

“Laying the Groundwork”: Concurrent Enrollment Teachers’ Experiences Teaching
First-Year Composition Courses at Public High Schools in Georgia

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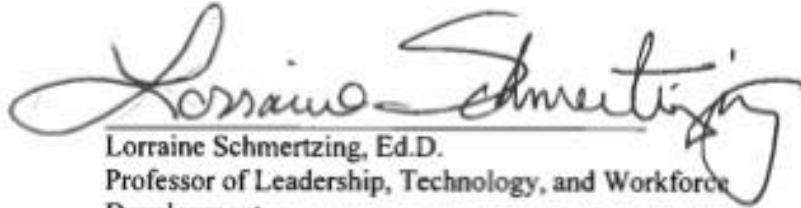
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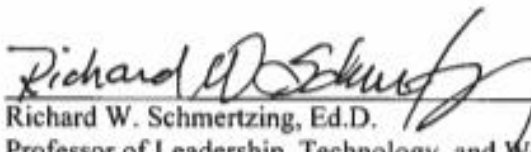
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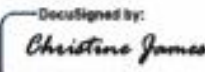
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand how six educators at public high schools in Georgia made sense of their experiences teaching concurrent enrollment (CE) first-year composition (FYC) courses. The conceptual framework of the research was anchored in the concepts of liminality (McWain, 2018; Turner, 1966) and threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005). Methods used were a bricolage of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016) with phenomenological components (Seidman, 2013) to capture the rich stories of CE FYC teachers. Data collection included semistructured interviews, classroom observations, and researcher memos. Three interviews were conducted with each collaborator. Data analysis included the creation of narrative profiles for each collaborator as well as in vivo, process, and versus coding. Five themes were developed to highlight the experiences of the CE FYC teachers in the study: (1) experiencing isolation and detachment while seeking support, (2) balancing workload while desiring autonomy, (3) managing complex decisions while dealing with uncertainty, (4) nurturing students while preparing them for the future, and (5) looking backward while pressing forward. The findings of this study supported three pieces of advice to CE partners to strengthen CE partnerships and support CE teachers: (1) foster mutual relationships between high school and college writing faculty, (2) provide meaningful, relevant resources to CE teachers, and (3) consider CE teachers' workloads. This study added to the literature on CE programs and FYC courses.

Keywords: dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, first-year composition, narrative inquiry

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The act of conducting this research was cathartic for me. Listening to the stories of my collaborators, a group of people with whom I whole-heartedly identified, was a profound pleasure and an honor. I am certainly and unabashedly biased, but I think English teachers are the most thoughtful and reflective people on the planet, and I did something right when I made the decision to interview them for this study. More than once during the process of crafting the collaborators' stories through their own words, I found tears perched under my eyes and that stubborn lump of emotion in my throat. Their stories and words moved me, and it is my sincere hope that I have done them justice in the sharing of them.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

During the Fall of 2017, I embarked on my career as a concurrent enrollment (CE) instructor. I had already been a high school English teacher for 6 years at that point, but I began teaching First-Year Composition (FYC) courses to high school juniors and seniors through a partnership with a local private 4-year university. I was hired at the high school specifically to teach CE, but I also had to fill out an application with the university. I spent the summer of 2017 planning the courses by myself, with little support from the university, and the pattern of isolation continued for the next 4 years. If I emailed the university department head with questions, she would respond, but otherwise there were no check-ins or visits.

This role was both immensely challenging and intensely rewarding. The first year was the most difficult. I had no other CE FYC teachers with whom I could easily collaborate, no one to go to with questions regarding rigor, no one to double-check my rubrics or grading. Despite the challenges, I loved teaching the content. Over 4 years, I shaped the courses to focus on revision and the writing process. I viewed myself as a guide whose goal was to help my students transition from surface-level high school writing to in-depth college writing. I took ownership of the courses, making them into what I thought FYC courses should look like, but I still lacked the collaboration and support that I desired.

After 4 years, I moved to a high school in a different district. I was once again hired to teach CE FYC courses but this time through a local public technical college. As the high school was larger than my previous one, there was another CE FYC teacher with whom I could collaborate. I was excited for the change and the new opportunities, but once again, the experience was not what I expected. I desired collaboration and support, but the pendulum swung as far as possible in the other direction. Rather than feeling supported, I felt micromanaged and overworked.

After only 1 year teaching CE in this district, I was offered a job in another district (with no CE responsibilities), and I accepted it. Now, I am a middle school English and special education teacher, and I work part time as an adjunct for a technical college, where I teach English 1101 and 1102 courses online. I still teach dual enrollment students, but now I am on a different side of the partnership, where I no longer manage the burdens of being beholden to two differing—and sometimes conflicting—educational agencies.

Although my role is different now, my interest in and passion for concurrent enrollment remain. My experiences led me to believe that the CE model provided beneficial opportunities for students but was challenging for CE teachers. On a deeper level, I began to suspect that a pervasive disconnect existed between colleges and high schools in CE partnerships. As a CE teacher, I recognized opportunities to improve the CE programs in which I worked, but I felt powerless to change anything. My two experiences teaching CE were vastly different, which I found intriguing. I became curious about how my experiences compared with the experiences of other CE FYC teachers. I wondered how other teachers ran their classrooms. What instructional

practices did they implement? What professional development did their cooperating colleges provide, and were these experiences beneficial? How did their experiences impact their view of education, relationships with their students, and culture in the learning environment? What did other CE FYC teachers see as the most important ways to help students be successful, to keep instructors enthusiastic, and to meet the needs of the institutions without compromising quality?

The topic of my study was a direct outgrowth of my own experiences and curiosity. As I read the literature related to dual enrollment in general (An, 2013a; Bowers & Foley, 2018; Grubb et al, 2017; Hanson et al., 2015) and CE FYC in particular (Denecker, 2013; Denecker, 2020; McWain, 2018), a research gap emerged to which I was drawn. In the studies on concurrent enrollment, the voices of CE teachers themselves were overwhelmingly absent from the dialogue. This voicelessness aligned with my own experiences, yet I also thought I had a great deal to offer to discussions of CE precisely because of my experiences working in two CE partnerships. I began to wonder if the experiences of CE teachers were the missing link that could provide clarity and knowledge to help strengthen CE partnerships. Perhaps if high school administrators and college faculty understood the challenges CE teachers faced, they could provide effective support to meet CE teachers' needs. If CE teachers had stronger and more effective support, then students would also reap the benefits. As a result of my personal experiences and questions, I decided to interview CE FYC teachers to hear their stories, learn about their experiences, and elevate their voices. In the next two sections of Chapter I, I explain why the experiences of CE FYC teachers were important to study, the

personal, practical, and intellectual goals I hoped to achieve in doing so, and the research questions that guided my study.

Statement of the Problem

Concurrent enrollment began as an outgrowth of dual enrollment. *Dual enrollment (DE)* is a general term for courses that provide high school students the opportunity to earn college credit before earning a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). *Concurrent enrollment (CE)* is a subset of DE in which college courses are taught on high school campuses by high school teachers (NACEP, n.d.-a). Between 2010 and 2019, the number of students participating in DE programs in the United States increased from 10% to 34% (NACEP, 2019). DE programs grew as part of a nationwide push for college readiness and the college “completion agenda” (Karp, 2015). In 2017–2018, 82% of public high schools in the United States offered DE in some form (NCES, 2020). As DE grew, researchers conducted quantitative studies exploring impacts of DE participation on variables such as college readiness, retention, grade point average, degree attainment, and time to degree attainment (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Bowers & Foley, 2018; Burns et al., 2019). Qualitative studies focused on student experiences related to DE (Duncheon, 2020; Kanny, 2015; Wecker & Wilde, 2020). As part of the push for college readiness and DE, high school students began enrolling in more college writing courses to get these courses out of the way before full-time college matriculation (McWain, 2018), saving both time and money. Additionally, colleges and universities began partnering with high schools to offer CE courses. As a result of these trends in DE, high school teachers now teach many first-year composition (FYC) courses. However, despite the proliferation of DE and subsequent research on the topic, few

researchers focused on the high school teachers who provide college writing instruction through CE FYC courses (McWain, 2018).

Scholars in the field of composition highlighted the need for research focused on the experiences of DE composition teachers. Sullivan (2006) referred to English teachers as “first contact professionals” (p. 8) who teach two of the most critical academic skills—reading and writing—that students need to be successful in other college courses.

Teaching writing-intensive courses is demanding work, as modern composition pedagogy emphasizes drafting and revision, a process that requires teachers to work closely with their students while modeling and guiding (Sullivan, 2006). This burden is compounded for CE teachers, who teach college-level concepts within the constraints of a high school environment and must answer to stakeholders on both sides of the DE partnership (McWain, 2018). While they face significant challenges, CE FYC teachers play an integral role in supporting students across the “composition threshold” (Denecker, 2013), which is the line students must cross between the imitative thinking and writing of high school to the authentic, academic thinking of college (Weinstein, 2001).

Composition scholars long noted the difference in goals and outcomes between high school and college writing instruction, a discrepancy that created gaps in students’ learning (Johnson et al., 2020). The CE composition classroom provides an opportunity to close these gaps to create better outcomes for students (Johnson et al., 2020). In her qualitative, multisite case study of three DE partnerships in the Midwest, McWain (2018) noted the importance of hearing the voices of CE composition teachers who introduce students to the world of college-level writing. Additionally, McWain noted CE composition teachers have the unique opportunity to “promote writing as a

transformative practice” (McWain, 2018, p. 407), and thus researchers should focus on the experiences and instructional practices of these teachers. Similarly, Denecker (2020) completed a mixed methods study in which she explored Ohio CE composition teachers’ definitions of rigor and their professional development experiences. Denecker noted the 11 CE composition teachers she surveyed held a wealth of pedagogical knowledge that could help align writing expectations across the high school and college environments.

The purpose of my study was to address the CE composition research gap identified by scholars such as Denecker (2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020). In her research on the experiences of CE FYC teachers, McWain (2018) recognized that her participants existed in a liminal space “betwixt and between” high school and college academic environments (p. 408). In conducting this study, I hoped to extend McWain’s research by exploring how CE FYC teachers navigated this liminal space as well as the impact they perceived this liminality had on their instructional practices. I gathered data by interviewing and conducting classroom observations of FYC teachers who teach CE courses at public high schools in Georgia. As one of only two states in which 100% of public high schools offer DE courses (NACEP, n.d.-a), Georgia is a fertile ground for research on CE composition. Because many terms exist to refer to the phenomenon of high school students taking college-level courses, I provided clarity by describing the relevant labels used throughout the dissertation.

Clarification of Labels

Across the United States, dual enrollment courses go by a variety of names, including *college in high school*, *concurrent enrollment*, *dual credit*, and *early college* (NACEP, n.d.-a). Both *dual credit (DC)* and *dual enrollment (DE)* are general terms for

any course that provides high school students the opportunity to earn college credit before they have earned a high school diploma (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In this dissertation, I used the term *dual enrollment* or *DE* to refer to these courses. DE courses are offered in a variety of instructional modalities, including online, hybrid, and face-to-face; students may participate on either high school or college campuses; and teachers may be tenured university faculty or high school teachers with university adjunct status (Zinth & Taylor, 2019). *Concurrent Enrollment (CE)* is a specific subset of dual enrollment courses taught by college-approved high school teachers in a secondary environment (NACEP, n.d.-a). *CE* courses were the focus of the study, specifically CE first-year composition courses.

First-Year Composition (FYC) courses are one or two courses that are part of the general college requirements for most colleges and universities. The courses are generally taken early in the college student's career, and the goal of these courses is to teach writing skills that students can transfer to other writing contexts throughout college (Johnson et al., 2020). Considering the focus of the study, which was high school teachers who teach CE FYC courses on high school campuses, I used the term *Concurrent Enrollment First-Year Composition (CE FYC) teacher* to refer to these high school teachers who teach CE FYC courses. These teachers are employed full-time by public high schools while also meeting the qualifications to teach college-level courses as adjunct instructors. CE FYC teachers work on high school campuses, and, in addition to other high school duties and teaching responsibilities, teach at least one FYC course through a partnership with a participating college or university.

A *dual enrollment (DE) or concurrent enrollment (CE) partnership* refers to the relationship between an institution of higher education and the high school or school district (Edmonds & Squires, 2016). In most states, postsecondary institutions and local school districts sign partnership agreements describing the terms and arrangements for DE courses (Mann, 2023). Agreements may provide an outline of the courses to be offered, the delivery model for courses, instructor qualifications, professional development requirements for instructors, and guidelines for costs and data reporting (Mann, 2023). Agreements submitted to state education agencies provide an opportunity for state officials to review the contents of agreements as well as track data and spending on DE programs (Mann, 2023). The format and content of these partnership agreements can vary widely from state to state. Additionally, organizations such as the *National Alliance for Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)* were created to oversee DE and CE partnerships and establish consistency among partnerships (NACEP, n.d.-b). A better understanding of the terms and contexts related to the experiences of teachers working with one foot in high school and one foot in college provided necessary context for my research goals.

Research Goals

Maxwell (2013) categorized research goals into personal, practical, and intellectual. The goal categories may overlap with one another, and each type is significant to the researcher, though personal goals may not be important for other people (Maxwell, 2013). According to Maxwell, personal goals may include the desire to advance in a career, an interest in a specific type of research or topic, or the drive to initiate change. Unlike some experts, Maxwell argued researchers should not separate

personal interests and goals from their research. Rather, a researcher's investment in the personal goals of his or her study can provide the motivation needed to complete a dissertation. My personal goals provided the underpinning for my study as well as context for my practical and intellectual goals.

Personal Goals

My personal goals and experience directly influenced the topic of my study. As a former CE FYC instructor, I spent 5 years entrenched in the day-to-day processes of teaching college-level writing to high school students. As I encountered the challenges of working within the overlapping spheres of two different academic environments as well as the rewards of watching students grow and succeed, I became curious. I became curious about the experiences of other teachers like me. Did other CE FYC teachers experience the same professional isolation I did? What support and professional development, if any, were they offered? What instructional practices did they use to teach college writing? How did they view their own roles as they supported students' transition to college-level work? I wanted to know more about how other CE teachers navigated their own professional responsibilities in the liminal space between high school and college.

My personal goals for the study related to these questions. I wanted to compare my own experiences to the experiences of other CE FYC teachers as a means of improving my own practice. I was unsure if the experiences of my participants would be like my own. In that case, I would know that I was not alone in the experiences I had as a CE FYC teacher. However, more important than validating my own experiences was learning from the experiences of other CE FYC teachers. I wanted to learn everything I

could from my participants to improve my own practice. Even though I am no longer a high school CE teacher, I currently teach English 1101 courses as a college adjunct. Whether I remain in this role in the future or at some point return to the high school classroom as a CE English teacher, I hope to bring new knowledge that can make a significant, positive impact on CE teachers and students.

My personal goals also impacted my choice to conduct a qualitative study using narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016). As an English teacher, I know the power of stories and how a story's message can be impactful to those who encounter it. I believe CE FYC teachers have knowledge that can positively impact concurrent enrollment programs. Through the research process, I established relationships with the CE teachers I interviewed, and I learned from their experiences. I wanted my research to amplify their voices to a wide audience, including college faculty, high school administrators, and other CE teachers.

Practical Goals

Maxwell (2013) argued qualitative research is appropriate for improving practices, programs, or policies. To improve practices, programs, or policies, the researcher must understand the context in which things happen for the participants as well as the meaning for participants (Maxwell, 2013). The practical goals for my study included finding ways to improve CE partnerships, finding ways to support CE FYC teachers, and finding ways to provide effective professional development for CE FYC teachers. Denecker (2020) found that the professional development offered to the CE FYC teachers in her study in Ohio was not consistently provided by expert faculty members and was bereft of discipline-specific pedagogy. Denecker (2020) concluded the

participants in her study wanted quality professional development to better their teaching practices and thus produce better outcomes for their students. By learning about the experiences of CE FYC teachers, I heard from the teachers themselves how they wanted to be supported, how they thought CE partnerships could be improved, and what experiences impacted their instructional practices.

Intellectual Goals

Intellectual goals focus on “understanding something” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 28). According to Maxwell (2013), qualitative research is suited for addressing intellectual goals focused on understanding the meaning of events, situations, and experiences in which participants are engaged. I wanted to understand the experiences of CE FYC teachers and the meaning that these experiences held for them. McWain (2018) recognized the push from legislators and administrators across the country to increase DE offerings. As a result of this push, increasing numbers of high school English teachers are teaching FYC courses, and McWain (2018) noted that “it is our responsibility to study and listen to the teachers who inhabit these liminal spaces” (p. 421). By seeking answers to the following research questions and learning about the experiences of these CE FYC teachers, I hoped to amplify the voices of these professionals who were caught between two academic spheres.

Maxwell (2013) stated a researcher’s intellectual goals can serve as the link between practical goals and research questions. The practical goals for my study included finding ways to improve CE partnerships, support CE FYC teachers, and provide effective professional development for CE FYC teachers. To achieve these practical goals, I had to first understand the experiences of CE FYC teachers and how they made

sense of their experiences. Thus, the research questions in the following section stemmed from my intellectual goal of understanding the experiences of CE FYC teachers.

Research Questions

According to Maxwell (2013), effective research questions should identify the things that you want to understand, and the researcher should frame the research questions so that they point to the information needed to accomplish the goals of a study. With my previously stated research goals in mind, I developed the following research questions to learn about the experiences of CE FYC teachers.

Research Question 1

How did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia navigate the liminal space between high school and college environments?

McWain (2018) recognized the CE FYC teachers in her study existed in a liminal space between the high school and college academic environments. My goals for the study involved exploring how the CE FYC teachers I interviewed navigated this liminal space on a day-to-day basis, including how they made decisions regarding curriculum and instructional strategies. I hoped to learn how CE FYC teachers balanced and managed the expectations from different institutions while also making decisions they believed would support their students. In addition to the first research question, I developed subquestions to extend McWain's (2018) previous research and help me understand how the participants in my study navigated the liminal space between two environments and how they experienced their roles in supporting students. The subquestions for research question 1 were as follows:

- 1.1 What experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to managing expectations from the high school and college institutions participating in concurrent enrollment programs?
- 1.2 How did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia make decisions regarding curriculum planning and instructional strategies for first-year composition courses?
- 1.3 What experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to their roles in supporting students through the transition from high school to college?

Research Question 2

How did the meanings concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia made of pivotal experiences in their lives impact their instructional practices and decision-making in the liminal space between high school and college?

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research is about understanding how people attribute meaning to their experiences. To truly understand the experiences of CE FYC teachers, I also had to understand what experiences these teachers viewed as pivotal in their lives as well as how they made meaning from their pivotal experiences. I wanted to learn how the experiences of CE FYC teachers impacted their decisions about what goes on in their classrooms and what instructional practices they implemented. I wanted to learn how CE FYC teachers reflected on their experiences

and the processes in which they engaged while planning curriculum and instruction for their students.

I developed these research questions and subquestions to address my research goals. I believed that by seeking answers to these research questions, I could add to the body of literature and ongoing academic dialogue surrounding both CE programs and FYC courses, which lent significance to the study.

Significance

In this section, I addressed the significance of CE FYC teachers and provided a rationale for the research I conducted to explore the experiences of these teachers. CE composition is an area that researchers identified as fertile ground for future research (Denecker, 2020; McWain, 2018; Russo, 2020); thus, I explain in this section how my study can contribute to the field of composition research and ultimately impact DE/CE programs and the success of students.

Through my study, I addressed the identified research gap by exploring the experiences of CE FYC teachers. My goal was to make an original contribution to composition scholarship by uncovering what instructional practices my collaborators used to support their CE FYC students in the transition from high school to college-level writing, how collaborators navigated a liminal academic space, and how they perceived this liminality impacted their instructional practices. In their qualitative studies, Denecker (2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020) explored the experiences of DE and CE FYC teachers. I wanted to explore CE FYC teachers' experiences in more depth. I also wanted to explore the experiences of teachers who work in Georgia because it is one of only two states in which 100% of public high schools offer DE, yet little research has been

conducted in the state. By focusing on the experiences of CE composition teachers in public high schools in Georgia, I provided additional perspectives of the challenging and rewarding work that is teaching college-level writing to high school students.

I hope this study can provide DE program faculty, including high school and college administrators, college writing faculty, and DE program coordinators, with data regarding the experiences and instructional practices of CE composition teachers. These data can be used to ground disciplinary discussions of best practices for CE composition and give voice to the first-contact teachers who play a hands-on role in transitioning students across the composition threshold between high school and college. Through this study, I hoped to uncover ways that the CE composition teachers in the study helped students transfer high school writing strategies into college contexts.

The CE composition classroom is a unique liminal space in which high school, college, and composition converge. This unique positionality offers the opportunity for high school and college writing faculty to cross the divide between two distinct academic environments with a shared goal of helping students succeed in college contexts. The findings of my study can lead to positive social change by including high school teachers in the dialogue surrounding composition practices. With these findings, DE program faculty can strengthen DE partnerships, improve the alignment between high school and college writing, and provide needed support for DE/CE composition teachers. Ultimately, stronger DE programs can improve outcomes for students by providing the necessary skills for postsecondary success. With the critical thinking and communication skills that first-year composition courses can build, students can become successful and productive citizens.

My own experiences and goals prompted my interest in learning about the experiences of CE FYC teachers. However, Maxwell (2013) argued that assessing one's personal, practical, and intellectual goals for a study is not something that a researcher should do only once. A researcher's goals may emerge and evolve as the study progresses. In the conceptual framework section of the proposal, I elaborated on the current problems related to CE FYC teachers by including relevant existing theories and literature as well as other influential components that shaped my thinking while I designed and conducted the research.

Chapter II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Maxwell (2013), a conceptual framework includes the ideas and beliefs a researcher holds about the topic he or she is studying. Similarly, Ravitch and Riggan (2017) defined a conceptual framework as “an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p. 5). A conceptual framework connects all components of the research process, including the researcher’s experiences, interests, and goals; the context and setting of the study; relevant theories; and methods (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). The researcher constructs the conceptual framework, which acts as a study’s foundation by influencing every component of the research design. A strong conceptual framework allows the researcher to justify the topic’s relevance and how the research design, including the goals, questions, data collection, and data analysis, will contribute to the ongoing dialogue of a specific community. My conceptual framework included my experiential knowledge, the study’s theoretical framework, existing research on the topic, and a pilot study I conducted to collect initial data and to practice the interview and data-collection processes. These components were intertwined and provided evidence that my study was “appropriate and rigorous” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017, p. 5). My conceptual framework also served as a foundation for the chosen research methods and why the methods I chose were appropriate to answer the research questions.

Experiential Knowledge

A researcher's experiential knowledge, or the knowledge a researcher brings from his or her own background and identity, has traditionally been treated as something to eliminate from the research process (Maxwell, 2013). However, compartmentalizing one's research from past experiences means ignoring "a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 45). By recognizing the impact my own experiential knowledge had on the research and connecting those experiences to the other conceptual framework components, I illustrated the relevancy of my topic and research design.

As I discussed in the introduction to the study, my own experiences as a public high school teacher who taught concurrent enrollment (CE) first-year composition (FYC) courses influenced my interest in this topic. While I will not restate all those experiences here, I described parts of them in more detail to show how my personal knowledge connected to the existing theories and research on this topic. In my 5 years as a CE FYC teacher, I taught in two different high school-college partnerships, and while each experience was unique, at times I felt both isolated and voiceless.

While it can be isolating at times, I believe that teaching should be a collaborative profession. When teachers work together, whether to align curriculum, plan extracurricular activities, or anything in between, I believe that students benefit. However, when I began teaching CE FYC courses, I was the only person in our entire district who did what I did, and I was ultimately on my own. While at first, I relished the autonomy I had to design these courses, as I became bogged down in the quotidian tasks of teaching college courses to high school students, I quickly realized the enormity of the

position I had undertaken. These students were potentially earning two credits simultaneously: one for high school and one for college. They needed the high school credit to ensure they graduated on time, and they needed the college credit to ensure they were set up for success as they continued their college journeys. The problem was the high school and college had different grading criteria for earning credit. To make matters even more complicated, students could technically “pass” English 1101 at the college level yet not be eligible to move on to English 1102. The college administrators didn’t always understand how things operated at the high school level and vice versa, so I was the one figuring things out for my students. The CE waters were murky, and I was navigating them largely on my own.

Even as I gained confidence in my role and learned how to support my students as they transitioned from high school writers to college writers, I still had many questions about what and how I should teach in my CE FYC courses. I wondered how other CE FYC teachers planned curriculum and what instructional strategies they used in their classrooms. I wondered how other CE FYC teachers navigated the high school and college environments, how they managed the differing high school and college expectations, and how they helped their students to be strong college-level writers. Though I was a college professor “on paper,” I did not feel like one, so I wondered how other CE FYC teachers viewed themselves and their unique roles. Just as I had no one to whom I could ask these questions, I had no one with whom I could share my own experiences, which led in part to my feeling of voicelessness.

As I became more experienced in teaching CE FYC, which included creating curriculum to help students become strong college writers as well as supporting my

students in both the high school and college realms, I became more confident in what I believed my students needed to be successful in the courses. What I found, however, was that my years of experience did not seem valued by everyone with whom I interacted at the high school or the college. I could not make one college faculty member understand the tedious process required for my high school students to sign into their college email accounts, which the college continued to insist that students use as the sole means of communicating with me. Some high school administrators disagreed with my belief that not all students who met the criteria for CE participation were ready for its academic demands. Thus, despite my best efforts, I watched students struggle through (and sometimes fail) an entire semester of a college-level writing course when I recommended within the first week that these students withdraw. I tried to advocate for my students, but I often believed I was hitting roadblock after roadblock. Certainly, not all faculty involved with CE made my experience challenging. My college liaison was extremely helpful, communicative, and sympathetic to my workload. I believed in the benefits of CE for students, and I still do, but the challenges for me as a CE FYC teacher were immense.

While I knew as I embarked on this study that my experiences would likely differ from those of my collaborators, part of my desire to conduct this study stemmed from a desire to elevate the voices of those who might feel voiceless. The CE FYC teachers I knew before this study constantly navigated the boundary between high school and college, advocating for their students on both sides of the divide, yet I learned from my experiences that many times, my voice and my expertise were not valued. My research design, including my research questions and my choice to collect data using

semistructured interviews to hear what other CE FYC teachers had to say about their experiences, started with my experiential knowledge.

As I navigated teaching in both the high school and college worlds, I was experiencing what Katie McWain (2018) termed *liminality*, though I did not know this word at the time. When I began this doctoral program in 2020, I was interested in what other CE FYC teachers experienced, and I began searching for research that would help me learn about these experiences. What I found were two theories—liminality (McWain, 2018; Turner, 1966) and threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005)—that touched on my own experiences. I also found a plethora of quantitative research (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Bowers & Foley, 2018; Grubb et al., 2017; Horn et al., 2018; Karp et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2022; Tucker et al., 2023) about the effects of dual enrollment on student outcomes, but I only found four studies (Denecker, 2013; Denecker 2020; McWain, 2018; Russo, 2020) specifically about the experiences of high school teachers teaching CE FYC courses. I began connecting these pieces together, which all began part of my conceptual framework. My beliefs based on experiential knowledge were only one part of the knowledge I had about my topic. Another important piece of my conceptual framework was the knowledge about existing theories related to my study.

Theoretical Framework

According to Maxwell (2013), a theory is “a set of concepts and ideas and the proposed relationships among these, a structure that is intended to capture or model something about the world” (p. 48). In other words, theory is a statement about what is going on with a certain phenomenon and why. Maxwell argued that existing theories

form an integral part of a study's conceptual framework. Current literature related to my topic revealed two existing theories that may provide insight into the phenomenon of CE FYC courses and thus may be impacting CE FYC teachers: *liminality* and *threshold concepts*. While I wanted to refrain from the assumption that these theories directly impacted the experiences of my collaborators, the theories informed my initial understanding of this topic.

Liminality

Liminality was a concept introduced in the 20th century by folklorist Arnold van Gennep and further developed by anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner, 1966). In Turner's (1966) work on rites of passage and stages of human rituals, he identified the liminal persona as "one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of the customary categories" (p. 48). Liminal beings were in the process of transforming and moving from one location or status to another. Turner characterized liminal beings as "neither one thing nor another, [. . .] neither here nor there," and "betwixt and between" (p. 48). Thus, the concept of *liminality* referred to a transitory period in which a person was moving from one stage of life to another as well as the state of being in the transition between two stages. The liminal person existed in the space between the two stages, with the old stage behind and the new stage ahead. During the liminal period, the person did not belong to any group, yet embodied characteristics of both stages—the old and the new (Turner, 1966).

While liminality was originally an anthropological concept, other researchers began using the term to refer to issues of both dual/concurrent enrollment and composition studies. Hofmann and Voloch (2012) identified dual enrollment as "a

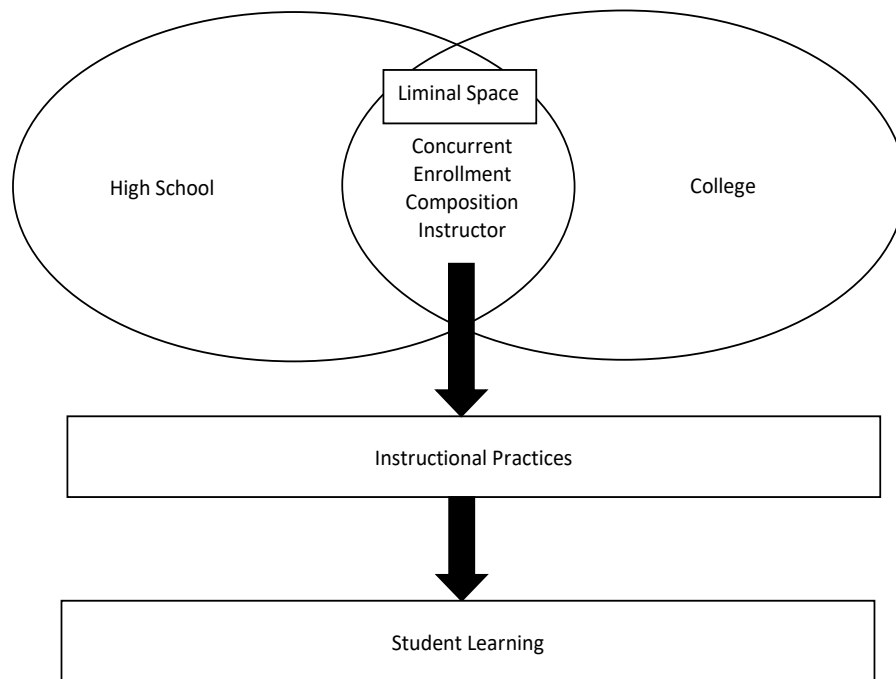
powerful liminal space” (p. 106) with the potential to help college faculty better understand the needs of their students. Similarly, McWain (2018) and Russo (2020) applied the concept of liminality to the experiences of CE composition teachers. McWain (2018) quoted Turner’s (1966) work when she referred to the CE composition classroom as a unique and liminal pedagogical space in which teachers are “betwixt and between” high school and college” (p. 408). CE teachers work at the intersection of two distinct academic environments and must contend daily with the differing expectations of both high school and college stakeholders. Additionally, McWain argued that teachers are the most liminal entities within the sphere of dual/concurrent enrollment, as they represent both the challenges and possibilities DE and CE programs hold. Russo (2020) highlighted the difficulty of maintaining the “balance between two spaces” and “straddling two sites” (p. 88), which CE FYC teachers do daily. Figure 1 is a visual representation I created to illustrate what McWain (2018) termed the “uniquely liminal institutional positionality” (p. 408) of CE FYC teachers.

The concept map should be read from top to bottom. In DE/CE programs, liminal space is created by the intersection of the high school and college environments. CE FYC teachers exist within this liminal space, navigating between high school and college policies, practices, and expectations. The CE FYC teacher chooses instructional practices that directly impact student learning. The theory of liminality may help explain the experiences of CE FYC teachers and thus was foundational to my research. As a result of my study, I hoped to better understand how CE FYC teachers in the study navigated and perceived their roles in the liminal space between high school and college as well as how

this liminal space impacted the teachers' instructional practices. Liminality also connects to the idea of threshold concepts.

Figure 1

Positionality of Concurrent Enrollment First-Year Composition Teachers



Threshold Concepts

Meyer and Land (2005) first introduced the idea of threshold concepts as a theory of teaching and learning. At its core, a threshold concept is “a new way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing something” (Meyer & Land, 2005, p. 373). Meyer and Land posited that every discipline includes threshold concepts, which lead students to previously unknown knowledge. Learners’ encounters with threshold concepts may be troublesome, liminal, integrative, transformative, irreversible, and bounded (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016). The term *threshold* implies the crossing of a boundary as the learner moves from unknowing to knowing. This idea parallels that of liminality in its

transformative nature. The student moves from one stage to another and is initiated into a new group as someone who holds disciplinary knowledge.

Researchers applied the idea of threshold concepts to both FYC and CE. Downs and Robertson (2016) argued that a main goal of FYC courses should be to offer new experiences and knowledge that encourage students to reconsider their prior knowledge about writing. Downs and Robertson went on to state that “early knowledge of writing is likely to be built on incomplete and inaccurate ideas about writing” (p. 105). Therefore, FYC teachers should use threshold concepts to uncover students’ misconceptions about writing and “work toward richer conceptualizations of writing” (p. 106). In his book on writing, Weinstein (2001) used the word “threshold” to refer not only to the boundary between high school and college but also the transition from “doing slavish or derivative thinking to doing real, engaged thinking of one’s own” (p. xi). Denecker (2013) extended Weinstein’s idea by referring to the “composition threshold” as the “uneven juncture where the paths of secondary and post-secondary writing expectations meet” (p. 28). While threshold concepts are typically used in reference to students, both McWain (2018) and Russo (2020) recognized the role that threshold concepts play for CE composition teachers, who help CE students cross this threshold on a daily basis.

I wanted to refrain from underusing or critically overusing the theories in my theoretical framework (Maxwell, 2013). I identified the concepts of liminality and threshold concepts in the literature related to CE and FYC. Therefore, I recognized that these theories might have played a role in the experiences of the CE FYC teachers, and I kept them in mind while conducting my study.

Existing Research

Prior research can impact a study's design. For example, existing research can help the researcher justify the need for a study and make decisions about a study's methods (Maxwell, 2013). To understand the need for additional research on the experiences of CE FYC teachers, one must also understand the context of dual enrollment (DE), CE, and the composition classroom. Thus, in the next subsections, I described the current research related to the history of DE and specifically the history of DE in Georgia, where I conducted my study. I also provided background regarding CE as a subset of DE, the benefits and criticisms of CE programs, the FYC composition classroom, and what we currently know about CE FYC teachers. By providing this information, I gave relevant context for my study and justified the need for additional research on the experiences of CE FYC teachers.

History of Dual Enrollment

The study was situated at the intersection of two fields: dual/concurrent enrollment and composition studies. To understand the need for the study, it is essential to recognize the history DE/CE and its relationship with the field of composition studies. Therefore, I outline the history of dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment before addressing the relevancy of composition courses and the need for more research focused on the experiences of CE FYC teachers.

DE programs began as part of a larger initiative to reform postsecondary education and increase college completion rates (Karp, 2015). DE differs from other educational reforms because it requires more collaboration between high schools and colleges, thus providing a bridge between the two distinct environments (Karp, 2015).

DE course participation increased drastically during the past 10–20 years. In 2010, 10% of U.S. students took college courses while in high school (NACEP, 2019). By 2019, participation jumped to 34%, and 88.98% of high schools reported offering DE courses in some form (NACEP, 2019).

Several quantitative studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs indicated that participation in DE programs promoted college access and success (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Bowers & Foley, 2018; Giani et al., 2014; Grubb et al., 2017). Specifically, researchers identified positive impacts of DE participation on several factors, including college readiness (An, 2013b), retention (An, 2013b; Bowers & Foley, 2018), grade point average (An, 2013b), degree attainment (Grubb et al., 2017), enrollment in remedial courses (Grubb et al., 2017), and time spent on degree attainment (Grubb et al., 2017). Karp et al. (2007) found a positive correlation between DE participation and high school graduation among students in Florida. Similarly, Lee et al. (2022) found that public high school students in Nebraska who completed at least one DE course during high school were more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college, and reenroll in college for a second year. Especially for socio-economically disadvantaged students, research also indicated the efficacy of DE programs in promoting college enrollment and degree attainment (Horn et al., 2018). DE policies continued to evolve as more and more states expanded their DE course offerings to improve college outcomes for students (Edmonds & Squires, 2016).

Despite the benefits, DE remains a contested and complex policy issue because it falls under the domain of both K–12 and postsecondary education systems (Zinth & Taylor, 2019). Although DE programs exist in all 50 states, a wide variety of policies,

procedures, and guidelines exists across the nation (McWain, 2018). Borden et al. (2013) conducted a nationwide study examining DE policies by sending questionnaires to contacts overseeing DE courses in each state. The contacts included higher education boards and commissions, college and university agencies, K–12 education departments, and workforce education agencies. Rhode Island and Utah were the only two non-respondent states, and Pennsylvania was in a period of transition related to DE policy; therefore, 47 states were included in the study. More recently, the Education Commission of the States compiled a similar list of state policies regarding DE and CE programs. Borden et al. (2013) found that all 47 respondent states had formal legislative statutes regarding DE, up from 37 in 2001. Of these 47 states, 37 had policies outlining student eligibility criteria (Borden et al., 2013). The most common eligibility requirements were that students had to be in a certain grade level and meet the entrance requirements of the postsecondary institution, such as earning minimum scores on college-entrance exams like the SAT or ACT (Education Commission of the States, 2022). Additionally, 37 states had policies regarding DE instructor eligibility, with the most common requiring that colleges and universities maintained the same standards in selecting instructors for DE courses as they did for traditional college courses (Borden et al., 2013). Instructor qualification criteria varied from college to college and from state to state, but common criteria required college instructors to hold at least 18 hours of Masters-level credit in the content area in which they teach (Education Commission of the States, 2022). While about half of the states in Borden et al.'s (2013) study offered waivers and exceptions for student eligibility provisions, only eight states offered waivers or exceptions for instructor eligibility. In addition to student and instructor eligibility criteria, 27 states

reported statewide regulations for the types of courses that could be offered through DE (Borden et al., 2013). For example, eight states, including Georgia, had policies prohibiting students from taking remedial or development DE courses (Borden et al., 2013). Because the state of Georgia was the focus for the study, I outlined the history of DE in Georgia to provide additional context and background.

Dual Enrollment in Georgia

Georgia has a long history with DE and is one of only two states in which 100% of public high schools offer DE (NACEP, 2019), yet little research has been conducted in the state. Since 1992, Georgia high school students had the option to participate in state-funded dual enrollment programs (Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division, 2018). The first program, Postsecondary Options Program, was funded by local school systems' state funding allotment, which meant local school systems lost funding for DE students (Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division, 2018). In 2004, the Postsecondary Options Program was replaced with two lottery-funded DE programs, Accel and the Hope Grant (Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division, 2018). The Accel program provided tuition for both public and private high school students enrolled part-time in academic degree courses, and the Hope Grant provided tuition for students enrolled part-time in technical certificate and diploma programs (Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division, 2018). In 2009, the Georgia General Assembly passed a bill introducing the Move On When Ready (MOWR) program, allowing eligible high school juniors and seniors to enroll full-time in college courses (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). Like the prior Postsecondary Options Program,

funding for MOWR courses came from a student's state K–12 full-time equivalent (FTE), which meant that high schools lost FTE funding for students who participated in MOWR (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). From 2009–2012, the MOWR program existed concurrently with the Accel and Hope Grant programs. In 2011, the General Assembly passed additional legislation requiring the development of statewide policies for DE; the bill also shifted the funding for DE and allowed high schools to earn FTE funding for DE students (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). After this change, DE course enrollment began to increase steadily (Flamini & Chalasani, 2019).

Beginning in 2013, several legislative changes impacted Georgia's DE programs. The first College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) was introduced in 2013, which was an assessment tool for measuring school performance based on graduation rates and student achievement scores, among other indicators (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). The CCRPI formula for high schools included an indicator for the number of high school graduates earning at least one high school credit in college-level courses through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual enrollment (DE) programs (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). This change created an accountability system that included participation in DE. Two new bills were introduced in 2015, consolidating the three state-funded DE programs (Accel, Hope Grant, and MOWR) into a single new MOWR program (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). The new MOWR was administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), and participation in DE did not affect high schools' state full-time equivalent (FTE) funding (Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division, 2018). Under the new MOWR, eligible high school juniors and seniors could enroll in DE courses

either part-time or full-time, and students' costs for tuition, fees, and books were covered by FTE funds (Flamini & Chalasani, 2019). In 2017, the governor changed the name from *Move On When Ready* to *dual enrollment* (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017).

DE participation increased 256.12% between the 2013–2014 school year and the 2017–2018 school year (Flamini & Chalasani, 2019). By the 2017–2018 academic year, Georgia and Idaho had the highest number of DE programs, with 100% of public high schools in these states offering some model of DE for students (NACEP, 2019). In 2018, a new bill called for the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) to collect student enrollment data for DE courses and evaluate DE programs in Georgia (Flamini & Chalasani, 2019). The last big change occurred in the spring of 2020 when the Georgia legislature passed House Bill 444; this bill capped a student's funding for DE courses at 30 hours of credit (Flamini & Chalasani, 2019). Despite this change, DE continues to be a popular program for Georgia students to earn college credit before leaving high school. In 2019, approximately 51,000 Georgia high school students earned over 660,000 college credits through DE programs (Berry et al., 2022).

As one of only two states with 100% of public high schools offering DE in some form, Georgia presents an important context in which to conduct DE research. With the growth of DE in Georgia, policymakers and stakeholders are focusing their attention on the impacts of DE programs. While tracking DE participation rates as well as postsecondary enrollment data can provide a quantitative picture of DE impacts, qualitative data is also necessary to provide a more detailed picture of DE, specifically from the perspectives of the growing group of high school teachers providing DE instruction. Specifically, more of these courses are being taught on high school campuses

through the CE model, a unique subset of DE courses taught by high school teachers. The role that CE courses play in the larger picture of DE was important for the context of the study.

Dual Enrollment Delivery Models

As DE programs evolved, various course models emerged to meet the needs of different school systems and the learners within them. DE courses may be offered through a wide range of academic settings based on the location of dual enrollment partnerships as well as the resources available. For example, students may take DE courses at a community college, at a 4-year institution, online, or in a high school setting. In high school settings, the courses may be taught by college instructors or high school teachers. Additionally, Early College High Schools (ECHS) emerged, which are specialized high schools that offer college courses to all students, and students may graduate high school with up to 60 college credits (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Along with the historical background of DE, it is also important to understand the different course delivery models available to high school students who wish to take college courses. While an in-depth look at each of these DE delivery models is outside the scope of this study, I will provide necessary context by describing three of the most common course delivery models. Before diving into the concurrent enrollment (CE) model, which was the focus of the study, I use this section to discuss three common course delivery models: on the college campus, online, and on the high school campus.

On the College Campus. One prevalent approach to DE involves high school students attending college classes face-to-face on the campus of the partnering postsecondary institution. Under this model, high school students are taught by college

instructors and attend class alongside traditional college students. In fact, the instructors may not be aware that some of their students are high schoolers. This on-campus model immerses students in the collegiate environment, allowing them the opportunity to observe and learn campus life and how to navigate the campus and its resources (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). College campus-based programs introduce high school students to the social and academic expectations of college, which can help ease the transition to full-time college life (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016; Tobolowsky & Ozuna, 2016). Edwards et al. (2011) noted that students taking courses on a college campus began to view themselves as college students and take responsibility for their learning. Similarly, studies also showed taking DE courses on a college campus increased students' academic confidence, independence, development, and self-sufficiency (Allen, 2010; Burns & Lewis, 2000). However, logistical challenges such as transportation availability and cost, as well as difficulties with scheduling, can pose obstacles for some students (Karp et al., 2007).

Online. Wider access to technology along with the COVID-19 pandemic brought an increase in online learning. One option for DE students is to access college coursework through fully online courses or programs. Students may take online courses through brick-and-mortar colleges or through virtual schools (Barnett & Stamm, 2010; Barbour & Reeves, 2009). This model allows access to a wider range of courses, especially for students in rural areas where physical access to a college campus is not feasible. Additionally, online coursework allows for more flexibility in student schedules (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). In their study of various DE delivery models at a community college in Southwest Virginia, Arnold et al. (2017) found there was no statistically

significant difference in course grades between the online courses and the face-to-face courses they studied. However, an obstacle of online delivery for some students is a lack of interaction between the instructor and students, which can lead to disengagement with the course (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Therefore, online DE courses are typically better suited for academically strong students who are self-motivated and able to work independently (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016).

On the High School Campus. Students may also take DE courses on their high school campuses. Some of these DE courses are taught by college instructors who travel to the high school, or, increasingly, these courses are taught by qualified high school teachers. I will discuss the courses taught by high school teachers, also called concurrent enrollment (CE) courses, in more detail in the following section. Generally, offering college courses on high school campuses removes barriers, such as transportation availability and cost, and increases access, particularly for minority students, first-generation college students, or students with low socioeconomic status (Edwards et al., 2011). Additionally, because the courses are embedded within students' regular school hours, access is increased for low-income students who may have additional responsibilities after school, such as working or caring for younger siblings (Edwards et al., 2011). Taking DE courses on their high school campuses also allows students to experience the challenges of college while still in their supportive high school environments (NACEP, 2019). Being on a high school campus may be more familiar and less intimidating for high school students than being on a college campus. Students can navigate the high school environment easily, increasing the chances that students will ask for help or receive necessary support (Edwards et al., 2011). These courses also allow for

a seamless integration of high school and college course material, which can make academic content relevant and practical for students, again easing a student's transition from the secondary to postsecondary environment (Edwards et al., 2011).

On the other hand, some researchers suggested that students who took DE courses on the high school campus missed out on the benefits that college environments offered (Arnold et al., 2017; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). College faculty, such as Camp and Walters (2016), challenged the rigor of college courses taught on high school campuses, especially those taught by high school faculty. Other experts expressed concerns that taking DE courses in the high school environment can mean that students fail to view themselves as college students (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). However, researchers such as Karp (2012), Hanson et al. (2015), and Klosterman and Stein (2022), found that students who took DE courses on their high school campuses, even those taught by high school teachers, still experienced high rigor and learned about college expectations. With the three common DE course delivery models in mind, I next discuss the focus of the study, the concurrent enrollment (CE) delivery model, which is a subset of DE offered on high school campuses.

Concurrent Enrollment (CE)

Concurrent enrollment (CE), a specific DE model in which college courses are taught on high school campuses by qualified high school teachers, is the most common model of course delivery for DE programs (NACEP, 2019). In 2019, 80% of DE students participated in college courses on their own high school campuses (NACEP, 2019). CE courses offer a unique set of benefits for students, but the CE model also received criticism from stakeholders, particularly at the postsecondary level. In the following

subsections, I address the benefits and criticisms of CE courses to provide additional context for my study and further clarify the current discussions surrounding these courses.

Benefits. In addition to the benefits outlined in the previous section regarding any DE courses taught on high school campuses, CE courses offer other benefits. Hanson et al. (2015) surveyed 150 high school principals, guidance counselors, and CE instructors from 35 high schools in Iowa to understand how these stakeholders perceived the impacts of CE programs on their schools and students. Generally, survey respondents reported positive impacts of CE courses on both schools and students. For example, 92% of respondents agreed that CE courses helped students gain in-depth knowledge in the subject area, and 86% of respondents agreed that students participated in rigorous learning through CE courses (Hanson et al., 2015). Respondents provided additional comments about the impacts of CE courses on students. One teacher stated the students were more prepared for “college and beyond,” and another teacher responded, “[Students] discover how much harder they must work for a college course than what they are used to doing when they were younger . . . but that they can do it” (Hansen et al., 2015, p. 78).

While some stakeholders expressed concern regarding high school faculty teaching college coursework, studies by Karp (2012) and Klosterman and Stein (2022) indicated that CE students reaped benefits from participating in CE courses. Klosterman and Stein (2022) conducted a quantitative study in Washington comparing the learning environment of a college mathematics course located on a university campus to the learning environment of its CE counterpart, which was taught on a high school campus.

The researchers surveyed 242 students in university classrooms and 260 students in CE classrooms. Using MANOVA, the researchers determined a statistically significant difference existed between the university and CE settings, with the CE setting scoring higher in the categories of involvement, teacher support, and student cohesion. These results indicated that the CE students in the study experienced increased engagement with course materials, higher levels of support from their teachers, and more collaboration with their peers when compared to students who took the same course on a university campus.

Additionally, Karp (2012) interviewed 26 high school students enrolled in CE courses offered through two community colleges in New York City. Karp interviewed the students three times about their experiences as college students: at the beginning of the semester, in the middle of the semester, and at the end of the semester. Karp found that, throughout the course of the semester, the CE students learned about their roles as college students, and the CE courses helped students practice college expectations. Karp also conducted classroom observations and found that some CE courses reflected the content and pedagogical structures of college courses while other CE courses did not. Students in what Karp called “authentic courses” (p. 25) engaged in more college practices, such as working independently, engaging in complex discussions, and taking responsibility for their own learning. Hanson et al. (2015), Klosterman and Stein (2022), and Karp (2012) found benefits of CE participation for students in the programs studied.

Criticism. Despite the previously outlined benefits, CE also faces a large amount of criticism. In her study on the professional development experiences of concurrent enrollment teachers, Denecker (2020) stated that “CE’s lack of uniformity in delivery as

well as oversight has led to decades of skepticism about its ability to achieve quality and rigor equivalent to that of traditional college courses” (p. 67). Some stakeholders, especially at the postsecondary level, question whether the rigor of CE courses is truly comparable to the rigor of the same courses taught on college campuses by college professors. Another issue that skeptics of CE target is the lack of consistency in instructor qualifications. Currently, no single set of qualification criteria exists for CE teachers (Horn et al., 2018). As of 2018, all but eight states had some form of state-level policy outlining required DE and CE instructor qualifications (Horn et al., 2018). In eight of those 42 states with specific policies, teachers must possess a certain number of graduate credits in their instructional content; 11 states required teachers to hold a master’s degree or higher; in 22 states, teachers must meet the same requirements as faculty at the participating college or university (Horn et al., 2018).

The previously outlined benefits and criticisms of CE courses were relevant to the study because CE FYC teachers work every day under the weight these benefits and criticisms of the courses they teach. My research question 1.1 focused on the experiences that six CE FYC teachers I interviewed had relating to managing expectations from both the high school and college institutions, and benefits and criticisms of CE courses play a role in these expectations from the participating institutions. Additionally, the history and pedagogy of first-year composition courses provided relevant context to my study because of the impact CE FYC teachers’ instructional practices.

First-Year Composition Pedagogy

First-year composition (FYC), sometimes known as first-year writing or freshman composition, has a long and storied history. Since its inception at Harvard, FYC has

undergone numerous shifts as colleges and universities attempted to adapt to the changing educational landscape (Fleming, 2011). FYC was conceived in the 1880s by administrators at Harvard, who became exasperated at the perceived deficits in the writing skills of their students and began requiring first-year students to take a year-long English composition course focused on weekly writing themes (Fleming, 2011). Now, for more than a century, FYC has been a staple of general education coursework for college students. A series of two courses or a single stand-alone course that focuses on college-level expository writing, FYC courses are required of nearly all first-year students and are designed to prepare students for the demands of future academic and professional writing tasks (Fleming, 2011). Composition pedagogy, here defined as both the practice of teaching writing and the theories which underly those practices (Tate et al., 2001), has evolved alongside FYC, and the history as well as the current trends regarding composition pedagogy in FYC courses directly impact CE FYC teachers.

In the early half of the 20th century, what is now known as current-traditional pedagogy was the dominant approach to writing instruction in the United States (Berlin, 1987). Current-traditional pedagogists primarily focused on teaching students to create grammatically correct and rhetorically effective essays, with an emphasis on imparting a set of fixed rules and conventions for writing (Berlin, 1984). This product-oriented approach stemmed from an appeal to the growing middle class, whose members valued upward social mobility and considered the ability to write effectively as an essential skill for economic success (Berlin, 1984).

In the mid-20th century, the field of composition began shifting toward a process approach to writing instruction, led by expressivist scholars such as Peter Elbow (Farris,

1987). Elbow's foundational works, *Writing With Power* (1998a) and *Writing Without Teachers* (1998b), left a lasting impact on the composition classroom. His works focused on process-oriented approaches and the development of students as writers. Elbow emphasized the process of freewriting to generate ideas and foster creativity without the constraints of grammatical correctness or polished prose. Alongside the process movement, as cognitive psychology gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century, composition scholars began exploring the cognitive aspects of writing (Hayes & Flower, 1986). This shift led to the adoption of problem-solving models, which emphasized writing as a cognitive process involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Flower & Hayes, 1981).

Toward the end of the 20th century and the into the 21st, the rise of social constructivist theories influenced composition pedagogy (Roberts-Miller, 2002). This shift focused on the collaborative nature of writing, acknowledging the role of social interactions in creating meaning (Roberts-Miller, 2002). Collaborative learning, peer review, and group projects became integral components of the writing process (Roberts-Miller, 2002). Additionally, the growth of technology as an instructional tool led to the expansion of literacy beyond traditional written text. Multimodal texts were introduced into the composition classroom, where students engaged with and created texts that included images, sounds, videos, and other interactive elements (Ball & Charlton, 2018).

Research on FYC courses explored the impacts of these courses on student success in college. FYC courses and the student's first year at university or college are critical for engaging students and laying the foundation for future academic success. These first-year studies courses help students acclimate to university life, teach them how

to use resources on campus, and assist students in developing study and other academic skills such as technology use and time management. FYC grades have been found to be predictors of first- to second-year college retention as well as graduation (Garrett et al., 2017). In a study of student records at a small, metropolitan U.S. university, Garrett et al. (2017) found that students at the university who failed FYC had only a 17% chance of graduating compared to a 53% chance of graduating for students who passed FYC. In fact, of all the first-year courses analyzed in the study, students who failed the first-year writing sequence had the lowest predicted graduation rate when compared to students who failed other introductory courses such as math, public speaking, and information literacy (Garrett et al., 2017). Additionally, in a larger-scale study at a polytechnic university in the Midwest, Nicholes and Reimer (2020) determined that students in their sample ($N = 8916$) who earned an A or B in Composition 1, when compared to students who earned a C or below, were “5.3 times more likely to persist to Composition 2” and “3.3 times more likely to graduate within 4–6 years” (p. 7). The history of composition pedagogy as well as research focused on the FYC classroom have impacted dual and concurrent enrollment FYC courses. Existing research regarding college faculty perceptions of DE/CE, as well as the impact of DE/CE on the FYC classroom also provided important context for my study.

College Faculty Perceptions of DE/CE Composition

Collegiate and high school writing teachers have had a complicated relationship since the formation of the National Council for the Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911 (Denecker, 2013). Debates abound regarding what constitutes college-level writing, with faculty on both sides of the high school-college divide bemoaning students’ inability to

produce advanced academic work (Denecker, 2020). College composition faculty have long criticized their students' lack of writing ability and the way writing is taught at the high school level. Many post-secondary composition faculty work with college students who they view as woefully unprepared for the rigor of college-level writing, while on the other side of the divide, high school teachers struggle with the top-down demands of ill-defined university expectations (Denecker, 2013).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, college faculty began making strong statements against DE/CE composition. In a 1991 edition of the journal *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, David Schwalm—at the time, a member of the journal's editorial board as well as an English professor at Arizona State University—published a strongly-worded opinion piece about the danger DE could hold for students' college-level literacy skills. He called DE a “disturbing extension of the concept underlying the Advanced Placement program” (Schwalm, 1991, p. 51). He made the following objections to the practice of DE: giving students credit for college composition did not mean they met the demands of college-level writing; students should view advanced curriculum as its own reward rather than only chasing college credit; and DE composition courses implied that writing was a skill that one mastered and from there moved on, instead of a recursive skill that helped students grasp increasingly difficult college tasks (Schwalm, 1991). After Schwalm's article, *Writing Program Administration (WPA)* did not publish another article on dual and concurrent enrollment until 2002; by 2012, the number of *WPA* articles on the topic began increasing steadily (Wecker & Wilde, 2019).

Despite early staunch criticism by college faculty, perceptions of DE and CE composition began to shift. In 2012, Schwalm recanted his previous statement about DE

composition, saying that DE had morphed into a means of providing college access to a wider number of students rather than as just an opportunity for students to encounter more rigorous coursework (Wecker & Wilde, 2019). While Schwalm's opinion was just one of many, his shift in stance and the publication history of the *WPA* journal paralleled the expansion of DE and the changing perceptions of its effectiveness. Much of the criticism targeted at CE FYC courses centered on the difference between high school and college writing expectations, with concerns regarding rigor and whether college courses taught by high school teachers are as rigorous as traditional college courses. Ferguson et al. (2015) conducted a case study of a small, public community college in the South. The researchers looked at the perceptions of course rigor among three faculty groups: high school faculty teaching CE courses at the high school, college faculty teaching DE students on the college campus, and college faculty teaching traditional college students on the college campus. The researchers conducted semistructured interviews and looked at course syllabi and grading policies to determine rigor. The researchers found that the courses taught by high school faculty on high school campuses were as rigorous, some even more so, than the traditional college courses taught by college faculty. While Ferguson et al.'s (2015) work was a single study, it did address the concerns of many skeptics by finding DE/CE composition courses can be on par with the rigor of traditional college FYC courses.

While concerns regarding DE and CE composition have by no means disappeared, perceptions have adapted to the reality and growing ubiquity of DE/CE. Notable college English faculty such as Denecker (2013; 2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020) called for an end to the “doomsday” (Russo, 2020, p. 109) narratives

surrounding DE and urged high school and college faculty to work together to improve DE/CE programs. Additionally, these researchers and others noted the potential that the classes hold in preparing students for college-level academic rigor (Denecker, 2013, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). Denecker (2013) conducted a landmark study focused on DE and CE composition instruction. Denecker interviewed 22 DE composition instructors from the University of Findlay in Ohio who had varying backgrounds and taught in different environments, some on the college campus and some on their respective high school campuses. Denecker found three main factors differentiating secondary-level writing from postsecondary-level writing: a focus on informational “report” writing rather than argumentative writing; surface-level versus deep writing; and lack of emphasis on the writing process. Denecker’s study was foundational in the topic of DE and CE composition courses because she recognized the potential of CE composition classrooms to become “conduits for collaboration, conversation, and professional development since these are spaces where high school and college students and instructors come together” (Denecker, 2013, p. 42). She called for more collaboration and research into the instructional practices and experiences of DE and CE composition teachers.

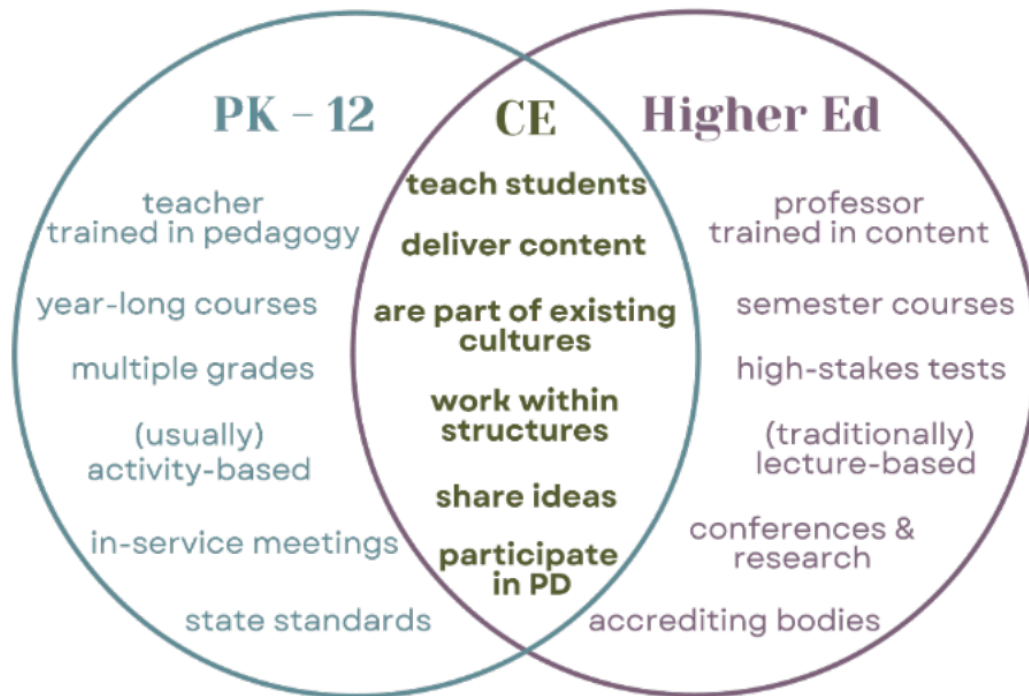
Furthermore, in 2020, members of the Conference on College Composition and Communication published a position statement on DE in composition (Johnson et al., 2020). They again recognized the gap between high school and college writing and acknowledged that dual enrollment could be a possible method to bridge that gap as a place where high school and college expectations could align (Johnson et al., 2020). However, in an article in her newly published journal *Concurrent Enrollment Review*,

Denecker (2023) outlined the three central “gap metaphors” (p. 55) frequently used to explain “variabilities in PK-16 education” (p. 55). Denecker identified these as gaps “in student readiness; in educational structures, functions, and culture; and in instructor preparation” (p. 55). Denecker argued that relying “too heavily on the gap metaphor is to situate secondary and postsecondary education as static, monolithic entities” (p. 55). Referring to gap metaphors and “building bridges” between high school and college environments means ignoring “the dynamic nature of learning which—above all else—should and can resist rigid boundaries” (p. 56). In lieu of gap metaphors, Denecker presented a Venn Diagram to illustrate the relationship between secondary and postsecondary teaching and learning. Figure 2 shows this Venn Diagram. Denecker (2023) emphasized the importance of collaboration between high school and college English faculty, which could help dismantle assumed hierarchies in secondary and postsecondary content, instructor qualifications, and pedagogical approaches.

Additional research on CE classrooms and teachers could identify how these teachers are already developing crucial writing skills and how they could effectively support DE students (Denecker, 2013). Existing research on DE/CE composition courses directly impacts the high school teachers who teach these courses. Because I wanted to learn more about the experiences of these teachers, the existing research provided a foundation for the study’s conceptual framework.

Figure 2

Denecker's (2023) Venn Diagram of Secondary-Postsecondary Teaching and Learning



Note: The center of the diagram denotes some, but not all, elements in common between PK-12 and higher educational structures. Please read the list of center elements with a “We all” sentence stem starter. The outer bands of the diagram represent what might be considered traditional characteristics of each unique learning environment. Again, this list is not exhaustive.

Dual/Concurrent Enrollment First-Year Composition Teachers

Few studies have been conducted about DE FYC teachers, and fewer have focused specifically on CE FYC teachers. However, several researchers highlighted the need for additional research in this area. McWain (2018) completed a multisite case study with high school DE instructors and administrators in DE partnerships. After conducting semistructured interviews with CE composition teachers, McWain found four common challenges these teachers faced: (1) tension between high school and college discourse

communities, (2) accountability to two different academic programs, (3) pressures from various academic stakeholders, and (4) intensive labor conditions. In her findings, McWain stated the “sense of conflicting priorities places dual enrollment teachers in a unique position, delivering college curriculum in the space between two different activity systems and discourse communities” (p. 411). DE teachers’ responses indicated the tension they feel in the liminal space where they carried the responsibility of two distinct academic environments. McWain also called for more research in this area, noting, “Scant research [. . .] has focused on the teachers who deliver composition coursework through these high school–college partnerships” (p. 406). Thus, she emphasized the importance of studying and listening to these CE composition teachers (McWain, 2018), which is exactly what I aimed to do with my research.

After Denecker’s (2013) study on DE and CE composition instruction, she completed an additional study targeting Ohio CE composition teachers. In this two-part study, she first explored how high school teachers of college-level composition defined *rigor* in postsecondary writing instruction. In the second part of the study, she surveyed 11 CE composition teachers about their credentials, preparation, and professional development related to teaching CE composition courses (Denecker, 2020). Part one of Denecker’s study about *rigor* revealed that CE composition instructors in the study viewed rigor as consisting of four components: grit, text application, depth, and revision. In part two of the study, in which Denecker surveyed the teachers about their credentials and preparation, she found that their professional development experiences varied widely, professional development opportunities were often generalized and not provided by an expert faculty member, and credentialing criteria for CE writing teachers was only one

way to promote rigor in these composition courses. As a result of her findings, Denecker called for discipline-specific professional development for CE writing teachers, more time and research into CE partnerships, and investment in high-quality mentorships for CE writing teachers.

I designed the study in response to the need for additional research into the experiences of CE FYC teachers, as identified by researchers Denecker (2013; 2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020). Their studies, though foundational to the fields of CE and composition, were preliminary in nature. Additional research is needed that capitalizes on and extends previous research by taking a more in-depth look at the experiences of CE FYC teachers. To aid in designing my study, I conducted a pilot interview with a CE FYC teacher. I analyzed what I learned from the pilot interview, which impacted my conceptual framework.

Pilot Interview

According to Maxwell (2013), pilot studies are beneficial because they can help researchers learn about the people they plan to study. I conducted a pilot interview for several reasons. First, as an inexperienced researcher, I needed to practice my interviewing skills. The pilot interview allowed me to practice writing and asking interview questions. I also practiced interacting with the participant by asking follow-up and clarifying questions during the interview. Next, the pilot interview allowed me to see the kind of data my interview questions would generate. For example, my participant might interpret a question differently than I intended. Thus, the pilot interview helped me see what kind of data my questions would generate and guided my revision of the interview questions for the future. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Maxwell

warned about the danger of a researcher failing to understand the beliefs of research participants. Therefore, I conducted the pilot interview to learn about the attitudes, beliefs, experiences, and perceptions of a CE FYC teacher and my reaction to them to better prepare myself for my study. By gathering this data, my goal was to ensure I did not make false assumptions about my potential participants. I learned a great deal by conducting the pilot interview, and I used what I learned as I designed the study, interviewed participants, and analyzed the data.

In the pilot study, I interviewed a former coworker, Lynn (a pseudonym), who was a CE FYC teacher at a public high school in Georgia. She taught CE through a public technical college. I chose Lynn because she is a friend, I previously discussed my doctoral journey and research with her, and she offered to help. She had been teaching CE composition courses for 7 years, so I knew she held a wealth of knowledge related to teaching CE FYC. I also knew her personality and that she would be forthcoming with information and an interview with her would likely yield rich data.

I interviewed Lynn for approximately 60 minutes. To prepare for the pilot interview, I wrote an interview guide with questions that I hoped would generate data to answer my research questions. I conducted a virtual video conference to interview Lynn. I conducted the conference using Microsoft Teams to record and transcribe the interview. As a safeguard, I also used the Otter.ai application on my phone to record the audio. During the interview, I took notes to aid my memory and assist with asking follow-up and clarification questions. After the interview, I practiced using MAXQDA, a data analysis software package, to code the transcript and categorize the codes.

After analyzing the data from the pilot interview, I recognized I needed to revise my interview questions to elicit the data I wanted to gather. The questions I asked were mostly procedural in nature. For example, I asked how Lynn came to be a CE teacher, what being a CE teacher was like, what type of professional development she experienced, and what instructional practices she used in her CE FYC classroom. These questions were important because they elicited data about the participant's experiences, yet I failed to ask questions to get at the meaning of those experiences to her. Lynn did hint at meaning-making in her answers, but the pilot interview process helped me recognize I needed to ask follow-up questions about how my participant made meaning of certain experiences. For example, toward the end of the interview, Lynn stated, "I get a lot of satisfaction of being able to really talk in depth about literature." She also emphasized the relationships she built with her CE composition students. She said, "I like the relationships a lot, and I like the opportunity to teach writing and kind of be their first real writing teacher." This response touched on the meaning that being a CE FYC teacher had for Lynn. However, I realized that, to get narrative data, I needed to elicit stories. One way I prompted my participants to focus on meaning making was by using Seidman's (2013) strategy of asking participants to tell stories about their experiences. Dr. Lorraine Schmertzling also helped me realize that I could not ask the question, "What meaning do you make of that?" because this question is hard to answer. Rather, once a participant shared about a specific experience, I asked follow-up questions to get to meaning-making. I asked questions such as, "How did that experience change you? What did _____ experience mean to you? How did that experience impact things you do today?"

As a result of memoing on the pilot interview, I reflected on the nature of my relationship with the interviewee as well as my Subjective I's, which Peshkin (1991) defined as personal subjectivities that might impact one's research. I realized one of my Subjective I's, my High School Teacher I, likely influenced my participant during the interview. My High School Teacher I impacted the way I approached my own CE students in a high school setting as well as the expectations I held for high school students conducting college-level work. This Subjective I was developed through my training as a high school teacher and my past experiences teaching high schoolers. My participant had her own beliefs, biases, and experiences about teaching college courses in a high school environment that were different than mine. I realized that because my participant was a friend and former colleague, we each made certain assumptions. One such assumption was that we already understood one another's experiences. When I asked about her professional development experiences related to CE, Lynn's first comment was, "Well you were there." She then described one professional development experience. While she did answer my question, she may have assumed that I already understood her experience. Seidman (2013) cautioned against such an occurrence in his discussion of interviewing friends. I discussed this topic more in the validity section of my proposal. However, the pilot interview helped me recognize that interviewing friends and acquaintances comes with challenges, which was why I searched for participants with whom I did not have a prior relationship.

Another thing I learned from the pilot interview related to the terms I used when interviewing participants. To reflect what I found in the literature, I used the term *concurrent enrollment* to refer to college courses taken by high school students on high

school campuses. However, while the courses that my participant in the pilot study taught fell into this category, she used the term *dual enrollment* to refer to them. This discrepancy helped me realize I needed to be careful about the terms I used when recruiting and interviewing participants. During interviews, I used the term each participant used, which for all my participants in the study was the term *dual enrollment* rather than *concurrent enrollment*. The preceding conceptual framework section comprised my understanding of what was going on with my topic. I created a concept map to visually represent the main theories and concepts.

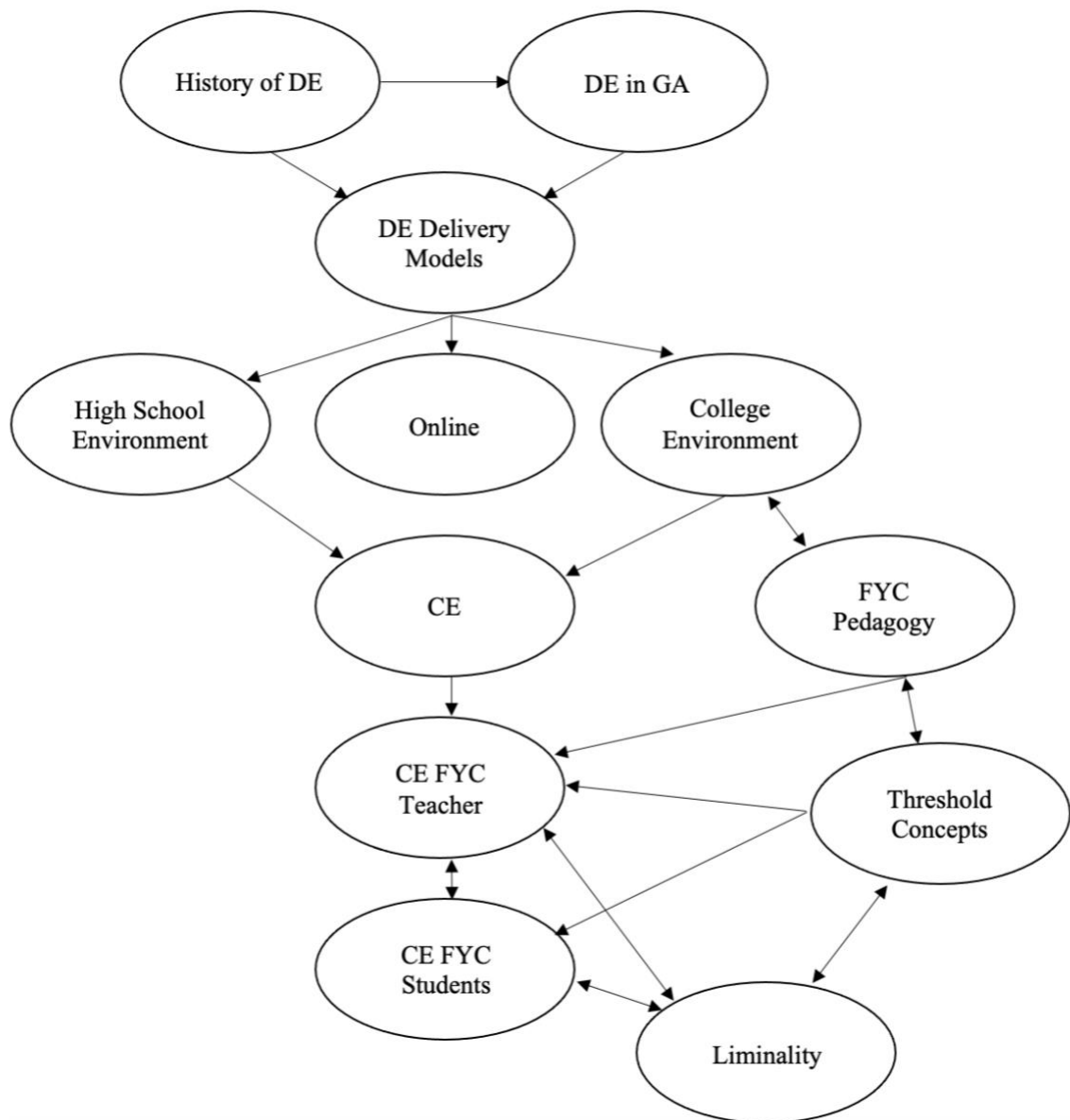
Concept Map

A concept map is a “*tool* for developing and presenting the conceptual framework for your design” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 54). Like theories, concept maps include concepts and the relationships between those concepts (Maxwell, 2013). Figure 3 shows the concept map I created to represent the theories and concepts related to the study. The circles represent the relevant concepts and theories, while arrows represent the relationships between these concepts. The direction of the arrows represents the impact or influence of one concept on another. I use the term *impact* to refer to a direct relationship, while the term *influence* refers to an indirect relationship. The influence of concepts trickles down to other concepts on the map. For example, the college and high school environments, which represent different DE delivery models, both impact CE, which impacts CE FYC teachers, which in turn impacts CE FYC students. Thus, the college environment still exerts an indirect influence on CE FYC students even though I chose not to include a direct arrow from the former to the latter. I believed that adding these additional arrows would have made the map too confusing. Bidirectional arrows indicate

that two concepts impact one another. For example, CE FYC teachers and students interact regularly in the classroom and thus have an impact on one another. This concept map reflects what I learned from reading about theories as well as the existing research related to my topic.

Figure 3

Theories and Concepts Related to the Experiences of CE FYC Teachers



The purpose of the previous conceptual framework section was to outline the ideas and beliefs I held about the topic under study. These ideas and beliefs provided the necessary context for my study. The conceptual framework played an important part in every aspect of the research design, but it especially impacted the methods.

Chapter III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research encompasses a wide variety of approaches. From the initial conceptualization of my study, I considered several research methods before landing on narrative inquiry. I initially planned to conduct a case study focused on CE FYC teachers through a single postsecondary institution. However, Dr. Lorraine Schmertzinger helped me realize this approach would not uncover the variety of experiences that I was seeking. I then considered a basic qualitative approach, but my committee helped me realize that I would be missing out on the crucial context of participant experiences if I went no further than coding and creating themes. I eventually determined that narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016) with phenomenological components (Seidman, 2013) was the most appropriate research design to answer the research questions, address the goals of the study, and include the context of participant experiences. In the following section, I outlined the methods used for collaborator selection, data collection, data analysis, and validity checks.

Narrative Inquiry

I used a bricolage of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016) and phenomenological components (Seidman, 2013) to create narrative profiles of participants. Both qualitative strategies allowed for exploring the experiences of CE FYC teachers at public high schools in Georgia. First, a qualitative approach was appropriate because I wanted an in-depth look at the experiences and subsequent perceptions of these

CE composition teachers. I could not obtain this type of rich, descriptive data from a quantitative approach such as a survey; therefore, I used interviews to solicit greater depth of information. According to Merriam (2002), constructivism is a central tenant of qualitative research. In other words, qualitative research is built on the assumption that individuals “construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (p. 37). This constructivist assumption provided a foundation for my study. I approached my research with the assumption that participants’ experiences were knowable and worth knowing and that the experiences and perceptions of participants were created by the participants as they interacted with their worlds. If I did not hold this assumption, then conducting interviews to learn about the experiences of CE FYC teachers would have been fruitless.

According to Merriam (2002), stories are powerful tools for understanding human experience. Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argued that “experience happens narratively” (p. 19). Narratives, or stories, reflect the manner in which we live out our lives because “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As narrative beings, stories are the way that humans express who we are (Clandinin, 2013). Thus, I chose a narrative approach to learn about and present the lived experiences of participants. Clandinin (2013) defined narrative inquiry as “an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding” (p. 17).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) laid a foundation for the use of narrative inquiry in educational research, as they viewed education as “the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories” (p. 2). More recently, both Clandinin (2013) and Kim

(2016) emphasized the important role narrative inquiry played in the field of education because stories help us understand how teachers interact with students and what goes on in classrooms. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach to narrative inquiry was shaped by John Dewey's philosophy of experience. As Clandinin (2013) noted: "Dewey's two criteria of experience—interaction and continuity enacted in situations—provide the grounding for attending to a narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality" (p. 12). Human experiences are related to the time, place, and the social interactions in which they occur (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Dewey also emphasized the idea of *continuity* as a major aspect of experience, namely that experiences come from other experiences and impact future experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, understanding experiences in their contexts is a central component of narrative inquiry.

Teachers are shaped by "stories of school" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22), and I believed that learning about these school stories from participants provided crucial understanding about how the CE FYC teachers I interviewed navigated between educational environments, interacted with students, and made instructional decisions. Kim (2016) also emphasized that narrative inquiry elevates "quotidian stories" (p. 23)—the everyday, seemingly ordinary events—that often go unnoticed. As a teacher, I recognized that much of what goes on in classrooms may be considered quotidian, yet it is precisely these mundane events that I hoped to elicit from the participants to understand how participants made meaning from these events and how these events shaped their instructional practices and decisions.

While narrative inquiry provided the foundation of the study, I also incorporated phenomenological components (Seidman, 2013). Phenomenology was appropriate for the study for several reasons. First, according to Kim (2016), phenomenology is a macro-level theory that serves as a theoretical underpinning for narrative inquiry. Seidman (2013) stated that phenomenology is complex, and different researchers use different approaches to inquiry that they deem as phenomenological. Seidman's (2013) approach to phenomenology and phenomenological interviewing is based on four themes that provided a foundation for his interview approach: "the temporal and transitory nature of human experience" (p. 16), "subjective understanding" (p. 17), "lived experience as the foundation of 'phenomena'" (p. 17), and "the emphasis on meaning and meaning in context" (p. 18). These four themes also provided a foundation for my research design. Human experiences are bound by time and are fleeting; thus, I could only ask participants to reflect on experiences that were in the past. However, my goal was to prompt participants to reconstruct these past lived experiences so that I could come as close as possible to understanding my participants' subjective experiences from their points of view.

Subjectivity is a crucial component of phenomenology as well as narrative inquiry. Kim (2016) defined *subjectivity* as "giving personal meaning to a phenomenon" (p. 55). Humans have their own personal and individual perceptions that they have constructed based on their unique lived experiences (Kim, 2016). By using the term *lived experience*, I mean the "ordinary, everyday events (language, rituals, routines)" that provide "a way of knowing and interpreting the world" (Given, 2008). I used this definition of lived experience as part of my phenomenological approach to the

participants' experiences. I asked participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their past lived experiences, which I then crafted into narrative profiles and presented in Chapter 4. In Seidman's (2013) words, I hoped "to make the 'was' come as close as possible to what was the 'is'" (p. 18). My purpose in having participants reconstruct and reflect on their lived experiences was to mine the meaning these experiences had for the participants (Seidman, 2013).

Thus, I used Seidman's (2013) three-interview series, which is phenomenological in nature, to build context for the participants' experiences, as experiences are meaningless without the context in which they occur. I explained the semistructured interview approach in more depth in a later subsection. Additionally, narrative inquiry was appropriate for the study because there is a relational element to narrative inquiry that I believed was crucial to understanding participant stories. Because of my identity as a former CE FYC teacher and because I developed relationships with participants, I referred to participants as *collaborators* from this point forward in the dissertation. My goal was to invite collaborators alongside me to share their stories of what it was like for them as CE FYC teachers. Because I wanted to learn about the experiences of CE FYC teachers, I recruited collaborators with different years of experience and who worked within different high school–college partnerships in different regions of Georgia. In the following section, I described the sampling technique I used to identify these collaborators.

Collaborator Selection

I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015) to identify study collaborators. According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling is useful when the researcher selects

participants “because they are information rich and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (p. 46). The phenomenon of interest in my study was the experience of being a high school English teacher who taught college FYC courses in a public high school in Georgia. Additionally, I used heterogeneity sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, to identify CE FYC teachers at a variety of public high schools, including cities, towns, and rural areas, and with a range of years of experience teaching CE courses. I also hoped to identify both male and female teachers as well as teachers of different races, if possible. The goal of heterogeneity sampling was to yield a variety of cases across which to identify diverse as well as shared patterns (Patton, 2015).

After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix A), I began creating a list of potential collaborators. Although I adjunct for a local technical college, my study was not focused on this college or any other single institution. To avoid a conflict of interest, I did not use any college resources or contacts to identify potential collaborators. Instead, I used publicly accessible information or contacts I knew independently of my adjunct position at the college. To identify CE FYC teachers, I first reached out to high school teachers I knew in various school districts to see if their schools offered CE FYC courses on campus. From my own experience as a CE teacher, I knew that high schools frequently partner with technical colleges to offer CE courses, so I used a list of technical colleges in Georgia as the next step in my search. I went to the colleges’ websites and looked at the counties and school systems with which they partnered. Then I went to the websites of those high schools and searched under their staff directories to identify names and emails of teachers who taught concurrent enrollment English courses. I was able to create an initial list of 14 names and e-mail addresses through these methods.

I sent the first round of teacher recruitment emails (see Appendix B) to these 14 teachers during the first week of March 2024. The emails included a brief description of the study, collaborator criteria, my contact information, the IRB approval statement, and a link to the Qualtrics survey. Immediately, one teacher responded saying she would be happy to participate, and she completed the Qualtrics survey. She was an acquaintance from a school system in which I previously worked. Though we were acquaintances, we had never worked together in the same school. Shortly after, a second person, whose name I identified from his school website, completed the Qualtrics survey. These were the only two responses I received from the initial round of emails. I also posted recruitment flyers (see Appendix C) in several Facebook groups for high school English teachers, but this strategy did not yield any results initially.

I next worked on identifying additional potential collaborators. I considered requesting lists of concurrent enrollment teachers from K-12 and college administrators. However, because I was not seeking participants from a specific district or college but rather wanted collaborators from different high school–college partnerships throughout Georgia, this method did not seem the most efficient. I decided to use public information found on high school websites to create a list of potential collaborators. Using the Georgia Public School Contact List from the Georgia Department of Education website, I began visiting high school websites, moving down the list alphabetically. I did not identify as many names through this method as I anticipated. I quickly realized many school websites did not include the courses that specific faculty members taught, but I was able to identify 11 additional names. I sent a second round of recruitment emails to these 11 teachers.

After 2 weeks of recruitment, I emailed a total of 25 potential collaborators, and seven people expressed interest in participating and completed the Qualtrics demographic survey. I analyzed Qualtrics survey results to select collaborators. Of the seven who responded, five were men, and only two were women. All respondents were White, and each had between 11 and 40 years of experience in education. Five respondents were from North Georgia, one was from Central Georgia, and one was from South Georgia.

I initially decided to interview six of the seven respondents. I decided to use one male respondent as a back-up because he taught CE through the same college as one of the female respondents. Since only two females expressed interest in participating, I selected both as collaborators. They also illustrated unique and potentially rich cases for study. One female respondent taught CE FYC courses that were cross-listed with the Advanced Placement (AP) Literature course, and students could take the AP Literature exam to earn AP credit alongside college credit. The other female respondent worked as a media specialist while teaching two sections of CE FYC. I thought these unique cases might yield interesting data.

I sent a follow-up email (see Appendix D) to collaborators to provide additional details about participation, such as number and length of interviews, and to let them know that I would be contacting them again soon to schedule interviews. I planned to conduct interviews in the order in which collaborators completed the survey. After the follow-up email, one male teacher responded stating that he could not commit to three interviews, so he was dropped from the list of collaborators, and I was left with five collaborators. I thought this might be a sufficient number, so I emailed the back-up respondent to let him know that I might reach out to him in the future if I needed an additional collaborator.

I began data collection with five collaborators. During the data collection process, I decided I wanted to find one more female collaborator, preferably someone who worked outside of North Georgia, since I already had three collaborators from that area. I also thought it was important to include the experiences of a non-White teacher. Several committed collaborators provided names of CE teachers they knew, but none of those leads panned out. At the end of June 2024, as I neared the end of interviewing the initial five collaborators, I connected with my sixth collaborator through a Facebook group for AP Language teachers. She responded to another poster who asked about CE in Georgia, stating she taught CE at a Metro-Atlanta high school. I messaged her on Facebook, and I quickly determined she exactly met the criteria I was looking for in my final collaborator, and she was extremely excited to share her experiences with me. Table 1 shows a list of collaborators and their basic demographic information. In the Qualtrics survey, each collaborator provided me with his or her gender, race/ethnicity, age range, and years of high school teaching experience. I also included in Table 1 the location of each collaborator's high school based on the region in Georgia.

Data Collection

According to Maxwell (2013), data collection is the process by which a researcher acquires the information needed to answer the research questions. Maxwell (2013) also recommended using more than one method of data collection to gather information about different elements of the phenomenon under study. I used semistructured interviews, classroom observations, and researcher memos to collect data and to answer the research questions.

Table 1*Collaborator Demographic Information*

Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Age	Years of Teaching (High School)	Region in GA
Claire	Female	White	30s	17	North
Julio	Male	White	60s	13	Central
Elbert	Male	White	40s	17	North
David	Male	White	40s	11	South
Kim	Female	White	50s	32	North
Jessie	Female	Multiracial	40s	2	Metro Atlanta

Semistructured Interviews

Because my research questions focused on the experiences of the CE FYC teachers in the study, how they made meaning from their experiences, and how their experiences impacted their instructional practices and decision-making, I used Seidman’s (2013) three-interview series. Seidman (2013) stated that phenomenological theory, upon which the three-interview series was founded, emphasized “exploring the meaning of peoples’ experiences in the context of their lives,” (p. 20) and without context, exploring the meaning of an experience is nearly impossible. I followed Seidman’s recommendation of conducting three interviews with each collaborator so the collaborator and I, together, could explore the collaborator’s experience, place that experience within context, and reflect on the meaning. Seidman’s method was appropriate for the study because it allowed for in-depth exploration of the meaning an

experience had for a collaborator. This phenomenologically-based method was reflected in the research questions for the study.

Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, with some exceptions. With the collaborator Julio, two of our interviews lasted about 45 minutes due to his schedule, so we scheduled a fourth interview to wrap up our discussion and allow me to ask follow-up questions. Interviews with a single collaborator were spaced about one week apart. This spacing allowed time for the collaborator to think about the preceding interview while maintaining continuity, and it also allowed me, the interviewer, time to transcribe the interview, memo and reflect on it, and create follow-up interview questions for the next interview. Table 2 shows the date and duration in minutes of each interview.

Table 2

Collaborator Interview Schedule

Name	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4	
	Date	Duration	Date	Duration	Date	Duration	Date	Duration
Claire	3/12	90	3/26	80	4/5	90		
Julio	4/11	85	4/18	45	4/30	55	5/23	50
Elbert	5/2	45	5/13	90	5/28	95		
David	6/10	85	6/19	90	6/24	95		
Kim	6/11	80	6/18	95	6/25	95		
Jessie	7/1	95	7/10	100	7/25	100		

Note. Dates show month and day. All interviews took place during the year 2024.

Duration shown in minutes.

According to Seidman (2013), the purpose of in-depth interviewing is to prompt collaborators to reconstruct and describe the meaning of their experiences. He argued the goal of in-depth interviewing is not to test hypotheses, confirm the opinions of the researcher, or gather answers to a specific set of interview questions. Seidman cautioned against a strictly prescriptive use of interview guides. Rather, interview guides should reflect a loose structure for the interview, and the researcher should not manipulate collaborators into responding strictly to the interview guide. Also, researchers should “avoid imposing their own interests on the experience of the collaborators” (Seidman, 2013, p. 94).

With Seidman’s warnings in mind, as well as the lessons I learned from my pilot interview, I created tentative interview guides for each of the three interviews (see Appendix E). The guides included the confidentiality statement, which I read at the beginning of each interview. I used the interview guides as a very loose structure for the interviews because I wanted to allow the interviewee to “map the territory,” as Dr. Richard Schmertzling says. This process involved letting the collaborator guide the conversation because I could not know or assume what a collaborator’s experiences were nor how he or she made meaning from the experiences. I wanted my collaborators to feel the freedom to share their experiences openly, and I let these experiences guide the follow-up and clarifying questions I asked. Some collaborators needed more prompting to share additional details. Additionally, some collaborators touched on similar experiences, such as uncertainty surrounding student use of artificial intelligence (AI). Originally, I did not have any interview questions or prompts about AI, but because I noticed a pattern in collaborator experiences, I added a question about AI to the interview guide for the

remaining collaborators. Thus, while I did create interview guides as loose structures for data collection, the interview questions evolved during the research process and were different for each collaborator based on the stories that collaborators chose to reconstruct with me.

All interviews took place virtually using Microsoft Teams, with the exception of my first interview with Elbert. We experienced some technical issues with Teams during that interview, so we used FaceTime instead. I recorded the FaceTime interview with Elbert on my phone; I recorded all other interviews using Teams. I also used the Otter.ai application on my phone to create a back-up audio recording and transcription of each interview. During each interview, I took notes while listening to collaborator stories. Because I had the video and audio recordings, I was not concerned with writing down every word, but I used notes to write down key ideas, interesting diction, or make note of follow-up questions I wanted to ask later.

I began each interview with the confidentiality statement, and I secured collaborators' verbal consent to participate in the study. In the first interview, I then framed the study, which I believed was an integral part of developing a sense of collaboration and positive rapport with the people I interviewed. Framing the study involved discussing the purpose and goals of the study. I also briefly shared an overview of my own experiences as a CE FYC teacher. I did not want to influence collaborator responses by sharing too much of my experiences, but I wanted them to know that I was invested in this topic because I was involved in the world of CE FYC. In framing the study, I also emphasized that I could not complete this process by myself, I truly wanted this to be a collaborative process, and I wanted in-depth collaborator input as I crafted

their narrative profiles. I also discussed the importance of stories and narrative to the study. I thought this would resonate with my collaborators since they were all English teachers, and stories play a significant role in their classrooms. I also gave collaborators the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms for the study. Four collaborators chose their own pseudonyms, and I chose the pseudonyms for the other two collaborators.

In the first interview, I started with a word association activity by asking collaborators to state what came to their mind when I said different words. I worked from the following list of words:

- Family
- Friends
- Significant other
- Work
- Middle School
- Student
- Vacation
- High School
- Dual enrollment
- Values
- Professor
- College
- Writing
- Homework
- Grade

The purpose of the word association game was to see how collaborators responded, get a baseline of ideas and topics to refer to or follow-up on later, and to help myself and the collaborator get comfortable with one another. I did not use all words with every collaborator. For two collaborators, Elbert and David, I did not begin with the word association because our initial conversations organically led into discussions of these topics. Elbert and David freely offered background information about themselves and their hobbies, families, and perceptions of dual enrollment to which I was able to refer back in later interviews.

Seidman (2013) recommended the focus of the first interview be on the collaborator's early experiences and history. The interviewer should ask the collaborator to share as much as possible up to the present time regarding the topic at hand. In the first interview, my goal was to prompt collaborators to reconstruct their early experiences that led to their becoming teachers, how they became CE FYC teachers specifically, and how they got to where they are now. Seidman (2013) recommended avoiding asking "Why?" questions, such as, "Why did you become a CE FYC teacher?" Rather, I should ask "How?" questions, such as how the collaborators came to be CE FYC teachers. Seidman (2013) argued that by asking "how?" questions instead of "why?" questions, the collaborators will hopefully "reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in their past family, school, and work experience" (p. 21) that place their experiences as CE FYC teachers in the context of their lives. With Seidman's advice in mind, during the first interview, I asked about the collaborator's early schooling experiences, such as in elementary, middle, high school, and college. Some collaborators easily reconstructed early educational experiences, while some stuck more with high school and college

experiences. I did not push collaborators to tell stories from certain time periods, as I wanted them to reconstruct experiences that were significant for them.

I began the second interview by catching up with the collaborator and finding out what was going on in his or her life. Chatting with collaborators and asking about their lives was important for building relationships and establishing rapport. These conversations also lead to interesting insights into the collaborators' experiences that I might not have uncovered otherwise. For example, while chatting with Jessie at the beginning of our second interview, she mentioned tutoring and her time tutoring in the college's writing center when she was in graduate school. I asked her to tell me about her experiences working in the writing center, which led to her sharing some significant stories from that experience. She then reflected on these experiences and made connections to the way she teaches her dual enrollment students now. I likely did not have a question on my interview guide that would have elicited these specific stories and meaning-making from Jessie. This example also illustrated the importance of remaining flexible, letting the collaborators lead the conversations, and paying attention to opportunities to ask probing follow-up questions.

For the second interview, Seidman (2013) recommended focusing on the concrete details of the experience for the collaborator in relation to the phenomenon under study, which was being a CE FYC teacher. I asked collaborators to reconstruct the details of what they do as CE FYC teachers. During this interview, I asked collaborators to walk me through what his or her day is like as a CE FYC teacher. I also asked about collaborators' relationships with the people involved in CE, such as their students, students' guardians, high school and college faculty, administrators, counselors, and so

forth. By asking about collaborators' relationships, I hoped to put their experiences within the context of the social setting, as suggested by Seidman (2013). Some collaborators expressed self-doubt or uncertainty during interviews about the stories they were telling and whether they were on topic or providing information that I wanted. When collaborators expressed uncertainty, I reassured them that they were telling their stories. Figure 4 shows an example of Elbert expressing self-doubt, and I reassured him to keep going.

Figure 4

Excerpt from Elbert's Second Interview

Elbert: So the way that I have them—do you mind if I keep going with this, or is this okay?

Marissa: No, go ahead.

Elbert: I'm self-doubting a lot in this because I've never done it before. I just don't want to waste your time.

Marissa: No, you're doing great. It's your story to tell.

Elbert: Okay. So with the second one with the academic discourse community, what I had them do, initially it was going to be like a multi-step assignment or project, but I decided against it because I told them that I'd rather them (*chuckles softly*) do one thing well than do two things poorly. Like, I actually used the Ron Swanson quote for that from *Parks and Rec*: "Never half-ass two things. Whole ass one thing." I actually used that because I said, "This is a college course. I can cuss in front of you."

I began the third interview by catching up with each collaborator and asking what was going on in his or her life. In the third interview, Seidman (2013) recommended asking the collaborators to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Seidman also cautioned that the third interview would only be productive if the foundation for it was laid effectively in the first two interviews. Reflecting on the meaning of an experience "addresses the intellectual and emotional connections between the collaborators' work and life" (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). In the third interview, I referred to stories collaborators told in previous interviews and asked follow-up questions about meaning, such as, "What

meaning did ____ experience have for you?” or “How did ____ experience change you?” or “How did ____ experience impact the way you teach your dual enrollment students?” I learned from my pilot interview that I could not just ask collaborators, “What does being a CE FYC teacher mean for you?” because this question is difficult to answer. Instead, I focused on specific experiences or stories collaborators told and asked how those experiences changed them or lead to where they are now. Figure 5 is an example of a follow-up question I asked David about an experience in which he “got in trouble” for teaching a Robert Browning poem in his CE class.

Figure 5

Excerpt from David’s Third Interview

Marissa: So when you taught that Robert Browning poem, and your principal called you in, how did that experience impact you?

David: It was just like a, “Hey, heads up.” Like she kind of looks out for me anyway.

Marissa: Yeah. (*pause*)

David: So wasn’t like a, like an official reprimand or anything like that. She was just like, “Hey, I got parent called, taught this poem, probably went a little too far with it.” And I was like, “Alright, I can see how that could be the case.” And so, like I said, I told her, I didn’t say I would never, like, I’m going to teach the poem again. I won’t be quite that, I guess, revealing (*laughs*). I’ll let them figure that out on their own. But I usually get a kick out of like their reactions when I’m just like every single thing in this poem, even the landscape, is sexual. And like, for them to kind of like, I think the power of that poem is in the fact that, you know, this was, and it was all just like the, you know, you have the historical context. Like this was really happening between him and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and he was just trying to make her father hate him as much as possible. And so it’s just kind of a slap in the face kind of thing. Like, “This happened, and you can’t do anything about it” (*laughs*). It’s one of those things, but you know, some people are really intrigued by that kind of stuff, and then some people are just put off by it. I guess the only real takeaway from that [the conversation with the principal] for me is you know, just let them know ahead of time, some of this stuff is going to be a little, we’re gonna get in deeper waters than you would normally.

Figure 4 also provides an example of how I used Seidman’s (2013) advice to “tolerate silence” (p. 95) when interviewing. After a collaborator responded to a question,

I would wait several seconds before I asked an additional question. Figure 4 shows that David provided a short response to my initial question about his interaction with the principal. Rather than immediately asking another question, I simply said, “Yeah,” to acknowledge I heard his response, and then I waited to see if he would expand on his answer. He did continue, providing more information about how this experience caused him to reevaluate how he approached his students and that he would give them a warning in the future regarding the content of the course.

Using Seidman’s (2013) three-series interview allowed me to develop relationships with the teachers who participated in my study. All six collaborators told me they enjoyed the interviews or thanked me for allowing them to participate in the process and for listening to their stories. Claire stated she appreciated the time to reflect on her career and consider why she made certain choices. Julio thanked me for asking him to reflect on previous job experiences and how those experiences impacted his current instructional practices. Each collaborator exhibited reflective meaning-making during the entire process, especially during the third interviews. Since I interviewed David and Kim during the summer, we had flexible schedules, and after we concluded our final interviews, they wanted to ask me questions about how I taught my English 1101 classes or how I dealt with obstacles like AI in the classroom. Thus, I spent time after the official interviews ended just chatting collegially with David and Kim, and they told me they appreciated talking with a peer because the work they do teaching CE can be lonely. Collaborators’ responses to the interview process reemphasized to me the importance of conducting this research and elevating the voices and experiences of my collaborators. In

addition to transcripts created through in-depth interviews, I also conducted virtual classroom observations of two of the six collaborators.

Classroom Observations

I wanted to conduct in-person classroom observations, but due to my own teaching job and the distance between myself and collaborators, I was unable to do so. Instead, two collaborators recorded CE lessons for me to watch. Initially, I also planned to conduct observations, either through Microsoft Teams or a recorded lesson, of all six collaborators. However, because of the schedule and timing of interviews, I was unable to observe all collaborators. I began interviewing Claire in March, and she was able to record a lesson for me after our second interview. I watched the lesson and asked follow-up questions during our third interview. I next interviewed Julio, and while we did schedule an observation time through Teams, it was nearing the end of Julio's school year, and his students—who were mostly seniors—repeatedly had other activities out of class that interrupted our plans. CE courses often follow college academic calendars, meaning they might end in late April or early May, before most high schools release for the summer. By the time I interviewed other collaborators, their CE courses were either wrapping up or not in session.

I attempted to set up observations at the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year, but most of those did not pan out either. Elbert was able to record a lesson in October 2024 to send to me, but I was not able to set up observations with the other collaborators. Rather than a separate section discussing classroom observations, I decided to discuss Claire and Elbert's lessons within their narrative profiles.

Researcher Memo Journal

I kept a journal of researcher memos to track my actions and thought process as I collected and analyzed data. I kept a digital journal in a Microsoft Word document. I wrote a detailed memo immediately after each interview and observation to record my initial reactions, insights, and questions. I noted and reflected on what patterns, similarities, and differences I noticed during interviews. I wrote memos during data analysis as I created narrative profiles, coded, and categorized the data. I also wrote memos as I used codes and categories to create themes. Memos allowed me to reflect on my personal biases and assumptions, which Peshkin (1988) called Subjective I's. I discussed these Subjective I's in the validity section of this dissertation.

As a writing teacher, I know that the act of writing is a thinking process. Writing allows us to generate and develop ideas. Thus, the researcher journal allowed me to practice what I regularly preached to my first-year composition students. I was able to track my thinking process and gain valuable insight into the experiences of my collaborators. The following excerpt is from a memo I wrote immediately following the first interview with Claire, who was my first collaborator:

I just completed my first interview with Claire. My initial reaction to this first interview is that Claire gave me a great deal of interesting data that I am looking forward to analyzing. Claire was animated, very loquacious, and she was a good storyteller. She had very thoughtful answers to my questions, and I could see her reflecting and analyzing her experiences as she reconstructed them for me. I could tell that her answers provided depth related to her experiences with dual enrollment. In my proposal defense, Dr. James mentioned that I don't want

my collaborators to talk about experiences they have already reflected upon. I want to prompt my collaborators into doing the reflection as they're speaking to me about their experiences, and I truly think this is what Claire was doing as she was talking to me. Toward the end of the interview, she even told me she was enjoying the interview, and my questions were prompting her to think about parts of her journey that she had never really gotten to speak about in this way before. Thus, I truly believe she was actively reflecting on her own experiences during our conversation.

At one point, after I asked Claire to respond with her thoughts about the word "work," she mentioned that has changed for her since COVID. She spoke about COVID as a before-and-after moment for her in her career. I see this as an interesting dichotomy that I want to follow-up on in a future interview. Another part of the interview that stood out to me was the way Claire spoke about her personal versus professional beliefs about dual enrollment and students taking advanced coursework. She emphasized her personal beliefs about students following "rigorous, age-appropriate trajectories." I think this contradiction between professional vs. personal could have interesting implications. I just don't know what those are yet. I look forward to the next two interviews with Claire, and I look forward to asking some follow-up questions and prompting her toward meaning-making regarding her past experiences. (Reflective memo from March 12, 2024)

After collecting data, I used categorizing and connecting strategies (Maxwell & Miller, 2008) to analyze and interpret the data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis took place immediately after each interview as I reflected on each interview, wrote a memo about it, and transcribed the interview. I recorded each interview using Microsoft Teams and used the Otter.ai application on my phone as a backup audio recording. To clean each transcript, I watched the Microsoft Teams recording while editing the Otter.ai transcription because I found that Otter.ai produced a more accurate transcription than Teams. As I cleaned the transcripts, I also highlighted intriguing sections of the transcript and made notes about follow-up questions to ask in later interviews. I bolded interesting words or phrases that I thought could become in vivo codes. I noted nonverbal expressions such as pauses, laughter, or words that a collaborator emphasized through volume or tone. I put these notations in parenthesis with italicized font within the transcript. I then exported the transcription from Otter.ai into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, for further data analysis. Once all interviews were concluded, I began creating narrative profiles (Seidman, 2013) from the transcripts using Maxwell and Miller's (2008) connecting strategies.

Connecting Strategies

Initially, my focus for data analysis was on coding, categorizing codes, and creating themes. However, while I was working on my proposal, Dr. Lorraine Schmertzling helped me recognize that a sole reliance on coding the data would mean ignoring the importance of context in the experiences of my collaborators. Context was crucial to understand the experiences of collaborators because, according to Mischler (1979), there is no meaning without context. While qualitative researchers commonly use coding and thematic analysis, connecting strategies can be used not just as alternatives to

these categorizing strategies but also in conjunction with them (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). Similarly, Seidman (2013) stated that researchers can present narrative profiles of individuals followed by excerpts from the interviews, organized as themes. By crafting first-person narrative profiles using Seidman's (2013) method, I retained the context of collaborator experiences and the meaning-making process that collaborators conducted during the three-interview series to make sense of these experiences.

To create the profiles, I followed Seidman's (2013) recommended process. I went through the cleaned transcripts in MAXQDA and highlighted interesting passages, paying close attention to stories the collaborators told. I put these passages into a Word document, where I reorganized them to reflect chronological order based on the collaborator's history and experiences. To retain collaborator voices and words, I kept narratives in first-person point of view. At first, I considered grouping sections of the narrative using a common structure of K-12 Experiences, College/Graduate School Experiences, and CE FYC Experiences. However, because I allowed collaborators to reconstruct stories that were meaningful to them, not all collaborator stories fit neatly into these categories. For example, Julio spoke less about his own college experiences as a student than other collaborators, but he shared more about previous experiences teaching college courses. After placing stories in chronological order of when the experiences occurred, I decided to group portions of the narratives together based on certain topics, stories, or events. Then, I used collaborator words as section headings to indicate the overall meaning of each section.

Throughout the narrative profile creation process, I wrote reflective memos to record my thinking about which passages from transcripts to include in the narrative

profiles. I also continually referenced my research questions so I could choose stories that helped answer these questions. As an English teacher, I enjoy stories, and crafting narrative profiles was an enjoyable experience. However, I did experience some anxiety when cutting material from the narratives. I trusted my experience analyzing and teaching stories to help me make decisions about what material to include and exclude in the narrative profiles. After using Seidman's (2013) connecting strategy of narrative profiles, I used the categorizing strategy of coding and categorizing codes to determine themes from the data.

Categorizing Strategies

While I began pre-coding immediately as I cleaned transcripts and drafted narrative profiles, the bulk of my coding process took place after narrative profile creation and involved a great deal of trial and error. Saldaña (2021) defined a code in qualitative analysis as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 5). A code represents the meaning of a portion of data. Initially, I planned to use *in vivo*, process, and values coding. *In vivo* coding was important because it allowed me to retain the exact words of collaborators. Process coding allowed me to analyze the actions and processes of participating teachers in the classroom setting. However, as I worked on coding and memoing, I recognized dichotomies and conflicting ideas in collaborator stories that lent themselves to versus coding. These tensions played an important role in collaborator experiences; therefore, I decided to use versus coding rather than values coding.

When I began coding as I finished interviews and cleaned transcripts, I used a three-column chart in Microsoft Word with memos in the left column, the transcript in the center, and in vivo codes in the right column. I used this method for the first two collaborator interviews, but I struggled to keep everything formatted in a manageable way, and I was having a difficult time organizing codes into categories. At that point, I uploaded the clean transcripts straight from Otter.ai into the MAXQDA software and started over with coding.

I conducted multiple rounds, or cycles, of coding. Saldaña (2021) distinguished between first cycle and second cycle coding methods. First cycle coding methods happen “during the initial coding of data” (p. 88) and involve applying different codes to the data. Second cycle coding methods involve using synthesizing and analytical skills to organize first cycle codes “to eventually develop a smaller and more select list of broader categories, themes, concepts, assertions, and/or propositions” (p. 297). The first cycle coding methods I used were in vivo, process, and versus codes.

Each cycle of coding involved applying a coding technique to all interview transcripts. For the first cycle of coding, I used in vivo codes, which I created using specific words from collaborators. I coded and recoded using in vivo codes. After the first round of coding all 19 transcripts with in vivo codes, I had close to 1,000 codes. I was overwhelmed by this number and realized I coded initially using a splitter method, which resulted in a large number of codes (Saldaña, 2021). I decided to follow Saldaña’s recommendation to recode using a lumpers method to reduce the number of overall codes. I also realized I coded everything in the transcripts, and I needed to only code “the most essential parts of [the] data corpus” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 36). Even though I started over

with in vivo codes, completing the first round of in vivo coding allowed me to become closely acquainted with the data, and I also identified patterns and possible code categories in the data. Between coding and recoding the in vivo codes, I created tentative categories. As I recoded using in vivo codes, I was also able to follow Saldaña’s advice to place codes into categories as I worked. Saldaña compared this process to cleaning the kitchen as one cooks a meal. Figure 6 includes a sample of the code categories I created in MAXQDA between rounds of in vivo coding as well as some example in vivo codes.

Figure 6

Sample of In Vivo Code Categories

Isolation/Disconnection	0
I don't feel like I'm a part of their faculty	1
can't bounce ideas off anybody	1
loneliness	1
I don't know what it's like at the college	1
I'm the only one that does it in my school	1
it's kind of lonely	1
only person at my school	1
I don't have anybody to compare myself to	1
am I doing this right?	1
I felt left out	1
I don't ever want to feel left out	1
I was a part of the school	1
I can contribute	1
I kind of get forgotten	1
I'm very different	1
Mentors	11
Obstacles	18
Perception of others	8
Personal college/graduate experiences	15
Preparing students	18
Pushing students	35
Qualifications/Experience	11
Support	13
Supporting students	24
Uncertainty/Worry/Burden	16
Work Environment	15

In the sample of code categories shown in Figure 6, the code categories are in the leftmost column. I listed the code categories in alphabetical order to help me as I recoded and placed codes into the appropriate categories. Under the category “Isolation/Disconnection” are examples of in vivo codes that I put into that category. Codes in this category related to collaborators’ experiences of being left out, feeling lonely, or not having colleagues with whom to collaborate. These codes were marked in blue because I used that color to label in vivo codes. The numbers to the right of the codes show the total number of times a code was used in the transcript. Each vivo code was used less frequently because collaborators used different words and phrases to describe their experiences. The numbers to the right of each category show the number of codes placed into that category. The figure does not show all categories or codes; rather, it is a snapshot taken during the process of data analysis.

To create in vivo codes, I used Saldaña’s (2021) “lumper” strategy to group together multiple lines of the transcript, which were on a similar topic, into a passage and chose a word or short phrase as the in vivo code to represent the overall meaning or essence of the passage. Table 3 shows an example of an in vivo codes from each collaborator, including the passage from the transcript to which I applied the in vivo code. I also italicized the in vivo code in the passage to emphasize the code and retain the context.

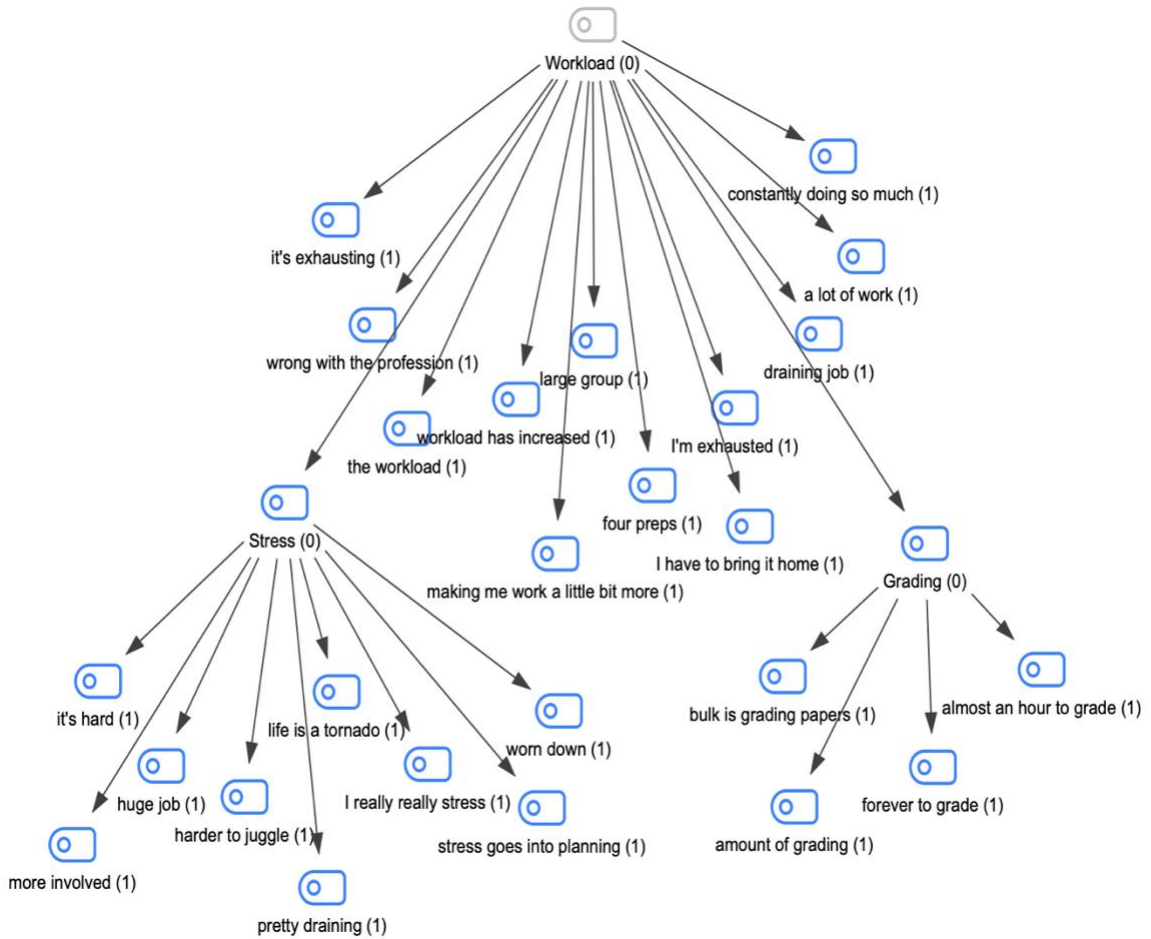
Table 3*Examples of In Vivo Codes*

Collaborator	In Vivo Code	Transcript
Claire	Teaching is a strenuous job	I think it's twofold. You know, <i>teaching is a strenuous job</i> in terms of like the day to day, coming here, and just it's unrelenting. (Claire Interview 3, Pos. 74)
Julio	There's a hierarchy there	But <i>there's a hierarchy there</i> . I had a student who was in an online psychology course, and she was having trouble working something out with the instructor. And there was clearly a communication problem. So I called the instructor directly and tried to explain what was going on, and she kind of freaked out. (Julio Interview 2, Pos. 51)
Elbert	That's overwhelming	It was just the not having the framework means that I basically just have the entirety of everything I could possibly know to choose from (<i>laughs</i>). <i>That's overwhelming</i> . It just gets to be a little <i>overwhelming</i> to say, "Okay, just narrow it down to like the entire internet. We'll go with that" (<i>laughs</i>). Like, what do I pick? What do I choose? (Elbert Interview 2, Pos. 60)
David	This is a college class	But if a student that's struggling or anything like that, a lot of times the counselors will say, "Have you tried calling the parent?" And I'm like, " <i>This is a college class</i> . I'm not calling the parent." They call me, and I'll talk to them, but <i>this is college</i> . (David Interview 2, Pos. 87)
Kim	Am I doing this right?	Because I feel like when you're the only person at your school teaching something, you always wonder about, " <i>Am I doing this right?</i> " Because there's nobody to bounce ideas with. (Kim Interview 3, Pos. 160)
Jessie	I was pretty alone	Because she was content lead, she didn't have time really to work with me on a lot of things, and so <i>I was pretty alone</i> in terms of planning for AP and planning for the dual enrollment. (Jessie Interview 2, Pos. 120)

I also conducted code mapping using MAXQDA's creative coding tool to enhance the credibility and organization of my data analysis (Saldaña, 2021). I completed multiple rounds of coding and code mapping. I grouped together similar codes into an appropriate category that encompassed the corresponding codes. As I worked, I formed new categories or grouped similar categories together to create new, larger categories. I sorted and resorted codes in different groups until I thought the categories were logical and all codes were included in a category. Figure 7 shows an example of a code map of in vivo codes that I created in MAXQDA during the data analysis process.

Figure 7

Example In Vivo Code Map



At first, the in vivo codes in Figure 6 belonged to three different categories: stress, grading, and workload. When I began code mapping, I realized that stress and grading were really subcategories that belonged under the larger workload category because the stress that collaborators experienced stemmed from their workloads. The number in parenthesis to the right of each code category indicated the number of times that code was used across all collaborators. All the codes are blue because I used that color for all in vivo codes to distinguish them from the process and versus codes.

Next, I coded using process codes. Process codes are phrased as gerunds to show the rituals and routines of daily life (Saldaña, 2021). This type of coding was appropriate for data analysis because research question 1 focused on how my collaborators navigated the liminal space between high school and college environments. Navigating this space was a process that involved the rituals and routines of collaborators' daily experiences. Table 4 shows examples of process codes from each collaborator, including the passage from the transcript to which I applied the code.

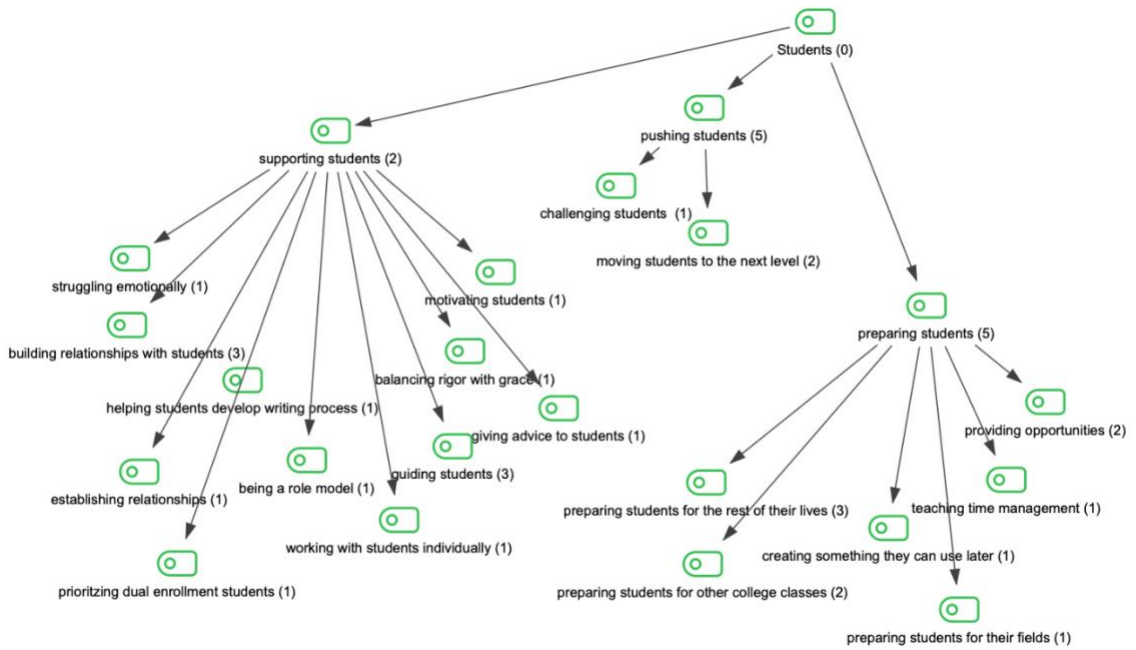
Table 4*Examples of Process Codes*

Collaborator	Process Code	Transcript
Claire	Balancing high school and college expectations	One of the expectations that we had to sit down and talk about what we would do is that we have exam exemptions in Rocky Ridge County Schools. [. . .] So, dual enrollment, you cannot exempt their final. They have to take it. (Claire Interview 2, Pos. 74)
Julio	Seeking support	My one colleague here who is the Spanish teacher primarily, although she teaches history as well. We vent to each other. Otherwise, there is none really. (Julio Interview 4, Pos. 32)
Elbert	Rejecting college resources	[. . .] the online course that was premade by Southern Ridge, it seemed like it was well over 10 years old and made by someone that had maybe been teaching a bit too long and hadn't changed their methodology very much. (Elbert Interview 2, Pos. 11)
David	Supporting students	I try to say this at the end of every 1101 and/or 1102. I'll tell them, "Just because this class is over doesn't mean I'm not still your teacher. I want to be there to help you be successful in college, so if you ever need help in another class, want me to look at something you've written, or you're not sure how to do formatting, or whatever your issue is. Get in touch with me." (David Interview 2, Pos. 106)
Kim	Dealing with AI	There's a point then where I think, but how detailed do I have to make them, or how detailed do I have to be to make them see that their own brain is better than AI? (Kim Interview 3, Pos. 118)
Jessie	Collaborating with college faculty	That's one of the one of the reasons why I liked going to the faculty meetings was because the other dual enrollment teachers would show up too, and we did have kind of a collective so we could share assignments and share ideas and strategies for implementing. (Jessie Interview 2, Pos. 141)

Using code mapping, I arranged and rearranged codes into categories and subcategories. Figure 8 shows the process codes relating to students. I organized these codes into the subcategories of supporting students, pushing students, and preparing students.

Figure 8

Example Process Code Map



The third type of coding I used was versus codes. Versus codes show tensions, conflicts, binaries, and dichotomies in the data. Because my first research question focused on how CE FYC teachers in the study navigated the liminal space between two different and often conflicting environments—high school and college—versus coding was an appropriate strategy to analyze the tensions in collaborator experiences. Table 5 shows examples of a versus code I applied to each collaborator’s interview and the passage the code represented.

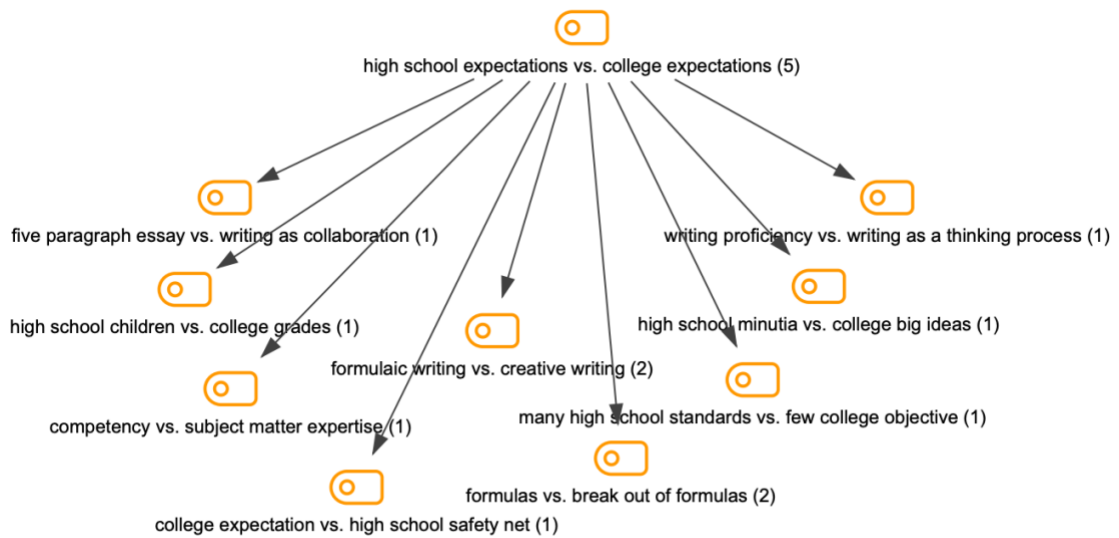
Table 5*Examples of Versus Codes*

Collaborator	Versus Code	Transcript
Claire	Professional vs. personal beliefs	Professionally, I see the reasons for it [DE]. Personally, I feel differently about it. Maybe that's hypocritical. (Claire Interview 1, Pos. 42)
Julio	High school vs. college writing expectations	I think ideally, if you're talking about good (<i>pauses</i>) high school level writing, you're talking about good formulaic writing. I can write a solid five-paragraph essay. For me, college-level writing takes the next step. It breaks out of the formulas. It's more creative and more in depth. It challenges students more to ask harder questions. (Julio Interview 2, Pos. 38)
Elbert	High school vs. college learning objectives	At the beginning, I really was given just five or six key learning objectives that I was supposed to meet for each course. As compared to with normal school teaching, I have four pages of single-spaced standards. I have now five learning objectives that I have to get across in 16 weeks. (Elbert Interview 2, Pos. 2)
David	High school rules vs. college autonomy	Teaching a college class, you get a lot more freedom to kind of do things the way you are. In high school, you have to follow formatting with the essential questions, follow curriculum. You don't necessarily have that so much at the college level. (David Interview 2, Pos. 6)
Kim	High school teachers vs. college professors	That's not to say that that professors at Mountain College or other colleges don't care about kids. I know they do, but you know as well as I do that high school teachers are very, very different from college professors, and we understand high school kids. (Kim Interview 1, Pos. 42)
Jessie	High school vs. college writing expectations	If I were to sum up my dual enrollment teaching philosophy, it would be just about, this class is an opportunity to help students transition from their role as writing in order to demonstrate competency to the role of writing in order to demonstrate subject matter expertise. It's a big step to take. (Jessie Interview 3, Pos. 98)

Using versus codes provided valuable insight about the tensions that collaborators experienced while teaching CE classes. Versus codes also helped me see the way collaborators viewed the differences between high school and college expectations, such as high school versus college writing expectations. Figure 9 illustrates an example of a code map I created with versus codes.

Figure 9

Example Versus Code Map



I grouped these versus codes together because they all related to high school versus college expectations for students, and these codes provided insight into how collaborators tried to push students to achieve at higher levels than students in traditional high school classes. For example, Jessie differentiated between high school and college writing when she said that high school writing is about demonstrating competency while college writing is about pushing students to demonstrate subject matter expertise.

Using multiple types and rounds of coding as well as code mapping helped to strengthen my study. During all steps of the research process, I took additional measures to increase the validity of my study as much as possible.

Validity

Validity in qualitative research is a controversial topic (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) defined validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account” (p. 122). Maxwell argued against the use of validity to refer to any objective truth; rather validity is really about the conceptualization of validity threats. The researcher must recognize all the ways that he or she could be wrong about what is going on related to the topic or phenomenon (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell identified two specific validity threats that arise in qualitative research: researcher bias and reactivity. Therefore, I took steps throughout the research process to be aware of and control these validity threats.

First, the biggest validity threat to the study was my own bias. My research goals as addressed earlier stemmed directly from my identification as a member of the group I studied. Although I changed jobs in August 2022 and no longer teach CE courses, I was a CE FYC teacher for 5 years. I currently still teach FYC courses as an adjunct for a local college. My own experiences as a CE FYC teacher motivated me to research the topic and became an important component of my conceptual framework. I hold strong beliefs, assumptions, and ideas about both CE programs and CE FYC courses. Peshkin (1991) argued that this subjectivity plays an important role in the qualitative research process, and rather than attempting to eliminate subjectivity, researchers “should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (p. 286). By bringing

their subjectivities to the forefront, researchers learn about their personal qualities that may impact their research and thus their findings. Peshkin stated, “If researchers are aware of the personal qualities that have been activated during their research, they then can at least disclose to their readers where self and subject become joined” (p. 286) and thus can “write unshackled” (p. 286) from subjectivities they did not recognize as having an impact on their research.

To identify his own subjectivities, Peshkin monitored his feelings during his research process, and he identified subsets of his identity that he perceived as impacting his research. He termed these components of his identity his Subjective I’s. Following Peshkin’s lead, I explored my own Subjective I’s and how they might impact the validity of the study. My Subjective I’s included my High School Teacher I and my Process Pedagogist I. My High School Teacher I impacted the way I approached curriculum and instruction when I was a CE FYC teacher. High school teachers often receive more pedagogical training compared to college instructors, who typically receive advanced training in an academic discipline. My educational background, which included a mixture of pedagogy and advanced English courses, was a bias that impacted my beliefs regarding the type of work students should be doing in a CE FYC classroom as well as the role the teacher should play in that classroom. My Process Pedagogist I impacted the way I approached writing instruction in my CE FYC classroom.

These Subjective I’s were potential threats to my research. I recognized that my own Subjective I’s, which include my personal experiences, feelings, assumptions, biases, and beliefs, impacted my study. I did not wish to separate my subjectivities from my research; in fact, my subjectivities were the reason for my interest in the research

topic. Like Peshkin, I recognized that my Subjective I's impacted the entirety of the research process, from the research design to data collection and analysis, and to the findings I created from the data. For example, my subjective I's impacted the types of questions I asked during interviews. By identifying my own Subjective I's, my goal was to remain transparent and keep my subjectivity at the forefront so I would not, as Peshkin warned, stumble upon my subjectivities during data collection.

In addition to the researcher's biases, reactivity is another threat to a study's validity. Reactivity is the effect of the researcher on a study's participants (Maxwell, 2013). While reactivity cannot be completely removed from qualitative research, researchers can take steps to minimize the effect of reactivity. During interviews, I asked open-ended questions and allowed my collaborators to lead the conversations. While I had a list of interview questions, I did not force a predetermined number of questions on collaborators. I allowed my collaborators to talk about their own experiences and the meaning they made from these experiences. I was careful in the way I responded to collaborators' stories so as not to influence the answers they gave.

Ultimately, my goal was not to eliminate my influence on collaborators because doing so is unrealistic (Maxwell, 2013). Instead, I used researcher memos to reflect on *how* I might be influencing collaborators during interviews. Additionally, Maxwell (2013) emphasized the positive impact of long-term involvement and intensive interviews on validity. I chose Seidman's (2013) three-interview series so I could establish a rapport with collaborators. Interviewing collaborators three times provided the opportunity to build relationships, reflect on participant responses, and ask for respondent validation of the data and my interpretation.

In this chapter, I outlined my research methods. After creating narrative profiles, coding, and memoing concurrently with these processes, I identified patterns in the data that I used to create themes. In the following chapter, I present the narrative profiles I created from transcript data.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE PROFILES

As humans, we tell stories to make sense of our experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016; Seidman, 2013). Therefore, to share collaborator experiences in a manner consistent with narrative inquiry and the process of the three-interview series, I used interview transcripts to craft first-person narrative profiles (Seidman, 2013). Narrative profiles allowed me to present my collaborators' experiences in context (Seidman, 2013). By creating profiles using collaborators' own words, I used those words to accurately reflect the collaborators' experiences (Seidman, 2013).

I followed the sequential process Seidman (2013) suggested to craft narrative profiles. After cleaning up the interview transcripts, I read back through the transcripts, marking compelling or interesting passages and paying special attention to those passages in which collaborators told stories or displayed meaning-making. Starting with a collaborator's first interview in the three-interview series, I combined all the interesting passages into a single transcript. Next, I rearranged the passages to place them in chronological order. I added details and additional stories from the second interview into their appropriate places in the chronology of the first interview transcripts, and I repeated this step with the third interviews.

Next, I read the new transcript "with a more demanding eye" (Seidman, 2013, p. 123) by asking myself which passages were the most compelling. From these passages, I

created a narrative. Maintaining the collaborators' words by using first-person point of view from the voice of the collaborator was crucial. Seidman (2013) warned that third-person voice creates distance between the reader and the collaborator whose voice should be prominent in the narrative. Seidman also recommended eliminating verbal tics that might serve as repetitive clutter that could interfere with the final meaning, so I deleted false starts and verbal fillers such as "like," "I mean," and "you know." I also indicated any places in the final profile where I needed to insert my own words to provide clarity or transition from one section to another by using brackets (i.e., []). Because stories are at the heart of narrative inquiry, narrative profiles were integral to the data analysis and presentation process.

Once I created a narrative profile draft, I sent this draft to the collaborator for member checking. I asked for feedback from the collaborator regarding ideas that needed clarifying, potentially identifying information that needed to be changed, or anything I needed to eliminate or add to ensure the narrative accurately reflected the collaborator's intended meaning. For example, Elbert asked that I change the pseudonym for his cooperating college because he thought it was too close to the college's real name. Taking his suggestion, I created a new pseudonym, sent it to Elbert for feedback, and made the change in the narrative profile. In the next section, I explained the structure I used for each narrative profile.

Narrative Structure

I created a narrative for each collaborator in his or her own words from portions of the interview transcripts. Though collaborators did not necessarily share their stories in chronological order during interviews, I reordered events to reflect the sequence in which

experiences occurred, beginning with the collaborator's experiences as students in K-12 and postsecondary settings and followed by the collaborator's experiences teaching CE FYC. All names and references to specific places or people in the narrative profiles are pseudonyms. For the sake of cohesion and clarity, I made additions to each narrative, but I tried to keep these additions minimal to prioritize my collaborators' voices over my own. These interjections were added as nonitalicized words in brackets and often provided context or information to clarify something for the reader.

Example: I have a department chair and then a division chair, and then there's somebody who is in charge of the dual enrollment program there [at the college].

I also added italicized words in parentheses to indicate a collaborator's emotions or actions when telling his or her story:

Example: I work at Fairview High School, and I just finished 32 years. So I have been working for a really long time (*laughs*).

Finally, I used italics without parenthesis to show where I used my words as opposed to my participants' words. Although Seidman (2013) recommended crafting profiles composed 100% of collaborator's words, there were places in the profiles where I believed context was needed to provide clarity. Therefore, my thoughts were included at times to help narrate the story and provide context and clarity, which was needed for certain components of a collaborator's story or to transition from one story to another:

Example: *I then asked Jessie to reflect on how those experiences working in the writing center impacted the kind of teacher that she is now to her dual enrollment students.*

I used these italics and my words before each narrative to provide a brief introduction to the collaborator. At the conclusion of each narrative, I included my personal reflection on the interviews with that collaborator using the same italic style.

Claire

Claire was the first teacher I contacted when I began recruiting. Though Claire and I never taught in the same school at the same time, we were acquaintances through one of my previous jobs, and our paths had crossed a few times. I knew that she taught a CE FYC course, and when I emailed her, she immediately and enthusiastically agreed to work with me.

Claire is a 40-year-old, White female. When I interviewed Claire, she was nearing the end of her 17th year teaching. She has a bachelor's degree in English, a master's degree in English secondary education, and a specialist degree in curriculum and instruction. Claire teaches at Valley High School, a rural high school in North Georgia. Her husband teaches history at the same school, and they have a son who just finished pre-k. Claire's high school uses a seven-period schedule with each class lasting about 50 minutes. Claire teaches for five of those periods. During the 2023-2024 school year, she also taught AP [Advanced Placement] Seminar and AP Literature in addition to dual enrollment.

I conducted Microsoft Teams meetings with Claire in March and April 2024. We scheduled our meetings right after school, and Claire was in her classroom. Hanging on the wall behind her was a poster that said, "Stand up for what is right, even if you're standing alone." During each interview, Claire thoughtfully responded to my questions, and I could see that she was reflecting on and analyzing her experiences as she was

sharing them with me. Claire expressed that she enjoyed the interviews, and she said my questions prompted her to think about parts of her journey that she had not reflected on in a long time and that she had never really gotten to speak about in this way before.

Claire's Story

I went to not really a small high school but a rural high school. I went to County High School. That was before there was even a North County High School, so that was the only high school in the county. We had a large number of people, but that was everybody in one school together. I'd say my graduating class was like 200ish. AP was kind of sparing, you could say, in the school. You almost had to be handpicked to do it. I did AP English my senior year. There were only three of us who wanted to take it, and so they put us in an independent study, and we were those kids where they literally put us in the copy room. Nothing was online yet. We just sat back there. This was 2002, but basically, we had a little seminar where we read stuff and talked about it, and I think for me that was kind of like, "Oh, this is kind of cool. I kind of like this."

I won't say I always liked reading. I didn't really start reading until maybe seventh or eighth grade. When I did, and then that [AP English] experience, I felt like that kind of pushed me toward what I do now because I thought, "Well, how cool we'll just kind of sit around," and it wasn't a traditional class setting. We could eat snacks and drink coffee and talk about literature essentially. That stands out to me, but it also stands out to me as a teacher, thinking about how the school wasn't proactive in trying to provide rigorous courses for a larger number of students because there had to be more than three students in my graduating class who could have done the course. That's

something I try to be really mindful of. I try to keep my courses as open as I can for students who are interested in sitting around talking about books.

I think the other thing that strikes me too when I think about my high school experience is that I was really specialized in one particular area. I've made it through math, and I've made it through [other subjects], but I wasn't over here taking AP Chem[istry] and AP this and AP that. I feel like so many of our kids, even if they do really just enjoy math or science, they're taking every AP class. There seems to be more of a push to excel in every area now than just, it's okay to be good at one thing, just be really good at it. Or maybe that's just like a Valley High School thing here, but I definitely see that with our students. That was not happening in County High School. If you took one AP class, you were like, "This is stressful." I graduated [from high school] in 2003, and I don't ever remember really hearing anything about dual enrollment. I took the AP exam, and I got [college] credit that way, but there weren't any dual enrollment classes that I remember. We had tech[nical] prep kids, and that's what it used to be associated with, is that you're getting your cosmetology [license], but they didn't call it dual enrollment. They called it tech prep.

My parents are also super supportive of me being a teacher because they are as well. My dad is an educator and administrator, and then my mom is not in the education field per se, but she's a counselor and she's actually worked for schools off and on through her career. I think growing up, really in the school, I won't say that [teaching] was the only thing presented to me as a career. It was presented to me as a good career. You can make an honest living. Do well. You're serving a purpose. You're helping people. Everybody in my family pretty much has a job in which they are serving and

helping. I can't say that that's been like an "a-ha" moment, but reflecting on our family and our values, it seems to be a praised trait, to be in the line of service.

My family is both emotionally supportive, but then also just I think if you're gonna teach, you have to have a spouse and your own children sort of willing to go on that journey with you. My husband's also a teacher, and so we're here [at Valley High School] today, probably until 5:00 or 5:30. Our son's in after school care. It's sort of like we're all really in this education journey kind of together.

How Did I do All of That in One Day?

I can talk about my first day teaching where I thought, "Boy, I have really messed up" (*laughs*). I thought, "I do not know what I'm doing." I did my student teaching at a really small school in Carson County. Then I did my first year teaching at Central High School. Totally different. I just remember that first day. This is kind of gross. I didn't even go the bathroom. I was so nervous. I was so nervous. I didn't go to the bathroom all day, and I got home to my apartment, and I was like, "Oh my gosh." It's like I blacked out. I couldn't even remember the whole day.

I mean, I go the bathroom now, but they're even days where I get home now—I'm almost 40—and I just think, "God, how did I do all of that in one day?" I think that as teachers we're just constantly multitasking and constantly doing so much. I think slowly, over time, I've built those skills that I think allow you to survive in the teaching field. I have a student teacher right now, and I can tell that some of those things are difficult for her in doing 20 things at a time because it's just not normal (*laughs*). Nothing's wrong with her. It's just wrong with teaching, I guess, or wrong with the profession.

I started at Central High School, and I taught there [from] 2007 to 2011. My husband also taught there. We both graduated from [the same college]. I think the first year, I taught Brit[ish] lit[erature]. I taught all the athletes. All of them. Then I taught a class that was a repeater ninth grade. They were 17 [years old] still taking the ninth grade, and I didn't know enough about education to know we would never do that now.

Then I left [town], and we moved to [town] in 2011. I got a job at Oakridge High School, and I worked at Oakridge til [20]13. Then I didn't get RIF'd [reduction in force, meaning teaching positions were cut], but actually I was more senior than [a] coach who was teaching English at the time at Oakridge, but they didn't want to move him. I was grateful because when [the Oakridge Principal] came in there that day, I thought, "Well here I go." What made me nervous [was] I thought, "My husband works here too." We got hired in the same year, so it was like, "if I time out, if we both get fired, what are we going to do?" Yeah, several people kept their job because they were coaches.

They moved me to Greene High School, and that was super awkward. It was just like, here you go. I mean, I went in and introduced myself to [the principal]. How awkward is that? "Hey, I've been moved here. You don't want me. I want to be back at Oakridge" (*laughs*). I think probably when I moved to Oakridge is maybe when I started saying, "Okay, I might be okay with this. I think this might be the thing for me to do." I would say more than the a-ha moment for me, it's sort of been over time as I've honed the skills and just gotten more comfortable teaching and with the workload.

I'm Here to Help You Do What You Want to Do

Claire teaches an on-level American literature course. She also teaches AP classes, and her dual enrollment students have the option to take the AP Literature test at

the end of the course to earn AP credit. I believe in public education. I believe that everybody should have the opportunity to learn and to pursue their goals, pursue their dreams. We are reading [the short story] “Everyday Use” today in class, and we read a little blurb about Alice Walker and how she starts out as the daughter of sharecroppers and through scholarships, and it never mentions through her own intelligence, through her own academic achievement, was she able to get scholarships to Spelman. I just really believe that education is here to equalize the playing field for everybody, no matter their background.

I think when I teach, I try to approach it from that point of view: opportunity. What is it that this particular student is trying to get from this? That’s different for every class that I teach because seventh period, my regular, on-level, American lit class, I have a lot of Option B students [high school students who simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree or technical certificate] in there who go to Horizon Community College (HCC) all day or do HVAC, and then they come here to take American literature. We did a poetry unit, and I was like, “Okay, y’all are gonna hate this, but we’ve got to cover these standards so that you could pass the EOC [end of course exam].” I don’t feel like my AP students who are going literally to Harvard are any better than my students who are trying to finish their HVAC at HCC and get a job. I try to approach it from I’m here to help you do what you want to do. No matter where you started.

I have kids sitting in my AP Lit class who are here to make a 5 (*emphasizes*). [A 5 is the highest possible score on an AP exam]. They want to make a 5. I have kids who are like, “Well, I know I’m gonna get the 1101/1102 credit. It’d be nice [to get a 5], but I’m

okay if I don't." I know those kids. I know sort of where they are and what they're thinking. That doesn't lower my expectation for everybody to do well on the exam, but I get it. I get that the kid who's trying to do early admissions to Georgia or whatever is really looking for that wow factor score. I get that some kids are just like, "Hey, my parents told me to take this class." I think when I first started teaching, I would take so much personally. It'd be like, "I can't believe they're disrespecting me by not doing the work. I can't believe they're disrespecting me by this type of essay. They should have written five paragraphs, but they only wrote four," or whatever. I just don't necessarily approach it that way anymore because I kind of just get that everybody has different goals, different needs, different ways that they're coming into the course.

Maybe That's Hypocritical

Well, let me just talk [about dual enrollment] from a personal example. My son, my 5-year-old, next year, they're teaching a class that's almost like a "move on when ready" kindergarten class. Maybe 5-year-olds who are ready to read are in the class with first graders who are reading but maybe struggling. I just told them, "No, no, no, we're not doing that."

I feel the same way about the eighth graders taking ninth grade lit. If my son's in honors, he will take eighth-grade honors and then ninth grade and 10th grade, 11th grade. The whole reason for that trajectory in Rocky Ridge School District is so that we can have more room for dual enrollment courses. That way they would have finished their English courses, and they could take an additional dual enrollment because my students leave me in 1101, 1102, and then they take 2130 [college American literature]. Some of them are leaving high school with three [college] English credits. So, if you want my

personal beliefs, I am a big fan of students following age-appropriate trajectories and academics. Rigorous ones. Rigorous ones, but age-appropriate ones, and then going to college when it's time to go to college. That's my personal belief.

My professional belief is my numbers [in AP Literature] were going down. I was losing students in AP Literature because I'll just say that I was competing, in some ways, with English 1101, which was only meeting sparingly face-to-face. Very few novels, just a couple of essays. The requirements were not the same as AP, so when the opportunity came for me to blend those classes, I did. My number [of students] has increased again because I think just having that safety net—and that's how a lot of them see it, "I know I will get 1101 and 1102 credit, even if I don't pass the AP exam"—has helped my numbers. It's appealing to the students. It's appealing to the parents. Dual enrollment is a buzzword right now. We get CCRPI points, [College and Career Readiness Point Index] which everybody loves. Professionally, I see the reasons for it. Personally, I feel differently about it. Maybe that's hypocritical.

It Was a Process

I was trying to think of the timeline about changing from teaching just a regular AP Lit class. You would think I could remember over 10 years, but when I came here, at one point I taught AP Lang and Lit. Part of [the] discussion is, "Hey, they're doing this [dual enrollment] at other schools." I just said, "Well, hey, I think I can do that too because of my master's." I have a master's in English and secondary ed, so I had the 18 hours of English. They [administration] looked at it, and they're like, "Well, you sure can."

When I realized I could do it [teach dual enrollment], I said, “Well, can you do it side by side? Can I continue to teach AP Lit and do this dual enrollment?” They’re like, “I think so,” and they looked at the accreditation sheets to see if we could do it. They’re like, “Yeah, why not? Sure.” That was part of it. My numbers [in AP lit] were decreasing. I think through a series of discussions, it was just made available. Nobody ever told me I had to do it. Nobody said I should do it. I just said, “Hey, I think I can do this. Do you want to do want to do this?” I think to the assistant principal at the time. She was like, “You know, it seems like a win-win situation for the students.” I would say it kind of happened just based on the circumstances. I wouldn’t say that I sought it out.

Probably at first, I stuck the name dual enrollment on [the AP literature class]. That’s because there was no oversight from HCC. Nobody came in my classroom. I didn’t even have an email for awhile through HCC. I think I created a syllabus one time and put it somewhere and that was it. I used to teach my AP Lit class thematically, so I’d have these groupings and themes and teach it, but at maybe a year in or 2 years in, HCC started going through their accreditation process to be accredited as a dual enrollment school.

[Then], I started looking really closely and working more closely with people at HCC who would come out and meet with me. We would talk about things, and so when they started providing support and saying, “Here are some of the things that we would like for you to include, or we want to make sure that we see evidence of in your syllabus,” then I was more mindful of that.

One of the big things is, that first semester, I usually would do different kind of research paper. I would do a research paper before, but it was usually more of like a DBQ

[document-based question] kind of thing. I have changed that assignment to align to the criteria of HCC. It's still literary-based so that I can keep it focused on what we're doing. It includes the skills that [the college] wants to see. So, that's one thing. Another thing that I do, that I didn't used to do, is I use Quill for grammar instruction. I don't use their first-year reader/writer notebook and, I know these are all things I talked to the assistant dean about, and I just said, "Look, most of these kids have scored a 3 on the AP Lang exam. They wouldn't be in 1101 really at HCC." Just kind of making them [the college] understand the population that I have kind of helped us do that.

That was probably maybe 2 years in because the first couple years that I taught, I was all over the place. [The college] was telling me to log in, and I didn't have a login, and they had a hard time having me as an employee but not having me as an employee. That caused tons of problems. After that got worked out after the first 2 years when they figured out that I didn't have to do Hazardous Spill Training and stuff because I didn't work on campus (*laughs*). I would say that probably took about 2 or 3 years. Again, it was a process of me learning about HCC and their process and their requirements and then sort of learning about dual enrollment.

I feel like that took about 3 years, and now it's really streamlined. I use Blackboard. I use a lot of their tools and things like that, administer their SLOs [student learning objectives, a type of common assessment], which before, they'd be like, "Administer this SLO," but I wouldn't be able to find it anywhere because I don't have access to anything (*laughs*). The relationship has gotten better over time. I'll say that for sure, and I feel like [the accreditation] was the catalyst for them to get their act together.

I'm Totally Not the Fun Teacher

I have a student teacher now, this semester, and I've really been trying to teach her how to have these engaging lessons. We're doing 10 minutes of this, and 10 minutes of that, and 10 minutes of this. You know, (*snaps fingers*) the pizazz. I'm not good at the pizazz, I'm just going to tell you. I am Not. Good. At. The. Pizazz. (*emphasizes each word*). I teach a workshop model class. I usually begin with something, either reading or information that the kids need to know. Today, we watched a short little video about how you can do interpretations from a different perspective. Then we read a poem that was an example of that and worked through the poem. That is not earth-shattering, but it's very standard and organized.

I don't want you to get the idea that I'm the fun teacher because I'm totally not. I'm not going to sit here and think of some sort of "wow" lesson that I have taught, but I think what the students really respond well to, and this is something that happened today and yesterday, is that I will, with them, show them what I would do if I had this poem on the AP exam. Like, what can I do that you can also do? We start working through that together. Yesterday, we did [the poem] "Facing It" about the Vietnam War Memorial. I would point out certain things, and through that lesson, they then start feeling more confident to say, "Oh, well, that's juxtaposition" or "Oh, well, that's the meaning of this," and I don't know that I'm explaining it very well, but you probably know that feeling when you're all in it, and you're all thinking together. Your whole class, except for the guy in the back who's watching the football video, but the majority of everybody, is thinking together and writing things down, and sort of throwing ideas (*mimes writing on the board*). They're making fun of my handwriting, like, "We can't read what you're

writing.” That kind of moment is how I like to teach. That lesson yesterday was kind of that moment. Then, we break away, and then I get them to partner up. They start talking through some of the lines that we didn’t get to. I had put some of those lines that we had identified on a chart and start to talk about some of the ambiguities that they were seeing in the lines.

Again, I’m not an entertainer. I’m not in showbiz. I would say my students would tell you [that] my strength is organization and presenting the information in a way that is focused. I don’t know if that’s what you want to write about, but I like that energy. I mean, I know what I want them to have at the end. That would be what I would miss if I taught online.

I won’t say that I’m not creative. I make a lot of my materials that the kids are using, because I think about, “What am I doing if I’ve got to get from this poem to understanding how a symbol in this poem is characterizing the speaker in some sort of way?” What do I need to draw out on my notes? Because I feel like we kind of had to learn those things in college (*gestures to herself and to me*). Right? Drawing things out because it doesn’t come natural to them [the students]. I always sort of think like, this is scary, a teenager. Like, “What would I need to do to get from point A to point B as we work through this poem?” I just like really neat, concise, orderly lessons, which probably makes me very boring now. I will pull out the three highlighters. We’ll do some good old rainbow highlighting and stuff like that sometimes. I would say 90% of my class periods, we are doing workshop model, reading something.

I said this the other day. I told this to my friend who used to teach AP Lang. I said, “I just love watching them write an essay,” a timed AP essay. I love handing out a

prompt, going over the prompt with them, and then I try not to be too creepy, but sometimes I just like watching their faces while they write (*She mimes writing an essay, throws hands up in the air like she's had an epiphany, and then starts miming writing again.*) I'm excited to read their papers when they finish because I just see how invested they are really in that moment. I do like seeing that in-the-moment thinking and getting that sort of interaction from the students.

Claire recorded a DE lesson for me in March 2024. The topic of the lesson was "Ambiguity in Poetry," with a focus on punctuation and structure in the poem "The Man He Killed" By Thomas Hardy. Claire began the lesson by showing and discussing the course calendar with students. She explained that day's lesson and the plan for the following days, which backed up her statement in our interview that she is a very systematic and organized teacher. The class period was set up as a workshop model, meaning Claire provided direct instruction for the first part of class, writing and modeling on the board for students to show how she wanted them to analyze the poem. Then, students spent time working in pairs to continue analyzing the poem while Claire circulated around the classroom, providing feedback and answering questions. Claire had a presentation on the board where she provided notes for students on the steps for close reading poetry. In our interviews, Claire said she likes "neat, concise, orderly lessons," which was evidenced in the lesson she recorded for me.

There's a Gap Between What They Think I Do and What I Do

Claire spent a good deal of time in our second and third interviews discussing her relationships and interactions with the college faculty at HCC. My relationship with Assistant Dean Frank is great. She checks in with me, and then she'll email me. She's

done several in-class observations of me. The relationship with her has been really good. The dean, she will email me at my Valley High School email, for example. Every email that I get [from the dean] usually goes to both [high school and college email accounts] and she's like, "Yeah, no problem" when I've asked for that, and not that I don't check my HCC email, but I've got my [high school] school email pulled up all the time. Just email me on it. So, the two of them have been actually really good.

I won't name any names, but other people are like, "Well, we really need you to be checking your HCC email." (*Pauses*). I will admit that there have been times where I've gotten pretty ticked off about that just because it feels like the insinuation is I'm not doing anything when I know what a majority of the professors in terms of their workload look like and what mine looks like. I do feel like for some of the faculty members, there is a gap between maybe what they think I do and what I do, which is understandable because they're not here with me, seeing what I do, whereas Dean Frank does come in and observe. She does see me teaching 26 kids in a classroom for 50 minutes. Every. Single. Day. (*emphasizes each word*)

Who Are You?

In our second interview, I asked Claire to reconstruct a specific interaction with a college faculty member, and she told me the following story. Then, in our third interview, I asked her to reflect on that experience and how it impacted her. I had a pretty heated meeting with a faculty member who came to see me at school during my planning. [She] was telling me I was going to need to copy every email and every interaction that I had with students, which is constant, to an HCC email with them [the college]. She's sitting here, and she's telling me that. I comment on Google Classroom, which I do already 10

times a day: “You’re absent today. Here’s what we did. Make sure you read pages, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” She was telling me I was gonna need to take that, copy it, put it into an HCC email, and send it to the kid through their HCC email account.

I was like, “Nah, I ain’t gonna do that. (*Pauses.*) You can forget it.” It kind of got a little heated because I was like, “Uh, I’m sorry,” or “Who are you?” basically is kind of what I said. I did apologize, so I don’t want you to think I’m a hothead. I did apologize, but it was just silly. It was just silliness. That kind of stuff, I had to just say, “Okay,” (*throws hands up and shrugs shoulders in a conciliatory gesture*) and then keep doing what I do. Guess what? Nobody ever followed up. Nobody ever followed up! (*Laughs.*) Imagine that!

I hope I don’t sound too mean, but it’s just that one meeting comes to mind because I got so (*pauses and puts hands on face*). I was taking deep breaths. I was like, “Okay, don’t say anything that’s gonna get you written up.” I feel like that person had a checklist that she had been told, these are the things that we need for HCC. That’s great, but I didn’t even know who she was: A. She had never introduced herself to me; B. She never came and observed the class or talked to the kids. It was just like, “I need to come and talk to you,” and then she just started laying all these things out on me. The tone was—and this is like a personal fault for me—but the tone was almost like, “Well, since you don’t understand (*starts talking more slowly and in a patronizing tone*), let me break it down for you,” and I don’t know. That’s a personal flaw for me. When somebody gets that tone with me, I’m like, “Woah! Hold on!” (*laughs*).

I think about that exchange. It really started with, I didn’t even know who she was. I think that if I were to identify what was the issue with that communication, it was

that I didn't know who she was. The expectation that I was supposed to know who she was and what she did and why she was here in my classroom, those pieces of information would have probably put me on a better footing in terms of communicating with her. I would have at least understood the purpose. She assumed I did. Why would I? I never stepped foot on [the college] campus. I don't ever go to the meetings. If I get an email, okay, that's fine, but I don't know who you are. I've never seen your face. Then, not really knowing why she was here.

It was like going into a meeting with someone who you don't even know what you're meeting about, and so I was automatically defensive, and that's a character flaw with me, but that's usually my positioning. Are you here to try to disrupt what I'm doing? Because what I'm doing is working. Therefore, I'm going to be defensive. I feel like they [college faculty] forget that they're meeting about this all the time with their president. They're all meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings, meetings all the time, and I'm over here, teaching English all day.

I think she was working from one understanding of the situation, and I'm working from, "I've got kids coming in here in 20 minutes, and you're telling me I've got to do 3 more additional hours of work a day for no reason other than you have it on your checklist." I think that's where the disconnect kind of came in, was when HCC gave them those checklists. Some people said, "Oh, look, you're already doing X, X, and Y." That's what I told Dean Frank. I said, "Look, you ask me for anything in terms of student communication, and I can produce it for you. It's happening all day, every day." I think for me, there are some who have worked really hard to understand this kind of different complexity of teaching dual enrollment. Then I think there are others who have been like,

“Well, this is how it works on campus” (*gestures to her right side with both hands*).

“Why is it not working like that (*moves hands to her left side*) in your classroom?”

I Want to Get Something Out of It

Claire's cooperating college hosts a professional development day for all the high school dual enrollment teachers at the start of every school year. I will say the first few [college professional development days] I went to, it's kind of like when you go to something that you don't even know what's happening. Anything they tell you is kind of out of context. You're like, “Wait, what?” But this past year, it was really helpful because I actually did know what they were talking about. I had been dabbling in Blackboard [the college's Learning Management System]. I had actually figured out how to log in to my account. Seriously, the first [professional development day] I think was me trying to figure out that I had an account.

This past one I would say was very helpful to me. One of the things that they started doing is they bring up teachers to do a panel about specifically Blackboard, but any other kind of complications. Whoever came up with that, that's been a really helpful thing. They picked [Claire's husband], who's really good at Blackboard, and a couple of other teachers from around the district, and they're all different. Some of them are teaching the dual enrollment agriculture or mechanics, and they just answer questions, preselected, presubmitted questions, and that was really helpful. Then we get together with the English professors, and we talk and, again, I do learn some things about Blackboard.

The last couple ones I think have been really, really helpful. I mean, I'm taking a day off the second week of school basically. If I'm going to do that, I wanna get

something out of it, and the last few have been really helpful. The first couple [professional development days], I was like, “What are we doing, people? Why am I here?” But the last two have been pretty good for me.

They Don't See Us Like That

I gave Claire the word “professor” as a prompt and asked her to respond to that word. That’s a great question because the kids think it’s hilarious when they do their MLA headings, they put Professor Claire, so I think I might say “tongue in cheek” or “humorous” is the word that comes to mind with that because they love to have a good time with that, calling me Professor Claire, but they don’t call me that in class. Just sometimes on their papers.

I think with high school students, it’s hard for them to understand how well credentialed we are sometimes because they’re so used to having like these relationships with us as teachers and students and being in the classroom. I put my diplomas on the wall because I’ve had students actually say, “Oh, I didn’t realize you had a degree—” Like, “Of course I have a degree in English! (*laughs*) What are you talking about?!” It’s just different if they don’t see us like that, which I think is maybe a problem sometimes. I love graduation when we all have our regalia on and they see us, like, “Oh, wow.”

I always liked writing. That was, I guess, maybe the first step in the right direction. One of the first classes that I took at [college] was American literature, and I made a B because of semicolons. No one ever taught me the use of semicolons. So, no, no, I would not have felt like [I would be a writing teacher]. My teachers in high school were just always like, “Oh, this is great. Oh, this is great. This is great.” They never really would give any feedback, and obviously it wasn’t great because when I got to college, it

wasn't great. I feel like I'm much more of an academic writer, when I'm writing my papers for my Ed.S. and things like that. That's why I love teaching [AP] Seminar because it's academic writing. I have students in AP Lit who are just beautiful writers, constructing these beautiful sentences, but I don't necessarily feel like that's the kind of writer that I am on a personal level. I'm a utilitarian writer. I'm not like a friend of mine who got her MFA [Master of Fine Arts], and I was like, "How did you do this job [teaching] during the day, and then your MFA at night?" and she's like, "Well, I'm always writing." No, no, no, not me.

I prompted Claire to reflect on how her identity as a writer impacted the way she taught writing to her students. In this section, Claire spoke about the change to the AP exam essay rubric. The rubric used to be a nine-point holistic rubric, which changed to a three-part rubric where students earn separate scores for their thesis statement, evidence and commentary, and the sophistication of their writing. I feel like [AP] Seminar is pretty cut and dry. I mean, [the College Board, which is the organization that creates AP exams and curriculum] has certain expectations for their writing. Pretty much like, "Hey, this is what they want, if you do this, then you're going to score well on seminar." [AP] Lit's a little bit more complicated, but [the College Board] they did away with that 9-point rubric, and they went to the 1-4-1 [rubric]. I think that it is a lot more prescribed. The 1-4 part, not the sophistication [part]. I think showing students, "Here is what you need to do to score on the exam" works well from my point of view in writing. For example, first semester I kind of teach them like, "We're gonna structure this by literary device. We're gonna do a paragraph about structure, a paragraph about this." Then second semester, some of them are still doing that. Some of them are still doing that now [at the end of the

year], and I'm okay with that. I know what they'll score [on the AP test]. They'll score a 1-2 or maybe a 1-3, if they do it in a really sophisticated way. But then being able to sort of say, "Okay, if you can do this other thing, you can score a 1-4."

I think I think a lot about the rubric, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. I think a lot about what the rubric is trying to assess. That works for me, and I like the common language. I like kind of taking the emotion out of it. If they're a really beautiful writer, then maybe they'll get the sophistication point. How do you teach a student how to do that? You just praise the students who are able to do that and try to foster the students where you see that possibility, that little spark there. Rules, I love rules, I love MLA, I love APA, and rubrics (*laughs*).

I can tell you that I have students tell me, "I'm not going to be an English major. I'm not going to be an English major." I think I might have one a year, out of 45. To be honest, a lot of them are not going to take another English class, which is kind of scary for me think about. Unless they take some sort of special topics class as an elective, many of them are not going to take another English class. I will say my American Lit course is much more geared towards that. You are going to have to know APA in college. You really only need MLA if you're going to be a teacher or you're going to be an English major or whatever. I think the kids maybe make fun of me because I'm always saying like, "On the AP exam, on the AP exam, on the AP exam."

I feel that [the AP exam] really tends to be a focus for me, and so in the years where I've had maybe five kids taking the test, then I would approach the class a little bit differently. I do think that the style of writing of AP, and I kind of hit on this about the 40 minutes, is not what you're expected to do in college. I mean, there are maybe some

times where they're doing a timed piece in 1101. I don't even know that many colleges still do that. I mean, this is a discussion with College Board too. The on-the-spot writing is being called into question because what skill are we actually assessing when we're having them do on-the-spot, 40-minute writing? I think AP Literature is moving towards portfolio, which would probably lean in more to what you're asking and that is more preparatory for higher education.

My student who's at Brown [University] right now, she sent me an email. She's like, "A lot of the things that we're being asked to do, we learned about in AP," so that's always good to know that they're able to transfer those into maybe their other skills because of course Brown doesn't take any AP credit, so she has to take everything [1101/1102] over again. Brown's not taking their [dual enrollment/AP] credit. Would I like to see AP Lit go towards a more portfolio style? Absolutely. Because I think that is more authentic to true academic writing and true academic work.

You Can't Explain That to Anybody Until They Can See It

I asked Claire to reflect on the support she receives from the college faculty. I will say I feel like the communication and things like that changed when Dr. Frank started coming and observing my class. When she came and watched me, just watched a regular lesson, she was like, "Wow! Y'all are doing a lot that we [college faculty] don't have to do!" Not even me, she could have went and watched anybody I think, anybody who was teaching dual enrollment and said, "Wow! Y'all are above and beyond the majority of what our professors are being asked to do." I've had to explain to her that I did that for 50 minutes she was here. Then I was like, "Now you have to leave because now I'm going to do something else. That wasn't it. I'm going to do this [teach] six times but three

different topics.” I think, even for her, that was hard for her to even conceptualize what the day was like, but there was no time for me to just sit around and chat about HCC, that I had to keep it moving because here comes another 25 [students].

I think even just being in the [high school] building is really good for [the college faculty] to see what it looks like. I can’t speak for anybody at HCC, but I think there was a perception that if the kids were sitting in this high school taking a dual enrollment class, that it was not on par with what they were doing at HCC. Until they started coming into the classroom. Until they started seeing what we were doing with our kids, dual enrollment, AP, whichever level we’re talking about. That you are doing more with your kids than they would be doing if they were in a course at HCC. You can’t explain that to anybody until they can see it. That to me made a huge, huge difference in the way that I was treated and in the way that people communicated with me and responded to me, when they realized that we weren’t just hanging out.

My classes are full time. Even days that aren’t class days at HCC, you’re still working with kids, you’re still meeting with kids. There are no office hours. You are available all the time. I had to explain that to them too. I don’t have office hours. My office hours are from 7:30 am until I leave at 4 pm. I am available all the time and by email. We don’t just say, “Oh, well I can’t meet with you right now because I’m busy.” If a kid comes in your room, you usually just stop what you’re doing and meet with them. I think seeing that was a game changer. I think that was real shift for me, for them to realize that what we’re doing here is actually pretty great, and it helps them [the college] look good, so they should be nice to us.

They Don't Have a Concept of That

In our third interview, I asked follow-up questions about the lesson Claire recorded for me to watch. I noticed that her students were complaining when she assigned homework, and that discussion led into Claire reflecting on the maturity of her DE students. Can I imagine these students taking a class at [a college] and being successful? It would be a struggle for most of them because they are juniors. Most of them are juniors, and they feel comfortable with me. They're gonna complain. Would that fly in a college-level class? Absolutely. Not. That might be what your paper is maybe seeking to find is, how successful would these 45 kids be if they were sitting at [a college], in English 1102? Academically, sail through. All these kids would sail through academically. The majority of them will make a 3 [out of 5] on the AP exam. Socially? Emotionally? (pauses and shakes head). No. Socially and emotionally, it would be a challenge for a lot of them.

I went to college when I was 17. I turned 18 right before I took my first class. These kids are 16. I have kids missing class so they can go get their driver's license. They can't buy a lottery ticket; they can't get a tattoo. These are children. When you talk about college level courses, you're not necessarily talking about, for me, the academic rigor, but you're talking about your ability to be independent and responsible. These kids are 16. They shouldn't be as responsible as an 18-year-old or a 19-year-old.

I guess it depends on, what are we thinking about dual enrollment? Are we thinking about it as the academic challenge, or are we thinking about it as these kids should be learning to live as 18-year-olds when they're 16? I approach it from, I'm here to give you the academic challenge, but you still live with your parents. It's not equitable.

I have to provide for myself. I have to find my own food. I have to wash my clothes. I have to go to the bookstore and figure out how to buy these books so I don't fail. That stuff we could never mimic, and I don't think that we should because they're not adults.

I have a friend who teaches at [a Georgia college], and he teaches history. He's a tenured professor there, near the end of his career, and he has a lot of students that come from [a local high school] that come and sit in his class. At first, he was shocked by having 15- and 16-year-olds in this class and would ask us a lot of questions, and we were like, "Look, if they're sitting in your class, you need to treat them like everybody else." He's even voiced that it's challenging. Because some of these kids still live at home with their parents. They're children. They're not the same as a 19-year-old who has an apartment (*holds up hands like she's balancing a scale*). Just they're not the same.

You can teach them academically the same, but socially, emotionally, they're not. Things like I don't allow late work. Well, even some colleges, you get 10 points off a day. Even some of the things that I do in my AP class might even be more strenuous in terms of academic expectations. I think the rubric that I use is more demanding than the rubric that HCC puts out for 1101 and 1102. Academically, the kids are fine, but I think that's the whole argument for why we teach them in the [high school] building and why kids are signing up for these classes more than they are the traditional dual enrollment classes because I think their parents realize that they might not feel comfortable sitting in a class with 20-year-olds. Then the model at HCC mostly being online has been another issue for our students because our students do not like taking online classes, and I don't really blame them.

One of the reasons we discourage our kids from taking just sheer online classes is because they're still in the mindset of you go to first period, you do your work for first period. You go to second period, you do your work for second period. Our kids have a hard time even conceptualizing the college day, that it's not like our day here. You don't move from place to place to place to place to place. You're gonna have a different type of schedule [in college]. So even explaining to my students what 15 hours means, a full load, what that looks like on a typical college campus. They don't really have a concept of that, and so when they sign up, they sign up for a real class through HCC or [another college], and it's online during the school day. Even if we give them a period [during their high school schedule] to work on it, they still have a hard time conceptualizing that. Again, that whole being on campus, social piece that they don't really have a schema for. Even my student teacher is like, "Oh, I forgot what it's like to go seven periods a day!" It's like it just keeps coming.

There Were No Roadblocks for Her

I had a student a couple years ago. Her name was Jazmin, and she was Hispanic. Her family spoke Spanish in the home. She was in on-level, regular ninth grade lit, regular 10th grade lit. She came to me the summer before her 11th grade year, and she just said, "Hey, you don't know me, but I really would like to take AP seminar." Well, her 10th grade lit teacher who shall remain nameless, who has retired, was like, "No, she's a low writer. She's a low reader," which was true. These were all true facts. They weren't wrong, and I said, "Well, let's just see how she does." AP seminar here is an elective, so if she doesn't do well, she could come out at Christmas. Let's just see what

happens. What's the worst thing that could happen? Also, equity and access for the College Board says if she wants to take class, she's gonna take the class.

So, she was in the class. She had a hard time at first with the honors rules: no late work, no retests, but it was seminar, so she was able to slowly get into that. She did really well in seminar. In fact, she made a 3 on the [AP] exam at the end of the year, so I asked her, "Well, do you want to take dual enrollment/AP Lit?" Because she was going to the CCA [College and Career Academy] and she was doing dual enrollment, getting her CNA [certified nursing assistant]. I said, "Well, do you want to just go ahead and take this class because this will get you 1101 and 1102?" Again, we're not talking about a 99 [grade] here. She was always kind of a borderline C/B student, back and forth between a C and a B in both 1101 and 1102, but she worked really hard, and she would always ask questions and ask for feedback and things like that. She did take the AP exam. I think she did make a 2 just because her reading literature skills were not as probably high as they needed to be in terms of the AP exam.

She got her CNA license, and she works as a CNA, and I think just being accessible to her is what is memorable to me. That she wanted to [take the class] and that there were no roadblocks for her. Even though it was a challenge for her, I think it was a good opportunity. I don't want to say life-changing for her, but certainly eye-opening in terms of that. Academically, was she prepared? No. Work-ethic-wise, she was. I have students who are academically off the charts. I sometimes even say the first day of class, "Most of you are smarter than me, but you don't know more about writing and literature" (*laughs*).

I've always said, and this is something that hasn't changed, "You give me the kid who is a genius but lazy, or you give me the kid who works hard but might not be as academically prepared, I will take the hard-working kid every single day." Now, I'm stuck with the kids who are smart but lazy, and that's fine. Because I teach honors, so that's fine, but as a teacher, I would have done anything to help Jazmin be successful if she asked because she was pulling the load with me. She just stands out as kind of an example of that philosophy that I've always held, and to be an honors teacher, that probably sounds weird to say, but I have students who have been told their whole life how smart they are. "Oh, you're so smart. Oh, you're so smart," and they are. They are really smart, but for me as a person, that's not the end all be all. You can be smart and still be a pretty detestable human being.

I think about Jazmin is in the healthcare profession, and if she walked into my room to prep me for surgery, I would feel like, "Yes! I'm so glad that you're here. I'm so glad to see you." I have some genius students who I'm sure will be doctors one day, but I think, "I don't know if I want to be out and them standing over me with a scalpel." So, again, what does our society value? I don't really know the answer to that, but I value someone who works hard and is trustworthy and is honest. I hope that's what we still value.

What Next?

Right now, I'm at an interesting point of my career. When you told me you're getting your PhD, I was like, "Oh my gosh, you're so brave" (*laughs*). I thought it was brave because I don't want to say I'm at a plateau, but I'm kind of at a, "What next? What next?" All of my education, I've kind of envisioned being in the classroom for 28

to 30 years. Now that I'm edging up on that 20th year, you see a lot of people moving, and a lot of people have started moving into these different positions. I think not coming to terms, but this conversation has been nice, reexamining kind of why I do these things. I find myself doing that maybe a lot more than I used to. You're like, "Okay, now, am I really going to be in here teaching when I'm wearing my EZ Spirits?" The answer does seem to be yes. That seems to be what's happening.

I think just the trajectory of my career tends to be one of the things that I struggle with. Well, what if they took away AP classes? What if they just said we're not doing that anymore, or they took away even dual enrollment classes? Then, I don't know what teaching would look like. I just don't really know how happy I would be teaching this job just to be honest. I like teaching my one class of American Lit, but if had to do that all day (*laughs*), I might be looking for something else.

When I retire from teaching, I'm going to try to teach at HCC and get state retirement because you can be vested in like 8 years I think through them, so I would just be 60 when I finished doing that. That seems pretty sweet. It seems doable. I think a job did come open at HCC for something more than adjunct. It may have been [another campus] I think. I thought about it, but I do feel I would miss the kids because it was all online. Some days that sounds great, just sit in my pajamas, grade papers, but I do like interacting with the students, and I know I would miss that piece. If you like interacting with the students, it's just really hard to find another job that would replace that I think.

You Have to Want to Do This Job

In our third interview, I asked Claire to reflect on advice she would give to future dual enrollment teachers. You have to want to do this job. You cannot phone it in. You

cannot pretend that you like the kids. You cannot pretend that you like the content. You can't pretend that you like the lessons. It's not like any other job. My sister went from healthcare to education, and she's like, "Healthcare is easier. I walk in the building, they give my charts, I do what I have to do. I go on my breaks, I leave." She's like, "I don't know these people." She's like, "Education is so much harder because you are everything. You are literally everything. You're making everything, you're presenting everything. You're making the decisions." I think you have to like it to do that. [Student teacher] and I have talked about that quite a bit.

I think being organized to teach dual enrollment, to teach AP, is a must. I won't use any names, but I think we have some AP or dual teachers here who are not organized. Their assignments are unclear, their due dates are unclear, their grading procedures are unclear, and the kids just have no respect for them in terms of academics. They respect them as adults, but no respect for them in terms of academics. You don't want a kid saying, "Well I'm just going to do what she tells me so I can get through this." I think organization is a personality trait that is almost required if you're going to teach AP or dual enrollment because I go into this class in August knowing what I'm going to be doing in May. I backwards design it, here's the exam, and here's what we've got to do. Most people can't do that. I've found that that's apparently weird. I always will advocate for people who want to teach AP who are already really regimented teachers, who have good procedures and plans in place for organizing their lessons, for organizing their grading, and their scoring and things like that. I think that's another piece of advice that I would give.

I think now that I am older, the third piece of advice would be, especially with AP and dual enrollment, give yourself a little grace. You're not gonna know everything you need to know that first year or second. Maybe by the third you'll have an idea, and parents can be pretty vicious, and there's a lot happening in that 3 years. I think part of that is just allowing some flexibility. The ability to say, "Well, that didn't work." Some humility, right? "That didn't work, so let's see what else we can try. What else can we do?"

I'm actually just happy that you asked me to do this [participate in the study]. I'm happy to help, and I think, as educators, we don't have the time to sit and reflect. I remember when I first started teaching, my little cute self, I had a little journal. I was going to write in my journal and all those things and reflect on the day. Please. I think I wrote one day. One sentence: "I'm tired." We teach our kids to reflect, but we don't. We don't reflect. This has been a really nice moment to just do that through the questions and things that you asked me. That's been kind of fun for me to reflect on some of the choices that I made, maybe think through some of those.

My Reflection

Claire exhibited meaning making when she reflected on her high school experiences as an AP English student and discussed how those experiences influenced her current philosophy in her own classroom. In her current role as an AP/DE teacher, she recognized that the high school she attended did not do a great job at making sure students had opportunities to take advanced classes. Therefore, Claire has an "open classroom" policy, meaning that any student who wants to take her AP/CE course can do

so. She emphasized that she does not “gate keep” her class by controlling who is able to enroll. If students want to do it, they can.

Claire was the only collaborator to reconstruct a specific, negative interaction with a college faculty member. During our second interview, Claire told me about an experience in which she met with one of the college faculty members who “showed up in [her] classroom” and began telling her what she needed to do in her classroom to prove she was engaging with students. In our third interview, Claire reflected on the meaning of this experience for her. She expressed that the interaction might have been different if the faculty member had established a relationship before coming into Claire’s classroom unexpectedly with a list of demands. Claire explained how she immediately felt defensive because this person adopted a patronizing tone and spoke to Claire as if she did not understand how things worked at the college level.

Despite this one interaction, most of Claire’s experiences with the college and college faculty were positive. Claire reflected that her relationship with the college liaison changed when she came to Claire’s classroom to observe. The liaison was shocked at everything Claire was doing in her classroom and during her day. Claire believed this experience helped the college faculty understand that the high school DE courses were on par or even more rigorous than the traditional college courses.

Like Elbert and David, Claire discussed that students come into her DE classroom with vastly different ability-levels and goals. Some students will matriculate into Ivy League colleges, while some will continue at HCC and go into technical careers. She expressed her desire to welcome all these students into her DE classroom and support them no matter their goals and career plans.

Julio

Julio was the second person to complete my Qualtrics survey. I had no prior relationship with him. I found his name on his school's website, emailed him, and he graciously agreed to participate. Julio is married and has six children, and because of his personal responsibilities at home, he could only meet with me during his planning time from 2:00-3:30. Because two of our interviews were cut short, we agreed to meet for a fourth interview to wrap up our discussion and so I could ask follow-up questions.

Julio is a White male in his 60s. He has a bachelor's degree in English with minors in French, philosophy, and history. He has a Master of Arts and a Ph.D., both in comparative literature. He has close to 40 years of experience teaching in various contexts. For most of his career, he was a college professor. Julio spoke extensively with me about these experiences and the impact they had on his current role as a high school dual enrollment teacher. At the time of our interviews, Julio was finishing up his 3rd year of teaching DE at a college and career academy in Central Georgia. Before that, he spent a decade teaching DE at a private high school. During the 2023-2024 school year, Julio taught one online section of 1101/1102 and two face-to-face sections.

During our interviews, Julio was very transparent with me about his experiences. He shared specific, negative information with me about his current high school and school system that could potentially damage his career if the stories were connected to him. Therefore, I took great care to censor any potentially identifiable information. Additionally, because of Julio's past experiences as a professor, he mentioned many different colleges during our interviews, and I have given each one a pseudonym and changed certain locations to protect his identity.

Julio's Story

My father, his first degree was in English, and then he decided he wanted to get a job. He got a graduate degree in physics and spent the rest of his life teaching physics or in university administration. I think I got my inspiration for English from him. I think that in many ways, I have tried to emulate my father and have the life that he had, which has turned out pretty disastrously for everybody involved. I had opportunities actually to make money instead of going in academics. I should have done something different, so I think they [my parents] had a huge impact on me, and I chose to continue that instead of moving on to a different life, which I should have a long time ago.

Two things happened in college. I've been a drummer my whole life, and I played in bands through my college career, and I had finished 4 years of college with the intention of doing a 5th year just because there were other things that I wanted to study. At the end of my 4th year, I had been playing in a band, and we got an offer to do a Department of Defense USO tour in Europe. So I said, "Sure, I'll try this," and ended up playing music full time for a year and did tours and worked a lot of gigs and then decided I was too good for that and went back to finish undergraduate school and go to graduate school, which I deeply regret now because maybe I would have had enough money to support a family if I'd stayed in that.

So, that was one. Then the bass player in one of the bands, his fiancée was the daughter of two owners of a private pharmacy. In high school and college, I'd worked at an independent pharmacy, and I got a job with them while I was playing music for some extra money. They straight up said, "Look, our daughter is going into nursing. She's not going to be interested in taking over the pharmacy. We'll send you to pharmacy school,

and you can take over the pharmacy,” and I decided I was too good for that and that I wanted to go back to graduate school and be a poverty-stricken English teacher. I deeply regret that as well. We know how pharmaceuticals are today. I would probably be speaking with you from the Bahamas now, but I never would have taught dual enrollment.

I was very, very—and continue to be—full of ego and self-importance, thinking that I was too good for making money. So, I decided I wanted to go into university teaching. That would be a very noble profession to have. Those are some very, very foolish mistakes that I have made along the way, and as much as I have enjoyed being in the classroom and working with students and so on and so forth, I think it was a very, very foolish decision to pursue this career. What we’ve done to the teaching profession in the last 20 or 30 years, it’s been just horrendous. I do not encourage any of my students to even think about going into teaching. I always tell them, “If you have no choice, if you have truly been called to teach, and you can’t imagine doing anything else with your life, then come on and go for it. Otherwise, you’re going to turn into one of the statistics. One of the beginning teachers that doesn’t last more than 2 or 3 years, and you’re gonna wash out.” I cannot in good conscience encourage anyone to do this.

Great Books

I prompted Julio to reconstruct specific experiences from his previous college teaching positions. This first story was from his time teaching FYC while he was a graduate student at Monument College in Michigan. This was his first experience teaching English 1101. At Monument College, I had a mentor who was also a graduate student. My first class, that was an English 1101 class, he came to observe. I had my

lesson plan all worked out. There were certain things I wanted to cover over the course of the day. We got into a discussion about one particular part of that in the class, and it was going really well, and I shut [the discussion] down so I could finish my agenda for the day. That was the one thing that he had to tell me at the end of the class was, “Listen, when it’s going like that and students are engaged and they’ve taken off, let it go. Let it go.” I will never forget that. That’s what I always do now in teaching. It doesn’t really matter what subject matter I cover. It matters whether or not they’re engaged. It’s true.

I started my full-time college teaching career at Summit University here in Georgia. My father had his first academic job at Summit University. When I was looking for jobs, as I was finishing my graduate work, Summit University was one of the jobs, and I called my dad up and said, “Oh, there’s a job at Summit University. Hahaha. Can you imagine?” When I went to interview for the job, the chair of the English department had been one of my dad’s students. She [had been] an athlete at Summit University. The first question she asked me was, “What do you know about Summit University?” I said, “I know that you were an athlete!” (*smiles*), and I got the job immediately. That was fun. So, I moved. I was in Michigan at the time and moved to Georgia. Moved to Summit University, and I actually really, really enjoyed being here. I enjoyed the students. I enjoyed the programs that I was working with and the faculty, and that was a good experience.

[At Summit University], there’s an alternative to the cafeteria course model. Instead of taking something from social sciences and something from science, there’s a program which is modeled on the Great Books program. The way that it works is that instead of reading a psychology book that is an anthology of commentary on Freud and

B. F. Skinner and Pavlov and all of that crew, you read the original texts. You read Pavlov, and you read Freud, and you read Skinner. That is the model. You read all primary texts. It starts with the ancient Greeks so that you're reading Pythagoras, and you're reading Heraclitus and Democritus and Euclid and Plato and Thucydides and Herodotus. You're reading all the primary texts instead of reading about Greek philosophy. They start with that ancient world and march all the way through the Western world to the 21st century. It's a series of courses that lasts over 4 years, and there's a senior capstone at the end. It's a fabulous, fabulous program, and I taught in that program.

There's a similar program at Monument University. It's for honors students. They spend their first year in the Great Books program, and they do the same thing. I cut my teeth on Great Books in that program. Then part of the reason I was hired at Summit University was because I could teach for Great Books. I did that and dearly loved it. It was very, very engaging. The students who did that were interested. They came, and they wanted to do it. That was phenomenal. All of the classes were Socratic seminars, so that students would bring questions from the things that they'd read every day, and we would discuss them and argue about them and struggle with the ideas, and it was wonderful. That kind of Socratic seminar format has stayed with me ever since. I don't do it as formally as if you look up Socratic seminar and you see what education people say about it, but the kind of discussion give-and-take format is something that I've done consistently because it works. Thank you for that question. I hadn't thought about that.

The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas

In Julio's next story, he shared about an experience teaching the short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." In the story, a fictional city called Omelas appears to be a utopia where everyone is happy. However, the city's happiness is predicated on a single child who is kept in perpetual darkness and misery. Once the citizens of Omelas learn this ugly truth, most eventually acquiesce to the atrocity because it secures their own happiness. However, a small handful of citizens make the decision to "walk away from Omelas."

[After working at Summit University], I moved to Canada and taught at Canada University. I was there for about 3 years. I have a specific story about Canada University that will stay with me forever. I had another woman who was older. She was in her probably mid to late 30s. Name's Esther. She was from South Africa. She was a White South African. This was shortly after apartheid had been dismantled in South Africa. There's a short story called "The Ones who Walk Away from Omelas." It's an Ursula K. Le Guin story. By the way, that's an interesting story too. My parents knew her. There's a connection there, but that's one of my favorite stories of all time. I was reading the story with my class in Canada University. Esther sat on the second row, and she was always engaged and talkative in the discussions and so forth. On this day, she was quiet. It was clear that there was something that was not quite right.

As we talked more about the story and got into it more, she was looking really despondent and distant, and finally I said, "Esther, are you okay? What's wrong?" Then, bam, everything became clear. I said, "Did you walk away from Omelas?" and she broke down in tears and was just sobbing, and nobody in that class will ever forget this day. Her

story was that she was in IT [information technology] and had a really, really good six-figure job in South Africa, but every day she would drive home to her gated community in her car that had a gun in the glove compartment. Every day she would drive through downtown Johannesburg, past the orphaned Black children who were begging for food, and it just got to the point where she couldn't stand it anymore. She packed up her whole family and left that job and came to Canada and worked in IT at Canada University. It was so moving because that was her story. That was what she did, and I'll never forget that. Every time I teach that story, I tell that story because it's so powerful.

A Rude Awakening

I then moved to New York and taught at Big Apple University. That was a rude awakening for me, quite frankly. All the students there are either engineers on commercial ships, or they're pilots on commercial ships. They're there to get their engineering degrees, and they want to be out on their ships and make a bazillion dollars, and they do. When they graduate, they are snapped up, and they make lots of money. It was a rude awakening because I got there, and I was doing my usual thing with my English classes, my literature classes. I was teaching kind of a modified Great Books class. It was all cool and great, except that students were not doing the work. They were not doing the reading. It took me like a month to realize (*emphasizes*) they're not going to. They were not there for humanities classes. They couldn't care less about reading about Socrates. They were there to get their engineering degrees and get out and get to work. The word on the street for English classes was "D for done." Just make a D, pass the course, and be done.

That was when the plagiarism started kicking in really hard when I was getting straight-up essays, full-tilt, copied, verbatim and wholesale off the internet. I was ringing kids up for plagiarism right and left and did not realize until about two semesters in that I was destroying careers. They were all part of a navy regiment, and they wore uniforms of the college. They were part of the U.S. Navy as students of the school, and if they got hit up for plagiarism, they were dishonorably discharged from the Navy. I had no clue.

I reconsidered what I was doing. Summit University had an honor system that if a student were accused of an honors violation, there would be a student court that would try them so to speak. I kind of wholesale stole that program from Summit University and wrote it up for Big Apple University, got it passed through the university senate, and then I left [the college] (*laughs*). Anyway, they adopted a new honor system because it was so rampant, and it was so bad. I didn't realize that I was ruining their careers. That woke me up that, "Oh my god. It doesn't matter what I have to say about these books. It doesn't matter what I'm teaching. Kids are not going to read it. They're not going to be engaged." That was really hard for me initially until I accepted it and started trying to do things that would at least get them a little bit engaged in class, if not in literature.

The First Time I Taught High School

[I] then came [back] to Central Georgia under very different circumstances. [My wife and I] spent a year in New York and then realized that it would be prohibitively expensive to continue to live in New York, so we started looking for where to go. Thought about coming back to Georgia because she has relatives [here], so that made sense. We were familiar with Central Georgia. That's when we both were hired. She was actually hired first to teach French at Magnolia Academy, and when she called about the

job, she said, “Oh, got any English jobs?” They said, “Oh yeah, the chair of the English department quit yesterday.” That was when I started teaching at the private high school. It’s called Magnolia Academy.

I was terrified when I first came to Magnolia Academy because it was the first time I taught high school, and the schedule and the number of students and the number of courses I was teaching was terrifying to me. It took me a little while to get my feet on the ground and realize that I actually could do three different preps and five classes a day. I managed to do that mostly with help from my wife, who was an experienced teacher at that point. That transition for me from college to high school was really hard. The dual enrollment helped with that because I knew what I was doing for the dual enrollment classes. That kind of made everything easier, I think.

I taught there for 10 years and then took an early retirement because our fifth child was about to be born, so I spent about 3 or 4 years not teaching and then came back and started here [current public high school]. I’ve been doing this for 3 years. There were things that I loved about all of them [past jobs] in their own way. Summit University was a great job. I loved that I was teaching Great Books as well as straight-up English courses. That was delightful. This [current] job has probably, in terms of workload and perks and salary, the best job I’ve ever had, but it’s impossible to live with. All of them have been mixed. Those two kind of stand out. Magnolia Academy was, at the time, a very, very good school until they got a new head of school. I’ve never had any problems with administration my entire career until they got a new head of school there, and there were things that I just could not live with anymore. Actually, when I was working at Magnolia Academy, I was getting a supplement from the college that I was working with

for my dual enrollment courses. The new head of school was an economist who looked at the books, and he took away my extra salary.

This Should be the Job of a Lifetime

In our first interview, I asked Julio to respond to the word “work.” The first word that comes to mind is oppressive. This is where immediately we’re getting into information that is kind of touchy. I’ve been teaching for, I realized now, nearly 40 years. The entire time I’ve taught college classes. I realized I’ve been teaching dual enrollment for 13 years. Then I’ve been here at this academy for 3 years, and it’s the first time that I’ve taught public secondary school. It is a fantastic job. The administration is impossible. It’s just abysmal. While this should be the job of a lifetime, it’s actually oppressive and onerous and horrendous, and that’s in part because the principal of our school has never served as principal before. He’s relatively young, has no clue what he’s doing.

Number two, the district that I am in is an utter failure. Statistically 60% of our high school students are illiterate. They graduate as far from being college and career ready as they possibly can. Well, that’s not true. It could be worse. It could be 100%. To my mind, if we were grading our school system, we get a 40, which is not even a good F. It’s a low F. It’s abysmal. It’s oppressive here because for me, what I’m doing teaching dual enrollment now is nothing like what I was doing when I was teaching in a private high school. When I was there [Magnolia Academy], I wouldn’t let in anyone [to dual enrollment] who wasn’t a senior and didn’t have at least a 3.5 GPA. Because to my mind, I’m taking high school students who are competent high school writers and trying to turn them into good college writers. That is impossible here because if I were to hold to the

standards that I had, at the time, I would probably have an 80% failure rate for my students.

We have a small academic program here, and it's a college and career academy, and most of it is CTAE [career, technical, and agricultural education] pathways. Academics is kind of the second-class stepchild here. We have no budget. There's no budget for academics. I have to beg for anything that we get, and as an example, I'm sorry, you pushed a button, so, I'm going to keep going. *I assured Julio that he should continue. I removed some of the specific details here to protect Julio's identity.* Some of the pathways are excellent. We have an excellent [specific CTAE] program. It's a really good program. The first thing they have to do is pass a [specific test]. They get certified in the first semester doing that. In order to be able to do the reading and writing and work for that, we won't let them into the program unless they have at least a seventh-grade reading level. A lot of the students who apply here don't meet that requirement. Where did they go if they're not at the seventh-grade reading level? They come into academics. They come to my (*emphasizes each word*) college. English. Class. Because we don't have as many students. We need more students in our program.

Many [of my students are] at a second, third, fourth grade level. I don't need to point out the absurdity of that (*laughs*). It is ridiculous. I have no standards anymore at all. When I first came into this job, I did not understand what was going on here and got taken to task for failing students. Not in a threatening way, but eyebrows were raised, and I had to document absolutely everything that I did. Did I contact the parents? I don't know if you do Infinite Campus [student information system] with the contact logs and all of that stuff, but I had to document absolutely everything.

The bottom line is if you come to this school, you don't fail. You don't have the opportunity to fail. We're gonna pass you one way or another. The only way that I can sleep is, well, I need this job. I'm at a senior level. I've got six kids. I need the money, right? I will do what I need to do. That already is a compromise, but the only way that I can sleep at night is just by thinking, "Okay, if I've got a student who's at a third-grade level, if I can get that student up to a fourth-grade level, then I have done essentially the equivalent of moving a student from 12th grade writing to college writing. I've taken him up a grade level." That student will pass the course with a 70, which is the minimum for passing a dual enrollment course. The majority of my students are in that boat. I have very few students who are, before or after my course, writing at a college level. That's where I am, and it's a hard place to be.

I asked Julio if the college faculty were aware that most of his students were earning college credit with such undeveloped reading and writing skills. I don't know how they couldn't. All of my time is spent on this [high school] campus. I really have very little contact with the college itself, but they must know. They must know. In part because I receive students in 1102 who are no better than the ones that I've had previously, so I know that there are other instructors who are doing the same thing that I'm doing. I have very little interaction with other instructors. I've had a little bit, but yes, they know. I think they're obligated to do the same thing. I mean, you either try to work with your students where they are, or you don't have students. I'm sure that they are aware of that. I don't think anybody can say that publicly. It's a big charade. It's kind of a farcical charade. It's awful. It's awful.

I asked Julio what he enjoys about his current job. Just working with students individually, and frankly, that's one of the things that is wonderful about this job. Face-to-face students, I've got maybe a dozen students per class and big blocks of time, so I can sit down individually with students and work with them on their writing and on their projects. And that's where real learning happens. It does not happen online. It does not happen in a classroom setting. It happens in that individual tutorial, sit down session. I love this job for that reason. I can work with them very closely, and I get to know them, and I get to know their work, and they can actually make some progress, which is great.

A Process Approach

When I interviewed him, Julio was teaching two face-to-face sections of English 1102 and one online section of English 1101. One of the things that's been both a blessing and a curse is that I don't write my own curriculum. It comes down from the technical college, so everything, all the assignments, all the essay assignments, all the reading assignments, everything is already mapped out. I'm really very little more than a grader for the course, which was not true when I was teaching it at the private school. I was doing my own curriculum there, and (*whispers*) it was a much better course. Anyway, that's the frustration. At the same time, it takes a lot of work off my hands. I don't have to develop a curriculum that way.

For both classes, it's sort of a typical classroom curriculum setup. The students just do all the work on their own. There are readings that they're assigned from an online textbook. It's an open-source textbook, so students have no expense for any of their materials for the class, and (*sighs*) it's pretty much a traditional and, to my mind, not very helpful composition book for 1101. It's got a chapter on narration. It's got a chapter on

description. It's got a chapter on argumentation and so forth. That's fine. Students are expected to go read that material and then take a quiz on it and then write an essay. There are a total of three major essays for the class.

I have my own philosophy about how 1101 should go, and this part of it I think they get right. It is a process approach. There's a brainstorming exercise, there's a prewriting exercise, then they draft, and then they write a final draft, and that's great. I like that very much. I haven't looked at new textbooks for this course in 20 years, but the textbook that I've always used for 1101 is *St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, which is really, really heavy on models. It has a lot of student examples of essays and a lot of professional examples of essays, and from what I know about human psychology, that is how we learn. We learn by imitation. I really think that's an extremely valuable approach, and the materials that I have for this course through the technical college provides virtually no resources like that. I think that's a big, big gap.

That's basically the curriculum, and that's true for 1102 as well. Go read this material. Read however many pages worth of literary devices that poets and novelists can use. Then go take a quiz on that and then go write an essay that analyzes a poem and talk about the poetic devices that the poet uses. Again, no examples to speak of. Another open-source online textbook, but very few examples of what that kind of writing should look like (*pauses*). Voila!

For the online sections that I have, I'm basically a grader for those classes. That's really about all that I do. For the face-to-face sections, I'm a lot more interactive. I do provide some models. Not as heavily as I would if I were doing the whole curriculum myself. I sit down with them individually and work with them on their writing and their

assignments, which I'm very grateful for here. The student-teacher ratio here is very, very low, so I have a lot of time to work with them individually. Then I give lessons too. I teach the way I always have in the classroom, provide them with techniques for how to do a comparison contrast essay, mnemonic devices, handouts on how to structure an argumentative essay based on Aristotle (*laughs*). All that kind of stuff.

Then for 1102, we read things together because I know they're not going to read. They will not read, so we do it in class together, and at least I know that they've been exposed to the material before they go to AI and find an essay about it and turn it in. I'm sorry. I'm very cynical these days, but that's just the way of the world. Ideally, I would have them reading a lot of essays that do what a particular assignment asks them to do. If they are writing a narrative, then I'll give them lots of examples of narratives. If they're writing a persuasive/argumentative essay, I'll give them a lot of examples of those, both from student writing and then professional examples as well. One of my favorite things to do is go to the Op Ed pages of what used to be called newspapers and say, "Oh, look at this! (*excited voice*) Look how there's a reputation section here, and you see that part, that's where they do all the blahdy blahdy blah!" I mean, the principles of argument/persuasive writing have not changed in a couple thousand years. So go to just about any opinion piece like that, find the elements that I want the students to hang on to, use forever.

I really believe in imitation. That's the way musicians learn how to play and develop their own style. That is the way that writers learn how to write and develop their own style. I just think that's the way that the human brain works. That's the way we're

hardwired. The more models that I can put in front of them, and the more I can get them to follow those, I think that's how you learn. So that's my philosophy about that.

College-Level Writing Takes the Next Step

I prompted Julio to tell me what came to mind when he thought of the word "writing." Two things: it cuts both ways (*pauses*). I spent 10 years at Magnolia Academy. I was chair of the department during that whole time, and I was teaching dual enrollment the whole time. Just by chance, the college counselor, the last year that I was there, did a poll of alumni that went back 10 years and asked them, "In what subject area did you feel most prepared when you got to college?" Universally, unanimously, the answer was English, which I was very, very happy about. Students would come back and say, "My roommates, they didn't know anything about writing essays, and I was able to help them." I thought, "This is fantastic. This is working the way that it's supposed to," and it was highly successful. When I think about writing, I think how important that communication is and how important that is for everything that they're going to do for the rest of their lives. That's the first thing.

Number two, here [his current high school], utter failure. Utter failure because I have students who can't begin to read, much less write. Many, many of my students can't write. They have no sense of where sentence boundaries are. I get fragments and run-on sentences, and I'm struggling just to try to get them to be able to write competent sentences. We know illiteracy and poverty go absolutely hand-in-hand. Every school in this district has a free lunch program because poverty is the rule here, not the exception. We're not going to break out of that until we do something about literacy rates here. So, writing here: abysmal, utter failure.

The third thing that comes to mind though is, I don't know how to deal with this yet, but I don't know what to do about AI [artificial intelligence]. I have no clue what to do about AI. I don't know. Especially with 1102, I get plagiarism all the time, straight out of AI, and I asked myself the question, "Does it even matter? Does it even matter?" I mean, is the advent of AI to writing what the advent of the pocket calculator was to mathematics? Is literacy going to be defined in the future by how well you can ask AI a prompt? Maybe that's all that matters. Maybe 20 years from now, that's all that's gonna count. Maybe it's not important for students to know how to write competently. They just need to know how to put the right prompt into an AI chatbot.

I think ideally, if you're talking about good (*pauses*) high school level writing, you're talking about good formulaic writing. I can write a solid five-paragraph essay. For me, college-level writing takes the next step. It breaks out of the formulas. It's more creative and more in depth. It challenges students more to ask harder questions, and I really don't know what else I would say about that. I'm really reluctant to talk about research. I think that we emphasize research way too much at the high school level. I think students need to find their own voice in writing because it's way too easy just to regurgitate what people have said. I think that's it. I think it's depth. And I think it's the ability to flex and move and to be more creative, break out of the formulas and communicate more effectively in more depth. That doesn't feel like a very satisfactory answer, but I don't know what else to come up with.

In a follow-up question, I asked Julio to discuss how he supported his dual enrollment students in their transition to college when he was teaching at the private school. I asked him what he thought he needed to get his students to do to be successful in

college. Just do the work for the course. Do the things that you do now, evaluate where they are with their writing. When they start the class and realize that they need to move from point A to point B, that okay, we need to work on paragraphing here. We need to work on sentence structure, compound-complex sentence structure, but least they have a good grasp of the material. They know how to read. If they're not perfect at it, they can write coherent sentences. They're thinkers. Let me take that and shape it and let's go beyond the five-paragraph essay. Add some depth, add some research, bounce them off one another. Have them collaborate because that's the way they're going to be writing for the rest of their lives. They're going to have somebody edit and make comments, or they're going to collaborate, so let's work on that. Let's make sure that when they walk into a sociology class, they'll understand what it means to write a comparison/contrast essay. I want to get them ready for all of the writing jobs that they'll be doing in college because all of these kids are going to be going to college. I want to make sure that primarily, they know how to write a solid argument, to present their position, to support it, to anticipate objections. When they're working for Google and there's a \$10 million contract on the line, they can make a solid presentation and make it convincing and get the job.

They can't do that in high school. They can be good readers, and they can do the fundamentals of the five-paragraph essay and that kind of stuff, but I want to move them to the next step, to get them ready both for college and then what they're going to be doing subsequent to college as well with their writing. The other half of the year though, was 1102. I feel very differently about both 1101 and 1102 these days, but at the time, I did Socratic seminars. I'd have them write out questions that they'd bring every day

about the short stories or the plays or whatever it was we were reading, and we would discuss those at length. I was able to really explore how poetry works with them so they would understand the difference between a sonnet and a limerick, for instance. We could look at the subtleties of poetry. We can look at the symbolism. We can look at the imagery. They really could appreciate that and understand and see what we were doing. When we did plays, we would perform them in class. We would act out the scenes. It was what, to my mind, 1102 was meant to be, and that was great. Nothing like what I'm doing now. Nothing at all. My students can't even read, many of them can't even read instructions for the assignments and understand what they're supposed to do, much less appreciate the subtlety of the difference between hexameter and dactylic, and that's unfathomable to me now, and I don't even try. This is one of the realities of Central City, Georgia. You've got abysmal public schools and pretty darn good private schools, and by and large they're segregation academies. That's the reality. I really never understood just how bad the public schools are here, until number one, I started teaching in them, and then number two, I have students in them as well—my own kids. It's abysmal.

I Don't Do Homework

In our first interview, I asked Julio to respond to the term "homework," and he told me he did not believe in it. In our third interview, he brought the topic up again and stated he was unsatisfied with his original response. He then told me the story about living in Germany and how this experience impacted how he views homework today. I was living in Germany, and I first got there and wanted to go to the grocery store in the evening and discovered that I couldn't do that. Because grocery stores closed at 6 o'clock in Germany and being the American that has Walmart open for 24 hours, or used to

before COVID “So, what in the world is going on here? You gotta be kidding me.” I actually asked somebody about that on the street one day and was told “familienzeit,” which is “family time,” and the Germans take them very seriously. They shut down their businesses because for them, people are more important than profits, unlike us Americans. So, that gave me pause. At the time I kind of rejected that and thought, “That’s really stupid,” but looking back on it now, I really, really, really appreciate that, and I wish that we had learned something that way from our European counterparts. That’s one of the reasons that I don’t believe in homework for my students. It’s family time. Frankly, that’s way more important than school time would ever think about being, so I don’t want to take away from them. So many of the students don’t have coherent families, or their families are fractured in some way. Still, it’s time for them to take care of their siblings, take care of their own children, and time to do something besides the obligations of schoolwork and system, frankly, that’s completely broken, and schoolwork doesn’t really count for anything anyway. I’m not going to have them go home and read 50 pages of Shakespeare and come back with two questions the next day.

There’s a Hierarchy There

I have virtually no contact with any of the college faculty, and it seems to be actively discouraged. It’s very strange. I don’t know where that comes from, but there’s a hierarchy there. All the students here take a face-to-face course, and they have an online course in addition to that every semester. I had a student who was in an online psychology course, and she was having trouble working something out with the instructor. There was clearly a communication problem. I called the instructor directly and tried to explain what was going on, and she kind of freaked out and (*pauses*) was

really apprehensive about having any conversation with me because it did not involve her department head, and then after that, protocol came down that we're supposed to go through certain channels when we're working with people at [the technical college]. I just thought, "Okay, well, I'm not going to do that again" (*laughs*). It's just weird to me that we can't converse colleague-to-colleague like that. I don't know what's going on with that, but that was a couple of years ago. I don't know if anything has changed since then, but I have not tread in those waters again.

So, that on the one hand. Second, I have a department chair and then a division chair, and then there's somebody who is in charge of the dual enrollment program there [at the college]. Those are the really the only three people that I have any contact with. The department chair is great for when I don't remember how to submit my grades. I can call him up and say, "What do I do?" He says, "Here's what you do" (*laughs*). The division chair is great too because he leaves me alone. He was a student at Summit University when I was a teacher at Summit University, so we know each other. Whenever I've needed anything, he's been really helpful. Mostly he just doesn't bother me and lets me do my thing, which I'm really grateful for. That is one of the things that I think has destroyed the teaching profession is that we have taken away instructors' autonomy, so I'm really grateful for whatever autonomy I can grab.

Then the dual enrollment person, it's just every semester is just a nightmare for dual enrollment because they register students late. Usually, on a good semester, we will get everybody up and running in Blackboard, in the learning platform, two weeks into the course. Sometimes it's more like a month before everybody has access to what they need. They claim that they're trying to improve that. It never works. Part of it is because they

have so many applications they have to put in, applications with Georgia Futures [an online resource where students register for DE courses], they have put in an application with community college, and so on and so forth. That administrative part of it is kind of a disaster.

I asked Julio if he considers himself to be a college faculty member. That's a hard question to answer. I think that in my mind, I am. In the way that I'm actually treated, no. We're treated like high school teachers. That's one of the things that I have suggested and would like to encourage. We should be thinking of ourselves as a college here because students are taking their college classes. Faculty should think of themselves that way, and administration should think of faculty that way as well, but no, as a rule, we do not. We follow the models of the high schools just because that's how the administrator thinks, and that's not good for faculty, frankly.

I Do the Best I Can to Focus on What I Can

*I asked Julio about the academic growth that he sees in his students from the beginning of a course to the end. I think [that growth] is entirely dependent on two other things. The first is the rapport that you establish with that student. I try to learn something about their lives, and even though I'm the old white guy (*smiles*), I try to make at least some connection to their lives and let them know that I really am available, and I have a listening ear, and I'll do what I can. I think that rapport is really essential in order to accomplish anything individually when you're working with students.*

The other thing is the circumstances of their lives. There's some students who, just because of the realities of their lives, are not going to be able to really make very much progress. Examples: 2 years ago, in the same class, I had one student who was

transitioning from female to male (*pauses*), facing family difficulties with that. She had not been able to tell her mother about that yet or any of her family members. She was living a dual life. She was male here, and she was female at home. Now, present tense, he is, he was living a female life at home, male life here. We here [at school] had to be very cautious when we were talking with mom because he had adopted a different name, so he was one person to us, and a different name to mom. That was really a hard negotiation. That was a really, really difficult time, and how can you focus on comma splices when you're dealing with that kind of stuff, right?

The transgender kid, I hadn't seen in a couple of years. I went to Barnes and Noble the other day, and behind the Starbucks counter was this person that I thought, "I know you," and (*excited voice as he recognized who it was*) "Oh, my God!" Way more confident. Way more self-assured. Obviously happier. He'd been able to come out of closet with mom. Mom was good, family was good, has plans for career. By the way, that student was the best writer I've ever had at the school from the outset because he'd been homeschooled. And it was, was really good. Was in an engineering program. Very, very capable students. Thankfully, life is on track now, and that's good. That was a good connection that we made in the classroom, and I'm grateful for that.

In the same class, I had a student one day who was not feeling well, and she eventually left the class. She was actively miscarrying in class. I mean, the realities of these kids' lives. Nearly all of them come from poverty. It's crushing. It's just crushing, so whether or not they can make any progress on their writing, on their reading, is more a function of the realities of their lives than what I can do in a classroom. I have to face that

and cope with it, but while I'm here, I've got them 2 hours a day. While I'm here, I do the best I can to focus on what I can.

I'm thinking just from this campus, first semester that I taught here, I taught summer school and had two classes. One had a normal number of students and the other one student, just one student. I don't know why they chose to work it that way, but in any case, that student started out not confident and mediocre writing, certainly not college level but at least high school, which was good. I had individual instruction every day with that student, and by the end of the time, I was writing recommendation letters for college, and she got accepted into the program that she wanted to get into, and it worked out really well. I was very happy about that. That was good.

The other thing is that we get a range of students here. Most of them are the ones who are really struggling, but also when word gets out to parents, as it does not very effectively here, I don't know why. Actually, I do. We don't initiate it, but when word gets out that you can earn 30 hours of college credit for free, we occasionally get the other end—the really high achieving students who are interested in medical school and want to get through that and graduate programs as quickly as they can and move on down the road. So, the past 2 years thanks mostly to my colleague over here who teaches Spanish, one of the ways that she connects with students is by becoming their academic advisor. The counselors in high schools here are so overworked that they can't begin to do an adequate job with these kids. So [Spanish teacher] over there, sits down with and works through their transcripts, sees the things that they need to do. She helps those who want to graduate early. She makes sure that they've got the credits in place that they get fully the 30 hours of enrollment. And the past 2 years, we've had one student who ended

up with a full ride scholarship to [College]. This year, we've got one who's got a full ride scholarship to [another college]. So, we've had some good success that way.

This Job Requires Dishonesty

I first asked Julio to tell me what support his high school administrators could provide to make his job easier. I could talk about that for a year (*pauses*). Stop thinking that we work for you. That's what I would say to my administrators. We work for our students, and you don't work for the [school] board. You work for us. I'm going to provide my students with the support that they need to be successful, and you need to do the same. Number one, stop imposing all this crap from the [school] board on me. Give me autonomy in my classroom. Instead of telling me that I have to write on the board like I do over here (*gestures to white board*), our learning target and success criteria every day, which is utter nonsense, let me teach the way that I know how to teach in a way that I know is effective with students, and we'll have success, but when you impose all this other nonsense on me, first of all, you're gonna drive me out of the profession like you have every other beginning teacher, make this life and this job miserable.

Number two, you're undermining my opportunity to be really supportive of my students. I could talk about this all day long. I mean, it's all backwards, and it's all wrong, and we've ruined the profession. Furthermore, academics has no budget. We have no budget. All the CTAE programs are incredibly well funded, but academics has no budget. When I put in a request for textbooks in the beginning of the year, I was told, "No. You have no budget for that." Thankfully, the administrative assistant found a way to work around the principal, and she got me books through the back door, but there's no support in the way that we need it. At all (*pauses*).

That's a really, really important question. The first thing is that the whole attitude and philosophy of administration has to shift so that they understand what their job is. I mean, the rule here is protect your butt. Cover yourself. I'm sorry, [but] you can't be successful that way. Except in protecting your butt (*laughs*). It's all superficial. There's no substance. I'm forced to do the same thing [protecting myself]. This job requires dishonesty. It requires dishonesty, and I'm in a position where I need the job. I feel really trapped.

I then asked what kind of support Julio wants from the college faculty. I prefer the autonomy. I think in the current circumstance, I'd just prefer the autonomy. Ideally, I'd like to be able to set my own curriculum. Ideally, I'd like to get paid better from the college. The adjunct salary is laughable. Most of my salary is paid by [the school district] so you can't really argue with that. Primarily if I could write my own course, set my own curriculum (*shakes head*). With the students that I have, it wouldn't work anyway, so I'm okay with where it is right now.

In our fourth interview, my final question to Julio was where he sees himself in the future. That's completely unpredictable right now. My wife would leave today if we can move, and we need to. This place is not a good fit for our family. It hasn't been for a long time, but it's just gotten worse the farther our kids have gotten into school and so forth. This is not the right place for us—politically either—so I just don't know what's going to happen. The moment that we get a break, we will go, so I cannot predict that. I have no idea. What I want to do is to write two textbooks and make a fortune off of those and leave. *Julio then went on to tell me about the two textbooks that he wants to write, which I will not share here so that his ideas remain private.*

My Reflection

Julio had a wealth of knowledge and experience spanning an almost 40-year career. While he spoke positively of some of his past experiences teaching at different colleges as well as teaching DE at a private high school, his current experience teaching dual enrollment at the public college and career academy was extremely negative. While several of my collaborators' experiences surprised me, none was more surprising than Julio's. The following is a researcher memo I wrote immediately after my first interview with him:

What Julio shared with me in the first interview was so outside of anything I expected to hear from a collaborator, and I realized I had expectations and assumptions that I did not even know I had. One assumption was that most dual enrollment students have at least a basic high-school-level proficiency with reading and writing. In my own experiences teaching dual enrollment, I had a handful of students each year that were not at all prepared for college-level work, but overall, I had dual students with strong work ethics and/or had average or above-average reading and writing skills. Most of my students could comprehend the texts I gave them and could produce essays that were at least on a high school level. However, Julio's experience was not on par with mine in this regard. In fact, most of his students are below a seventh grade reading level. This information was shocking and made me realize that I had assumptions about the kind of students who are in dual enrollment classes that I did not even recognize at first.

Julio's experiences were surprising to me, but they also represented the exact reason I chose to conduct this research: to amplify the voices and share the experiences of dual enrollment English teachers. Julio used such negative diction to describe his experiences. He used the term "oppressive" to describe work. He used phrases such as "utterly abysmal," "utter failure," and "impossible" to describe the administration at his school as well as the school system in which he works. Very few of Julio's students write at a college-level either before or after his course. Julio described feeling trapped in his position, and he said that it is a "hard place to be."

Julio exhibited strong meaning-making during our third and fourth interviews when I asked him to reconstruct specific stories about his experiences teaching at various colleges. As he told stories, he reflected on lessons that he took from each of these experiences and how he carried those experiences and lessons with him. For example, he reflected positively on his experience teaching at Monument College in the Great Books program, and he carried some of the Great Books strategies, like Socratic seminars, with him. However, he also expressed a deep sense of regret that he did not pursue other career paths, such as going to pharmacy school, when he was in college and had the opportunity to do so.

Additionally, Julio's reflected on a contradiction in his experiences at his current school. He said his job should be the job of a lifetime, but it's "impossible to live with." He appreciated the small class sizes and the manageable workload in terms of planning and grading. Julio spoke fondly of his students, and I could tell that he cared deeply about building relationships with students. He told me stories of positive connections he's been able to make with students. He said being able to sit down one-on-one to work with

students was the best part of the job. However, he expressed uncertainty about the future. He foresaw class sizes increasing because of district-level decisions. He was becoming increasingly frustrated with the quality of education his own children were receiving from the school system, and he expressed his desire to move elsewhere if the opportunity presented itself. Learning about his experiences was eye-opening, and I am grateful that he was willing to share so much and be so open with me.

Elbert

Elbert was the third collaborator to complete the Qualtrics survey. Like Claire, Elbert was an acquaintance I knew from a school system I worked in previously, but we never worked together. When we spoke, Elbert was finishing up his 17th year teaching. He teaches at Briarwood High School, a school in North Georgia, which is the same high school he attended as a student. He just finished his 2nd year teaching dual enrollment courses through a local community college, Southern Ridge College.

Elbert is the English department chair at his high school, and he also coaches the high school cross country team. He mentioned his introverted nature and that teaching is draining for him. He's taught a little bit of everything in the English department including British, American, world, and AP literature. His school is on a seven-period schedule, with each class lasting about 50 minutes. He currently teaches AP Language, AP Seminar, and dual enrollment (English 1101/1102).

I conducted interviews with Elbert during May 2024. For our first interview, we had some technical difficulties, so we spoke through Facetime. After some initial trial and error, I was able to use Facetime on my computer, and I recorded the Facetime using my phone. I was also able to use Otter.ai as a backup audio recording as I did for

all my interviews. For the second and third interviews with Elbert, we were able to use Microsoft Teams.

Elbert's Story

I've been married for 16 years, almost 17 now, and I am a father of four. I have children that are 15, 12, and 10, and a foster daughter who's 17. She's been living with us for the past year and a half. So yeah, we're a pretty full household with three dogs too. For free time, I like to exercise. I like to run for fun because I coach cross country as well. Just exercising for me is fun. I read a decent bit, but I read all day [at work], so I kind of get tired of reading all day.

I play guitar. I play in a church band, the worship band on Sunday mornings. I'm not actually very religious though. My wife is; my family is. That's kind of what I do in my spare time. A lot of my life is spent ping ponging to sporting events, which is again why you have me on the phone (*laughs*). I was going to say with the four kids and all that, you have to catch me when I'm in the car. I can't sit still too long. I get crazy. I also think that I tend to be pretty introverted, and I don't like to talk to folks a whole bunch out in public things, but my wife does, and so I tend to be out amongst places a lot. In the classroom, I'm talking, but outside of that I don't know what to say.

That Was the Turning Point

I had been fortunate enough when I was at Briarwood High School to have a teacher that kind of pointed [my writing ability] out to me on one of essays I did. That was the turning point, I guess, in 11th grade that she gave back the research paper and was like, "This is the best one I've seen." I was like, "Oh. I never thought about it like that." I didn't know I had done anything special or anything like that.

I was fortunate enough to grow up in a house with a mom that read and a dad that was a teacher, and my grandmother loved to write letters and stuff like that. She would always complain to the editor about things in the newspaper. I was always around people who tended to write, so it was kind of almost natural, but it was a bit of a surprise when the high school teacher was like, “Hey, that’s the best that I’ve seen. I’m so impressed.” She literally wrote, “I’m so impressed.” She was not one to give out compliments. She was like a battleaxe. Five foot two and terrifying.

I think a big thing is—just being honest—18-year-old me wanted nothing to do with my parents. How they were. I looked at them or looked at my dad like, “I don’t want to be like that” because 18-year-old defiance is cooler than my dad. My dad was this way, and priorities were very different, I guess. Young me was like, “I want to travel doing physical therapy. I want to be up in the mountains somewhere.” Just kind of an outdoorsy bro type or something like that. It’s funny how, again, prefrontal cortex developing, I look back now like how immature I was. When I first graduated high school, and even the first 2 years of college, [I] did not really understand that like, “Oh, I need to find something that I can enjoy but then also be pretty good at” and everything, so I think the compliments that I got kind of led me toward that [and] teachers who kind of encouraged me because, again, I never really saw a path in that. I never saw [teaching] as a career option initially.

I Didn’t Intend to Teach High School

I jumped colleges a good many times, and I got my bachelor’s in English from Pinecrest College at the time in 2006 and went back and got education certification through secondary ed in 2007. I student taught at Briarwood High School, and my first

full time job was in [a] high school in [Northeast] Georgia. I taught 12th grade British lit there for 3 years, and then I moved to Briarwood after that when the job opened up. This is my alma mater. I started there in 2010, and I've been there ever since.

[Going into education] was kind of an accident. I started college as a physical therapy major for about a year and a half, and I started doing pretty well in my English courses. I think I was decent at it in high school because [of] one of my teachers, but one of my college teachers asked if I would write for the school newspaper. She's like, "I have articles for the school newspaper, and you're doing really well as a writer." That was at Southern Ridge College. She asked if I would write a few things for the paper, and I said, "Sure. Why not?" I was kind of almost annoyed at first because I didn't want to. If you do well at something, you kind of get asked to do things. I didn't like that so much. I was kind of like, "Really? Do I have to do this?" About halfway through, probably a year and a half into college, I realized I didn't like the science classes very much.

I've had someone ask me to write articles, and then I had another person ask me if I would tutor in English because I was doing well on papers, and I kind of just drifted over towards deciding, "Okay." [I] actually had two good advisors, and they both kind of convinced me that being an English major could be a way to make a living (*laughs*). They didn't mention the education part so much, so I went through English thinking, "Fine, I'll be a college professor, and that's what I'll do." I had no intention of teaching high school. I thought that teaching high school would be a waste of time honestly. I was like, "Why would you waste your efforts with kids who don't want to learn anything?"

I got my bachelor's and was gonna go get my master's, and I'll start into the world of academia. I started courses to take my master's program and realized after I'd

been working for a year at Pinecrest's Writing Center tutoring and looking at the courses I was gonna take, I was like, "Am I really gonna be helping anybody, or is it just gonna be a decade of me worrying about me?" I didn't really think teaching was in my future because my dad was a math teacher for 33 years, and I'd kind of avoided the idea of teaching at all.

Doing well earlier in college in those [English] classes, and then it was just kind of a gradual shift. I don't remember exactly the day when I shifted that way, but when I transferred from Southern Ridge College to Eagle State University was when I kind of decided, "Okay, I think I could do English," and I was like, "I'll be a college professor. I'll just go all the way through the world of academia," but I think it was, again, the older I get, the smarter my dad got (*laughs*). If that makes any sense. The things I thought were stupid that my dad did were actually like, "Oh, it's because he was smart enough to not give a crap what anyone thought about him."

It was a neat mix because in college I helped coach cross country here at Briarwood High School. I helped the coach here for 2 years, and I loved that. I loved being able to help out with running, and I definitely didn't get into teaching to coach, but that was a nice aspect and just getting to work with young people also. Initially, I thought, "I can't stand high school kids. They're so immature," and yeah they are, but they're also pretty neat. It's kind of interesting, and people always get worried about the future and all like, "Oh, kids these days," but for me, I'm the other way around. I get to witness the future firsthand. I get to see what's coming up the next few years. Getting to work with kids in cross country kind of helped. Getting to help tutor in the writing center kind of led me toward that way.

I Get to Decide Every Day if I Enjoy this Job or Not

Then oddly enough, after I graduated, I still didn't intend to teach high school. I graduated in 2006 with my bachelor's, and I worked at a camp. I worked the summer there. You live on campus there, and my job was I was the Bible study teacher for that. I spent the summer being a camp counselor and teaching Bible study. I was kind of like, "This is pretty fun."

After that job was over, because it's just seasonal, I applied to be a substitute teacher in Dale County. It's funny, the secretary at Dale County, I don't even remember her name, but I was like, "I think it'd be good to serve just to get out there and spend some time out in the classroom." I had decided after camp to go back to Pinecrest University to get my ed[ucation] certification in the fall and student teach in the spring. She was like, "You know, you just got this one year, and you can go, and you can decide what your classroom is going to be like and how you want to teach and what kind of person you want to be." Oddly enough, I don't know if she meant it to be as weighty as it was, but it kind of made me realize, "I'm kind of in control of the person I want to be." It's not the job that made my dad the way he was. He was his own person and everything. I've kind of carried that on. It's like I get to decide every day if I enjoy this job or not. Realizing, especially with English, I have a lot more freedom to do that than say with math curriculum or science curriculum. As much fun as those things could be, I was better just overall at ELA and realized I love what literature can do for people. I've seen what language can do for people. I think I told you about my grandmother loves to write. My mother loves to read. I kind of realized it kind of all just kind of came together in a

really neat way that I didn't expect, but the intent was not to teach high school for sure. Now I'm glad that I didn't do what 20-year-old me thought.

I talked to my advisor again at Pinecrest, and I was like, "I think I might teach," and she was like, "Well," and she listed some of the reasons that would be good. Like, "Oftentimes, you get to decide what you want to teach, and just think of all the people that you might help." She kind of had me convinced, and I had not intended to get into teaching at all.

It [teaching] kind of just fell into my lap in a way. I didn't start out thinking it because, again, I was a little bit more selfish about it. Initially, with the academic idea, I was more like, "I'll be famous, and I'll write the next great American novel." I think that was probably 20-year-old me who was super superior, but it's funny how just [in] 2 years, by the time I finished college, my mindset was not that anymore. It was more like, "Okay, I could probably help some people," and I didn't want to be a doctor or anything like that. The kids that I was around in high school were kind of the unseen ones that didn't see themselves as kids that could learn, or that they didn't think school had any purpose for them. I was kind of thinking, "Okay, let's play a little game and see if I'll challenge myself and see, can I make school matter for these kids?" That led me in the direction of wanting to be in public school teaching.

That's kind of a long story, but still, that's kind of how I ended up jumping into it, and my fiancée at the time was going into elementary school teaching and all, so she was like, "You'll be so great at it!" So, I had a good cheerleader in my corner too. We're married now. She wasn't just my fiancée. She's the media specialist at the [Briarwood] Primary School. She did elementary school for about 6 years, and then she did middle

school for about 2 [years], and then got into elementary school library. She was the elementary school librarian at [another school] and now is at Briarwood Primary. She's the media specialist, so lots of books in our house.

I'm Conflicted

In our first interview, I prompted Elbert to respond to the term "dual enrollment." He spoke about his general beliefs and experiences teaching dual enrollment for the past 2 years. I'm conflicted because I really enjoy [teaching dual enrollment]. I get a lot of freedom to choose my curriculum pretty well. [The college] does have a framework in d2L [course learning management system] that I've looked at, and it was not anything that I wanted to use at all. I've been able to kind of glean things, luckily, from other professors that have posted things in places like d2L or on Canvas [another learning management system], where they posted their 1101 courses, and I can see, okay, that's kind of what it looks like, and I can do something similar. I've appreciated that.

At the same time, it's kind of lonely a bit. I'm only one that does it in my school, and it's funny the level of, it's not bad, but sometimes teacher's jealousy a bit. People who don't teach the courses think that, "Oh, you just have these wonderful children that are college students and really want to do well." I have had that. This semester, I've got some really great, phenomenal students, but it's a weird mix of students who are doing a dual enrollment to get college credit because it's free, or students who have done honors classes all throughout school and are taking dual enrollment because they've gone through all of the different AP classes. They took AP Lit, the final lit, their junior year, so they have nothing to do their senior year. I'll be honest, some kids just sat through regular

[English classes] for 11, 12 years, and some that have taken the hardest things and passed both AP exams. It makes it difficult to tailor the work to each person, each kid, because they're not all there for the same reason. *Elbert emphasized that he enjoys having students with different plans and goals in his dual enrollment class. The challenge for him lies not in the students themselves but in tailoring the course content to meet their individual needs.*

It's a mix of juniors and seniors too, so I've got some juniors who have finished American lit or something like that, and they're not where they need to be as far as college-level writing, so it's almost like a remedial course that I'm doing with the regular 1101 course. I'm trying to catch them up while, I'm not bragging, but in one of my classes, I have four kids going to Georgia Tech, a kid got into Stanford, a kid going to Auburn, and two UGA kids, and then with a kid who is a great kid, but he's going into welding next year. They're not there for the same purposes. Not that I'm against that. I'm not bashing any of them, and I'm glad to have all of them, but at the same time, it's weird to jam them all in the same room—a kid that's going to be at Georgia Tech in a few months [and] the kid that's going to be back at Briarwood High School next year. I want to prepare the Georgia Tech kids, but I can't kill the juniors that are gonna not graduate on time.

I think [dual enrollment] is beneficial. I wish that they would maybe limit it to seniors. I've had one junior who has had the maturity level to think about career plans and everything. If we're looking at the college transfer [of credits], it's hard to compare because I don't know what other colleges are doing. I don't know that this kid will go to UGA [University of Georgia] and feel prepared when they get to UGA. I think I'm doing

a fair job. I think I'm preparing them as well as I can for the next level, but at the same time, I don't know.

I think I have talked about not this year, but next year, limiting [the course] potentially to just seniors instead of juniors because I had one junior this year that was a standout. She did wonderfully. I was so proud of her, and she actually won the Excellence in DE English [award]. You're only allowed to give one award per gender, per class. She had a 99 in my class, and that was very rare that because the rest of my juniors, save one, kind of struggled. They just didn't have the maturity level, and I don't want that to affect their college transcript, that they're potentially failing a college class before they're even out of high school. Before they're even to their senior year. Maturity-wise, it's hard. Prefrontal cortexes are not developed yet (*laughs*). It's hard to understand the significance of, this is not like in middle school when you fail. This is going to stay with you. That F in college is gonna stick with you, whereas in high school you graduate, and if you start at Southern Ridge College, then your high school transcript pretty much goes away, and you don't have to worry about it anymore, but this is different.

That's kind of what is tough is that the administration here [at the high school] has different expectations than say, Southern Ridge. If a kid's gonna fail, I'll be like, "Hey, this person's gonna fail." [The college] is like, "Okay." Obviously, we put [the grade] in there, but they don't need me to call anybody. But with here [the high school], it's kind of like they're college students, but they also need me to call their parents if they're failing. That's not college. That never happens.

Compensation for Dual Enrollment

One of the things that I've kind of had a little falling out with my county has been compensation for [dual enrollment]. Because through Southern Ridge College, over the summer, I would get paid around \$2,600, maybe \$2,700, per course that I would teach, but Dale County initially didn't have any extra pay for dual enrollment teachers. It was like you do all the work, you get hired, and there's no extra pay. What they started this year is they require like a memorandum of understanding where you can't get paid by Southern Ridge College. Southern Ridge College pays Dale County Schools, and they then, in turn, pay us \$1,250. Essentially, I was going to be making \$5,000, and now I'm making \$2,500 for doing dual enrollment because they don't want me getting paid by Southern Ridge College. They get that money. I'm sure it's to be equitable, but they literally tried to violate my contract with Southern Ridge College last year. Except that I contacted GAE [Georgia Association of Educators, which is a professional organization for public school employees] and my lawyers there to see if they could actually make me do that, and they could.

This year for my new contract they said either you sign it, or you don't teach dual enrollment. Either give you half of my income or, honestly, screw over the kids who are in my DE classes because I thought for a second about being petty and saying, "Well, okay, fine, I won't teach it," but then those kids. I had 42 kids signed up to take it, and nobody else was certified to teach it because everybody else had gotten their master's in education or something, and my master's is in English from [College]. I'm not petty, but I was getting ready to be petty.

That was a little frustrating. It had nothing to do with Southern Ridge College. They had no control over that, but my county was micromanaging. I know I'm still getting paid extra to teach a higher group of students, so don't complain about it. At the same time, I think teachers need to get out of the, "Well I'm just happy with what I can get" mindset. I don't want to fall into, "Well just be happy you're getting anything at all." No, I'm doing a totally different curriculum for a totally different institution with a different syllabus and different standards and everything, and I was not happy with how my county was handling it.

Why I got my master's in English was, yes, you get a raise, but my purpose was so I can teach dual enrollment. I really wanted it to be an opportunity at Briarwood so that people didn't have to either do it online or do virtual from a teacher at [another high school] or something. I wanted that to be an opportunity that kids could do in face dual enrollment and give them that advantage and all. That's why I did it anyway, so I wasn't about to hold out on them over \$2,500, but still.

I Hate Pointless Assignments

Elbert recorded a DE lesson for me in October 2024, several months after we completed our interviews. The lesson was focused on writing prompts students completed in which they had to observe a phenomenon taking place and analyze it. Students could choose to observe social media, advertisements, student interactions in the school, and so forth. The class format was an "open discussion" [Elbert's words] in which students shared what they observed. During the lesson, Elbert shared student examples on the board, asked probing questions as students shared, and modeled analysis of observations. The lesson was a good example of activities Elbert discussed in our

interviews, especially that he tried to prompt students toward critical thinking and deep analysis of material.

At the beginning, I really was given just five or six key learning objectives that I was supposed to meet for each course. With normal [non-dual enrollment] school teaching, I have four pages of single-spaced standards. I have now five learning objectives that I have to get across in 16 weeks. I didn't get really any set curriculum. Through the d2L platform [online learning platform], there was an online course set up [by the college] that was, in my opinion, pretty poorly set up. It was a little bit disjointed, and some of the exercises seemed really remedial. At the same time, I just felt like, honestly, I'd be bored trying to get through this and didn't see the justification for sticking with that. So that wasn't a big problem for me because, "Okay, that's just one option that I don't like," and just trying to see if I could piece together something from it just organizationally, but I didn't. It was a lot of grammar focus, which as far as research goes, grammar direct instruction has not really been proven to be that effective anyway, so I decided to leave that out. I left that out, and then I looked around especially within d2L but also within Canvas at premade courses that other teachers had built before, English 1101 courses or 101 courses depending on the school. I just didn't want to try to reinvent the wheel. I thought it'd be better to try to find something that someone had as far as textbook resources because I didn't have a lot of money to buy textbooks, especially at the last minute.

Depending on the school you go to, they each have different rules for how their 1101/1102 class are. I'm teaching 1101 like a basic composition course and how to

develop that into efficient writing with transitions. It's kind of basic level. I feel it's probably easier than AP Lit because that's how a lot of 1101 courses I know of work. I tend to be more conversational [in the classroom]. I'm not like a disciplinarian so much because I've been teaching for quite a while. Plus, I'm just being honest, I'm a 6-foot-6 man with a beard. That's kind of intimidating to a lot of students, so I don't tend to have the disciplinary problems from boys like the some of the women teachers in my school. I think I need to talk through things with students. I don't like to just throw them work and say, "Here, good luck, now figure this out on your own." I like to walk them through and assess as they're working on something so I can talk to them about it. I sometimes get on their nerves because I'll set them loose and then I'll walk around and literally just be like, "Hey, how's it going? Show me what you're doing." Just to make them show me and let me see how things are going. I do that because I don't do busy work. I hate pointless assignments, and especially in the age of AI and Google, I try to make my assignments kind of un-Google-able (*laughs*) for how AI answers questions. I try to make things have so many layers of things that AI would be really, really obvious. That they couldn't even think of how to put an AI response or a question in there.

That's been a mix because for one that's a little harder on me creating assignments. For two, it means I'm creating better assignments. It's making me work a little bit more as a teacher, which is probably a good thing overall because it's hard to cheat. I have not done a multiple-choice-type-question test in probably 3 years. I prefer handwriting because they can't use a computer. They have to think of it up on the spot. I'd much rather see what their thought process is than see what they can insert on a multiple-choice question.

I try to bring in more critical thinking and hit like the DOK [depth of knowledge] level three and level four type stuff. We get through the basic level things, well, I usually do that with journaling, especially with the DE class. They tend to do journals; we have process journals and reflection journals. When they do the readings, they do reflections on the readings. It might be an application type of thing. But then when they get to the projects, those reflections then go to the second part of the journal, which is process. The way I did my DE courses this past semester was everything built on itself. My readings all worked toward one thing, and that way if they did the readings and the reading journals, then that helped them do the process journals, and if they did the process journal in unit one, that helped them understand unit two. Then by the end once they get to unit four, which is the final unit, they have a culminated project they have pretty much created through three different units that they then turn into a final piece of work that they can be proud of. Everything builds on itself. This is not random. I used to be very random and just looking at random crap and be like, “What are we even doing today?” but I found students don’t like that (*laughs*), especially my structured students. My overachievers want to know. I got it [the culminating project] because in one or two of my graduate classes, the teacher did the same thing. Usually at the end you’re panicking because like, “Oh crap I have to relearn all this stuff that I did all semester,” and instead, really, you’ve already done all the stuff and now it’s time to put it together.

Try to Adapt to What’s More Useful

Elbert discussed how he has changed the curriculum for his 1102 course based on what worked with his students and what he thought was beneficial for them. His master’s courses introduced him to the world of linguistics and discourse communities, which he

then implemented into his 1102 curriculum. Elbert talked about the impact his master's courses had on his curriculum decisions. 1102 was a lot more wide open. It was intended to be looked at more as teaching literary analysis at first. I was trying to think about how to do that, and in a lot of my courses personally, I don't teach fiction as much anymore. I teach more nonfiction because with AP Seminar and AP Lang, I teach a lot of nonfiction. I tried a literary perspective, like a thematic unit on death. I had students that did an evaluation about viewpoints in different cultures about death. This is from a course that I found on Canvas. In retrospect, that was a mistake. Honestly, I thought that it would be useful and beneficial, but it ended up being kind of dark (*laughs*). Surprise, surprise. It ended up being kind of dark. As far as the analysis goes, either I was not well-versed enough in it, or I was not good enough at it posing appropriate questions. I didn't feel like what they got out of that course was very beneficial from me, and that's my own fault. I tried to structure it around poems and music and short stories, and we had a nonfiction text called *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*. It's a pretty neat read. I enjoyed it, if you don't mind a little bit of cadaver humor.

This year, I was researching because, for my master's, I got a little more of a taste into linguistics and discourse communities, and I started teaching more along the terms of what do these kids need to know as far as rhetoric goes to do well in whatever field they're going to enter. With my summer course in 1102 and then this year with 1102, I went with teaching discourse communities straight out, what they are, and had them evaluate their own primary [and] secondary discourse communities that they could choose, and some of them went with gaming, if they were in an online gaming group, or if they want to go into being a CNA, or I had one that was volleyball and pole vaulting.

When I taught my summer course, it was pretty neat because I had one that was a dog groomer, and another one was in risk management. You get all kinds of different things. That makes it a lot more appropriate for each student, so I enjoy doing that more because they can gear everything toward their own professional communities later on. They could evaluate how to do an effective letter or get used to what we call the lexis for their particular discourse communities because otherwise they're gonna enter a field and never had heard any of these terms and never dealt with any of that. That way [the students] can at least find things that are specific to them. [They can] research on a topic that they chose, in a career they chose, in a genre of writing they're gonna have to use in their field, and even to the point where I give the option of using the citation format of the field.

I do a focus more on discourse communities and James Gee's discourse concepts and Jonathan Swales concept of what a discourse community has, the different levels. The first one is really primary-focused, where they focus on something really close to home for them so that they kind of get familiarized with the discourse community idea, what primary discourse is and secondary discourse is. We watched a bit of stuff like James Gee [researcher in linguistics who focused on discourse communities], so that they can really grasp, okay this is what this is. I want them to see examples of it first and foremost, so that I can get closer to the content before I set them loose on some other field.

The first big unit that we did was more focused on the individual person, and the second was a bigger focus on the person's field of choice. We call it the ADC unit, academic discourse community unit. You already know primary one, so you're going to

be entering a secondary one. [The discourse community is] the club, and you want to get in the club, so how do you get in the club? You have to find out because what's the code that they speak? I use examples, like in [the movie] *Elf*, the code (*points to eye and winks*). How to get a date and everything. Because I've had student teachers before where they'll sit through a meeting, and then we leave, and they're like, "What just happened?" They have no idea what anyone was talking about because they hear IEP, 504s, and RTE, so they don't know what any of that stuff is at first because they're new. They've not used it before. They've never heard it before. The same thing is going to happen with [students] because they're going to try to enter a workforce or become a major in a certain subject that they never looked at Briarwood High School before. They can't even fathom it.

I thought that was more useful than doing another literature unit because a lot of these kids had already had AP Lit last year, and not saying that they knew everything they need to know, but if this is their last literature course that they're gonna take in college, I'd much rather them use it for something useful within their field of study because I checked, and none of them want to be English majors. I can't believe it (*sarcasm*). They may change their minds and see the light, but knowing that they're not going to enter in to particularly the humanities fields, I want them to be more prepared, whether it's the medical field or the work force or business management. I have one that wants to do aerospace engineering, and another wants to do computer science, so that gave them the opportunity to look into it themselves because I can't teach everything. I can't be all things to all people, so I kind of made them become their own tutors in a way. I did that because I'll say the same thing with the framework for 1102, the online course

that was premade by Southern Ridge, it seemed like it was well over 10 years old and made by someone that had maybe been teaching a bit too long and hadn't changed their methodology very much. I try to change a little bit every year, at least to try to adapt to what's more useful rather than stick with the same thing I've done for the past 17 years.

My Job is to Get You Ready for Everything Else

A lot more of [dual enrollment] is independent, but they do have a lot more readings that I assign as opposed to research that they go out and find, especially at the beginning. I give them a lot of assigned texts, so that they know what they're supposed to do when they begin to research. Like how to read a text. One of the readings that I have, it's an older essay from 1941, but it's actually how to mark a text. It actually makes them go through and mark this essay like they would mark a book. It's funny. I found that they honestly appreciate learning how to do a method like this because otherwise they're just coloring, right? Everything is highlighted, but nothing is actually important. It all looks like a coloring sheet. This kind of how to mark a book.

One of the warm-ups we'll do is how to understand what's in an academic journal (*holds up the first page of an academic journal article that is marked up and labeled*). If you're looking at this, "Okay, what does the DOI number, what does the volume number one, comma one through five mean?" and all this other stuff. This way they're not just kind of guessing but they actually understand, like "Oh!" It's not like this unknown code that no one can decipher but actually everything has a purpose. I tend to try to guide them, especially with DE, into the world of academic study instead of just literature. I'm like, "Okay, no, I gotta get you ready for everything." It makes you realize that when people wonder like, "Why even take an English class?" Because everything comes back

to this class really. My job is to get you ready for everything else. Science only worries about science. History only worries about history, but I worry about you doing well in all that.

Actually, I Work Here

I did [interview at the college]. There was an interim department chair when I interviewed, but it was a telephone FaceTime interview. It was a pretty thorough interview, and I had to submit all of my college transcripts from my undergrad, which I went through three different undergrads, so that was always annoying. But from undergrad and master's and specialist, I sent all my transcripts through that. I had to submit a resume and all my work experience to prove that I was qualified for the position.

Luckily, with this course [English 1101/1102], a master's in English would suffice, and then my specialist is in English education. So that qualified me enough to not have to worry about it, but still I was a little nervous because I was afraid, what if they wanted more experience, or I didn't know what they really were looking for. I just applied, and the interview was probably about an hour interview, but it was productive and didn't feel like an assault or anything like that. It felt pretty laid back and everything. Then they just told me what I'd be teaching, and then I've been on the email list since then. I've been on the email list since then about if I wanted to teach summer school classes, and I don't want to this year. So, again, they invite me to stuff. The humanities department chair will send emails about like, "Oh yeah, we're having a staff getting together!" But it's at the [other] campus or it's on a Tuesday at 10:30, and I'm like, "I'm here [at the high school] teaching six classes a day" (*laughs*).

For one, Southern Ridge has four campuses now plus online campuses, so they'll send out [an email] to all English faculty where it's like, "We're having a meeting at like 2 o'clock on Thursday. We're having a department get together and stuff," and I can't go to any of that. It's weird cause I'm the department chair for my English department at the high school, but I have a department chair at Southern Ridge College too. I don't really get to converse with any of them unless I'm doing a training or putting in grades or something. It feels kind of like I don't even know if the people at the main school actually talk to each other or if they're lonely over there too. I don't even know.

The only time I hear from [faculty at the college] is if I'm in trouble or something (*smiles*). If I've forgotten to do something. We have to do attendance verification, and I don't have to do that anywhere else. I forgot to do it, and so I was like 2 days late on that, but that's the last I've heard. My department chair did ask about doing an observation of me, and I gave her some times because she said we needed to do an observation in the classroom to see how it was going. I gave her some times and was very free to be about anytime, and then that was about 2 months ago. I've not heard from her since, so (*laughs*). I mean, I don't mind but that's the most interaction that I've had. I do talk with the registrar at Southern Ridge because she is helpful with my students that are already seniors transitioning to being freshmen at Southern Ridge. I've talked with her on the phone and then through email quite a few times because like the kids are like, "What if I just go into Southern Ridge next semester?" "I got you. Email this lady" because we've already talked, and this is a super easy process and she's been really, really helpful.

I asked Elbert if he considered himself a college professor. No, not really. I teach at Briarwood High School. I teach for Southern Ridge College at Briarwood High

School. I say sometimes, “Yeah, I adjunct for Southern Ridge College,” but I don’t really consider myself part of the faculty there. I always have worried if I go to their restroom if I’m out there running, that they’ll be like, “Hey, what are you doing here?” Like, “Actually, I work here.” (*laughs*). Of course, they wouldn’t know me. So, yeah, I mean, I’m an employee for them, but I don’t feel like I’m part of their faculty. I don’t know, it seems (*pauses*)—I hate to say this—it seems irresponsible almost to kind of just throw me out there. Yeah, I interviewed well, and, of course, I don’t want to get fired, so I’m going to do my job. At the same time, that’s a lot of trust to put into a person that you literally don’t know.

I Hate Grades Altogether

I kinda hate [grading]. I hate grades altogether (*laughs*). The concept of it bothers me a lot. To be honest, I tend to be easier grading with them [CE students] because I’ve told them that I’m more concerned that they try new things and take risks than that they fit some really annoying rubric. I do have a rubric for them. There’s guidelines for what I want them to do. I told them, “If you take a risk and you’re trying something but you fail at it, then I’d much rather [you do that].” Say my final was on a 28-point scale rubric-wise, but I never calculated it percentage-wise based off of that. If you scored a 24 to a 28, I think a 24 was a 91 or something like that, or a 90. So those first few points, honestly, on a rubric scale, I never really liked to take a lot off for those because those were just kind of clerical things to me. That’s not the big thing. The big deal is not, “Oh, did you make sure the period was outside the citation?” Yeah, maybe it was in the wrong place or something like that, but that’s not going to be the difference between an A and a B for me.

I tend to grade more easily. It's mostly because as they're doing the assignments, I do a lot of scooting around or walking around. Especially in my smaller classes, but even in my bigger ones because they have a decent bit of time to work because I don't send homework home with them. Either they're not going to do it, they're gonna cheat on it, or they're going to panic about it and not do a good job. I prefer to give more time in class and not get as far. I give them time to work so that way I can walk around and just sit next to them. I have tables instead of desks in my room, so it makes it where I can sit across from them and just kind of sit next to them and have them come up and show me what they're working on. I go over and sit with them because I got this from Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher, but how you don't just hover over them or lord over them. Just sitting down next to them and talking with them is more collegial, and it's a little less didactic, I guess. I'm talking through something with them instead of talking at them. Usually by the time they finish [a piece of writing], I've already seen it multiple times, probably multiple drafts of it. Grading is kind of easy by then. Like, "Oh yeah, I remember they already had this, this, and this." It's pretty easy.

Not Everybody can Teach the Golden Children

There's a misconception with some of my colleagues that they're like, "Well, not everybody can teach the golden children," basically that my job is easier than theirs because I teach [dual enrollment]. That's a little bit infuriating because it's kind of condescending to me. They had a chance to do it too, and they just didn't do it (*laughs*). That's problematic because it's like saying I don't face challenges with these students. It's even more so sometimes because what of they're up against. Graduation's staring them in the face, and they're terrified and then cocky at the same time (*smiles*). So, that's

a little bit frustrating, but again, I've gotten over that. I don't worry too much about what people who are not my classroom think about my classroom (*laughs*).

In our third interview, Elbert elaborated further on the perception of some of his colleagues. I said earlier about having a "gravy" [slang for "wonderful" or "excellent"] schedule, but it's mainly because I think I've mentioned before how sometimes in my department there will be some vocalized jealousy about me be having the classes. "Oh, well, my kids aren't like your kids. I can't ask them to do this." "Oh, my kids can't handle this kind of stuff." People will say to me because I have honors and AP classes. At the same time, my kids can't handle simplistic stuff because they're just going to either cheat on it, or they won't feel like it's worth your time. I don't think they realize how much stress goes into planning for classes because these kids are good at getting away with garbage and they've gotten away with garbage writing in the past. The aggravation about, "Oh, well, you've got all these easy classes. So of course it's easy." No, I'm planning four preps a day of advanced content and reading the writings of all these classes too. You can't just give them a 98 and them be happy. A 98's like, "Well, why'd I miss those two points?" "I got an 89. Why not a 90?" You have to explain everything, and it's exhausting.

The amount of grading that you do, the thought processes that you have to put into the type of assignments that you're gonna give, it's a decent bit of work, and I really, really stress that I'm teaching the right thing, that I'm doing what I'm supposed to with this class as far as choosing the correct guidelines or curriculum or whatever they need to know and everything. There's a bit of stress too. There's a lot of stress too of having the

open-ended framework, like the fact that I don't really get anything [curriculum] in particular. They can just let me choose whatever.

Not having the framework means that I basically just have the entirety of everything I could possibly know to choose from (*laughs*). That's overwhelming. It just gets to be a little overwhelming to say, "Okay, just narrow it down to like the entire internet. We'll go with that." (*laughs*). What do I pick? What do I choose? Because what I'm passionate about may not be what they're passionate about, student-wise. What I think they need might not be what they may need, especially realizing that I'm 40. They're 17 [or] 18, so I'm becoming more and more irrelevant by the day (*smiles*).

What I do Kind of Matters

*Elbert shared stories about dual enrollment students who had a strong impact on him. He talked about two students who excelled in the way they approached the assignments for his 1102 course. Elbert's first major writing assignment in 1102 asks students to explore and write about the discourse community of their family. Both students Elbert discussed found deeply personal ways to connect to the writing tasks. [One student's] parents moved to the US from Mexico. He is an outstanding clarinet player, super, wonderful kid, and it is difficult (*pauses*) for him. He's a gay Latino student and in a very conservative household, and that makes it difficult for him. Not just because of the teacher I am, but just because I guess the type of person I am, I don't do any type of belief statements in class or anything like that. He felt, I think, safer around me. Just being comfortable being himself and everything. Anytime he would do a project, he would really dive [in] because I allowed him to choose along the personal lines. He just dove headfirst. It was really neat what he found out about his family, like how he*

kind of identified, with the difference between his mother and his father, as far as how they communicated with him, and as far as like closeness of family members and everything like that. It was so funny because he took that even into the academic one [project] about like, ESOL education and everything. He was like, “I can’t, I can’t decide. So I know you said just three sources, but can I please use five?”

It was so neat to see him doing that, and his work, just his final paper that he did was just outstanding and just so, so thoughtful. You could just tell he put so much into it, and it’s just been really nice that I’ve felt like we kind of bonded a bit this semester, or really this year. I had him last year for AP seminar. That he trusts me enough to ask questions because he doesn’t do that with other teachers. He’s really pretty quiet, but that he trusts me to come to me with questions and clarifications and all that stuff because whatever we’re doing, he sees it as important, and so he wants it to be the best that it can. That’s very, I dunno, that weighs a lot on me that like, “Okay, I have to do a better job. For him” (*emphasis*). If for no one else but him because he needs that. He needs to be able to do well in the field that he’s in. I mean, it was life-driven and professionally-driven too, just that meant a lot (*emphasis*) to me. Kind of showed me, “Oh, okay. Well, what I do kind of matters.” That really helped.

I have one other [student] from last year too. She also was a Latina student that parents were immigrants. The thing was her is she doesn’t buy into the traditional lifestyle that her parents do as far as the women being submissive and that she needs to find a boyfriend so she can get married and have kids and everything like that. She did hers on the role of authority within Hispanic families. She could respect her father while also not having to respect his belief system. I’m sitting here like, “Oh my gosh.” I was

overwhelmed kind of because I was not expecting it. But the fact that something that deep, but the fact that she was able to take it and really run with it and not just run with it personally but also academically and be able to evaluate it in a pretty mature and obviously somewhat biased—but as unbiased as possible way—and look at what the what research actually shows and the sociological implications of how she felt. It was almost like therapy or something like that for her, and I felt kind of, it's a mix of grateful that she was able to be that serious about it, but also guilty for, because I'm pushing her into, this is a hard part of her life, and I was like, "Geez, am I doing this to her?" but it ended up being something that was very useful for her, and her final writing too was very much this really cool revelation about herself and about who she felt that she could be now because of that, and I was like, "Oh my gosh." It was very powerful.

I feel very indebted to kids like that that are willing to actually put thought into it and see [what I'm trying to do]. It makes me feel like, "Okay, what I'm trying to do here is working." Not for every kid, but for some kids, they see the purpose behind why I'm doing what I'm doing, and why I want them to push the way that they are pushing, and it was pretty awesome (*smiles*).

Be Willing to Reach Out

In our third interview, I asked Elbert what advice he would give to future dual enrollment teachers. It's tough because it's advice that I'm not sure how I'd be able to do. Be willing to reach out to people at your school, people at your college, especially if you're struggling, especially building a new course that you've never taught before. Be willing to reach out to them. I hate to be cliché but not reinventing the wheel and feeling like you have to create a whole new course on your own. Realizing there are a lot of

really good 1101/1102 courses that are already made that you can kind of glean interesting topics from. It doesn't make you any less of a teacher to use those resources, especially if you educate yourself in those because a lot of the work is going to be with the students instead of the material. Those are the two big things. Reach out if you need help. Reach out to your department person, and hopefully they'll be helpful. They did pair me with a person that's supposed to be a guide, kind of like a support person, but I didn't really feel like I needed him. For one because I was older than him (*laughs*). He was like, "I've been teaching for 6 years." I'm like, "Okay, (*laughs*) I'm on 17, so maybe I'm fine." Reach out to the college for help but then also, utilizing things like Canvas [and] d2L to help you with creating a course that you like.

I think the last thing that I was thinking about just now was the importance of the syllabus. It may not be the first year, but once you get a course laid out, knowing when and how to refer to refer to the syllabus and how to make sure that the kids know that and that becomes contractually binding. Because I had an attendance problem, but I didn't realize I was supposed to put an attendance issue in the syllabus. They [the college] said, "Well, you just go off of what your syllabus says." I'm like, "Oh crap, I didn't put that in there." I've always just used the same stock syllabus for high school. College syllabus is a different level of things. I have one for my AP classes. I have, I think, a 15-page AP Seminar syllabus, but it needs to be more like that. I definitely came in not prepared for the legality aspect of it. There are sample syllabi out there, but I needed to be more clear about what I needed in my syllabus because otherwise the students, there's no standard to hold them to. I can't really back myself up if I've not created something that helps me, so that's the last thing that I thought about.

My Reflection

Elbert exhibited meaning-making when reflecting on the impact his master's program had on the curriculum for his DE classes. Because he took linguistics courses as part of his master's program, he learned about academic discourse communities, and he implemented this concept into his DE course curriculum. He reflected on his desire to prepare students for the world after high school and after college. He said he "cannot be all things to all people," so he uses academic discourse communities to allow students to make their own decisions about what they want to study and write about in his class. For Elbert, teaching DE is "lonely," and he feels uncertainty about whether he is "doing the right thing" for his students and teaching them what they need to know to be successful in college and in their future careers. He does not want them to get to college and feel unprepared, but he worries that he is not giving students what they need.

Elbert and Julio were the only collaborators to mention compensation for teaching dual enrollment classes. Elbert had a conflict with his school district because the college pays the school district for him to teach the course, but he only sees part of that money from his school district. He receives less money than he would if he were teaching the course solely for the college. He almost chose not to teach the DE courses over this issue, but he decided that it would ultimately not be fair to the students for him to hold out because of money.

Elbert also discussed the way some of his high school colleagues view him because he teaches dual enrollment. He believed they misunderstood what he does; they think his job is easier teaching DE because he generally teaches higher achieving students. However, he said the stakes are higher for him because a college grade is on

the line for these students. He also has to work harder developing curriculum because he thinks what is provided by the college is outdated. He also feels pressure to create assignments that are challenging and multilayered so students are less likely to use artificial intelligence (AI) to complete assignments. Like all the collaborators, Elbert spoke about establishing relationships with students and his desire to prepare them for future academic endeavors.

David

David completed my Qualtrics survey in early March. We scheduled the interviews for June because that was best for his schedule. David teaches at a school in South Georgia. He coaches middle school football and wrestling. David's wife is an English special education coteacher at his school, and they sometimes coteach together. He has a 10-year-old son that he described as very athletic.

For the 2023-2024 school year, David taught two sections of world literature in addition to one class of dual enrollment. His school is small, so some years there is not enough interest for him to teach the DE class at all. David's school uses block scheduling. Students take four courses each semester, and teachers teach three courses with one planning period. Because of this schedule, sometimes David teaches English 1101 and 1102 in the same semester, meaning each course lasts only about 8 weeks.

This schedule was different than any of the other collaborators' class schedules. Similarly to Elbert, David said he never saw himself as a high school teacher. The opportunity presented itself to him, and his wife played an integral part in supporting and encouraging him to pursue teaching. He has a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in

fiction writing. David's goal to be a fiction writer, and he told me about the novel he has been working on for about 10 years.

David's Story

Outside of school, my number one hobby is I want to be a fiction writer. That's kind of how I even got into all this because I went to grad school and got an MFA degree in fiction writing. Basically, I had to write a novel to graduate. I've been working on a book for way too long (*laughs*). 10 years. My wife gives me a hard time about that. That's kind of my true passion is working on my writing. I don't do it enough. I'm a lazy writer. I stay busy. I find lots of excuses to do anything except do the writing. A lot of my energy goes into coaching [and] keeping up with my family, and so it's easy to kind of fall off on putting the writing off, but I try to stay with it.

I do a lot of odd jobs. I wouldn't call myself a handyman, but this room that you see here (*gestures behind him to the home office he's in*), I built everything in this room, the floors, the shelving, made it all. This is my little escape room. I do bonsai as, I guess, a hobby. Now, the weird thing about that is I had absolutely no interest in doing anything with plants or gardening or anything, and then when COVID hit, it was like somebody downloaded a program into my brain. [You have] free time now; this is what you're gonna do (*laughs*). I would be just doing these things and planting trees and just like, "Why am I doing this?" It made no sense at all to me, but it was a compulsion, and it's just something to occupy my brain, I guess.

When I was in high school, the school was a little bit smaller. I think enrollment was maybe 700. I graduated in 2001. I spent about 12 years avoiding anything related to teaching. When I was in high school, I was a football player. I was an all-state linebacker.

I wrestled. I played baseball. I was on a state championship baseball team. I was always pretty much involved, and that's why I still do the coaching thing; it's always part of my life. In high school, I almost never talked to anybody. I was real quiet. Everybody knew who I was because I was involved in so much, so many of the athletic programs. We had a big baseball season, won state; football was kind of blowing up. We'd been terrible, and all of a sudden we were good. Everybody knew who I was, but I just wanted to get out of [the town] and nobody remember who I was. Then I come back, and it's like you can't get away from any of that old life you had. It's waiting on you when you get back. Everybody knows my parents and my grandparents, and now my kid's got to grow up with all that (*laughs*).

Really [my interest in writing] started with my AP high school English teacher, who was still teaching here when I started teaching. She just kind of [gave] a little bit of gentle encouragement. We would do some creative writing things, and she's like, "You should really try to get this stuff published," and just kind of put the seed in basically. Just gave me the thought that maybe I could do something with this. I've had a few things published. I haven't made any significant money off of anything, but I've always enjoyed reading. Really it's just been a steady stream of just encouragement from teachers, mentors. In a way, it started way back, a long time ago, my brother and I, when we were in middle school, we wanted to write comics. He would draw the comics, and I would come up with the stories. That was maybe where it all technically began. Always been pretty creative, I guess, imaginative anyway. The act of writing and all, [I] just kind of slowly, steadily got better at it.

I used to hate writing essays. I used to hate reading. I was the oldest child, and when you go through school, there's always one kid that's always the studious child. Then there's the troublemaker. My brother was a troublemaker, and I was the one doing the right stuff. I did everything the way you're supposed to do it, made all the good grades. I always struggled with reading until I got to college, and I started taking these English classes, and it's just the more you do it, the better you get at it.

I Really Never Even Considered Teaching an Option

South Georgia University (SGU) is actually where I went for my undergrad, and I met my wife there. We met at a poetry class at SGU. [My wife] basically asked me out in college. She approached me, and I was pretty much oblivious the entire time. She was trying to get my attention. She would draw on my hand and all kinds of stuff (*smiles*). I had no idea. I thought I was going to be playing football in college and doing all that kind of stuff. That never really worked out. At SGU, I decided to take some creative writing classes. I was undecided for several years for a major. I had no idea what I wanted to do. I tried a lot of things, and the only thing that really kind of stood out as a talent for me was the writing. [I] kind of stuck with the writing things. I won an award at SGU for poetry and fiction writing. Then after that, I had a couple things get published, very small things.

I graduated in 2005, and then I was working just kind of odd jobs afterwards. I had an English degree as an undergrad degree and wasn't really sure what I wanted to do with it. Then I was still writing. I was in the creative writing program issue at SGU, and my wife convinced me to just kind of just go all in on the fiction writing thing, try to get an MFA degree. I applied to a bunch of colleges, MFA programs, and things like that. I

got accepted at a few places, and then Georgia College contacted me. I'm glad I went there. That was a unique experience. It wasn't a long way from home. Actually, my wife didn't move up with me. She was teaching at [high school], and so we actually weren't together for about a year, and she hated that so much. Eventually she quit her job here, moved up there. Then eventually got in the school system there doing [special education].

I had a poetry professor [at SGU]. His name was Barry White. He was real laid back. Funny, charismatic. He's just a really interesting person. He was one of my mentors. Then the fiction professor was Dr. Fitzgerald, and he terrified people (*smiles*). I was in classrooms where he made people cry. He would talk about how bad their writing is, or he would attack something they said. He had a very aggressive teaching style. It was night and day; they were two completely different people. He [Dr. Fitzgerald] was real smart, knew so much fiction. He opened my eyes. There's this whole world of fiction that I had no idea existed. To my knowledge, it was all classics. You read Hemingway, and you read some Poe, and you're good. I had no idea how much the modern world of literature is so alive, and it changes so quickly, and I had no understanding of it, no concept of it. With him [Dr. Fitzgerald] and then Barry's encouragement, like I said, my wife and I met in his classroom. Every now and then, I feel like I'm getting maybe too uptight or something like that. I think, "So how would Barry teach this?"

When I got into grad school, I had several mentors, professional writers who showed me the ropes. One of them was the Georgia Poet Laureate a few years ago before he became the poet laureate. He taught me fiction writing. He's a Southern writer, and he basically showed me that it would be okay to be a Southern writer because I used to just want to fall into a classic literary category. So much of who I am is from the South, and

[he was] like, “You don’t have to try to be something you’re not. Write about what you know.” All of these teachers had an impact on who I am as a writer and also as a teacher. It all kind of worked hand-in-hand to a degree.

Once we got married, I’d always had kinda odd jobs. I worked at a distribution center for a little while. I worked at Lowe’s, I worked restaurant jobs, theme parks. I kind of went around everywhere. I really never even considered teaching an option. I tried coaching before. I did a community coach thing right out of high school. It was okay, but I just never felt like I was adequate, I guess. Confidence wasn’t really there. When I got to grad school, part of the grad school curriculum is you got to teach some classes, and I knew it was coming. I guess the real advantage for doing it that way, instead of going through the education programs and all that, is I didn’t have to develop all this stuff and go through all these observations and things like that. They pretty much just [said], “You got this class. It’s small; it’s a creative writing class.” They kind of held your hand a lot to get started. You would go in there with a creative writing teacher, and you would kind of coteach basically.

Then the first class that I actually taught was a middle school writing class. It was just a summer program kind of thing. That was just for a week. We would teach them some poetry elements, they would write some poems, and that was basically it. Then, the following semester, we were given a class, and it was just one class to begin with, and then it was three. The workload steadily got stronger. I leaned a lot on the people that were in the program with me because some of them had teaching experience, and of course I talked to my wife about a lot of things she did, and mostly just got to talk about literature. We were given almost full autonomy. We had advisors. We were given a grade

for teaching that class, and so they would do an observation. I think he did three observations, and we'd have to turn in some grade reports.

From what I remember, it was structured so that you can kind of be yourself and then also kind of get some feedback on it. I enjoyed teaching. I had a friend who was teaching a graphic novel. They were talking about it, and I was like, "Oh, I want to do that too." We kind of brainstormed some ideas. He was doing *The Watchmen* and a couple other popular graphic novels like *Maus*. I was like, "I'll try this Stephen King thing. We'll see how it goes." It was a Stephen King graphic novel, and it was only the first book [in the series], and there was no real resolution to it. I got a lot of complaints about that (*laughs*). A lot of [the students] just didn't feel like it was worth the money, I guess. I learned from doing that (*laughs*). There's probably a fair amount of them that didn't read it at all. I was hoping they would find it interesting and engaging. It was a good experiment. We did that, and we did poetry, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and things like that.

I found out that all I gotta do is just talk about this thing that I'm really interested in and really good at and do it that way. That's kind of the way it [my teaching career] began. Teaching a college class, you get a lot more freedom to kind of do things the way you want. In high school, you have to follow formatting with the essential questions, follow curriculum. You don't necessarily have that so much at the college level, so being introduced that way, I think that gave me the opportunity to be successful and not get frustrated with it.

Just Teach the Class

Once I got out of grad school, I thought I was going to be an editor. I was doing fiction writing, a lot of editing. I never thought I would be a teacher. I am actually mostly introverted. I try not to be. I do a pretty good job of pretending not to be. Being a coach and being a teacher, every day is kind of a challenge.

I'm actually teaching where I graduated from. When I got the job offer, it was one of my coaches. At that time, he was the athletic director. I was just visiting my parents. I was just in the grocery store, come back to my hometown and ran into one of my old coaches who said, "Hey, we got job openings. Do you need a job?" He said they had an English position open. I was like, "Sure." The rest is history basically (*laughs*). I got my foot in the door, and [my wife] came in right behind me because they had a [special education] opening, so we came in together. We didn't teach together the first year, but the following semester, we were in the classroom together, and she showed me a lot of just classroom management, things like that. I had my wife to be there with me the entire time, so that really took that workload off my shoulders. Then eventually, when we had to teach it apart from each other, I was fine. By the time that was going on, it was easy.

I didn't do dual enrollment until maybe 2016 or later. I can't really remember what year I started. We started with [another college], and then I've taught for Longleaf Technical College since at least 2018. The segue into going back into doing college teaching for dual enrollment, somebody had asked one of our assistant principals if we had a program like that. They were looking for who they had already on hand who could do that, and I was the only person with the degree that would allow somebody to teach

dual enrollment classes, so they asked me to do it. I was like, “Yeah, sure. What do I need to know about it?” This was with [another college], and they’re just like, “We’ll put you in contact with their person. They’ll tell you what program they use,” and I did all that. They were pretty much just like, “Just teach the class” (*laughs*).

So that’s what I did. I designed the class similar to what I did in grad school, but when I have my choice, I tend to teach by genre, and so I do a fiction unit, poetry unit, nonfiction, and kind of do it that way. That’s what I did. I kind of picked up the kind of the things I enjoy teaching, and that went pretty well. For that to be my first class, it was a great class to have taught. In the past, like since COVID, it’s been a little different teaching some of these classes because there seems to be a bigger disparity between the strengths of students. Then we mentioned the AI complication, that’s the new wrinkle. I mean, that’s pretty much how I got here.

They Need as Much of a Guiding Hand as Possible

David told me about his typical workday. In the mornings, I have duty. It’s a smaller school so everybody’s got some sort of duty. I do parking lot duty, and usually I get to drive around a golf cart and pretend to be security, usher the kids in. Last semester, I had first block planning. Once the first bell rings, I’ll go in, and I’ll check the front office, see if they need anything. I’ll head to my room, and that’s when my planning period kind of has started. Usually every morning, I’ll check in with two other teachers that are teaching 10th grade lit with me. I’ll check with them, kind of give them a rundown of what I did the day before, what I’m planning to do that day, see if they’ve changed things up because usually somebody’s either changed something or had an idea or something like that. We don’t meet formally, but we kind of informally kind of keep

tabs on each other. There's only me and two other teachers that are teaching [world literature], so I check in with them.

Then when I get to my room, [I] sit there and kind of plan in detail what I think is going to happen that day. I'm not very good at time management, so if there's time left over, I try to grade some papers. That's where the bulk of my planning time goes, is grading papers, and a lot of that grading time goes to my college class stuff. It's not that I give them priority over my other classes, but there is a lot more [of], in my opinion, the need for that preparatory step with feedback and things like that going into college. They're right there at it. They need as much of a guiding hand as possible. With my 10th graders, they've got 2 more years of high school. I have time to help them more if I need to, but with most of my college students, they're getting ready to tackle the big wide world, and I want to help them as much as I can. It's usually at the forefront of what I want to hit on. Grading papers, things like that.

They come in at second block. That's my college class. They'll come in. We have ViewBoards [an interactive touchscreen that functions as a digital whiteboard] at our school that we've had for 2 years now. I don't use the whiteboard so much. I used the ViewBoard. I'll pull up all our assignments and things like that on there. For a typical class, for 1101, Longleaf is very heavy on the grammar side of things, so the first half of the semester, I spent a lot of time on the grammar. We also only do Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, [and] Thursday classes for the college class. Fridays they don't have to come in. It was mostly a seat-time issue with them being in class. Because we're on block schedule, they're in class an hour and a half, 5 days a week. Seat time was just crazy. I don't know if it was my suggestion or if just somebody kind of threw the idea out there

[to] not teach on Fridays, and that way they have an extra day. If they need help, they can come in. I just use it as an office hours kind of thing, which has worked great. I really like it. The students really like it. It's kind of an incentive to take the class and stay in it. That's one of the reasons I get a lot of students [who] take [the class], and they're not ready for it. They sign up for it because they just want that Friday off.

When they come in, [we] typically spend a lot of time on grammar, probably at least 30 minutes a day just kind of going over a grammar assignment or something like that. I've gotten to where I do a lot of grammar; I use the textbook for grammar practice. I think I mentioned this, the grammar practice out of the textbook, and then we'll find some stuff online that is like things they've never seen, or it's more of like a practice time type scenario.

Then we'll review some of the textbook information as far as if we're doing thesis statements, we'll do some of that. We do a lot of Kahoots. With the world they live in, that's just one of the things that they expect. Kahoots and Gimkits are kind of the go-to. Once a week, we'll do a Gimkit review of whatever our subject is. We usually have a quiz on Thursdays because it's the last day of the week. I try to plan out longer assignments over the weekend because they have basically a 3-day weekend. They have a slightly longer reading assignment. I do have to assign reading almost every night of some degree. They'll read it that night, they'll come in the next day, we'll talk about it, have some notes on it.

Teaching is a draining job anyway, but it is very draining if you're an introvert. If I had my way, I would never say anything. I'd be like, "This is what you're doing today. If you need help, ask" (*laughs*). I can't do that. I've taught myself not to do that. When

I'm teaching, I tend to talk more than I probably should. I overdo it, I feel like. It's probably just me trying to compensate for the fact that I feel like I shouldn't be talking and saying anything. Like, "Who am I to be saying all this?" That's the way it is. For the most part, I teach 10th grade. I teach a couple of 10th grade classes, and then I'll teach the college class. The past year, the college class has been first, and it's mixed, so there's 11th and 12th grade in there, and then two world lit 10th grade courses, and then I coach middle school football. We're on block schedule, so we only have the three classes. I've got a wide spectrum of students, from basically 10-year-olds to sometimes 18-year-olds. That's my daily dose of human activity. That can be pretty draining.

The coaching thing is probably my favorite part of it because I really enjoy doing that part of it more so than the high school teaching. I like the dual enrollment stuff because there's a little bit more maturity, and most of the kids that are there, they want to learn something. It's not always the case when you're teaching regular ed. Some of the students when they come into this class, they don't really know what to expect. Nobody's really told them what it's about. A lot of it's laying the groundwork; this is almost like college. There's college expectation, but you have the high school safety net. For the most part, I try to have a classroom that they know what to expect.

It's a Half Step Rather than a Full Step into College

I have a curriculum mapped out. Especially the past couple years, the emphasis for us has been to do a lot of coplanning, kind of everybody does the same assessments. We tend to do the same assignments and reading assignments. As far as the regular ed classrooms, that's typically what's happening planning-wise. We're all kind of on the same page. We try to keep pace with each other. This coming semester, I think there's a

lot of talk of people still basically teaching to the same assessment but teaching other material, kind of branching out, which I'm fine with. There's things that I've wanted to teach or didn't like teaching that I'd like to move away from.

Longleaf has provided slideshows for all the units of the textbook, and I'm not a big fan of them. It's mostly the formatting. The content is not so bad, but the formatting they use is very boring and kind of overdone. When I'm teaching from the slides, I feel like I'm talking to the walls, and they're [the students] all passed out. Sometimes it feels like there's gotta be a better way. I'm still trying to find a better way to deliver and I guess touch back on the thing they read the night before. To me, that's one of the bigger struggles of the class is the engagement of the material. That's what I tell them the first day when they get there is that this is a class that is one of the most boring subjects you can imagine, and it's really hard to make it entertaining. When you get out of this class, you will be a better writer. You will understand the language better, and you will be more confident. They almost always end up that way. I feel like it does do a good job of doing that for them, but it is such a boring class (*laughs*). I tell them it's probably one of the most boring classes that you will take in college because it's just essays [and] how to write them. That's the class. It's hard to make that exciting because so many of them just don't like to do it. The only way you get good at it is just doing it. That's the challenge of the class.

Not every time, but I get to teach 1102 following that. It's kind of a weird situation sometimes. This past year, we did 1101 half the semester and 1102 the second half. It's almost an 8-week course for 1101, 8 weeks for 1102, and it's rapid fire. If you fall behind, it's hard to catch back up. That pace is a struggle for some of them. I tend to

be very forgiving and understanding, especially [because] I've got a lot of athletes that take my classes. Almost all of them have a job, and it's a struggle for the workload. Some of them will maybe not read the assignments, and it ends up costing them somewhere. It always shows up in some way. I try to talk to them, just be like, "You just gotta make sure you're taking the time [to do the work]." For the students, the real struggle for that class is time management. I think it does a really good job of teaching them how important time management is when they go to college because I wasn't ready for that when I got to college. I had no idea what I was getting into. I did all AP classes [in high school], and I had great grades, never had to study, and I got to college I had no idea what I was doing (*laughs*). It was a completely different world, and I try to give them a taste of that. I try to make it a class that would have benefited me back then, going into what college really was. It's almost like a half step rather than the full step into college. You got the high school safety net there. I think they get 4 points on a rigor point system that they do at our high school. On the high school side, the college score is what it is, but they get another small incentive to take the class and kind of without damaging their GPA. I think that's the justification for it.

One really interesting thing that I've started doing, I start the class with a controversy of the day. It's either something from the news, or just some random topic that I feel will engage the class and kind of get them thinking and talking to each other. We spend about the first 10 minutes of class talking about whatever big is happening. Sometimes it's a news thing, like the beginning of school last year in the fall was the submersible that sank. We talk about that; we get some opinions. That really kind of piques their interest. You kind of get a feel for their personalities. The downside is you

kind of have to control it because some kids will hijack the entire conversation. Some people will never speak up, even though they have great opinions for the most part. This last semester, I had to actually change it. They wanted to go real crazy with the controversies, so we went to topics of the day. Kind of just keep it a little more tame without getting too crazy.

Every now and then I try to throw some information at 'em that maybe they've never heard of or thought about. I did how to get rich. How to become a millionaire in 5 minutes, and so it was basically like the *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* grid thing. What do you need to be to become a millionaire? Kind of showed them how to get there, how to navigate it. One time I did a lot of philosophy-type questions. Why is there something rather than nothing? I let them take that wherever they wanted. It's just kind of food for thought, and I try to guide into things that they could write for an essay. I haven't really figured out the most fluid way to do that, but I would like those topics to find a way into some of their essays because they always pick the same run-of-the-mill, gun control topics, abortion rights, and all that kind of stuff. I'm trying to open their eyes.

I'm very open with their essay topics. You can write about anything as long as you can make it to do what you were supposed to do with the prompt. As long as there's a good argument, and it's researchable, you can do it. I've started a whole spreadsheet of topics that would make really interesting papers. One day, I'll unleash that on them, and be like, "You need to pick one of these topics" instead of these five topics that everybody else writes about. As a professor, I've never wanted to put those handcuffs on 'em because if they're really passionate about it, I don't want to take that away from them. On the flip side of that, not very many of them are that passionate about those things that

they would push back on them anyway. They're just looking for the easy thing, and so I try to convince them that the easiest thing you can write about something you're really interested in. They almost never take that advice. I don't know why. I guess they don't feel like they can talk about something that they actually care about. It's a struggle. More of them the past year or two have branched out. I had one student do traffic safety, which was kind of off the wall. And then he was like, "This is what I want to do when I get to school." You could tell by the way he was talking about it and the way he wrote about it, it was a major concern for him. He had thought about all this stuff on his own, and then those kinds of things make papers better and more engaging. They struggle with that.

Much more feedback happens with the dual enrollment classes [compared to his on-level world literature classes]. The 10th-grade classes need that kind of stuff [feedback], but I don't go into as much depth. A lot of times, the practice they're getting is kind of simple. You either get it wrong, you missed it, comprehension-type questions, things like that. Pretty straightforward. With the college class, there's a lot more push for the depth of understanding, getting the concept. If they turn in an essay, my wife gets onto me because I spent about probably 20 to 30 minutes on every essay grading. Probably longer in some cases. If it's really bad, it takes me almost an hour grade. They have a lot of issues. Especially the first essay for 1101, the narrative essay, I mark up all the grammar things. I'm not necessarily taking off for every single thing, but I'm letting them know, "You messed up in this many places, and that should be a concern for you" (*laughs*). I kind of over-grade, especially at the beginning, [for the] first essay. I over-grade that one to kinda set the tone. Some of them, the grade is lower than any grade they've ever gotten before. It's kind of a shocker. I got to step up my writing, and it's just

a narrative essay. They're telling a story about themselves. I'm mostly grading for grammar and structure. There's some other requirements. They have to use some dialogue and things like that, so I grade all those things. We've talked about most of the things that I'm grading for when we go through all that. We will have hit on some of the major grammar points and how to make dialogue work. The rubric that Longleaf has given me for these separate essays, they're pretty harsh on the grammar and the syntax, especially in 1101. 1102, it's a lot more built into other areas. It doesn't impact them as much. That first time they get that first grade, a lot of them are kind of thrown for a loop, which to me is a good thing. It's kind of a wake-up call.

It's Not Quite College

I got in trouble last semester actually (*laughs*). I taught a Robert Browning poem, "Meeting at Night." It's about a secret hookup. All of them [the students] were like, "Aww, it's such a nice little poem," and then it's kind of like, "Alright, so let's think about what's going on here. Why is he knocking on the window?" (*laughs*). They're all kind of surprised by that. The imagery in that poem, if you really look at it and think about it in the message of the poem and apply it to the imagery, it's a very sexual poem. He talks about a beach in there, and then there's a boat, and all these things are sexual innuendo.

As David told this story, he laughed about it good-naturedly. I guess I pressed that issue a little too much because the principal called me in the next week. She was like, "So you taught this poem. We have an issue." I was like, "What happened?" I was sure which poem she was talking about. She's like, "So this poem 'Meeting at Night,' apparently you were talking about how this is all sexual references and subliminal messages and things

like that.” I was like, “Oh my gosh (*laughs*). Yeah, it sure is. I can’t deny that.” A parent called the principal. Probably just a little too shocking for somebody. The mom was so upset. I mean, these are still high school students, so I’ll back it off a little bit.

It wasn’t an official reprimand or anything like that. [The principal] was just like, “Hey, a parent called, taught this poem, probably went a little too far with it.” It was just like a, “Hey, heads up.” [The principal] kind of looks out for me anyway. I was like, “Alright, I can see how that could be the case.” I didn’t say I would never [teach the poem again]. I’m going to teach the poem again. I won’t be quite that, I guess, revealing (*laughs*). I’ll let them [the students] figure that out on their own, but I usually get a kick out of their reactions when I’m just like, “Every single thing in this poem, even the landscape, is sexual.”

I think the power of that poem is in the fact that you have the historical context. This was really happening between him [Robert Browning] and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and he was just trying to make her father hate him as much as possible. It’s kind of a slap in the face kind of thing. Like, “This happened, and you can’t do anything about it” (*laughs*). Some people are really intrigued by that kind of stuff, and then some people are just put off by it. I guess the only real takeaway from that [the conversation with the principal] for me is just let them [the students] know ahead of time, “We’re gonna get in deeper waters than you would normally.”

Even in 10th grade, I’ve taught way worse things than that. You never know what a group is gonna push back on. If you teach *Romeo and Juliet*, I mean, that’s about as blatantly racy as it gets. I guess I should probably give a disclaimer in class like, “We’re going to talk about some uncomfortable things.” Because my plan before that was to

teach “Hills Like White Elephants.” It’s one of my favorite stories to teach in a college setting, but once that happened I was like, “I should probably not teach that.” Now that that’s happened, I probably shouldn’t go with “Hills Like White Elephants.” I skipped it just to avoid the issue. I’ll be teaching it this semester. I don’t care. I’ll just, at the beginning class, say, “We’re gonna have stories with abortion in it and murder.” I don’t think I really gave that disclaimer at that point. I’ve taught “Where are You Going? Where Have you Been?” by Joyce Carol Oates. I’ve taught that for many years, and I always thought that if I ever got a call about anything that I ever taught, it would be that one. So far, nothing. I didn’t teach it last semester because of the poem situation, but I’ve taught it every year. It’s an abduction story. It’s such a terrifying situation that [the main character] finds herself in. I’m always concerned that somebody’s gonna go home and be like, “We read the creepiest story of all time.” Because it is. It’s rough, but I feel like it’s a good one for them to get a feel for a time period and characterization.

It’s always been a concern of mine to have a helicopter parent just kind of try to dictate the classroom. That wasn’t this situation, but I try to avoid dealing with parents, even with regular [not dual enrollment] students. I don’t enjoy calling parents at all. It’s one of my least favorite things about the job (*laughs*). *David reflected on this story as an example that, while he is teaching a college class and a high school class simultaneously, at the end of the day, he is still teaching high school students. He can’t treat them exactly the way he would treat college students.* That story is probably the best example of something happening where, even though I’m trying to treat these two things as the same thing, they are two separate things. Every now and then I’ll get reminded that it’s not quite college.

A Smaller Kind of Microcosm

*I asked David to reconstruct an experience where the college provided professional development. He told me about the college's professional development for dual enrollment instructors. I think when they started it was part of the accreditation thing they had to do for SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools]. It is less effective recently. It used to be I would have to take a day off the school, go up there [to the college], they'd feed us lunch, meet in person, and kind of do breakout room type things. Then once COVID hit, they did that same thing, but it was online. It was an all-day thing. Then the past year it was down to maybe a couple of hours, and then they would record it, so if you couldn't be there for the actual session, you could watch the recorded video. They required you to at least watch the recording. Not quite as effective. When we'd get together like that [in person], we'd have the opportunity to share ideas. One time I remember somebody was talking about how long it takes her to grade papers, and I sympathized with that. I think I mentioned before, it takes me forever to grade papers. Incredibly slow, a snail pace. Coaching and teaching two other classes, I wish I was at least twice as fast as I am (*laughs*), but I'm not.*

Probably the person I speak to the most [at the college] is going to be the liaison that we have. His name is Paul. He teaches 1101 and 1102, but he's not a high school teacher. He teaches dual enrollment, but he just kind of travels here and there [to different high schools]. He's the one that does my observations for the past few years. I talk to him a lot. If I've ever got questions about anything, I'll shoot him an email. Most of the slideshows, notes, and things like that come from him, and so he's imported those into the shell for the classroom. I think a lot of the dual enrollment teachers that are going

through Longleaf use a lot of his slides and notes and things. That's probably my primary contact. When we did the collaborations in person, we got to meet a lot of people involved with dual enrollment, even the president of [the] university would be there, and you'd get to meet all of them. It's not a very big university. You got to get a feel for who's doing what, like the tech support people. Aside from Paul, actually, I probably talk to some of the tech support people the most because we always have students with issues. Then there is a dean. I've met the dean, but I've never had a conversation. I know the dean approves all the [course] shells, makes sure we're being observed.

[The college liaison] has a form that's kind of a rubric-type thing. It's a general observation form, and they have criteria they're checking for, professional knowledge and student engagement, teaching strategies. They do that, and he'll send that to me, and usually, if he has any questions about something I did, he'll send me an email. That doesn't typically happen. Really, it hasn't happened much at all. Usually, when he's when he's on his way out, I'll ask him. There was one time we were teaching something with poetry, and a student asked me a question. I was just like, "I've never been asked that question before." I kinda asked him, "What's your answer to that question?" He's very helpful. Like I said, anytime I've got a question about how to teach something, or if I want to modify something in Blackboard or anything like that, he'll give me some feedback on that. He's the one that kind of gave me the idea to change the narrative essay [to an in-class assignment]. He did it this past year as an in-class assignment because he wants them to kind of be thinking on their own terms. He gave me that idea, and the stuff like Perusall [an online student engagement tool] and some of those other things, I bounced those off him too.

Before Paul, there was another person who was observing me. She's now higher up in the university. She might be a dual enrollment department head. I'm not sure. When she first started, there were a few times where I didn't hear anything from observations. I was always kind of questioning was I doing okay, but I think it was just because she was so busy because she was everywhere. For the first year or two that I taught at Longleaf, I wasn't sure. I didn't have the opportunity to ask the questions like I get to ask now. That's not really a negative. It's just I guess a better situation for me [now] because I get to kind of question things and modify things to my liking, whereas before I was just kind of going with what they gave me.

I asked David if he thought of himself as a college professor. When something like that comes up, I usually just say I'm an instructor for Longleaf, but I only teach one class (*laughs*). I tell my students I'm a professor; you might as well consider me a professor. If you want to call me an instructor, that's fine as well. You should go ahead and get in the habit of addressing your professors as professors because you need to be able to do that. Now whether or not if I'm officially, legitimately a faculty member of Longleaf it's probably more of a gray area. I would consider myself part of it to a degree. We're very low on the totem pole (*laughs*). Probably at the bottom. I'm the professor of this class. I'm the representative of Longleaf as I teach this class because I'm using their content; they [college faculty] observe me. It's just like teaching in college. It's just a smaller kind of microcosm. Even when I was doing that with [different college], I kind of considered it the same way. I'm just an extension of Longleaf, just to a lower degree. I mean, most of my students will either call me Coach David or Professor David or Mr. David, and I tell them upfront, I don't care what you call me. On paper, most of them put

Professor David, because on that first day, I tell them, “You need to get used to this. This is how you should address your teachers. Use me as practice,” because they don’t really get that opportunity until they get to college. There’s always been Mr. and Mrs. or Coach, and then sometimes just remembering to put “Professor” on there. It might get lost in translation.

They’re [the college] a little more hands on than I would prefer, but I don’t mind it. There’s some oversight to it, which I understand. They’re kind of protecting themselves. On the flip side, I like to kind of build in some things that I feel like are necessary. The freedom, the autonomy to kind of do your own thing is part of the reason why I want to do college and not just high school. Even with that, I do like being kind of provided some things and some expectations to understand this is the target; this is what we’d like to know. I don’t even mind somebody curating the content. Longleaf does a pretty good job of they provide content, but they give you multiple options. The only thing would be the textbook. They want us to use that textbook. I don’t think it’s a great textbook. There’s parts of it that are good. It needs there’s other things that need to be included as well. There’s some pros and cons to it.

High School Safety Net

I share stories about when I was in college. One of the first things we do on the first day of class is ask me a question. Any question you want to ask me, you ask me. And so usually somebody asks something along the lines of, “What’s the best advice you can give somebody?” If they don’t ask, I’ll ask it. My advice to them is never take an 8 o’clock class (*laughs*). That’s one big difference between high school and college. You kind of have to be there for high school. When you go to college, that choice of having to

be there at 8 o'clock is a very difficult choice to make sometimes (*laughs*). That's what I tell them. It's really hard, especially if you enjoy hanging out with friends, staying out late at night, parties, all that kind of stuff. If that's what you really get into when you go to college, then those 8 o'clock classes are going to be a problem.

I tried to give them some advice about what college is really like. This [class] is supposed to be kind of like that, but it's not the same. It's not gonna be being on your own and independent and having to make choices of where to put your time and things like that. I try to share all that. To me, it's a really good class for students to really get a taste of college and get some kind of perspective on what it really is because I did not get that. I was not ready.

Every now and then, I've had to [contact parents of dual enrollment students]. I do have a lot of parents that want to get in touch with me, kind of keep tabs on their kid, which I'm totally fine with. If a student's struggling or anything like that, a lot of times the counselors will say, "Have you tried calling the parent?" I'm like, "This is a college class; I'm not calling the parent." They call me, and I'll talk to them, but this is college. This is how they treat you in college. The parents aren't there. I try to make it as realistic as possible in that way.

Now if there's some concern, I will call the parent if I feel like it's necessary. Typically, a student who's struggling, I'll talk to them as they're coming into class or at the end of class and try to get a feel for what's going on with them. I had a student last fall who was in the middle of moving. I think his parents were probably having difficulties, maybe going through a divorce. His home life was not great. He wasn't able to do a lot of his work. I'd give him some extra time, just kind of talk to him every day,

see how things were going. By the end of it, he was able to kind of pull things together, and he was a strong writer anyway, but he was just late on a lot of assignments. I tell them all like, “You lose points on these late assignments, but if you just don’t do it, I’ll take it whenever.” I’m kind of lenient with the late policy, and I tell them, “Some college professors, if it’s one day late, they’re not gonna take it.” Again, it’s that high school safety net thing. I just have a conversation with them. Tell them when you get to college, if you’re 3 weeks late, trying to turn something like this in, you’re probably going to get rejected. Just give them some feedback on that and understand where they stand.

AI Is the Burden We Shoulder Now

Five of my six collaborators brought up their concerns about Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the writing classroom. David discussed it at length. Every now and then, a plagiarism or an AI issue will come up, and I just talk to them [the student] about it. Just, “I’m going to zero this grade out like you’d never even turned this in. Do it again, and do it the right way.” I give them a day, and then that’s what I’d do last semester. With the final essay, I had two students just turning papers that were half written by AI. Called one of them in, talked to him, and was like, “Why’d you do this?” He’s like, “It was the end of semester.” He had gotten suspended for vaping. I guess he was just in a place where he just, he was like, “I’m done,” mail it in, phone it in. He was just like, “I just felt like I just needed to just be done with it.” He sent that in. I talked to him, and it’s like, “Listen, we’re gonna do this. We’re gonna kind of erase the slate here, and what you’re gonna do is you’re gonna do a different essay than everybody else is doing,” and I gave him certain parameters he had to do. Basically making it so that if you wanted to do

AI again, you won't be able to pull it off. I was like, "And you got 2 days get it to me."
He was like, "Alright."

For the most part, if I see that AI is in there, and I call them on it, they fess up to it. They don't try to deny it or anything. I had one person deny, and I kind of believed her story, and it was more of like she was using Grammarly or something like that.

Grammarly is getting I think a lawsuit for some of this stuff because it says it's just doing grammar corrections, but it's actually modifying the sentence. That's what's getting flagged as AI because it's basically using AI to check things. She said she used that in a few places, and then it made sense because she was a pretty strong writer anyway. She was the only one that really kind of pushed back on, did I use AI or not? Even these grammar services, you gotta be careful with those. Even the counter AI measures that they have now, they [the students] can put something in, how to make something that you use AI for not sound like AI. It's crazy.

What I tell my students is, "How many of you in here like writing?" Some of them raise their hands and like, "You write every single day. You read every single day. It's just on your phone. You do these things, and you just think you're not doing them, but you are." For me, it's one of those things, reading and writing. Some people are going to be naturally talented with it, but the more you do it, you can make yourself at least competent, and that's one of my biggest concerns with AI is how much of that is to just fall by the wayside? Because it's so much easier to just be like, "Well, I'd rather not write that myself." It's kind of scary because if that stuff had been around when I was feeling like that, where would I be? It's kind of a cautionary tale.

It's the burden we shoulder now, to a degree. I try not to let it be that though. Since December, every class that I've had, I've told them about it, we've talked about it, discussed it. I want them to be able to use it in a productive way and not just ignore this thing that's out there that everybody's doing. It's just a shadow or something. That's not how I want them to see it because if you treat it that way, it's not a tool. It's just an undercurrent or something, and really it's not going to go away, and you can't pretend it's not there. To me, that's the one wrong way to go about dealing with the problem. The past year I've tried to teach responsibility, but in a lot of ways, it's uncharted territory. If you pretend it's not there, they're going to use it twice as much. At least they know where you stand on it, and they have some sort of understanding. It's just one of those things you've gotta work with and learn from it.

I Want to Be There to Help You Be Successful in College

Probably some of the most rewarding things, and I try to say this at the end of every 1101 and/or 1102, I'll tell them, "Just because this class is over doesn't mean I'm not still your teacher. I want to be there to help you be successful in college. If you ever need help in another class, want me to look at something you've written, you're not sure how to do formatting, or whatever your issue is, get in touch with me." There's usually, especially at the end of the semester, three or four students who reach out. Some of them at the University of Georgia, Georgia Southern, just kind of random places. They'll send me an email and ask me to look over this thing, give them feedback, and things like that. That's always rewarding.

I had a student last semester email me. She's about to start grad teaching at Georgia Southern. She had given up on doing anything with English. English had always

been her interest, and so she had gone through her sophomore, junior year here and just lost all motivation to do anything. She was kind of in the same situation as me. I told the class I was an introvert in high school. She was an extreme introvert. I was just like, “Never thought teaching would be my thing.” She emailed me about how much my class had impacted her and taught her that you can expect great writing. As a teacher, [I] just kind of want to require students to do that and still be lenient enough to not completely crush them for making mistakes. That’s kind of part of my philosophy is I’m gonna tell you where you’re wrong and show you how to fix it, and if you can do the right things, it will pay off for you in the end.

She emailed me about that, and she’s teaching drama and all kinds of things [that] I had no idea she was doing. She said it was basically all because of my class, and I was just like, “That’s very surprising” (*laughs*). This is weird how you get kind of wore down by teaching, worn out and just kind of just frayed at the edges. Then it seems like, every time that I feel like maybe this isn’t worth it anymore, I get a student send me something like that, and it is a huge boost. It’s really bizarre how often it’s just like, “If this week’s like last week, I can’t do this anymore,” and then somebody will show up and pass me a note or send me an email or something like that. It just keeps you going.

There is a student who is now a teacher here, who was in my [dual enrollment] class. He was trying to get in, maybe history, so he went to [college], graduated, and came back here. He was a substitute teacher for a while. He stopped by and talked to me about the class and how much it taught him. He basically kind of thanked me for being prepared for not just English classes, but for other classes, which I try to emphasize that too. When we talk about writing, it’s not just English essays that you need to be prepared

for. It's all these other academic classes, history classes. When you get into your major, you're going to have to write an essay at some point. All these writing skills are designed to build into that. I try to lead them in that way. I hope that it's beneficial to them somewhere down the line.

I'm trying to get my dual enrollment students to write as best as they possibly can. That's what I tell them like, "In this class, you're going to write more essays and better essays than you've ever written." Some of them, when they hear that, it's kind of a shocking moment for 'em. Most of them feel like they've always written pretty well because they're in a dual enrollment class. They've taken some AP classes and things like that. I try to let them know right away that the expectation is higher than anything you've seen before, and not just for content. It's the level of the grammatical structures and understanding what you're saying, conveying the message, all that stuff. That is my emphasis for going into dual enrollment because I'm trying to always tell them, "This is preparing you to write every essay that you're going to write in college, so you need to know what the expectation is for all those formatting expectations." MLA format, I don't think I've mentioned that at all. We spent a lot of time getting them to understand that, and still by the end of 1102, they're still struggling. This is just one format. You still have APA and all these other formats that you might have to deal with. The expectation is that you do it right, or it will cost you. Conveying that to them is kind of the biggest difference between my 10th grade class and this class.

You Never Figure out the Teaching Thing

Hopefully [in the future], I'll publish that book, it'll be wildly successful, and I can just go to 49% [teaching part-time]. Even better, not even having to do it at all.

Really, I don't see myself changing what I'm doing. Every now and then, I think that maybe I shouldn't be teaching. I want to do something else. I'm getting a little too old to be thinking that, but usually when I think about, "So what am I going to do 5 years from now?" I'm really just trying to do basically the same thing I'm doing now. Be as helpful as possible hopefully. You never figure out the teaching thing. You're always learning new things, new complications pop up, all that good stuff. I'm hoping that in 5 years I'm a better teacher than I was today. I don't see myself doing anything other than teaching. I'm not against it though (*laughs*) if the opportunity presented itself. If somebody was gonna pay me what I get paid to edit a magazine or something like that, I would jump on it.

I do hope in the future that I'm able to make stronger connections with my students because a lot of times they'll leave, and I don't know what impact I had on them until I get maybe a letter or an email out of the blue. I know teachers that they have very strong connections with their students. They know what they're doing for the rest of their lives basically. I do follow usually the athletes. They stay connected to me pretty well. As far as general students, a lot of times I just hope they forget about me entirely (*laughs*). Taught you a little bit, maybe you're successful at the next level, and you forget some of the boring assignments that we had to deal with every now and then. Yeah, 5 years from now, I'll probably still be doing the same thing (*pauses for a few seconds*). With a state championship ring.

My Reflection

As we got to know each other, I recognized David and I shared several similarities. He and his wife are both English teachers just like myself and my husband.

David is a coach, and so is my husband, so we spent some time after interviews talking about athletics. We each have one son who also shared some similarities. I enjoyed our conversations, and he shared a plethora of stories and resources from his experiences teaching CE.

Though he was not the first collaborator to mention AI in an interview, David's discussion of AI triggered an epiphany of sorts by helping me recognize AI as playing a significant role in the CE FYC classroom. His insights on the impact of AI in education illuminated both opportunities and challenges within the composition field. He wrestled with AI as a "burden" and as a "tool," reflecting on how he addresses it with his CE students. While he acknowledged AI's potential to enhance learning, he also stressed the importance of critical thinking and learning how to write in a world increasingly influenced by digital tools. David is also a fiction writer; he has dreams of publishing a novel he has been working on, and he wondered how his own writing journey would be different if he had AI to do his thinking and writing for him.

Like Jessie, David also shared his own struggles during college, which shaped his empathetic approach to teaching and the emphasis he places on talking to students about college expectations. His stories revealed that he has intentional discussions with CE students about topics such as college routines, skills they will need, and how to interact with professors. He pushes his students to create the best writing they have ever produced while also guiding them through that process. Like other collaborators, David also reflected on the workload of teaching CE and the amount of grading and planning the course requires. David said he does the homework and assigned readings along with the students because he believes it makes him a better teacher and helps him present the

material more effectively. He juxtaposed this workload with teaching traditional high school courses and the additional level of preparation and feedback they require. Like Kim, David prioritizes grading his CE students' writing because he recognizes the importance of getting students ready for that next level. If they do not get the practice and knowledge now, he worries that they will miss out on vital information to ensure future academic success.

Kim

I connected with Kim through one of my husband's friends, who worked in Kim's school district. He also happened to be one of Kim's former students, and he spoke very highly of her as a teacher, friend, and colleague. Kim agreed to meet with me during the summer. She was an interesting case because Kim worked as her school's media specialist while also teaching two sections of CE FYC.

When we met for our first interview, Kim had just finished up her 32nd year as an educator. She spent almost all those years working at the same high school she attended as a student. For the first 14 years, she was an English teacher, and then she moved into the media center role. She has taught CE FYC for 3 years, and she teaches two sections each year in a hybrid format. She meets with one section of her dual enrollment class on Wednesdays and Fridays, and she meets with the other section on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Mondays are dedicated professional and planning days for teachers, and students do not come to school.

During each of our interviews on Microsoft Teams, Kim sat on her couch, and her black cat would wander into the camera view periodically. Kim has a doctoral degree that she completed in 2016. I asked about her dissertation, and she told me she looked at

the relationship between students' reading scores and graduation test scores. When I thanked her for agreeing to meet with me and for giving up her time to help with my dissertation, she said she remembered how lonely she felt when she was working on her doctorate, and she likes to be a resource to those who are working on their dissertations.

Kim's Story

I don't remember a time when I didn't love to read. My dad reads everything all the time. I guess I just always watched him growing up. He always had a book on the couch arm, always had a book, sat down, and would read. I loved English. I loved reading. I loved writing. Growing up I just read anything. I had an older sister and a couple of older cousins, and they were always reading teen romance books, so that's what I read usually. I read very few classics. That was one thing when I got to college, it almost became a joke that I had read so few classics. The professors would mention a book, and [ask], "Who's read this?" and everybody would raise their hand but me.

I remember when I was pretty young, probably 10 [or] 11, we were out shopping one day and were looking at books because we always looked at books. I saw a copy of *Call of the Wild*. My dad picked it up and said, "Have you ever read this?" I said, "No," of course, and he said, "Well, you should buy it and read it." Well, I was having to buy it with my money, and I was cheap. I really didn't want to buy it, but I did. I bought it, and I read it, and I loved it. Read it over and over and over. Matter of fact, I gave my dad a copy of it one year for Father's Day or birthday or something. I wrote a little note in it. It was probably the first classic that I read, and I remember in one of those college classes where we were talking, [and the] professor was saying, "Who's read this book?" It was a joke because I had read almost nothing that I was supposed to read. We came across Jack

London, and she said, “Has anybody read anything by Jack London?” and I said, “Oh, *(raises hand excitedly)* I have!” Everybody looked at me. “You have?” I was the only person in the room who had read *Call of the Wild*. That was kind of a weird little story. That was probably the first classic that I read.

I think from then on, I tried a little more to read things that were more meaningful. Although I’m gonna tell you, give me a trash novel, and I’m still good with it *(laughs)*. I guess this is something too. This is not what you asked, but I sort of changed my perspective a little bit about reading since I became a media specialist because I see a lot more value in reading for pleasure. I still love my classics, and I still want everybody to read *Wuthering Heights*. You shouldn’t be able to survive if you haven’t read *Wuthering Heights* *(laughs)*, but there’s a lot of value in just reading what you like.

Through Her Class, I Found Myself

I actually got to college and decided I wanted to be a biology major, for some unknown reason. I have really no idea why *(laughs)*. I really thought I might go to medical school. Again, I don’t know why because I hate blood and sick people, and that’s just disgusting. I got to a biology lab. We were dissecting a fetal pig, and it was all I could do not to just get sick, and all the other people were just so excited. “Oh, look, here’s the so-and-so,” and I’m trying not to gag, and I thought, “I am in the wrong place” *(laughs)*. “This is the wrong place.” I immediately went and changed my major from biology to undecided. I was an undecided major for a semester or two, and then I had an English professor at Brighton University. Her name was Alice Harper. She was fantastic. She terrified me. She made me cry several times *(laughs)*. She terrified me to death, but I absolutely loved her classes.

That professor, I actually had for eight classes at Brighton. I took everything that she taught. Everything. I think if I had to call someone my inspiration or my mentor, she would have been it. I loved all the other English people at Brighton, but she was my person. She was something. Little short lady, and she intimidated the class. She had control of her classroom. That was the one thing you could say about her, but I loved her. I loved her. She was great. I went into her office one day and sat down, and I said (*sighs*), “I think I want to be an English major. Do you think I should be an English major?” (*laughs*). She said, “Well I’ve been waiting for you to figure that out. Yes, you are an English major.” I said, “Okay, thank you. Just making sure.”

I think I was a terrible writer until I got to Dr. Harper’s class to be very honest. I thought I was very good. That’s kind of where I think a lot of my students come in (*pauses*). Not really just my school system, but I think as an educational system, it’s always good to find something to praise about students. I tell them that as well. When it comes to writing, yes, I’m going to put some smiley faces. I’m going to underline some things, and say, “This is so perfectly well said,” and “I love this,” but there’s going to be more than I’m going to criticize, and I tell them it’s constructive criticism. I think when I started college, I had never had someone who really gave me constructive criticism. I mean, I would get, “Oh, good job,” and that would be a comment I would get on a paper. “Good job. A.” Well, that didn’t really tell me anything. Dr. Harper was the first one who gave me a dose of reality when she gave me back the first paper, and I couldn’t even read it for the red marks she had on it.

I think that’s how I grew as a writer. I think that the only way to learn to write is to rewrite, is to write and correct and revise over and over and over, and so that’s what

we do because I feel like that's how I learned to write. That's how I developed. Oh my goodness, I bet there were some essays for Dr. Harper that I wrote five or six times. I would write them, and she would mark them up, and I would fix them and hand them back in thinking, "Okay, this is a 99." Oh, nope. She'd find all kinds of other errors, and it was just a back and forth. I feel like that's how you learn to write, or at least that's how I learned to write.

Dr. Harper, actually the first semester I had her, she never put a grade on anything for the whole first semester, and it was an honors English class. You got check marks. You got a red checkmark or black checkmark, or different color check marks meant different things, meant you had to go back and redo it. When you got a certain color, I think it was a black checkmark, that meant you didn't have to redo it anymore, but it might take you four or five times to get to that check mark, and you still didn't know what your grade was. It was pretty scary. I'm a perfectionist, and I need to make an A, and I was very terrified when I got checkmarks instead of grades. We were all freaking out because we all thought we were "top" (*uses air quotes*) English students. We were chosen to be in the honors class, and we never got a grade, so we had no idea until the end of the semester what kind of grade we had in the class.

Kim reflected on the meaning of that college experience for her and how it impacted the way she teaches her dual enrollment students now. She had very, very high expectations. She made me cry a few times, and I never, ever want to make a student cry. That's one line I will draw. I don't want to make a student cry like she did, but she had very, very high expectations. I think about that with my dual enrollment students, but through her class, I guess I found myself, and I really found that I did have a talent for

writing. I was not as good as I thought I was, obviously, but she helped me improve so much. I did appreciate that. It was scary going in. I didn't like it very much in the middle part, but by the time I got to the end of that first year, I was so thankful to have had that experience and had her guidance.

I guess that [experience] inspires me with students, and I tell them straight up, "I'm gonna mark all over your papers. Don't be offended. Don't get your feelings hurt. You're not going to make 100 on an essay. Don't expect it." I tell them it's a learning experience. We're learning, we're improving, we're always getting better. I try to use that experience to help my students. I try to ease into it a little bit better than I felt like I had it in college (*laughs*) because like I said, we were terrified. I don't want to terrify students, but I do want to push them and make them really, really work hard to see what they can do.

I wouldn't do that to students [not giving them a grade until the end of the semester]. [Dr. Harper] took some things a little farther than I would take them because that really freaked me out, but that first essay that my students write, I don't put a grade on it. I mark it up and hand it straight back to them, and they revise, and then then we start that back and forth. They'll say sometimes, "What would this have been?" I'll usually just say, "You really don't want to know. Just rewrite it" (*laughs*). "You just rewrite it, and then we'll work from there." They learn that's sort of the process that we do. I don't want them to have a grade on a first attempt because it's the first attempt. I want to grade that final attempt. I want to grade something that they worked on, and they've polished, and they're very, very proud of, not something that they maybe wrote in 30 minutes and really didn't put a lot of thought into. By the time that we get to the

end of the semester, they know this is the process. I think that's the only way there is to learn to write. That's how I learned though, and I'm assuming everybody else has an experience similar to that, but that's what I do. That was my experience.

I've Got the Best of Both Worlds

I work at Fairview High School, and I just finished 32 years. I have been working for a really long time (*laughs*). I love our school. I actually graduated from Fairview High School. This is my hometown. This is where I graduated from. We built a new high school [several years ago], so I actually worked at the old high school where I went to school. I think I am one of two teachers left to actually work at the old school and then moved into the new school, so I feel have a lot of ownership in our school. What I'm seeing now are former students who are coming back as teachers, and that is a really special thing to me, that people love the school so much that they leave it, come back, and they want to spend their career at the same place.

We have a great school. I think I've worked under maybe six principals at the school, so I've kind of been there through it all. I think I'm the oldest faculty member, not in age (*laughs*), but in experience. I've been there the longest. I've been through a little bit of everything. All kinds of different schedules, a little bit of everything that we've done, I've been there. I taught English for 14 years, and now I'm in the media center. I am the media specialist, and then this will be my 4th year teaching dual enrollment. That's something I really, really enjoy doing.

I asked Kim what impacted her decision to switch from teaching English to the media center role. I think I was just ready for a little bit of a change. I had done English for 14 years, and I loved it. I still love teaching English. That's one of the reasons I was

so excited to do dual enrollment because I got to be back in the classroom. I was just ready for change. Decided I wanted something different but not something completely different. I didn't want something outside of education, and I really didn't want something outside of English. I loved being in the library. I thought, "Gosh, to have a job surrounded by books all day. How could this get any better?" I do love it.

The librarian at our school was about to leave. She knew she was about to leave, and I really loved my time in the media center when I would take my classes and do research. Everybody else seemed to really dread it because back then we would go and spend 2 weeks in the media center to do a research paper, and everybody else would just be so just mad. Just, "Oh, (*disgusted voice*) gotta go spend two weeks in the library," and I'd think, "Yeah! (*excited voice*) I get to spend two weeks in the library!" I just found out that I really loved that part of English as well. I loved the research; I loved the writing. I loved being able to help kids find information, and so when I realized that job was coming available, I thought, "Well, we'll try it out and see," and then been there ever since. [I] really, really love it.

Being a media specialist, people think I sit and read all day. I don't do that (*laughs*). I did find when I left the classroom that I really, really missed teaching English. That's when I started working at Horizon Online University teaching a freshman English class and loved it. I absolutely loved it. I did it for probably a couple of years, and then they changed the format of how they were doing classes. They suddenly needed fewer teachers, and so I went for a few months, few semesters without teaching there, and then I was going to have to reapply. It was a whole big deal. I knew that our dual enrollment

lady at the high school was nearing retirement, and so I just sort of spent my time, and I had some outside things going on too.

Like I said, I knew that I wanted to get back teaching English. Now I love my job. I just finished 32 years. People keep asking me, “When are you going to retire?” (*laughs*). I said, “But I really love what I do.” I love being in the library all day, and then I get to go out and teach my dual enrollment, and I feel like I’ve got the best of both worlds. Teaching dual enrollment, it’s not a high school class, so I’m not bound by a lot of the high school regulations. I don’t have to turn in some of the paperwork they do, and I don’t have to deal with any of that kind of stuff, which is the stuff I hated about the classroom anyway. All that picky stuff. I just get to go in and teach and then go work in a library, and I love it. Absolutely love it.

We’re Able to Hold Their Hands

In our first interview, I asked Kim to respond to the term “dual enrollment.” As a parent, to be very honest, I’m a little on both sides [regarding dual enrollment]. I appreciate the fact that [my son] was able to finish school early. I certainly appreciate the fact that I saved some money at Mountain College because he ended up graduating in 3 years instead of 4. I really think that’s a fabulous way to look at it. When he actually graduated in May, he said, “Wow, I kind of wish I had one more year there [at Mountain College]. I love it so much.” I was looking at it as, “Oh, he’ll be so excited to get out early.” In fact, I think he would have enjoyed one more year there.

I think that’s an issue that, as parents, we’re looking at it from our perspective of, “Oh we’re saving money,” not necessarily from a student’s perspective that they might need or want that extra year. For our son, he actually went in with an associate’s degree,

and we don't do that anymore in our county because of the cap that the state put on the dual enrollment hours. He was one of the last ones I think that was able to get the dual enrollment associate's [degree]. If you have the associate degree, you pretty much have to walk into a college declaring a major, and I think that's an issue too sometimes. I think that's a lot of pressure to put on 18-year-olds. Sometimes I think there's a purpose for taking all those core classes in college, and that is to decide what you want to do. I think for students who don't know what they want to do, I'm not always sure that the dual enrollment classes give them that perspective that they need.

Now as a dual enrollment teacher, I love the program. I love it. It really gives our kids the opportunity to get the class, get those hours, get that experience, but they are in such a controlled environment. They're supported. That's not to say that professors at Mountain College or other colleges don't care about kids. I know they do, but you know as well as I do that high school teachers are very, very different from college professors, and we understand high school kids.

We're able to hold their hand and get them through those first classes, which I think makes them better students when they get to college because they've had that experience. They've not just been sort of thrown to the wind, if that makes sense. I think that's one of the things when I interviewed at Cherokee Heights College (CHC), they asked me something about how I would treat kids who didn't turn in work, and I said, "Well, they're kids. They're still kids. They're high school kids." Even though I know there's their syllabus and their deadlines, we're still dealing with kids, and we have to take that into consideration. I think that's the biggest advantage is that our students get the hours, they get the classes, but they get it, I say, with a lot of love, if that makes sense.

We take care of our kids, and we check on them, and we support them in a way that they're not going to get if they walk into a 4-year university and they're in a class of 300 kids. That's a big culture shock, especially if you come from a very small high school. Now, if they have to walk into a class with 300 students, at least they got the experience of knowing, "I have done college classes. I can do this. I know how to do it. I've made mistakes. I've figured out my way of managing." I just think that's the greatest thing ever.

Every Day is a Different Day

I get to work. Every third week, I have duty just like all the other teachers, so I have to go out and do morning duty. I have to do metal detectors. I help some gentlemen who do it. If I don't have duty, then I just head straight to the library. We're probably busiest before school and probably the first 30 minutes of first period. All of our students have Chromebooks. We have one-to-one devices. They all have Chromebooks, and the library is sort of the hub for Chromebooks (*laughs*).

I have an assistant, a media aid. We call her a clerk. From the time we get to school until bell rings and probably the first 30 minutes of first period, we are dealing with Chromebooks. Students who forgot their Chromebooks and have to come borrow one. Students who borrowed one the day before and forgot to turn it in are coming in. Students who turned theirs on and now suddenly it's not working. They have forgotten the password. The battery's gone out. Something wrong with the Chromebook. Something won't work. We're dealing with all that.

We also do all the printing for students. Before school, probably the first 30 minutes, we are printing everything that students need pretty much for the day. They

come in, and it's really funny that our students are so surrounded by technology, and they're still so technologically (*pauses*) illiterate sometimes. They have such difficulties just maneuvering their devices. A lot of them can't print; they can't email; they don't know how to attach documents. We're having to really work with individual students, helping them take care of all these issues. That's pretty much the first hour and a half probably that I'm at school. I'm dealing with that.

We also have a program where students, if they're seniors and they don't need all of the periods in the day, can actually come in late. It's worked out now that the door they use to come in late is a side door of the library. There's a girl who, that's her job, to come and sign the kids in, and they walk through metal detectors there too, so they're in the library. That group this year, it's been probably about 50 kids, so they kind of trickle in the last 20 minutes before first period's over. They all have a lot of issues. They come in, and they need stuff printed, and they have issues with Chromebooks, so we have to deal with that.

Then the bell rings to end first period, and that's my period. Second period is when I teach. I have to get all my stuff together. I have a little cart that I roll down to my room, and I have to make sure I get all my stuff together. A lot of times, I print stuff for my class. They turn in everything through Blackboard, of course, but a lot of times I want them to have a paper copy to make corrections on or make notes on. I print a lot of their homework. I'm trying to print that, get it on my cart, and then I head down to class. Then I teach second period.

Then I come back to library, and the first thing I have to deal with is everything that I missed second period and kind of catch up with that. Then the rest of the day, it's

just really more of the same. I have Chromebook issues I'm dealing with. Kids have lost 'em. Teachers bring in lost ones. Teachers have technology questions. Of course, we've got kids coming in, checking out books, have small groups coming in to test. I'm working with teachers, finding resources, doing a library job, and then in between, I sort of tried to take care of my dual enrollment class, and sometimes I just go in my office and shut the door and grade papers or work on whatever I need for the next day. I always say you never know what the day is gonna bring when you go because some days it's very quiet and peaceful in the library, and some days it's absolute chaos (*smiles*). Everybody in the school, whenever they have meetings, they meet in the library. I never know who's coming in. It's a lot.

I guess most schools are like this, but the library is the place to go when you don't know what to do. Any question that you have. Anything. They come to the library. I like that kids do that. I like to feel like we're a good place to come, but they'll come in and start telling me, "I really need to get my schedule changed. I don't like this class," and they'll start a whole story, and I'll say, "Wait, wait, wait! I'm the librarian. You're gonna have to go see a counselor" (*laughs*). "I can't help you."

I do like the fact that they feel comfortable that they can just come in and [ask for] whenever they need. Anytime anybody has a question about how we do things, or how we have done things, they come and ask me. They'll say, "Oh, go ask Dr. Kim. She knows." I get a lot of that, a lot of teachers coming in to ask questions. Sometimes I just get teachers coming in to ask for advice. I like that too. I am the oldest in experience, so I do appreciate that sometimes they come in and just ask, "I'm having trouble with this. What do you think I should do?" I try to help. As a librarian, I'm also in charge of

copyright. I have a lot of teachers coming in and asking copyright questions. We're also just the place where a lot of things are stored in the school. I get a lot of people comin' in just needing stuff. Every day is a different day.

I do library orientation lessons at the beginning of the year for English classes, and then I do research lessons. Sometimes I'll do evaluating website lessons, just a lot of different stuff I do. I really don't know if I do it because I'm dual enrollment or because I'm a librarian, but at the beginning of every year we do a research seminar. We usually do it on Mondays when the kids are not technically there, but they can come in and stay for as long as we need them to. We do a research seminar for all of our new dual enrollment students. We've done it for probably the past 4 or 5 years, even before I was teaching dual enrollment, because we felt that our dual enrollment students were walking in these classes, and they had no idea of how to do research. They did not know what we meant when we said APA or MLA. We had some issues with some plagiarism that sometimes it's difficult to tell if it's intentional plagiarism or if it's, I just really don't know what I'm doing. Our district decided that we wanted to make sure that kids knew what they were doing. We do a seminar that's a 2- or 3-hour seminar where we go over how to do research from beginning to end. We go over MLA; we go over APA. We go over what is plagiarism, what do you have to cite, and it's pretty intense, but it's been very helpful. We give tons of handouts and resources that they can use, and kids say that it helps so I hope it does, and we've already gotten [the seminar] scheduled for this fall. It's really been helpful.

It's a lot of work. In the past, I was actually going into all the dual enrollment classes, especially the social studies classes, because that seems to be the first ones that

kids take at our school. I was going in individually and trying to do research instruction, so this has really helped out a lot because I don't take away time from them. We can spend as much time as I need. I mean, I can talk for hours about research (*laughs*). It's nice to do it on a Monday when we don't have those time constraints.

I Do it Based on What I Feel Like That Group of Students Will Need

First semester is 1101, and it's hard to do writing because the kids have to do so much on their own. That's why I've really enjoyed the hybrid class where I see them twice a week, and they have 2 days of study hall. I gave them a syllabus with a schedule at the beginning of the year, so every day I already have what's due and what we're doing in class. For 1101, we don't do a lot of writing in class. I let them bring in what they've written, and then we work on it sometimes in class.

Every year I do something a little different, so I'm still working on what I'm going to do this fall. We start out, the beginning of the semester at least, looking at sentence corrections. I give them paragraphs [and] sentences that are poorly written, and we work on trying to improve them. In other words, I want them to be able to find mistakes in things I give them so that they don't make those same mistakes in their writing. We spend a lot of time on writing complete sentences, which sounds crazy, but you know exactly what I'm talking about. Fragments, run-ons, comma splices—we spend a lot of time working on those. I spend a week or so [on sentences], and then I assign them their first essay.

My goal is always if they turn in something one day, I give it back to them the next class period. I'm working like crazy trying to get essays graded. That is a huge job. I try to hand back essays with my marks on them. Usually not a grade, but just marks. I

spend some time letting them revise [their essays] in class, so that I can go around and answer questions, help them out. In 1101, we also do a lot of grammar. That's a big part of what they're supposed to do in 1101, and I probably do more than other people do, but I have found that students don't know terminology of grammar. It's so hard to say, "You put a comma after an introductory prepositional phrase," when they have no clue what a prepositional phrase is. We start with, "Okay, we're gonna start with finding nouns in sentences," and they always laugh. "Are we in third grade?" until I hand them a worksheet, and they realize they can't find nouns. They don't know what nouns are! I try to take it more than just, "Let's find the nouns in the sentence," but we try to look at, "So what are some common letters that nouns end with?" If I see a word that ends in *-tion*, it's gonna be a noun. We're trying to look at how we make different parts of speech from the sight word. How we change those words to make different parts of speech because I want them to understand how language is used. Then we do some grammar, and then we go back and do, "Let's look at what are the comma rules? Where are the capitalization rules?" I mean, it sounds like basic stuff, but I find that kids really need that.

I try to look at what mistakes I find in their essays and then focus on those kinds of lessons in class. As far as in class, I give them a lot of handouts. I just find 'em online, make 'em up. They love it when I make up my own because I do crazy sentences. I do movie quotes a lot of times for my sentences. They think that's hilarious, but sometimes we'll get in groups. I like them to work with other people sometimes because they can talk it out, and I walk around and listen to their conversations to sort of see where our problems are. Because when I hear them talk to each other, I can see what their thought

processes are and where their mistakes are coming from. I always tell them, “I’m gonna mark every mistake in your paper. I’m gonna mark it.”

When I start grading them, I don’t always take off for mistakes that I think they don’t know. I tell them that if I see a mistake, especially if it happens on more than one person’s paper, then we stop and have a minilesson on that. Then I’ll say, “Okay, now if I see this mistake again, I’ll take off.” I don’t let them talk about other teachers, but they do sometimes talk about why they don’t like writing. I don’t want to do that [let students talk negatively about other teachers], but I want them to tell me where their issues with writing are. A lot of them will say, “I don’t like writing essays because you just take off for things that I don’t know what you’re talking about,” or “Things are just circled, and I don’t know why.” That kind of helps me guide how I grade because I want them to know why. I tell them I mark a mistake in the line, and then over on the right-hand side of the page [is] where I take off points. I tell him I’ll never take off the point without having something more. If it’s something that’s unusual, I can say that I may mark it and not take off points, but I still wanted to make that correction.

So, 1101 is always a little bit different because I do it based on what I feel like that group of students will need. As soon as the class is over, you start thinking about, “What should I do differently?” Then of course 1102 is my favorite. I love the literature. It’s my absolute favorite. With 1102, they have something to read every night, and then we come in and discuss it the next day. It’s a little bit different. To me, 1102 is a little more structured than 1101 because I’m kind of guiding 1101 based on what the kids need. Sometimes even on their schedule I’ll say, “grammar review,” but I don’t specify what we’re doing because that’s going to be determined by what they need.

It Is Hard to Try to Do Both

It's hard [to balance her roles as media specialist and dual enrollment teacher]. And then as the class moves along, a lot of those dual enrollment students will come in for me to help them in the library. Now, that is one good thing is that I am "free" (*uses air quotes*) all the rest of the day so that they can come in and sit down and get help, or I can just meet with 'em and talk with 'em. That's a good thing, and I do appreciate that, but it is hard to try to do both because I don't have a dedicated planning period. I don't have a time that is set aside for me just to do my dual enrollment work. I try to do a lot of essays due on Sunday night or first thing Monday morning so that I have all day on Monday to grade, and that has been a big help. Then, of course, sometimes we have meetings and trainings on Monday, so that's not always the best. I do try to schedule it that way when I can so I have all day Monday because like I said, I should be free in the media center, but I never know what's going to happen. I never know what I'm going to be doing. That is challenging; I do enjoy the time that I can meet with students, and they appreciate it.

Every year, it seems at least by midway through the year, I have a small little group, usually of girls, who find their way in the library every day. Sometimes they just want to sit and work among themselves. Sometimes they need help. Sometimes they want me to read what they're writing. We did *Hamlet* in 1102, and I had a couple who every day wanted to come in and talk about what they had read, even before we got to class, so that was really nice. It was nice for me to be able to do that because if I had just regular English classes to teach, I would have a planning period and that would be it. It's been nice that way, carving out that time. If I don't get it graded at school, I just have to bring

it home and do it. I really hate doing that, especially when I have, you would think, so much time to do it. Mondays have really helped. That's been a blessing.

I'm a Part of the School

When I was in high school, we had a media specialist who had been there, I think, since my mother was in high school. So she had been there for, oh my goodness, 50 years, maybe. She was not the friendliest person. She did not make the media center very welcoming, and so a lot of teachers didn't use the media center, and a lot of kids I think didn't go in there because she wasn't always pleasant. I feel like that for a lot of years, the media center just wasn't a place that many teachers used. They didn't feel very comfortable. As an English teacher, I used the media center a lot, and even other English teachers didn't want to go in there. I mean, it was that unwelcoming. I feel like so many teachers had gotten used to that, and they didn't really feel like it was a place was important to use.

I feel like that that was something I had to sort of work on, to make sure that everybody felt included, and everybody felt welcomed, and to make sure they understood how I could work with them. I don't think there was any collaboration for a very, very long time between the media specialists and teachers. I had to really work to make them understand, this is what a media center is supposed to be. This is what I want to do, and to make them see that I was a part of the students' lives at the school. I wasn't just a place to send kids when you didn't like 'em, just send them to the library for a while because I still get a lot of that. I was a part of the school, and that I had a voice. For a little while, I was actually on the school leadership team, and I appreciated that because I felt like that was sort of recognition that I was a part. I may not be a classroom teacher, but I can still

contribute. I think that doing dual enrollment has maybe helped some teachers understand that I am a contributing person to the school. I think they see that, and I love the kids, and I think the kids say nice things about me for the most part, and I think that's helped as well because teachers are understanding that yes, I'm here to help kids and I'm here to be a part of the school, not just not to stuck over my little library corner.

Nothing that was really ever just said [to make her feel left out], but that was, I think, just the culture of the school for a very long time. I hope that they feel like that I'm a very important part of the school too. Because it was not a very good feeling to feel like I was just sort of there but (*pauses*) not a part. I mean, because I don't go to departmental meetings. I don't ever want to feel left out. I'm a part of the school.

Am I Doing This Right?

I asked Kim to tell me about any professional development that the cooperating college provided. Once a year, at the beginning of the school year, all the dual enrollment high school teachers go to the college for a full day of professional development. The last [college professional development day] that we went to, we started out in a department meeting. All the English teachers were together, so each department met with their mentors, and we had a department meeting. We talked about AI. We talked about curriculum. We shared topics that we gave for essays. We talked about grading. It was very collaborative. It was, "I do this, what do you do?" "This is a great idea." We shared resources, which was very helpful. Then we spent some time just as a department looking at our courses because a lot of times, teachers are teaching six classes in a high school and then one dual enrollment. It's just one thing, and setting up Blackboard [the college's online learning management system] is not easy. I am not a huge fan of

Blackboard. It seems like every time I get it set up, there's a change, and then when I copy courses over, my changes don't work. Setting up the gradebook is monumental. I think the last time I set mine up, I went to YouTube and found some instructions on YouTube because I could not get it set up.

We spent some time going through our courses, making sure that gradebooks are set up correctly, making sure that we have all the items that we're supposed to have. They [college faculty] look at the syllabus for each class to make sure it includes all that information. It's a nice question and answer session where we have time to talk to other people who teach the same thing that we do and really make sure that we're all on the same page, or at least make those connections so that we know when we have questions throughout the semester that now we have some people that we can talk to.

Then we had a lunch, and then we did a full session with all the dual enrollment teachers. That's where we had the really big AI workshop. Then we had just some general information sessions. I know that they always do sort of an introduction of all of the resources that CHC offers. For example, all the tutoring sessions, what we're supposed to do when students aren't doing well, talk about the accessibility issues. They talk about some requirements overall. Just in case we missed it in the department meeting, they tell us again (*laughs*) to know really what's required.

I don't enjoy going to them [professional development] because we miss a day of school. Especially for me, when I only see my students every other day anyway, it usually falls on a Friday, so that means I only see my Wednesday/Friday kids one time. In the past, what I've done is I've doubled up on Thursday, made them all come to class on Thursday because, first of all, I like to keep my classes together, and so missing a day

throws me off. I don't enjoy missing a day. I do appreciate the fact that we are kept in the loop. Like I said, with high school sometimes as a media specialist, I felt left out. I think this is a good way to make sure that dual enrollment teachers don't feel left out. To make sure we know that there's somebody looking over our shoulder in a good way, not looking over our shoulder to catch us doing something wrong, but looking over our shoulder to make sure that we've got everything we need and we've done everything correctly.

To me, it's a really good time to ask those what I call dumb questions. You know, "For some reason, when I click on this, I'm seeing this message pop up. What am I doing wrong?" I know this last time, the lady who teaches at our sister school in the county, her gradebook was, I don't know what she had done, but it was horribly messed up. They sat down with her and got it fixed, and if she had to try to talk with somebody on the phone and work through it or try to email back and forth to work through it, it would have been a disaster. It was a nice way to have somebody sit down face-to-face and help her fix it. It's nice.

I really wish they would do it earlier before classes start, but I know in our county, we start so early. I mean, we'd have to go in July to be able to do it before school started. By the time we get to this workshop, we've been in school for 3 weeks. It's an "oops" if we're that far behind, but I do appreciate the fact that they meet with us, and I think it's more of a CHC requirement. The last time that we went, this last year, we did the department meeting first. Every other year I've been, the department meeting's been at the end so that we had the full support session in the morning, had lunch, and then worked with our department, and then when you were finished, you could leave. If you

didn't have any questions, you were free to go. This time, we did the department meeting in the morning, and I think everybody finished. We got all of our problems worked out and everything, and then we had to sit for an hour. When they sent out a full survey about the meeting, I said that we all didn't need probably 4 hours with our department. Some of us could have done 2 [hours] because I could have gotten back to school and gotten some work done. That was one suggestion I had, but I do appreciate the fact that they meet with us. It is aggravating, but it is nice to know that if I'm having an issue with anything in my class, that I know that I'm going to be able to go and sit down with somebody who's going to help me.

Especially the very first year that I was there, the first year I did dual enrollment, I really got a lot of good ideas just hearing everybody else talk about what they did. I can't think of anything specific, but I remember using some of the stuff we talked about. Maybe somebody had list of [essay] topics, but just hearing how other people do things makes me a little more confident that I'm doing everything okay. When you're the only person at your school teaching something, you always wonder about, "Am I doing this right?" because there's nobody to bounce ideas with. You're just sort of on your own, and so that [professional development] was a good way to make sure that okay, yeah, we're all on the same page. I'm doing the same thing everybody else is.

I have my mentor or my faculty liaison, I guess, she comes out once a year and observes, sits in on a class, is always very complimentary. Always seems very pleased with what she sees. She smiles the whole time that she's watching, which is always a good sign. She'll call occasionally, send me an email, "Everything good? You need anything?" I appreciate that. I feel like that she's got my back, and I feel like if I need

something, she's the first person I can call. She might not know the answer, but that gives me at least a point of contact. I feel very well supported. I think that CHC really worked hard on the dual enrollment. I know it's a pretty big percentage of their students in their dual enrollment program. I think that they do appreciate the dual enrollment, and I think they work to make it work well. Everybody's always been very helpful to the students. They are very, very, I think cognizant about, this is an important part of our school, and I feel like they treat the kids well.

Before Kim could start teaching her dual enrollment classes, she had to do training on Blackboard, the college's learning management system. The training is self-paced in Blackboard. The only negative thing I would say at all was the Blackboard training, and they seem to use a prescribed Blackboard training that had absolutely nothing to do with what I do day-to-day in Blackboard. I think that's been brought up in some of our department meetings, that we all went through the training, and then we all sort of just had to figure it out on our own. I know when I started, I had those people [other teachers] at my school, who were who were teaching in CHC. I mean, they helped me so much. And I don't know that that's a fault of them [the college faculty]. I guess they're using whatever training I'm sure that Blackboard puts out, but it's not the best. I felt like there was nothing in that training that I learned that I actually use.

I Almost Expect Perfection

I almost expect perfection [from dual enrollment students]. I expect my high school kids to make a lot of errors. I don't expect to see a lot of same errors in college students. I expect a depth of writing that I don't expect in a high school class. High school students, for the most part, can get by with very mechanical kind of writing, very

scripted writing. We don't want that in a college class. There's a depth there. There's a maturity, and it is hard to put into words, but there is a difference. Again, I'm a very nice teacher, but I am a very strict grader. I do expect them to write flawlessly. I tell them, "I could have found something to mark in Shakespeare's papers" (*laughs*). I don't expect them to be perfect, but that's the standard I'm going to hold them to, whereas a high school student, I would not do that. Especially when we write about literature too, there's just a depth there, a depth of understanding, a voice that I'm looking for on a college level that I would not expect from just a high school student in a high school class.

I think they look at me as a college professor. I think at my school, in my situation, it's a little different for them because I'm not a high school teacher at the school. I am only a college professor. I can see where other teachers, they may not look at them that way because if I'm teaching ninth graders first period and then college second period, maybe I'm not real sure what I am. The students are not really sure what I am, but because I only teach the dual enrollment, I think they do look at me as a college professor.

You've Got to Believe in Yourself

At the end of the year, we always have an honors day, and so we are asked to choose one student from each class to receive an award for that class. My first year, I could only choose one student for dual enrollment. After that, I said, "No, no, I teach 1101, and I teach 1102. That needs to be two awards. It's two separate classes." So now I give an award for each class. I don't know how other teachers give the award. I give it based solely on grades because I love the kids, and I always have favorites. I'm not supposed to have favorites, but I have multiple favorites, and so I just base it on grades.

That way I don't have to justify why I gave an award to this student. Two different girls got my awards this year. One got 1101, and one got 1102.

I was not able to go to honors night, and by the time honors night hit, we were finished [with classes]. I didn't see the students who received their awards until the night of graduation. We were in the gym, waiting to go out onto the football field, and the group of girls that I called my favorites because they would come to the library every day and see me, they came over to hug me. One of those girls was one who got one of the awards. She had not said anything about receiving the award, which I thought was kind of odd. I said, "Well, congratulations on your dual enrollment award," and she said, "Well, I was surprised you picked me." I said "Well, you know I love you, but you had the highest grade in the class." She said, "What?" (*shocked voice*). I said, "You had the highest grade." She said, "Like of both classes?" I said, "Yeah, you had the highest grade." Well, she just burst into tears. I mean just started bawling, and I know it was emotional. It was graduation, but she just started bawling. She could not believe that she had the highest grade. I was hugging her because she was crying, and all her friends were hugging her.

It was a sweet moment because I said, "You are a fantastic writer." I said, "You've got to believe in yourself." She was always very critical of herself. She did not have a lot of confidence to be such a fantastic writer. When I realized that she did have the highest grade and she was getting an award, I remember thinking, "Well this may be what she needs for her to finally realize what a great job she does." We were in the gym, and she came back over to me before we went out on the field to hug me again and to thank me again. It really touched me. I was telling my husband afterwards. I said, "She

just started boohooing right then.” I said, “I’m so proud of her.” I don’t know why she thought she got the award. I guess she just thought I liked her because that little group always came to see me all the time, and I really did like them all, but I didn’t give her the award because I liked her. I gave her the award because she earned it.

Then I had another little girl probably my first year teaching dual enrollment. She was a little bit quiet, had not done very well in English classes. Not to be critical of other teachers, but I think she did not do well in other English classes because she was so quiet, and she did not participate. She would not answer a question out loud to save her life, but she wrote beautifully and had no confidence in herself at all. I feel like I helped her gain some confidence. Matter of fact, if I ever had to pull out an example of how to do a quotation, or how to do anything, I would ask her, “Can I use a paragraph of this for an example?” She would always say, “Don’t tell anybody it’s mine.” “I will not ever tell anyone it’s yours.” I would pull out hers and use it. I think she grew; I think she gained a lot more confidence. Now she still didn’t want to answer questions in class. She would just [get a] deer in the headlights [look] if I ever made a mistake and called on her, but fantastic writer, and her grade in the class should reflect that, not the fact that she answered questions or not. I hope now she believes herself. She’s one that I really thought would stay in touch with me, and she hasn’t, and I’ve been real disappointed that she hasn’t stayed in touch, but I think about her a lot and wonder how she’s doing. I like when I can feel like I’ve given somebody that confidence because sometimes that’s all we need is just the confidence to know that we’re doing the right thing or that we have that talent.

There's so Much Freedom

I asked Kim to tell me about her favorite part of teaching dual enrollment. I would say the kids; I love the kids. I love those relationships that we can build as English teachers. I often think if I taught math, I think, "Gosh, if I had to talk about numbers all day, how awful that would be." I love English because we get to talk about so many things. When we're writing or when we're reading literature, we get to talk about life, and I get to know them [the students] so much more than I think I would in any other subject area. Then I get to talk about what I love all day because I love English. I get to talk about that and make them see how important it is. That's the best thing, just the kids.

In 1102 this year, we did *Hamlet*. Of course, I love *Hamlet*. It is my absolute favorite. I had talked about it all year. I'd hyped it up, and a lot of the kids were not looking forward to it, surprisingly. They said, "We don't wanna do this. We don't wanna read this," which is typical, but I'm always so pleased at the end that so many of the kids will come back and say, "I really liked that. I really didn't think I was gonna like it, but I loved it. You were right. This was really, really good" (*laughs*). That makes me feel good, to know that I've shared that with the students and that they'll remember it. That's what I tell them, "I want this to be something that you'll remember for the rest of your life." Of course, 1102 is a little more applicable because we're talking about literature, and literature is life. Even in 1101 when we're writing, we're writing from the heart. We get to talk, and I get to know them and build those relationships with them. If you were a math teacher, and you just had to do numbers all day (*laughs*), I don't know how you'd get to know kids. In the dual enrollment, there's so much freedom that I feel like I get to know them even more than I would in a regular classroom. I have objectives I have to

reach, but high school classes have become so bogged down with everything that goes on, but the dual enrollment classes I have that freedom. I love that.

The Fear that I Don't Do Enough

I asked Kim to tell me about her least favorite part of teaching dual enrollment. Maybe just the fear that I don't do enough or that I'm not enough because I feel like this is their 1101. They will never take it again. I mean, when you're a high school teacher and you teach them in 10th grade, if you miss something, well, they'll get it in 11th [grade], or they'll get it in 12th, but this is the only 1101 they will ever take, so I'm responsible for making sure they get what they need. If I miss it, then they've missed it forever. There's a fear of that. "What if I didn't do enough? What if I'm not good enough?" and now I've sent them into this world without the knowledge that they need. I worry about that. I'm a perfectionist, and I want them to leave the class being successful, and I worry what if I didn't do a good enough job. Because I'm the only one, I don't have anybody else to compare myself to at my school. There's a fear there.

My Reflection

Kim's experiences were unique because of her role as a media specialist. She said "it's hard" to manage her media specialist role with teaching dual enrollment. Because she doesn't have a dedicated planning period, it is often challenging for her to find time to plan and grade for her DE classes. She also expressed feeling lonely at times because she is not a classroom teacher, and she has sometimes felt as if she is not a part of the school. Thus, in addition to navigating the liminal space between high school and college, Kim also navigates the liminal space between the media center and the classroom. She must balance all these roles. Kim discussed the fear that she is not doing

enough in her classroom to equip students with the skills they need for college and for life. Like Elbert, she expressed uncertainty that she is teaching her students the right things, as she does not have anyone else in her school with whom to collaborate. A pattern of loneliness appeared in both Kim's and Elbert's stories of their experiences.

Kim exhibited meaning-making when she reflected on her own college experiences. She discussed the high expectations her college professor and mentor, Dr. Harper, maintained. Kim reflected that her experiences as a college student in Dr. Harper's classes impacted the kind of teacher she is now. Like other collaborators, Kim discussed the high expectations she maintains for her students. She also reflected on her role as a DE teacher to hold her students' hands and help support them as they are moving into the college realm.

Jessie

Jessie was my final collaborator, and I secured her participation in July after I finished interviewing the other five collaborators. I met Jessie almost by happenstance on Facebook. She commented on a post in a group for AP Language teachers in which the poster was searching for information about starting concurrent enrollment (CE) in Georgia. Jessie responded to the post, stating that she taught CE at a high school in Georgia. I messaged Jessie through Facebook Messenger, sent her my recruitment flyer, and she enthusiastically agreed to participate. We met virtually during July through Microsoft Teams.

Jessie is in her 40s, and she has a 10-year-old daughter whom she spoke about with fondness, saying, "She's awesome." Jessie's excitement in talking with me was

palpable, even through a video format. She had a wide smile, laughed often, and was an expressive storyteller.

Jessie had quite a journey to where she was at the start of our interviews. When she was 20 years old, she jumped in her car and moved to Georgia from New York. She earned an associate's degree in teacher education. She earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing from State University. She then earned her Master's in English Rhetoric and Composition also from State University. She started a PhD program but had to withdraw when she became sick.

At the time of our meetings, Jessie was not a fully certified high school teacher, but she had spent the previous 2 years teaching at a high school in Metro-Atlanta. Before that, she taught composition and rhetoric courses at several Georgia colleges. She considered completing a second master's degree (Master of Arts in Teaching) to earn her teaching certification, but that path did not work out for her. While she wanted to continue teaching at the high school, she decided to reapply to a PhD program instead. She was accepted and planned to begin the PhD program in the fall of 2024 while teaching English courses through the college.

Jessie's Story

I was born in Baltimore. I think I was in kindergarten, and we did a class play, and it was *The Big Brown Bear* or something like that. One of my classmates, Allison, she was chosen to be the big brown bear. I'm not sure what prompted my teacher to ask me what I wanted to be, but I just told her I wanted to be a frog. Somehow, I got the frog part written into the play for me (*laughs*). It was such a silly memory, but in hindsight, I don't understand how or why that happened, but I was a frog. I was able to persuade my

teacher, I guess, to let me be a frog because there wasn't anything else that I was gonna be. *After Jessie told me this story, we joked that this must have been her first experience in which she showed a predilection for communication and rhetoric, which is what she was about to focus on for her PhD.*

I was in a gifted program also. I guess I was a really, really, really, really, really early reader. I started school a year early. Because of my reading ability, I did all of my reading and writing classes in a grade ahead of me, so whenever I was in kindergarten, I spent most of my time in first grade reading and writing classes. I was terrible at math. I mean, I must not have been terrible at math, but that's my memory (*pauses*). I loved being in school, so I have nothing but fond memories of my entire school experience.

We moved to New York when I was going into fifth grade because my dad got a new job. I have a younger sister. When we moved, it was just me and my sister. My younger brother wasn't born until after we got to New York. My sister loves telling a story about what a horrible person I am because when we moved, maybe this is rhetoric again (*laughs*), I convinced everyone on the school bus that my sister, whose name is Sara, I convinced them that her name was Matilda. "She hates her name, so if you call her Matilda, she's going to tell you no, that's not her name (*laughs*), but that's only because she hates her name." Oh my goodness. She spent a good solid several months of her life just hating me a lot and being Matilda (*laughs*).

My High School Experience Was Very Awesome

I went to a ridiculously tiny public high school, and it was in New York. Unlike in Georgia, where each county has its own school district, in [this county] in New York when I was in high school, every zone is its own school district. Ours was the smallest

school district in the county. My graduating class in a public high school, and this is 20 minutes outside of New York City, my graduating class had 32 students. 32 students. It was tiny. Another thing that I feel grateful for, I loved it. I had a fantastic high school experience. It's funny to say this because there were only 32 students, but I was the valedictorian of my high school class. Yes, I did have to work hard to be the valedictorian of my high school class (*laughs*), even though there were only 31 other students behind me (*laughs*).

I was super confident. I did not feel that I was a strong math student, nor was I strong in physics or chemistry. I still did great 'cause I ended up top of the class, but I also relied on my communication skills to talk with my teachers. I don't know how accurate it is, but I have a memory of persuading my calculus teacher, when I was a senior, to let me write a report instead of taking the final exam. That was a long time ago too, but I know the accurate part is I did get to write something for a high-stakes grade. It might not have been the final exam, but it was something important. For physics, my teacher was the nicest, sweetest, most gentle person. I did not attend any of my physics classes, but our final test was a New York State Regents exam. It was a standardized test. We had a study guide, and whatever I didn't do in class, I just spent the week before that final test studying the mess out of that study guide. I pretty much had it memorized for the test. That's what got me through physics.

It was [a] tiny school, so everybody literally knew everybody. I was really comfortable with that. I loved that. I had friendships with probably every single one of those high school groups. I was an athlete. I played varsity volleyball, varsity basketball, varsity softball, but also my best friends who are the garage band guys (*laughs*). Looking

back, I was just ready to be friends with everybody. I loved all my teachers. There wasn't a single teacher who I couldn't stand. They were all great.

In our tiny high school, we did everything. I was in the band. My mom, she sabotaged me (*laughs*). She went directly to the band's conductor and said, "Hey, my daughter knows how to play the piano. Can she be in the band?" and he was like, "Oh, yeah." Then she told me (*laughs*). Our junior/senior high school was all in the same building. It wasn't a high school that was separate from junior high school. We were all there. I was in the high school band when I was in seventh grade. And that year, we did big band night. We didn't have any lower brass instruments in the band, so he [the band director] transcribed the lower brass parts into a piano part that I played on a synthesizer. I was the tuba (*laughs*). It was wild. It was fun, though.

I was in the band. I played volleyball. I played softball. I played basketball. I was the editor of the school paper. I was in another public service club. I can't remember what it was. I was valedictorian, and I don't have a copy of that speech, but I remember saying something along the lines of, the benefit of being in such a small school is that each of our voices are proportionately louder, and we have to bring this volume into the world because it's gonna be a whole lot bigger when we get out of here. That part kind of resonated with me because, kind of like I'm doing now, I love talking. I'm not afraid to say something. I'll ask questions a million times. I'll speak my mind about stuff. I really feel like that's something that I can attribute to not really having any choice but to be acknowledged, everywhere I went, all of us, in this tiny high school that we went to.

I'll say that the high school that I was teaching at has almost 3,000 kids. 3,000 students. It's still, despite the huge number of students, at some level, the student

experience really was similar to my memories of high school. I also felt like it was definitely my mission in the high school where I was teaching to make sure that if there's one thing that they learn in my classroom, it's that their words have power. That they cannot be afraid to open their mouth no matter where they are. Even if right now, they're really tiny in the great scheme of things at that school, no, they're not. Get recognized for the stuff that you're doing great.

I realized that my high school experience was very awesome. I also realized that—and this realization in hindsight, it's not in that moment—I'm certain I had 30 hands holding mine the whole way through. Everything that I felt like I pushed through independently in high school, while I'm sure I did, it probably couldn't have happened without the teachers making certain that I knew that they were expecting this work, and they were expecting it to be perfect. Expecting it to be well done.

I Didn't Know How to Make That Work in College

I get to college and first class, it was Econ 101 in a lecture hall with 600 other students. Like, “Huh.” (*Looks from side to side.*) “This is enormous.” Then my Intro to Poli Sci [political science] class, which I was so excited about, it was same thing. It was a couple hundred kids in a lecture hall and then a breakout group with a GTA [graduate teaching assistant]. The first and only paper I wrote for that class, the question was, “Is America a procedural or substantive democracy? Use your textbook and lecture notes to answer,” and then there was a page limit. My happy, excited self was like, “Oh, I can write a paper? I'm great at writing papers. I'm going to the library.” I spent a ridiculous amount of time in the library looking at journals. I think I had at least 10, if not more, citations. I wrote a seven-page paper, and it was great. My argument was, “America is

neither a procedural nor substantive democracy. It's a corporate authoritarianism”
(*laughs*). I get an F on the paper for not meeting the directions. That was just like a punch
in the gut.

I took a class called Africans in the Americas. It was a look at the slave trade and
the African diaspora in the Americas, and it was a phenomenal class. I did really, really,
really well in that class. That was a positive memory. Maybe that was a hint way back
then about the things that I'm interested in now, as I say this out loud, and I'm thinking
about what I'm interested in writing about (*laughs*). I absolutely loved that class.

I guess, again, in hindsight, I realized that I did not have a way to self-motivate
for the classes that were challenging to me because I struggled with the content. If it was
an English class, or that [Africans in the Americas class], if it was something that was
really, really, really interesting to me, I was gonna dive right in, but I didn't know how to
read a syllabus or apparently how to read instructions on a paper (*laughs*). I just was used
to being able to do what I did [in high school], and so that was rough. In high school, like
the physics class, I was able to scramble at the last minute and wind up getting a great
grade on the final exam, which my sweetheart, wonderful, loving, caring teacher made
my final grade for the class since I never showed up (*laughs*). I didn't know how to make
that work in college. I couldn't make it work in college. I didn't have that level of
discipline that I needed to have to follow the rules until I figured out how to break the
rules, if that makes any sense.

I was academically dismissed after the first two semesters, and I was terrified. I
did not want to tell my parents that that happened because the community was so small.
How does the valedictorian of the high school fail out of college after her first year? I

managed to find a job. I applied for a job at McDonald's, at Structure in the mall, and I applied for a job at General Hospital, which was close to the college, for a file clerk position. When they interviewed me, she asked me if instead of being a file clerk, I'd be interested in being a patient care tech. It was double the hourly wage, and I said, "Yes, I would. I would love to do that. I'm very interested in that." Within a couple of weeks, I had my first apartment and the job, and that's when I felt like I could finally tell my parents what was going on. I did that [worked at the hospital] for 2 years. Then I tried to go back to school. I got to community college, but I don't know what was off, but I was not able to motivate myself to go to class and work. Finally, I just reached this burnout stage where I was like, "Let me just come home," and so I came home.

I had a friend in high school whose dad lived in New York and whose mom lived in Georgia. She grew up in Georgia, coming to New York over the summers to visit her dad, and she and I went to summer camps together. When I came home from college, it was pretty tough. I found her number and called her up and she said, "You should come to Atlanta. I need a roommate." I said, "Okay" (*laughs*). I jumped in my car, and I drove to Atlanta. That was the best worst mistake I ever made (*laughs*), but I haven't looked back.

Finally, my grandparents and my mom, after things kind of cooled down and they knew I was okay and safe, probably a year or two later, they convinced me that I really need to go back to school. I started taking classes at [a local] college. The first year, I took one class, and I did great. The second year, I took a full load, and I did not so great, but I had this new level of, "Okay, I'm figuring this out now." It was kind of like a redo for freshman year, making the mistakes that freshmen do, but then having a much clearer

understanding for how to recover from those mistakes. By the time I finished at [the] college, I was a coeditor for the paper. I won a creative writing contest. I won the contest for fiction and for poetry. Then I started off at State University in the bachelor's program, definitely on the right foot. I should add that, at this time, now I am bartending and floor managing a restaurant in [City]. Now I have this routine down. I know my chunks of time, when I'm doing my writing, and I'm doing my reading, and I'm going to class, and I have work that does not come home with me. I have work, I go, I'm just at work, I'm loving work. I'm non-stop moving, dealing with people, eating great food, and making great money. I wasn't stressed out financially or anything. I was just in a really great place.

In my 40s, I'm Diagnosed with ADHD

Fast forward to when I made the decision to bail out of the PhD in the communications department. I was a part of a graduate student support group, and that was led by a clinical psychologist and a student in the clinical psychology program, who was working on his PhD. It was in the intake that led to me being invited to the support group. The counselor that I saw in the Student Counseling Center in my intake asked me if I had ever been assessed for ADHD. I was like, "No! I never have." Then, fast forward. In my 40s, I'm diagnosed with ADHD. I'm like, "Well, that explains a lot!" (*laughs*).

It's funny to compare my high school experience to the point at which I'm doing really well at school. My schedule was so full. Everything was like clockwork. Everything was down to a science, and I knew what I was doing and when I was doing it. That was really what was missing from my first semester at college. I didn't know that routine was really what was a huge part of driving my success in high school. That's

definitely been a struggle now is trying to establish a set routine, but when I have moments of everything is working the way it needs to be working for me, that's when it's great.

I asked Jessie how her ADHD diagnosis impacted the way she approaches instruction in her classroom. [I] just kind of have this recognition that, if I can't function without knowing what I'm going to be doing and when I'm gonna be doing it, how can I expect that anybody—neurodivergent or otherwise—can function in that manner too? It's really important to me to make sure that however I'm setting up my classroom or the classwork that we're doing, there's a pattern. That students know what to expect when they walk into the classroom. That is very important to me. It has played a significant role in how I structure my syllabus and how I treat the day. I can definitely give examples in the dual enrollment classes that I've taught because I already have that routine that's locked in place. I have weekly writing assignments and daily writing warm-ups, and so everyone knows when they come into class, the first thing that they [would] do is look at the writing prompts and then answer the writing prompts. Then they knew that if they had done the reading that there would be whatever discussion questions that they were going to do, and so the writing prompts would lead to the discussions.

The things that changed that a little bit are if we're preparing for writing a paper, the reading assignment would be the assignment sheet, and then the writing prompt would be just a brief, this is what I understand about the assignment, these are the questions that I have, this is what I'm looking forward to, this is what I can't stand about this assignment, et cetera, et cetera. That was really great. It also helped that my dual enrollment classes were pretty small, but we always had great discussions.

Conferencing is an Integral Part of the Classes I Teach

When Jessie was a student at State University, she worked in the school's writing studio as a tutor. I asked her to tell me stories about her experiences working there. She reconstructed two specific experiences, and then she reflected on the way those experiences impacted the kind of teacher that she is now. It was the end of the semester, and an undergraduate student comes in with a 1102 assignment, their research paper. He hadn't done anything, and it's due in 2 days. I was like, "Okay, let's see what we can do to salvage this." I was like, "Well, what is the topic that you want to write about?" He says, "Well, I want to talk about euthanasia."

Now, context is everything, and this is happening right after Hurricane Katrina, and State University [had] opened up the doors to hundreds of college students from Louisiana who were displaced because of the hurricane. I was much more of a news junkie then than I am now. I had just read these horrible news stories about health care workers and retirement homes who were basically pulling the plug on patients who they weren't going to be able to safely evacuate. So, when I hear euthanasia, that's what I'm thinking about. I start pulling up these articles about this. Then I look at this student, and he's like, "I was really just talking about my dog" (*laughs*). So that was me getting a little too overzealous and learning a really important lesson. It doesn't matter that your paper is due in a couple of hours. Let me let you do the talking (*laughs*). I will just point my finger when and if I need to.

That was hard, but the mode of tutoring was really less tutoring and more guidance and consultation. The idea was that, through our meetings with students, we weren't to edit. We weren't to make suggestions for specific changes. We should show

students a pattern. If it's editing, and if it's grammar, proofreading, or typos, things like that, show students these patterns and help them learn how to recognize this when they're reading through their own work. Definitely build in ideas about the writing process.

When we're able to build in time to edit and proofread our own work, that becomes a part of this process. We did a really good job I think of branding ourselves as the idea generation spot, so students could come in with their assignment sheet, read through the assignment sheet, make sure that they understood everything they're doing, and then brainstorm. It was for any writing assignment, and it was for any grade. So, I helped students who were international students with dissertation chapters.

I helped a student who was—this is really, really, really, really, really moving, really heartbreaking—speaking at a fundraising benefit for a hospice care provider who cared for her mom. Her mom had died in their care. She's writing this speech to help raise money for that provider. She was an example of the way that, ideally, our writing studio process would work. *Jessie's voice broke a little here. I could tell that she was getting emotional as she told this story. She looked toward the ceiling as if in an effort not to cry.* She came in with, "Okay, this is my task. How do I approach this?" We talked through some ideas for starting, and then a couple days later, "This is my intro." We talked through each step, and then the very last visit, she read me her whole speech. It was so good (*pauses briefly*). I didn't tell her anything. It was just the guidance that I gave her, so that was a perfect one.

I then asked Jessie to reflect on how those experiences working in the writing center impacted the kind of teacher that she was to her dual enrollment students. It's a blessing and a curse because I see the benefit of being able to have these 30-minute

discussions with students about their writing. It is impossible to have 30-minute discussions with 100-and-some-odd students for all five essays that we do (*laughs*). I do see that it's important to me to have conversations with students throughout the semester, and so that experience in the writing center has made conferencing an integral part of the classes that I teach.

I think the other thing that I've taken from that is recommendations for students for how they can design their writing processes. In the writing studio, we either read the paper, or read the draft to the student, or have the student read it to us. That's become part of my teaching process too is that we do peer review, peer editing. It's not just, "Here, exchange papers, read, and here's your list of things to look at." It's "read your papers out loud to each other." Come in with a copy, and then as my partner would read my paper to me, I have my copy in my hand. As I'm listening to them read my paper, I'm making notes on my own paper for things that are awesome, for things that don't sound the way that I thought they sounded in my own head (*laughs*). That's been pretty huge too. That helps [to] kind of disperse the conferencing a little bit. What I try to do is use our peer editing day to build in conferences with students as they're working with each other. Even just having time to talk through their papers with each other, it seems I get pretty good feedback [from students] about that too.

They Have to Learn how to Set the Rules for Themselves

I started adjuncting at City Technical College the summer before my last semester of writing my [master's] thesis, and they hired me to teach there full time. It was contingent on me completing my master's degree. My dad died when I started doing my master's thesis research project, and so that was a pretty rough moment. That kind of was

a hump that I had to get over, but I did, and it was definitely helpful that City Tech hired me. I taught there for 5 years.

I had one of the dual enrollment students who made such an impression on me. I don't even know what high school he went to, but it was this one student who kind of just stands out in my memory. Most of the students at City Tech are nontraditional college students. They're embarking on a new career. There are a lot of veterans who were finishing their service and starting school. Just the landscape of the population, it's very diverse, and it's very interesting. I loved teaching there. I loved the relationships that I was building with the students there. The high school students were just so well prepared. They were working so hard. They were really motivated to do really well in the classroom, and that sometimes was a stark difference from many other students who were in the same space as they were. I felt really compelled to make sure that I was able to give them the time that I felt that they deserved. Make sure that they did well, and they understood how to take this experience, not just the classroom experience, but this glimpse into college experience, with them so that they will be much more prepared than I was to do well once they got into college.

Connecting it to my own experience leaving high school and going to college and just failing miserably—with fireworks and everything—of what an impact I could make if I was on the front end of a bunch of students who are getting ready to leave this place where they are, whether they feel it or not, being guided through this academic process, to the point in their life where all of a sudden they have to be their own guide, their own resuscitator, their own disciplinarian. They have to set all these rules for themselves. They're leaving this space where the rules are set for them, and they have to learn how to

do it themselves. If I can help anyone on the front end avoid the experience that I had, that would be huge (*pauses*).

I Can't Count on You to do That, Can I?

Jessie spent 2 years teaching dual enrollment and other courses at Peachtree High School, a high school in Metro-Atlanta. She did not have a K-12 teaching certificate, but she hoped to be recommended for the certification program, called Educate, offered by the school system. I was getting my daughter ready to go back to school, and I happened to notice in the county where I ended up teaching that there was a loud, robust call: “Do you have a college degree? Do you want to teach in a high school?” I’m like, “Yes, you’re talking to me. Yes, I do.” So, I was hired at a career fair to teach at the high school. During the interview, I asked the principal if she would recommend me for the Educate program. She said yes, she absolutely would, and no, she absolutely did not. She retired, and I don’t want to sound like I’m angry, but I did not follow up with that.

When we hired the new principal, I had a face-to-face meeting with him individually. Because now I am in the MAT [Master of Arts in Teaching] program, and I am floundering. When I found out that the outgoing principal hadn’t recommended me, I applied to and was accepted to the MAT program. It was really, really, really, really, really challenging for me, and I didn’t do a great job of keeping it all together. The incoming principal said yes, so I shared with him what happened. I shared with him my hopes that he would recommend me for the Educate program because I am really struggling to learn how to teach at this school while I’m learning how to teach high school students. At the same time, the content that I’m teaching, I get. I can do this. It’s

important to me to learn and get the certification. I would love to ride out my working years here at this school. I don't want to continue to jump around to different things.

He [the principal] said, "Yeah, I will. I'll write the recommendation [to the Educate program]," and no, he forgot. I don't know if he forgot or he had so much that was going on, and so when I approached him again, he's like, "Well, don't worry. I will write a letter asking them to extend your certificate for one more year so you have one more year to finish this." Internally, I'm thinking to myself, "Well, I can't count on you to do that, can I?" I can't afford to pay to be in school, and this is crushing. This is just crushing me. I am miserable. I guess whatever I said earlier about being fortunate enough to never dislike what I was doing, there was this hot second before I was accepted into this PhD program that I'm starting in the fall, where I was miserable.

Challenge Them to Take on the Expert Role

The first year I was there [at Peachtree High School], I was teaching 10th grade world lit. The teacher who left, whose classes I took over, was a special ed[ucation] teacher. I had two resource sections, and I was a coteacher in two blended classes. Then I taught the one section of English 1102. I was the monitor for English 1101, and that's when I said, "Hey, I can teach this class." Then, this past year, I taught AP classes and the dual enrollment sections.

So, 2023-24 school year, we have a new principal who is there ready to really turn the performance of the school around. He enacted a bunch of new policies for staff and for students, which were met with a fair amount of grumbling. As a fairly new person there, I was not a grumbler. I was just ready to get on board and get through this. We show up at school, and all teachers are stationed outside of their classrooms for the first

10 minutes of the morning before the first bell rings, but just to shepherd students around and make sure that there aren't stragglers in the hallways, things like that. My first period class was my dual enrollment class, and so that was just an awesome way to start the day. Since that dual enrollment class started 2 weeks after the actual school year starts, I was pretty happy that the students who were in the dual enrollment class actually showed up to their first period class. I'm not sure if they really knew that they probably didn't need to be there, but they were there, and so we did some basic discussion of what the class would be like, and then when the actual school semester started for [the college], then we jumped into it.

I spent extra time talking about the syllabus and hopefully trying to embed the idea that the syllabus really is their guide for whatever class that they take in college. That's one document that they need to read thoroughly, not lose (*laughs*), and understand that administrative kinds of questions that they have are going to be somewhere in that document, but that does not mean that they can't come talk to me about questions they have about the assignments or the schedule. I tried to, at the onset of the class, get a feeling for the students who are in the class, get an idea of what they want to do when they finish high school or college or whatever. I tried to use that, "What do you want to be when you grow up? What do you like? What are your interests?" I try to, at least for 1101, use that as a way to either choose the readings that we do in the textbook or to supplement with my own. I didn't do it this past year because I was a bit overwhelmed with being in school myself, so I really just tried to stick to the City Tech syllabus, but when I'm able, I try to build in an assignment where either individual students or groups

of students will assign a reading to the class that we can then rhetorically analyze and write about and talk about.

When they got to English 1102, that's when I had them pick the lit that we were going to read together, but for English 1101, we stuck to the syllabus. We would start off with what I call writing warm-ups. I'm sure I'm not the only one who calls them writing warm-ups, but it'll be a prompt, and we write about it, and then take it from there. The students I had in the class were really engaged, and it wasn't difficult at all to get them to do the work. It was difficult to get them to stay awake when the first class is at 7 o'clock in the morning (*laughs*). 7:02 to 2:10 or something like that was our school day.

[Dual enrollment] was pretty textbook. We'd go through our units. We'd always start off with a writing process discussion, and I tried to weave that through the entire semester. I try to sell it as a course that is really going to be the foundation for the writing that they'll do academically, professionally, and possibly personally too. My goal for them in that class is to develop a writing process they'll be able to count on for every writing task that they take on (*pauses*). I think it's important for me to sell that because my perception of their expectation is that this is going to be just like their high school English classes where they're reading literature, and they're talking about literature, and they're writing essays that will demonstrate to their teachers that, yes, they read what they were supposed to read, and they can answer questions about what that was supposed to mean. It's important to me to challenge them to take on the expert role. Do you know the whole Kenneth Burke essay about joining the conversation? *I responded that I had never read Burke's essay*. Imagine that you are standing outside of a room, and inside the room, there's a table, and people are seated around the table, and there's one seat. When

you go in and you sit down at this table, you're trying to join this conversation. Sometimes you're able to add your opinion, sometimes you're able to add some supporting facts, sometimes you're able to kind of shift the direction of the conversation. I love that. It's a chapter of one of his books. It's a little blurb, and even now there's textbooks called *Joining the Conversation* that are based off of that. I just love that. I think that's really what I try to share with them about what we're doing in this class, which is that, from this point on, you're not regurgitating stuff anymore. You are taking an active role in and adding to the existing conversations about the topics that you choose to write about. Hopefully some of that sticks.

I asked Jessie to provide an example of how she prompts her students to "join in the conversation." I would say my research assignment. We start brainstorming at the beginning of the semester. I put it as problems that you urgently want to solve in the world, and I do put some parameters. We're not going to talk about abortion. We're not going to write about gun control. We're not going to write about some of these big red flag kinds of things. Stay local, stay close to home, something that you see every day. Then one of the examples I have is when I taught at City Tech, the students had a really frustrating parking situation, and one of the students wanted to write about fixing the parking situation. It was a great paper, and I often use her annotated bibliography as a student sample. It's that close to home. It's that real world. It's not something that's miles away; it's something that's right in front of you that you want to solve. It may be that there [are] not articles about this you could find at the library. You might have to interview somebody. I do give options for the resources they can use for the writing

assignments. I try to make sure that if there's not two scholarly articles, then there's four newspaper articles or something like that.

I do research roundtable discussions for the final research paper in 1102. There have been a few times where I've had enough students where, if they're doing papers that are kind of similarly themed, I'll have them get into groups of three or four. I'll set them up like they're doing a panel presentation, where they'll each talk about their paper, talk about their research, talk about the challenges that they're facing as they're writing, and talk about their successes. Then I have them write an abstract beforehand that I pass out to the other students in the class so that they can prepare questions. I don't have a specific memory of a single student that just wowed me, but those research roundtables, as a whole, I always get so excited. I'll bring other teachers in to sit and observe when I possibly can.

I've Learned so Much from Students

I feel that, at least in classrooms that I've been in, the spaces that are shared with the students, if I'm not learning as much from my students as they're learning from me, that I'm doing it wrong. I felt really grateful for the crops of students that I've taught over the last many, many years of teaching (*pauses*). I've been really fortunate, and I'm very grateful for the experiences I've had with the students I've had because I've learned so much from them. I can give kind of a bookend. The very first class that I ever taught was as a GTA [graduate teaching assistant] when I was working on my master's degree. The very first class that I taught was a summer class, so it was 2 days a week, 3 hours each section in the classes, and for some reason (*grimaces*), this class met at 7:30 in the morning. That was in 2009, so I had nontraditional, first-year students in this first-year

composition course, and so there was a [military] veteran. There were a lot of students who are retaking the class, or who just had put it off until the very end. One of my students, I can't even remember the actual prompt, but she wrote an essay about female circumcision in Africa. I had never heard of that. It was one of the things where I learned about a topic that was brand new to me.

At the same time, in that same class, another student was writing about figuring out a way to get people to stop asking for money, people who are experiencing homelessness or other challenges. Around the campus where we were, you couldn't make it from your car to a building without being asked and being approached by people asking for spare change or whatever, and another student wrote about that. Another student in the class had experienced homelessness once, and that was another part of that first-year class was broaching these subjects and then figuring out a way to make sure that we're having civil discourse about topics that people will have very strong opinions. It all went really well.

Fast forward to this year, and I'm teaching in a high school, and I wanted to do a quick 2-minute mindfulness meditation at the beginning of class. I had a student who, very vocally, refused to do that because she didn't believe in meditation. She challenged me (*laughs*) in front of the class over this. I was just totally caught off guard by that particular challenge, and so I didn't handle it in the best way. I had to take a mindfulness moment for myself. Seriously. I'm certain that was a—I don't know how to word this—that was a (*pauses*) blatant challenge to my authority in the classroom (*pauses*).

So, towards the end of the school year, what I ended up doing with the student who challenged me was telling her, "Hey, I want to make little goodie bags for students. I

think what I might do is just have kind of a little potpourri. You guys can make your own bags. I'll have maybe little fidget things." I asked her to help me figure out what to choose. I told her, "I can't quit thinking about the meditation thing. I want to make sure that I am respectful to what I'm doing in the classroom, whether it's little gifties, or things like that. Can you help me figure out what to provide for these little make your own gift bag things?" She was really helpful. She picked out these cheap little fidget things. I forget what they're called, but they were a hit. So, I don't know, I guess the answer to that question is that, generally, I don't have problems with students in my classrooms. Also, I probably have a lot more to learn about the kinds of challenges that I'll face with teaching high school students because that was very different. I just wanted to kind of find a resolution. I didn't think there was going to be a way for her and I to talk through that because she's not an adult. She's a high school kid, but let me see if I can bring her expertise in in a way that is kind of healing to whatever student/teacher relationship we have, and I think that was pretty successful.

I ran into a couple of students who I taught at City Tech, who were now LPNs [licensed practical nurse] or techs at the hospital, and that was really cool. It wasn't that we sustained relationship, but it was just really awesome to walk into work, and then I hear this shriek (*laughs*), and then I hear these footsteps patter, and then I turn around. She's an LPN, and she ran up to give me a great big hug in the middle of the hallway at the hospital. She's like, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm changing my life. I'm following in your footsteps." She said, "Really?" I said, "No" (*laughs*). I said, "I'm taking a break. Then I'm gonna get back to it one day." That was so awesome. There are least three students who I taught who were working at the hospital who had finished their

programs at City Technical College. A couple of other students who I've kept in touch with, not on a daily [basis] but maybe once a year, who are also doing what they had set out to do, which is really amazing.

This is Not Just Writing for an English Class

I asked Jessie to talk about what advice she would give to future DE/CE teachers.

The first thing that I would do would be to encourage them, if there's time, to maybe sit in a college level course so that they really get the experience of being in a classroom like what they're about to create in their high school. The second thing that I would do is to encourage them to, even if they don't have the opportunity to sit in this class, to really commit to treating those students like college students. I always use this as an example, but traditional high school students, when they get to college, this might be the first time in their life that they don't have to ask permission to leave the classroom to use the bathroom. So that's one of the things that I did in my dual enrollment class. I was like, "Let's try to treat this like a college classroom. You don't ask permission to use the restroom. Just take the pass and go." Stuff like that. That was kind of funny for the first couple of months, really getting used to that.

Stick to the syllabus. Stick to the syllabus. Stick to the syllabus. Stick to those rules. Stick to the syllabus. We're not doing our students any favors if we fall back on whatever high school kind of considerations that we make. I think content-wise, I want my students to get this idea of writing as a process and not as a product, and so editing and revision is really important to me. What I really hope that students walk out of our dual enrollment classroom [with] is this sense that what they're learning to do in this class is to write at a new academic level, and that means that a part of this process must

include time to edit, to revise, and to consult. Making time, even if it's a part of the grade for the essay, to talk with your professor or to see a tutor about the paper that you're writing has got to be a part of that process. If you walk out at the end of the year semester, and you've written great essays without revising, without editing, without peer review, then I don't know that you're really adequately prepared for what this class is supposed to prepare you for, which is writing a paper.

I guess one of the other things, this isn't just about writing an English paper for an English class. This is about writing academically for any course that you have to write. Then maybe encourage them to go outside the box with the artifacts that you use for reading, as a way to kind of support the idea that this is not just writing for an English class. I have an awesome article that I like to use in the class, "Asking Beautiful Questions." I like to use it as a way to generate ideas for research papers or reports on topics. If I were to sum up my dual enrollment teaching philosophy, it would be this class is an opportunity to help students transition from their role as writing in order to demonstrate competency to the role of writing in order to demonstrate subject matter expertise. It's a big step to take. It's a brain stretch, but this opportunity is coming at a time where these particular classes---English 1101 and 1102---they often become gatekeeper classes for traditional first-year students. We have this awesome opportunity to help these students, whether they realize it or not, bypass the gatekeeper, or slide right by, or high five the gatekeeper, and keep on going. If we do it, if we do it right, and so I guess that goes just back to the, stick to the syllabus. Make sure that this is a college classroom and not a high school classroom.

My Reflection

Jessie was an excellent storyteller; she reconstructed several of her experiences as a student. She naturally reflected on the impact and meaning that these experiences had for her as a teacher. She made the connection that her desire to teach dual enrollment and to help students as they transition from high school to college was a direct result of her struggles as a first-time college student. Although she was very successful in high school, she floundered when she moved into the college environment. She wanted to teach dual enrollment students to help them avoid the struggles that she experienced.

Jessie was diagnosed with ADHD when she was in her 40s. She realized that the times in her life when she was most successful were times when she had a very structured routine. In hindsight, she realized that she struggled so much in her first college experience because she went from a highly structured high school environment where she had a lot of support to a less structured college environment where she did not have the required self-motivation and responsibility to create that structure for herself. These experiences impacted her approach to teaching CE because she now tries to build routines into her classroom for students and help them start creating their own routines and structures that will help them be successful when they are in college.

Jessie, like Elbert, David, and Kim, emphasized that FYC is about more than just writing for an English course. Jessie stated, "this isn't just about writing an English paper for an English class." She believes that FYC is about learning to write academically for any course. She views her role as helping students build skills that they

can carry with them and that will help them in all courses, for their entire academic journeys, and for their lives.

Conclusion

The narrative profiles presented in this chapter provided an in-depth look at the experiences of the six CE FYC teachers who participated in the study. I chose to present collaborator stories in this manner because, according to Mischler (1979), there is no meaning without context. Themes alone would not illustrate a true picture of the stories, past histories, and experiences of these educators. In addition to narrative profiles, I also developed themes to show similarities across collaborator experiences. I present these themes in Chapter 5.

Chapter V

THEMES

In addition to using connecting strategies to craft profiles, I also analyzed interview transcripts using categorizing strategies. I shared the profiles in Chapter four to first provide the context of collaborator stories. In this chapter, I share themes I determined from the data. Thematic analysis is a categorizing strategy that focuses on similarities and differences across collaborator experiences (Maxwell & Miller, 2008). My categorizing data analysis process included coding, code mapping, creating categories from the codes, and then using these categories to create themes.

I conducted three first-round coding strategies: in vivo coding, process coding, and versus coding. I grouped similar codes together to create categories. I used the creative coding tool in MAXQDA to group and regroup codes, creating categories and subcategories of codes. This process was iterative, and I wrote memos throughout to track my thinking process. When I thought all codes were grouped into logical categories, I looked at the frequency of certain codes and categories to identify patterns, which I then turned into thematic statements. I identified one theme in connection with each research question and subquestion. Table 6 shows the connection between my research questions and each theme.

Table 6*Connection Between Research Questions and Themes*

Research Question	Theme
RQ1: How did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia navigate the liminal space between high school and college environments?	Experiencing isolation and detachment while seeking support
RQ1.1: What experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to managing expectations from the high school and college institutions participating in concurrent enrollment programs?	Balancing workload while desiring autonomy
RQ1.2: How did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia make decisions regarding curriculum planning and instructional strategies for first-year composition courses?	Managing complex decisions while dealing with uncertainty
RQ1.3: What experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to their roles in supporting students through the transition from high school to college?	Nurturing students while preparing them for the future
RQ2: How did the meanings concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia made of pivotal experiences in their lives impact their instructional practices and decision-making in the liminal space between high school and college?	Looking backward while pressing forward

Each theme has two or more components connected by the subordinating conjunction “while,” a word that indicates two events are happening simultaneously. I chose to phrase the themes using this structure to represent the way collaborators balanced the varied aspects of their roles as CE FYC teachers, including the tensions that

were inherent in navigating the high school and college environments. This structure stemmed from the dichotomies in versus codes. However, I chose not to retain the “versus” language in the themes I created because I did not think it ultimately reflected collaborators’ true experiences. Denecker (2023) argued that gap metaphors of CE “situate secondary and postsecondary education as static, monolithic entities” (p. 55), while bridge metaphors also “leave no room for the dynamic nature of learning” (p. 56). The experiences of the teachers in my study showed that their classrooms—where these secondary and postsecondary worlds collide daily—were anything but static. While there was tension in collaborators’ experiences from the high school and college environments, they were actively working to break down that divide by bringing the college environment into the high school. Thus, while I did use versus codes during data analysis, I ultimately decided maintaining the “versus” dichotomy reinforced unhelpful bridge and gap metaphors and ignored the work collaborators were doing to bring these two worlds together for students.

Further, the components of the themes, such as “balancing workload,” were phrased as gerunds to reflect the actions and processes that the CE FYC teachers in the study performed daily. In the following sections, I explained each theme, provided evidence from the data to support theme development, and connected each theme to the corresponding research question. While I presented the findings using this structure, themes were not mutually exclusive to one another. Rather, they were interconnected, and there was overlap among themes and the evidence provided to support each one.

Theme 1: Experiencing Isolation and Detachment While Seeking Support

The first research question was about how the CE FYC teachers in my study navigated the liminal space between high school and college environments. Isolation became a connecting thread since all six collaborators mentioned feeling isolated in their roles as CE FYC teachers. Each collaborator stated he or she was the only teacher in the school—some in the entire school district—teaching college English courses.

Elbert stated that teaching CE was “kind of lonely” because “I’m the only one that does it in my school.” He expressed feeling frustrated due to loneliness and not having anyone to talk to or “bounce ideas off of” regarding his instruction or curriculum choices in his CE classroom. Kim echoed Elbert’s words when she discussed constantly wondering, “Am I doing this right?” because “there’s nobody to bounce ideas with.” Kim’s sense of isolation as a CE teacher was compounded by her role as the media specialist. She said, “I kind of get forgotten” because she’s in the media center and because “I’m the only one teaching what I’m teaching.”

Along with this isolation came feelings of detachment from college faculty and the college environment. Collaborators differentiated between their statuses as adjunct employees for their partnering colleges and their identities as high school teachers. Kim was the only collaborator who said she considered herself a college faculty member. Elbert joked that he worried about getting questioned if he used the restroom facilities while running on the college campus. He said, “I’m an employee for them, but I don’t feel like I’m part of their faculty.” Similarly, David considered himself an instructor for the college, and he told his students that “you might as well consider me a professor.” However, he went on to add, “Whether or not I’m officially, legitimately a faculty

member of Longleaf [College], it's probably more of a gray area. I would consider myself part of it to a degree. We're very low on the totem pole (*laughs*). Probably at the bottom." David's reference to being low on the totem pole implied a hierarchy of college faculty status. Julio also said "there's a hierarchy there" when he tried to contact another college faculty member about a student. The college faculty member was "really apprehensive about having any conversation with me because it did not involve her department head," so Julio did not "tread in those waters again."

Collaborators reported varying degrees of interaction—both positive and negative—with college faculty. While all collaborators had liaisons or other college contacts that they could reach out to with concerns such as navigating learning management systems or creating attendance policies, support from the college rarely went deeper than logistical issues. Only Claire and Kim mentioned in-person professional development for CE teachers from their colleges that involved collaboration with college faculty regarding class content and instructional strategies. They both reported the most effective component of these professional development experiences was the departmental collaboration time in which the English teachers got together to share resources, ideas, and instructional strategies. David's in-person professional learning from the college changed to a digital format during COVID and thus "became less effective" for him. Jessie attended some of the in-person English department meetings at the college, though these were not required for CE teachers, and she admitted this was "sometimes honestly just to get out of the door of the high school." Elbert and Julio received no professional development at all from their colleges. These findings echoed what Denecker (2020) found regarding professional development experiences of CE FYC teachers in Ohio. She

discovered that professional development experiences varied widely among participants. She found that the teachers she interviewed desired discipline-specific professional development, which Claire and Kim reported was the most helpful and effective component of their required professional development days at the college.

Collaborators sought support in other places independent of the college. Julio found support from the Spanish teacher, the only other academic teacher at his college and career academy. Claire collaborated with her husband, who also taught CE courses in the same high school/college partnership, though he taught a different subject. Similarly, David found support from his wife, who was a special education English teacher at his school. While Jessie “was pretty alone” at her high school, she found support in a dual enrollment collective made up of other CE teachers in her school district. This group was formed by another high school CE teacher rather than a college faculty member.

These stories indicated that my collaborators experienced feelings of isolation and “otherness” when it came to identity and status as college faculty. Despite teaching college-level curriculum, they felt disconnected from the academic and social culture of the college. They did not have access to the same professional development, peer networks, or institutional support systems that are available to full-time college faculty. Even though some collaborators, such as Elbert and Julio, received email invitations to English department social gatherings, they expressed they did not have time to take advantage of the invitations because of their high school schedules. This sense of “othering” was compounded by the complexity of their position: while they were expected to uphold the academic standards of the college, they remained embedded in the

high school's structured environment, which operated under different expectations and priorities.

These stories supported McWain's (2018) finding that the CE FYC teachers in her study lacked professional learning communities for "collaborating, soliciting feedback, or sharing examples" with colleagues (p. 412). Taking this idea further, my collaborators indicated this lack of support led to feelings of uncertainty that they were doing the right things in their CE classrooms. This theme highlighted the constant effort teachers made to mitigate feelings of isolation by seeking support and building their own resources to navigate the expectations of both educational institutions. In the following sections, I discussed the themes related to research subquestions 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3. These themes provided additional insight into research question 1 and the liminal space that CE FYC teachers in my study navigated.

Theme 2: Balancing Workload While Desiring Autonomy

Research subquestion 1.1 dealt with how the CE FYC teachers in my study managed expectations from their high school and college institutions. All collaborators brought up the workload involved with teaching CE FYC. Elbert, David, and Kim believed their CE students needed more feedback, support, and guidance compared to non-CE students. As a result, grading student writing was a time-intensive task that extended outside contracted work hours for some collaborators. David stated that with his CE classes, "My wife gets onto me because I spend about probably 20 to 30 minutes on every essay grading. Probably longer in some cases. If it's really bad, it takes me almost an hour to grade [one essay]." Claire noted that CE classes were "higher stakes" than traditional high school classes because college credits and grades were on the line, and

therefore the workload and stress were heavier due the pressure of helping students succeed. Elbert thought the resources provided by the college were outdated, but he found planning and creating his own CE curriculum to be “overwhelming.” Jessie knew the importance of carving out classroom time to conference with her students one-on-one about their work, but she lacked the time needed to meet individually with more than 100 students.

Kim and Julio were the only collaborators who did not teach other courses in addition to CE FYC. Jessie, who had the fewest years of high school teaching experience, recounted the stress of learning how to teach high school students while also planning for and teaching special education, Advanced Placement, and CE courses. Elbert was the department chair for his high school English department, and he also taught four different English courses, all with advanced content. While Kim only taught CE, she said it was hard for her to balance her role as media specialist with teaching CE courses when she did not have a dedicated planning period to plan or grade for CE. Claire compared her workload to the workload of college professors, saying she had been “ticked off” in the past when college faculty insinuated that “I’m not doing anything” because she did not regularly check her college email. She said, “I know what a majority of the professors in terms of their workload look like and what mine looks like,” meaning that she believed her workload as a high school teacher was heavier than the instructors at the college.

Julio’s experiences were outliers in many ways, and he was the only one to say that his workload was manageable because of his small classes sizes and because he did not make his own curriculum. However, he anticipated that his workload would increase the following school year due to budget cuts and larger class sizes. Julio contrasted his

experience at his current high school with his previous experience teaching CE at a private high school. Now, he lacked the autonomy to build his own curriculum or to determine which students enroll in his courses. He expressed that when he had more autonomy over his courses that the curriculum was stronger, and students were more successful.

Kim expressed that teaching CE offered more freedom than teaching classes that were strictly high school classes. She was not burdened by some of the high school expectations such as turning in detailed lesson plans or participating in professional learning communities. However, she experienced the burden of fear that she was not doing enough or was not enough for students. Claire, Elbert, and Kim indicated gaps between their roles and others' perceptions of what they do. For Claire, this gap was evidenced in a "heated" meeting with a college faculty member who came into her classroom without introduction and starting listing things Claire needed to do or change. Claire reflected that this interaction was based on a lack of communication and understanding of one another's roles. On the other hand, Claire noticed a "shift" in how she was treated by college faculty when her liaison came to observe a lesson. She believed seeing all the tasks she managed in a day helped her college liaison to respect and trust what she did in her classroom.

However, while some collaborators like David, Elbert, and Claire stated that they had more freedom in teaching CE than in teaching traditional high school classes, they also recognized that, in David's words, "it's not quite college." This fact was evidenced when David had a parent complain about the sexual themes he brought up when teaching a poem in his CE class. David, Claire, and Kim emphasized that while they were teaching

college content, they were still teaching high school students, a reality that impacted everything from the texts they choose to their classroom policies. As a result, collaborators lacked the academic freedom that college faculty generally have while balancing what they perceived as a heavier workload.

McWain (2018) also noted the “labor disconnect” between high school and college faculty. She found that the CE FYC teachers she interviewed detailed burdens such as large numbers of students, heavy grading loads, and the responsibility of extracurricular activities that took much-needed time away from meaningful activities such as professional development, collaboration with other teachers, and providing in-depth feedback to students. The teachers I interviewed echoed similar struggles. From sponsoring the Soapbox Derby, coaching sports, serving as the Advanced Placement coordinator, and monitoring bathrooms, hallways, and metal detectors, the experiences of my collaborators were filled with additional duties and responsibilities that had nothing to do with English curriculum, college-level or otherwise. As Elbert put it, life as a high school teacher “is a tornado.”

Theme 3: Managing Complex Decisions While Dealing With Uncertainty

Research question 1.2 focused on what decisions collaborators made regarding curriculum planning and instructional strategies for their CE FYC courses. All collaborators indicated some degree of uncertainty regarding instructional decisions, which related to their feelings of isolation and detachment from the college environment. These teachers were tasked with delivering rigorous college-level content to high school students at varying skill levels. Claire, Elbert, Julio, and David taught students with differing academic abilities and future plans, ranging from students who were reading on

an elementary level to students who planned to attend Ivy League colleges. To address this discrepancy, they carefully designed lessons, assignments, and assessments that challenged advanced students without overwhelming those who required foundational literacy support.

Elbert “really stressed” about teaching the right things to his students so they would be prepared for college. Both he and Kim recognized that most of their students would likely never take another college-level English course again, and they felt the pressure of that reality. Kim contrasted this fact with teaching traditional high school classes, saying that if you missed teaching something in a 10th-grade class, students would be exposed to it the following year. However, “this is the only [English] 1101 they will ever take, so I’m responsible for making sure they get what they need. If I miss it, then they’ve missed it forever.” She went on to question what if “I’ve sent them into this world without the knowledge that they need?” This worry was constantly present for some collaborators.

Julio was the only collaborator who did not express uncertainty regarding his instructional choices, likely because his curriculum was set by the college. Rather, Julio’s uncertainty centered on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom. Early in our first interview, Julio stated he “had no clue what to do about AI.” He questioned whether students would even need to have writing skills in the future, or if literacy would be “defined in the future by how well you can ask AI a prompt.” All collaborators except for Jessie discussed the current and future impact of AI in the English classroom, and they grappled with the need for changing their curriculum and instruction in response to the ubiquity of AI. In that vein, Elbert spent time adapting assignments to make them

multi-layered and “un-Googleable.” Similarly, David changed his compare and contrast essay so that students wrote it on paper in the classroom rather than using technology to eliminate the possibility they would use AI to do their writing for them. Although the rise and use of AI tools like ChatGPT were ultimately outside the scope of this project, it was clear that the teachers I interviewed were feeling the effects on their students and classrooms. Collaborators viewed writing as a thinking process, and David and Kim worried about the impact of AI on students’ critical thinking skills and writing ability. David believed that AI will “change the way people think about academic writing,” and Kim pondered how she could help students understand that “their brains are better than AI.” The question of how best to approach AI in the English classroom was something no one had an answer for yet.

The experiences of teachers in this study indicated that CE FYC teachers faced a unique set of challenges as they made complex decisions about curriculum and instructional practices. Similarly, McWain (2018) asserted that “procedures for developing curriculum and meeting district, college, state, and national standards” (p. 412) were the most complicated challenge for the CE FYC teachers she interviewed. CE FYC teachers must align their courses with both high school standards and college-level expectations, ensuring students are prepared for academic success in both settings. This balancing act often involved selecting and adapting materials that meet diverse student needs, fostering critical thinking, writing, and communication skills. At the same time, teachers grappled with uncertainty about whether they were fully preparing students for the demands of college and future careers. They constantly assessed whether their approaches were fostering the right skills. These decisions required flexibility, ongoing

reflection, and often collaboration with both high school and college faculty to ensure they guided their students down the right path, which connected to my fourth theme.

Theme 4: Nurturing Students While Preparing Them for the Future

Research question 1.3 was about what experiences the teachers in my study had relating to their roles in supporting students in the transition from high school to college. The code categories I created related to collaborator interactions with students had the largest number of codes when compared to all other code categories. After analyzing the codes under the “Interactions with Students” category, I divided these codes into three subcategories: “Supporting Students,” “Preparing Students,” and “Pushing Students.” I recognized differences among these actions. “Supporting students” involved providing the guidance that high school students needed to be successful. “Preparing students” involved helping students build skills and getting them ready for future academic pursuits as well as life after traditional schooling. “Pushing students” involved having high expectations and moving students from rote learning to the depth of knowledge required for higher-level work. Collaborators frequently balanced teaching students who were still in high school while grappling with the reality that these students were earning college credit and thus should also be held to higher standards than traditional high school students.

Jessie noted that FYC courses “often become gatekeeper classes for traditional first year students.” She perceived her role as CE teacher as an “awesome opportunity” to help students “bypass” or “high-five” the gatekeeper on their way into the college environment. She also emphasized that CE English “isn’t just about writing an English paper for an English class. This is about writing academically for any course that you

have to write.” Similarly, in response to my question about college-level writing, Julio stated, “So when I think about writing, yeah, I think how important that communication is and how important that is for everything that they’re going to do for the rest of their lives.” Claire said, “I’m here to help you do what you want to do,” whether that is attending Harvard or enrolling in a technical college to earn HVAC certification. Collaborators took their role of supporting all students extremely seriously, viewing it as the most important aspect of their jobs.

Though collaborators did not specifically mention the composition threshold (Denecker, 2013) or threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005), these theories were inherently present in their responses. Collaborators viewed their CE FYC classrooms as places where students were challenged to take the next steps, moving from high school writing to college writing. Collaborators pushed students to let go of old ways of thinking and move to new academic knowledge. For Jessie, this process involved helping students understand that they needed to take on the expert role about their writing topics rather than just “regurgitating stuff” that they learned or read, which reflected Meyer and Land’s (2005) definition of a threshold concept as “a new way of understanding” (p. 373). David emphasized that he pushed students to go further and deeper than they had ever been before when analyzing and discussing literature. Similarly, Julio stated that “college writing takes the next step,” “breaks out of formulas,” and “challenges students more to ask harder questions.” These responses indicated that collaborators recognized their roles in helping students cross the composition threshold into more challenging academic work.

During data analysis, I kept returning to David's statement of "laying the groundwork." In our first interview, he stated, "So, a lot of it's [English 1101] laying the groundwork; this is almost like college. There's college expectation, but you have the high school safety net." David's reflection that his job was "laying the groundwork" stood out to me as highlighting the delicate balance CE English teachers must strike between supporting students as they navigate their final high school years and preparing them for the challenges of college-level work. His description of English 1101 as "almost like college" with "college expectations" acknowledged that while the course introduced students to the rigor and independence required in higher education, it also offered the "high school safety net" to cushion students during this transitional period. I chose to make "laying the groundwork" part of my dissertation title as I thought it truly captured the meaning of being an CE FYC teacher for my collaborators. For them, navigating the liminal space between high school and college was constantly balancing supporting high school students, who were still children, with college-level expectations and rigor. Every decision they made was with the goal in mind of preparing students for the future. David's reflection encapsulated this phenomenon, suggesting that teachers viewed their work not only as imparting knowledge but as providing a framework to enable students to succeed beyond the high school classroom.

Ultimately, the role of the CE teacher is crucial. They must maintain high standards to prepare students for the realities of college, while also providing the guidance and support typically associated with high school instruction. By doing so, teachers transition students from the familiar high school environment to the more independent, demanding world of college. Russo (2020) referred to CE FYC teachers as

“border crossers” (p. 92) who straddle educational boundaries. However, I argue that my collaborators’ experiences showed that a CE teacher’s role goes further than just crossing borders or building bridges. In my collaborators’ stories, there was not only a sense of bringing the college environment into the high school setting, but there was also a sense of making the future accessible to students in the present. The CE FYC teachers I interviewed were not just getting students to pass a test, write an essay, or even earn credit for a college course. Rather, these teachers were actively and consciously preparing students not just for *the* future but for *their* futures, both in college and beyond. Preparation for the future was not just a natural by-product of college-level work but a crucial element of collaborators’ daily decision-making processes.

Theme 5: Looking Backward While Pressing Forward

Finally, research question 2 was about the meaning that six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia made from pivotal experiences in their lives and the impact these experiences had on their instructional practices and decision-making. All six collaborators exhibited reflective practices in which they looked backward at their experiences in high school, college, graduate school, and past teaching roles and used those experiences—both positive and negative—to make instructional decisions that they hoped would benefit students as they moved forward in their academic careers.

Elbert learned about academic discourse communities in his graduate linguistics course and used that knowledge to build the curriculum for his 1102 course. By using the framework of academic discourse communities, he allowed his students to choose topics related to their interests and future career plans. Kim used ideas about grading and having

high expectations for students that she learned from her college mentor and implemented them into her CE classes. Claire reflected on her experience as a high school student when she took an Advanced Placement course as an independent study with two other students, and they met in the copy room of the high school. Her high school was not “proactive in trying to provide rigorous courses for a larger number of students.” This experience shaped the open course philosophy she maintained regarding her CE/AP course, allowing any student to enroll who wanted to do so.

Jessie and David both discussed their own struggles as college students and how they used the lessons they learned to help support their students and prepare them for college and life after college. For Jessie, her college experience was one of the driving reasons she wanted to teach CE students. She said:

Probably connecting it to my own experience leaving high school and going to college and just failing miserably—with fireworks and everything—of what an impact I could make if I was on the front end of a bunch of students who are getting ready to leave this place where they are, whether they feel it or not, being guided through this academic process, to the point in their life where all of a sudden they have to be their own guide, their own resuscitator, their own disciplinarian. They have to set all these rules for themselves. They’re leaving this space where the rules are set for them, and they have to learn how to do it themselves. If I can help anyone on the front end avoid the experience that I had, that would be huge.

Like Jessie, David said that college “was a completely different world, and I try to give them a taste of that.” He also emphasized, “I try to make it a class that would have benefited me back then, going into like what college really was.”

Julio also reflected on lessons he learned that impacted the way he approached his CE students. He taught his first English 1101 course as a graduate student. His mentor encouraged him never to stick unwaveringly to a lesson plan to the detriment of student engagement. He said he never forgot that lesson that “teaching doesn’t really matter what subject matter I cover if they’re not they’re engaged.” Additionally, he used instructional strategies that he learned as a college professor, such as Socratic seminars, to help engage his current CE students.

Teachers also recognized that preparing students for the future was not just about academic skills. They also used their past experiences and the challenges they faced to help students build nonacademic skills such as time management, collaboration, and communication. Kim used peer review in her classroom to help students work together on their writing. Jessie hoped her CE students learned that “a part of this [writing] process must include time to edit, to revise, and to consult. So, making time, even if it’s a part of the grade for the essay, to talk with your professor or to see a tutor about the paper that you’re writing has got to be a part of that process.” David thought his class did “a really good job of teaching them how important time management is when they go to college because I wasn’t ready for that when I got to college.”

These stories showed that my collaborators drew from their own schooling experiences to inform their teaching practices and support their students. Reflecting on their academic journeys, they recalled the challenges they faced, the strategies that helped

them succeed, and the gaps in their own preparation for college-level work. This backward reflection shaped their current approach, as they empathized with the struggles their students may encounter and tailored their instruction to help students overcome challenges. By integrating techniques they found effective—strategies like maintaining structured classrooms and implementing Socratic seminars—these teachers aimed to help students press forward and navigate the complexities of college expectations. Additionally, they used their experiences to anticipate potential difficulties and proactively guide students around them, ensuring that their students were better prepared not only for college but also for future academic and professional challenges. In this way, their past became a key tool in shaping the success of the next generation of learners.

Although much of my focus in conducting this research was on context and the narrative profiles, I analyzed the data using both connecting and categorizing strategies to strengthen my work. Coding, categorizing, and code mapping the data helped me to look for similarities and differences among collaborators to establish overarching themes. In the following chapter, I presented my discussion and conclusions.

Chapter VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this dissertation study, I collected and presented data on the experiences of six high school teachers who were teaching concurrent enrollment (CE) first-year composition (FYC) courses at public high schools in Georgia. Collaborators included three women and three men ranging from 2 to 13 years of experience teaching CE courses. Three collaborators worked in North Georgia, one in Central Georgia, one in South Georgia, and one in Metro Atlanta. To gather data, I conducted in-depth interviews with each collaborator following Seidman's (2013) three-interview format. This qualitative study added to the growing body of research on first-year composition courses and concurrent enrollment programs.

In this closing chapter, I connected the parts of the study together by revisiting the conceptual framework that provided the foundational influences for the study as well as methods, thematic answers to the research questions, limitations of the study, and topics for future research. I ended by discussing advice my collaborators offered to future CE FYC teachers, advice to CE partners regarding what needs to be done as a result of the findings of my study, and lessons I learned throughout the research process.

Conceptual Framework

In Chapter 2, I discussed the conceptual framework for my study, including the current literature related to concurrent enrollment programs, first-year composition

classes, and the teachers who navigate them. Concurrent enrollment (CE) originated from the broader framework of dual enrollment (DE), which provides high school students opportunities to earn college credit prior to high school graduation. The rapid growth of DE programs across the United States since 2010 underscored a national push for college readiness and completion. In the CE model, high school teachers deliver college-level course content on their high school campuses. As noted in previous studies (Denecker, 2013; 2020; McWain, 2018; Russo, 2020), these CE teachers maintained a unique positionality “straddling two sites” (Russo, 2020, p. 88) as they navigated the liminal space between high school and college (McWain, 2018). Based on the existing literature, I situated my study’s conceptual framework in liminality (McWain, 2018; Turner, 1966) and threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005).

Scholars recognized the unique and complex role CE FYC teachers play in helping students navigate the high school and college environments (Denecker, 2020; McWain, 2018). While supporting students, the teachers in my study also navigated the different expectations and demands from both educational sectors, often while teaching other courses and managing extracurricular responsibilities. Researchers like Denecker (2013; 2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020) emphasized the important work CE FYC teachers do in helping students cross the “composition threshold” (Denecker, 2013) and transition from the basic writing skills necessary in high school to the more sophisticated, critical thinking required for college writing. Given the significance of writing skills to academic success across disciplines, the work of CE FYC teachers is especially valuable in preparing students for the academic challenges they will face in college.

By conducting this study, I sought to fill the gap in research by examining the instructional practices and lived experiences of CE FYC teachers, particularly in Georgia, where every public high school offers DE opportunities in some form (NACEP, n.d.-a). Through interviews with collaborators, I captured how these teachers navigated the liminal space between high school and college, how they reconciled the demands of two educational systems, and how they perceived the impact of this unique position and their past experiences on their teaching. By focusing on the voices of CE FYC teachers, this research offers insights into how educators manage the dual expectations of their roles while helping students develop critical writing and thinking skills crucial for college success. I discussed these insights further in the thematic answers to research questions section of this chapter. The concepts represented in my conceptual framework influenced the decisions I made regarding the methods I used to conduct my research.

Methods

Using the components of my conceptual framework, I chose methods I believed would help me answer the research questions. I used a bricolage of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016) along with phenomenological components (Seidman, 2013) as my research design. According to Kim, “narrative inquiry is a way of understanding human experience through stories that, in turn, help us better understand the human phenomena and human existence” (p. 190). To collect data, I conducted semistructured interviews using Seidman’s (2013) three-interview series. Interviews were held virtually through Microsoft Teams. Two collaborators also recorded CE lessons for me to watch. I intended to observe all collaborators, but the timing of interviews precluded additional observations.

I used the connecting strategy of creating narrative profiles using Seidman's (2013) guidelines to create the profiles from interview transcripts. First, I focused on compelling passages and then placed those passages in chronological order. Seidman suggested maintaining the first-person point of view of collaborators, which allowed collaborators to be the narrators of their own stories. While Seidman recommended constructing profiles with only collaborators' words, when I thought it necessary for understanding and cohesion, I added transitions or contextual information in my own words using italicized font. I also wrote an introduction and reflection for each collaborator using my analytic memos. Creating narrative profiles to share collaborator stories allowed for exploring the experiences of CE FYC teachers in a manner that maintained the rich context of their experiences.

In addition to using the connecting strategy of creating narrative profiles, I also used the software MAXQDA to code the transcripts and categorize codes to identify patterns in the data and determine themes. I used *in vivo*, process, and versus coding (Saldaña, 2021). After coding all the transcripts, I used MAXQDA's creative coding tool to create code maps. I grouped together similar codes into an appropriate category that encompassed the corresponding codes. I formed new categories or grouped similar categories together to create new, larger categories. I sorted and resorted codes in different groups until I thought the categories were logical and all codes were included in a category. The code maps along with my analytic memos helped me recognize and make sense of patterns in the data, and I used these patterns to create themes to answer the research questions.

Thematic Answers to Research Questions

After using the connecting strategy of creating narrative profiles and the categorizing strategies of coding and code mapping, I determined five themes to answer the study's research questions. These themes illuminated the experiences of the six CE FYC teachers who participated in the study. Teachers' experiences showed that they participated in the following processes:

1. Experiencing isolation and detachment while seeking support
2. Balancing workload while desiring autonomy
3. Managing complex decisions while dealing with uncertainty
4. Nurturing students while preparing them for the future
5. Looking backward while pressing forward

By connecting these themes to the research questions they answered and providing supporting quotes from collaborators, I emphasized my study's relevance in the academic discourse related to CE and FYC.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 was how did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia navigate the liminal space between high school and college environments? I determined collaborators were experiencing isolation and detachment from both the college faculty and other high school faculty while seeking support in various places. Julio stated, "I have virtually no contact with any of the college faculty, and it seems to be actively discouraged," and "there's a hierarchy there" between the high school and college faculty. Elbert said that other high school teachers in his building expressed jealousy that he got to teach "the golden children," an attitude he

perceived as condescending toward him because he felt it dismissed the challenges he faced in teaching CE students. He also stated he was “lonely” because he was the only one that did CE in his school. When I asked David about how he first came to teach CE, he said reached out to the college for help in creating curriculum, and he was told, “Just teach the class.” He was provided minimal support from the college. Kim said, “When you’re the only person at your school teaching something, you always wonder about, ‘Am I doing this right?’ Because there’s nobody to bounce ideas with.” All collaborators experienced isolation of some degree as CE FYC teachers.

While all collaborators had assigned mentors or contacts at the participating college to whom they could reach out with questions, the support provided was inconsistent. Only three collaborators—Claire, Kim, and David—attended professional development opportunities hosted by their cooperating colleges. They stated the most beneficial part of these professional development days was the opportunity to sit down with other high school and college writing teachers to share ideas and resources in a collegial manner. This finding emphasized the need for meaningful and consistent professional development in which high school and college writing instructors participate as equal partners with the shared goal of supporting students. Feeling connected to the high school and college spaces could help the CE FYC teachers in my study manage the expectations from both institutions, which connected to research question 1.1.

Research Question 1.1

Research question 1.1 was what experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to managing expectations from the high school and college institutions participating in

concurrent enrollment programs? I determined collaborators were balancing their workloads while desiring autonomy. All six collaborators discussed the heavy workload that came with teaching CE courses. According to McWain (2018), high school teachers “face different labor conditions from their college counterparts” (p. 416), which was reflected in the experiences of my collaborators. In addition to the planning, teaching, and grading required for their CE courses, collaborators also shouldered additional responsibilities common for high school teachers. Elbert was the cross-country coach and the department head for his high school English department. Claire, Elbert, and Jessie taught other advanced high school courses. Julio was the sponsor for the Soapbox Derby. David coached football and wrestling. As the media specialist for her high school, Kim did not have a dedicated planning period to devote to her CE courses. These examples highlighted the need for supports from both high schools and colleges which could lighten the workload of these six CE FYC teachers.

When reflecting on a negative encounter with a college faculty member, Claire stated that “it feels like the insinuation is I’m not doing anything when I know what a majority of the professors in terms of their workload look like and what mine looks like,” meaning that she believed her workload was heavier than college professors, yet she was constantly being asked to complete more tasks. Julio’s workload came from the fact that most of his CE students were at third or fourth grade reading levels, making college-level work essentially impossible for them. He also bemoaned the top-down nature of his district, saying he wished his administration would “stop imposing all this crap from the [school] board on me. Give me autonomy in my classroom.” David lamented how long it took him to grade essays for his DE class. He also reconstructed a story about getting in

trouble for teaching Robert Browning's poem "Meeting at Night" and discussing the poem's sexual imagery with his high school students. A parent complained to the principal about his lesson, and David used that experience to illustrate why, even though he was teaching a college class, he could not always treat his students like college students, a reality which further complicated his role.

These collaborator stories emphasized some of the challenges CE FYC teachers face in teaching college-level content to high school students. Additional responsibilities detracted from time that could be spent planning meaningful instruction, providing detailed feedback for CE students, or collaborating with other writing teachers. Additionally, these six teachers experienced this workload without the benefit of the autonomy typically afforded to college instructors on college campuses. Collaborators recognized that although they were teaching college content, they had to modify this content to make it appropriate for high school students who, as Claire stated, "still live with [their] parents." The workload of these six collaborators partially stemmed from the complex decisions they made regarding curriculum planning and instructional strategies, which related to research question 1.2.

Research Question 1.2

Research question 1.2 was how did concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia make decisions regarding curriculum planning and instructional strategies for first-year composition courses? I determined collaborators were managing complex decisions while dealing with uncertainty. All six teachers related some degree of uncertainty regarding the decisions they made in their CE FYC classrooms. Julio and David both talked at length about uncertainty regarding the use of

AI in their CE classrooms. Julio said, “I have no clue what to do about AI.” Elbert said, “I really, really stress that I’m teaching the right thing, that I’m doing what I’m supposed to with this class as far as choosing the correct guidelines or curriculum.” Kim talked about the fear of “‘What if I didn’t do enough? What if I’m not good enough?’ and now I’ve sent them into this world without the knowledge that they need.” Kim constantly worried whether she was teaching her CE students the information they needed to be successful in the future. A connecting thread among all collaborators was that they were constantly managing complex decisions regarding CE curriculum while also grappling with their own uncertainty about those decisions.

These decisions regarding curriculum were also complicated by the lack of resources collaborators had available to them. Julio believed a process pedagogical approach and using imitation was the most effective way to teach his students to be strong writers. He said, “I really think [imitation is] an extremely valuable approach, and the materials that I have for this course through the technical college provides virtually no resources like that. I think that’s a big, big gap.” He also said that, at his high school, “there’s no budget for academics,” so he had to beg for any resources he wanted. While Elbert was provided basic curriculum resources from the college to teach his FYC courses, he found these resources unhelpful and outdated. Elbert said there was an online course set up by his cooperating college that was “pretty poorly set up” because “it was a little bit disjointed, and some of the exercises seemed really remedial.” Further, the 1102 course provided by the college “seemed like it was well over 10 years old and made by someone that had maybe been teaching a bit too long and hadn’t changed their methodology very much.” Thus, rather than using the resources provided to him, Elbert

built the course almost completely on his own. Similarly, David used college resources like unit slideshows and the provided writing textbook, yet he stated he did not like them very much because they were boring. These teachers lacked resources that would ease some of the workload that came with making complex curriculum and instructional decisions. Having access to effective resources from their cooperating college would help these teachers provide support to their students, which related to research questions 1.3.

Research Question 1.3

Research question 1.3 was what experiences did six concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia have that related to their roles in supporting students through the transition from high school to college? I determined collaborators were nurturing students while preparing them for the future. All six teachers reconstructed stories about balancing college-level expectations with the ability and maturity of high school students. Elbert said that “everything comes back to this class really. My job is to get you ready for everything else. Science only worries about science. History only worries about history, but I worry about you doing well in all that.” Similarly, in summarizing her CE philosophy, Jessie said, “This isn’t just about writing an English paper for an English class. This is about writing academically for any course that you have to write.” In David’s words, “A lot of it’s laying the groundwork; this is almost like college. There’s college expectation, but you have the high school safety net.” Ultimately, I chose David’s phrase “laying the groundwork” as part of the title of my dissertation because I kept coming back to that phrase as the embodiment of what it means to be a CE FYC teacher. I chose the word “nurture” for this theme because nurture means caring for and promoting the growth, development, and well-being of

something. The word carries a positive connotation and conjures images of growing, changing, and developing, which were words collaborators used when talking about their roles with students. In order to effectively teach, nurture, and support their students, my six collaborators reflected on their individual experiences as students and used those experiences to make decisions in their own classrooms, which connected to research question 2.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 was how did the meanings concurrent enrollment first-year composition teachers at public high schools in Georgia made of pivotal experiences in their lives impact their instructional practices and decision-making in the liminal space between high school and college? I determined collaborators were looking backward to their own experiences in school to press forward with their students. All six teachers reconstructed their “stories of school” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22) and how those experiences impacted decisions they made in their CE FYC classrooms. While all six participants had different past experiences, those experiences continued to influence their classroom decisions and how they interacted with their CE students. David reflected on his undergraduate experience, saying, “it was a completely different world” than high school, and he tried to give his CE students a taste of that by trying to make his class one that would have benefited him when he was in college. Because of her experience as an AP student in high school, Claire kept her CE course open for any student who wanted to enroll. Kim reflected on a professor she had in college who had high expectations and made a large impact on her teaching style. She said, “I guess that experience inspires me with students” because she maintained high expectations by “almost expecting[ing]

perfection” from her CE students. Jessie reflected on her struggles when she failed out of college. She said, “If I can help anyone on the front end avoid the experiences that I had, that would be huge.” These six teachers took lessons they learned in school and tried to teach those lessons to their CE students. The collaborators constantly looked backward on their own experiences in school while pressing forward with their students to help them be successful in future college courses and beyond. While these themes illustrate the findings of my study, it is important to also consider the study’s limitations.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the experiences of the six collaborators identified through purposeful sampling. Five of the six collaborators were White; one was multiracial. All collaborators worked at public high schools in Georgia, with three collaborators working in North Georgia, one in Central Georgia, one in South Georgia, and one in the Metro-Atlanta area. While I was able to identify participants from different regions, half of participants were from North Georgia, likely because I live and work in North Georgia and thus have more contacts in the area. The experiences of the teachers I interviewed belong to them alone. CE FYC teachers working in different CE partnerships or in different locales are surely to have different experiences than the ones reconstructed in this study. Therefore, study findings are not generalizable to CE FYC teachers working in other locations, but I tried to provide as much description as possible so individual readers could decide what would transfer to their contexts.

Another limitation of the study was researcher bias. As a former CE FYC teacher and a current adjunct instructor with experience teaching first-year composition courses, I worked to keep my emotions and personal experiences in check while interviewing

collaborators. Working with teachers I did not know or with whom I had minimal prior interactions helped to minimize bias as much as possible. Getting to know my collaborators in the context of the study helped us avoid prior assumptions that I already understood their experience and allowed me to ask probing questions to get to the heart of their stories. Memoing immediately after each interview helped me reflect on my personal emotions, feelings, and experiences. I strived to keep the experiences and voices of my collaborators at the forefront of the study by crafting narrative profiles in first-person point of view.

Another limitation of the study was a lack of classroom observations and document analysis. Although I planned to conduct a classroom observation of each collaborator, circumstances and timing got in the way, and I was only able to observe two collaborators, Claire and Elbert. I began interviews at the end of the 2023-2024 school year, when CE teachers were wrapping up their semesters. Because college academic calendars typically differ from K-12 calendars, many CE courses end earlier than high school classes. I began interviewing in mid-March, and the teachers who participated in the study finished their FYC courses at the end of April or early May. Claire was able to send me a video of a CE lesson. However, Julio and I scheduled and rescheduled a classroom observation, as our plans kept being foiled by interruptions such as Milestones testing and senior activities. My interviews with Kim, David, and Jessie took place over summer break when CE courses were not in session. Despite these limitations, I uncovered potential topics for future research related to CE and FYC.

Future Research

This dissertation addressed the research gap identified by Denecker (2020), McWain (2018), and Russo (2020) by exploring how CE FYC teachers navigated the liminal space between high school and college environments. Future CE FYC research could focus on topics such as professional development, relationships between high school and college writing faculty, and the impact of AI on CE FYC classrooms, students, and teachers. These topics were discussed by collaborators during interviews, yet I lacked the time to fully explore them as part of this study.

First, additional research is needed about professional development experiences of CE FYC teachers. The teachers I interviewed had varying experiences with professional development provided by their cooperating colleges. Effective professional learning has the potential to build connections between high school and college writing teachers with the goal of supporting students over the composition threshold (Denecker, 2013). Some of my collaborators noted hierarchies, tensions, and disconnects between themselves and the college faculty. Learning more about the support that CE FYC teachers need from their college counterparts can strengthen relationships and lighten the loads of high school teachers. McWain argued that building strong networks for CE “might give instructors a stronger sense of a disciplinary and professional community across institutions” (p. 421).

Another notable concern five of my six collaborators discussed was the role of AI in the CE FYC classroom. Some teachers discussed AI tools they used, but most of our discussion centered on uncertainty regarding how to address AI with students. David aptly stated that AI is “the burden we shoulder now.” Both David and Julio predicted that

AI will change the way we think about literacy, and realistically that change is already in motion. Future CE FYC research could focus on the efficacy and impact of AI on students and teachers. Stronger relationships and connections between high school and college writing faculty can also allow for conversations about how to address AI in CE FYC classrooms. In addition to potential research topics, my collaborators also provided advice for future CE FYC teachers.

Advice to Future CE FYC Teachers

In our third interviews, I asked my collaborators to share what advice they would give to future CE FYC teachers, and the suggestions they provided were insightful. Elbert said that CE teachers should be willing to reach out for help from people at the high school and college. He also stated that resources are available for CE teachers. Full courses exist on learning platforms, so teachers should look online for resources and not try to reinvent the wheel by creating all new materials. Additionally, Elbert emphasized the importance of creating a solid syllabus and sticking to it. Jessie also stressed, “Stick to the syllabus. Stick to the syllabus. Stick to the syllabus.” She also recommended that CE teachers should sit in on a college class on the college campus, if possible, to get a feel for what the course looks like in that environment. This practice could also help build needed relationships between high school and college faculty. She also recommended committing to treating the students like college students and giving them some college freedoms, such as not requiring them to ask to go to the bathroom.

Claire discussed the importance of being organized and regimented when teaching courses with advanced content. Claire backward designs her courses, so she always knows what she wants her students to be able to do at the end of the course, and she

works backward from those goals as she plans lesson and units. She also emphasized the importance of CE teachers giving themselves grace. She said, “You’re not gonna know everything you need to know that first year or second. Maybe by the third you’ll have an idea.” Having humility and flexibility when things do not go the way you planned is important. If something did not work, then try something different.

Additionally, collaborators stressed the importance keeping students as the focus of the work CE teachers are doing. As Claire said, “You have to want to do this job. You cannot phone it in. You cannot pretend that you like the kids. You cannot pretend that you like the content. You can’t pretend that you like the lessons. It’s not like any other job.” Finally, collaborators also highlighted the need for autonomy and academic freedom in CE classrooms. In addition to the previously stated themes and suggestions for CE teachers, I also reflected on the experiences of collaborators to present advice to CE partners, including high school and college faculty.

Advice to Concurrent Enrollment Partners

Ultimately, I agree with Denecker (2023) in rejecting the gap and bridge building metaphors related to CE FYC. While gaps surely exist, these metaphors are largely unhelpful for CE FYC teachers and only serve to reinforce the divide between the high school and college faculty, environments, and content. The teachers in my study showed that they worked tirelessly to bring the high school and college worlds together for the betterment of their students. The work they were doing every day in their classrooms is meaningful and dare I say life-changing for students, and it is work that none of them took lightly. I urge CE stakeholders to also reject these unhelpful metaphors that situate high school English classrooms as somehow subordinate to college classrooms and

instead recognize the possibilities they offer. Based on the experiences of my collaborators, I also offer advice to CE partners.

Foster Mutual Relationships

CE FYC teachers need positive, mutual relationships with college writing instructors. My collaborators did not desire mentor/mentee relationships born from tasks on a checklist, nor hierarchical relationships with imbalances of power. Rather, CE FYC teachers need opportunities to sit down at the same table with college writing faculty to share ideas and resources and troubleshoot challenges they face in their classrooms. For Claire and Kim, the most beneficial part of the professional development they were provided by their colleges was sitting down with other CE FYC teachers and college English instructors to informally talk about their courses. Kim stated that these conversations helped improve her confidence that she was teaching her CE students what they needed to know. Faculty in both high school and college spaces have knowledge and experiences that deserve to be shared. The conversation should involve college faculty truly listening to what high school teachers have to say about the challenges they face when teaching college-level material to high school students. My collaborators wanted to be viewed as peers and equals by college faculty. Meaningful collaboration between colleges and CE instructors is essential in developing materials and resources that are practical, relevant, and aligned with the expectations of higher education.

Provide Meaningful, Relevant Resources

My collaborators had a variety of experiences related to the resources and support they received from their cooperating colleges. Julio, Elbert, and David were provided resources that they ultimately deemed insufficient. The need for meaningful and relevant

resources for CE FYC teachers is critical to ensuring the success of both instructors and students. As these educators navigate the challenges of aligning their courses with college-level expectations while teaching high school students, they require targeted support to help students transition from secondary postsecondary expectations and rigor.

College faculty should take an active role in equipping CE FYC teachers with the tools they need to deliver high-quality instruction, not by dictating what CE teachers must teach in their classrooms, but by providing comprehensive and adaptable resources. By equipping teachers, colleges can ultimately help enhance student learning outcomes. Addressing the need for relevant, meaningful resources will not only benefit educators but will also ensure that CE students receive a rigorous and enriching FYC experience, better preparing them for their future academic journeys. Without adequate resources such as curriculum guides, textbooks, and other instructional materials, CE FYC teachers may be forced to spend time creating their own resources, adding to their already heavy workloads.

Consider CE FYC Teachers' Workloads

Finally, in addition to fostering mutual relationships between high school and college writing faculty and providing meaningful, relevant resources for CE teachers, high school and college administrators should consider the workload that comes with teaching CE FYC courses. Workload was a topic that collaborators consistently brought up during interviews. The six teachers I interviewed indicated they need responsibilities taken off their plates rather than added to them. They needed support instead of longer checklists. They desired more time for meaningful activities: working with students, planning impactful learning experiences, and providing detailed feedback on student

work. High school and college faculty should consider ways to lighten the workload of CE FYC teachers, such as providing additional time for planning or grading. For example, to alleviate some hours of instructional seat time, David said his CE courses did not meet on Fridays, and he used this time to meet with students, plan, and grade. Providing CE teachers time in their schedules for office hours or extra time for planning and grading would be extremely beneficial.

Many educators and stakeholders are involved in dual and concurrent enrollment partnerships. Unfortunately, teachers are all too familiar with the feeling that educational decision makers do not understand what truly goes on in classrooms. If nothing else, I hope my research elevated the voices of six professionals who work tirelessly every day in CE FYC classrooms to build life-long learners and successful citizens. Theirs are the voices that matter. I urge high school administrators and college faculty to listen to what teachers need and what would make their jobs easier. The process of working with my six collaborators taught me valuable lessons that had an impact on me both personally and professionally.

Lessons Learned

This dissertation process has fundamentally changed me as a human, a teacher, a learner, and a researcher. As humans, we are inherently self-centered, thinking our experiences are universal or of utmost importance. I certainly thought so regarding my experiences teaching CE FYC. Creating relationships with the teachers I interviewed moved my focus away from myself and broadened my perspective because of the newly found awareness of what others were experiencing. Talking with my collaborators improved my own practice as a teacher of English 1101 and 1102 courses. For example,

David shared digital tools such as Brisk and Perusall that he used in his classroom. Elbert taught me about academic discourse communities and the way he implemented them in his English 1102 course. Jessie introduced me to Kenneth Burke's parlor metaphor in which scholars join into an academic conversation that has been ongoing for many years and will continue for many more years. I now use this metaphor as a way to think about the work I am pushing my English 1101 and 1102 students to do. The teachers I interviewed gave me ideas to use in my own classes and showed me different ways of approaching my students, grading, and assigning college-level work.

Throughout my doctoral journey, I certainly experienced feelings of imposter syndrome. At times I became so frustrated or overwhelmed that I surely thought I would quit. Coding was an immense challenge for me. I started and restarted so many times. I was certain I had no idea what I was doing, and I would never identify themes from over 400 pages of transcript data. However, I just kept moving. I kept reading Saldaña's (2021) text, memoing, rereading the transcripts, and watching YouTube videos about MAXQDA until finally everything came together. I kept pressing on, and I learned I have the grit and determination needed to conduct my own research and earn a terminal degree in my field.

My favorite part of the process by far was conducting interviews. I was reminded of the power that stories have in building connections between people and helping us make meaning from our experiences. I loved listening to the stories of my collaborators. We shared, commiserated, laughed, and even cried. I feel so honored that these busy educators took so much of their precious time to help me with this project. I can never adequately repay them, but I hope I have done their stories justice in the way I presented

them in this work. Overall, this research was a phenomenal learning experience that will remain with me forever.

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Appendix A
IRB Approval Form



**Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants**

EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL REPORT

Protocol Number: 04452-2023

Responsible Researcher: Marissa Hann

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Lorraine Schmertzing

Co-Investigator(s): n/a

Project Title: *The Experiences of Concurrent Enrollment Teachers Teaching First-Year Composition Courses in Georgia.*

Level of Risk: Minimal More than Minimal

Type of Review: Expedited Convened (Full Board)

Approval Categories: 6 & 7

Approval Date: 10.15.2023

Expiration Date: 10.15.2026

- Consent Requirements:**
- Adult Participants – Written informed consent with documentation (signature)
 - Adult Participants – Written informed consent with waiver of documentation (signature)
 - Adult Participants – Verbal informed consent (Research Statement)
 - Adult Participants – Waiver of informed consent
 - Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with documentation (signature)
 - Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with waiver of documentation (signature)
 - Minor Participants – Verbal parent/guardian permission
 - Minor Participants – Waiver of parent/guardian permission
 - Minor Participants – Written assent with documentation (signature)
 - Minor Participants – Written assent with waiver of documentation (signature)
 - Minor Participants – Verbal assent
 - Minor Participants – Waiver of assent
 - Waiver of some elements of consent/permission/assent

Comments:

- *The interview statement must be read aloud to the participant at the start of each interview session. A copy of the interview consent statement must be provided.*
- *Upon creation of each interview transcript, it is recommended that each interview is deleted from devices used to record and store the interview recordings.*

Approval: *This research protocol is approved.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie 10.15.2023
 Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
 Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment Email



Subject: Want to share your experiences as a dual/concurrent enrollment English teacher?

My name is Marissa Hann, a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University, and I am conducting a study about the experiences of dual/concurrent enrollment teachers. I am looking for public high school English teachers who teach first-year composition courses through dual or concurrent enrollment programs. If you have taught at least one of these courses for at least 1 academic year and you teach the course(s) in person on your high school campus, you may be eligible to participate.

What is required of participants?

- Interviews through Microsoft Teams
- If you are comfortable doing so, allow me to observe (through a recording or live through digital means) a dual/concurrent enrollment class period

Your name and the name of your school will not be associated with your interview or observation data. If you are interested in participating, please follow the link or scan the QR code below to take a short survey. After I review survey responses, I will contact you if you are eligible to participate.

[DE/CE English Teacher Survey](#)



Thank you for your help,

Marissa Hann

mwhitlock@valdosta.edu

Survey: https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1XQW9fybbVArcDs

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Marissa Hann at mwhitlock@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix C
Recruitment Flyer

**PARTICIPANTS
NEEDED!**

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A DUAL/CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT ENGLISH TEACHER!

**I am conducting a study and looking for DE/CE
English teachers who want to share their stories.**

Eligible participants must:

- Be a high school English teacher.
- Teach at a public high school in Georgia.
- Have taught in-person dual or concurrent enrollment first-year composition courses (such as English 1101/1102) for at least 1 academic year.

Why participate?

- Share your experiences with educational stakeholders.
- Contribute to the growing discourse on dual/ concurrent enrollment.
- Let your voice and your stories be heard.

Interested? Unsure if you qualify?

**Follow the link below or scan the QR code to take a
short survey!**

[https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1XQW9fy
bbVArcDs](https://valdosta.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1XQW9fy_bbVArcDs)



Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Marissa Hann at mwhitlock@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Appendix D
Participant Follow-up Email



Subject: Participant Follow-Up

Hello and Happy Friday!

Thank you so much for filling out my demographic survey. You have been chosen to be a participant in a dissertation research study currently titled *The Experiences of Concurrent Enrollment Teachers Teaching First-Year Composition Courses in Public High Schools in Georgia*, which is being conducted by Marissa Hann, a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on high school campuses.

Participation involves a series of 3 interviews through Microsoft Teams. Each interview should last between 60-90 minutes, and interviews will be scheduled between 4-7 days apart. There are no known risks involved in participating in this project. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. You will be given a pseudonym in the study. All recordings and data will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

Additionally, if you feel comfortable doing so, it would be helpful for data collection if you could record yourself teaching one of your dual enrollment class periods. Students' faces would not have to be recorded. If you are able to do this, you can record and send me the recording at any time. However, this is not required to participate.

I will be contacting you again within the next few weeks to begin scheduling interviews. These will be at your convenience. If there is a day or time that works best for you, please let me know. Ideally, I would love to have all interviews wrapped up before summer break, but some interviews may have to extend into the summer.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns at all. I cannot complete this process without you, and I look forward to working with you and learning from you.

Sincerely,

Marissa Hann

mwhitlock@valdosta.edu

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Marissa Hann at mwhitlock@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu

Appendix E
Interview Guides

Interview One: Life Story

You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research study currently titled *The Experiences of Concurrent Enrollment Teachers Teaching First-Year Composition Courses in Public High Schools in Georgia*, which is being conducted Marissa Hann, a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on high school campuses. There are 3 interviews, and each should take about 90 minutes to complete. There are no known risks involved in participating in this project. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. You will be given a pseudonym in the study. All recordings and data will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this project and your certification that you are 18 or older. Do you agree to participate?

Before we begin, I would like to share a little of my own history and why I am interested in the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses. I have been an English teacher for 12 years, and I taught concurrent enrollment English courses for 5 of those years. I taught these courses first through a private university and then through a public technical college. My own experiences as a concurrent enrollment teacher made me wonder about the experiences of others. Although I changed jobs and no longer teach CE courses, I am still interested in and passionate about the topic. I want to learn about what it is like for you, as a high school

teacher, to teach college-level writing courses. The purpose of the first interview today is for me to get to know you and your history. In our next interview, I will ask you about your experiences and the details of what it is like being a concurrent enrollment composition teacher. In our third interview, I will ask you to reflect on the meaning of your experiences as a concurrent enrollment teacher and how your experiences impacted and shaped you. This is my initial plan for our time together, but my hope is that you will relax and take the conversation wherever you want it to go. I have no expectations about how you should answer my questions because you are the expert here. This process is about you and your experience, and not about me following a strict plan. I can't do this process without you, so I need your help to share your own experiences as a CE teacher. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Today, I will ask some questions about your background and how you came to be a teacher. Please share as much as you feel comfortable sharing with me.

1. A pseudonym will be substituted for your name to protect your privacy. Do you have a specific name you would like me to substitute for your own?
2. First, let's start with a word association game. I'll say a word and you tell me the first thing that comes to your mind regarding that term.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Significant other
 - Work
 - Middle School
 - Student

- Vacation
- High School
- Dual enrollment
- Values
- Professor
- College
- Writing
 - Homework
 - Grade
 - Mentor/Coach

Awesome, thank you. I just wanted to get your reactions before I started asking questions just to see your responses, to loosen us both up a bit, and to have a baseline that we can revisit in the future.

3. Please tell me about yourself personally, outside of school and your classroom.
4. Please tell me about your early experiences in school as a student.
5. Tell me a story about an important elementary school experience.
6. Tell me a story about an important middle school experience.
7. Tell me a story about an important high school experience.
8. Tell me a story about an important college experience.
9. What kind of writer were you as a student? How did you view yourself as a writer? How did you develop as a writer?
10. What drew you to the field of education?

11. Tell me about an “a-ha” moment (or moments) when you knew that the field of education was the right fit for you.
12. Tell me about an “a-ha” moment (or moments) when you knew that being an English teacher was the right fit for you.
13. Can you share about your professional journey prior to becoming a dual enrollment teacher?
14. Who would you say were your heroes, mentors, or coaches along the way? What were they like? What did you learn from them that you still use today?
15. What bullies, “nay-sayers,” or challenges did you experience along the way?
16. Please tell me the story of how you started teaching dual enrollment classes.
17. How would you describe your overall teaching philosophy?
18. Are there any personal values or beliefs that strongly inform your approach to teaching dual enrollment composition?
19. Tell me the story of how you prepared to teach your first dual/concurrent enrollment course. What was that experience like?
20. When you are in social settings, what stories do you tell about yourself and your experiences most often?
 - How do you describe what you do to your friends?
 - How do you describe what you do to your colleagues?
 - How do you describe what you do to your students?
21. Are there any other experiences related to your personal or professional journey that you would like to share?

Interview Two: Details of Experience

As a reminder, this interview is part of a qualitative study for my dissertation research. In my research, I am exploring the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on public high school campuses. You have been asked to participate in a dissertation research study currently titled *The Experiences of Concurrent Enrollment Teachers Teaching First-Year Composition Courses in Public High Schools in Georgia*, which is being conducted Marissa Hann, a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on high school campuses. There are 3 interviews, and each should take about 90 minutes to complete. There are no known risks involved in participating in this project. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. You will be given a pseudonym in the study. All recordings and data will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

I want to learn about what it is like for you, as a high school teacher, to teach college-level writing courses. In our first interview, you told me about your history and how you came to teach dual enrollment courses. Today, I will be asking you questions about your experiences as a dual enrollment teacher. I am interested in learning specific details about your experiences. Please share as much as you feel comfortable sharing with me.

1. How have you been since we last talked? What is going on in your life?
[I will use the first part of interview two to ask any follow-up questions related to interview one.]
2. In the first interview, you said/mentioned/described . . . Can you tell me more about . . .?
4. What are your favorite parts of teaching dual enrollment English? What are your least favorite parts?
5. Can you discuss any collaborations or support systems you have found helpful in navigating the demands of teaching dual enrollment composition?
6. How would you describe the difference between high school-level writing and college-level writing?
7. How do you view the role of rigor in your classroom?
8. How are your dual enrollment English courses different than your “regular” high school English courses?
9. Please describe your experiences related to the high school side of teaching dual enrollment.

Possible follow-up questions:

- What other high school faculty at your school/district are involved in dual enrollment? Counselors, administrators, other teachers?
- What are your relationships like with these high school faculty who deal with dual enrollment?
- Please describe any professional development experiences you have had at the high school related to concurrent enrollment.

10. Please describe your experiences related to the college side of teaching dual enrollment.

Possible follow-up questions:

- What are your relationships like with college faculty?
- Please describe any professional development experiences you have had from/with the college.

11. How do you navigate working through both the high school and the college?
What is it like dealing with both schools?

Possible follow-up questions:

- How are the expectations from the high school and college different?

12. Do you consider yourself a college faculty member? Why or why not?

13. Tell me a story about a positive dual enrollment experience. [Follow-up as needed.]

14. Tell me a story about a negative dual enrollment experience. [Follow-up as needed.]

15. Have you ever considered quitting? If yes, tell me a story about that time.

16. Please walk me through a day in your life at ___ high school.

- Walk me through a dual enrollment class period. What are you doing?
What are the students doing?

17. What instructional strategies do you use in your dual enrollment classes? How do you decide or choose these strategies?

18. What is your philosophy or view on grading? How do you approach grading for your dual enrollment classes differently than with “regular” classes?

19. What is your philosophy on homework? What role does homework play in your dual enrollment classroom?
20. How would you describe your relationships with your dual enrollment students?
- Tell me a story about a relationship with a dual enrollment student.
21. Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you want to share with me about what it is like to be a dual enrollment teacher?

Interview Three: Meaning of Experiences

As a reminder, this interview is part of a qualitative study for my dissertation research. In my research, I am exploring the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on high school campuses. You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research study currently titled *The Experiences of Concurrent Enrollment Teachers Teaching First-Year Composition Courses in Public High Schools in Georgia*, which is being conducted Marissa Hann, a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of high school teachers who teach college first-year composition courses on high school campuses. There are 3 interviews, and each should take about 90 minutes to complete. There are no known risks involved in participating in this project. No one will be able to associate your responses with your identity. You will be given a pseudonym in the study. All recordings and data will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, to stop responding at any time, or to skip questions that you do not want to answer. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this project and your certification that you are 18 or older.

I want to learn about what it is like for you, as a high school teacher, to teach college-level writing courses. In our first interview, you told me about your history and how you came to teach dual enrollment courses. In our second interview, you described your experiences and what it is like teaching dual enrollment composition courses. Today, I will be asking you questions about the meaning of your experiences. Please share as much as you feel comfortable sharing with me. [Note: Much of this interview

will be directly related to the experiences shared in interview two. Thus, I will revise this interview guide and questions to reflect what the participant shared in interview two.]

1. How have you been since our last meeting? What is going on in your life?
2. In the last interview, you shared about . . . Please elaborate more on this experience.

Possible follow-up questions:

- Please describe . . . in more detail.
- Please give an example of . . .
- Who was involved in this experience?
- What did you do or feel in reaction to this experience?

[Repeat question two as much as necessary to gather more details about participant experiences.]

3. When considering . . . previous experience, please describe your feelings about . . .

Possible follow-up questions:

- What did you learn from this experience?
- How did this experience change you or how you view yourself?
- How did this experience effect you?

[Repeat question three as much as necessary to gather more details about participant perceptions and meaning of experiences.]

4. How do you understand your role as a dual enrollment teacher? How do you view your role in preparing students for college and college-level work?

5. How do you perceive your dual enrollment students' readiness for college-level work? In other words, do you think they are prepared for college-level work? Why or why not?
6. What impact do high school dual enrollment faculty have on the curriculum you implement in your classroom?
7. What impact does the college or college faculty have on the curriculum you implement in your classroom?
8. In what ways has teaching dual enrollment influenced your identity as a teacher? How has it shaped your professional goals or aspirations?
9. Can you share any memorable success stories related to students in your dual enrollment classes? How do these stories contribute to your understanding of your role as a teacher?
10. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to educators considering or currently involved in dual enrollment first-year composition teaching?
11. What, if anything, would you change about being a dual enrollment composition teacher if you could?
12. How could your high school or college administrators/faculty better support you as a dual enrollment teacher?
13. Do you have anything else you want to tell me? Is there anything you wish to clarify about what you already told me?