and it also helps the other students because if you have a class with kids dual enrollment (another class obviously -a high school class), the students who are involved in the dual enrollment help the teacher say, "Hey grow up this is the way it is going to be they are not just saying that to have you behave better." It's just an incredibly maturing experience for them.

> *Anne*: I'm trying to think of anything different that I can add. The only thing I can think of to add is that maybe it helps the students realize if they are going into this career, oh, I really do have to know anatomy. Oh, this is not what I thought it was going to be. So it might even help them because they are taking the courses that are really zeroing in on that career it giving them better vision of what that career is all about. So I think it may help with career awareness too.

> *Ellen*: We have been using for motivation, you know what, you come in my office as a tenth grader and you're not quite making it, you bring your grades up to a 2.0

and you tell me you want to go onto college. You'll get it up next year, I'll recommend you for dual enrollment; but you have to pass. You can't go there and make D's. You need to make C's. So actually I use it as an enticement. We had a student last year that went through and between dual enrollments her junior and senior year and her AP classes she went off to school with 35 credits. I tell them when you take your dual enrolment credits and the next year, not the first year, the next year when you register for classes it's all down on the number of credits. So you are going to be ahead of everybody. So we talk about how it affects them in college. I actually tell them from experience from my own kids or kids that have been through the program; they'll come back and tell us how it happens.

Josh: If we are talking about dual enrollment from all phases, The Advanced Skill Center, Welding, up through to college classes, then in its simplest form it is providing our student s with additional opportunities that they would not have if they were contained within the four walls of our school.

Despite the benefits middle achieving students receive from participating in a dual enrollment program, Lords (2000) suggested there may be negative consequences associated with allowing students who are middle of the road students, and not academically prepared, to participate in dual enrollment programs. As a result, some research argues that an early college experience can have a devastating effect on a student's self esteem and efficacy levels.

Surprisingly, the diversified occupational guidance counselors did not state any harmful consequences for an early college experience. On the contrary, most felt that even students who ultimately end up failing or withdrawing from a course will still take away a "lesson learned" from the experience. The following are a sample of the diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions of how dual enrollment programs may hurt students.

Ellen: I don't think it hurts students. People think, well they go to college and get an F and they won't want to come back. Except for the community college, since students are taking courses while they are still in high school, if they fail a course they don't send their transcripts to another college and the college does not ask for

it. So then they don't get credit for it. But I know in the community college if you go there and then decide to go back there then it really hurts them because they are already starting on probation. And so that would be the only drawback, but if they go to other schools and get an F they don't sent their transcript. Actually not, if a student receives a D or an F we do a conference at the end of the semester. When you talk to them about why they got the D or F, being honest they tell you I treated it like I did high school. I turned my stuff in late, they didn't take late papers and so it wasn't done. The one kid got an F because he didn't have a ride, he missed the final. Not to make excuses for them, but they have and excuse that is legitimate in terms of it doesn't dissuade them from going on to school.

Ashley: I don't see it as a bad thing. But a student may see it as a negative if they don't have a good experience. The good experience can be a social experience; it could be a good academic experience. So there are a lot of variables. Getting into a college setting no matter what the environment it's going to be different and sometimes you can help them with that and sometimes you can't if they are not successful. That would be the only drawback that I see that we need to find a better way to help the students realize what their potential is. Because sometimes they sell themselves short.

Susan: I personally don't see it. Because it's a choice, and hopefully that choice is made with guidance and I'm assuming that a child could "quote" fail an opportunity. We try really hard to make sure that doesn't happen and that there are options available if the kids not performing at the level they need to be performing.

On the whole, diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed there are far more advantages for middle achieving students to participate in the program, than not to participate. One of the diversified occupational guidance counselors suggested that students may be reluctant to participate if they do not know what to expect from the program. This is particularly true of students who may not be up to the challenge, both from a social and academic perspective. One counselor stated "some students just don't like to leave the comfort of their home school" and, as a result, will never participate in dual enrollment programs, or any other program that is outside their comfort zone.

Several of the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that transportation had become a tremendous barrier for students. While the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania permits dual enrollment grant funding to be used for transportation expenses, only one of the school districts among the six were using their funding to cover transportation costs. The Lindy School District purchases bus passes for students, enabling them to use public transportation in order to get to their college classes. The following is a sample of the comments made regarding transportation issues.

> *Timothy*: Transportation issues are huge. That's number one –just huge, especially for the kids from the city. They don't have cars or easy access to buses. There timeliness isn't there. A 12:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. period is very difficult for them. They get out of school the same time that kids in other school districts do. They can't get there in fifteen or twenty minutes or even a half hour.

> *Ellen*: For us it's been transportation, here our experience is that most of our kids don't have cars. If you look at other county schools those schools have parking lots for staff and students, we just have one for staff. No students, we don't have as many students that drive, so that becomes an issue. Most schools tend to start their classes on the hour and the bus services that get to those schools many times get there at 5 minutes after, that a big issue.

Jones (2006) found that students who participate in a dual enrollment program increase their overall GPA and first year persistence rates among first year full-time students. However, the study was not exclusive to middle achieving students. In general, the current research indicates that early college exposure sparks the interest of high school students, thereby affording them the opportunity to obtain a better understanding of post secondary education expectations. Therefore, it was imperative to gain a better understanding from the diversified occupational guidance counselors as to their true perceptions of student success.

Accordingly, all diversified occupational guidance counselors believed that providing middle achieving students with early exposure to post secondary education is key. As they each identified what they considered to be the positive learning experiences students take away from the program, a common theme emerged. The diversified occupational counselors were of the opinion that first and foremost, students develop self confidence in their own academic capabilities. This outcome is consistent with the Alfassi (2003) findings on self-efficacy levels and their impact on academic achievement levels. Additionally, this theme is consistent with Bandura (1995) as he reports that self-efficacy is the key factor in the establishment of intellectual developments as well as a predictor of future academic success.

As the diversified occupational guidance counselors discussed the progress they see as middle achieving students attend the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program, it was evident that what they were observing was truly a yearlong transformation. The following are a few statements regarding this perception.

> *Susan*: In my opinion it's confidence. Confidence in so many ways, confidence I can do it academically, confidence that I have overcome a fear, confidence that I can make it out here. There is so much self esteem that goes along with it.

> *Josh*: Confidence it's just such a huge factor.

> *Ellen*: Of course they feel good about themselves, and they are excited. It's that they don't have the self confidence to believe that they can. Dual enrollment gives them a chance to find out.

> *Ashley*: It's confidence that they can compete.

> *Susan*: That is a transition, but wow, what growth!

In summary, the diversified occupational guidance counselors' reactions to the intrinsic benefits middle achieving students receive as a result of participating in a dual enrollment program were positive and plentiful. It was clear from the dialogue that the diversified occupational guidance counselors were firm believers the program at the Advanced Skill Center provided students with an increased level of self-efficacy they may not have experienced without participating in the program.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors confirmed the findings of Margolis and McCabe (2004) and Shunk and Zimmerman (1997) that students entering the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program were leery about their ability to complete at a more rigorous academic level. In fact, one of the diversified occupational counselors explained that ten of her students withdrew from the program immediately upon entrance because they believed they could not succeed and compete academically with students from other districts.

The counselors also resoundingly confirmed that the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program provided students with an experience that could not be replicated within their home school district. Counselors often referred to this experience as "getting a clue" as to what is expected at the next level. These expectations include time management, study skills, note taking, independent learning, and the development of relationships with faculty members.

Lords (2000) reported that students who are not academically strong and who have a negative experience in a dual enrollment program may experience adverse effects on their already weak efficacy levels. This is one area that the diversified occupational

guidance counselors did not agree with the research. Most diversified occupational

guidance counselors believed that the experiences that students receive (both good and

bad) are lessons that they can build upon and learn from in the future. Additionally, the

diversified occupational guidance counselors confirmed this is an opportunity for

students to experiment in an environment that may not have a lasting impact on their

future. Additionally, the diversified occupational guidance counselors stated that the

program provided students with the motivation to continue on after high school

graduation. This concept will be reported in the next guidance counselor perception

section.

The following table summarizes the research supporting the diversified

occupational guidance counselors' perceptions stated above

Table 4   *Matrix of Guidance Counselor Perceptions of Student Persistence to Post
Secondary Education and Supporting Research from the Literature*

Perceptions of Intrinsic benefits	Supporting Research
- Students come into the program thinking they are at an academic disadvantage. - Student withdrew from dual enrollment programs because did not think they could compete with other students. - Students came into the program with the impression that they were not worthy of such an experience and consequently did not know how to react in the program. - Students interest level in attending post secondary education increases as a result of participating in a dual enrollment program.	- Margolis and McCabe (2004) Self-efficacy is a concern for student who struggle academically. - Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) students who believe they are not academically talented will hesitate to participate in dual enrollment. - Pajares (1997) suggests that student with low efficacy often respond to situations with high levels of emotionality. - Bandura (1995) Self-efficacy is the key predictor to future academic success.

Theme Four: Guidance Counselor Perceptions of the Relationship between Dual

Enrollment and Persistence to Post Secondary Education

Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003) reported that success in post secondary

education is a predicated on both rigorous academic preparation and a clear

understanding of the expectations of college while in high school. Creating the linkage

between the high school and post secondary institution is key to developing a transition

process that allows for student success. Dual enrollment programs seem to bridge the gap

that currently exists between the two. This section examines the perceptions diversified

occupational guidance counselors have regarding the connection between dual enrollment

and post secondary educational pursuits as related to students participating in the

Advanced Skill Center dual enrollment program.

Duda (1996) suggested that school personnel often can impact the decisions

students make regarding their educational goals. The diversified occupational guidance

counselors working within the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program have

acknowledged and given credence to this theory. Although self confidence clearly is one

of the hallmark accomplishments of this program, the diversified occupational counselors

agree that students thrive on the recognition they receive from school personnel from

their high school. In a few of the sending school districts, there is considerable

competition each year for the available openings at the Advanced Skill Center. Students

who are selected for the program benefit even more because they believe that school

district personnel find them worthy of this opportunity. The following is a summary of

some of the comments regarding the importance of recognition.

Josh: It may sound corny, but being patted on the back from school officials and people smiling at them and saying good job.

Susan: I think they do recognize what this means once they get here and they are actually in the classes. They actually recognize what they are being given. It's not just- I coming here and getting a pat on the back. I am actually learning something that is important and adult like that can be used at the next level. Sure that all builds confidents, but also it's like this is worthwhile.

Kate: They are being told they are worth, in essence, because they have been given a gift and they do eventually appreciate that.

Anne: Well if you look at our situation where we had twenty-eigt students interested and the district would only send about half of those. The twelve or thirteen that got to come really feel special because the other half didn't get to come.

Midgley (1998) and, Pintrich and Schunk (1996) suggested that achievement goal theory has emerged as a focus of understanding student academic motivation. The research of Duda (1996) indicated that the type of climate students find themselves in often can make a considerable impact on their decision making process. This is especially true when considering whether or not to attend post secondary education. Likewise, the climate created often has a greater effect on middle achieving students. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the way in which a school district projects how they value their students, i.e. providing all students with opportunities, including dual enrollment, also has the potential for impacting a student's goals.

The notion of attending post secondary education can also be related to the student's social, economic, and cultural beliefs. The National Association of College Admission Counseling (1990) found that the high school student population has changed dramatically over the decades. Specifically, student populations with ethnically diverse and racial backgrounds have been steadily growing. In many states, these populations

constitute the majority of students in high schools. Ryan and Cooper (2007) reported that

Hispanic youth represent the fastest growing segment of the population. However, they

report school districts have not served this population well.   Nationally, Hispanics

possess one of the worst high school completion rates (64%) in the country (p. 322).

Additionally, the culture of the Hispanic and Latino population does not actively promote

post secondary options, and in fact, if options do exist, they are limited to educational

institutions within the community. This concept can best be illustrated by comments from

one of the diversified occupation guidance counselors.

> *Ellen*: In an urban setting the Latinos are the hardest group to crack to get them to
> college in the first place. However we have more Latinos in our building, they
> will soon out number everyone in the building. So to get them to do dual
> enrollment, it's tough. Ok you can set the family up, look your child is college
> material. They want them to go to a school right here in the community they
> don't want them to leave, I disagree with that, but that is there culture so you go
> with that. I did convince two to go to a school that is 45 minutes away, but they
> are still within reach of family. They may not get the whole college atmosphere,
> or experience. When you ask them what they want to do with their future, college
> is not the answer. In talking to some of them, you find out some of them you find
> out that they may be the first generation getting out of high school, they are just
> going to get a job and go to work. But honey, I had a kid that was 19 in the class
> and they weren't going to go to college and I said you're in the top 10% of your
> class, he said well, what does that mean? So as we start, getting to them soon and
> talking about their class rank and telling them where they are and giving them
> opportunities go to a school to do post secondary while still in high school parents
> are starting to come along. I have 12 kids going to YBI, three are Latino's, and
> they don't want to go to college-that's what they keep saying-I don't want to go to
> college. I explain to them, you have a choice of going to YBI, or go to HACC;
> you can go to the community college because it's still right here in the
> community. So helping them, that's why they are tough to crack; the mindset of
> college just isn't the thing. I'm going to get out of here and go to work.

Ellen's comments are echoed by a few of the other diversified occupational

guidance counselors, especially those that work in urban settings.   Another diversified

occupational counselor stated that when meeting with minority students from different

backgrounds and cultures, it becomes more than just working on the student's self-efficacy level. In many cases, it's breaking through cultural barriers as well.

When discussing the benefits of dual enrollment, the diversified occupational guidance counselors ultimately agreed that students who do well in high school often do well in post secondary education. Therefore, the consensus of the diversified occupational counselors was that in general, schools may be limiting themselves by offering dual enrollment options to high achieving students. Graham and Weiner (1996) report a student's belief in their own academic ability is critical to their future academic success. Therefore, school districts may want to consider aligning early college programs, such as dual enrollment, where they may reap the most benefit. According to the diversified occupational guidance counselors, when examining the value added benefits of dual enrollment, high achieving students may not receive the as much benefits as originally perceived.

> *Susan*: People who are good at school are just usually good at school. Post secondary is school.

> *Ellen*: The top kid who does well in high school and goes off to school usually does well. However, a few kids who were top students and did not do dual enrollment say they struggle in the sciences when they went to college because here we only have limited science (Biology, Chemistry I, and AP Biology) and most kids from other schools have had more sciences.

> *Ashley*: Sometimes kids are good in school. It depends on what you mean by good. Are there grades good? Are they good students? There is a difference. You can have inflated grades and someone thinks you are a good student, because on paper you're a good student. But do you have good study habits? Are you persistent? So the top students aren't always the one because the top students they may not have good study skills.

The diversified occupational counselors agreed that middle achieving students benefit more from dual enrollment opportunities, and simply put by one of the counselor's, "the high achieving student is going to go to college anyway; they have already decided that. It's the one's that haven't decided and then realize wow, I can do this."

Harari and Convington (1981) reported that a student's self worth is often based upon their academic achievement. Accordingly, diversified occupational guidance counselors are convinced programs like the Advanced Skill Center promote a holistic learning experience for their students. Students at the Advanced Skill Center have the opportunity to take dual enrollment courses in allied health, medical terminology and gerontology. The diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that the program allows middle achieving students, who originally may not have been thinking about post secondary options, the opportunity to experience a more rigorous academic environment. From this experience, the diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that the students receive much more than just college credits. In many cases, their attitude and efficacy levels have been transformed. Furthermore, many students' original goals of graduating from high school and going to work to "get a job" change to post secondary aspirations. The following is a summary of the diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions of the relationship between dual enrollment and post secondary education.

> *Susan*: What impacts these kids? I believe this program. There are kids in our school obviously that we work with because we try to do a lot of career oriented programming. To help kids understand, we do the Ken Gray stuff. We say to them, look- there is stuff out there for you; it doesn't have to be four years. Go do the 18 month, the two year, and this kind of plays into it. They come over here; they said no way that I want to go to school they get into the classes they see that

they have more skills than they realize they do. And then it's like, "oh well, maybe I'll go on to the two year, or maybe I can actually handle a four year program." I don't know how many kids we brought over here thinking that their next step was a job after the ASC and in fact it ended up being more schooling.

Katie: Seems to be most profound in nurse aid, probably because we hear so much about each student at their graduation. That is so profound. Almost every student had no intention of doing anything and now they seriously consider going on to college. They have decided, they are not going to be a nurse aid, now they are going to be an RN and it's just amazing.

Anne: I think a lot of it is peer pressure also. Because for the middle and underachieving student, they are sitting in the classroom in many of their classes and everybody is talking about where they are going after they graduate from high school and I feel they want to be able to say they are going somewhere too. So I'm going here, even though they may never go. But I think there is a lot of pressure on them in the high school. I'm just talking about the high school now, that they feel they have to say they are going somewhere.

Ashley: I think from middle achievers too, it shows them they can do something else. Some of them may be feeling well I don't know if I can get into college or I'll have to go to XYZ, or I'm just going to work. I find that a lot of kids, especially in the City don't think about the college. They think about it but don't actualize the college. Where am I going, I want to leave York, what school am I going to go to and how will I afford it? They may not all be getting, "well of course you are going to college." When I came up it wasn't an option. But whether or not I was going was never up for discussion. You are going. I don't know that a lot of kids get now get that because of the culture of the city. A lot of people grew up and went to Caterpillar to work or Harley to work and they could make a good living doing that. They need to realize it's not an industrial town anymore and you need some other skills. So I think for that middle achieving student it's something to aspire to. Well maybe I can do that.

Josh: From a school district perspective, it goes back to what we said earlier. Allowing that type of students, and even our top level students who think they have a clue–but don't the opportunity to experience other experiences that they all think they know what it is. But to provide these students with the opportunity whether they take advantage of it to the fullest or not, they are interacting, (especially at a place like this) with adult workers who are telling them "you need to go onto some form of post secondary education." So they are hearing it not from a teacher in a shirt and tie in a classroom. They are hearing it from someone who has been out in that business for seventeen years and is very frustrated because he did not do that when he was eighteen years old. They are almost getting around ambassadors of career development and they don't even know it.

Daggett (2005) argued that in order for learning to be effective, students must be able to see the relevance in what they are learning. A concept he refers to as the Rigor/Relevance Framework in which students maximize their learning potential when they apply information they learned. He states, educational settings such as Career and Technology Centers, provide excellent learning opportunities for students because they not only draw upon a student's prior academic knowledge, they also are learning skills that can be applied in the future.

Essentially, the Rigor/Relevance Framework can be compared to the instructional delivery of the Advanced Skill Center. In addition to taking rigorous college level course work, dual enrollment students also have the opportunity to job shadow within the local health care system. The shadowing experience is paired in accordance with the student's career interest. Therefore, students see the relevance of the information that is taught through their course work. The following is Susan's perception of how this framework is directly related to the Advanced Skill Center and student success.

> Susan: "Getting real" takes two things and I think this is for real and when I present this to kids I truly believe it. It's not just academic skills. You have to have a combination of academic skills and career focus. If you have both you are much more likely to do better. Supposedly Ken Gray has the stats to prove that. I would have been one of those kids. I had basic academic skills that were pretty good and didn't realize it. When I went to college I knew why I was there, I know exactly why I was there and what I was going to accomplish and what I needed to do. I wanted to be teacher, all four years – no major changes. I was completely focused. It worked great for me and I think they are saying those are the kids that graduate.

Although the Rigor/Relevance Framework is most related to Career and Technology education (Vo-Techs), the diversified occupational guidance counselors view the

Advanced Skill Center's program as an even more rigorous option for their students because of the dual enrollment component. Additionally, the local Career and Technical Center is a comprehensive vocational school and does not have part-time options for students. As a result, students who want to study a vocational area must attend the Career and Technology Center on a full-time basis. According to the diversified occupational guidance counselors, this option is not appealing to all students. The diversified occupational guidance counselors argue, students like the idea of staying in their home school district and leaving to attend the Advanced Skill Center in the afternoon.

The diversified occupational guidance counselors freely shared their optimism regarding their students' persistence to post secondary education. For many, the initial process of selecting students for the program and then supporting them throughout the program often becomes a wait and see scenario. The diversified occupational guidance counselors promote that students often enter the program with one goal in mind, to find a job right after they graduate. As the diversified occupational guidance counselors watch the progression of the students throughout the year, that goal often gets replaced or supplemented with the notion of attending post secondary education. Several diversified occupational guidance counselors confirmed that without the opportunity this program provides, students would not have considered post secondary education as an attainable goal for themselves.

> *Susan*: When I look at dual enrollment for our students I get excited because I just feel it says to people you are worthy. You don't have to be the top of the class to go to college. There is a chance for you to make something of yourself.
> Talk about what do you love to do, and go get trained for it. And if it is four years, ten years, or two years it doesn't matter. It's about getting up every morning and doing what you love, and giving the people the opportunity to do that.

Ashley: Getting into a college setting no matter what the environment it's going to be different and sometimes you can help them with that and sometimes you can't if they are not successful. That would be the only drawback that I see that we need to find a better way to help the students realize what their potential is. Because sometimes they sell themselves short.

In summary, the diversified occupational guidance counselors whole heartedly uphold that through their participation in dual enrollment programs, middle achieving students are afforded the opportunity to experience an academically rigorous environment while at the same time learning what is expected at the next level. This school of thought is consistent with the research of Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003) who reported dual enrollment programs often fill the gap that exist between the high school and post secondary institution while allowing the student a smoother transition between the two systems.

The concept of worthiness was one that was unveiled repeatedly throughout both focus group sessions. The diversified occupational counselors stated that the middle achieving student often does not feel worthy of such opportunities and when given the opportunity, dual enrollment participation can make a tremendous difference in the way they feel about their ability to compete at a new level. These statements are in alignment with the research of Harari and Covington (1981) who reported a student's self worth is often based upon their academic achievement. Thus, diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that the dual enrollment program allows students the break needed to experiment with their ability to do college level work; while also igniting their interest in educational opportunities after graduation. This concept is especially key to diversified

occupational guidance counselors as most of the students entering the Advanced Skill

Center's program had no desire or interest in continuing their education upon graduation.

The counselors believe that the unique elements of this dual enrollment program would

be beneficial to all students, not just middle achieving. One diversified occupational

guidance counselor summed up the program as a "try before you buy" program.

The diversified occupational counselors reported that the middle achieving

student population is typically not recognized within their school district for any type of

scholastic accomplishment. Furthermore, the diversified occupational counselors have

drawn the conclusion that the recognition received by dual enrollment students has an

immediate impact on how the students perceive themselves and it is evident that this

perception has lasting effects on their decision to attend post secondary education. This

perception is similar to the findings of Duda (1996) who reported that school personnel

can often impact decisions students make regarding educational goals. This is not only

perception, but fact, as the post graduation data revealed that students attending the

Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program choose to go onto institutions of higher

learning upon graduation. The diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that

the self confidence students receive as a result of successfully competing at the college

level, provides students with the motivation and efficacy levels needed to continue into

post secondary education. In addition, this motivation is coupled by the reinforcement

and encouragement received from school district personnel in their home school.

As students are exposed to college level coursework and experience the type of

academic rigor needed to compete in post secondary education, the diversified

occupational guidance counselors report that students take coursework in their career

interest area. The counselors believe that by allowing students to explore their career

interest prior to graduation may either confirm or negate their interest in that career. In

this specific case students take courses in a health care area such as allied health, medical

terminology and gerontology. This concept is in line with the research of Daggett (2005)

whereby a student's achievement level increases if they see the relevance of what they

are learning. The diversified occupational guidance counselors acknowledge that pairing

both interest and content knowledge has increased student persistence rates into post

secondary education. The following table summarizes the research supporting the

diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions stated above.

Table 5   *Matrix of Guidance Counselor Perceptions of Dual Enrollment Student Persistence to Post Secondary Education Programs and Supporting Research from the Literature*

Perceptions of Post Secondary Persistence	Supporting Research
- Diversified occupational counselors agree that the dual enrollment opportunity allows students to "get a clue" as to what to expect in college. - Diversified occupational counselors provide encouragement and support as students participate in dual enrollment programs. - By participating in shadowing opportunities, students see the relevance in their academic preparation. - Dual enrollment students find themselves in a rigorous academic environment that increases both confidence level and academic abilities. - Middle achieving students who perform well in dual enrollment opportunities believe they can succeed in post secondary opportunities.	- Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003): report that success in post secondary education is based upon a clear understanding of expectations in higher education. - Duda (1996): School personnel can often impact decisions students make regarding educational goals. - Daggett (2005): Students must see the relevance in what they are learning. - Duda (1996): The type of climate that students find themselves in often can make an impact on their decision making process. - Harari & Covington (1981): A student's self worth is often based upon their academic achievement.

Findings from Historical and Document Analysis

The dual enrollment program at the Advanced Skill Center provides students with an opportunity to participate in academically rigorous college courses. As a result of their success in high school, many of these students pursue post secondary educational offerings. The researcher was permitted to review and examine several types of documents distributed to potential students and parents of the program, in addition to the final grade reports submitted to each school district. The types of documents examined

consisted of marketing brochures, information/recruitment letters to potential students and parents, newspaper articles on successful HIT students, the Advanced Skill Center's web page; specifically the HIT program page, conference proposals, student applications and registration forms, transcripts from the students' home school district and the local community college awarding the college credit to students and results of post graduation surveys conducted by staff at the Advanced Skill Center.

A review of the form letters disseminated by the Advanced Skill Center staff revealed that the information provided to the school districts and potential students and parents about the HIT program was not specific to a targeted student group. For example, the recruitment letter sent from the Advanced Skill Center to the diversified occupational guidance counselors did not indicate any prerequisite criteria a student may need to meet in order to be eligible for the program. As a result, students of all academic ability levels were invited to apply for admission to the program. This is not the case in many dual enrollment programs throughout the country. Most dual enrollment programs require a specific grade point average and in many cases a specific score on the SAT in order to participate in the program.

Upon reviewing the HIT program brochure, it was apparent that the information provided to students emphasized the health care program and the job shadowing experience that is associated with it. No mention of post secondary opportunities was apparent in the brochure's narrative. The concept of dual enrollment and the potential for students to earn up to eight college credits was not the focal point of any of the examined documents. The overarching message of the HIT marketing brochure suggested this is a

program that provides an opportunity for students to explore the health care field; not participate in college level course work. Anecdotally, the researcher believes that middle achieving student may avoid participating in such a program if the focus of the marketing brochure was post secondary education.

The recruitment letters and the marketing brochure did not provide the researcher with a sense that post secondary education is an option for students who enroll into to the HIT program. Likewise, upon review of the Advanced Skill Center's webpage, the health care program under the High School Internship listings was not provided as an option. The researcher followed up with Advanced Skill Center's administration and was informed there were some changes necessary on the health care program web page and it would be available in the near future.

The staff at the Advanced Skill Center provided the researcher with copies of local newspaper articles profiling their successful students and graduates. Many of the articles were written about students attending other HIT program areas such as welding, automotive and graphic design, all who were able to obtain self sustaining employment upon completion of the program. A few of the articles highlighted students who participated in the health care program and enrolled into a post secondary institution while continuing to work in a job they obtained during their job shadowing experience.

The researcher was also permitted to review the application form that is provided to all applicants of the program. All HIT students complete the same application, regardless of the program in which they are applying. Subsequently, students are not required to list their current academic performance information on the application.

However, students are not admitted into the program without the recommendation of their diversified occupational guidance counselor. Thus, this application allows students the opportunity to apply to a program of study without second guessing their academic ability to compete.

The researcher was provided with a transcript from HIT health care program students from both the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic year. It's important to note that in order to maintain the confidentiality of the student's record; no personal identifying information was viewable on the transcript. Accordingly, out of the 55 high school transcripts that were reviewed, 65% of students possessed between a 2.0 - 3.0 grade point average. The other 35% of students possessed between a 3.0 - 4.0 grade point average. This further confirms that students who participated in the program tend to be middle achieving students.

The staff at the Advanced Skill Center conducts telephone follow up surveys of recent graduates or parents of graduates, as a means of documenting the program's effectiveness. The researcher was permitted to examine and review the aggregate results of both the 2006-2005 and 2006-2007 graduation surveys. This data is existing data compiled annually by the Advance Skill Center staff. The surveys are conducted three months after students graduate from the health care program. The intent of the survey ascertains the employment or educational status of HIT graduates. Accordingly, students who are employed were asked where they are employed and their current employment status (part-time or full-time). For students who have chosen to go onto post secondary education, the name of the institution is requested as well as the student's chosen major.

The results of the survey data provide remarkable statistics that support the diversified occupational guidance counselors' perceptions of post secondary persistence. According to the aggregate data for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school year, 83% of the students in the health care program continue on to attend post secondary education. The data indicated that students enrolled into institutions such as the Harrisburg Area Community College, Millersville University, York College, the Pennsylvania State University, Lancaster General Hospital School of Nursing, York County Technology Center, and Shippensburg University. Further, the students declared majors in fields such as nursing, radiography, and allied health. Consequently, out of the students who enter post secondary education, 67% matriculated into the local community college.

The Advanced Skill Center staff was also able to share information with the researcher regarding the academic preparedness of their graduating students who then matriculated into the local community college. This data was provided to the Advanced Skill Center by the local community college as part of a joint conference presentation on the HIT dual enrollment program and included only students from the 2006-2007 school year. Surprisingly, results of the college's placement exam (Accuplacer) indicated that 64% of the dual enrollment students from the health care program placed directly into college level courses and were not in need to any remedial work. Typically, 42% of all community college freshmen require some remedial course work (NCES 2004).

The patterns that emerged from the analysis of the documents are consistent with the perceptions shared by the diversified occupational guidance counselors regarding persistence to post secondary education in the previous section. Clearly, the Advanced

Skill Center has been able to document the persistence rates of their students into higher education. The diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that the HIT program promotes students' interest in post secondary opportunities, and the Advanced Skill Center survey data supports their beliefs.

The data gathered through the document and historical analysis is consistent and supported by the information gathered during the focus group sessions. During the focus group sessions, the diversified occupational guidance counselors articulated to the researcher, if provided the opportunity, students of all academic abilities may take advantage of dual enrollment programs. By not restricting eligibility criteria and including inclusive language in their recruitment letters and marketing brochures, the Advanced Skill Center's HIT program opens the door to post secondary opportunities to many students that may not have been able to access such a program. This notion also aligns with the diversified occupational guidance counselor's beliefs that dual enrollment programs may be more beneficial to the middle achieving student. However, it is important to note that the recruitment letters and marketing brochures distributed by the Advanced Skill Center do not promote entry into higher education, rather job readiness for the workforce.

During the focus groups the diversified occupational guidance counselors boasted the success of their dual enrollment students and often provided the researcher with details of student success stories. The documents reviewed also support this claim as the researcher reviewed several newspaper articles profiling Advanced Skill Center students.

Although the document and historical analysis was limited by the number of years

the Advanced Skill Center's program has been in existence, there is a direct connection

between both the document and historical analysis findings and the focus group findings.

This is especially true regarding the intrinsic benefits students receive from the program

and their persistence to post secondary education.

Table 6   *Matrix of Historical and Document Analysis Data*

• Recruitment Letters to potential students and parents of students and HIT marketing brochures. • Advanced Skill Center's HIT website – health care page. • Students' high school transcripts. • Conference Proposals/Accuplacer placement testing results. • Newspaper articles. • Follow up graduation data on HIT health care students.	• Focus of the recruitment letters is work readiness skills, not post secondary educational opportunities. • Review of the ASC's HIT website is geared to short term skill training in other occupations. Health Care is not mentioned as an option for students • High school transcripts verify most students in the HIT program are middle achieving students. • Information within a conference proposal indicates students participating in the health care program and matriculating into the local community college test into college level classes. • Student success stories in the local newspaper document that students do persist onto post secondary education • Based upon existing follow up survey data students persist onto post secondary education and major in nursing, allied health, and respiratory therapy

Summary

This chapter discussed the research findings from the focus groups and interview conducted with the diversified occupational guidance counselors who participate in the Advanced Skill Center's health care dual enrollment program. From the group discussions, the following themes emerged: (a) diversified occupational guidance counselors are positive about the dual enrollment initiative in Pennsylvania, but believe the students that may benefit the most are not always the students targeted for these opportunities; (b) guidance counselors within their high schools must lead the charge to promote dual enrollment opportunities to all students; (c) diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that when middle achieving students are given the opportunity to participate in college level work, the growth that occurs in their self confidence is profound; and finally (d) the diversified occupational guidance counselors believe that there is a link between a middle achieving student participating in dual enrollment opportunities and their persistence to post secondary education.

Finally, the analysis of the post graduation data reveals that the students enrolled in the health care dual enrollment program are entering post secondary education at a high rate. Chapter Five will offer a summary of the findings and conclusions related to the research data and will offer recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the study's significance to research. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions guidance counselors possess regarding dual enrollment programs and the benefits to students who participate in them. This chapter will summarize the relationship that exists between the data collected and the original research questions proposed in Chapter One. Because guidance counselor perceptions are the central focus of this research, the methods utilized to gather information in this study primarily relied on the data gathered through focus group interview sessions. Additionally, both document and historical analysis were used to support the research question findings. This chapter concludes with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a students' post secondary education plans?

2. How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?

3. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?

4. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?

A goal of this study was to give voice to guidance counselors sharing their perceptions about dual enrollment programs and the students that participate in them. In order to adequately answer the research questions and to have a thorough understanding of guidance counselor perceptions, focus groups were conducted which allowed for elaborate and meaningful discussion regarding each issue. The development of themes presented in Chapter Four helps provide a framework on which the perceptions can be presented.

Summary of Findings

A summary of the major findings of this study can be found in the table below, followed by a narrative summary. This section will also discuss how the findings relate to the literature reviewed in chapter two and will address the findings from the theoretical framework used to support the study.

Table 7   *Table of the Research Questions and the Major Findings*

Research Questions	Findings
1. How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in students' post secondary education plans?	■ Guidance counselors perceive their influence on a student's post secondary planning very differently than the guidance counselors a generation ago. ■ Guidance counselors today deal more with personal counseling issues of students instead of post secondary counseling.

	- Guidance counselors report students do not rely on them for information about post secondary options. - Guidance counselors do not believe that the *College for all Model* is suitable for today's students.
2. How does a guidance counselor's influence impact which students are selected for a dual enrollment program?	- Guidance counselors who are knowledgeable about the goals and objectives of their school district's dual enrollment program will attempt to influence a non-traditional group of students to participate in the program. - Guidance counselors believe they are in the best position to drive dual enrollment programs in their districts. - Middle achieving students are often overlooked
3 What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program?	- Guidance counselors perceive students receive several intrinsic benefits from participating in a dual enrollment program, the premier benefit being an increase in a student's self-efficacy. - This increase in self-efficacy is most profound in middle achieving students.
4. What do high school guidance counselors perceive as the relationship between a student participating in a dual enrollment program and his or her decision to attend post secondary education?	Guidance counselors perceive a positive, and, in many cases a cause and effect relationship that exists between students who participate in a dual enrollment program and their persistence to higher education.

How do high school guidance counselors perceive their influence in a students' post secondary education plans? The findings of this question are similar to the research of Bleuer and Waltz (2003) who reported the nature of the guidance counselor's role has become that of a personal counselor instead of what was once thought of as a gate keeper to higher education. The diversified occupational guidance counselors echoed this sentiment throughout the data collection as they reported the majority of their school day is often spent dealing with absenteeism, in-school suspension, behavioral issues and even helicopter parents. Likewise, the findings indicate that much of the guidance counselor's time today is often consumed by needy students. Often these needy students originate from many different groups of students, both high and low achieving and everything in between. These students have needs that must be dealt with in order for them to be successful; conversely, they are not the students who are simply struggling with responsibility. It was clear that these diversified occupational counselors had an affinity to needy students and as a result, these students receive much of their time.

Furthermore, the conclusions drawn from this study support the literature of Rosenbaum et al., (1996) who reported that today's, guidance counselors do not advise or counsel students about post secondary options and opportunities, they simply are providers of information. As such, the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that most students do not rely on guidance staff for post secondary institutional information. Furthermore, guidance counselor influence theory from Chapman et al., (1987) also concurred with the findings of this study as they found that one in five students never discussed college plans with a counselor.

Conversely, the findings from the Rosenbaum et al., (1996) study regarding the "college for all model" were not consistent with the literature reviewed in chapter two. Whereas the "college for all model" promotes the notion that all students should be preparing for post secondary education. The counselors were cautious about the message the "college for all" concept sends to students and the value the school district placed upon those students who do plan on attending college versus those students who do not plan on attending college. As this finding differs from the current research it is equally as important to understand why it is different. When examining why this finding is inconsistent with the current literature, it is important to note that by the nature of their role as diversified occupational guidance counselors, one of their many objectives is to work with students who are generally non college bound and provide them with alternative options. Therefore, the diversified occupational guidance counselors' opinions may be biased regarding this concept.

The findings of this study contend that guidance counselors perceive their influence on a student's post secondary planning very differently than the guidance counselors a generation ago. No longer viewed as social selectors or gate keepers to higher education, more current literature on guidance counselor theory reveals that guidance counselors find themselves spending most of their time on issues unrelated to post secondary persistence. It is the researcher's perception that students' needs today are much different than they were thirty years ago. Today, guidance counselors deal with students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and their need to be medicated in order to function in an educational setting. They deal with students

from single parent households, students who are in need of educational accommodations and students who often lack respect for school district personnel. These issues were not as prevalent thirty years ago and have changed the dynamic of the secondary school setting and the guidance counselor's role.

However, it was clear from the diversified occupational guidance counselors in the study that the notion of post secondary achievement avails itself to many types of students today, not just those who are typically tracked as college bound. This finding is consistent with much of the literature presented in chapter two, including the research of Shill (1987) and Rosenbaum et al., (1996).

This study examined a guidance counselor's influence upon which students are selected to participate in a dual enrollment program. The findings of this question are especially telling in the respect that the diversified occupational guidance counselors in this study were not convinced that the nature of dual enrollment programs (especially in Pennsylvania) is completely understood by all guidance counselors. Furthermore, the diversified occupational guidance counselors voiced concerns regarding the procurement of state funding and the variations in the delivery of dual enrollment programs in Pennsylvania. This finding was not apparent in any of the literature reviewed in chapter two of this study. It appears as though there may be a disconnect between the procurement process and implementation of programs within the Commonwealth. As such, the researcher did not discover any dual enrollment studies specific to Pennsylvania in the literature review.

As reported in chapter two of this study, Pennsylvania promotes the notion of providing opportunities to the "capable not the exceptional." This notion was not evident to many of the counselors participating in this study and certainly not evidenced in their school districts. There seemed to be conflicting perceptions as to who really administers the dual enrollment programs within their district. In some school districts, the guidance counselor has the responsibility of applying for the grant funding, securing agreements from the participating post secondary institutions, recruiting students, operating the program and administering the funds. In other school districts the assistant superintendent and/or curriculum coordinator is responsible for the procurement of the funds, but not the operation of the program. Yet in another case, the principal was charged with both procuring the dual enrollment funding and recruiting the students for the program. In at least two cases among the represented school districts, their administration believed the procurement process was too arduous and complicated to justify implementing. As a result, these two school districts do not receive Project 720 dual enrollment funding.

According to the diversified occupational counselors, the decentralized approach that many school districts take does not allow for true understanding of the program's goals and objectives by all parties. To illustrate, one of the diversified occupational guidance counselors asked "How am I to know what the guidelines and regulations of the program are if I was not part of the process of writing the grant or deciding what our students really need?" As a result, many of the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that their knowledge of the program was limited.

This study found guidance counselors want to take ownership in dual enrollment programs. When asked who in the school district should be driving the dual enrollment program, there was absolute consensus; it is the guidance counselor's role. The counselors made this statement based upon the assumption that the guidance counselor has the broadest based understanding of the school's students, current school curriculum and post secondary education offerings. The diversified occupational guidance counselors concluded that classroom teachers may serve as an additional support when encouraging students to participate in a dual enrollment program. However, they were compelled to add, in order for classroom teachers to participate, they must first be educated about the purpose and intended audience of dual enrollment.

An additional conclusion to surface while discussing the issue of which students are influenced by their guidance counselors to participate in a dual enrollment program was the notion of middle achieving students and their post secondary aspirations. The diversified occupation guidance counselors confirmed that dual enrollment should serve as a mechanism for any student who may be interested in pursuing higher education, not just those who are academically superior. It was further argued that students who may be undecided about their academic future are also good candidates for dual enrollment programs. This concept provides capable students an opportunity to experiment in a post secondary setting and still maintain the support structures of their school district. This finding is consistent with the research of Adelman (1999) who argued for the inclusion of middle and low-achieving high school students in dual enrollment programs because of

the relationship that exists between rigorous academic coursework and post secondary education.

The findings from the focus group confirmed that middle achieving students are often overlooked by school district personnel. Diversified occupational guidance counselors cited several examples of high achieving students receiving additional opportunities through AP classes, Honors courses and Early College programs; likewise students with learning disabilities received additional support services. This finding confirms the research of Klopfenstein and Thomas, (n.d.,) who report many of these opportunities are often targeted to high achieving students. For this reason, the diversified occupational guidance counselors participating in the study indicated they reach out to middle achieving students as much as possible, which includes dual enrollment opportunities.

By the same token, one of the diversified occupational guidance counselors representing a Project 720 school commented that students who are often identified as middle achieving or even underachieving may very well be gifted students. She recalled a young lady she worked with last year that tested proficient (and higher) in all major academic areas and had participated in gifted courses through the ninth grade. Unfortunately, as a senior, this student was on the verge of failing and even wanted to drop out of high school. The counselor asked why. What happened to this student? Simply put, the student was bored with the routine of the high school regiment, felt as though she was being treated as a child and felt that she was being asked to do busy work while in classes. Upon the recommendation of her guidance counselor this student was

enrolled into a dual enrollment program. This specific diversified occupational guidance counselor advocated, "this is exactly the kind of student who can benefit from dual enrollment opportunities."

Although this example is unconventional, the diversified occupational guidance counselors agreed that students who are middle achievers, underachievers, or first generation college students may have the most to gain from participation in a dual enrollment program. This is consistent with the research of Jones (n.d.) who reported middle achieving students in North Carolina's AVID program are often the target of dual enrollment programs. These findings also indicate that guidance counselors who are knowledgeable about the goals and objectives of their district's dual enrollment program will attempt to influence a non-traditional group of students to participate in the program.

This study contends that labeling a student as high, middle, or underachieving often encourages students to live up to what is expected of them. As such, guidance counselors believe that labeling students can promote or limit opportunities to pursue higher goals in academic and social settings. Labeling students according to ability can also communicate to the student the value placed upon their ability level. Accordingly, guidance counselors confirmed their school districts often provided little or no opportunities for middle and underachieving students.

The conclusions drawn by this study in regard to the question, what students can benefit most from dual enrollment opportunities, provides much insight to the existing research. Although studies have suggested that non-traditional students may have much to gain from dual enrollment opportunities, this study draws conclusions from the

guidance counselors that refer students to such opportunities. As such, this new body of knowledge added to guidance counselor influence theory may assist other guidance counselors as they contemplate which students to recruit for dual enrollment programs.

The findings of this study regarding the intrinsic benefits students received from participation in a dual enrollment program are most promising and are easily supported by the current research and self-efficacy theory. Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) reported students won't engage in activities they believe they won't succeed in. The results of this study indicate that when a school district values students at all levels, students will attempt to participate in programs outside their comfort zone. Additionally, the findings of this study indicate that middle and underachieving students who participate in dual enrollment opportunities receive noteworthy and affirmative intrinsic benefits from such participation.

Historically, school districts tend to value the higher achieving students and as a result will support these students with programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and dual enrollment programs. Thus, school districts have not invested heavily (either by budget allocations or staff resources) in programs supporting middle and underachieving students. Accordingly, diversified occupational guidance counselors agree that these students often feel neglected and devalued by the school system. These perceptions are consistent with the findings of Margolis and McCabe (2004) who reported that self-efficacy is of particular concern for students who academically struggle and often resist the idea of further education.

The confirmation of Pajares (1996) research was most surprising to the researcher. Pajares (1996) reported that students with low levels of efficacy will often display high levels of emotionality as they deal with overwhelming issues. Similarly, middle achieving students often have higher anxiety levels and often give up easier when confronted with a perceived unachievable goal, such as success at the college level. This concept was best illustrated when the diversified occupational counselor from the Lindy School District explained how ten of her dual enrollment students withdrew within the first week from the Advanced Skill Center's HIT program. She remarked "these students were scared from the moment they entered the door, so much so, they stressed themselves out wondering what the other students thought of them being there and finally they gave up. They told me they couldn't do it – they couldn't compete- that's what they see in their minds eye." The diversified occupational counselor was certain the students could have competed and been successful or she would not have recommended them for the program.

Margolis and McCabe (2004) argued, when a student is challenged, especially through programs like dual enrollment, their low self-efficacy levels can improve. The findings of this study concretely confirm the self-efficacy research of Margolis and McCabe. Diversified occupational guidance counselors contend that the increase in a student's self-efficacy levels has the biggest impact on the middle achieving student by far. The counselors were quick to laud the significant change that occurs with a majority of middle achieving students regarding their belief system, their self confidence, and

pride in their status. In particular, students who previously doubted their ability to compete at a higher level now have reason to look differently at their future.

Additionally, the diversified occupational guidance counselors reported that middle achieving students who participate in a dual enrollment program experience an intense maturing experience during the transition. One counselor commented, "the growth that occurs in these students is profound." When students leave the program, they believe in themselves, they believe in their ability to compete with other students and they have a new and positive outlook. Another counselor commented, "The transformation is quite remarkable and also refreshing to see in education today-something positive is happening here." Yet another counselor commented "In my opinion dual enrollment students learn confidence - confidence in so many ways. Confidence they can do it academically, confidence that they can overcome a fear, and confidence that they can make it out there." This finding is consistent with the research of Gougeon (2004) who reported dual enrollment programs geared to non-traditional students will change a student's attitude and beliefs about themselves and their abilities.

Additionally, the conclusions drawn from this study revealed that middle achieving students who participated in the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program leave dual enrollment programs with a new and realistic sense of the expectations needed at the next level. Appropriately, students develop an understanding (and often have a new respect) for higher education, especially as they realize the demands are greater and the need to manage their time and prioritize their work becomes essential to success.

Therefore, findings in this study clearly indicate there are significant intrinsic benefits for students who participate in a dual enrollment program. By far, the premier benefit received by students is the increase in their self-efficacy levels. Additionally, the findings of this study lend themselves positively and contribute to the every growing body of literature of self-efficacy theory. Moreover, these findings provide necessary insight to the perceptions of guidance counselors that is lacking in the current literature.

The results of the data gathered through focus group discussions and the data derived from both the document and historical analysis indicate there is a positive relationship that exists between a student's participation in dual enrollment and their persistence to post secondary education. The findings also confirmed that in most cases there is a cause/effect relationship that develops as a result of participating in dual enrollment program, especially in regard to middle achieving students.

Venezia, Kirst and Antonio (2003) reported that success in post secondary education is predicated on both rigorous academic preparation and a clear understanding of the expectations of college while in high school. Creating the linkage between the high school and post secondary institution is key to developing a transition process that allows for student success. The diversified occupational counselors revealed that initially students who attend the Advanced Skill Center's program have little if any motivation to attend post secondary education. In the words of one of the counselor's, "I see students who for some reason or another by the time they are in their senior year have decided that they are finished with high school. They don't need to be there, they don't want to be there, they don't see any purpose for being there. They are on to the next phase of their

life, which does not include more school and for those kids it gives them something very productive to do their senior year that they actually appreciate. I've witnessed them being transformed and setting new sites for themselves."

The findings from the focus group sessions revealed that middle achieving students who enter dual enrollment programs often are lacking the necessary motivation to enter post secondary education. However, the counselors believe whole heartedly that the program shows middle achieving students that they can do something else. The counselor's report prior to entering a dual enrollment program, many students are often unsure and skeptical they will be accepted into a college, while others think about college but don't actualize college.

The findings in this study can also be supported by the current body of literature regarding student achievement theory. The literature provided in chapter two discusses the notion of mastery goals as a means to improve motivation (Bandura, 1982). Mastery goals focus on a student's internal needs to achieve, most of which can include learning from their own curiosity, or learning for the pleasure derived by performing new tasks (Covington & Mueller, 2001 p. 162-163). Likewise, the findings of this study confirm that as a student's self-efficacy levels improve they are often motivated to continue onto post secondary education.

The diversified occupational counselors agreed that when coupled with an improved sense of self-efficacy, students' attitudes about post secondary opportunities change as a result of their experience in dual enrollment. This perception is consistent with the research of Bandura (1995) who reported self-efficacy is the key factor in the

establishment of intellectual developments as well as a predictor of future academic success. In this specific case, the future academic success can be measured by the number of student who persists onto post secondary opportunities.

Although limited in scope, the review of the historical analysis confirmed the perceptions of the diversified occupational counselors, who boast; middle achieving students who enter dual enrollment programs persist onto post secondary institutions. The researcher reviewed two years of historical data provided by the Advanced Skill Center which revealed that 83% of dual enrollment students enrolled into the health care program persisted onto post secondary institutions. Accordingly, students majored in health care areas such as nursing, radiography, and allied health.

The conclusions drawn by the persistence rates of dual enrollment students entering post secondary education in this study are similar to those found by Karp (2006) when researching New York City's NOW program, and the research of Jones (2006) at Texas Tech University and South Plain College. Furthermore, a telling finding of the study indicated that 64% of dual enrollment students enter post secondary institutions without the need to take any remedial coursework. This finding is also consistent with the research of Bailey, Hughes and Karp (2003) who found that not only are dual enrollment student less likely to need remedial course work, they are twice as likely to graduate on time.

Therefore, findings in this study with regard to how guidance counselors perceive the relationship that exists between dual enrollment programs and persistence to high education lead to the following conclusion. There is a positive, and in most cases a cause

and effect relationship that exists between students who participate in dual enrollment programs and their persistence to higher education. This cause and effect relationship is supported by the data which is indicative of the percentage of students who persist onto post secondary education.

Supported by the research of Middleton & Midgley (1997), the conclusions drawn from this study in regard to the cause and effect relationship between participation in a dual enrollment programs and persistence to post secondary education may cause school district personnel to consider mastery and performance goals with other motivational measures, especially when considering any type of school reform. This study concludes that it is extremely important to consider motivational goals and their subsequent educational outcomes when dealing with non-traditional student populations such as middle achieving students.

<div align="center">Implications of Findings</div>

The findings and major conclusions of this study contribute positively to a growing body of research in the area of dual enrollment, guidance counselor influence, self-efficacy, and student achievement theory. In particular, the results of this study are especially timely as school districts currently must comply with regulations imposed by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. These regulations include increasing the rigor of secondary curriculum. As a result, many school districts have chosen to offer dual enrollment programs to meet this requirement.

The findings of this study are unique in that they provide insight from the perspective of a guidance counselor, a perspective that was missing from the current

literature. Additionally, most literature regarding dual enrollment programs focus on high achieving students. This study distinctively provides information on middle achieving students, a student population that is studies limitedly in the research.

Furthermore, the National Governors Association launched a national initiative to *Redesign America's High School,* reporting that the American high school has not gone through any reform in the last hundred years. This reform's focus is built upon a dramatic change in the academic rigor of the senior year. This reform encourages states to develop legislation and policy promoting the opportunities for high school seniors to take post secondary courses while still in high school. Dual enrollment programs serve this purpose and the findings and conclusions drawn by this particular study may be of particular interest to those school districts contemplating implementation a dual enrollment program targeted to a variety of student types.

One of the key ideas drawn from the study is the need to fully involve guidance staff in the development of dual enrollment programs in order to effectively promote the program to the students who may benefit the most. This may alleviate the concerns that dual enrollment programs can often be disjointed and poorly understood by counselors. The conclusion that a guidance counselor's role has changed from that of a social selector and gate keeper of post secondary education to that of a personal counselor may be of value to school district administrators as they propose new student to counselor ratios for their district. Additionally, given that most students look to the Internet to obtain information regarding post secondary options this may prompt administrators to modify their current delivery method of post secondary counseling.

Another key idea drawn from the study is the fact that guidance counselors perceive their role as the one that should be driving dual enrollment programs in their district. This suggests that school districts may need to collaborate more closely with their guidance counselors in order for them to feel knowledgeable about the goals and objectives of the program. Additionally, when guidance counselors are well informed and take part in making decisions about program goals and objectives, they can confidently operate the program to its fullest potential. This may include providing dual enrollment opportunities to students who are middle and underachieving. The findings of this study may also prompt state departments of education to consider adding guidance counselors to their email distribution and mailing list when sending out information pertaining to dual enrollment.

As previously mentioned, many school districts today are using dual enrollment programs to enhance the rigor of their secondary school curriculum, and as a means of complying with the regulations of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. The findings of this study regarding who should administer dual enrollment programs and which students should participate in dual enrollment programs are of prime concern to school district personnel and may enhance the practice of current dual enrollment programs. Today's premier educational issues that school districts are dealing with, such as, the "wasted senior year," lack of challenging and rigorous coursework, disengaged students, and high dropout rates may be directly addressed through the implementation of dual enrollment programs and the findings of this study.

In particular, the conclusion that middle achieving students who take part in dual enrollment programs increase their self-efficacy levels and persists onto post secondary opportunities is also supported by several other studies (Lords, 2000; Jones, n.d.). Clearly, this information can be used by school district personnel as they reflect upon the type of students that should be considered for such opportunities. More specifically, guidance counselors may want to consider dual enrollment opportunities as mechanisms for motivating students to consider post secondary educational opportunities, especially students who may have no post secondary aspirations or expectations.

The findings of this study may also be practical for administrators of post secondary institutions currently operating dual enrollment programs. Post secondary educational administrators may want to use the results of this study to apply, compare and contrast, or make adaptations to in order to redesign their own programs. For example, community colleges may want to take more of an "open door" approach when admitting secondary students to their dual enrollment program instead of admitting students based solely upon achievement levels. This study contends that dual enrollment programs are more beneficial to middle achieving students and as a result, more middle achieving students enter post secondary institutions, including matriculation into the participating community college. Institutions may be wise to use dual enrollment programs as a long term recruiting tool.

<div align="center">Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Study</div>

The purpose of this study was to identify the beliefs and attitudes guidance counselors possess regarding dual enrollment programs and the students who participate

in them. The findings of the study concluded that guidance counselors perceive dual enrollment programs as an opportunity for students to gain the self confidence in their ability to do college level work and compete at the next level. The findings of this study conclude that this is especially true when middle achieving students participate in dual enrollment opportunities. Additionally, findings of this study confirmed that the majority of students who participate in a dual enrollment program do persist onto post secondary education and are less likely to take remedial education coursework.

From the researcher's perspective, a primary limitation of this study is the scope of the program. The Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program has only been in existence for three years. As such, there was not an abundance of historical data to draw upon. However, this program is viewed as a model program for dual enrollment initiatives in Pennsylvania and believed to be note worthy of study. Consequently, because a study approach was chosen for this study, it may not be possible to generalize the findings across a larger population.

Further, from a methodological point of view, this study provided the researcher with a wealth of detailed knowledge regarding diversified occupational guidance counselors and their perceptions of the dual enrollment program within the HIT program of the Advanced Skill Center. However, further research may want to investigate the perceptions of guidance counselors regarding dual enrollment programs outside the supportive structure of the HIT program. This may involve students who participate in dual enrollment opportunities at a variety of institution types, including, four year colleges and universities, two year colleges and even trade schools.

Today, most of the current literature regarding perceptions of dual enrollment programs is related to both student and parent perceptions. This study examined the perception of guidance counselors, a perspective that was missing from current literature, yet very noteworthy of studying. Consequently, the findings of this study will provide new research and confirm the research of others while ultimately adding to the knowledge base of this subject. However, future researchers may want to further examine middle achieving students' and/or parents' attitudes and perspectives on dual enrollment in order to gain more insight on this often forgotten student group. Finally, although the results of this study in regard to post secondary persistence are compelling, future research may want to include longitudinal studies to examine dual enrollment students' post secondary graduation and attrition rates, compared to students who may not have participated in a dual enrollment program.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The following list of questions was used as an outline for the focus group questions. Where appropriate, the interviewees were asked to expand upon their answers.

1. How do dual enrollment programs help students?

2. How do dual enrollment programs hurt students?

3. How do you feel about the "college for all" model?

4. How do you see the dual enrollment program with the Advanced Skill Center, impacting a student's choices after they graduate?

5. How have local educational institutions changed their delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of middle achieving students?

6. How will a successful dual enrollment experience impact middle or underachieving students?

7. In your judgment, what are the requirements that should be placed on students who want to take dual enrollment courses?

8. In your opinion, what motivates a middle or underachieving student's decision to attend post secondary education?

9. In your opinion, why would a student not participate in a dual enrollment program?

10. What is the connection between middle or under achieving students participating in a dual enrollment program and their desire to attend post secondary education?

11. Some view students who are high achieving students in the high school classroom will also be high achieving student in post secondary education. How do you think this theory compares with the students you have experience with?

12. What are the challenges faced by students who participate in this program?

13. What do students learn from participating in a dual enrollment program that they may not learned if they did not participate in the program.

14. What experience do you have with middle achieving or underachieving students who want to attend post secondary education?

15. What is your name, the school district you are employed at; tell us how many years have you been employed as a high school guidance counselor.

16. What is your own personal philosophy of middle achieving student's ability to succeed in post secondary education, regardless of participation in a dual enrollment program?

17. What is your perception of how students feel about their ability to succeed academically among college students?

18. What role do you see guidance counselors have in promoting dual enrollment?

19. What students should be targeted to participate in dual enrollment capabilities? Why?

20. What was your initial reaction to the dual enrollment initiative in Pennsylvania

21. Which students receive more of your time when preparing students for post secondary opportunities?

APPENDIX B- COUNSELOR INVITATION LETTER

(IUP Letterhead)

June 7, 2007

Dear Counselor:

For decades, there has been much concern regarding the rigor of high school curriculum and more recently, the wasted senior year. Many high school students fulfill graduation requirements by the end of their junior year, resulting in many seniors biding their time and enrolling into non-essential electives rather than rigorous coursework. In a recent national survey, the National Commission of the High School Year saw little if any coordination between high schools and post secondary institutions.

Recently, there has been a national movement to increase the rigor of the senior year by providing dual enrollment opportunities to high school junior and seniors. Much of the research dedicated to this subject revolves around programs targeted to high achieving students. Furthermore, there is very limited research regarding the perceptions guidance counselors have about dual enrollment opportunities to middle achieving students.

The Advanced Skill Center's HIT program is an example of a dual enrollment program, targeted to middle achieving students. In order to gain a deeper understanding of guidance counselor perceptions, you are invited to participate in a focus group regarding this very topic. Participants for this group are limited to diversified occupational guidance counselors that have students attending the HIT program. The focus group will be held on June 6th at 1:30 pm at the Advanced Skill Center and will last 90 minutes.

In order to gather complete and detailed information from the group, the focus group sessions will be audio taped. Upon completion of the sessions, the tape will be transcribed and sent to you for your review.

Data collected from this focus group will become part of a doctoral dissertation at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A summary of the findings will also be made available to you. Further, findings from this research will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for their review.

I hope that you are able to participate, and I will contact you by phone to conform your attendance.

Sincerely,

Marjorie A. Mattis   Dr. Wenfan Yan
Primary Investigator   Faculty Sponsor
Administration & Leadership Studies   Administration & Leadership Studies
136 Stouffer Hall   113 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705-1087   Indiana, PA 15705-1087
Phone: 814-241-0521   724-357-7931

APPENDIX C - INFORMED CONSENT FORM - GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

(IUP Letterhead)

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. You are eligible to participate because you are a diversified occupational guidance counselor whose school district participates in the Healthcare Industry Training (HIT) dual enrollment program located at the Advanced Skill Center.

The purpose of this study is to exam the perceptions diversified occupational guidance counselors have regarding your influence over a student's decision to attend post secondary education, in addition to the perceptions you may have regarding the benefits and results received by middle and underachieving students who participate in a dual enrollment program.

Accordingly, you will be asked to participate in a series of focus groups regarding dual enrollment programs. The focus groups will be held at the Advanced Skill Center, and will take approximately 90 minutes of your time, per focus group.

The information gained from this study may help us to better understand the type of student that may receive maximum benefits of dual enrollment opportunities.

Your participation in this study is <u>voluntary</u>.   You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or IUP. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying Marjorie Mattis. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your school districts ability to participate in the Advanced Skill Center's dual enrollment program. Your response will be considered <u>only in combination</u> with those from other participants. The information obtained in the study may be published in a scholarly journal, or presented at conferences, but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and return it in the box next to the refreshment table.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this research study, please feel free to contact the following:

Marjorie A. Mattis   Dr. Wenfan Yan
Doctoral Student   Professor and Dissertation Chair
Indiana University of Pennsylvania   Indiana University of Pennsylvania
1306 Jefferson Avenue   113 Davis Hall
Portage, PA 15946   Indiana, PA 15705
814-736-8936   724-357-7931

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name _____ _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached_____

Best days and times to reach you_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_____   _____
Date   Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX D - LETTER OF APPROVAL - ADVANCED SKILL CENTER

(ASC Letterhead)

March 15, 2007

Institutional Research Board
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
1011 South Drive
Indiana, PA 15705

To whom it may concern:

Miss Marjorie Mattis has made us aware of her intent to conduct a study at the William F. Goodling Regional Advanced Skill Center as part of her doctoral studies at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Her study will involve conducting focus groups with the diversified occupational counselors participating in our Health Care Industry Training (HIT) dual enrollment program.

This letter is to inform the Institutional Research Board that Margie has the approval and full support of the Advanced Skill Center to utilize our location as the site of her research. She has agreed to share her research findings with the faculty, staff and administration of the Advanced Skill Center. We anticipate that these findings will also be beneficial to local area school districts and other post secondary educational institutions.

We wish her the best of luck with her study.

Sincerely,

Chuck Thomas   Dan Bernardy
President   Program Director

APPENDIX E - INFORMATION LETTER TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

(IUP Letterhead)

June 1, 2007

Dear High School Principal:

For decades, there has been much concern regarding the rigor of high school curriculum and more recently, the wasted senior year. Many high school students fulfill graduation requirements by the end of their junior year, resulting in many seniors biding their time and enrolling into non-essential electives rather than rigorous coursework. In a recent national survey, the National Commission of the High School Year saw little if any coordination between high schools and post secondary institutions.

Recently, there has been a national movement to increase the rigor of the senior year by providing dual enrollment opportunities to high school junior and seniors. Much of the research dedicated to this subject revolves around programs targeted to high achieving students. Furthermore, there is very limited research regarding the perceptions guidance counselors have about dual enrollment opportunities to middle achieving students.

The Advanced Skill Center's HIT program is an example of a dual enrollment program, targeted to middle achieving students. In order to gain a deeper understanding of guidance counselor perceptions, your guidance counselors are invited to participate in a focus group regarding this very topic. Participants for this group are limited to diversified occupational guidance counselors that have students attending the HIT program. The focus group will be held on June 6th at 1:30 pm at the Advanced Skill Center and will last 90 minutes.

In order to gather complete and detailed information from the group, the focus group sessions will be audio taped. Upon completion of the sessions, the tape will be transcribed and sent to you for your review.

Data collected from this focus group will become part of a doctoral dissertation at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. A summary of the findings will also be made available to you. Further, findings from this research will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for their review.

It is believed that this research will provide valuable information to school districts regarding the benefits students receive from participating in a dual enrollment program.

Sincerely,

Marjorie A. Mattis   Dr. Wenfan Yan
Primary Investigator   Faculty Sponsor
Administration & Leadership Studies   Administration & Leadership Studies
136 Stouffer Hall   113 Davis Hall
Indiana, PA 15705-1087   Indiana, PA 15705-1087
Phone: 814-241-0521   724-357-7931