

NAVIGATING TWO WORLDS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS INSTRUCTING
DUAL CREDIT COURSES IN SOUTH TEXAS

by

Cynthia F. Cid

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The central research question addressed in this study is: What are the experiences of adjunct faculty teaching dual credit courses in South Texas? The theory guiding this study is Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. The settings of the research were three high schools that offer dual credit courses in Arroyo Nordville, located in South Texas. In this study, pseudonyms were used for the three high schools, namely East Arroyo High School, West Arroyo High School, and North Arroyo High School. Participants were eligible to participate in the study if they are high school teachers instructing a dual credit course at the high school and serve as adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College. This qualitative study utilized extensive interviews, photo interviewing techniques, and document analysis to study the experiences of high school dual credit teachers. The data gathered were analyzed through open coding and the phenomenological method of analysis utilizing Moustakas' epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of description. Five themes were identified from the study: upholding college standards, institutionalized expectations, double edge experiences, key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, and training and support. The research corroborated and extended previous findings. Theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are discussed in this research.

Keywords: adjunct faculty, concurrent enrollment, dual credit, dual enrollment

Dedication

To my daughter, Emma: May you continue to be intellectually inquisitive and strive to make a difference to others as you venture into the world of college and career life. May you always stay in faith and pray that God will guide you every step of the way.

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First and foremost, my unceasing gratitude goes to God for His saving grace and abundant blessings all these years. Secondly, I would like to thank my husband, Phil, for his patience and willingness to do whatever it takes to ensure I have time to study or write my dissertation manuscript. You were willing to step up when I could not during my four-year journey to a doctoral degree. You are my rock, and I love you.

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List of Abbreviations

Advanced Placement (AP)

Career and Technology Education (CTE)

College and Career Readiness (CCR)

Coronavirus Disease in 2019 (COVID-19)

Dual Enrollment Learning and Teaching Academy (DELTA)

Dual Enrollment (DE)

Early College High School (ECHS)

End-of-Course (EOC)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Higher Education (HEd)

International Baccalaureate (IB)

Middle College High School (MCHS)

National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness)

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

Texas Success Initiative (TSI)

Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment (VPDE)

World Health Organization (WHO)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many high school students as young as 14 years old can take college classes that could provide them high school and college credit at the same time. In some states, such as Arizona and Maine, middle school students can take dual credit courses if they meet the eligibility requirements (Education Commission of the States, 2015). In Florida, sixth graders can take dual courses if they meet the Grade Point Average (GPA) and placement score eligibility requirements (Florida Department of Education, 2014). As a result, it is common for many students to graduate from high school with several college credits, a certificate, or an associate degree. Students take dual credits while in high school and could earn up to 2 years of college credit tuition-free (Bush, 2017). Participation in a dual credit program has become popular because of the growth of the Early College High School (ECHS) nationwide (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Some students who take dual credit courses may be awarded an associate degree in general education or science concurrently with their high school diploma (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Ferguson, Baker, & Burnett, 2015).

Dual credit students will earn college credits while attending a community college or while never leaving their home campus as the courses that provide both the high school and college credit are taught by credentialed high school teachers (Duncheon, 2020). These teachers become adjunct faculty for a college, and they go through a rigorous process to ensure that the dual credit course they teach meets college standards (Pierce, 2017; Stein & Klosterman, 2019). High school teachers instructing dual credit courses must comply with the requirements of the higher education institution with regards to (a) student expectation, (b) teaching philosophy, (c) curriculum, (d) pedagogy, and (e) assessment (Stein & Klosterman, 2019; Taylor, Borden, &

Park, 2015) while simultaneously following the same expectations, pedagogy, and other requirements from their respective high school campus. The study investigated the experiences of dual credit high school teachers who are straddling two worlds of work: secondary school and higher education.

This chapter contains information regarding the background of this study and highlights a gap in the research literature regarding dual-credit high school teachers' experiences. In this chapter, (a) the theoretical framework that helps explain the phenomenon being studied is outlined, (b) the researcher's motivation and philosophical assumptions are discussed, (c) the problem and purpose statements of the study are identified, and (d) the significance of the study is explained in detail. Moreover, chapter one includes a list of research questions and relevant terminology. Furthermore, chapter one contains an end of chapter summary to review vital information about the study.

Background

Dual enrollment (DE) is a college course that high school students can take to potentially earn a high school and college credit for the same course upon successful completion (An & Taylor, 2015). DE is also known as dual credit, concurrent enrollment (Staats & Laster, 2018), or early college programs (What Works Clearinghouse, 2017). DE is not popular globally, but it is common in the United States (Staats & Laster, 2018). DE has received significant support from local board members, K-12 educational leaders, higher education institutions, and school stakeholders, as the program offers a plethora of benefits.

Students who took dual credit courses in high school passed the state-mandated end-of-course examinations in English, math, science, and social studies (Berger, Garet, Hoshen, Knudson, & Turk-Bicakci, 2014; Edmunds, Unlu, Glennie, Bernstein, Furey, & Arshavsky,

2017). Participation in dual credit programs showed the following benefits: (a) increased the number of students graduating from high schools (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Icel & Davis, 2018), (b) helped students to be college-ready (An, 2013; An & Taylor, 2015), (c) showed growth in the number of students who matriculated in college after high school graduation (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Jones, 2018), and (d) increased college completion rate (An & Taylor, 2015; Blackenberger, Lichtenberger, & Witt, 2017; D'Anna, Denmark, Rosenthal, & Maillet, 2019; Duroske, 2019; Kanny, 2015; Lile, Ottusch, Jones, & Richards, 2018; Phelps & Chan, 2016; Zinth & Barnett, 2018). Participation in dual credit program is especially significant for low-income and first-generation college students (Blackenberger et al., 2017; Giani, Alexander, & Reyes, 2014; Loveland, 2017) and low-achieving students (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015) in college completion rate.

DE had been shown to increase the academic rigor of high school curriculum, increase college accessibility, elevate levels of student motivation, higher GPA's, faster degree completion, and reduce the cost of college (An & Taylor, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Jones, 2018; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017; Loveland, 2017; Stein & Klosterman, 2019; Wang, Chan, Phelps, & Washborn, 2015). Furthermore, high school students who took DE courses were less likely to be placed in remedial classes in college (An & Taylor, 2015; Grubb, Scott, & Good, 2017). Moreover, the findings of a study suggested that taking career and technical dual credit courses prepared students for the workforce (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). The many benefits of the DE program towards student success are why many states initiate or continue to enact legislation to expand the program and provide additional funding to increase dual credit opportunities (Holten & Pierson, 2016).

Minnesota took the lead in launching a statewide DE program in the 1980s, and since then, many states, such as Arkansas, Virginia, and Utah, started DE programs (Loveland, 2017). Lately, states are expanding their DE programs. In the 2016 legislative session in Idaho, House Bill 458 was passed to expand dual credit opportunities to students in grades 7-12 by providing additional funding across school districts in the state (Holten & Pierson, 2016). Ohio launched a dual enrollment program in 2015-2016 as a strategy to have 65 percent of its citizens earn a degree, certificate, or other post-secondary workforce credentials by 2025 (Loveland, 2017). New York launched College Now program where 3, 200 full-and part-time students were enrolled in more than 50 degrees and certificate programs in a local community college (Pierce, 2017). Nationwide, there has been an increase in enrollment in DE courses. There is a tremendous increase in enrollment in dual credit courses because of Early College High Schools (ECHS) expansion in many public high schools.

ECHS provides an opportunity for at-risk and economically disadvantaged students to earn a post-secondary credential, either an associate degree or up to two years of college credits that can count toward a bachelor's degree during high school at no cost to their families. Although the National Early College Initiative--supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation--has ended, early colleges continue to expand nationwide (Edmunds et al., 2017). Many secondary public schools are applying and are being granted the designation of Early College High School every academic year to help their students earn some college credits.

With the exponential growth of students taking DE courses, there is an increasing demand for instructors who can teach DE courses. DE courses may be taught by college faculty who teach students either on the college or university campus or at the high school campus (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). DE courses may also be taught by high school teachers who meet

the required credentials, such as a Master's degree in the content area to be taught or a master's degree with at least 18 credits in the content area to be taught (Piontek, Kannapel, Flory, & Stewart, 2016). High school teachers apply to be adjunct faculty. Each higher education institution reviews and approves the teachers' applications based on the institution and state guidelines (Piontek et al., 2016).

High school teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school are considered adjunct faculty to the college (Stein & Klosterman, 2019). Support for adjunct faculty, who teach students at the high school, is mainly left to the secondary school where they are employed (Swafford & Waller, 2018). Since the support is expected from the secondary institution, high school administrators are responsible for decisions about school involvement with a dual enrollment program (Hanson, Prusha, & Iverson, 2015). Collaborative partnerships through regular engagement and interactions between the secondary school and the higher education administrators and the high school faculty and college faculty are required to ensure the success of the DE program (Taylor et al., 2015). As high school teachers instructing dual credit courses follow guidelines and pedagogy in secondary institutions, they are also required to navigate the world of higher education to ensure consistency and instructional quality of dual credit courses taught at the high schools (Piontek et al., 2016).

Theoretical Context

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory was utilized in this study to explore the experiences of high school instructors instructing dual credit in South Texas. The social cognitive theory postulates that individuals can control their actions, but a reciprocal relationship exists between the individual's behavior, environment, and cognition (Bandura, 1997). A central pillar of the social cognitive theory is self-efficacy (De Oliveira Fernandez, Ramos, Silva,

Furtado, & Ramos, 2016). Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment” (p. 3). These beliefs are learned and not fixed character traits, thereby allowing individuals to exercise an influence in their lives (Bandura, 2006). Teacher efficacy is, therefore, learned throughout one’s teaching career. Teacher efficacy, which is theoretically based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), was explored in the study as it relates to the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses.

Teacher efficacy is a vital psychological paradigm that any teacher must have to become an effective teacher (Zakeri, Rahmany, & Labone, 2016). Bandura (1997) defined teacher's self-efficacy as the teachers’ belief in their ability to implement instructional and learning processes. Teacher’s efficacy beliefs impact the amount of effort that teachers invest in teaching. Blonder and Rap (2017b) indicated that teachers with a strong sense of efficacy tend to be more organized and generally plan better than their counterparts with a low sense of efficacy. Additionally, teachers with a high sense of efficacy also “tend to be more open to new ideas and innovations, and more willing to experiment with new teaching methods” (p. 702). Experimenting with new methods using available resources and digital competencies as fast and as efficiently as possible (Santi, Gorghiu, & Pribeanu, 2020) became necessary for high school teachers to teach dual credit during the coronavirus pandemic. A study on teachers' self-efficacy indicates that the level of perceived self-efficacy regarding their competencies in utilizing digital devices for instructional purposes is relatively high (Santi et al., 2020). However, teachers found themselves putting in more effort in preparing online classes and designing lessons that will meet the needs of students (Sun, Tang, & Zuo, 2020).

Despite the complex tasks that teachers usually face in their profession, they exhibit certain levels of resiliency. Resilient teachers are not afraid to tackle educational challenges as they consider their profession a calling (Sadziak, Wilinski, & Wieczorek, 2018). Teachers with high self-efficacy always bounce back and focus on essential instructional strategies instead of spending time with classroom discipline (Phan & Locke, 2015). As a result, teachers with high self-efficacy have students who demonstrate on-task behavior, positive attitude, and motivation toward learning and going to school (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Teachers with high self-efficacy are critical as high school students taking dual credit are expected to be highly motivated as they strive to earn college credits while earning their high school diplomas.

Teachers instructing dual credit students at the high school level must have confidence in their ability to teach students, leading to positive changes. These changes can improve student outcomes as the teachers do what is best for all students (Astuti, Putrawan, & Komala, 2020), especially in improving instructional practices (McKeown, Abrams, Slattum, & Kirk, 2016). Moreover, teacher self-efficacy is considered three to six times more influential on student learning than teacher effectiveness (Hattie, 2003). This information is vital as high school teachers instructing dual credit students provide quality instruction and the same experience as traditional college students (Piontek et al., 2016; Priebe, 2016). In the provision of quality college instruction for dual credit students at the high school, concerns exist. The concerns are over the minimal oversight by the partner university and lack of release time for college faculty and high school faculty to collaborate, which “makes the quality of instruction difficult to guarantee” (Priebe, 2016, p. 445).

Collaboration among high school dual credit teachers and college faculty may help promote efficacy among high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. High school teachers

and college students can share different forms of expertise (Farah, 2019) and learn from each other to effectively enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching dual credit students. It is also vital for high school teachers to feel accepted as essential college faculty. Aldridge and Fraser (2016) indicated that “affiliation (the extent to which teachers can obtain assistance, advice, and encouragement and feel accepted by colleagues) significantly influenced teacher self-efficacy, both directly and indirectly and influenced job satisfaction indirectly” (p. 302). The provision of opportunities for teachers to work together helps teachers’ personal and professional growth and efficacy (Goddard & Kim, 2018).

Aside from collaboration among dual credit teachers, the provision of appropriate professional development can undoubtedly impact their performance ability and efficacy in teaching dual credit courses (Hanson et al., 2015). Dual credit high school teachers feel that they face different labor conditions from their college counterparts (McWain, 2018), so the provision of meaningful professional development may help alleviate this challenge. School administrators may help facilitate the provision of professional development to the dual credit teachers. School administrators play a vital role in enhancing teachers' collective efficacy, especially in low-performing schools (Mosoge, Challens, & Xaba, 2018). School administrators who maximize support, foster collaboration among teachers, and promote a positive school-level environment significantly improved job satisfaction and teacher efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

Support from college and high school administration, teacher collaboration, and provision of professional development was explored in the study as they relate to the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit. Teacher collaboration and professional development and how they relate to dual credit teachers’ efficacy may be uncovered during the study. Many

studies on high school teacher efficacy have been done in the past, specifically on their qualifications (Moosa & Shareefa, 2019), beliefs (Thompson & Dooley, 2019), technology usage (Arkyuz, 2019), and the effect of transformational leadership (Damanik & Aldridge, 2017; Windlinger, Warwas, & Hostettler, 2020). A study has not been done to explore the efficacy of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. In this research, as the dual credit high school teachers tell their stories, social cognitive theory, specifically its derivative on teacher efficacy, provided a framework to help understand the interpretations of their experiences. The teachers' personal stories and accounts, which were structured through the lens of social cognitive theory, offered insights that may improve the dual credit program.

Historical Context

Historically, dual enrollment programs were created almost five decades ago to offer affluent, high-achieving high school students an opportunity to simultaneously earn high school credit and college credits (Greenberg, 1989). Since then, DE programs have evolved to support a variety of student populations and diverse demographic backgrounds. Two factors have catalyzed the evolution of DE programs. The rigorous academic preparation combined with increased college expectations that can strongly predict success in post-secondary education (Karp, Bailey, Hughes, & Baranda, 2004) is one factor. The other factor is the overall change in the diversity of student populations in the United States (Education Commission of the States, 2016). The latter was essential in the rise of ECHS as the program targets at-risk high school students to assist them in obtaining 60 college credits or an associate degree.

With the rise of school districts offering ECHS within their schools, more credentialed teachers must meet the demand. Post-secondary institutions address the teacher shortage by providing scholarships or tuition discounts to high school teachers interested in acquiring the

necessary credentials to teach DE courses eventually (Piontek et al., 2016). Some states offer loan forgiveness to help teachers obtain their credentials to teach dual credit (Horn, Reinert, Jang, & Zinth, 2016). School districts also provide stipends for teaching a dual enrollment course (Hooker, 2018; Piontek et al., 2016). Financial support and local administration support are identified by existing in-house adjunct faculty as a must (Swafford & Waller, 2018). The success of dual enrollment programs relies heavily on the partnership between post-secondary institutions and local school districts (Pierce, 2017). School administrators at the high school level must be willing to provide financial and human capital to support the partnership (Swafford & Waller, 2018). Moreover, effective communication between the local district and partnering university (Swafford & Waller, 2018) and teaming up to align curriculum and ease the transition process for students (Malin, Bragg, & Hackmann, 2017; Pierce, 2016) must take place.

Social Context

This study examined the lived experiences of teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas. The students taught by South Texas dual-credit high school teachers are primarily first-generation, at-risk, economically disadvantaged Hispanic students. South Texas is in an impoverished region near the border of Mexico. South Texas is a four-county region located in the southernmost tip of Texas. It has a population of 1,321,814, where approximately 92.2% are Hispanic or Latino, 5% White, and 2.8% other races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The median income in South Texas is \$33,757, and 34% are living in poverty. South Texas tops the list of America's poorest cities (Cohen, 2013). Approximately 84% of the students in the area are considered economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

One university, two community colleges, and one technical college are in South Texas. Despite the presence of higher educational institutions in the area, the educational attainment for

18-24 years of age individuals (population: 144,599) in South Texas is as follows: 23% less than high school graduate, 31% high school graduate, 42% some college or associate degree, and 4% Bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Educational attainment for 25 years and older (population: 739,990) at South Texas is as follows: 38% less than high school graduate, 24% high school graduate, 22% some college or associate degree, and 16% Bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). As evidenced by the small percentage of South Texas residents who pursued post-secondary education, the low educational attainment is one of the crucial reasons why public schools in the area push for dual credit courses.

In recent years, educational leaders have been developing strategies to expand dual enrollment pathways in South Texas (Saenz, Cortez, Martinez, Ponjuan, & Valle, 2015). School leaders in the region carefully consider the unique needs of students along the border. They demonstrate a spectrum of leadership approaches to ensure students have full access to higher education opportunities (Martinez, Valle, Cortez, Ponjuan, & Saenz, 2018). Specifically, the goal is to increase affordable access to college and postsecondary completion rates among students in historically underserved communities through dual enrollment (Martinez et al., 2018). As the number of students taking dual enrollment increases, more certified high school teachers who qualify as adjunct faculty are needed in South Texas. The dual credit high school teachers work hard to ensure the curriculum they teach is as rigorous as the classes offered at the college (Tensen, 2018), despite skepticism from critics who say otherwise.

Situation to Self

Researchers must always consider what they bring into the study, such as their personal history, views of themselves, and philosophical assumptions related to the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have been a teacher for eight years, a high school academic counselor for four

years, and currently a high school assistant principal. As a former high school counselor, I advised students to take dual enrollment courses. As a high school administrator, two of my many responsibilities include being an Advanced Placement (AP) Coordinator and I help oversee the Early College High School (ECHS) on campus. As an AP Coordinator, I work with 19 AP teachers on campus to ensure they are provided with the support and resources they need as they teach the rigorous classes to help students pass the AP exams. Four of the AP teachers I oversee are also dual credit teachers. I am also in charge of the entire AP exam administration towards the end of the school year.

As one of the two ECHS administrators, where the model is a school within a school, I submit the yearly application form to Texas Education Agency (TEA) to ensure we are a designated ECHS the following school year. I recruit potential ECHS students from middle school and work with the ECHS counselor to ensure the students take and pass their college readiness exam called the Texas Success Initiative (TSI). Passing the TSI exam is the main criterion for students to take dual credit courses. Moreover, I ensure that we follow the ECHS access, outcome, and attainment measures set by TEA. Furthermore, I work with dual enrollment representatives from our partner community college to comply with their expectations.

My being an academic counselor in the past and my current role of overseeing the advanced academics at my campus, both the AP program and Early College, make me uniquely qualified to understand the dual enrollment process in our area. I understand dual enrollment from the K-12 sector perspective and higher education. Over the years, I am aware of the differences between the two educational sectors. I recognized the incongruity between the two sectors regarding their academic histories, philosophies, and governance. I also recognize the

congruence between the two sectors, most notably to help many low-income students obtain college credits and motivate them to further their education after high school. The consonance and dissonance between the higher education and the secondary school sector piqued my interest in conducting a study into the instructional experiences of our dual enrollment teachers and how they are navigating the two educational institutions where they work. This research informs high school administrators and higher education leaders how to improve dual enrollment partnerships and support for dual credit teachers.

My professional experiences with the dual credit program in our school and a philosophical assumption led to the research choice. I believe that high school teachers teaching dual credit at the high school can make a difference in the lives of many students. Knowledge learned from years of studying and many experiences as a counselor and administrator in charge of dual credit impacted my confidence in the high school teachers' ability to influence students positively. As a self-proclaimed lifelong learner, I believe there is more knowledge out there waiting to be discovered about dual credit teachers. This belief may have an impact on my epistemological stance in this research. Furthermore, dual credit teachers can bring multiple identities to the construction of their world. Lincoln (1997) pointed out the existence of a "polyphonic chorus of author/selves, subjects, and participants, audiences and texts" (p. 38).

Inseparable to this belief is an ontological assumption that there are multiple perspectives of reality based on personal experiences (Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015). Individuals create their own perceived reality (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher, I examined the nature of the participants' realities and reported their experiences as dual credit high school instructors navigating both the secondary and higher education sectors.

Axiological lens that potentially influenced this research are values that guide my perceptions and actions. Every effort was made to make the study neutral and not allow personal matters to shape the research. Bracketing was implemented with fidelity to ensure values and preconceptions do not taint the research process.

Constructivism was the research paradigm that helped shape the study. Constructivism allows individuals to come up with multiple meanings to the same lived experience (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The basic principles of how dual credit teachers' realities are socially constructed were analyzed. The subjective meanings of the participants' experiences are at the heart of the research.

Problem Statement

Research indicates that the exponential growth in the number of students participating in the dual enrollment program results in the increasing demand for more instructors. Dual enrollment can be taught by college faculty (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016) or high school teachers who have the required credentials, such as a master's degree in the content area or a master's degree with at least 18 credits in the dual credit content area to be taught (Piontek et al., 2016). The majority of high school students who participated in the dual enrollment program this past decade took their courses at their high school campus (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019) because it is less intimidating, convenient (Pierce, 2017; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016) and were provided the appropriate support (Barnett et al., 2015; Ferguson et al., 2015). School districts offer many incentives such as professional development funds, loan forgiveness to obtain credentials (Horn et al., 2016), or a stipend of \$1500 per semester (Hooker, 2018) to meet the increasing demand for high school teachers who can teach dual credit courses. Despite these incentives, there is currently a shortage of qualified high school teachers that "threatens to derail

dual enrollment” (Hooker, 2019, p. 3), which causes frustration among high school administrators (Scheffel et al., 2015).

The literature on high school dual enrollment includes concerns on academic rigor provided by high school teachers (Ferguson et al., 2015; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017; Priebe, 2016) and their lack of autonomy in delivering course content and methods (McWain, 2018) as they straddle both worlds of work: the high school and the post-secondary education. The problem of the research study was the lack of or minimal interest to teach or continue teaching dual enrollment. There is surprisingly little research on high school teachers teaching dual enrollment to understand their experiences that may help high school and post-secondary administrators improve DE policies and address the dual credit teacher shortage.

Many studies done on dual enrollment were to (a) determine the impact of dual credit participation on postsecondary attainment (Blackenberger et al., 2017; D’Anna et al., 2019; Grubb et al., 2017; Lawrence & King, 2019), (b) assess dual-enrolled students’ college readiness compared to nonparticipants (An & Taylor, 2015), (c) examine how dual credit policies influence college access and completion (Taylor, 2015), (d) investigate how dual credit programs are implemented in Kentucky school districts (Piontek et al., 2016), and (e) explore the experiences of high school students participating in DE (Azimzadeh, Koch, & Rollins, 2015; Lile et al., 2018).

Other research studies conducted on dual enrollment were to (a) compare DE students’ motivations (Dare, Dare, & Nowicki, 2017), (b) determine the impact of online, inquiry, and mentor-based laboratory on students taking dual credit Biology courses (Desy, Adams, Mourad, & Peterson, 2018), (c) examine dual enrollment achievement in various learning environments (Arnold, Knight, & Flora, 2017), and (d) investigate dual credit participation rates (Holten &

Pierson, 2016). Furthermore, other studies on dual enrollment aimed to (a) evaluate dual credit policies nationwide (Taylor et al., 2015), (b) analyze secondary teachers' experiences in implementing inquiry pedagogy in Algebra (Staats & Laster, 2018), (c) identify challenges to teachers' academic freedom for English teachers (McWain, 2018), and (d) examine how school leaders approach the task of establishing dual enrollment opportunities for underserved students in South Texas (Martinez et al., 2018). Although dual enrollment appears to have been well researched by empirical studies, only one recent study was found that examined and discussed secondary teachers' experiences teaching dual credit courses at the high school campus.

Duncheon and Relles (2020) explored the complexities of dual credit implementation at the high school. However, the current research study is more comprehensive. It gives the dual credit high school teachers in South Texas a voice, and their stories contributed to the body of literature on dual credit.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The high school teachers are employed by the school district full-time and are currently teaching students taking dual enrollment classes that count for both high school and college credit. At this stage of the research, the experiences of the high school teachers were a result of their direct participation as dual credit faculty at their home campus. Specifically, the study described the experiences of dual credit high school teachers as they navigated both worlds of their work: the high school and post-secondary institution for which they are affiliated as adjunct faculty. The theory guiding this study was the social cognitive theory, which highlighted human social agency's evolution and exercise. The theory,

first introduced by Albert Bandura, examines human capacity to exercise control over the nature of one's life and focuses on an individual's ability to produce desired results and preclude unfavorable ones (Bandura, 2001). As experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses were explored, sources of teacher efficacy, as part of the social cognitive theory, were identified. Performance outcome, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states were four sources of efficacy beliefs for the dual credit teachers. Secondary school-university partnership and provision of support to adjunct faculty by high school educational leaders were among the study's implications.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because most dual enrollment courses are taught in high school campuses by credentialed high school teachers instead of post-secondary institutions. High school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses are critical in providing opportunities and support for many high school students, especially the ones in ECHS (Saenz & Combs, 2015).

Empirical Significance

No known studies to date have been conducted to examine the experiences and the critical role that the South Texas high school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses play as they straddle the two worlds of their work: both the high school and college level. Related studies that exist examined leadership styles as a predictor of career readiness in Early College High School students (Villarreal, Montoya, Duncan, & Gergen, 2018) and school leaders' approaches in maintaining dual enrollment opportunities in South Texas (Martinez et al., 2018). These studies were relevant because high school administrators' support of dual credit teachers is imperative. School administrators, however, focus their attention on increasing student

achievement as measured by factors such as standardized tests, student attendance, promotion rates, and graduation rates as schools are rated annually based on these (Mercer, 2016).

Administration focuses its attention on the teachers who teach End-of-Course (EOC) classes by providing instructional coaching specific to exam preparation (Welton & Williams, 2015). With increased accountability pressures on school administrators, more of their time is allocated to additional testing and data analysis with EOC teachers as they serve the role of instructional coaches (Kane & Rosenquist, 2019). School administrators, however, are encouraged to look at the bigger picture beyond high-stakes testing that counts for school accountability (Snyder, 2015). Results of the study contributed to the field of research as it provides evidence that support from high school administrators is imperative to enhance the teachers' efficacy in teaching high school students taking dual credit courses.

Theoretical Significance

Social cognitive theory has been used extensively in health promotion (Bandura, 1997), information science research (Middleton, Hail, & Raeside, 2019), and education. Studies in education use social cognitive theory as a framework; however, they focus on students' learning (Inda-Caro, Rodriguez-Menendez, & Pena-Calvo, 2016; Lu & Lien, 2020). This study of dual credit high school teachers' experiences is unique because it focuses on the learning and experiences of adults, teaching students motivated to earn a high school diploma and college credits. The high school teachers who instruct dual credit courses in South Texas play a critical role in motivating students who would otherwise not go to college to pursue post-secondary education.

The study provided an understanding of the teachers' efficacy in teaching dual credit courses to underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students in South Texas public

schools. The teachers' sources of self-efficacy beliefs contributed to the field of research on social cognitive theory. Furthermore, the study described the influence of the dual credit high school teachers' experiences, the support provided by educational leaders or lack thereof, and other factors on individual teacher's behaviors.

Practical Significance

The examination of experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses provided information and guidance for school administrators on how to provide support for the DE teachers, given administrators are responsible for any decisions made regarding dual credit program at the high school level (Hanson et al., 2015). Provision of support to DE teachers, so they may increase academic rigor in dual courses, which is equivalent to the courses taught at the post-secondary institutions, is imperative. Moreover, the study's findings may improve collaboration between the secondary institutions and the partnering college as the partnership is vital in the success of dual credit programs (Taylor et al., 2015). To enhance collaboration between high school and post-secondary institutions and increase DE course quality, obtaining feedback from the faculty is imperative (Taylor et al., 2015).

This qualitative study sought to improve the dual credit program as high school teachers' feedback revealed what their experiences are like teaching dual credit courses at the high school campus while playing an adjunct faculty role. The information revealed in the study is critical as legislative policymakers, school district leaders, school administrators, and college program coordinators cultivate a culture that promotes dual enrollment and makes decisions regarding dual enrollment courses taught at the high school level.

Research Questions

Research questions represent the different components of the inquiry that the researcher wants to explore (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). As such, the phenomenon of this study will be explored through questions that may reveal information that describe the “meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences” of the participants of the study (Patton, 2015, p. 98). Those guiding questions are:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas?

This question provided breadth to the study, which allowed me to look at the holistic experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. In addition, this question enabled me to be clear about the general domain that is of utmost interest in this study without limiting my vision (Miles et al., 2014). The following sub-research questions were addressed in this study:

Research Question 1

How do dual-credit high school teachers experience their dual responsibilities as secondary school teachers and higher education teachers?

This question provided an opportunity for high school teachers to voice out their experiences in teaching dual credit courses at the high school campus while having to abide by the regulations, practices, and policies of secondary and postsecondary institutions. Dual enrollment teachers teaching general education courses are expected to teach a curriculum that is at least rigorous, if not more stringent than the general education courses taught at the college campus (Ferguson et al., 2015). At the same time, dual credit teachers are expected to teach standards that will help high school students pass state-mandated tests. By understanding the

experiences of these teachers, targeted support from high school administrators, as well as department chairs, were discussed so DE high teachers can meet the needs of students taking dual credit courses.

Research Question 2

What experiences influence dual credit teachers' performance and sense of efficacy in instructing dual enrollment courses at the high school site?

When the above question was responded to, particularly by foregrounding the experiences of high school teachers to determine their ability to instruct dual enrollment courses, it generated sources of efficacy upon which the teachers drew from to ensure quality instruction was provided to DE students. Efficacy, which is a derivative of social cognitive theory, was used to generate the question. The study aimed to explore high school teachers' experiences and their competencies to make a difference in high school students taking DE courses. During the study, it was predicted that the need for ongoing training to improve instruction might surface. Dual enrollment teachers from the high school participate in professional development opportunities such as learning management system, integrating technology into the classroom, and engaging students in specific academic discipline activities to enhance their dual enrollment courses (Hanson et al., 2015).

Research Question 3

How do high school teachers instructing dual credit courses describe the experience of learning and improving their instructional practices through collaboration with peers and faculty counterparts in post-secondary institutions, professional development, and targeted support from school administrators?

The question aimed to generate responses that identified current practices of high school teachers and faculty from the community college, professional development, and the type of support needed by high school teachers teaching DE courses. The question aimed to generate responses that identified the support needed by high school teachers teaching DE courses. Positive support provided to teachers in their daily teaching endeavors may raise their sense of efficacy (Moosa & Shareefa, 2019). Self-efficacy, a subset of Bandura's social cognitive theory, is vital in tackling goals and challenges. The support to DE teachers may emanate from the secondary institution educational leaders and the partner university. Adjunct faculty in a study to identify resource needs in a dual enrollment course revealed conditions beyond the scope of the partnering university (Swafford & Waller, 2018). Responses from participants guided the support needed both from the high school and partner university's administration. Moreover, it is essential to improve the alignment of DE policies, performance tasks, and teacher training between high school and higher education (Fukuda & Hopper-Moore, 2016).

Definitions

1. *Career readiness*- Possession of skills necessary for workforce success (Malin et al., 2017).
2. *College readiness*- the state of being academically prepared for postsecondary education, as measured through standardized test scores, course completion, and grade point average (An & Taylor, 2015)
3. *Comprehensive dual credit*- A series of courses designed to introduce students to academic rigor in their last two years of high school (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016)
4. *Dually enrolled*- High school students who take courses at two locations (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016)

5. *Dual enrollment*- A college-level course that high school students can take for high school and college credit. It is also referred to as dual credit or concurrent enrollment (An & Taylor, 2015).
6. *Enhanced Comprehensive dual credit*- courses are part of a complete curriculum of only dual credit courses that offer support services (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016).
7. *First-Generation student*- Students for whom neither parent has a 4-year degree (Tibbetts, Priniski, Hecht, Borman, & Harackiewicz, 2018).
8. *Pedagogy*- The art and science of teaching students, often used by K-12 teachers (Ozuah, 2016)
9. *Self-efficacy*- According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy relates to the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment” (p. 3).
10. *Singleton dual credit*- Tobolowsky and Allen (2016) describe this as an individual elective course intended to introduce high school students to the rigor of college and provides students an opportunity to earn college credit.
11. *Social cognitive theory*- The premise of the theory is that an individual can control his or her actions; however, a reciprocal relationship exists between the individual's behavior, the environment, and one’s cognition (Bandura, 1997).
12. *Teacher efficacy*- the teacher’s belief in his/her ability to implement instructional and learning processes (Bandura, 1997).

Summary

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. Dual credit courses that high school students and a few middle schoolers take could provide them college credit hours and high school credits. All college credits are usually earned by students while never leaving their home campus as high school and college credit courses are taught by high school teachers. These teachers become adjunct faculty for a college. This research studied the lived experiences of the high school teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school site. There was a need to study the lived experiences of dual credit high school instructors because of the absence of qualitative research describing the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas.

Although dual enrollment appears to have been well researched by empirical studies, research has not been conducted to examine and discuss the experiences of secondary teachers teaching dual credit courses at the high school campuses in South Texas. Educational leaders are not familiar with the challenges and needs of their high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. The study may provide a basis for support to high school dual credit teachers, both from the college partner and the high school administrators. Investigating the problem sought to uphold the purpose of the study, which was to describe the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A college education is critical in today's competitive and contemporary society (Barra & Zotti, 2017; Waryoba, 2017). Possession of a high school diploma is "no longer sufficient for economic success for economic success, both individually and for our nation" (Karp, 2015, p. 104). Individuals with college degrees are more likely to be employable because their education signals productive capacity and desirable qualities to potential employers (Horowitz, 2018). In the United States, the labor market demands more highly educated and trained workers (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016). The employment rate in the year 2016 was higher for people with higher levels of educational attainment than those with lower levels of educational attainment (McFarland et al., 2017). The promise of future earning power and financial stability that a college degree has to offer increased dramatically in the last part of the twentieth century (Smythe, 2019). Beyond the monetary returns a college education can offer, there are social and community benefits. College graduates tend to be more psychologically healthy, are engaged in educational activities with their offspring, and take on community outreach projects compared to high school graduates (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016).

As a result of post-secondary education's economic and social benefits, there has been a nationwide drive for college access and attainment for students in the United States (Jones, 2018; Kim, McVee, & Faith, 2019). Initiatives to help students transition to college have been implemented for decades. These initiatives were fueled by fewer students earning postsecondary degrees because 37 % of high school graduates who matriculate to college leave after two years (Bailey, Hughes, & Karp, 2003). The transition from high school to college has been a challenge for many students due to a lack of preparation for college-level coursework (Callan, Finney,

Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006). Therefore, many states enacted legislation to provide and maintain dual credit opportunities to help high school students pursue, persist, and succeed in postsecondary education (Holten & Pierson, 2016).

Dual enrollment was initially created for high-ability students to realize their potential through educational acceleration (Assouline, Colangelo, & VanTassel-Baska, 2015). However, dual enrollment was later offered to all eligible students based on specific criteria to expand college readiness among high school students. Dual enrollment courses provide high school students an opportunity to earn both high school and college credits for the same course. The dual enrollment courses can be taught at the postsecondary institution through distance education or at the high school campus. College professors teach dual enrollment courses taught at the postsecondary institution and through distance learning. High school teachers who meet the credentials of the partner college or university to be adjunct faculty teach dual enrollment courses at the high school site.

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school adjunct faculty teaching dual credit courses in South Texas. The literature review in this chapter examines four areas of related research. The first section provides a theoretical framework related to the study. The theory will be described and explained how it relates to the topic of study. The second section provides a review of the high school to the college transition process. The third section focuses on the dual enrollment program. The historical context, policies, and effectiveness of the dual enrollment program will be explored. The section also examines Early College High School, which is a major driving force of dual enrollment. The fourth section pertains to secondary and postsecondary partnerships and organizational support provided to the dual enrollment program. Additionally,

the literature review exposes a void of qualitative research conducted on high school teachers teaching dual credit courses, which creates an opportunity for additional contributions to be made in the field of dual credit programs.

Theoretical Framework

This study was theoretically guided by social cognitive theory (SCT). The experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses were viewed through social cognitive theory. In the discussion of social cognitive theory, the origination and major theorist of each is described. This framework is followed by a discussion of how the theory is related to the study.

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura introduced the social learning theory in the 1960s. The social learning theory developed into the social cognitive theory in 1986 and postulates that there is a dynamic, reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) emphasized five interrelated human capabilities: symbolizing capability, forethought, vicarious capability, self-regulatory capability, and self-reflective capability. The self-reflective capability allows individuals to reflect on what they have done and what they can do (Morris, Usher, & Chen, 2017). This self-reflection can have a profound effect on an individual's performance. Bandura (1997) indicated that individuals reflect on and evaluate their efficacy by interpreting information from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological and affective states.

Enactive mastery experiences refer to an individual's past direct experiences of performance attainment and are an essential self-efficacy source (Bandura, 1997). Individuals who previously experienced success in achieving goals and endeavors are more than likely to repeat it. On the other hand, failure to master a specific task will undermine their efficacy belief.

Vicarious experiences are the second source of self-efficacy and come from observation of people who are considered role models. Bandura (1997) noted that novel vicarious experiences are potent in the development of self-efficacy. Moreover, when the role model is perceived as similar to the individual and when the role model openly struggles and overcomes obstacles, an individual's self-efficacy is enhanced (Kitsantas, Zimmerman, & Cleary, 2000).

Social persuasions are the third source of information in the development of self-efficacy. It refers to the impact that evaluative feedback of influential people may have on an individual's efficacy beliefs (Morris et al., 2017). Influential people, such as teachers or supervisors, can strengthen individuals' belief that they have what it takes to succeed. Praise, encouragement, and sincere messages can have a powerful effect in developing one's efficacy (Shunk, 2011). Physiological and affective states are the fourth source that can influence self-efficacy. An individual's state of well-being, such as stress, fatigue, anxiety, and mood, can affect one's interpretation (Morris et al., 2017). Bandura (1997) posited that a moderate level of affective states leads to optimal performance.

The four active sources of efficacy expectations affect the experiences of teachers teaching dual credit courses. Teachers' mastery experiences, which is the most effective source of efficacy (Blonder & Rap, 2017a; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Zakeri et al., 2016), may motivate teachers to continue using effective instructional strategies with dual enrollment students. An example of an effective instructional strategy may be the use of differentiated instruction. Goddard and Kim (2018) indicated that "teachers' use of differentiated instruction might provide mastery experiences that could lead to enhanced teaching efficacy" (p. 7). High school dual credit teachers working collaboratively with each other and higher education faculty counterparts may enhance their implementation of instructional strategies. Collaboration leads to increased

self-efficacy because when “teachers are working collaboratively on instructional practices, their mastery experiences may be affected by their collaborative work, thus increasing their level of teaching efficacy” (Goddard & Kim, 2018, p. 3).

Dual credit teachers’ vicarious experiences may be developed and enhanced through collaboration with other adjunct faculty on campus and at the postsecondary institution. Collective efficacy is enhanced when the group observes successful performances of colleagues (Zakeri et al., 2016). High school dual credit teachers and their college faculty counterparts may observe each other teach and help peers with their goals. Goddard and Kim (2018) emphasized that “when teachers work together, they are likely to experience positive outcomes that may lead to improved morale and teacher efficacy” (p. 2). School administrators from secondary school and post-secondary institutions can facilitate collaboration between and among dual credit teachers by providing them time intended for working together. The provision of opportunities for teachers to work together helps teachers’ personal and professional growth and efficacy (Goddard & Kim, 2018). K-12 partnerships and professional development sponsored by the partner post-secondary institution and the high school may also enhance the dual credit high school teachers’ vicarious experiences.

Social persuasion that may come from the support and feedback from school administrators can positively impact the high school teachers’ efficacy. It may also have a contradictory effect, as it affects the teachers’ emotional states. The impact of persuasion on an individual is highly dependent on the credibility, trustworthiness, and expertise of the persuader (Zakeri et al., 2016). A dual-credit high school teacher will respond positively to an administrator who has established credibility. Moreover, high school administrators can positively impact teacher efficacy during the evaluation process if the words they use to describe

teachers' performance accurately represent the experience at hand (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). Teachers who receive specific (not vague) constructive feedback on improving their lessons or enhancing their student engagement during the teacher evaluation process may impact their efficacy (Donaldson & Papay, 2015). Furthermore, if teachers receive minimal feedback regarding their teaching practices from supervisors, their self-efficacy is more than likely to dwindle (Phan & Locke, 2015).

Social persuasion also involves performance feedback (Zakeri et al., 2016), either from a colleague, sharing instructional strategies with fellow teachers, and advice from peers (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). High school teachers teaching dual credit and are considered adjunct faculty to a college, even though they belong to different departments, seek advice from each other. This classification is essential because teachers' social networks help shape their efficacy beliefs through the access of information and peer support (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010). Dual credit high school teachers must take the time to support each other. Social persuasion does not operate simply via the existence or provision of assistance and aid from peers. It also “depends on whether those peers take the time and effort needed to persuade the advice seeker that they can be successful in the classroom” (Siciliano, 2016, p. 251).

Physiological feedback or emotional arousal is another source of efficacy for dual credit high school teachers. Excitement or anxiety can impact their feeling of mastery or inadequacy (Zakeri et al., 2016). Challenges that come with teaching dual credit courses at the high school level may affect teachers' efficacy. For example, through their words and actions during the evaluation process, administrators may inhibit or enhance teachers' sense of self-efficacy by impacting teachers' emotional state (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). Moreover, when teachers

feel that they are subpar to their college faculty counterparts, this may cause emotional stress. On the contrary, if teachers experience a sense of belongingness, this may impact their efficacy. Teachers with high personal efficacy are more than likely to contribute to positive collective efficacy as they attribute a sense of belongingness to the group (Zakeri et al., 2016).

SCT is an approach to understanding human emotion, cognition, and motivation, which assumes that individuals are active agents in shaping their environment (Bandura, 1986). As such, high school teachers are expected and may even expect themselves to make a difference in the lives of students who are taking dual enrollment courses. High school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses meet specific credentials to be considered adjunct faculty, including minimal requirements of the regional accrediting association (Texas Education Agency, 2020). Credentialed high school teachers teaching dual credit courses are therefore capable of performing and completing tasks confidently. This support enhances the self-efficacy of teachers. Having self-efficacy, which is the central tenet of SCT, self-efficacy is crucial. Self-efficacy is described as an optimistic self-belief to perform successful tasks specified at the organizational level, expend more considerable effort, and tenacity in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997; Shunk, 2011).

Applied to the current study, SCT and its derivative self-efficacy theory provided a framework to understand how dual credit teachers viewed their capabilities to impact students taking dual credit courses at the high school level. Dual credit teachers who work hard to ensure the curriculum taught are as rigorous as entry-level college classes can make the teachers feel proud that their students have earned their college credit (Tensen, 2018). Furthermore, dual credit high school teachers who think that their training can enhance their ability to teach dual credit courses may develop feelings of consistency and belonging with community college

faculty (Hanson et al., 2015). This relationship, along with competence, may influence teacher efficacy and job satisfaction for high school dual credit teachers. Teacher efficacy increases job satisfaction (Cevik, 2017).

Related Literature

As social cognitive theory provided a theoretical framework for this study, the related literature offered a context for the topic of dual-credit high school teachers. The related literature set the background on what has already been investigated about dual enrollment and documented how the study added to the existing literature. Dual enrollment program policies, effectiveness, and approaches have been examined to establish a foundation for the topic. Additionally, the literature review addressed a gap in current knowledge regarding the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit in South Texas, which created an opportunity to contribute to the field.

High School to College Transition

The pursuit of postsecondary education for high school students is becoming a national priority and expectation in today's contemporary society. In the U.S, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in December 2015, has a college and career readiness component that aims to prepare K-12 students to transition to college and employment (Malin et al., 2017). As a result of ESSA, more students graduate from high school and attend college (U.S. Department of Education, n. d.). Even before ESSA, there was a steady increase in high school graduates matriculating in college. Between 2000 and 2015, the total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 30 percent (McFarland et al., 2017). However, most students who matriculate are from high-income families (McFarland et al., 2017; Taylor, 2015).

Additionally, research suggests that first-generation students enroll in college at significantly lower rates than their counterparts (Goodwin, Li, Broda, Johnson, & Schneider, 2016). When disaggregated by race, the college enrollment rate was higher for Asian and White young adults than Black and Hispanics in the year between 2000 and 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Taylor (2015) argued that postsecondary educational opportunities in the United States for different groups of students have been and continue to be unequal.

Despite the reported inequities in college access, the number of high school students entering postsecondary education is expected to continue to climb. By 2026, it is predicted that the total undergraduate enrollment will increase to 19.3 million students (McFarland et al., 2017). The trend in college access and success is positive, but many students still do not make it through college (Taylor & Yan, 2018). This trend is supported by a 59 percent completion rate for students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at a 4-year degree-granting institution in fall 2009 and only 29 percent for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who began pursuing a certificate or associate degree in fall 2012 (McFarland et al., 2017).

Despite the successful college admission of high school graduates, they are still at risk of leaving college as they experience high levels of anxiety, are overwhelmed, and underprepared to meet transition challenges (Knoesen & Naude, 2018). Most students find the transition to college to be difficult because of increased workload, faster class pace, and minimal concern by college professors (Nair & Fisher, 2000). Additionally, students are acutely vulnerable during the first year of the first semester in college because they are not well prepared for the academic demands of the postsecondary institution (Hirsch, 2008; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Furthermore, difficulty adjusting to university experience or perhaps lack of social belonging may be factors of

retention. Research suggests that social belonging intervention is vital in preparing students for college life (Wolf, Perkins, Butler-Barnes, & Walker, 2017).

To support college access and students' transition into and through college, credit-based transition programs that provide college-level work in high school are being implemented (Barnett, Maclutsky, & Wagonlander, 2015; Martinez et al., 2018). Many types of transition-based programs and academic pathways exist, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Tech Prep, dual enrollment, bridge programs, and Early College and Middle College High Schools (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006). Along with Advanced Placement, dual enrollment is the most common, as evidenced by the increase in DE participation over the past decade (College Board, 2019; Durosko, 2019; Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). There is a growing body of evidence that dual enrollment is an effective strategy to support student transition to college (Taylor & Pretlow, 2015). Dual enrollment “provides an opportunity for students to transition seamlessly from high school to college” (An & Taylor, 2015, p. 5). The increase in DE enrollment has a positive effect on students because “dual enrollment provides a transitional period in which students learn normative rules and behaviors of what it means to be a college student” (An, 2015, p. 102). This transitional period is critical to historically disadvantaged students.

Studies suggest that dual enrollment programs have positive outcomes for historically and contemporaneously marginalized and disenfranchised students, including racial/ethnic minorities, students of low socioeconomic status, and female students (An, 2015; Ganzert, 2012; Smith, 2014). This may partly be a reason for the exponential growth of students from diverse backgrounds participating in dual enrollment while in high school (Martinez et al., 2018). Despite the claim that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and Hispanic/Latino

students are less likely to participate in dual credit courses than their counterparts (Holten & Pierson, 2016). The likelihood underrepresented students will matriculate in college increases because they participated in dual enrollment courses (Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009).

Dual Enrollment Program

Dual enrollment is also referred to by many as concurrent enrollment or dual credit. Generic terms such as joint enrollment, accelerated learning options, or credit-based courses are also used to refer to dual enrollment (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). The dual enrollment program that many people are familiar with nowadays is different from when it started five decades ago.

History of dual enrollment. Syracuse University launched the first dual enrollment program called Project Advance in 1973 (Greenberg, 1989). The dual enrollment program was initially established to provide an academic challenge to high-achieving high school students. The courses offered were biology, calculus, chemistry, English, sociology, psychology, and computer engineering (Greenberg, 1989). High school teachers who have undergone summer training sponsored by Syracuse University taught dual enrollment courses. Each of the high school courses was offered as year-long courses. The students were required to take an exam at the end of the academic year to receive college credit (Greenberg, 1989). Despite the rigor provided in the dual enrollment courses, the issue of transferability became an issue. Wilbur and LaFay (1978) found that dual credits did not transfer to higher education for about 10% of the students, and 15% received credit but not an exemption from the course. These statistics may represent why dual enrollment did not gain popularity until the 1980s (Nelson & Waltz, 2019).

Minnesota launched the first statewide dual enrollment initiative in the 1980s, followed by three other states: Arkansas, Virginia, and Utah (Loveland, 2017). Many more states in the U.S. have started the DE program since. Alaska remains to be the only state without a statewide

dual enrollment program (Education Commission of the States, 2016). Despite the many challenges in initiating and maintaining the dual enrollment program in each state, it has gained popularity because of the many benefits DE has to offer. Furthermore, dual enrollment is particularly prominent in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as part of the College and Career Readiness policy (Malin et al., 2017). The fact that DE can now be funded by grants in Titles I, II, III, and IV (Bird & Niebling, 2019), the expansion of DE is inevitable. With the expansion of dual credit programs, a more diverse group of students are provided opportunities to take DE courses (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). DE is offered to students who are in the middle or low achieving group. Underrepresented groups are also able to take advantage of the DE courses. As more students from diverse backgrounds are taking DE courses, and the program continues to expand, DE policies in different states are examined.

Dual enrollment policies. State policies play a critical role in maintaining the quality of dual credit programs (Taylor et al., 2015). Policies also help institutionalize practice (Education Commission of the States, 2019). The Education Commission of the States claimed that 47 states plus the District of Columbia had adopted a standard statewide dual enrollment policy regarding access, qualifications, and funding (Zinth, 2015). However, only 10 require their public high schools and eligible postsecondary institutions to offer DE, and 28 states plus the District of Columbia allow private schools and tribal colleges to offer DE (Education Commission of the States, 2016). In addition, each state has different policies and program titles regarding dual enrollment (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019).

The differences in policies regarding DE-related issues among the states nationwide may be due to the tradition of offering dual enrollment courses initiated and operated by a local community college and the nearby school district (Taylor et al., 2015). For example, three states,

such as New York, New Hampshire, and Alaska, leave dual enrollment policies up to the local school districts and postsecondary institutions (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). In other states, this practice transpired without any clear guidelines or policies; therefore, dual enrollment was implemented in divergent and disparate manners (Nelson & Waltz, 2019; Taylor et al., 2015). As a result, many issues for the dual enrollment program emerged.

The lack of uniform practices/policies regarding the quality of instruction, lack of national standards regarding instructor eligibility (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016), and lack of consensus on who may participate in DE (Nelson & Waltz, 2019) are problematic issues for dual enrollment. Regarding instructor eligibility, 17 states have a policy requiring high school teachers to have a master's degree in a specific discipline. In comparison, 18 states had a policy that requires instructors to have specific courses (Taylor et al., 2015). Also, certain states may have policies requiring high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses to meet additional criteria such as (a) supplemental training, (b) adjunct faculty status with a partner community college, or (c) other measures in place to ensure the quality of DE courses taught at the high school is equivalent to the courses taught at the postsecondary institution (Education Commission of the States, 2020).

Regarding student eligibility, differences exist in many states. For example, in 22 states, students must be in 11th grade to participate in DE, whereas, in several states, students could enroll in their freshman or sophomore year (Hansen, Jackson, McInelly, & Eggett, 2015; Jones, 2018). However, states can easily change their policies. For example, in 2015-2016, through House Bill 505, the state of Texas reversed the policy regulation where any students, regardless of grade level, may take a DE course (Jones, 2018). In a 2016 legislative session, Idaho passed House Bill 458, which offered dual enrollment courses through the Fast Forward Program to

students in grades 7-12 (Holten & Pierson, 2016). In Ohio, the College Credit Plus, which provides secondary students the opportunity to earn at least 15 college credits by the time they graduate in high school, allows students to take dual-credit courses starting in grade seven (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019). This rule can be problematic as it creates potential legal challenges that may require school districts to pursue protection to ensure the safety of minor students (Nelson & Waltz, 2019).

States must also be cognizant about policies that address equity gaps, such as eligibility, transportation, and funding because if they are designed correctly or incorrectly, these policies may serve as barriers to DE participation for low income, disadvantaged students (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012; Karp, 2015). Fortunately, a current national trend provides greater access to dual enrollment programs for disadvantaged, first-generation, and middle-achieving students (Community College Research Center, 2012). The movement may be due to policies enacted by certain states. For example, in Texas, House Bill 1 mandates that high schools provide college pathways that enable students to earn college credits while they are in high school (Texas Education Agency, 2006). HB 1 provides \$275 per student for dual enrollment participation to support individual achievement for college readiness standards (Jones, 2018). Since the enactment of HB in 2006, dual enrollment in Texas increased by 15,000 students between the Fall of 2007 and Fall of 2008, and the trend continues (Texas Higher Coordinating Board, n.d.)

While many states do not have policies regarding their dual enrollment programs, other states, such as Minnesota, have policies that provided a framework for offering dual enrollment courses to high school students (Taylor et al., 2015). As the expansion of dual credit programs became the priority in Idaho, policies regarding DE funding were enacted (Holten & Pierson,

2016). In other states, as dual enrollment grew, so were the policies that guided the program. For example, efforts to regulate dual enrollment quality were approached by creating the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP) and individual state policies. NACEP is a voluntary organization that regulates accreditation status to high school and college partnerships to ensure they meet quality standards (Taylor et al., 2015). It was founded in 1999 by key leaders to ensure dual credit courses, most notably those taught by high school teachers, provide rigor and are comparable to courses taught at the college campus (Scheffel, McLemore, & Lowe, 2015). Implementation of standards related to curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and evaluation are NACEP's primary concern (Scheffel et al., 2015).

Although some states require schools to strengthen their dual enrollment programs through NACEP accreditation, other states do not make this a requirement. As of May 2019, there are 112 concurrent enrollment programs in 23 states that are NACEP accredited (NACEP, n.d.). NACEP's accreditation standards include areas in curriculum, faculty, students, assessment, and program evaluation, policies, and practices to ensure that DE courses offered at the high school are consistent with the college courses offered at the college (Scheffel et al., 2015). The assumption is that the quality of students' experience in the dual credit program is more significant as they receive higher quality instruction in NACEP accredited schools. However, a study indicates no differences in the quality of dual credit programs offered at institutions that were and were not NACEP accredited (Taylor & Yan, 2018). This may be a reason why some states rely on their own to regulate their dual enrollment programs (Taylor et al., 2015) instead of going through NACEP accreditation. For example, Virginia's dual enrollment program is being operated under the Virginia Plan for Dual Enrollment (VPDE), which provides a centralized framework to dual enrollment policies (Pretlow & Patteson, 2015).

On the other hand, “Ohio lacks a central repository of information related to dual enrollment policy and procedures. This forces stakeholders to seek out bits and pieces of information from myriad sources” (Pretlow & Patteson, 2015, p. 22). Regional accreditation is an option for other states to ensure dual credit programs and course quality. This ensures that DE courses taught at the high schools follow high standards equitable to the course taught at the college campus (Taylor et al., 2015), which is just one of the areas that are considered in NACEP accreditation.

Although dual enrollment policies vary from state to state, when it comes to DE design features such as increasing rigor of high school curriculum, reducing the costs of college to students, and providing DE courses to college or high school campuses, most states are similar (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015). As dual enrollment programs continue to expand nationwide, community college leaders and school administrators need to consider establishing a general dual enrollment policy that addresses all relevant areas of dual enrollment and that ensures equity and DE quality for all students (Pretlow & Patteson, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). The success of dual enrollment programs depends on sound policies governing the program.

Dual enrollment effectiveness and challenges. The effectiveness of the dual enrollment program had been measured through the benefits that it offered to school stakeholders. Students who took dual credit courses in high school passed the end-of-course examinations in English, math, science, and social studies (Berger et al., 2014; Edmunds et al., 2017). Key findings of a study on dual credit programs in Texas, specifically at Houston Independent School District, indicate that a higher percentage of students who were enrolled in dual credit courses during the 2018-2019 school year passed the 2019 STAAR Algebra 1, Biology, English 1, English II, and U.S. History EOC assessments, compared to their peers who were not enrolled in any dual credit

course (Houston Independent School District, 2019). Aside from the fact that dual credit enrollment was a positive predictor of students' performance on state-mandated tests, the opportunity to earn college credit through dual enrollment program had been shown to benefit students in increasing the number of students graduating from high schools (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Icel & Davis, 2018), being college-ready (An, 2013; An & Taylor, 2015), increasing the number of students who matriculate in college after high school graduation (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Houston Independent School District, 2019; Jones, 2018), and in increasing college completion rate (Blackenberger et al., 2017; D'Anna et al., 2019; Duroske, 2019; Kanny, 2015; Lile et al., 2018; Phelps & Chan, 2016; Taylor, 2015; Zinth & Barnett, 2018). The latter is especially significant for low-income and first-generation college students (Blackenberger et al., 2017; Giani et al., 2014) and low-achieving students (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015).

Participation in dual enrollment while in high school can positively impact the retention rate in college. Findings of a study suggested that participation in AP English, AP math, and dual enrollment increase first-year fall-to-fall college retention (Bowers & Foley, 2018). In the area of college completion rate, findings of another study indicated that students who took dual credit courses while in high school “finished a bachelor’s degree at a 28% rate compared to their non-dual credit peers who finished at a 19% rate” (Blackenberger et al., 2017, p. 260). Taylor (2015) found that high school students in Illinois who took dual credit at a community college completed college at a much higher rate compared to non-dual credit participating peers. This is in conjunction with the findings of a study that indicated students who accelerated outperformed their peers (McClarty, 2015). A study conducted on ECHS students showed the same positive

results for dual credit students, both for completion rate with their associates and bachelor's degrees (Edmunds et al., 2017).

However, it is to be noted that the completion rate for associate degrees is at a much higher rate than bachelor's degrees (Edmunds et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2017). Moreover, a study conducted in Texas reported a smaller positive effect on the completion rate for students of color and low-income students (Miller et al., 2017). The researchers hypothesized that this might be due to a lack of academic preparation for underrepresented students. Furthermore, the effect on graduation rate for institutions that accepted dual enrollment credits among incoming first-year students showed a positive 6-year graduation rate (Myers & Myers, 2017). However, the same study showed that the effect of accepting dual enrollment credits only positively affected the less selective institutions because it had the opposite effect with more selective colleges.

Nevertheless, participation in dual credit programs while in high school helped develop higher levels of academic motivation, more vigorous study habits, clearer college expectations, higher levels of engagement with college faculty, and academic knowledge and skills (An, 2015; Karp, 2012). Although participation in dual credit programs in general significantly impacts the completion of a college degree, results of a study indicated that students were less likely to complete an associate degree at the community college in which they participated in the DE program (Lawrence & King, 2019). The same study indicated that this may be because students enroll in universities after graduating from high school rather than enrolling in the local community college.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above of dual enrollment programs, DE also increased the academic rigor of high school curriculum, increased college accessibility, increased

levels of student motivation, higher GPA's, faster degree completion, and reduced the cost of college (An & Taylor, 2015; Duroske, 2019; Jones, 2018; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017; Loveland, 2017; Stein & Klosterman, 2019; Wang et al., 2015). For potential first-generation college students, taking DE courses provided a great deal of confidence within the students as it cultivated a college-centric perspective (Loveland, 2017). For students of color and low-income families, dual credit is promoted as a mechanism to reduce educational inequalities in college access (Kanny, 2015; Taylor, 2015). Moreover, high school students who took DE courses have been found to be less likely to be placed in remedial courses in college (An & Taylor, 2015; Grubb et al., 2017). This is significant because about 26 percent of students who matriculate in four-year colleges and over 50 percent of students in community colleges usually enroll in remedial courses (Malin & Hackmann, 2017a).

When dual enrollment courses are offered on college campuses, it provides students the university experience, which helped them transition easier into college (Lile et al., 2018). The transition period provided by dual enrollment improved students' persistence to college as they were already acclimated to the postsecondary environment (An, 2015; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017), and DE developed their college student identity that helped foster educational aspirations (Kanny, 2015). Furthermore, for students taking career and technical dual credit courses, DE prepared them for the workforce (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). Results of a study suggested that "both college and labor market success rates of dual credit students" can be substantially higher, especially for students who take CTE dual credit courses (Phelps & Chan, 2016, p. 31).

The many potential benefits of dual enrollment are the reason why the U.S. Department of Education announced in October 2015 through an experimental program to allow students to use Pell grants for funding dual enrollment courses (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Although there are many benefits, some students indicated many dual enrollment challenges. High pressure in performance, high stress, demanding schedule, and heavy workload are some of the DE challenges mentioned by participants of a study (Azimzadeh et al., 2015). In another study, students indicated three drawbacks of taking dual credit courses: negative impact of poor DE grades on the high school transcripts, negative interactions with others while students are taking DE courses on college campus, and minimal support system from the high school and community college (Kanny, 2015). Although providing a support system to dual enrollment students before and during participation in dual credit courses contributes to the success, especially to low and middle-achieving students (Barnett & Stamm, 2010), this is still an issue in most schools with dual credit programs.

Another challenge in dual enrollment, which students mostly worry about, is the transferability of dual enrollment credits (Horn et al., 2018). A typical response when the question arises regarding DE course transferability is: “It may depend on the class, the student’s major, whether they attend a two-year, four-year, public or private college, whether they enroll in college in-state or out of state, and what policies are in place” (Duroske, 2019, p. 56). While it may be true that institutions often approve DE courses for credit on a case-by-case basis, students must be informed of these caveats. Despite the challenges, including a limited support system, students concluded that participation in the DE program was still rewarding and beneficial (Azimzadeh et al., 2015; Kanny, 2015).

From the high school and higher education administrators’ perspectives, barriers and challenges of dual enrollment include the following: lack of credentialed instructors, cost of books to the student, difficulty transferring credit, difficulties in sharing information between schools and colleges, lack of scheduling alignment between schools and colleges, lack of interest

from students and parents, lack of transportation for students, too much paperwork (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017), inconsistencies in instructor qualifications, inadequate funding, lack of student readiness, and discrepancies in outcomes (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019; Priebe, 2016). Although “Perkins V will continue to support the growth of dual enrollment courses” (Perry, 2019, p. 17) nationwide, the cost is a significant challenge that affects the implementation of dual enrollment in several states (Pierce, 2017; Taylor & Pretlow, 2015; Zinth, 2015). Currently, there are varying approaches to financing dual enrollment programs (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019). Some states require individual school districts to shoulder the expenses of dual enrollment. In contrast, other states use state funds, individual parents, or mixed approaches to finance dual enrollment (Zinth, 2015). Funding dual enrollment programs can be expensive (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019), so most school districts rectify the situation by using their own high school teachers to teach the dual credit courses (Zinth, 2015).

Howley, Howley, Howley, and Duncan (2013) called the high school teachers “border crossers” (p. 92) as they straddle the college and high school border. Having certified high school teachers to teach dual credit courses is beneficial for both the school district and the teachers because it can save the school district money. The teachers’ teaching credentials make them more desirable for employment (Howley et al., 2013; Zinth, 2015). Despite the school district’s preference to use their own teachers to teach dual credit courses, this practice met criticism. There is a growing concern regarding the provision of appropriate rigor and depth required for college curriculum (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019). There is also apprehension about student readiness. There are concerns regarding high school students’ maturity and readiness for college curricula (Howley et al., 2013). Although taking dual credit courses is beneficial for some students, DE programs are forcing students to mature quickly, which “might inadvertently

cause students to miss out on key adolescent social, cultural, and age-appropriate experiences” (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019, p. 257).

Although dual credit is promoted to reduce educational inequalities in college access (Karp, 2015; Taylor, 2015), criticisms exist regarding the DE program's equity and quality. Many high schools nationwide are offering dual enrollment programs, but many still question the accessibility. Although 71% of high schools across the United States provide dual enrollment courses, access is not equitable for all students (Morgan, Zakhem, & Cooper, 2018). For example, 78% of schools with less than 20% of students of color offer the program, yet only 58% of schools with more than half of their enrolled students being of color provide the program (An, 2013). Moreover, several states have requirements for dual enrollment participation, therefore leaving most middle achievers ineligible to take dual credit courses (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019).

Zinth and Barnett (2018) argued that DE options could be expanded by using several standards such as test scores, grade point average, attendance, and other measures to identify potential DE students in hopes of broadening accessibility. Karp (2015) insisted that state policy can address all the equity gap. Aside from equitable accessibility, concerns also arise regarding dual enrollment courses' equitable quality with the courses offered at the postsecondary institutions. Since many of the dual enrollment courses are offered at the high school, taught by high school teachers who have adjunct faculty status with a community college, there are concerns about the DE course quality (Ferguson et al., 2015; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017; Priebe, 2016). This poses a problem for students who take dual enrollment courses. Due to the credit quality of dual enrollment courses, some institutions do not accept the credits (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Although findings of a study suggest that dual enrollment general education

courses taught at the high school were at least as rigorous if not more stringent than general education courses taught at the community college (Ferguson et al., 2015), credit transferability of dual enrollment courses remain an issue. This may significantly impact students taking dual enrollment courses.

Dual enrollment students. Students who are taking dual enrollment courses are provided opportunities to experience university life, explore individual interests, and engage in academic challenges beyond the scope of high school (Dare et al., 2017). Dual enrollment helps students gain confidence and self-efficacy, so they are more likely to enroll and graduate from college than non-participating students (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Since low-income students and first-generation college students have a lower likelihood of attaining a college degree (Cabrera, Terenzini, & Bernal, 2001), having adequate support for the students while they are in high school help tremendously. Dual enrollment had been instrumental in helping many students matriculate in college and obtain a college degree (Blackenberger et al., 2017; Lile et al., 2018; Taylor, 2015), most notably for low income and first-generation college students (Blackenberger et al., 2017; Giani et al., 2014).

Despite other options to earn college credits, students choose to take dual enrollment courses over Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs because it does not require successful completion of exams (Kolvoord, Keranen, & Rittenhouse, 2019; Stein & Klosterman, 2019). Dual enrollment credit is granted after students successfully complete the entire course. Moreover, unlike Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, dual enrollment formats target a wide range of students, not just those who are high achieving (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). On the other hand, dual enrollment programs have been critiqued more because, unlike AP, there is no standard quality mechanism that regulates DE. Criticism of

DE mainly pertains to the rigor of dual credit courses as they are not monitored for quality. However, most claims “are not empirically supported and based only on anecdotal evidence, yet there is a legitimate educational interest” on DE (Taylor & Yan, 2018, p. 3). Dual enrollment remains the second most popular college program nationally after the Advanced Placement program (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015).

Schools generally have academic eligibility requirements for high school student dual enrollment participation. Dual enrollment courses are typically offered in certain grade levels, have a minimum GPA, and sometimes students must pass college readiness exams (Scheffel et al., 2015; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). These requirements vary by state. Furthermore, states have varying regulations regarding the number of college credits that must be offered to high school students. For example, in Texas, school districts are mandated to implement a program that can provide students with an opportunity to earn the equivalent of or at least 12 semester credit hours of college credit in high school (Martinez et al., 2018). This type of requirement by the states and many other factors expands the dual enrollment program in schools. Along with the growing number of students taking dual enrollment courses is the need for more instructors to teach DE.

Dual enrollment faculty. Dual enrollment courses may be offered through distance education, at the college or university, or in a traditional high school setting (Priebe, 2016; Stein & Klosterman, 2019). Many students are also taking DE courses in unique settings such as Early College High Schools, which are either stand-alone ECHS campuses or a school within a school ECHS. Students in ECHS reported being in a school environment that felt like a family unit and having supportive teachers at the high school helped them achieve their goals (Adams, Williams, & Lewis, 2020). Students who took DE courses on college campuses report that their

experiences help increase maturity, improve time management skills, and a greater sense of efficacy in navigating the college environment (Burns & Lewis, 2000; Kanny, 2015).

Although being on campus has positive benefits, students who took DE courses at a community college reported negative aspects of their experiences, such as feeling judged or targeted for being high school students and a limited or lack of advising support (Kanny, 2015). Yet, the same study indicated that students who took DE courses taught by high school teachers on campus reported being college-ready, were more comfortable taking DE courses, felt proud of having been exposed to college courses before graduating from high school, and have more confidence in completing college-level work. However, the findings of another study suggested that high school students taking DE courses at the high school campus perceived themselves as just secondary students and were not yet at the same level as college students (Lile et al., 2018).

Regardless of where students take dual enrollment courses, the exponential growth of dual enrollment for the past two decades prompted a demand for more postsecondary education instructors. From fall 1995 to fall 2015, the number of full-time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 47 percent, while part-time faculty increased by 95 percent (McFarland et al., 2017). Instructors teaching dual enrollment courses can either be part-time or full-time faculty. Most part-time faculty teaching dual enrollment courses are certified high school teachers who have been dubbed as adjunct faculty by a community college or university. Despite the increase in the number of instructors teaching at post-secondary institutions, there remains a shortage of teachers to teach dual credit courses at the high school. There is a challenge in identifying college faculty willing to teach high school students or are interested in working with high school DE teacher counterparts (Scheffel et al., 2015). Students taking dual credit courses on college campuses indicated that college professors were skeptical,

if not averse to, teaching high school students, which is evident in their explicit remarks (Kanny, 2015). This may be one of the many reasons why DE students prefer taking dual credit courses at the high school campus.

About 80 percent of high school students who participated in dual enrollment programs this past decade took courses for postsecondary credit at their own high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Offering dual enrollment at the high school seems to be an option that can provide greater access for students because they do not have to travel to take dual credit courses at the college campus (Pierce, 2017). This preference for a dual credit environment is supported by the fact that only about 17 percent took their dual enrollment courses at a college campus, 8 percent took the courses online, and 6 percent took DE courses at a high school other than their own (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Students participating in dual credit programs may be opting to take their courses at the high school where they are at or on a college campus. Still, most colleges across the United States are increasing DE accessibility by offering distance education (Helmer, 2018).

Offering DE remote learning is especially significant when schools changed how they delivered instruction during the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, which the World Health Organization (WHO) declared in March 2019. Social distancing became a necessity that markedly changed traditional educational practices. The utilization of distance education to deliver post-secondary instruction became necessary (Iwai, 2020; Santi et al., 2020). As high school teachers teaching dual credit courses transitioned to distance education, they tried new ideas and explored new tools to connect with their students. Results of a study on teachers teaching college courses indicate their willingness, flexibility, multidimensionality, and ability to

provide interactive online learning (Terenko & Ogienko, 2020). Teachers were intentional in their technology integration to provide effective learning experiences for students (Poth, 2020).

As far as students' preference to take dual credit courses on a college campus instead of distance education or at the high school setting (pre and post coronavirus pandemic), being on a college campus offers them certain benefits. Being on a college campus can benefit high school students taking dual credit as it exposes them to a more authentic college experience (Pierce, 2017). However, many students' dual credit courses taught at the high school setting remain a preference by many students because it is less intimidating, and the location is convenient for students (Pierce, 2017; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Moreover, high school teachers who are staff members in the traditional high school setting and have adjunct status at the community college (Ferguson et al., 2015) can offer campus support services when needed. Academic and social supports can make “participation in dual enrolment a possibility for a broader range of students, including those who may need bolstering along the way (Barnett et al., 2015, p. 47).

Students who took dual credit courses on college campus report minimal support in ensuring they stay on track and navigate new challenges and norms of college-level courses (Kanny, 2015). However, a strong commitment of high school teachers to provide support for DE students helped 65% of high school students earn college credit in high school versus about a 20% completion rate for students who did not receive any support (Haxton et al., 2016).

Although taking dual enrollment courses at the high school is a popular option, many have expressed concerns over the rigor of DE instruction and instructor eligibility at the high school level. Dual enrollment has been critiqued more than AP in terms of its quality because there is no standard quality mechanism regulating DE (Taylor & Yan, 2018). However, it has always been an expectation for high school teachers teaching dual credit courses to provide college-level

expectations in instructional rigor, attendance, class participation, and students' behavior (Piontek et al., 2016). In fact, there is an explicit agreement between the partner college and among high school teachers teaching dual credit courses that dual credit courses taught at the high school are at least, if not more rigorous than community college courses (Ferguson et al., 2015).

The quality of dual credit courses is essential, especially if colleges and universities expect DE students “to achieve certain learning outcomes, gain specific knowledge and skills, have an authentic college experience in a college class, or be proficient in a particular content area that will enable them to be successful in subsequent courses once they matriculate in college” (Taylor & Yan, 2018, p. 122). Despite criticisms on dual credit course rigor provided by high school teachers, findings of a study on CTE dual enrollment suggest that dual credit courses taught by high school CTE instructors consistently predicted higher levels of college student success and better labor market outcomes compared to dual credit courses completed at the college campus (Phelps & Chan, 2016). Additionally, a study based on analysis of syllabi and faculty interviews indicates that “dual enrollment general education courses were at least as rigorous if not more rigorous than general education courses taught to standard students on the community college campus” (Ferguson et al., 2015, p. 89). Many factors, such as instructor eligibility, may be worth exploring to address some of the concerns.

Instructor eligibility is not a problem at the postsecondary level because the instructors are part of the college faculty (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). The instructors already went through a rigorous selection process and have demonstrated proficiency in content knowledge and expertise through research (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Instructor eligibility of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment is a concern for many because of the lack of consistent policies

in many states. Horn et al. (2016) found a wide range of policies in place regarding state-level instructor qualifications. The results of their study suggest that 12 states did not have any policies regarding instructor eligibility. In 35 states, high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses must meet the same requirements as faculty of the postsecondary institution (Horn et al., 2016). In nine states, high school teachers teaching DE courses must have a master's degree or higher; in 6 states, DE teachers must possess 18 graduate credit hours (15 credits in South Dakota) in the field in which they are teaching (Horn et al., 2016; Piontek et al., 2016; Scheffel et al., 2015) and become adjunct faculty for a partner college (Pierce, 2017). In general, state policies vary, perhaps to allow institutions and local districts latitude in setting their own rules and regulations (Borden, Taylor, Park, & Seilar, 2013). This may also be partly due to the shortage of instructors who can teach dual enrollment courses.

Currently, there is a shortage of qualified teachers, even at the high school level, to meet the increasing number of students enrolled in dual courses (Piontek et al., 2016). This causes much frustration for high school administrators (Scheffel et al., 2015). About 77 percent of today's dual enrollment students take their courses at secondary schools, and 68 percent of these courses are taught by high school teachers (NACEP, n.d). Many superintendents prefer to have credentialed faculty employed by the school district to teach dual credit courses for funding purposes and promote a positive college-going culture on campus (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019). Due to the high demand for high school teachers to teach dual credit courses, school districts are coming up with innovative solutions to attract more teachers.

Some states provide grants, such as credit voucher systems, professional development funds, and loan forgiveness to help teachers financially as they obtain the credentials to teach dual credit (Horn et al., 2016). Other organizations provide incentives. In a school district

located in South Texas, educational leaders entice their own high school teachers to teach DE courses. Pharr-San Juan Alamo School District pays its own teachers an additional incentive, \$1500 per semester, for teaching a DE course (Hooker, 2018). Many school districts in South Texas also offer extra compensation for teachers with master's degrees and even more substantial compensation for teachers with a master's degree in core content. The shortage of teachers due to the growth of dual credit programs is a problem that is being addressed by offering incentives to teachers. It may be wise for school administrators to look at other factors, such as the challenges that dual credit teachers experience to address the shortage problem.

The teachers who qualify to teach DE courses face many challenges. Skepticism regarding academic rigor leaves a feeling of defeated attitude among dual credit high school teachers because they work hard to ensure the curriculum taught is as rigorous as the college classes offered at the university level (Tensen, 2018). Moreover, dual credit teachers experience the liminal role of delivering college-level courses without benefitting from the academic freedoms typically experienced by college faculty, such as autonomy in course content, methods, protections from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and smaller class loads (McWain, 2018). Furthermore, dual credit high school teachers are accountable to several public stakeholders such as parents, administrators, voters, and legislators, while college faculty are not (McWain, 2018). Finally, dual credit teachers face different labor conditions compared to college faculty. As the study examined the experiences of the high school teachers teaching dual credit courses in South Texas, findings of the research may provide insights that can address the dual credit teachers' challenges as well as improve curriculum alignment, administrative support for DE teachers, and policies between the secondary and higher education sectors.

Types of dual enrollment offerings. Bailey and Karp (2003) identified three broad types of dual enrollment programs: singleton, comprehensive, or enhanced comprehensive. Singleton courses introduce highly motivated students to college-level coursework, but they do not consume the entire students' four-year high school experience (Bailey & Karp, 2003; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Specific examples of singleton courses are Advanced Placement classes and dual enrollment courses, such as Speech Dual, that may fulfill students' high school and college requirements. Comprehensive DE, on the other hand, provides academically advanced and middle-achieving students in the last two years of their high school opportunities to take articulated college credits (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Examples of comprehensive courses are International Baccalaureate courses and Career and Technology Education courses that may lead to a certificate. Finally, enhanced comprehensive DE takes up the entire student's high school schedule. Unlike the first two, enhanced comprehensive targets middle-to low achieving students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. Examples of enhanced comprehensive programs are Early College High Schools (ECHS) or Middle College High Schools (MCHS), where the goal is to offer dual credit courses and support (Barnett et al., 2015; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016) that may provide students an opportunity to earn an associate degree. Both ECHS and MCHS are designed to provide dual enrollment opportunities to students who may not have access to post-secondary education in the past (Barnett et al., 2015).

Middle College High School (MCHS), such as La Guardia Community College campus in New York City, which commenced in 1974 (Barnett, 2006), is not as popular as ECHS. Today, there are only 50 MCHSs in 16 different states nationwide (Middle College National Consortium, n. d.). There is very little literature and research on MCHS (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). As a result, MCHSs are often linked to Early College High School. ECHS and MCHS

are often linked together because the models are pretty similar, so studies use these two terms interchangeably. MCHS and ECHS are identical in their goal, target population, unique pedagogies such as team teaching and collaborative learning techniques, innovative form of assessment such as portfolios, and both offer opportunities for students to earn college credits. However, MCHS and ECHS are different in three ways. First, MCHS students must take college credits as part of their high school experience (Barnett et al., 2015). ECHS students are offered the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school, but it is not a requirement. If ECHS students take college coursework, it is at no cost to them. Secondly, unlike MCHS, which is located on a college campus, Early College High Schools are either a stand-alone high school campus or a school within a traditional high school model. Third, MCHS campuses have links to vocational education (Pianelli, 1995), while ECHS are geared more towards earning college credits that may lead to an associate degree in several disciplines such as Interdisciplinary Studies, Biology, or Math. When ECHS started, most MCHSs converted to ECHS (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016), mainly because they are similar in their dual enrollment objective (Barnett et al., 2015).

ECHS initiative began in 2002 and was supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. ECHS are innovative high schools that provide an opportunity for high school students to earn their high school diploma and 60 college credit hours (Texas Education Agency, n. d.). ECHS serves economically disadvantaged students, first-generation college-goers, English Language Learners (Saenz & Combs, 2015), students of color (Seltzer, 2010), and students who are average academically (Barnett et al., 2015). Early College High Schools enroll no more than 400 students from grades 9th-12th (Lauen, Barrett, Fuller, & Janda, 2017). Students who attend ECHS have an opportunity to earn two years of college credits or an associate degree

at no cost to their parents while simultaneously satisfying high school graduation requirements (Duncheon, 2020; Lauen et al., 2017). ECHS successfully addresses access and equity issues, school dropout concerns, college and career readiness challenges, and degree completion (Saenz & Combs, 2015). The implementation of ECHS increases access and equity for a diverse student population. Since 2002, more than 280 ECHS are operational across the United States, serving more than 80,000 students in 31 states and the District of Columbia (American Institutes for Research, 2020).

ECHS students are usually very successful in achieving their goals. Students felt that part of their success is having a sense of belongingness in their school environment, which they describe as “family” (Adams et al., 2020; Schaefer & Rivera, 2016). Moreover, the availability of academic support to ECHS students helps them stay on track (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2018). The success of ECHS students carries on to post-secondary education. ECHS positively impacts both college enrollment and degree attainment after high school graduation (American Institute for Research, n.d.; Edmunds et al., 2017; Haxton et al., 2016). Burns, Ellegood, Bracy, Duncan, and Sweeney (2019) agreed, based on the findings of their study, that ECHS has a positive and statistically significant impact on reducing a student’s time and increasing the probability of degree attainment. This means that students in ECHS can graduate from high school with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree, thus allowing them to go into the workforce sooner (Edmunds et al., 2017). ECHS increases career and college readiness for traditionally underrepresented students in postsecondary institutions (Lauen et al., 2017).

Services provided by ECHS have benefitted students in terms of secondary outcomes such as reduced absences, ninth-grade retention rates, higher math and English end-of-course exam scores, and slightly higher 5-year graduation rates (Lauen et al., 2017). These factors have

a substantial effect on the attainment of an associate degree. Although “ECHS is generally successful at increasing high school outcomes, greatly boosts associate degree completion, and increases 4-year college enrollment at less selective public institutions” (Lauen et al., 2017, p. 547), the transferability of college credit hours to highly selective postsecondary institutions remain an issue (Horn et al., 2018). It is, therefore, imperative that secondary and postsecondary institutions collaborate to address the issue.

High School and Postsecondary Partnerships

Historically, postsecondary and secondary learning institutions operated on disconnected policies and reforms (Krueger, 2006; Priebe, 2016). It is not until problems surfaced, such as academic rigor at the high school level, an increasing number of students taking remedial classes in college, and decreasing completion rates among college students, that states revisited educational pathways to provide a smooth transition for high school students to post-secondary education (Karp, 2015; Karp et al., 2004). ESSA also calls for partnerships between secondary education and higher education as an integral part of the college readiness policy (Malin & Hackmann, 2017a). The emergence of dual enrollment restructured the relationship between secondary and postsecondary institutions (Karp, 2015; Kilgore & Wagner, 2017; Pierce, 2017). Successful dual credit programs depend upon a strong collaboration between community colleges and the local high schools (Pierce, 2017).

A comprehensive partnership between secondary and post-secondary education can improve high school completion rates and college access for underrepresented students (Domina & Ruzek, 2010). In this partnership, there must be effective communication between the school district and the partnering college (Swafford & Waller, 2018). There usually exists a discussion of expectations, such as the school’s responsibility to provide the human capital and

administrative support when it comes to enrollment services and academic reporting to the partnering college (Swafford & Waller, 2018). Furthermore, the partner college provides dual credit information to school administrators regarding student admission requirements, course descriptions, curriculum, and adjunct faculty curriculum and expectations (Piontek et al., 2016; Swafford & Waller, 2018). Although post-secondary institution administrators are expected to observe dual credit courses annually, this has not been implemented consistently in some school districts (Piontek et al., 2016).

The partner college communicates to high school teachers teaching dual credit courses that they are expected to institute college-level expectations for academic standards (Piontek et al., 2016). The communication between the partner college and high school focuses on rigor and other topics that pertain to the successful implementation of dual credit programs, but not on high school teachers' experiences who teach the dual enrollment courses. Both college and high school leaders have minimal information regarding teachers' experiences, needs, and challenges. Their attention is focused on other factors affecting dual enrollment. High school and district leaders are looking at the long-term potential of dual enrollment at their respective institutions to ensure the staff understands the goals behind a college-going culture (Martinez et al., 2018). Other leaders focus on creating a pipeline of qualified educators certified to teach dual credit classes in high school (Martinez et al., 2018).

Some administrators are concerned about not having enough administrative staff at post-secondary or high school to manage logistical challenges and communication between the two sectors as dual credit enrollment expand (Piontek et al., 2016). Most administrators are focused on increasing the number of dual credit courses and increasing rigor so students can earn college-level credit without having to leave the campus, resulting in decreased transportation costs

(Chumbley, Hainline, & Haynes, 2018). Regardless of the priorities between the two institutions, partnerships between community colleges and local school districts are now common as school district leaders and community college leaders aim to ensure that high school students are college-ready (Icel & Davis, 2018; Malin et al., 2017; Pierce, 2016;).

Collaborative partnership through regular engagement and interactions between the high school and the higher education administrators and the high school faculty and college faculty are vital in the success of the dual credit program (Taylor et al., 2015). School districts and community colleges can team up to improve college readiness by aligning their curriculum and providing opportunities for high school students to be exposed to the college environment and culture to ease the transition process (Malin et al., 2017; Pierce, 2016). Alignment between secondary education and higher education can improve College and Career Readiness (CCR) and student equity, which are essential components of ESSA (Henig, Riehl, Houston, Rebell, & Wolff, 2016). Furthermore, the alliance between secondary and postsecondary institutions might provide dual credit high school teachers a stronger sense of a disciplinary and professional community, as well as an avenue to express their concerns (McWain, 2018). High school teachers and college faculty teaching the same course can share resources to ensure consistency and create a sense of belonging for teachers (Hanson et al., 2015). This is imperative as some of the concerns of dual credit high school teachers shared in a study are lack of mentorship, communication, and inconsistencies in student experiences and grading approaches (McWain, 2018).

Cultivating and maintaining a partnership between school districts and postsecondary institutions requires relationship building at the very top levels of leadership (Pierce, 2016). School administrators and higher education leaders must have mutual trust, which comes from

being honest, having an open mind, and keeping the lines of communication open. Pierce (2016) suggested three keys to successful partnerships: developing a shared vision, involving teachers, and keeping the conversation going. While it is vital for college and school leaders to share the vision, it is more important to allow faculty members and teachers to be engaged in collaborative efforts. Ongoing, productive dialogue between high school instructors and college faculty is crucial in assuring students taking dual credit courses get the best possible education (McWain, 2018; Pierce, 2017; Priebe, 2016).

High school teachers often have a limited idea of what is expected of the courses they teach, and college faculty often feel that high school teachers are not preparing students appropriately for college (Pierce, 2017). The provision of collaboration between college faculty and dual credit high school teachers is a key to DE success (Pierce, 2017). This can be accomplished by providing dual credit high school teachers time during the day to meet with college instructors. Without the much-needed release time, teachers who participated in a study indicated that they could not pursue meaningful professional development and collaborate with other teachers (McWain, 2018).

The most enduring and enriching aspects of participation in dual enrollment are the relations between the teachers and the professors that grow out of shared concerns, a passion for teaching, and a desire to belong to a learning community focused on self-improvement (Sloan, 2019). Higher education faculty and high school teacher development often revolve around fostering collegial relationships that provide access to new perspectives and expertise (Knowlton, Fogleman, Recihsman, & de Oliveria, 2015). This type of faculty-teacher collaboration creates opportunities for learning and sharing of expertise (Farah, 2019). This interaction leads to a strategic partnership and meaningful professional development.

Professional Development

Dual enrollment teachers and course quality are imperative to the success of the program. Teachers teaching dual enrollment courses must have a deeper level of content knowledge. While some states require dual enrollment instructors to have a master's degree or 18 hours of college credit hours for the subject they teach, ongoing professional development can enhance their expertise in a specific content. Moreover, professional development can help teachers face the daily challenges of teaching 21st-century learners or digital natives (Ferreira, Junior, & Rodriguez, 2016). Educational technologies are prolific and are part of the instructional process in today's digital world, so immersing teachers in this type of training is significantly important (Ferreira et al., 2016). Furthermore, for teachers to have a comprehensive understanding of college readiness and practices to ensure student equity for advanced coursework, teachers and school leaders must engage in extensive professional development (Malin et al., 2017).

Findings of a study indicate that professional development “served as a key factor in improving teacher quality, and subsequent student assessment scores” (Green & Allen, 2015, p. 70). The professional development of teachers is essential in improving teaching and learning. Moreover, the same study revealed that teachers in high-achieving schools viewed the alignment of their professional development to the student learning standards to a greater degree than teachers in low-achieving schools, thus indicating that high-quality workshops contribute to higher student achievement (Green & Allen, 2015). This, along with the significant demand in training, pedagogy, and breadth of coursework for high school teachers teaching dual credit (Kolvoord et al., 2019), make it essential for schools offering dual credit courses to provide professional development to the teachers. This may not be the case for some schools because teachers who participated in a study on dual enrollment indicated that the lack of professional

development, professional teaching community for collaborating, soliciting feedback, or sharing examples, while navigating dual courses was a major challenge (McWain, 2018).

Teaching dual credit courses becomes a big challenge if high school teachers do not get out of their silos. Allowing the teachers to engage in professional development and college faculty around curriculum and assessment results in better course alignment (Pierce, 2017) can change teachers' competence (Dean, Heaton, Orme, & Woodward, 2015). Professional learning communities allow for collaboration and reflective practice among high school teachers and college faculty in the same department. If high school teachers and college faculty engage in professional learning together, they may engage in collegial dialogue about teaching practices related to teaching and learning (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). This is important as dual credit high school teachers are always trying to prove themselves because of the nationwide stigma regarding DE instruction quality at the high school. High school dual credit teachers feel defeated by such a stigma, doubting dual enrollment classes' integrity at the high school site (Tensen, 2018). On the other hand, college faculty who are teaching dual enrollment courses to high school students on the secondary campus or at the college campus may benefit from targeted professional development to help build greater buy-in and become "more attuned to some of the instructional scaffolding or adaptations that would help dual enrollment students" (Kanny, 2015, p. 68).

Creating a professional learning culture for teachers is establishing a learning climate that values honesty, courage, empathy, and care for each other to strengthen the teachers' emotional bonds to share teaching practices openly (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). Teachers cannot freely engage in collaborative inquiry and professional development if they feel criticized for not being competent (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). A substantial level of trust between college faculty

and dual credit high school teachers must be present during professional learning community or professional development. Collaborative professional development may remain elusive for some teachers at first. Still, over time, exposure to a trusting collaboration is a “generally positive and effective model for shifting teaching beliefs and practices” (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). Since dual credit high school teachers feel that they face different labor conditions from their college counterparts (McWain, 2018), they need to pursue meaningful professional development to provide the best education.

Dual credit teachers already feel that they have a heavy workload as they work an average of 117 more hours per semester than non-dual enrollment teachers (McWain, 2018). School leaders must be cognizant of the teachers’ workload and release time for dual credit teachers to engage in professional development. Other factors must also be considered. Educational leaders must remember that they play a significant role in the success of professional learning among teachers, which may lead to the transformation of the learning organization (Peschl, 2007; van Veen, Zwart, & Meirink, 2012). Although there may be times when educational leaders experience difficulties in stimulating teachers’ learning attitudes, administrators must reflect on their function as role models. Modeling learning while leading the organization is vital to create a culture that supports teachers’ learning (Gaikhorst, Marz, du Pre, & Geijsel, 2019).

Leaders need to believe that professional development that focuses on social capital within the organization, where teachers learn from each other, can help strengthen educational practices (Gaikhorst et al., 2019; Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016). Dual credit teachers need to collaborate with college faculty. It is equally important for teachers to learn from other high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. Ultimately, fostering authentic faculty development

for higher education and K-12 teachers together can cultivate collegial relationships that enhance expertise and teacher capacity (Knowlton, Fogleman, Reichsman, & De Oliveira, 2015).

Teachers from secondary schools and colleges can share different forms of expertise (Farah, 2019). The dual enrollment program will succeed if teachers work toward common goals (Dean et al., 2015) and high school, college faculty, and administrators from both sides work together.

School Administration Support

The role of school principals is multi-faceted, time-intensive, and demanding (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Unlike before, the role of school leaders is more complicated than being building managers and parent-teacher buffer (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b). School leaders' many duties and responsibilities compete against each other for their time (Crow, 2010). School administrators are expected to be instructional leaders, catalysts of organizational change (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b), facilitators of data mining and analysis to help increase student achievement (Schildkamp, Poortman, Ebbeler, & Pieters, 2019), foster teachers' well-being through the provision of autonomy support (Ebersold, Rahm, & Heise, 2019), and many more.

With much emphasis placed on school accountability, the role of school administrators is becoming more challenging and stressful as they juggle their many roles and, at the same time, try to meet state-mandated accountability measures (Paletta, 2019). Since improving student achievement is highly emphasized as a critical component of educational reform, it is natural for school administrators to spend more time in state tests that measure student achievement and overall school performance (Park, Lee, & Cooc, 2019). School administrators, however, must strive to look at the bigger picture beyond high-stakes testing (Snyder, 2015).

School administrators who are engaged and are grounded with a sense of purpose value cultivating cultures that support students in a broader community of learning and living (Snyder,

2015). Since there is currently a need and a national policy to bolster K-12 students' abilities to transition to college and employment (Malin & Hackmann, 2017a), school administrators must focus their attention on growing CTE programs and dual enrollment programs. Supporting teachers in preparing students for college and career is crucial (Kirking, 2016). So far, there is a lack of empirical research on school leadership activities that promote students' college and career readiness, more specifically on practices that involve multiple stakeholders (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b). Since educational leaders are uniquely positioned to bring stakeholders together when planning and implementing reforms (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b), they are held accountable for reform mandates, most notably in student learning and students' preparation for college and careers (Gronn, 2010).

Principals serve as the leading communicators in disseminating information about school reform initiatives (Heck, 1992; Portin et al., 2009), such as dual enrollment programs. Since teachers usually do not have access to mandates or lack understanding regarding reform mandates about their practice, principals help them make sense of the reform mandates (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). This role of an educational leader is essential, as high school teachers teaching dual credit courses believed that having minimal information about college policy and procedures affected their performance negatively (Howley et al., 2013). However, educational leaders' role is not tied solely to the communication of policies; they must see it through and work with teachers directly engaged in instruction. Leaders can support productive teacher collaboration (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b) by providing a structured time to collaborate to develop their expertise (Ermerling, 2010; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001).

Although educational leaders are busy juggling their many responsibilities, their presence and ability to set the tone during professional learning communities through collaboration,

mutual trust, shared norms, values, and feedback (Gaikhorst et al., 2019) are crucial. This is vital as teachers consider support from the principal as a significant variable contributing to their individual and professional development (Cemaloglu & Savas, 2018). A study indicated that an essential indicator in the successful implementation of distance education to students is providing informational and educational support for teachers (Terenko & Ogienko, 2020). This also applies to teachers who teach dual enrollment courses, online or face-to-face. Principals can empower dual credit teachers to ensure students are provided with many opportunities for postsecondary success (Malin & Hackmann, 2017b).

Many school administrators are proponents of the dual enrollment program because DE is one way to help bridge the gap between academic preparedness and postsecondary expectations (Kilgore & Wagner, 2017). Support for high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses is mainly left to the secondary school where they are employed (Swafford & Waller, 2018). High school administrators are responsible for decisions about school involvement with a dual enrollment program (Hanson et al., 2015; Piontek et al., 2016). School leaders must nurture a collaborative school culture focused on setting high expectations, enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, and providing resources (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). This may not be the case for programs such as dual enrollment, as school administrators are not aware of the experiences of dual credit teachers. School administrators must be cognizant of the conflicting priorities that their dual credit teachers experience. High school dual credit teachers work for the district and their administrators, but they are also a part of the postsecondary institution's organization and curricular models (McWain, 2018).

Awareness of the challenges of dual credit high school teachers' conflicting priorities and challenges may place educational leaders in a position to provide support to strengthen the dual

credit courses offered at the high school site. A participant in a study suggested that dual enrollment class creates labor demands that far exceed those of teaching a traditional high school class. Yet, she does not feel supported in discussing those demands with her administration (McWain, 2018). This may be partly due to the lack of rapport with teachers on the part of school administrators who are given many responsibilities that compete for their time (Crow, 2010). When it comes to dual enrollment, a significant burden of a school principal if the school district does not have a district coordinator is to be responsible for working with college partners, handling financial issues, collecting and analyzing data, and ensuring the Memorandum of Understanding is followed (Cassidy, Keating, & Young, 2010). School administrators must provide resources and time for dual credit teachers to plan lessons regardless of the many duties. Although high school teachers may put time as a top priority, they are not the only ones who may need this, as college instructors wish they had more time to pursue research and pedagogical development (McWain, 2018). This is not to say that educational leaders can disregard the need to allocate time for dual credit teachers to plan.

As more and more high school students enroll and thrive in dual enrollment programs, the high school principal is critical to their success (Floyd & Handy, 2019). School principals must be actively involved in the collaboration or partnership between the high school and post-secondary entities. Principals play a significant role in establishing a collaborative working relationship with postsecondary institution leaders. Principals must ensure that necessary support is provided to DE teachers and DE students. This was proven by a study where a robust support system helped 65% of students earn college credit while in high school compared to about 20% completion rate for students who did not receive extra support (Haxton et al., 2016).

Principals must be open-minded, strategic, collaborative, student-motivated, and risk-takers (Floyd & Handy, 2019). They are expected to work collaboratively with school stakeholders to develop a viable action plan for the DE program. School administrators must support high school teachers teaching dual credit courses to ensure rigor in DE courses. Failure to recognize the importance of ensuring that teachers provide quality exposure and engagement to students taking dual credit courses will continue to generate criticisms on dual enrollment as non-rigorous college credit (Jones, 2018). Floyd and Handy (2019) recommended the following strategies for principals to employ to ensure the success of the dual enrollment program: provide incentives for student participation in DE program, develop or designate space for college lounge for students and teachers, support policies that cover the cost of college courses, sponsor college nights to educate stakeholders, and promote DE programs in the community and feeder schools. High school principals must be aware that their role is critical in making dual enrollment programs successful by promoting, valuing, and offering the program in their schools (Hanson et al., 2015). While school administrators are essential, school district leadership is also necessary to the success of the DE program (Kolvoord et al., 2019). School district leaders must be committed to cultivating a culture that promotes dual enrollment (Floyd & Handy, 2019). The overall success of dual enrollment as an option for students results from the district's collaborative efforts, secondary school administrators, and postsecondary institution leaders.

Summary

This chapter provided the theoretical framework and the related literature pertaining to the dual enrollment program. Support for college access and students' transition into and through college, history of dual enrollment programs, dual enrollment policies, types of dual enrollment offerings, and dual enrollment effectiveness have been identified. The benefits of dual enrollment are highlighted. Dual enrollment helps students transition successfully in college and can help with college attainment. Students take dual credit courses in postsecondary institutions, through distance education, or at the high school. Majority of the high school students who participated in dual enrollment programs this past decade took dual credit courses at their own high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

High school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses on campus were the focus of this study. School reformers and educational leaders would benefit from hearing and listening to the voices of high school teachers who teach dual credit courses. High school teachers can be supported through secondary and college partnerships and educational leaders from both sectors. To date, literature is limited in understanding the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. The study filled a research gap about the teachers' experiences teaching dual credit courses in South Texas. Furthermore, the described experiences of the dual credit teachers reinforced some tenets of the social cognitive theory related to the teachers' source of efficacy and their learning to provide the best education for students taking dual credit courses.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. In this chapter, the design, rationale for the phenomenological methodology, and research questions are presented. My role as a researcher in this qualitative study is addressed, and site and participant selection are discussed. The procedures for conducting the study are outlined, and data analysis techniques, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are detailed.

Design

This study used a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is “an inquiry approach that is useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2008, p. 645). Qualitative research is conducted to encourage individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and understand the contexts in which participants of a study address a problem or issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative approach explores the many aspects of human experience. The primary aim of qualitative research is to describe how people understand and handle their day-to-day situations (Miles et al., 2014). In this qualitative study, I am interested in understanding how individuals “interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). The utilization of the qualitative approach in this study provided a rich, holistic picture of a certain phenomenon based on the “meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience” for a group of people (Patton, 2015, p. 98).

In this study, a phenomenological qualitative approach was used. Phenomenological research design focuses on the participants' lived experiences of a study regarding a specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To understand the reality of a phenomenon, it is essential to understand the phenomenon as a person lives it. Phenomenological studies generate knowledge about people in varied aspects, including “how experiences are lived in time, space, and vis-a-vis our relationship to others, as well as bodily experience” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010, p. 19). This phenomenological study sought to capture and understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a phenomenon (Patton, 2015) for the high school teachers teaching dual enrollment in South Texas. Phenomenology has a basis in the first-person reports of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological research design utilized in this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of high school teachers as they teach dual credit courses at the high school site.

Since the primary focus of phenomenological studies is the lived experiences of individuals who experience the same phenomenon, the study explored the lived experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses at the high school. The phenomenological approach was selected as the most appropriate qualitative design for this study because the lived experiences of the high school teachers teaching dual credit courses were used to understand how they simultaneously navigate their role of working for both secondary and higher education sectors. Moreover, the purpose of the study was to capture the essence of navigating the world of secondary and higher education as experienced by high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses at the high school campus. This is critical as capturing the essence of the basic structure of the shared experiences is an essential task in phenomenological studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The phenomenological approach appropriate for the study was transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental or psychological phenomenology is “focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). The transcendental phenomenological research design utilized in this study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of dual enrollment high school teachers without the researcher’s biases and preconceptions influencing the study. The researcher must focus entirely on the participants’ viewpoints (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Astedt-Kurki, 2015). In this study, epoché was vital as the researcher set aside experiences to take on a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon being investigated. To keep an open mind to new knowledge, the researcher practiced bracketing, which requires putting aside feelings, perceptions, and beliefs (Merriam, 2009).

In a phenomenological study, it is imperative during the epoché step for the researcher to set aside biases, prejudices, and preconceived ideas (Moustakas, 1994). In epoché, researchers set aside their experiences as much as possible to have a new or renewed perspective of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher achieved this by refraining from prejudgment (Moustakas, 1994), subjectivities, or biases with the phenomenon, and encountering every experience related to the phenomenon with a fresh perspective (Creswell, 2013). To accomplish epoché, it was crucial to examine the researcher’s biases and assumptions regarding the phenomenon being studied before conducting the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I spent time in quiet reflection before and after the interviews to ensure that I have not included my own thoughts on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, a research journal was used throughout the study to help me bracket out my own thoughts, biases, and experiences (Creswell, 2013). As an educational leader who helps out

with the Early College High School program on campus, I bracket out my experiences and preconceived notions about dual enrollment to focus on capturing and articulating the experiences of the high school teachers. This ensured a rich collection of descriptive data that led to a deeper understanding of the essence of the lived experiences of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses in South Texas.

Research Questions

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses who serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. To help investigate the essence of the phenomenon, the following research questions were developed.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas?

Research Question 1

How do dual credit high school teachers experience their dual responsibilities as secondary school teachers and higher education teachers?

Research Question 2

What experiences influence dual credit teachers' performance and sense of efficacy in instructing dual enrollment courses at the high school site?

Research Question 3

How do high school teachers instructing dual credit courses describe the experience of learning and improving their instructional practices through collaboration with peers and faculty counterparts in post-secondary institutions, professional development, and targeted support from school administrators?

Setting

The study setting was three high schools that offered dual enrollment courses in Arroyo Nordville, located in South Texas. This study used pseudonyms for the three high school sites, namely East Arroyo High School, West Arroyo High School, and North Arroyo High School. These sites were chosen because these three public high schools have Early College High Schools and offered other dual credit courses not included in the program of study for ECHS. Thus, these sites provide an opportunity for all students to earn high school and college credit simultaneously. Moreover, these three high schools have in-house teachers who teach dual enrollment courses in the high school setting.

It was ideal to study the experiences of the high school teachers teaching dual credit courses in these three high schools because teachers are expected to follow the same mandates from Texas Higher Coordinating Board, Texas Education Agency, and the partner higher education institution. All three high schools are in an impoverished region near the border of Mexico and serve the same demographics and population of students. Students are primarily Hispanic students and are economically disadvantaged. The three high schools are committed to the same core principles of serving students underrepresented in higher education. It is a principle shared with Nordville Texas Community College, the partner higher education institution for all three high schools. The college has a forward-thinking approach to assist the underserved population and economically disadvantaged students. High school teachers teaching dual credit courses at East Arroyo High School, West Arroyo High School, and North Arroyo High School are considered adjunct faculty of Nordville Texas College.

East Arroyo High School has approximately 2,000 students and is in South Texas. Along with the other schools in the same district, East Arroyo High School is managed by a 7-member

School Board, elected by the community's people. A school superintendent manages the schools in the entire district, but East Arroyo High School's principal, along with six other administrators, is responsible for providing instructional leadership and managing the day-to-day operations of the school. Like East Arroyo High School, West Arroyo High School is a designated Early College High School with a school-within-a-school model. It also has a 7-member School Board and one school superintendent. In addition, the high school has one principal and six school administrators. Like the leadership structure of the two previously noted high school sites, North Arroyo High School is managed by a 7-member School Board, a superintendent, and a school principal. North Arroyo High School is a standalone Early College High School model. All three schools are similar in their leadership structure, ECHS, and demographics of the student population they serve. Furthermore, the sites were selected to represent the typical high school in South Texas affiliated with Nordville Texas Community College. Typical sites are specifically selected because they are not “in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 2015, p. 284).

Participants

A purposeful sample of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses from three partner school districts of Nordville Texas Community College was utilized in this research study. This study's purposeful selection of participants helped me answer the research questions and respond to the research problem, which was framed explicitly for high school teachers instructing dual credit courses. Purposeful selection requires the determination of selection criteria that are crucial to the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This entails the identification of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In purposeful sampling, participants are selected purposefully to ensure depth of understanding regarding the phenomenon being studied

(Patton, 2015). As a result, the participants of the study provided rich information that illuminated the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015).

Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study because the participants are representatives of a unique, homogenous group. Participants were eligible to participate in the study if they were high school teachers teaching a dual credit course at the high school and were adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College. The selected participants shared the common experience of teaching dual credit courses at the high school level, and their experiences were important to explore. Participants who met the criteria based on their availability and willingness to participate were used in the research study. The participants of the study were high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses from East Arroyo High School, West Arroyo High School, and North Arroyo High School. The participants were given pseudonyms.

The number of participants in a phenomenological study vary in size from three to four individuals to 10-15 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Approximately 15 participants were recruited for this study to obtain enough data that reached a saturation point where no new information is being collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended the utilization of a sampling unit until a saturation point or redundancy is reached. Thematic saturation is achieved when more data do not lead to the discovery of more information related to the research questions (Lowe, Norris, Farris, & Babbage, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that a point of saturation is achieved when the researcher is hearing the same responses to the interview questions from the participants of the study. Nelson (2017) considers saturation point or conceptual depth is achieved when the researcher determines that sufficient depth of understanding is achieved in relation to the topic of study and the theoretical categories.

Regarding participants of the study, there was no specific age, ethnicity, or gender criteria, except the fact that the teachers participating in the study have taught dual credit courses at a high school in South Texas and was an adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College for at least one year. This way, maximum variation is achieved through the selection of participants with diverse qualities, but have experienced the same phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The demographics of the population of teachers from which the sample came from was more or less similar across the three high schools. Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for 2018-2019 school year for Region One Education Service Center from which the three high schools belong indicated that the majority of the teachers have an average of 12 years of experience with an average salary of \$55,569 annually for teachers with 11-20 years of experience (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Moreover, TAPR states that the most common ethnicity of teachers in South Texas is Hispanic, followed by White, Asian, and African and American. Approximately 77.5% of teachers hold a bachelor's degree, but only 18 % have master's degrees, and 0.2 % have a doctoral degree. Furthermore, TAPR conveys that there are more female teachers than males (70.6% female and 29.4% male). When the research study was completed, participant demographics such as the teacher's highest educational attainment, years of teaching experience, years of experience teaching dual credit courses, and types of teacher certifications held were summarized in a data table.

Procedures

Guidelines from the Liberty University Dissertation Handbook were followed. The researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). Since the study involved school personnel, I submitted documents of institutional permission from each participating high school to the IRB as part of the process of securing approval to

conduct the study (see Appendix B). Once I received IRB approval and the school principal provided a site approval (see Appendix C), I met with each school administrator and obtained email addresses of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses at the high school site and are considered adjunct faculty with Nordville Texas College. Consent from the school principal from the three high schools was obtained previously before sending an email to potential participants requesting them to participate in the study (Appendix D). Included in the email was (a) specific language ensuring the participants' identity would remain anonymous, (b) participating in the study would not affect employability and teacher's evaluation, (c) criteria for participating in the study, (d) the name, cell phone number, and email address of the researcher, and (e) information stating that participation in the study will add to the body of knowledge regarding high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. There were no responses to the initial email from a few participants, so a second email request was sent (Appendix E). Approximately 10 days to request permission to participate in the study was planned, based on the recommendations of Callegaro and Disogra (2008).

Consent forms were also sent as an attachment (see Appendix F) to the initial email. The participants responded in an email or in-person regarding their willingness to participate in the study. As the researcher, I set up a virtual meeting to discuss the research, answer any participant's questions regarding the study, collect the consent forms electronically, and arrange a mutually agreeable time and place for the virtual interview. The consent form includes information regarding the assurance of anonymity and the ethical use of data.

After the virtual interviews were conducted, I transcribed the recorded interviews. After all the interviews were transcribed, I met with the participants in person, virtually, or sent them the email transcription, to provide them an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of the

transcriptions. This audit or member checks process was vital to ensure the accuracy of the information in the study. Once member checks were done, the interview transcriptions were exported to the NVivo software. All final transcriptions from the interviews were eventually analyzed for “significant statements,” and “clusters of meaning” from these statements were written into emerging themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

The Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary human instrument in data collection and analysis in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). There may be preconceived notions, biases, and shortcomings regarding dual credit, which stems from my experience as a former academic high school counselor and my current role as an administrator helping with Early College High School. As a researcher, instead of eliminating my subjectivities and biases, I must identify them and monitor them in relation to my own interests, “to make clear how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, my direct role as an academic counselor in the past and my direct involvement as an administrator in our Early College High School, set up as a school-within-a-school model of ECHS, must be identified. In our school, students in ECHS as well as other students not enrolled in ECHS take dual enrollment classes at the high school, either taught by a professor from Nordville Texas Community College or a high school teacher considered as adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College and have full-time employment from our high school.

I am one of the seven school administrators in one of the three study sites, specifically East Arroyo High School. I oversee the science department on campus. Currently, no one in the science department on campus teaches dual credit. The high school teachers teaching dual credit

courses are not under my direct supervision as they are not part of my Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) load. Instead, the other school administrators directly supervise them.

Regarding the other two high school sites, specifically West Arroyo High School and North Arroyo High School, I do not have any connection, relationship, or know any of the high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. I do have knowledge of how dual enrollment works because of my previous role as a counselor and my current role helping with our Early College High School where I work. I will have to practice bracketing during the study.

Bracketing involves a reflection of one's personal biases, opinions, beliefs, and values the researcher may have regarding the study (Moustakas, 1994). It is important that bracketing is done during the study to ensure presuppositions regarding the topic of the study, and a few of the participants will be set aside. Bracketing, which is done by setting aside ideas, preconceived notions, and beliefs about the study and the participants, ensures that biases and subjectivities will be minimized (Moustakas, 1994). One method of bracketing was writing memos throughout the data collection and data analysis process as a means of examining and reflecting upon my engagement with the data (Cutcliffe, 2003). Tufford and Newman (2010) indicated that "memos can take the form of theoretical notes that explicate the procedural aspects of research, and observational comments that allow the researcher to explore feelings about the research endeavor" (p. 86). Another way of bracketing was by using a reflexive journal, in which preconceived notions were identified throughout the research process (Ahern, 1999). Aspects explored in the journal include but were not limited to the researcher's reasons for conducting the research, assumptions regarding socio-economic status, the researcher's place in the power

hierarchy, and the researcher's value system (Hanson, 1994). Bracketing ensures that data are identified in its pure form, "uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions" (Patton, 2015, p. 842).

Data Collection

Data collection for a phenomenological study must adequately capture the lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Three data collection strategies were employed in the study to obtain valuable data from high school teachers instructing dual credit courses. Triangulation involves three sources of data (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The utilization of three data sources helped "shed light on a theme or perspective" for the study (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation of data involves "comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information" obtained from different data collection methods (Patton, 2015, p. 957). Triangulation using multiple data sources is a "powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity "of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 245). Qualitative data for this study was collected through one-on-one, in-depth interviews with participants, photo interviewing technique, and document analysis. These three techniques were to ensure that rich, comprehensive data were collected for the study. The data collected provide and communicate contextual details regarding the experiences (Patton, 2015) of the high school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses.

In this study, the participants took part in a semi-structured interview. An interview is the most appropriate data collection strategy in a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). The interview allowed participants to "address the phenomenon profoundly, providing a space of aperture for the informants to express their experiences in detail, approaching reality as faithfully as possible (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105). Following the semi-structured interview, participants took part in a photo-interviewing process. Photographs provided by the participants or supplied

by the interviewer were used to allow the participants to go in depth in sharing their experiences as dual credit teachers. Lastly, the researcher viewed and analyzed documents, such as the Memorandum of Understanding, a sample of professional development agenda, and other official communication from NTCC. The document analysis process was intended to generate information that answered a part of the second research question.

Interviews

Interviews are a common form of collecting data in all forms of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative data collected in this study consisted of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” and will be obtained through interviews (Patton, 2015, p. 14). Moustakas (1994) suggested that long, open-ended, semi-structured interviews are the primary collection method for phenomenological studies. During the interview process, the utilization of open-ended questions allowed participants to voice out their experiences “unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 218). Since the study examined the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses, conducting interviews yielded rich data to discover their feelings, thoughts, intentions, and the meanings of their experiences while experiencing the phenomenon. Interviewing is critical when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around the participants (Merriam, 2009).

The interview was done one-on-one. Extenuating circumstances such as the coronavirus pandemic led to web-based video interviews instead of in-person interviews. The video conferences were held using Zoom as it has an integrated recording function. Zoom video conferences allowed audio and visual communication (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The expected time duration for each interview session was at least one hour. This was enough time

to solicit valuable data regarding the teachers' experiences as they navigate the worlds of higher education and secondary education while teaching dual credit courses at the high school.

The interview sought rich insights regarding the experiences of teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school. It was crucial that the questions utilized during the interview were field-tested with peers or experts for face and content validity. In addition, field testing the questions allowed the researcher to acquire some practice in interviewing (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim, & Yusof, 2017). This research study conducted a field test by having four dual enrollment experts review the interview questions to ensure credibility, validity, and risk level. The four experts comprised central office and school administrators who oversaw the dual enrollment program in one school district that offers dual credit courses and a Nordville Texas Community College partner. The field test was conducted after IRB approval. A summary of the experts' recommendations was discussed with the dissertation chair.

The type of interview conducted in this study was semi-structured because the questions were determined ahead of time. Still, the researcher was flexible when asking questions for clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher used the interview guide, which has a list of questions to ensure all the research questions were answered during the interview. Clarifying questions were asked to ensure the information's accuracy and obtain detailed information about what was said (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The interview commenced by establishing rapport and creating a climate in which the research participants felt comfortable responding honestly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994).

Additionally, the researcher was respectful and utilized a non-judgmental approach during interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Sorsa et al., 2015). When conducting interviews, Moustakas (1994) recommended the utilization of broad, open-ended questions in interviews to

obtain “rich, vital, substantive descriptions of the participants' experience of the phenomenon” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116). Open-ended questions led to valuable textural and structural descriptions of the participants’ experiences and even stories about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews were recorded to ensure the researcher captured the responses accurately (Creswell, 2013). Recording the interview assured that everything said was preserved for transcription and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The following standardized questions (see Appendix G) were asked to stimulate responses from the participants:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is your highest educational attainment?
3. What types of teaching certifications do you hold?
4. How long have you been teaching, and how long have you been teaching dual credit course at the high school level?
5. As a dual credit teacher in South Texas, what aspect of your job is the most rewarding? What aspect is the least rewarding?
6. As you navigate both the world of high school and higher education in your role as a DE instructor, describe your experiences in trying to accomplish tasks for both institutions.
7. Tell me how you incorporate the educational philosophies, expectations, and requirements of your high school with the educational philosophies, expectations, and requirements of higher education within your dual enrollment role.
8. Describe your experiences with the curriculum, syllabus, grading policies, and other standards set by Nordville Texas Community College as well as your secondary institution.

9. What types of obstacles or challenges prevented you from accomplishing your tasks as a dual enrollment teacher, who must follow both requirements from your high school and Nordville Texas Community College?
10. Tell me examples of characteristics, skills, and practices that you are more than likely to repeat and/or recommend to a brand-new dual credit high school teacher.
11. Describe any positive or negative experiences you have had that influence your ability to perform your job as a dual credit high school teacher.
12. Describe your experiences where anyone or anything may have encouraged or discouraged you that have impacted your self-efficacy as a dual credit high school teacher. Describe how you felt in each experience.
13. As an adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College, what type of support have you received from NTCC coordinators and high school administrators?
14. Tell me about a time when you received positive or negative feedback or both from an administrator, either at the high school or the partner college.
15. Describe how you feel about teaching dual credit courses at the high school level.
16. Describe the obstacles or challenges that you have experienced as a dual credit teacher and how you overcame them.
17. What are your thoughts about the professional development opportunities provided to dual credit teachers? How often are the PD opportunities, and how does it help you as a dual credit teacher?
18. What collaboration or mentoring opportunities from NTCC and the high school are provided for dual credit teachers?

19. Describe your experience and the level of support you received from both the high school and NTCC as you transitioned to teaching dual credit courses online due to the coronavirus pandemic.
20. What else you would like to say about your experiences as a dual enrollment teacher at the high school that was not covered in any of the questions?

It is important that throughout the process of the interview, the researcher was respectful, nonjudgmental and non-threatening (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, the interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to provide the best database for analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The first four questions were designed to obtain information about the participants. The fifth question elicited responses about their general motivation for teaching dual enrollment. Questions six through nine were asked to answer the first research question of the study. In these questions, the researcher was interested in the participants' beliefs and opinions about their role as a high school dual credit teacher straddling the two worlds of their work: the high school and the higher education institution. Dual credit teachers usually struggle with their role as they are considered full-time teachers at the high school, so their priorities remain with their primary institution (Priebe, 2016). At the same time, they are expected to teach the curriculum as rigorous as the courses taught at the college level (Tensen, 2018). Questions six through nine were critical to elicit responses from teachers about their general experiences in working for both institutions of learning.

Questions number 10-12 were intended to elicit responses to answer the study's second research question. The questions aimed to find out information, characteristics, and experiences contributing to the dual credit teachers' sense of self-efficacy. Findings may lead to the improvement of support provided by school administrators to DE teachers. The type of support

provided by the high school and NTCC leaders to dual credit teachers is important to promote student success, teacher development, wellness, and retention (Ari, Fisher, Killacky, & Angel, 2017). For questions number 13-19, the questions stimulated responses to answer the third research question of the study. Dual credit teachers revealed the sources of support they received. It is imperative to identify the needs of high school adjunct faculty beyond the partnering university's scope (Swafford & Waller, 2018). The last question (number 20) provided an opportunity for the participant to mention experiences, opinions, values, and knowledge about dual credit that may not have been asked and were necessary to capture the essence of their lived experiences as high school teachers teaching dual credit courses. The teachers' responses to the last question answered any of the three research questions of the study.

Photo Interviewing Technique

A second data collection strategy for this study was a photo-interviewing technique. It was integrated at the end of the interview process. Using photographs as a qualitative data collection technique encouraged participants to immerse themselves in the interview and offered specific reference points or themes to examine further (English, 1988). The use of photographs allowed participants to go in-depth in sharing their experiences as dual credit teachers. Since capturing digital images and using a camera is an increasingly constant practice today and is part of our contemporary reality (Pink, 2013), taking photos is fast, easy, and valuable in this study. The participants were provided a choice to bring a photo or choose from a selection. Teachers were given an option to use existing images or available online images to portray their experiences of teaching dual credit courses. Participants were instructed to provide one or two pictures of anything, except pictures of individuals, to illustrate their impressions and

experiences of teaching dual credit courses at the high school. The participants who chose not to bring a photo were provided a selection of images to choose from.

Teachers were empowered to take photos to create narratives about the events and routines that make up their day-to-day existence as dual credit teachers. In addition, the images can tell the story of the photographer's important thoughts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) regarding the phenomenon. The participants were provided a choice to use "found" photographs (Tinkler, 2013). The researcher provided a selection of photos such as images on dual credit, graduation caps, quotes, and many others. The photographs taken by the participants and the ones provided by the researcher acted as a data source for extracting additional information from the initial interview.

Moreover, when used in conjunction with the interview, the photos stimulated further discussion of particular questions (Tinkler, 2013). Furthermore, the photographs were an essential part of the data corpus but are best analyzed through memoing (Miles et al., 2014). After participants provided narratives about their photos, after the interview process, or when an idea strikes, I wrote the memos on index cards. The memos were sortable and were captioned with basic content or ideas (Miles et al., 2014). The memos helped guide me toward possible new sources of data, shaped which idea to pursue further, and helped with the organization of many available data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The traditional interviews and photo-interviewing technique are triangulation methods in qualitative research (Dempsey & Tucker, 1994). Information gathered during the photo interviewing technique answered the second research question. The specific instruction script (see Appendix H) provided to the participants before and during the photo interviewing technique directed participants to reveal sources of their efficacy when teaching dual credit courses.

Document Analysis

The third source of data for the study was analyzing existing and publicly available documents. Document analysis included examining public records, personal documents, visual documents, and physical artifacts (Merriam, 2009). These sources provided valuable information to help me understand the central phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). As I searched for documents relevant to the study, it was important to check for authenticity. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated that checking for the authenticity and accuracy of written documents is an integral part of the research process.

In this study, authenticity was double-checked by going to the primary source of the documents. Since the study explored the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses, public record documents posted on the high school website, such as the Memorandum of Understanding, provided insight in answering research question one. In addition, official communication, such as professional development flyers from Nordville Texas Community College, generated information that provided insight to research questions two and three.

Analysis of the high school student handbook regarding student behavior, student attendance, and FERPA regulations was examined to determine consonance and dissonance in policies between the high school and higher education institutions, which was crucial in answering the first research question. In addition, grading policies for high school and higher education were analyzed to explore the dual credit teachers' experiences of navigating two worlds of work. These documents provided insights and confirmed how teachers experience their dual responsibilities, which provided information to answer the first research question.

It was imperative to study the dual credit partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to understand the experiences of dual credit teachers as they fulfill their responsibilities of promoting a college-going culture and college graduation culture at the high school level. The MOU uncovered valuable data that answered the first research question. The MOUs were readily available on school websites. Using relevant documents such as the ones mentioned above led the researcher to the possibility of serendipitous discoveries (Merriam, 2009). As a researcher, I kept an open mind. I relied on my skills and intuition to search for and interpret data from the documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) relevant to answering the research questions. Most of the documents listed were easily accessible and free, which provided valuable data to verify emerging hypotheses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the records conveyed areas of experience hidden from language obtained during the interview process (Hodder, 2000).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was the process of making sense of the data collected, which typically involved “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people said and what the researcher has seen and read- it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). Data analysis includes data condensation, display, conclusion drawing, and verification (Miles et al., 2014). For this study, data analysis was the process of answering the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews, photo interviewing technique, and document analysis used to answer the research questions provided relevant data regarding the high school teachers’ experiences in teaching dual credit courses at the high school site. In this study, the initial preparation of data used for the analysis required accurately transcribing the data into text. The recorded interviews were transcribed by hand. The transcript from the general interviews

and photo interviews was a straightforward summary of the main ideas presented by the participants (Saldana, 2015). The transcriptions were checked for accuracy through member checking. The participants were provided an opportunity to review the transcripts, provide feedback, and clarify any misinterpretations. The data organization followed as the transcribed data were placed before the researcher for an in-depth study utilizing the methods and procedures of phenomenological analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The organization of data in computer files was important in qualitative research because of the vast amount of information gathered during the study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

In qualitative data analysis, Moustakas (1994) recommended horizontalizing the data, which requires the researcher to regard every participant's horizon or statement as having equal value. All elements of the data collected must have the same weight (Patton, 2015). Statements that were irrelevant or repetitive were deleted, leaving only the horizons (the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon). Utilizing the horizontalized statements, the meaning or meaning units were listed (Moustakas, 1994). When the horizontalized statements were reviewed, pertinent themes regarding the lived experiences of the dual credit high school teachers were revealed. The clustered themes were used to develop the textural descriptions of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The textural descriptions included quotes and verbatim passages from the research participants. The textural descriptions were used to develop a structure of the lived experiences of dual credit high school teachers, thus creating structural descriptions. Structural descriptions that captured the essence of the phenomenon commenced from the in-depth study of interview responses. The data gathered from the interviews and documents were analyzed phenomenologically utilizing the procedures developed by Moustakas (1994): epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of description.

Epoché

Epoché is the suspension or neutralization of the researcher's judgments. This entailed the researcher's positioning about the experiences of the studied phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). Moustakas (1994) emphasized that a researcher remains present to carry out the epoché first and foremost, in a transcendental phenomenological study. Moustakas (1994) stated that "epoché requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt" (p. 26). In epoché, the researcher set aside beliefs, attitudes, prejudgments, biases, and suppositions to focus on the participants' experiences of a phenomenon. The researcher looked into personal bias and "eliminated personal involvement with the subject material -that is, eliminate, or at least gain clarity about, preconceptions" (Patton, 2015, p. 840). Epoché asked the researcher to deactivate certain elements inherent in ordinary, pre-philosophical experience and acting (Overgaard, 2015).

A researcher is challenged to embrace life in what it truly offers, reach a transcendental state, and have a pure state of fresh perceiving and experiencing (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the researcher's goal was to attain a transcendental state wherein the impact of the researcher on the inquiry was assessed continuously. The researcher's biases and preconceptions did not influence the object of the study. The researcher was required to focus entirely on the participants' viewpoints (Sorsa et al., 2015). In a way, the researcher assumed the position of a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, so the participants' experiences may develop to an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). The regular practice of epoché increased the researcher's competency in achieving a presuppositionless state and being open to receiving whatever appears in consciousness (Moustakas, 1994).

As a researcher, I decided how my personal understandings were incorporated into the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a separate section, my background as a researcher was introduced in the first part of the paper. The epoché process ensured objectivity and eliminated possible biases that I may have regarding dual enrollment. It helped record my reflections before and after each interview and throughout the analysis process to facilitate the epoché process (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché was achieved by refraining from prejudgment (Moustakas, 1994) or experiences with the phenomenon and encountering every experience related to the phenomenon with a fresh perspective (Creswell, 2013).

The pursuit of epoché required the researcher to be transparent and take a neutral stance in every interaction surrounding the phenomenon to provide equal value and prevent myself from being in “bondage to people and things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 87). To do this, I spent time in quiet reflection before and after the interviews to ensure that I have not included my own thoughts on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). When I was engaged in quiet reflection, I made intentional choices and efforts to clear my mind of things that may have prevented me from attaining “an open consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89). A research journal was kept to help bracket out my own thoughts, biases, and experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is the process of “describing in textural language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and self” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). In phenomenological reduction, the phenomenon is perceived in its totality, in a fresh and open way (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the quality of the participants’ experiences became the focus. Phenomenological reduction included bracketing, in which the focus of the

research was placed in brackets; everything else was set aside so that the entire process was rooted solely on the research topic and question (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is like the familiar practice of quoting (Overgaard, 2015).

Moreover, horizontalizing, where every statement is initially treated as having equal value, is also an important part of phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). Statements irrelevant or repetitive were deleted, leaving only the horizons (the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon). The horizons were later clustered into themes. Phenomenological reduction required me as a researcher to examine the data on the lived experiences of dual credit instructors repeatedly to ensure accuracy. During this process, I may have realized that I have achieved saturation with the data collected. I reflected on each significant statement provided by the participants and started making connections.

Imaginative Variation

During data analysis, it was essential for me to examine data from different perspectives or angles to ensure the lived experiences of dual enrollment teachers at the high school are described accurately. The process led to an understanding of the essence of the experience. Imaginative variation assisted in reflecting participants and examining their experiences of the phenomenon to clarify meanings and interpretations (Turley, Monro, & King, 2016). This task of imaginative variation sought possible meanings through the utilization of imagination from varied frames of reference, approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions (Moustakas, 1994). The process is similar to “moving around a statue to see it from differing views” (Patton, 2015, p. 843). Imaginative variation enabled the researcher to derive the structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation aimed to arrive

at structural descriptions of an experience (Moustakas, 1994) and the underlying factors that account for what the dual credit teachers experienced.

The focus of imaginative variation was on this question: “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is?” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Imaginative variation required participants’ descriptions of conscious experience to be distilled to a unified synthesis of essences. The essences became the foundation for all knowledge about the phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Different interpretations that were way off might have come up, so it was important for me as a researcher, during the process, to always go back and refer to the data provided by the participants.

Synthesis of Description

Synthesis of meanings and essences was the final step of the transcendental phenomenological research process. This refers to the “intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). This is also referred to by experts in the field as textural and structural analysis. Textural analysis involved the description of *what* was expressed by the participants. Structural analysis refers to interpreting *how* it was expressed by the participants (Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

In the research study, these two questions were highlighted: what elements do the participants unintentionally filter? What are some events evidenced through the participants' stories but are not openly communicating? Textural and structural analyses were necessary for the interpretation of findings. They helped me identify the essence of the lived experiences of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses as a researcher.

To capture the essence of the dual credit teachers' experiences, it was imperative to have a system in the organization and management of data early in the study. The system involved coding, which consisted of assigning shorthand labels to various aspects of my data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for easy accessibility. A computer software program designed for qualitative research with coding, linking, query, writing, and annotation tools was utilized in the study. As I collected data, it was vital to code according to my study's relevance and the theoretical framework that informed the study. As I went through coding, it was essential to focus on patterns and insights related to the purpose of the study and research questions. Codes were organized and analyzed by research question. As data codes accumulated, it was essential to think of recurring patterns or themes that "pulled together many separate pieces of data" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 277) regarding the study. The themes constructed during data analysis were responsive to the research purpose and answered the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The culmination of the data analysis process came in an essence statement, or the meaning of the experience shared by the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the conclusion has a composite description of the phenomenon's essence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All the strategies discussed were employed during data analysis to ensure a thorough and qualitatively sound research method that accurately described the lived experiences of high school teachers teaching dual enrollment courses. Moreover, it was vital to address how I established that the research findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable.

Trustworthiness

The value of a research study is strengthened by its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It refers to the degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the rigor or quality of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). To ensure the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, Merriam (2009) suggested the following strategies: triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement with data during collection, researcher reflexivity, peer review, and others. Some of these were utilized throughout the study to establish trustworthiness. A study's trustworthiness is dependent on establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility or confidence in the truth of the study was essential (Polit & Beck, 2014) to this research. A series of techniques were used in the qualitative study to establish credibility. Techniques may have included prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility for the study was established through member checks. Through member checks, the participants reviewed the preliminary data and written analysis of the interpretations of the study for accuracy. Participants were provided an opportunity to review the transcripts and the findings. Participants provided feedback and clarified any misinterpretations.

Moustakas (1994) indicated that participant feedback could identify inconsistencies and clarification of emerging themes. Therefore, audit or member checks, a validation strategy that entails documenting thinking processes that clarify understanding over a period (Creswell & Poth, 2018), was imperative. The audit check ensured that the recorded data were accurate. This

confirmed that the findings were based on the participants' narratives. This process allowed transparency in the research process.

Furthermore, the triangulation of data added credibility to the results of the study. Through triangulation, the researcher got verification from three different sources, which augments the trustworthiness of data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Multiple data collection methods, such as interview, photo interviewing technique, and data analysis, were employed in the study to establish triangulation. Thus, triangulation was a powerful strategy for increasing the credibility of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Transferability

The extent to which the study's findings are helpful to individuals or can be applied to other situations or settings is considered transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2014). Researchers enhance the possibility of transferability by using rich, thick, detailed descriptions of the context, location, and people studied and being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Researchers need to provide a vivid and detailed picture to inform and resonate with the readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the best way to ensure transferability in a study is to create a "thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and the study" (p. 125). It will be the readers' responsibility to determine if and how the study's findings may be applied to other settings (Merriam, 2009).

In the study, transferability was accomplished through the collection and provision of thick, rich descriptions of the dual credit teachers' experiences. The rich descriptions in the study allowed others to discover similarities from the phenomenon being studied and transfer or apply those to another setting or context, therefore providing transferability to the study's

findings (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Schwandt, 2015). The in-depth interviews with participants, analysis of relevant documents, and repeated review of the collected data assisted in transferability. A vital data analysis strategy, such as the phenomenological reduction, allowed the researcher to examine the data from different perspectives and ensure transferability.

Another strategy for enhancing transferability in the study was the careful selection of the study sample. Maximum variation in the sample, whether it be the sites or the participants of the study allowed for more significant application of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the study, the selected participants were high school teachers teaching all types of dual credit courses. They were the core subjects such as English, math, science, and social studies and a wide array of elective dual credit courses. Maximum variation was accomplished by purposefully selecting a wide range of cases to get various dimensions of interest (Patton, 2015). The study's variety of participants enabled more readers to apply the findings to their situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and over the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Dependability ensures that although replication of a qualitative study does not yield the same results, the results must be consistent with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Audit trails were implemented to establish dependability and confirmability to the study (Schwandt, 2015). For this study, an inquiry or external audit was implemented. An external audit verified and confirmed the findings of the study. An external audit was done by having another researcher outside the study examine the research process and outcomes to verify the accuracy of the data collection methods and evaluate how well the

findings were supported by the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection methods, the theoretical framework that shaped the study, and data were presented clearly and precisely to ensure the third-party examiner conducting the audit can determine the accuracy of the study's findings (Creswell, 2013; Schwandt, 2015). The dissertation committee members and another individual not associated with the study audited my work throughout the research process. The dissertation committee members and the individual not associated with the study examined my coding procedures, the emerging themes and affirmed research consistency.

Confirmability is the degree wherein findings are consistent and could be repeated (Polit & Beck, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity to establish confirmability. An audit trail is a transparent description of the steps taken during research from the beginning to the end of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the study, I kept analytic memos and a research journal throughout the entire research process. The memos included information about how data are collected, decisions that led to the data analysis, and the rationale for the decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The journal had notes, interview schedules, coding decisions, and other reports that aided the research process. Another strategy to ensure confirmability was the clarification of research bias: researcher reflexivity. As a researcher, I accomplished reflexivity by presenting honest and self-searching accounts of the research process (Sherry & Schouten, 2002). The clarification of my role as the researcher and the biases I may have regarding dual enrollment was important to ensure I do not intentionally or unintentionally mislead the research. It was also essential for self-awareness to be implemented throughout the inquiry process. Self-awareness was an asset during the research process, especially during data analysis (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

In research, it is important to trust that the study is conducted with integrity and involves the ethical stance of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Ethically responsible research and the protection of the research subjects were a priority in this study. As the researcher, I ensured that IRB approval was obtained before conducting the research. Ethical guidelines for conducting research on human subjects were followed. Informed consent was provided to all the participants. The informed consent form contains information on the purpose of the study, participant anonymity, how the data will be used, and an explanation that participation in the study involves minimal risk. Pseudonyms were used for all participants, the high school sites, and the higher education partner for dual enrollment. All identifying information was removed from the participants' names as well as the sites. Audio-recorded interviews were destroyed after the transcription process was complete. All documents and transcriptions were kept in the researcher's home office in a locked fireproof safe. All copies pertaining to the study were stored in the locked, fireproof safe for at least three years and destroyed when they were no longer needed.

Summary

Chapter Three discussed the initial procedures, selection process of participants, and the researcher's role. Moreover, the qualitative research methodologies for this study were explained in greater detail. Three data collection strategies, such as one-on-one in-depth interviews, photo interviewing techniques, and document analysis, provide rich data for the study. Approximately 20 interview questions, which answered the central research question and the three research sub-questions of the study, were generated by the researcher to serve as an interview guide during the data collection process. Finally, data analysis procedures used in the study were discussed. The phenomenological method of analysis used in the study followed the procedures developed by Moustakas (1994): epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of description.

Moreover, the plan to establish the study's trustworthiness, which was dependent on establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, was discussed in the chapter. Furthermore, ethical considerations for the study were in place to protect all participants from harm, ensure participation was voluntary, that all information was confidential. Transmission and storage of data were protected.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter provides the findings based on an in-depth analysis of the transcendental, phenomenological study of the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas. First, a brief restatement of the purpose of the research and a review of the research questions guiding the study are provided. The participants in the study are introduced with brief background information and how they interacted with the phenomenon. The results of the data analysis are then presented under two headings. The first heading is presented as emergent themes and offers a narrative of how the participants described their experiences about the phenomenon. The themes are linked and presented according to the purpose and questions that guided this study. The second heading provides answers to the research questions. The data are presented in the order in which the research questions are stated. The participants' own words are sometimes quoted to provide a rich, thick narrative of the participants' lived experiences as they experienced the phenomenon. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the study's findings.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The research questions provided an operational guide to this study. The restated research questions are as follows:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas?

Research Question 1

How do dual-credit high school teachers experience their dual responsibilities as secondary school teachers and higher education teachers?

Research Question 2

What experiences influence dual credit teachers' performance and sense of efficacy in instructing dual enrollment courses at the high school site?

Research Question 3

How do high school teachers instructing dual credit courses, describe the experience of learning and improving their instructional practices through collaboration with peers and faculty counterparts in post-secondary institutions, professional development, and targeted support from school administrators?

The research questions were established based on the purpose of the study to elicit an understanding of the participants' experiences related to the phenomenon. The data were analyzed based on the research questions. The answers to the research questions are presented through thematic perspectives based on the structural and textural descriptions of the phenomenon.

Participants

This study examining the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas included 15 participants. The participants were teaching various dual credit courses in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, and Career and Technology Education (CTE). All participants have a master's degree in the field for which they are considered as instructors. The average years of teaching experience for 15 participants is 17

years. The average number of dual credit teaching experiences for the 15 participants is seven years. Table 1 represents a summary of the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Biographical Information

Pseudonym	Highest Educational Attainment	Dual credit course	Years of teaching	Years of teaching dual credit
Gerald	Master's degree	CTE	9	5
Vera	Master's degree	English	28	7
Frank	Master's degree	Math	9	7
Jade	Doctorate degree	CTE	16	12
Robert	Master's degree	English	28	8
Shawn	Master's degree	Math	16	3
Flynn	Doctorate degree	Math	15	7
Mary	Master's degree	English	22	10
Jeremiah	Master's degree	CTE	8	3
Janet	Master's degree	Foreign Language	17	7
Misty	Master's degree	Science	34	10
Felicity	Master's degree	English	7	3
Sheldon	Master's degree	Social Studies	19	11
Allan	Master's degree	CTE	14	6
Faith	Master's degree	Social Studies	9	7
Average:			17 years	7 years

Gerald

Gerald was born and raised in Arroyo Nordville, Texas. He earned a Master's degree in Professional Studies and Integrated Marketing Communications. Gerald worked as a business executive for a big corporation before becoming a high school teacher. He had been teaching since 2012. Gerald started teaching Marketing as a dual credit course in one of the high schools in South Texas in 2016. He is passionate about taking his dual credit students to the next level by developing quality marketing solutions for big companies such as Hewlett Packard and local hospitals, banks, and electric companies. He wants to create a national model for the marketing dual credit course. Gerald holds a marketing teaching certification for eighth grade through 12th grade. He is also an athletic coach.

Vera

Vera was born and raised in the Great Lakes State. However, she migrated to Arroyo Nordville, Texas, almost three decades ago. Vera earned a Bachelor of Science degree in English and a Master of Arts in English, concentrating in poetry. She was a substitute teacher for a year before becoming a certified, full-time teacher in 1993. Vera had been teaching dual credit since 2014. She pursued her master's degree with the intention of being able to provide an opportunity for students to take dual credit courses at their home campus. She loves teaching dual credit as well as Advanced Placement courses. Vera has a lifetime certificate for English Language Arts, 6th grade through 12th grade. She also has the English Language Learner teaching certification.

Frank

Frank teaches Mathematics at a public high school and works as an adjunct faculty for NTCC in the summer. Frank holds two Master's degrees: a Master's of Science in Mathematics

and a Master of Liberal Arts in Mathematics for Teaching. Frank began his teaching career at Nordville Texas Community College in 2010 as an adjunct professor then became a full-time math instructor at the high school. After two years of teaching at the high school, he became the sole dual credit instructor and expanded the dual credit program. Currently, his teaching load is purely dual credit courses. One of the most rewarding parts of his career is offering students an opportunity to earn a college credit course. Frank had been teaching dual credit since 2014. He holds a teaching certification for Mathematics, 6th grade through 12th grade.

Jade

Jade earned a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in marketing. In addition, she has a Master's degree in Educational Administration and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. Jade started teaching when she was 23 years old. She began teaching dual credit courses in 2009. She is currently teaching Entrepreneurship and Principles of Marketing dual credit courses. In addition, Jade holds a Principal certification, Early Childhood through 12th grade and Office Education, 6th-12th grades. Providing an opportunity for students to earn an associate degree by taking dual credit courses while they are in high school has been a rewarding experience for Jade.

Robert

Robert earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master of Arts degree in English with a concentration in composition rhetoric and pedagogy. Robert started his career in the education field in 1993. He had been teaching dual credit courses since 2012. He also teaches an AP course. Robert holds a lifetime teaching certification in English Language Arts, 6th through 12th grade. He also holds an English Language Learner teaching certification. Robert indicated that he had to submit his application to teach a dual credit course two years in a

row as there were not enough students interested in taking the class in 2010. He describes the application process to be considered for a dual credit teaching position as a convoluted process. Luckily, the dual credit course he is teaching has gained popularity since 2012. Looking ahead in terms of educational pursuit, Robert is thinking of going to Law school as he is also interested in forensics.

Shawn

Shawn has traveled and lived in different states such as Washington, California, Nebraska, and Texas. He lived in Mexico as well. He received a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering and a Master's degree in Mathematics teaching. Shawn holds a teaching certification in Math, 8th through 12th grade. He had been teaching since 2005. Shawn started teaching dual credit courses in 2018. He is currently teaching a dual credit course and Algebra 1 classes. Provision of assistance to his students when working on problems is one of the most rewarding experiences for Shawn. In addition, during the commencement ceremonies, he loves watching his dual credit students graduate from high school with an associate degree.

Flynn

Flynn was born in the United States but was raised in another country. Flynn was a first-generation college student. He is very thankful that he had teachers and counselors who helped him fill out college applications when he was in high school, as college was not on his radar. As a teacher, he is very passionate about offering guidance and support to high school students and their families to pursue post-secondary education. Flynn has a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, a Master's degree in Mathematics, and a Doctorate. He started his career as an engineer and then moved to education two decades and a half ago. Before working as a high school teacher, he was a professor at Nordville Texas Community College. He started teaching at the high school

in 2006. Flynn began teaching dual credit courses in 2014. He holds a Texas teaching certification in math, 6th through 12th grade.

Mary

Mary is passionate about teaching. She had been teaching since 1999. She had been teaching dual credit courses since 2011. Mary also teaches Catholic Church Education classes at her parish. Mary describes herself as a workaholic, as she dedicates many hours of the day accomplishing her many responsibilities as an English II and a dual credit course teacher. Mary earned a Master's degree in English and holds a teaching certification in English, 6th through 12th grade. Seeing the students graduate with a high school diploma and an associate degree is the most rewarding experience for Mary as a dual credit teacher. Her students who enter post-secondary education as a junior usually come back sharing their success stories in college at a young age, making Mary very proud.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah had been teaching since 2012. Before teaching, Jeremiah was in law enforcement for 15 years. Some years of his law enforcement career included being part of the school district police department. When the school district ran out of funding for the police department, Jeremiah worked as a teacher for the Alternative Education Placement school in the district. When an opening came up for a Criminal Justice teacher at the high school, Jeremiah took the job. He holds a Generalist- 4th through 8th grade and a Manual trade teaching certification, with an emphasis on Criminal Justice. He pursued a Master's degree in Criminal Justice with an emphasis in Leadership and Management. After obtaining his Master's degree, Jeremiah started the process to become a dual credit instructor. Jeremiah had been teaching dual credit since 2019.

Janet

Janet earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and a Master of Arts in Spanish Literature. In addition, she holds a Spanish teaching certification. Janet had been teaching Spanish since 2004. She enjoys teaching Spanish. Her focus is on helping students improve their communication skills in Spanish and create a solid cultural awareness among students. Janet had been teaching dual credit since 2014. For Janet, it is extremely rewarding for her to be a part of a student's success. Over the years, she witnessed how former students have become successful professionals. As an educator, Janet continues to play a role in empowering and helping students acquire the necessary skills to achieve that level of success.

Misty

Misty teaches Chemistry at a public secondary school. She started her career in the education field in 1987. She holds a secondary chemistry teaching certification. She was a teacher in the middle school for many years before moving on to high school to teach chemistry. She is passionate about teaching and working with students on both sides of the spectrum. Misty earned her Master's degree in Secondary Education and a Master's in Science and Chemistry. She earned a Master's degree in Chemistry to provide an opportunity for students to earn college credit while in high school. Misty had been teaching dual credit since 2011. She is also an adjunct faculty for Nordville Texas Community College in the Summer. She loves being able to teach advanced chemistry to students pursuing their associate degrees.

Felicity

Felicity was in the service industry before becoming an integral part of the education field. She felt that the service industry prepared her to handle many students in the classroom who have unique needs that need to be met. She earned a Master's degree in Literature and

Cultural Studies. Felicity holds a Reading teaching certificate, 7th grade through 12th grade, and an English Language Learner certificate. She had been teaching since 2014 and was teaching dual credit since 2018. Felicity loves having academic freedom when it comes to teaching dual credit students. However, according to Felicity, academic freedom was recently disrupted as the dual credit program moved to the online learning platform.

Sheldon

Sheldon started his teaching career in another country in 1999 and loved what he was doing. He was teaching a dual-language program. He later decided to come back to the United States and sought a teaching career here in 2002. He earned a Master's degree and has completed the required courses for a Doctoral program. He holds a Composite Social Studies 6th through 12th grade teaching certification. Sheldon had been teaching since 2002. He had been teaching dual credit since 2010. Sheldon loves the fact that he can challenge thinking among the students with his role as an educator. He considers thinking as a great gift and an essential tool. As a history teacher, Sheldon sets high expectations for his students and guides them in taking the history content and process to the next level.

Allan

Allan served in the U. S. Marine Corps for four years before he started teaching. He earned a Bachelor's degree in English and two Master's degrees: Information Technology and Educational Leadership. He holds a teaching certification in English, Information Technology, and Educational Leadership. Allan started teaching in 2008. He had been teaching dual credit since 2015. As much as he is passionate about teaching, he plans to venture out and become a school district leader for Instructional Technology. In the meantime, Allan considers it very

rewarding to teach college-level introductory computer courses. He sees his job as an opportunity to get students prepared for the subsequent college-level courses.

Faith

Faith is a proud Texan and a child of a migrant family. She graduated from a university in South Texas with a major in Psychology. She ended up turning in her minor, anthropology, into another major. Since 2000, Faith worked on and off, mainly in South America, working on archaeological and anthropological projects. She also held a job as a curator in a museum. She worked as an education coordinator for the museum as well. She caught a glimpse of what Social Studies teachers do when they go to the museum to enhance student understanding of a lesson. Faith holds a teaching certification for Composite Social Studies, 6th through 12th grade. She had been teaching since 2012 and had been teaching dual credit since 2013.

Results

The results of the study are presented under two headings: theme development and research questions responses. The information provided under theme development is organized into thematic categories and subthemes that elaborate and provide detailed data from each collection method, including participant quotes. The five themes and subthemes supported the research questions of the study. The information provided in the research question responses presents narrative answers to the central question and three guiding questions. In addition, several participants' quotes relevant to the research questions are provided.

Theme Development

This study sought to understand the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas. All the teachers who participated in the study answered a total of 20 questions during the virtual interview. The dual credit teachers also participated in a

photo interviewing technique where they chose a picture that illustrates their impressions or experiences of teaching dual credit courses. Two of the participants brought their photographs, and 13 of the participants chose an image from a selection I provided. I also engaged in document analysis to triangulate the data. The interview, photo interviewing technique, and document analysis focused on answering the central question and the three guiding questions. Analysis of data gathered from the three data collection strategies resulted in the identification of themes and subcategories.

The findings from this study are presented under five different themes: (a) upholding college standards, (b) institutionalized expectations, (c) key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, (d) double-edged experiences, and (e) training and support. Subthemes for each category were identified and are presented to provide a greater understanding of the participants' experience with the phenomenon. Participant quotations are integrated into each category to deepen understanding of the complex processes by which the participants experienced the phenomenon. The spoken words from participants were transcribed verbatim to accurately represent their voices.

Theme 1: Upholding college standards. Upholding college standards was the first theme identified during data analysis. Participants have a deep understanding of their role as instructors of a course that counts for college credit. Vera explained succinctly that dual credit partner colleges “want to know that their courses at the high schools are being taught as college courses.” Although the teachers dealt with high school students at the secondary home campus, they understood that the course expectations must be similar to those taught in the college setting. The participants indicated that they must follow the standards set by Nordville Texas Community College. Frank claimed that “they have expectations laid out by point” for dual

credit teachers. Mary stated that NTCC had “everything laid out point by point, kind of a roadmap.” Dual credit teachers are expected to provide rigor and follow the curriculum and syllabus set by the partner college. In addition, NTCC goes through accreditation through the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), so the dual credit teachers are expected to adhere to high standards set by the accrediting organization. The sub-themes for the first theme can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Sub-Themes of Upholding College Standards

Sub-Themes	Theme
Rigor Curriculum and Syllabus Accreditation	Upholding College Standards

Rigor. Provision of rigorous instruction is essential to maintain the integrity of dual credit courses. The instruction being offered in the dual credit classes must be of the same quality and rigor as the courses being offered at the college level. Robert indicated that NTCC wants to “know that their courses at the high schools are being taught as college courses and on par with them.” Therefore, the high school students taking dual credit classes are held to the same standard as college students. About 87% of the high school dual credit teachers who participated in the study mentioned rigor as an essential factor in upholding the college standard in their courses. Gerald stated the following:

When you look at teaching dual credit for the college, it revolves around developing a high level of rigor. If you are teaching to the standards of the college, you're going above and beyond what the high school needs you to do. You just operate at that level as a dual credit teacher.

Sheldon understood that he was dealing with high school students, so he approached rigor in his dual credit course in a unique way:

I really try to elevate the high school philosophies and expectations to meet the NTCC expectations. You cannot have separate expectations, at least in my belief; you have just to have one and stick to the one on the higher ed. I tell students, this is the NTCC expectation. You are a high school student, but when you're in this class, you're also an NTCC student. If you are able to elevate the thinking of the student, then I think they are able to meet that expectation. I would like to consider it a rigorous class. This is a college class, and I treat it as such. So, when it comes to expectations or rigor, it is the same expectation in the high school class because it is a dual course, they're getting NTCC credit, but I cannot lower the expectations because they are high school students. So, instead of lowering the bar, I ask them to raise the bar to meet the expectations of NTCC.

The participants in the study were aware that maintaining the standards set by NTCC was an utmost priority. However, most of the participants in the study felt that the dual credit courses taught at the high school level are often criticized. Robert exclaimed that “there is a constant questioning, coming from that direction, about the level of rigor; whether or not the courses are really college-level courses.” Robert was referring to NTCC questioning the rigor of dual credit courses taught at the high school level. NTCC observes the course twice a year, and Robert exclaimed, “sending someone once a semester certainly isn't going to give them much of a real understanding of what's going on with the courses.”

Moreover, NTCC questions students' grades, especially when almost the entire class earns solid A's and B's. Dual credit teachers argued that the students they teach in their courses

are typically different from those attending community college. Students who are taking college credit courses while in high school are bound to matriculate in four-year universities. Felicity, Robert, and Frank indicated that these students have the time to commit and be very attentive to their studies, even though they are in high school. Robert concluded that NTCC has a “very big chip on their shoulder about their reputation as a college.”

As dual credit teachers affiliated with NTCC, participants were often hired as adjuncts in the summer, giving them opportunities to get together with their college counterparts. A couple of participants heard criticism regarding the rigor of dual credit courses. Misty stated:

It was discouraging when colleagues would make comments that high school teachers do not have any business teaching a college-level course. I even had one professor as I was getting out of an adjunct faculty meeting, “Oh, you're teaching the dummy class.”

Criticism such as the one described above often led to a feeling of subservience among dual credit teachers. Despite this, dual credit teachers persevered to provide quality in the courses they teach. Sheldon described:

I think there is a sense of inferiority among some dual credit teachers: that dual enrollment teachers aren't as tough as NTCC professors or college professors. Therefore, I hold myself at a higher level and expect my students to perform at a higher level so that when my students end up going to take classes at NTCC or another college after high school graduation, students feel it is easier.

Students often visit their teachers after a semester or so in college. The participants indicated that former students corroborated the rigor provided by their teachers in dual credit courses when these visits occurred. Robert, Mary, Allan, and Sheldon felt proud that the rigor

they provide in dual credit courses helped students transitioned smoothly in post-secondary education. Sheldon stated:

Students are telling me that they are appreciative. They say thank you for teaching me how to do all this, because when they get to college, their college professors are not teaching them how to do citation correctly; they already know. Students are sitting in a class with 20- or 21-year-old, because they have their associate degrees now. They are taking junior- senior level classes, and their classmates are looking at them, wondering how they know how to do a lot of college stuff.

Robert mentioned that it was empowering to hear from former students firsthand that the rigor he provided in the courses he taught prepared the students with whatever came their way in college. He stated:

To hear that from my students is very encouraging. I was teaching the curriculum right, it was appropriate, and it helped them in the upper level. And for students coming from an impoverished area like ours is very rewarding. I think it makes me emotional. Oh yeah, it felt empowering.

As empowering as the stories come from students regarding their preparation for dual credit courses, the participants regarded the framework of NTCC's curriculum and syllabus as an integral part of the entire process.

Curriculum and syllabus. The curriculum and syllabus utilized by the participants of the study when teaching dual credit courses are set by the partner college. Gerald mentioned that the "curriculum is very straightforward, and they're going to give you a curriculum that's already been tried and proven." All participants noted that NTCC expects dual credit teachers to follow the curriculum they were provided. Frank stated:

As far as the curriculum and syllabus go, whatever curriculum I am instructed to follow from NTCC is the curriculum that I follow at the high school. We are expected to cover all of the material from NTCC. And we have very little extra time to deviate from it.

So, as far as the curriculum is concerned, we do not have any extra time to maybe get into very specific elements of TEKS that we are missing. We adhere to the NTCC curriculum and syllabus because this is the expectation from our department at the college. The expectation in every meeting that we have with our department is that we must comprehensively cover our topic list.

While the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the current curriculum standards set by the State of Texas for high schools, all the dual credit teachers who participated in the study knew that they must adhere to the NTCC curriculum. Shawn referenced this when he stated:

As far as the curriculum, we always follow NTCC standards, not the TEKS set by the State. Yeah, it has to be the NTCC standards, especially in this situation since we're not really testing them. There is no district test for our class; we just basically go by with what NTCC tells us.

This does not mean, however, that the teachers completely disregard the TEKS. A couple of the participants mentioned that they found a way to integrate what is on the TEKS and what is being asked by NTCC. For example, Jade pointed out that there are some elements of the TEKS in the curriculum provided by NTCC. She remarked:

As far as the dual credit curriculum, we have got to follow the NTCC curriculum. The TEKS, I do not want to say they go out the window, because a lot of them are aligned to

what the college course is. But there might be more requirements; there are more standards that need to be met with NTCC versus the high school course.

One participant commented that while the course learning objectives embedded in NTCC's curriculum is very detailed; there are some similarities with the TEKS. Allan pointed out that TEKS are incorporated in what he taught and always carefully cover what the college required. He stated:

A lot of the course learning objectives are only for NTCC, but some are aligned to TEKS. As a dual credit teacher, you have to kind of balance, I guess, between the two and also make sure you take care of what NTCC wants you to do. But at the same time, we have to make sure we take care of what high school needs to do. I mean, if you prepare students for a college-level course and they're doing what they are supposed to do for that course, high school should be taken care of as well.

As detailed and rigorous as the college curriculum that the participants have to follow, three participants indicated that there were some missing components. Mary, for one, revealed that "TEKS require British literature their senior year, and it is difficult to incorporate with an NTCC course objective; they don't mesh." Furthermore, Felicity brought up that since she taught a stacked class, where Advanced Placement and dual credit were combined, she was obliged to find a way to integrate the two curricula. She also compared the AP and dual credit curricula. She stated:

I try my best to marry as many things as possible. For AP Language and Composition, students are required to compose three different modes: synthesis, rhetorical analysis, and argument piece. NTCC requires the argument piece. So, I try to, and I guess what you could say like a double-dip. Of course, we are doing stuff for NTCC because the number

one goal is for students to get college credit. When it comes to the AP exam, I show them the similarities there. I will say that the NTCC curriculum is not as rigorous as the College Board curriculum. I brought that up, and others have also brought that up to our NTCC department head. But they do not want to see any AP stuff. What they don't realize is that, and I hate to say it, theirs is just more watered down, in my opinion.

Regardless of the differences, Felicity understood that she must abide by the NTCC standards. While all dual credit teachers know that they must follow the curriculum and syllabus set by the college, the high school administrators recognize that this is part of the dual credit program policy. Vera remarked:

High School is pretty accepting of the curriculum, the syllabus, and the grading policies of the college, so I pretty much follow the NTCC requirements for the curriculum and the syllabus. My supervisor at the high school level is perfectly fine with me submitting the documents that are necessary for the college. I do not have to do an extra document for her.

Mary further reiterated that since she started teaching dual credit courses in 2011, her school administrators confidently trusted her to follow the guidelines set by the college for all matters related to the course. She declared:

From the beginning, my high school left it in my hands to know what to do. And basically, there was an agreement that I would follow NTCC guidelines. So, my English class became my 1301 or 1302, so the requirements for that class were my English 4. So, the curriculum was NTCC curriculum. My department had everything laid out, such as the length of essays, activities, quizzes, and discussions. Everything, all the curriculum, and syllabus were based upon what NTCC required, and the administrators of my high

school were always accepting of that. So that is basically how I run those dual credit classes.

While all the participants acknowledged that the NTCC curriculum must be followed, Misty revealed some aspects that dual credit teachers must pay attention to. She said:

Rigor, academic honesty, communication, teamwork, course learning objectives specific to the subject matter, all those expectations are incorporated and embedded in the curriculum. For general chemistry, the course syllabus and assessment activities have specific labs that need to be conducted. Projects and presentations are also requirements. So, I have incorporated rigor, academic honesty, communication, teamwork, and critical thinking into those activities.

Along with the curriculum, the participants talked about the importance of creating a syllabus and following the template provided by NTCC. The participants called the template a shell. The participants understood the importance of laying their expectations for the dual credit courses. Sheldon specified:

One thing to always keep in mind is that the syllabus is the Constitution, for me. If a student ever has a question about their grade, I am going to refer them to the syllabus. I would recommend any new dual enrollment to have a very detailed, foolproof syllabus to minimize any issues that may arise. Anything that's in your syllabus basically becomes the law of the class and allows you to do what needs to be done.

Along with other participants, Robert did not have any issue in creating and following a syllabus, according to NTCC standards. However, Robert argued that the syllabus was very limiting in the era of distance learning due to the COVID pandemic. He stated:

I always built my syllabus with the idea that we were teaching the student to be academically successful in all areas. Right now, just as an example, my grade book for my dual class has 12 grades. And we have only been in classes for three weeks. I am using the syllabus that they built and incorporating it into the course, and there are too many little assignments that are time-consuming for the students. I'll certainly be talking to them about how the online courses were developed, and there's just no consideration for the problem right now with distance learning. There are just too many assignments in one week.

Felicity added that in the past, they have so much academic freedom, even to what was in the syllabus. Most recently, things changed as they transitioned to online learning. She also commented that major “things started changing ever since NTCC was getting their accreditation” from the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). Misty noted that prior to NACEP, her syllabus, a 14-page document, was sent to the department chair before starting the semester for approval. The syllabus was then revised at least two or three times before dual credit teachers were approved to teach for the semester. When NACEP came along, she was required to toss out the syllabus that she had submitted for revisions. Misty was required to use a syllabus from a professor from NTCC so that it would be aligned or it would mirror the same curriculum as NTCC. Misty further stated that NTCC’s pursuit of accreditation caused several changes to occur, such as the number of meetings they had to attend and tasks that needed to be done.

Accreditation. The participants who have been teaching dual credit for a long time posited that the increased amount of what was being required of them was due to the fact that

NTCC was going through accreditation from NACEP. Mary, who had been teaching dual credit for 10 years, wished differently. She stated:

There are more things asked of us now, or just in certain ways than before. I guess you may say I had it easy starting, and now, I kind of wish it was backward because now they have more expectations. I wish they had done that 10 years ago when I started, and not now. Well, I mean, it's good that they are doing it now, but I think that I would have grown a lot more 10 years ago. They let me do it a certain way for so many years, I did not even know that's not what they wanted. So that's kind of a negative experience for me, but it did not prevent me from doing my job; it just made me better.

Jeremiah had a similar experience as Mary. He indicated that they let him teach the dual credit course in a certain way for years, and all of a sudden, NTCC wanted things done differently when they were seeking accreditation. As a result, Jeremiah had to redo or change many things to comply with what his department chair was asking. Vera echoed the same sentiment:

I will say that NTCC has been more active in the last couple of years as they've been working on accreditation. So, we have seen a lot of changes and more governance over the decisions that are made by dual enrollment instructors. So, they've been a lot more active about asking us questions about our percentage breakdown for the work in our courses.

Misty specifically talked about changes brought upon by the pursuit of NACEP accreditation, which she thought were cumbersome.

When I first started working as a dual faculty, I was mainly in isolation. I would only see my department chair if I were going to be observed or they were going to inspect the lab.

But it was almost like if you know, they are over there. When NACEP came into the picture, everything changed; they assigned a mentor. We met twice per semester. We would have to attend department meetings on Fridays, which wasn't always convenient because I had to get permission from my principal to attend those Friday meetings. We were required to attend those with the assigned mentor. They also started to provide more professional development for us, especially using the blackboard platform.

Despite the changes brought upon by the NACEP accreditation by NTCC, half of the participants did not mention the added tasks. Frank brought up NACEP from a different standpoint. He referenced accreditation as an essential component of maintaining college standards, especially with students. According to Frank, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) "likes to hear students say that they are NTCC college students; that they identify themselves as college students."

Rigor, curriculum, syllabus, and accreditation were the three subthemes that make up the theme of upholding college standards. The participants understood the importance of providing rigorous instruction in their dual credit courses. The participants unanimously agreed that when it comes to curriculum and syllabus, they have to follow NTCC. The participants mentioned that the accreditation process brought changes in the dual credit program at NTCC.

Theme 2: Institutionalized expectations. The participants in the study regarded the Memorandum of Understanding (which was later referred to as Interlocal Agreement) as sacred. In addition, participants mentioned that the school district and NTCC have grading policies, evaluations, and academic freedom requirements. The dual credit teachers learned how to manage their dual roles to keep up with the requirements of the school district and NTCC. The sub-themes for the second theme can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Sub-Themes of Institutionalized Expectations

Sub-Themes	Theme
Memorandum of Understanding Grading Policies Teacher Evaluation Managing a Dual Role	Institutionalized Expectations

Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum of Understanding was emphasized by NTCC frequently. Five participants mentioned that the MOU was on the agenda whenever they attended department meetings and constantly brought up when issues arose. Frank stated:

A lot of times, questions arise, and we are reminded constantly by the chair that our districts have agreed to this. We get that a lot in email communications from the director of dual enrollment programs- that our districts have agreed to adhere to the standards and that if there is any issue that we should bring it up.

Resources such as textbooks were a common issue that the participants brought up. Sheldon claimed that textbooks were “supposed to be replenished every three to five years.” When textbooks were up for adoption, dual credit teachers spoke to the high school administrators about it. Shawn declared that there were “ongoing changes in textbook requirements.” This was becoming a challenge for his subject area. He said:

The books, requirements, publishers, and software change every year. Through the Memorandum of Understanding, the school district has to provide the students their books. So, the problem is, every year, we may spend \$20,000 on all different books, and the following year, change again to a different book, so another five to 10 thousand dollars. Then, when you get the books, you also buy the software licenses. As a dual

credit teacher, I feel like that is the biggest obstacle because I have to learn the book all over again.

Frank, who worked as a dual credit teacher, teaching the same course in the same high school, concurred with Shawn's claims. Frank pointed out that in the MOU, the school district has agreed to "comply with what the college is asking," such as providing adequate resources such as textbooks. Moreover, Misty and Sheldon mentioned that part of the MOU agreement was to ensure that classrooms comply with the acceptable parameters set by NTCC for the high schools to offer biology and chemistry dual credit courses on campus. Misty exclaimed:

They would come to visit; they would inspect the lab if certain materials were missing. I was asked to show vendor quotes to prove that those materials had been ordered. Also, when I would be observed in the Fall, they would come in and ask, let me see your textbooks. They wanted to see the textbooks; they wanted to see the lab manuals.

Furthermore, Misty talked about the unavailability of resources she needed at the beginning of the school year. This made her apprehensive as NTCC was fastidious about that. Misty revealed that NTCC "has a certain way of doing things, and they're very strict" to what is agreed upon on the MOU. Participants mentioned that NTCC regularly references the MOU, empowering dual credit teachers to speak up about the agreement. Frank declared:

In the departmental meetings and professional development, the Dean of the Dual Enrollment reminds us that there is an agreement; there is a partnership between NTCC and our respective high school in the district. The goal is that we are going to work hand in hand so that we can create that college experience for our dual credit students.

Robert commented that the school district he works for understands the MOU and "has been generous" in allowing the dual credit teachers to do what they need to do for the college.

The school district did not meddle in their affairs, including grades, because they trust that the dual credit teachers did what they were supposed to do.

Grading Policies. NTCC and the school districts have their grading policy. Participants in the study indicated two grading policies they abide by, one for the college and one for the high school. As a result, students receive two different grades. Jade indicated that the grading policies when she started as a dual credit instructor changed. She exclaimed:

It did not used to be like that. I remember back when I first started; they had to get the same grade at the high school and the college. Over the years, it changed. I think it changed because we go longer in high school. We have like a week before and the week after the college dismisses, so we need to give them something to do.

Nevertheless, the participants reported two different grades for students taking dual credit courses. Frank stated that for NTCC, teachers were only required to report one letter grade at the end of the semester. For high school, dual credit teachers were expected to report six weeks grade every six weeks. The grading weights were different as well.

Vera commented that the grades for high school differed from the grades at the college because the breakdown of the course was different. Allan explained that the NTCC professors made the decisions regarding the different weights on the assignments while the high school was set in stone. The high schools followed the 60-40 % rule. Frank and Allan pointed out that 60% of the students' high school grades at the end of each grading period come from minor assignments, and 40% comes from major assignments. With NTCC, Frank said that the flip side was true. With NTCC, Frank and Allan pointed out that the college emphasized more on the final exams. Frank stated:

Exams are worth more. We are talking about a final exam worth 25% and chapter exams worth 45%, so you're looking there at 70%. Whereas the classwork that they do is minimized. You know, roughly about 10% in various components. So, you are looking at 60-40 versus 70-30. And there is obviously, mathematically, the probability of a great discrepancy. It is something that I stress to students.

The participants indicated that they discussed the discrepancy between the high school and college grades at the beginning of the semester. Misty mentioned that she informed her students that the NTCC official grade was “not going to mirror the grade posted on the high school portal.” Frank encouraged students to discuss the grade discrepancy with their parents as well. This was usually covered during conversations with parents when Frank’s school had an open house. Frank said dual credit teachers needed to be upfront and address the grading policies for both institutions since students will get a high school grade and a college grade for the same dual credit course. Shawn explained:

So, a dual credit student can actually have two different grades. NTCC grade may be different with the high school grade. So, a student can earn a B at the college but will earn an A or C at the high school. Or a student may get a B with the college and also gets a B for high school. But there have been instances when there is a difference in the letter grade earned for college and high school.

During the photo interviewing technique session, Shawn specifically chose Figure 1

to emphasize the grading disparity between the high school and the college.

Figure 1. Dual Credit Incongruence

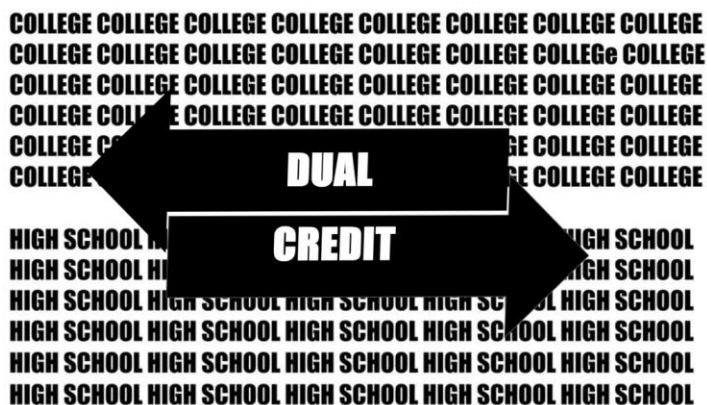


Figure 1. Schematic diagram to show two different expectations or tasks for dual credit teachers.

Shawn explained:

You can see where it says dual and then credit. In that situation, you see the students are, of course, getting credit for two of them, so basically for college and the high school. So, you can see how the arrows are pointing in different directions. So, students might be thinking about getting a grade for this class, and then also going to get a grade for the other class, even though it's the same thing and they are going to get a great grade for both.

Navigating the divergence when it comes to grades for a dual course is specifically significant because it has implications for high school ranking. Vera tried to navigate it cautiously, especially with the high school grading policy, as the dual credit students are usually the ones in the top 25, the salutatorian or valedictorian.

The grades for a dual credit course are posted online through two different platforms. Participants indicated that college grades are posted on Blackboard, and the high school grades are posted on the high school portal. The high school portal can be accessed by parents, but not

the Blackboard unless the students themselves share their login username and password. Parents who understand the differences between high school and college grades usually try to get grade information from high school teachers. The participants, however, indicated that they could not provide college grades because of FERPA. Misty indicated that she had parents that were upset because she would not release the grade. Misty exclaimed, “Our hands were tied; we are not allowed to do that because of FERPA.”

When it came to changing grades due to calculation error or other reasons dual credit teachers merit the grade change, Flynn indicated that it was possible for both institutions, but the situations were different. He stated:

The students in high school, if they don't pass the first semester, I can always do a grade change for as long as they come in and do the work and make up their assignments, exams, or missing work. You can pretty much do the same thing at the college level. The only difference is that they are no longer your students. So, you kind of have to work with a student outside of the class so that they can do whatever is missing; you would have to give them an incomplete. In both situations, it allows me to help the students.

Teacher Evaluation. The participants of the study were evaluated formally at least twice during the year. One formal evaluation came from NTCC, and another came from the high school. Whether it came from the high school or NTCC, the evaluation became a source of efficacy for the participants. Allan revealed:

During my first-year teaching dual credit, we had a department meeting before the semester started. I guess just like anywhere else, there is always a select few that are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. So, the department chair and the entire

department are telling us to follow certain guidelines. I had to think of following the high school guidelines as well. So, to me, it was a little overwhelming. So, at one point, I did question myself if I can do this. And then the department chair from the college came and observed me. He loved it. He basically put me at ease. The assistant department chair has come by a couple times and observed, and they gave me the confidence to just keep doing what I am doing.

Participants mentioned that they received a positive evaluation, either from NTCC and/or the high school during the current school year as well as in the past. Faith pointed out that she had not received any negative feedback from NTCC. Her evaluator, the department chair, praised her for bringing real-world examples into the classroom. It was a common practice for her to do a food project in her anthropology class since one way to learn some cultures is through what they eat. Flynn commented:

The observation that NTCC implements, they are always very surprised at how much we do as dual credit high school teachers. They even say, “You have this wonderful lesson, and you know we, in college, always lecture.” So, it's a different environment, different style of teaching, I think, probably, you know, the instructors at the college level, they're more concerned about content, and not really pedagogy, you know, so in the high school, we have to go above and beyond to help the diverse students that we have.

For many years, teacher evaluations for both NTCC and the high schools were done in person. The exception was the school year 2020-2021, when most instruction was done remotely because of the COVID pandemic. Teacher evaluations for the school year 2020-2021 were done differently. The high schools did the evaluation by observing the online classes. NTCC did it differently. Participants mentioned that NTCC sent someone to go through their Blackboard

course. Frank indicated that NTCC was “going based off of what they saw online, and what they perceived were items that were missing.” Vera stated:

They just looked at the modules. Unfortunately, they didn't talk to me about that, and they didn't ask me which section he should go look at, even though all the sections are the same in the material. I had one section where every unit was ready to go. And it just wasn't visible to the students and then I would just release it to the other sections. But they gave him access to a section that didn't have that, that I was releasing it to, so he only saw six weeks' worth when he went in and not all the ones that were ready to be revealed week by week. And so, they docked me on my evaluation because I didn't have all of my units prepared, but if they had just asked me, I would have directed them to the other section where everything was prepared.

Frank and Mary shared the same sentiments as Vera. Moreover, Mary revealed that the school year 2020-2021 was a stressful year for her and the online evaluation feedback caught up to her. Nevertheless, the participants mentioned that the high school expectation was for the teachers to use Google Classroom as a Learning Management System. However, NTCC expected dual credit teachers to use the Blackboard, not the Google Classroom. The participants mentioned that NTCC was very stringent about the usage of Blackboard. Vera explained:

The evaluation that they did from NTCC has three levels: acceptable, acceptable with corrections, and unacceptable. Like there is no room for you to be exceptional or superior. For the most part, I've been at the acceptable level, and I've been feeling okay about that. But this last semester, they moved me to acceptable with corrections. The reason is because I did not use the blackboard platform as much as they desired for me to do that. I explained to the department chair that the reason that I didn't do that was

because the platform, the blackboard platform, couldn't do what I needed it to do. So, I used a different source to accomplish that, and he assumed that I meant Google Classroom, which they do not like.

As dual credit teachers, the participants understood that they play a dual role. Their ability to navigate the expectations of the high school and the college was dependent upon how they managed their dual role.

Managing a Dual Role. The participants of the study incorporated the expectations and tasks of the high school and NTCC using different approaches. Gerald indicated that the dual credit teacher serves a dual role in “trying to please both” institutions. Despite the duality of what the job entails, Janet mentioned that “student success is ultimately the mission of both NTCC and the high school.” The participants noted that their pedagogical skills were employed to ensure that the high school students taking a dual credit course were successful. Flynn, who used to be one of the instructors at NTCC, revealed that “sometimes dual credit teachers are better teachers than maybe some other professors or some of the instructors at the college” because of their pedagogical skills. Allan mentioned that he received several compliments on pedagogy from his evaluators from NTCC.

Janet chose Figure 2 during the photo interviewing technique session to illustrate her experiences as a dual credit teacher. She declared:

I think this photo is a good representation that captures one of the differences between high school and college, especially when it comes to delivering instruction. For the most part, high school students are not used to long lectures. Collaboration through hands-on activities is a more common way of learning for high school students.

Figure 2. Two Learning Environments

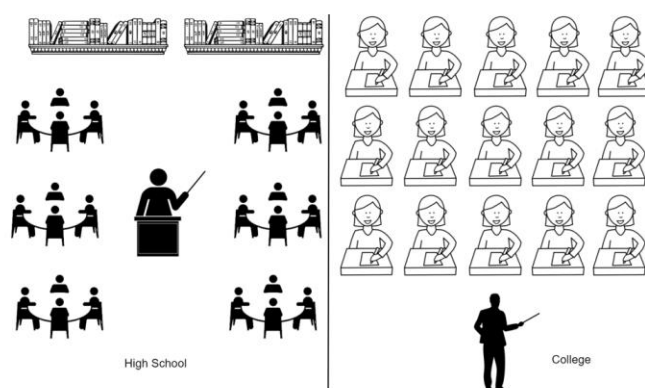


Figure 2. Schematic of the two learning environments where dual credit courses can be taken. Students take dual credit courses at the high school and/or on a college campus.

Two other teachers chose Figure 2 as the image that represented their dual credit experiences. Faith chose it to represent the duality of her role and the two types of learning environment that she can transition in and out of as a dual credit teacher. On the other hand, Vera chose the image to represent her experience from a different perspective. She stated:

I like that one because on a daily basis, I feel like that. I feel like I'm trying to do the right part in the left part environment. Notice that the students are only in one or the other environment. It's hard to feel like you're a college student when you're on a high school campus. It's hard to feel like a college instructor when you're on a high school campus. So, I liked that there's like a division line there between the two types of classrooms.

Janet elaborated Vera's idea. She commented that the students in her dual credit classes did not see her as their college instructor because they saw her at the high school campus on a regular basis. Janet brought up the fact that "students detach themselves from that college experience and sometimes want to think a college course will mirror the high school setting." As a result, issues pertaining to deadline arose because the high school's end of the semester was

different from NTCC. Janet tried to bridge the gap by being more lenient, but not as much. Allan tried to work with the students, without sacrificing rigor. He provided just enough assistance as they are transitioning from high school to college-level type of attitude toward their work. Flynn discussed that as a dual credit teacher, he was provided the opportunity to teach and provide assistance to students daily because of his accessibility on campus.

Being a high school teacher on campus who happens to be the instructor of a dual credit course sometimes required a participant to teach the College Board and NTCC curriculum in a stacked class, called Advanced Placement/Dual Credit (AP/DC). To accomplish this, Felicity tried to “marry as many things as possible.” She also showed her students the similarities between the two curricula. Jeremiah stated that he tried to “intertwine them,” ensuring the NTCC requirements were being met. He claimed that he “cannot mix them too much,” but he tried to do that, “where they kind of mirror each other.”

To manage their dual roles, three participants did the balancing act. Allan, Shawn, and Flynn tried to balance both the expectations of NTCC and the school district. They talked about the fact that in some cases, they might have to go by what NTCC says for a specific task and do what the ISD is requiring as well. Shawn provided the grading policy as an example. They used the syllabus for the NTCC grade and followed the school district’s policy of 40% and 60% for the six-week grading period. Allan remarked:

You have to kind of balance between the two and also make sure you take care of what NTCC wants you to do. But at the same time, we have to make sure we take care of what high school needs to do. I mean if you prepare them for a college level course, then, they should be ready for any high school-level course; high school should be taken care of as well.

On the other hand, Sheldon approached his dual role differently. He agreed that the role was like “a marriage, and there's a lot of negotiating back and forth.” For the most, however, he compartmentalized. He said:

I am really good at compartmentalizing. So, I really have two separate jobs. I have my NTCC bosses, and I have the expectations and rigor that I must meet, but I also have the high school expectations that also need to be met. A lot of times I'll have to tell students, the way that I separate it, is that I say, if I'm talking about something that needs to be done in the class, always assume it's about NTCC. And if it's about something else. I will tell you this is for a high school grade, or this is a high school assignment. So that's like the high school side, but really, it's just compartmentalizing the different roles that I have with the different expectations at each position also holds.

Five participants indicated that some elements overlap. Mary pointed out that one of the two things both institutions “have in common is that they want students to achieve success.” Both the high schools and the college have high expectations. As dual credit teachers, Mary claimed that as dual credit teachers, they were getting students where they need to be. Jade claimed that when elements overlapped, or an alignment and similarities for both institutions existed, it was easy for teachers to implement them.

On the other hand, three participants commented that they usually felt conflicted. Sheldon indicated that there have “been experiences where it becomes a power struggle between the expectations with NTCC and the expectations of high school,” but he had been able to find a balance between those two. Frank further commented:

I would say that you get into a gray area of what master is it that you serve. Because the fact that it is dual credit means they're getting high school credit and college credit. And

to me, the fact that we are allowed to teach these college-level courses says that number one, first and foremost, the organization that I serve is the college because they have allowed us to put their stamp on the course that we're offering.

Vera stated that it was tricky sometimes because “the high school expects the high school and the college expects the college.” An example she pointed out was the grading policy. When it came to NTCC, she did not have to talk to parents about the students’ grades, but at the same time, she felt that as an employee of the school district, she got paid to do this type of thing. She commented: “I feel a pull in philosophy I can't really 100% fulfill.” Overall, Vera tried to stick with the expectations of the college because students were earning college credit.

As dual credit teachers, participants felt that the work was doubled up. Vera stated that they have to deal with two different timeframes from both institutions, grading policies, teacher evaluations, and staff development. To manage the dual responsibilities, Flynn advised that dual credit teachers have to be “flexible to meet the expectations of both institutions.” Frank agreed because “ultimately, both are focused on student success. One, on high school completion; the other, in attaining a college degree.”

Theme 3: Double edge experiences. Double edge experiences was a theme identified during data analysis as participants discussed their practices as dual credit teachers. The participants talked about their most rewarding and least rewarding experiences, positive and negative experiences, and the positive and negative feedback they received. The sub-themes for the third theme can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Sub-Themes of Double Edge Experiences

Sub-Themes	Theme
Most rewarding vs. Least Rewarding Positive vs. Negative Feedback Positive vs. Negative Experiences	Double-Edge Experiences

Most Rewarding vs. Least Rewarding. Participants of the study declared the most rewarding and least rewarding part of being a dual credit teacher. The most rewarding experiences of the participants involved student success. The least rewarding experiences varied.

Most rewarding. Misty, Shawn, and Robert indicated that the most rewarding part of being a dual credit teacher was challenging thinking and seeing growth in students. Sheldon and Shawn saw the “aha moments” as very rewarding. Robert pointed out that some high school students were ready and capable of college work. He said that “watching them grow and come into their own while still in high school” was the most rewarding part.

Frank said that the most rewarding part of being a dual credit teacher who taught mathematics was being able to help students with their entry-level college math course, which unfortunately serves as a gatekeeper for many students. Frank elaborated:

Many of our students will not attain a college degree simply because they cannot get past an introductory math class. But if those students can successfully pass my college algebra course and most of them do, I have now increased the likelihood of them attending a college degree. How transformative is that for my community that I somehow helped open the door for that individual, and then imagine the ripple effect.

Misty considered it rewarding to be able to teach advanced chemistry to students

pursuing their associate degrees. Allan, Faith, Flynn, Mary, Jade, and Vera claimed that the most rewarding part was being a part of the students' academic success and seeing them graduate with their associate degree while they received their high school diploma. Vera revealed:

I pursued my master's degree because I wanted for our students to have the option to have dual credit. I'm glad that that has happened. I've seen a lot of students who really get help financially through the program and you know can complete their associates degree. The most rewarding for me has always been graduation day when the students are getting their associates degree. That, to me, is like one of the greatest accomplishments, both for them and for myself, because I see myself as someone who helps them get there.

Jade and Flynn chose Figure 3 to summarize their experiences as dual credit teachers.

Both participants agreed that seeing the kids graduate with both associate and high school diploma was rewarding. Flynn elaborated that it represented a "very happy day for their families as this is a milestone in their life."

Figure 3. Graduation Cap



Figure 3. Image representing graduation for dual credit students.

Faith mentioned that it was gratifying to see students graduate with an associate degree "without a student debt and encourage them to continue" as the demographics of most students she worked with need this type of assistance. Furthermore, Flynn and Janet stated that it was

rewarding to empower them to continue “advancing their studies at the college level.” Mary expounded this idea when she shared two quotes that she saw on a graduation cap to illustrate her experiences as a dual credit teacher. The quotes were (a) “the rose that grew from concrete,” which came from a poem or a song from Tupac Shakur, and (b) “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Mary elaborated:

The students are like the rose. They're adapting, and they don't give up on their dreams. So, that's kind of how I see my role as a teacher teaching dual credit. Everything is possible. I think that a lot of students are shocked with the kind of work they have to produce once they become an Early College High School student. Then they take the college course for the first time and succeed at it because they didn't give up. They're beautiful, they bloom, and they get to experience success the day they walk down the stage.

Least rewarding. The participants explained that the most rewarding part of their experiences as dual credit instructors was coupled with the least rewarding experiences. Gerald voiced out that the least rewarding aspect of his dual credit role was the presence of stigma. According to Gerald, there is this stigma that dual credit at the high school is “dumbed down and is watered down because the kids are young and not as capable.” While Robert indicated earlier that some kids are capable, he also mentioned that others are not ready for college-level work. Janet commented:

The least rewarding part of teaching dual credit is that although the majority of students already have the idea of college instilled in them, there is still a part of the population of dual credit students who do not commit to the fact that they are college students and therefore must comply with the requirements of said institution. Some

students still believe that the high school system of being able to turn in certain assignments late will save them from failing the course.

Allan, Faith, and Shawn indicated that it was frustrating to get some students to realize that they're taking college-level courses. Allan specifically mentioned that “their maturity level and mentality is still high school.” Faith said that the least rewarding part of her job was “to bring students down to reality when they fail the course. Both Faith and Shawn emphasized that it would affect their GPA and is documented on their college transcript if students fail the entire semester.

Misty, Vera, Sheldon, Robert, and Jeremiah brought up the workload as the least rewarding part of teaching dual credit. Tedious paperwork, staff development, reading redundant emails from NTCC, and the sheer volume of other things that must be done to teach a dual credit course was the least rewarding for the teachers. In addition, the teachers have other high school courses to prepare and the one or more sections of dual credit courses they taught. Jeremiah said that preparing the dual credit courses and having everything on Blackboard starting the school year 2020-2021, because of remote learning catalyzed by the COVID pandemic was the least rewarding part of the job. Sheldon mentioned that he understood “why they're there, so we do it begrudgingly.” However, Misty noted that “the time, effort and expertise of dual enrollment faculty is not commensurate and compensated as dual credit faculty have to put in an extensive amount of hours.”

Gerald, Jade, Mary, Vera, Misty, and Felicity wished that the dual credit teachers get paid more. The stipend they received to teach dual credit courses is now \$350 per semester per course. Misty, Flynn, and Jeremiah unanimously exclaimed that the stipend was not worth it. Jeremiah mentioned that he was doing the job of two people, and Misty exclaimed that she

sometimes had to sacrifice time with family to do the work for dual credit at home. Vera pointed out that when it comes down to it, their salary came from the school district, and their \$350 stipend was not commensurate to the work they did for dual credit. Jade elaborated:

The pay is terrible. I remember in 2005, when there was hardly anything we had to do for NTCC, other than plugging the grade at the end of the semester, the pay was \$350. Fast forward to 16 years later, and it's a whole different ball game. For the same pay and 10 times the amount of work, and they're demanding so much more from us, it almost discourages me from wanting to do it again next year. Because we're not compensated for it, and it's the same situation year after year, you just grow tired, and it's just not worth it anymore sometimes.

Positive vs. negative feedback. Feedback provided to the participants, either from the NTCC department chair or high school administrators were discussed thoroughly. Most participants indicated that they received positive feedback. However, a couple of the participants mentioned negative feedback, while one participant considered the feedback she received as neither positive nor negative.

Positive feedback. The positive feedback was well received by the participants and became one of the sources of efficacy as they fulfilled their responsibilities as dual credit teachers. Gerald pointed out:

I received some very positive feedback regarding my efforts. It was very validating, and it kind of helped me understand that I was going down the right path with what I was trying to achieve with my students. I've always been provided very positive feedback regarding my dual credit course.

The participants indicated that the feedback they received specifically dealt with their

ability to accomplish required tasks and their performance. Janet mentioned that her NTCC department chair has always given her positive feedback for the “different performance levels required of instructors regarding content, presentation, and student engagement.” Janet was proud that she found herself in “good standing having fulfilled and satisfied all program requirements.” Misty’s assistant dean of instruction and department chair always gave her excellent evaluations as they were satisfied with her performance. As a result, Misty was often offered adjunct positions for the summer or in the Fall semester. Misty said she taught during the summer but was currently taking a break from teaching at the college campus. Felicity stated that she always received positive feedback and recently received an affirmation when two administrators visited her teaching a dual credit course online. She mentioned that the administrators were very impressed because of student engagement. Felicity added:

The administrators who came in during the same session were impressed with what was happening in class. They gave me such good feedback. When I talked to my friends who are DC instructors, they tell me nobody talks in class. No one participates; they'll type in the chat, but their voices are not heard. That sounds so depressing; that's not even a classroom.

Furthermore, Jeremiah pointed out that his dual credit course was usually “used as an example for Staff Developments, especially when it came to differentiated learning.” On the other hand, Vera considered the feedback she received recently when she was evaluated based on the content of the Blackboard platform as neither positive nor negative. The rating was acceptable, so she interpreted it as such. Vera, however, mentioned that during in-person instruction and NTCC sent someone to observe the class instruction, she always received

excellent feedback about the rigor level of the course, the expectations, how the course was responding to the requirements, and student engagement.

Negative feedback. Sheldon pointed out that he had a supportive principal who defended him when parents complained. Sheldon received feedback from a few upset parents when he did not accept plagiarized work or when he awarded a zero to students who were cheating were negative. Sheldon brought up the fact that “a parent is going to paint a teacher in the ugliest, nastiest light, to be able to get their kid to pass.”

Faith received negative feedback once from a high school assistant principal. The constructive criticism was for her to avoid providing direct instruction or lecture and “put more stories into it.” Faith was able to connect that her evaluator wanted her to teach the way she teaches her dual credit anthropology courses.

On the other hand, Jade considered negative feedback stemming from lack of attendance to professional development very frustrating. Jade did not attend a Saturday workshop mandated by NTCC as she had previous commitments that day. NTCC was going to withhold her paper and not provide her stipend for the semester if she did not make it up. Jade resolved the issue, but it was a negative experience she will never forget.

Positive vs. negative experiences. The participants shared their positive and negative experiences as dual credit teachers. Both positive and negative experiences were very different from what they considered the most rewarding and least rewarding part of their job.

Positive experiences. Gerald, Janet, Allan, and Shawn pointed out their supportive peers as part of their positive experience. Allan specifically mentioned his fellow dual credit high school teachers in school as they helped each other out as a positive experience. Sometimes, they even engaged in interdisciplinary teaching. Moreover, Allan brought up the college-going

culture on campus as a positive experience for teachers and students. Janet mentioned the student course evaluation feedback and genuine constructive criticism a big part of her positive experience to become a better dual credit instructor. Flynn referenced student presence on the high school campus as a positive experience because of easy access to the provision of assistance to dual credit students.

Felicity, Frank, and Sheldon mentioned that exercising academic freedom in teaching their dual credit courses was considered a positive experience. However, Sheldon mentioned that there was usually a power struggle between college and high school expectations regarding academic freedom. Usually, dual credit teachers cannot discuss specific topics because of students' age and the fact they are still in high school. Felicity mentioned that while she enjoyed the academic freedom at first, she felt that it was taken away when NTCC demanded that dual credit teachers follow a shell or template in terms of content to be taught.

Negative experiences. Gerald and Mary considered the lack of students' motivation who were placed in dual credit courses as a negative experience. Gerald specifically stated that this stemmed from a "school organizational counseling issue." Students were placed in dual credit courses, even if it was not their career path. Gerald mentioned a "lack of awareness and education of what dual credit is about, what students need to do, and how they need to work." Felicity pointed out that the Early College for all set up in some schools was an excellent opportunity for students to earn college credit. Still, many students did not want to be in dual credit classes, so they wanted to drop. Felicity brought up that these students "don't even want to be part of this associate program, but their counselors talk them into this." Moreover, students are "not emotionally ready to be in this class, so they end up getting an F." Vera expounded:

I do feel that there is an unfair push to put students into these courses who may not be ready. And I run into a lot of situations, and this is one of the reasons why I'm not 100% gung-ho about dual credit.

Robert mentioned that dual courses “should be for students who are ready for them.” He indicated that students who demonstrate a high level of proficiency in their Texas Success Initiative (TSI) exam can take dual credit courses, but not for students who failed the TSI a few times and have to retake the “test five-six times with the hope that maybe this time they will pass it.”

Negative experiences mentioned by other participants included lack of resources, most especially at the beginning of the school year. Misty exclaimed that this happened every year. Frank revealed that access to materials such as the textbook was a challenge. As NTCC wanted to stay current, the high school had to go through the adoption cycle. Frank and Shawn mentioned that teachers have to read the book once they adopt the new book to stay current. Frank mentioned that “maybe one or two people from the department “were involved in the process of their textbook selection. He recommended that “NTCC should be more considerate” and obtain more input from the dual credit teachers.

Allan, Faith, and Vera mentioned that having to worry about parents calling regarding the students’ grades can be categorized as part of their negative experiences. The teachers mentioned that FERPA regulations bound them, so there was not much they can do, even when pressured by parents to release grades. Faith indicated that she received that type of pressure from the coaches at the high school.

Another negative experience mentioned by two participants was dealing with the Blackboard before starting the school year 2020-2021 because of remote learning. Shawn stated

that they were trained to use Blackboard, but then the department decided to use the Blackboard Ultra, which was slightly different. Changes such as these were a daunting experience for dual credit teachers, especially when it involved a timeframe for completion. Jeremiah elaborated:

Everything got changed around this past semester. It wasn't explained that well. I did what they wanted me to do. Now we're changing back to something else so basically, I had to redo all the courses again. It is too much work. This was the moment where I was just like, "I don't even want to teach dual credit anymore." I really did think about the amount of work, which is a job for two people.

Other negative experiences mentioned by other participants involved high school issues such as juggling two schedules, dealing with extra-curricular activities, and the many interruptions in teaching dual credit at a high school campus. When it came to the start and end of school for both high school and NTCC, the timeframe was different. Participants pointed out that NTCC usually starts one week later than the high school and ends earlier than high school. Faith mentioned that it was "tough to bridge the gaps."

Furthermore, Shawn and Faith emphasized that dual credit teachers lose a lot of instructional time because they usually administer the STAAR tests. Faith mentioned that she could quickly lose a "whole week of instruction." Furthermore, Janet pointed out that teaching dual credit in the high school setting was a challenging experience because of interruptions such as intercom announcements and students being pulled out of class for various reasons. The participants stated that their dual credit students actively participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports, Band, and UIL academics, so they get pulled out many times. Participation in college trips was another reason why students were usually absent from their dual credit class. Faith indicated that attendance became an issue, which was an obstacle by itself.

Another challenge emphasized by Robert was distance education, which commenced in the latter part of Spring semester 2020 and continued to the following school year. On top of this, Robert mentioned that he needed to keep up with so many emails from NTCC. The emails were usually redundant. He also needed to keep up with the high school emails. Robert revealed:

The email flow just at my school is every five minutes, whether it's relevant to me or not.

The NTCC emails are even more crazy because they send the same email over and over.

For instance, registering for the convocation for January, there were 15 of the same emails.

The sheer amount of information and notifications that needed to be processed by dual credit teachers was challenging. Experiences such as this entail the dual credit teachers to possess skills and characteristics that allow them to succeed in what they do.

Theme 4: Key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching. The participants of the study mentioned many qualities and skills that they employed to do a great job teaching dual credit courses. The characteristics below are what they utilized to teach dual credit successfully and are worth repeating, so they recommended these to brand new dual credit teachers. These characteristics make up the fourth theme, and the sub-themes can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Sub-Themes of Key Factors to Succeed in Dual Credit Teaching

Sub-Themes	Theme
Know the Subject Matter	Key Factors to Succeed in Dual Credit Teaching
Teach the Subject Matter	
Understand the Stakeholders	

Know the subject matter. Gerald recommended that dual credit teachers “become subject matter experts.” Robert was also a firm believer that if you are going to teach dual credit, you need to “be a master of your craft.” He suggested that dual credit teachers “keep studying their field, constantly know it well, know it in-depth, so that when a student asks an honest and sincere question, your answers are ready.” Moreover, Gerald suggested that teachers must be confident in their ability to teach the course.

Be confident. Gerald suggested, “as you teach it, you learn more.” Based on his experience when he first started teaching dual credit, he pulled many information from his professional experiences in the corporate world. He recommended that having confidence in oneself and having the ability to just push through are essential skills for dual credit instructors.

Be passionate about teaching. Janet believes in the quote that “teaching is a form of art.” She stated:

Every day is a new day to create magic in the classroom, meet the course, the students, and your own expectations. Always put your heart and soul in every lesson, from the moment you plan it to the moment you deliver it to your students. We all know the classroom is not a place of ideal perfection, and we are susceptible to getting discouraged when things don’t go as planned, but stepping away from negativity and embracing the positive will likely create a change. Having high standards and expectations and providing students with meaningful and effective assignments will allow students to think critically and creatively. This, in turn, will lessen the challenges teachers face in the classroom.

Allan agreed with Janet and elaborated on the implementation of pedagogical strategies.

He suggested using instructional strategies that they learned as high school teachers to get students to learn the material.

Be passionate about learning. Jeremiah and Jade recommended that dual credit teachers become lifelong learners in their field. He strongly suggested that teachers attend “professional development as much as they can when it comes to higher education.” He made sure he practiced this and was always granted permission to attend workshops or meetings with NTCC. Jeremiah pointed out that “when COVID happened, dual enrollment instructors had to get their courses online” and needed to be Blackboard certified. Fortunately, Jeremiah received his Blackboard certification as he attended sessions previously, even when he was not required to do it.

Be prepared. As a dual credit teacher, Misty implemented the three P’s, “Prepare, plan, and Predict.” Misty exclaimed:

Chemistry encompasses so many topics, and I think that as a chemistry teacher, you need to revisit and review a lot of these topics. In order to improve your delivery of the content, dual credit teachers need to stay current with the material, and make sure that you work out every single problem in that book and be familiar with the skills required for the class.

Shawn also suggested that being prepared was a skill he practiced regularly. He made it a point to “always have the lesson up for the next day.” He always ensured that his copies were ready to go before the day of the dual credit class and that all the sections were covered.

Teach the subject matter well. Knowing the subject matter goes hand in hand with teaching the subject matter well. The participants shared their best practices regarding this.

Be organized. Gerald revealed that being organized was something he had struggled with throughout the years. He admitted to being “able to do a million things at once and going 100 miles an hour in everything that he does,” so it helps to be organized. He considered organization as one of the best practices of a dual credit teacher. Vera elaborated:

I think it's good to be extremely organized. It's a benefit to have everything organized for the term because then you can speak to the students about what's on the midterm and what's going to be expected on this paper that's coming up, and you know it's not the type of course that you can kind of feel your way through. You can probably be successful at that but not ultimately helpful to the students in that way. So, I feel like you have to be a planner or at least put yourself on some sort of organizational strategy and have the whole course planned out before the course begins. That way, you know all the readings, you know all of the papers that are going to be written and what the topics are for the discussions, and you can then craft your discussions with the students and your lectures.

Robert agreed that being organized is essential. He exclaimed that “there's no substitute for knowing where you are and what's coming next.”

Try to outsource. Felicity mentioned outsourcing as best practice. She said that as an English teacher of 160 to 180 students who were required to write four to eight-page papers, her job could be exhausting. She set up “true office hours” on Fridays when students were asynchronous during distance learning. She required her students to submit their papers to NTCC’s Center for Learning Excellence, in which each dual credit student received three hours of tutoring for any subject. Felicity’s students obtained assistance from the writing tutor, and then she had their papers run through Grammarly. They also did peer editing in class. She said,

“by the time my eyes get on that paper, it's pristine, or it needs to be near.” This practice lessened her stress level.

Stick to the syllabus. Sheldon reported that having a detailed syllabus and sticking to it was a good practice. He referenced to the syllabus as the course's constitution. If students ever question their grades or if any issues arise, Sheldon referred them to the syllabus. He strongly recommended for “new dual enrollment teachers to have a very detailed, foolproof syllabus, in order for them to maximize any issues that may arise.” Issues regarding failing grades and attendance can be referred easily to what is on the syllabus. Sheldon stated that “anything that's in your syllabus, it basically becomes the law of the class and allows you to do what needs to be done.” Furthermore, Shawn mentioned that he tried to stick to the syllabus in terms of lesson coverage. He said that “the most important thing is to just basically stick to your schedule; that way, you can finish all your material by the end of the semester.”

Understand the stakeholders. Dual credit teachers deal with many individuals who are invested in the education of students. Participants of the study suggested practices that they implemented to understand the stakeholders, which include the students.

Build caring relationships. Flynn, Mary, and Faith consider developing caring relationships with students a vital practice when teaching dual credit courses. Mary mentioned that since dual credit teachers are on campus with the students, a strong bond is created. She recommended getting to know students, taking the time to learn their names, having a deep respect for each other, and showing a caring attitude can create those deep bonds with students.

Be flexible. Aside from developing caring relationships with students, Faith practiced flexibility. Due to the unavoidable interruptions with class instruction because of the nature of the learning environment where the dual credit students were in, Faith ensured that she was

flexible with these circumstances. Aside from this, she was also flexible and empathetic in terms of due date provision of assignments when she was aware that students were dealing with extenuating circumstances. Frank mentioned flexibility in terms of instruction delivery to students involved in many extracurricular activities. For example, he suggested that preparing instructional videos, like a flipped classroom model, captures the lecture students may miss because they were absent.

Keep an open mind. Jade recommended that dual credit teachers “keep an open mind and be prepared to adjust teaching styles.” She advised brand new dual credit teachers to remember their role and “why you're there.” She pointed out that dual credit teachers are “there to help these kids succeed, and it really is a rewarding experience when you see them walk across the stage and get that associate degree along with their high school diploma.” Flynn brought up the fact that with the student population they were dealing with, dual credit teachers can significantly impact them and their families as some students may not have anyone pushing them and guiding them.

Be a team player. One of Allan’s suggested characteristics for a brand-new dual credit teacher is to be a team player. He recommended the practice of teamwork and willingness to help fellow dual credit teachers. Allan elaborated:

You always have to work for somebody else. So, I don't mind asking for help when I need it. I don't mind taking advice if somebody has something, so I'll listen, and I'll put it to best use. I don't mind doing whatever it takes to get the job done.

Reach out for support. Frank practiced and recommended for brand new dual credit teachers “to reach out to somebody; somebody that knows, or that's been there before.” He advised that dual credit teachers ask for advice on anything, including how best to present the

material. He recommended finding somebody, not only in the same content area but other departments as well.

Theme 5: Training and support. Professional development provided by NTCC and support from department chairs, peers, and high school administrators were discussed by the participants. Mentoring and collaboration were also essential parts of the conversation with the participants. The sub-themes for the fifth theme can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Sub-Themes of Training and Support

Sub-Themes	Theme
Sources of Support	Training and Support
Support in Transitioning to Online Learning	
Mentoring and Collaboration	
Professional Development	

Sources of support. Three sources of support were evident based on the information provided by the study participants. Participants mentioned that they received support from their colleagues, department heads from NTCC, or high school administrators.

Support from peers. Gerald, Allan, Shawn, Flynn, Frank, and Janet reported having been fortunate enough to work alongside supporting staff. Allan worked in a small, supportive school environment where everyone is willing to help each other out. He pointed out that sometimes the dual credit teachers in his school did interdisciplinary teaching and that this kind of camaraderie positively affected the teachers and students. Flynn commented that the collaborative culture where he worked, not only among dual credit teachers but all staff members, made it easier to keep up with all the different tasks. Vera, Frank, and Sheldon talked about how they collaborated with other dual credit teachers from another school who teach the same subject matter. Vera stated:

I have to reach out. So, I don't have a mentor. Collaboration happens. If you have a question, I do have a colleague at another high school that teaches the same course that I do. She was a student of mine, actually. And she and I sometimes will discuss changes to the curriculum, how you are going to handle that in your course; we will share syllabus just so that we can kind of see what decisions that we each made in the parts that we're allowed to make, how do you handle attendance; you know just general discussions. We are pretty friendly We also teach AP, so we communicate in that way, but that's a self-selected collaboration.

On the other hand, Mary, who taught in a small school, indicated that her experience was the opposite. She was the only one teaching dual credit in the subject area, so she sometimes felt isolated.

Support from NTCC. The participants declared that NTCC department chairs provided support in various ways. Janet pointed out:

At NTCC, our department chair and her assistant are always available to help us throughout the semester with whatever we need. We have also been invited to participate in offering workshops to share our expertise and teaching techniques. Personally, I have benefited from the experiences and ideas of my dual credit colleagues, and I have put into practice what I consider is essential for the course.

My department chair from NTCC has created an online support group to help answer questions that may arise during the semester. Her staff is very helpful and supportive in answering dual enrollment staff questions or concerns.

Gerald concurred that department chairs, specifically his department heads at NTCC, “have always been very supportive and have always provided very positive

feedback” regarding his dual credit course. Vera and Jade, however, have a different experience. Jade revealed:

I received very little support from NTCC. Calls go unreturned; emails take days to be answered. It's more negative than it is positive. I don't know them; they don't know me either. It takes a lot to just get some help. For example, over the summer, they had us doing so many things; like I was just so close to just giving up, like calling it quits. There's no guidance. It's like I'm in it by myself, and I have to figure it out.

Vera did not have a similar situation as Jade because she would get a response to an email. However, the response was not necessarily helpful, such as the question about rubrics developed for papers assigned to students. She was told to use her best judgment.

Support from high school administrators. Participants have different perspectives regarding the support they received from high school administrators. All participants mentioned that high school administrators supported the provision of time to attend professional development or meetings at NTCC. Five participants mentioned that was the extent of support they received from high school administrators. Shawn said that there had not been any situation where they “really need a lot of support.” Flynn stated:

As far as support from high school administrators, they do not meddle into NTCC affairs; they kind of just leave you alone- that’s the support. I think the system is already in place, so the administrators may not need to be involved. I think the administrators just have to send reminders, and the teachers themselves, you know, we kind of remind each other and help each other.

Vera, Frank, Mary, and Robert mentioned that high school administrators might have confidence in their dual credit teachers. Frank stated:

There is a lot of autonomy on what it is that I do. As far as my administration, it's been a very hands-off approach. I feel that maybe the fact that they perceive that I know what I am doing and so they let me run my show.

Robert mentioned that the high school and the school district where he worked allowed them to do what had to be done for the college. He stated that they have not “really been meddling in that.” Vera indicated that the high school administrators’ “focus might be elsewhere.” She elaborated:

There are a lot of other fires to put out, and they have put an interest in me with this course and with the students in the course because they believe in my abilities as an educator, so that is a positive thing. I wish that the high school were a little more interested in what was happening in the courses. Specifically, I wish that my appraiser and the counselors who put the students in my courses understood, really understood the expectations that we're asking students to do, especially since many of them are taking multiple courses plus multiple AP courses.

Mary mentioned that she was thankful her school administrators did not stack the AP and dual credit courses, so she can just focus on the NTCC curriculum. When it came to curriculum, Vera pointed out that the high school accepted NTCC’s curriculum, so she did not have to submit an additional document to her high school administrator. However, she was unsure if the administrator looked at it and understood the scope of what happens in her courses. She revealed:

It is an obstacle and a blessing that the administration at my high school is not super interested in finding out about what I do in the curriculum in the dual enrollment classes.

The blessing is that they trust my judgment as an educator and an experienced teacher to make decisions that are proper for my course. The flip side of it is that they don't always understand the rigor or the expectations of the course, and they don't take time to do that.

On the other hand, Janet and Sheldon talked about how supportive their high school administrators were when it came to the provision of textbooks needed for class. Misty, however, had difficulty obtaining the required materials for her dual credit courses even though her administrator and counselor knew that the textbooks were needed for the first day of school.

Provision of support mentioned by Faith and Felicity included assistance by the Early College administrator at the high school with phone calls to parents of students who were failing dual credit courses. In addition, Sheldon specifically mentioned his school principal as his “bulletproof vest” as he defended him many times when parents complained about their children doing poorly in class.

Support in transitioning to online learning. Spring Semester 2020 was a challenging semester for all participants who suddenly transitioned from in-person instruction to online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the participants were forced to navigate the Learning Management System (LMS) for NTCC. Janet mentioned that “it was not easy to create assignments, evaluations, and the grading center in the LMS because the training was one hundred percent online and sometimes it was difficult to reach out to the right person at NTCC.” Misty mentioned that she had one month to learn the Blackboard fundamentals, and it was extensive. She mentioned that a professor was assigned to her to assist in the Blackboard transition.

Moreover, Misty mentioned that when NTCC required the dual credit teachers to build a blackboard learning platform, “the school district required teachers to build their online presence via google classroom.” As far as the high school, the dual credit teachers did many Google Classroom training, but NTCC did not allow them to use it in dual credit courses. All the participants mentioned that NTCC required the dual credit teachers to use the Blackboard platform strictly. Misty and Felicity used Google classroom once in a while to do fun activities with students because they did not want the instruction to be “so dry and plain” all the time. Aside from Google classroom, Screencastify was a training that the school district provided for the teachers. Still, as far as anything specific for dual credit teachers to help them transition to online learning, Vera said there was no support from the high school.

Most participants indicated that Summer 2020 was challenging because of the online workshops required by NTCC. Janet stated:

All Dual Enrollment instructors must get certified in order to continue teaching dual credit courses. The entire summer vacation was juggling between NTCC’s training, APSI training, and our District’s online training in order to adjust content and learning tools for students according to course objectives and student needs. The trainings provided by both organizations were informative and taught me to grow as a professional and to reinvent myself in order to be prepared and teach my students the knowledge and skills the course requires not only in a face-to-face setting but also in long distance and hybrid learning.

Three participants said the summer training was good. Three participants indicated they were already Blackboard certified and transitioned online even before the COVID pandemic occurred, so there was no need to go through the training again. Sheldon

pointed out that he received support from NTCC during the transition. Faith, Mary, and Flynn commented that they received support from NTCC professors during the summer as they went through the training and built the universal shell for their courses on Blackboard. Four participants, however, indicated that there was a lack of support from NTCC when dual credit went through the Blackboard certification in the Summer year 2020. Frank stated:

For me, it was challenging, because I knew what I was doing, it was a matter of a time restriction. I was facing a very strict deadline, whereas my colleagues, they had pretty much the summer. But I know the challenge that many of my colleagues faced was that they had been working day in and day out. And it was difficult for some of them because the program just is maybe not what they're used to. It's an in-house program that NTCC developed. I would like to say that the support maybe was not there because they kind of threw us to the wolves while you figure this out. It was very self-paced.

Faith, Jade, Jeremiah, and Robert claimed that finishing the Blackboard modules took a lot of work and many hours. Robert mentioned that NTCC “did a really big number on a lot of people” when the Blackboard certification was required to be completed during the summer of 2020. He elaborated:

They put people through a lot of PD, without any consideration for time and certainly without any consideration for compensation. As our NTCC department chair put it, he said, “I know that we put you guys through slave labor.” Those were his words, and by the time somebody uses a phrase like that, they have quite a bit to apologize about.

Aside from Robert, Faith and Jade exclaimed that with the number of hours they put in, they should have been compensated. Faith mentioned that “because it is a lot of work and NTCC does have a lot of requirements, they could raise that little stipend” that could buy a computer to

benefit the students in the end. Jade brought up that it was a lot of work, with no support from NTCC. She revealed:

I was not getting the support that I needed. NTCC kept sending one of the assignments back, and I did not know why. I did not know what they wanted. I would call to ask for support, but they didn't want to call me; they didn't want to answer my questions over the phone. I kept calling, asking for somebody to please help me so I can complete this. If not, I am not going to be able to teach the dual courses. The deadline was approaching. At the end, someone finally called. But I was just so fed up in the summer because they required us to do all of these things, but it's not easy when you don't have guidance and support and when it's not something that you do every day. I think a lot of people were on the same boat.

Mary agreed that the training to obtain the Blackboard certification was intense and required many hours. She concurred that NTCC required too much from dual credit teachers for a \$350 stipend. She mentioned that she could “bear with it, more than others” because her high school was supportive. She was appreciative that her high school did not require her to use Google Classroom and did not stack her dual credit class with AP students.

Mentoring and collaboration. All the participants, except Misty, pointed out that they were not assigned any mentors at NTCC. Flynn brought up the fact that they received information from the dual enrollment office to offer guidance, information, and reminders. Robert said that there was “no real mentoring happening at NTCC, except asking assistance from the Department Chair.” Misty talked about working in isolation when she started as a dual credit teacher. When NACEP came along, NTCC provided Misty a mentor, who was a professor at NTCC. The mentor was someone that she could reach out to when she needed help. Misty,

however, felt more comfortable asking for assistance from her department chair than her mentor, so the mentoring did not last long.

All the other participants mentioned that if they needed assistance, they have to reach out for support. Felicity declared that “it was a challenge, in the beginning, especially the first-year dual credit teacher not to have any mentor. It's pretty much teaching yourself.” Vera, Mary, and Faith mentioned the absence of mentoring specifically for dual credit instructors at the high school either. Faith pointed out that dual credit teachers were on their own, except that they have the Early College High School director helping them navigate things.

All the participants revealed that collaboration existed among dual credit teachers. The participants mentioned that they have to network with dual credit teachers within the campus or other schools. Flynn stated:

The collaboration is happening with experienced teachers who are teaching dual credit on campus. So, I think whenever there's a new dual enrollment teacher, they will probably need a mentor; it doesn't have to be a formal mentor; just you know, look at who's going to be your contact. Maybe multiple mentors are better; that way, you don't take up all the time of one person. At the same time, I get to collaborate with others, and that's something that I enjoy- meeting people and working with them and see what it is that we can do together to be able to help our students.

Vera and Felicity mentioned that they reached out to other dual credit teachers who taught the same subject matter. Vera called it a self-selected collaboration. Felicity, who was a collaborative learning facilitator on her campus, reached out to other instructors at other schools so that they can share best practices and assignments. Vera reached out to others to discuss matters concerning the curriculum and syllabus. As far as collaboration with NTCC professors,

Frank mentioned that “there is minimal collaboration.” Janet stated that her “department chair from NTCC had created an online support group to help answer questions that may arise during the semester.”

There were departmental meetings that occurred at NTCC where dual credit teachers were involved. However, the participants mentioned that the dual credit teachers met together instead of being integrated with NTCC professors who taught the same subject matter. Shawn mentioned that this might be the case because there are so many dual credit teachers. Vera remarked:

We are treated as a separate category. I find that sometimes demeaning because if you're expecting me to teach the course, I have all the qualifications to be teaching the course over at the NCC campus, the same as those instructors. I just happened to teach at a high school, and they continually say teach it like a college course but then when I go to meetings and only with the dual instructors, I don't get the benefit of the full-time instructors over there and NTCC to give me ideas about how they teach the same course that I teach. I feel like they treat us as not fully capable of teaching the courses.

Frank stated that he participated in a Saturday conference where all dual credit teachers and full-time NTCC instructors got together. Vera mentioned that in January 2020, the dual credit teachers participated in a department meeting where a full-time instructor from NTCC presented a specific topic germane to the course. Vera commented that NTCC was “starting to incorporate what the full-time instructors on the college campus do,” and she hopes it continues.

Professional development. Vera and Misty indicated that professional development was a mandatory task that dual credit teachers have to do twice. They have to attend training for the high school as well as the college. The high school professional development occurred randomly

throughout the school year. Mary appreciated the fact that when her school was just starting with the Early College High School Program, several professional development opportunities were offered at the high school but had not been happening lately. Allan mentioned that the training provided by his high school was sufficient but has been modified recently to be beneficial specifically for dual credit teachers. Vera indicated that most high schools did not offer training specific to dual credit teachers because they “just defer to the college on that.”

All the participants pointed out that NTCC provided mandatory training at the beginning of each semester. The participants mentioned that the training was usually an all-day Saturday event, which Jade was not happy about because “it is her day off from the institution that pays the bulk of her salary.” Gerald indicated this was a challenge, but he attended the training and made sure that he “got it all done to the level that they wanted.” Nevertheless, Jade, Gerald, and all the participants attended the scheduled professional development days. Frank indicated that the Saturday professional development typically involved “going over software that they use for reporting and to track students, learning management system, and others.” Allan stated that sometimes the topics covered in training were not as beneficial as those offered at the high school. Vera commented:

We have to spend the whole Saturday doing training, rather than preparing for our class that might start on Monday and that's usually after a whole week of actual training at the high school. So, we do a week or sometimes two weeks in the Fall semester for Back-to-School type trainings at the high school, and then Saturday is another one for the college.

On the other hand, Allan and Felicity liked the half-a-day department meeting or breakout sessions of the Saturday training because the dual credit teachers in the same content area got to collaborate. Allan stated:

Actually, that is where I get most of my information because I'll sit down with all the computer science teachers from around the area. Some of the adjunct faculty are there, too, and the professors from the whole computer science department. So, we'll talk, exchange ideas, and pick each other's brains. So that part is good. Yeah, I do enjoy that.

Aside from the mandatory once-a-semester training from NTCC, four participants mentioned that the college also offered optional professional development opportunities throughout the year. In addition, the participants mentioned that they received emails from the college regarding training available for dual credit teachers. Vera stated that "if you want to go to it, you can join this webinar. There are lots of opportunities; what there isn't a lot of is time." Frank commented:

The opportunities for PD are there. Maybe it's the opportunities that some people would tune out, but I sat there, and I listened. I was receptive because we have to see how we can best direct the student to get to that end goal of getting college credit and/or getting an associate degree. I think that those professional development opportunities have helped me in terms of being a better academic advisor for my students.

Furthermore, Frank and Misty mentioned that NTCC offered a Dual Enrollment Learning and Teaching Academy (DELTA), which was mandatory for all new dual credit teachers. DELTA was over a span of six weeks, where dual credit teachers have to work on different modules. Misty exclaimed:

Part of that was to respond on the discussion forums. In order to receive credit, we had to write eight sentences or more on a specific topic. And then we have to wait for another member from the cohort to reply to that prompt. And then, we had to reply to their prompt with an additional eight sentences or more in order to get credit. So, this took

like six weeks, and my personality is I want to get this done and get it out of the way so I can move on and do something else. But we really had to wait until the other members finished their work in order to respond to theirs in order to get credit, so I didn't like that.

The participants mentioned that they had to go through an intensive mandatory training to obtain Blackboard certification in Summer 2020. In order for dual credit teachers to continue teaching, which was remote learning, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the training had to happen during the Summer of 2020. Three participants were already certified, so they were not required to go through the training. Twelve participants, however, spent their summer working on modules to get the Blackboard certification. The participants mentioned it was a complex process. Vera stated:

Over the summer, NTCC wanted all of us to be certified to be online instructors, which is a whole different certification process. There were many modules that you have to complete, and in the process of doing those modules, you also put together your entire first course on Blackboard. So, it was a little overwhelming for us to do that over the summer, but ultimately it was beneficial because our understanding of how to teach online and ways that you can engage your students and how the material can be presented was flushed out, and we were able to navigate that.

Jeremiah was one of the three participants already certified online and did not go through the certification process in the summer. He was proactive by attending optional professional development opportunities provided by NTCC, which he encouraged all dual credit teachers to do even if it is not required.

Research Question Responses

Four research questions were developed to guide the purpose of the study. The central question and the three guiding questions were answered through the interview, photo interviewing technique, and document analysis. The research questions sought to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The five themes identified during data analysis that were discussed previously supported the responses to each of the research questions in the next section.

Central Research Question. The central question of the study was, *What are the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas?* The participants expressed that their role required them to do double duty for the college and high school. The presence of the Memorandum of Understanding (also known as Interlocal Agreement) required the high school to uphold the college requirements. Therefore, the participants indicated that the high schools acknowledged and accommodated anything that the dual credit teachers did. The participants disclosed that they maintained the standards of the college at all times when instructing dual credit courses, whether in person or online. As a result, the participants followed the shell provided to them by NTCC in building the curriculum and syllabus for dual credit courses.

All five themes identified during data analysis described the experiences of the participants in their role as high school teachers instructing dual credit courses. Aside from maintaining the college standards, the participants experienced pulling double duties concerning institutionalized expectations. There were also double edge experiences, such as most rewarding, least rewarding, positive, and negative experiences discussed by the participants.

Moreover, the participants described several vital factors that contributed to their success as dual credit teachers. Lastly, the participants described that support came from mostly their peers, the department chairs at NTCC, and minimal support from the high school administrators. The training provided to the participants from NTCC, especially the Blackboard certification during the Summer of 2020, was extensive.

Research Question One. The first guiding question of the study was, *How do dual-credit high school teachers experience their dual responsibilities as secondary school teachers and higher education teachers?* The themes of maintaining college standards and institutionalized expectations described how the participants experienced their dual responsibilities at the high school and college. The participants felt there was a stigma associated with teaching dual credit courses at the high school level. Sheldon thought this might be a cause of a sense of inferiority among dual credit teachers. The teachers, however, upheld high standards and expectations for their dual credit courses. They provided rigor and expected students to perform to that level. They believed that if they taught to the standards of the college, they were going over and above what the high school needed them to do. They followed the expectations for the college because students are earning college credit. Dual credit teachers followed the shell provided by NTCC in designing the curriculum and syllabus for the course.

Robert explained:

There is this idea that dual credit instructors offer a “light version” of the course, a version lacking rigor and therefore not equivalent to college courses. It is a fact there will always be differences in content material and teaching styles. While some instructors teach the master shell to the letter, others offer more course material than on

college campuses making dual credit courses more rigorous and more demanding than courses at the high school level.

NTCC expects dual credit teachers to deliver instruction as rigorous as their college counterparts. Therefore, the dual credit teachers followed the rigor, expectations, and tasks asked of them by the college. At the same time, there were expectations and tasks that they have to follow as high school teachers who are fully employed by the school district. When it came to the curriculum and syllabus, the dual credit teachers followed NTCC's shell. The high schools acknowledged this. However, the teachers pulled double duty in other aspects, such as grading policies, teacher evaluation, learning management system, staff development, and juggled two different schedules. Vera stated:

There are some elements that overlap, but the toughest thing is probably the different timeframes of the two institutions, so it is kind of hard to have due dates; you know, like the semester finishes two weeks before the high school. The semester finishes, and keeping track of that and keeping students on target with that is difficult. The grading is different, so you have to keep two different grade books, and make sure that the students really understand what's going to be for high school credit; how that's going to be calculated versus the college that they're doing the same assignments, but the end grades might be different because of the different ways that they get weighted. So, that is a, is a bit of a challenge. Staff Development is another teacher task, and so we do double staff development. We get evaluated also at NTCC and the high school. I have to write two lesson plans. So, in some ways that adds to the tasks because everything is doubled up.

Keeping up with two different expectations was a challenge for some participants. As Frank stated, sometimes, it became a moral dilemma about which master to serve. The dual

credit teachers, however, kept up with the double tasks and expectations in various ways. Most teachers tried to be organized to keep up with deadlines for both institutions and balanced the tasks for both. Others like Sheldon compartmentalized their dual role, wherein the two institutions were treated as separate jobs. Since the students were earning college credit, Frank stated that teachers defaulted to the college expectations, as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding. Jade and Vera, however, were conflicted because the school district was paying their salary. Vera stated:

I wish that NTCC would kind of understand our role as high school teachers. They are very demanding that we just live up to the expectations of their courses and teaching them the way they want them to be taught and following all of their rules, but they only pay me 350 bucks per course. So, when it comes down to it, I've got a salary over here from the school district, and I've got 350 bucks over here. I do not think that that's commensurate.

One thing the dual credit teachers kept in mind in accomplishing their tasks for both institutions was student success. As Sheldon mentioned, teachers must meet the high expectations set by NTCC in everything they do and never lower them because they are working with high school students.

Research Question Two. The second guiding question of the study was, *What experiences influence dual credit teachers' performance and sense of efficacy in instructing dual enrollment courses at the high school site?* The theme of double-edge experiences and key factors to success in dual credit teaching answered the second guiding question. The participants felt that certain best practices helped them tremendously to perform their job as dual credit teachers. Since the participants indicated that they were, in essence, doing the job of two people,

or serving two masters, as Frank insisted, dual credit teachers needed to be first and foremost organized. Dual credit teachers must be aware of tasks that must be done and deadlines for both institutions. Moreover, Vera stated that “putting yourself on some sort of organizational strategy and having the whole course planned out before the course begins” can help craft the discussions and lectures provided to students.

Misty employed the 3 Ps, which are prepare, plan, and predict. Her experiences as a Chemistry teacher required her to prepare materials needed for laboratory investigations ahead of time. This practice allowed her to be successful in teaching dual credit chemistry. Being prepared was also one of Shawn’s best practices, making his years of experience as a dual credit teacher seamless. Based on the participants’ experiences, their ability to perform their job as a great dual credit teacher was also based on several factors such as knowing their subject matter well, knowing how to teach the material well, and their ability to understand the school stakeholders, especially the students. All the participants reached out for support, one or another, and this has helped them successfully navigate the middle road that all dual credit teachers experienced.

Several experiences influenced the dual credit teachers’ sense of efficacy. The participants’ sense of efficacy came from the following sources: performance outcome, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback. The key factors that helped them succeed, as mentioned previously, are part of the performance outcome. These are the best practices that made them great or helped them get better at what they do. For example, an award given to Gerald for his students’ marketing projects influenced his sense of efficacy, but he gauged his success based on the success of his students. He stated, “if the kids are doing well and are being praised, I like that because my kids get the attention, and I taught them.”

All the participants believed that the most rewarding part of what they do is witnessing the growth in students and, most importantly, helping them earn college credit, which can potentially lead to an associate degree. Misty stated:

I was really, really pleased that I was an integral part of our first class of students to graduate with an associate degree. I was really elated because of that. I have always had a really good passing rate. I would say 85% or more of my students have passed the course. They have earned eight college credit hours. I am also pleased about how the program has grown. It started out with only four students, and the class eventually grew to 24. I finally got it to max out.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that the most rewarding part of their experience is watching their dual credit students walk across the stage and receive their associate degree along with their high school diploma.

A negative experience that a few of the participants mentioned, which contributed to low self-efficacy, were comments related to the dual credit course rigor at the high school. Misty stated that it was discouraging when colleagues would make comments like “high school teachers do not have any business teaching a college-level course.” Furthermore, a few participants received negative feedback pertaining to the NTCC teacher evaluation that happened recently. The NTCC appraised the dual credit teachers based on the modules posted on Blackboard. Vera, along with other teachers were discouraged by that. The participants, however, indicated that they received primarily positive feedback from NTCC department chairs when they were evaluated in-person, compared to the online evaluation. Vera stated:

Whenever there has been a physical person because NTCC will send someone from the college over to observe your course once per year in the classroom, whenever that has

happened, I always received very good feedback about the rigor level of the course, the expectations, how my course was responding to the requirements, and the interaction of my students in the class.

In regard to vicarious experiences, the participants indicated that reaching out to others for support was critical to teach dual credit courses successfully. Most participants were collaborating with their peers on campus and off-campus. The participants were also able to reach out to department chairs for support. Mentoring for dual credit teachers from NTCC, however, was non-existent.

One negative factor that most participants were not happy about was the amount of time and effort to accomplish the tasks being asked of dual credit teachers. In addition, the participants indicated that the stipend they received was not commensurate. Jade explained:

We are worth more than \$350. I mean, that's not even wage; it is like working for pennies. Yeah, I get paid for the district to teach. I do not get paid to teach NTCC and do their requirements. So sometimes, I'm not always eager to do things for NTCC, and I leave them for the last minute, and sometimes I just purposely miss the deadline. I do not have support from any of them over there.

Although the stipend was not as much as they wished, the general feeling of the participants when it came to their experience of teaching dual credit at the high school was positive. Gerald felt special and empowered to be able to have the opportunity to help students earn college credit. Most participants stated that they loved teaching dual credit, although it was taxing. Allan stated:

I enjoy it. It is awesome. I am helping prepare them to be college students. And then you see them graduating with their associate degree. I get frustrated sometimes, and then

when you see that, though, it just makes me feel good. I am teaching dual credit and helping them with the tools they need to succeed academically in college.

Frank commented that teaching dual credit was something that “he would not trade for anything else.” Most participants stated, “I love what it is that I do.” The participants are mainly focused on making a difference in students. Flynn stated:

I like teaching dual credit a lot. I feel that it's quite an experience because you get to see the full spectrum of students. Some students are very dedicated, work more independently, and ask questions. Then you have other students who kind of have to sit down with them, talk, and you know, get them in. That way, you can find out how you can best help them. So, to me, I feel very honored to have those types of students who already have a vision of going to college, but most especially those who do need a role model that has been to college that can give them that advice. I have been there, so I point them in the right direction and encourage them that they can accomplish anything that they want.

Experiences of the participants that influenced their performance and sense of efficacy came from various sources, but one thing that they have in common was being able to help students and allow them to earn college credit.

Research Question Three. The third guiding question of the study was, *How do high school teachers instructing dual credit courses, describe the experience of learning and improving their instructional practices through collaboration with peers and faculty counterparts in post-secondary institutions, professional development, and targeted support from school administrators?* The question was answered with the theme of training and support. All the participants, except one, mentioned that the department chairs at NTCC were available for

support. The dual credit teachers, however, have to reach out to the department chairs. As Gerald mentioned, “it comes down to the instructor who wants to take that step to reach out and ask questions because otherwise how are they supposed to know.” Two departments at NTCC offered online support, which the participants appreciated.

Janet indicated that the online support group was helpful in answering questions that arose during the semester. She added that the staff at her department were “helpful and supportive in answering dual enrollment staff questions or concerns.” Sheldon mentioned that the dual enrollment mail server in his department was “where the chair or other professors will send out information so that everybody can collaborate.” He felt that the professors at NTCC were open to helping him out as they gave him access to “40 hours or 100 hours of work” to build the shell for his Blackboard modules. Jeremiah pointed out that he received support from his professor friends at NTCC when he reached out. Allan stated that once a semester, during department meetings, he networked with other professors and exchanged ideas, and helped each other out.

The rest of the participants did not feel that collaboration existed between dual credit teachers and their faculty counterparts at NTCC. Robert exclaimed that they just gave him a book, and that was the support. Jade mentioned:

They just give me a syllabus, and you can just use their information and plug it in and use it as your syllabus. I do not know them. I have never met them. There is no guidance.

The last time I was over there was when I needed a textbook. I was again trying to complete a training that nobody had offered me help with. It took them a few days, so I think they just kind of forget about us.

Vera mentioned that collaboration did not occur because the dual credit teachers were

treated as a separate category during professional development and/or department meeting that occurred once a semester. She felt this was demeaning to dual credit teachers, but other participants felt that NTCC was slowly starting to integrate dual credit teachers with faculty counterparts. The participants indicated that NTCC offered many professional development opportunities. Janet felt that she had benefited from the experiences and ideas shared during the professional development, and she had put what she learned into practice. Once a semester, there was mandatory training for dual credit teachers, which usually occurred on a Saturday. There were also optional workshops or webinars offered to all faculty, which included the dual credit teachers. It was up to the dual credit teachers if they wanted to attend or not. Three participants indicated they attended some of the webinars.

Robert was one of the many dual credit teachers who did not attend any of the optional training offered. He attended the mandatory training. In terms of learning and improving practices through professional development, he exclaimed:

I've never been to a training where I would say, "Oh my god, I never thought about that." Sadly, most of the training I do go to when they're over, I think to myself, "Well, they got some room to grow." They're not thinking about education from the standpoint of what pedagogy these might work best. They seem like the professor who waits for the students to fill in the room, and then they talk about what they want to talk about and dismiss them and collect the papers. The engagement part in the class, the building part, I don't see any of that happening over there, and it might be, again, part of them still finding their character as a university or college.

The summer of 2020 was a challenging year, as Janet exclaimed, because the dual credit

teachers were required to be certified in the Blackboard learning management system. Most participants have to go through the self-paced modules that took many hours to complete if they wanted to continue to teach dual credit. Many participants were unhappy about the Blackboard certification process, but Janet indicated that she learned new things about the Learning Management System, improving her teaching and student learning.

As far as professional development offered at the high school level that was specific to dual credit teachers, Vera pointed out that the high schools deferred to the college for that. Professional development was offered to all high school teachers throughout the school year, and the dual credit teachers participated in these. At the high school where Allan worked, it was suggested that professional development opportunities intended explicitly for dual credit teaching might be beneficial. The high school administrators listened and offered these training for the dual credit teachers at Allan's school.

The participants agreed that high school administrators were supportive of the dual credit teachers attending training and department meetings at the college. The participants also indicated that high school administrators helped in the acquisition of textbooks and other materials that the dual credit teachers needed. The Early College High School counselor and administrator provided information about what must be submitted to NTCC. Moreover, two participants indicated that their administrators helped them in contacting parents of students who were failing. Most participants indicated that they were usually chosen to administer the state-mandated tests, thus losing instruction time. However, Faith felt blessed to have a supportive administrator who was cognizant that the STAAR testing administration caused her to lose instruction time.

While some participants mentioned specific situations wherein they received support from high school administrators, most participants felt left alone. As Frank mentioned, “there's a lot of autonomy on what it is that I do. And as far as my administration, it's been a very hands-off approach.” Vera added:

It is an obstacle and a blessing that the administration at my high school is not super interested in finding out about what I do in the curriculum in the dual enrollment classes the blessing is that they trust my judgment as an educator and an experienced teacher to make decisions that are proper for my course. The flip side of it is that they don't always understand the rigor or the expectations of the course, and they don't take time to do that. They're just completely unaware of what happens in my courses.

Each of the participants mentioned that learning and improving their instructional practices occurred when they collaborated with peers. As Vera mentioned, it was, however, a self-selected collaboration. The participants have to reach out if they wanted to discuss changes in the curriculum, discuss the syllabus, or other important decisions that needed to be made regarding the course. The participants collaborated with other dual credit teachers within the campus or reached out to others who taught the same content but taught at another high school. As Frank mentioned, “the beauty of this is that many of us are teaching the same course.”

Support from other dual credit teachers and collaboration amongst the teachers teaching the same course content was the most common when I examined the horizons for each of the open codes. The horizons of the open codes were enumerated, and interrelated codes were grouped and identified as themes (see Table 7).

Open-Codes	Enumeration of open-code appearance across data sets	Themes
Accreditation	14	Upholding College Standards
Curriculum and Syllabus	32	
Rigor	35	
Finding a balance/alignment	25	Institutionalized Expectations
Evaluation	16	
Compartmentalize tasks	2	
Grading Policies	28	
Memorandum of Understanding	16	
Academic freedom	9	Double Edge Experiences
Earn college credits	28	
Dual credit challenges	32	
Double duty and serving two masters	48	
Negative feedback	9	
Positive feedback	13	
Feelings about teaching dual credit	16	
High school issues affecting DC	16	
Stipend	35	
Too many tasks	35	
Be knowledgeable about subject	32	Key Factors to Succeed in Dual Credit Teaching
Be confident	8	
Prepare and Plan	2	
Be passionate	4	
Be organized	5	
Outsource	1	
Stick to the syllabus	2	
Be flexible and keep an open mind	6	
Reach out for support	4	
Professional development	34	Training and Support
Support from and collaboration with colleagues	53	
Support from HS administrators	15	
Support from IHE	24	
Support from IHE during transition to online learning	24	
Lack of mentoring from IHE	23	

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Summary

This chapter provided details regarding the findings of the study after data analysis was completed. The findings were provided in two sections: theme development and research question responses. Narrative responses from the data described lived experiences of the participant's interaction with the phenomenon. Moreover, the participants of the study were presented through profiles that included brief descriptions regarding their backgrounds. Five themes were identified from this study which supported the central question and three guiding questions. The five identified themes from the data analysis were: (a) upholding college standards, (b) institutionalized expectations, (c) double edge experiences, (d) key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, and (e) training and support. All five themes provided an answer to the central research question. The first two themes: upholding standards and institutionalized expectation, provided an answer to the first guiding question. The third and fourth themes: double-edge experiences and key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching answered the second guiding question. The fifth theme, training and support provided responses to the third guiding question. Overall, answers to the research questions offered an understanding of the essence of the participants' experiences with the phenomenon.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of the transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The contents of this chapter are organized into five different sections. This chapter (a) summarizes the findings of the study, (b) discusses the findings and the implications in connection to the relevant literature and theory, (c) discusses the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study, (d) outlines the study's delimitations and limitations, and (e) provides recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with the provision of a summary.

Summary of Findings

This study examined the lived experiences of the high school teachers instructing dual credit courses on campus. The narrative accounts of their experiences as dual credit teachers were categorized into five different themes. As discussed in the previous chapter, the themes and responses to the research questions were detailed in a narrative form. A concise summary of the study's findings, with brief answers to each research question, is imparted in the subsequent paragraphs.

Themes

Five themes were identified as a result of data analysis. The themes were: (a) upholding college standards, (b) institutionalized expectations, (c) double edge experiences, (d) key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, and (e) training and support. Each theme represented an essential component of the high school teachers' experiences regarding teaching dual credit courses at the secondary campus. Each narrative described in each theme captured the dual

credit teachers' experiences and became a vital element that formed the essence of the phenomenon.

The first theme identified from the data analysis was upholding college standards. All the participants indicated that it was essential for them to maintain the college standards by teaching dual credit classes as college courses. The dual credit teachers reported that they were all required to follow the NTCC standards and expectations. This included rigor and teaching the course similar to the college course counterpart to maintain the integrity of the dual credit course they were teaching. Although the dual credit faculty taught high school students, they set high expectations for the students, similar to their college counterparts.

The participants expressed that the rigor in dual credit courses taught by credentialed high school teachers was often criticized, especially when students received exemplary grades. The participants revealed that once a semester visit from NTCC professors was not enough time to get a clear understanding of the quality of instruction that goes on in a dual credit course. Moreover, most students taking the dual credit courses are very committed and have a lot of time to invest fully in their studies, unlike the students who attend a typical community college who are otherwise occupied with a job and maybe raising a family. The participants indicated that they are empowered by the fact that former students often corroborated the rigor provided in dual credit courses. Former students insisted that the dual credit courses they took while in high school prepared them for a smooth transition to upper-level courses at the college or a university.

The participants stated that they followed the syllabus and curriculum set by the college. The dual credit teachers have no time to deviate from it. Although a few of the participants found a way to integrate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills required by the State of Texas, the dual credit teachers were not required to follow the standards, as NTCC has its

curriculum. A few participants shared that the NTCC curriculum and TEKS may have some similarities. Participants with stacked dual credit courses, either with a regular class or AP course, found themselves having to integrate two curricula, which presented a challenge for the teachers.

The participants followed a template called a shell provided by NTCC for the dual credit course syllabus. The syllabus lays out their expectations for the course. Some participants who have been teaching dual credit courses for many years expressed that they used to have academic freedom, including the syllabus, but was taken away when NTCC sought accreditation from NACEP. The participants revealed that many changes came with the accreditation process. Aside from the syllabus, there was an increase in the tasks that dual credit teachers have to complete, and they were required to attend more professional development. The participants understood that the changes occurred to comply with the accreditation and maintain college standards in dual credit courses.

The second theme identified was institutionalized expectations. The participants expressed that they have to follow expectations from NTCC and the high school. The dual credit teachers followed two separate grading policies, have to be formally evaluated twice, and attended staff development for both institutions. Utilizing the breakdown of percentages set by each institution, the participants adhered to submitting one letter grade at the end of the semester for NTCC and submitted grades for dual credit students every six-week grading period for the high school. The participants emphasized the possibility of discrepancies between high school and college grades to students and parents. The participants brought up transparency of grades to parents of high school students and adhering to FERPA regulations as a challenge when it comes to dual credit students' grades.

The dual credit teachers have to go through one formal evaluation from NTCC and another from the high school. Most of the participants indicated that they received positive evaluations from both during in-person formal evaluation. However, the school year 2020-2021 brought a different challenge when dual credit courses were taught online. NTCC department chairs or their designee conducted their formal evaluation by checking modules on the Blackboard platform. A few of the participants were unhappy about the formal evaluation rating from NTCC.

The dual credit teachers managed their dual role by intertwining elements that overlap, especially regarding the curriculum. For the participants who have a stacked class, such as AP/DC or DC/regular, the teachers wished they did not have to deal with this, but they tried to integrate both as much as they could. The participants tried to balance the NTCC and the high school expectations. Compartmentalizing and treating their dual credit role as two separate jobs was another strategy utilized to manage their role. Most importantly, the participants emphasized that they always made sure to take care of what NTCC wanted them to do because students are earning college credit. Moreover, there is the Memorandum of Understanding that both institutions and dual credit faculty must follow.

The third theme identified from this study was double edge experiences. The participants expressed their most rewarding, least rewarding, positive experiences, negative experiences, positive feedback, and the negative feedback they received. The opportunity to be able to challenge thinking and see growth in students, help students pass the college gatekeeper courses, assist students with their academic success and see them graduate with an associate degree along with their high school diploma was expressed by the participants as the most rewarding part of their job as a dual credit teacher. As a result of the students graduating with an associate degree,

the dual credit teachers felt that they could help the families financially, considering that most students in the area are economically disadvantaged. On the other hand, the participants mentioned the stigma associated with teaching dual credit since the high school students are young and are not ready to take on college-level courses as one of the least rewarding experiences. The workload was another least rewarding part of the experience, especially since they were not compensated enough to teach dual credit.

Most of the positive feedback the dual credit teachers received was in regard to their ability to accomplish their tasks, performance, the rigor of the course, pedagogy, and student engagement. The negative feedback they received involved mostly of parent complaints regarding grades. Inability to attend mandatory professional development was another negative feedback received. The positive experiences the participants expressed were having supportive peers, working in an environment with a college-going culture, positive feedback from students, and accessibility to assist students on campus. Negative experiences included students' lack of motivation, lack of counselor and administration awareness of what dual credit is about, placing students in dual credit who are not ready, stacked class, lack of resources, transparency over grades, Blackboard platform, juggling two schedules, dealing with extra-curricular activities, distance education, email flow of redundant information, and loss of instructional time due to students being pulled out of school-related activities and teachers being asked to administer the state-mandated exams.

The fourth theme identified was the key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching. The participants mentioned the characteristics and skills they have implemented to help brand new dual credit succeed in teaching dual credit courses. The participants expressed that dual credit teachers must know the subject matter, teach the subject matter well, and understand the

stakeholders. They expressed that the following specific characteristics and skills have helped them: be subject matter experts, be confident, be passionate for teaching and learning, be prepared, be organized, try to outsource, stick to the syllabus, build caring relationships with students, be flexible, keep an open mind, be a team player, and reach out for support.

The fifth theme identified from the data analysis was training and support. The participants indicated that they received support from peers, NTCC department chairs, and high school administrators. It was minimal support from high school administrators, though. The participants mostly collaborated with other teachers on campus and reached out for support from other dual credit teachers off campus. The dual credit teachers indicated that if they have any questions, they reached out to department chairs. A couple of teachers indicated they reached out to faculty counterparts. There was no mentoring program for dual credit teachers. The support received from high school administrators consisted mainly of giving the teachers permission to attend department meetings and professional development at NTCC. The participants indicated that high school administrators did not meddle in NTCC affairs; thus, a hands-off approach existed. In preparation for the transition to online learning starting the school year 2020-2021, all dual credit teachers were required by NTCC to earn Blackboard certification. The dual credit teachers struggled with the process and indicated a lack of support from NTCC.

Research Questions

The central research question was: *What are the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas?* The participants in the current study taught dual credit courses at their respective high school campuses. As the participants shared their experiences, the five themes were identified. The themes of upholding college standards,

institutionalized expectations, double edge experiences, key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, and training and support provided information regarding the dual credit teachers' experiences. The participants expressed that, in essence, they managed a dual role and performed double duty. The participants abided by the expectations of the college as well as the tasks for the high school. The dual credit teachers disclosed that they maintained the college standards, followed the rigor, curriculum, and shell provided for the syllabus from NTCC to adhere to the standards of the accreditation process. The participants expressed that NTCC continuously emphasized the Memorandum of Understanding during department meetings to ensure the high schools adhered to the agreement since the students are earning college credits.

The participants expressed that they were obliged to adhere to two different expectations. They pulled double duty, as they, in essence, were serving two employers. The participants managed their dual roles by balancing the responsibilities, intertwining elements that overlap, or compartmentalizing. The participants expressed their most rewarding, least rewarding, positive, and negative experiences. Moreover, the participants shared the fundamental characteristics and skills they employed to succeed as dual credit teachers. Lastly, the participants declared that out of the three sources of support, assistance from their peers was the one that occurred the most. Minimal assistance was provided from NTCC as well as the high school administrators. NTCC and the high school provided many professional development opportunities throughout the school year.

The first guiding question was: *How do dual-credit high school teachers experience their dual responsibilities as secondary school teachers and higher education teachers?* As teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school campus, the participants mentioned the stigma associated with it. The teachers indicated that they endured comments about the dual

credit courses offered at the high school as the lighter version of the course. This was not, however, the case. The participants elevated their expectations and ensured that they provided rigor in dual credit courses. The participants followed the curriculum and the syllabus set by NTCC. Upholding the standards of the college as they taught the dual credit courses was first and foremost in the participants' minds.

The participants expressed that they have to abide by two different tasks and expectations, one for the college and another for the high school. The participants have to manage two different schedules, two different grading policies and were formally evaluated by the college and the high school. The participants who taught stacked classes, AP/DC or DC/regular, managed to intertwine some overlapping elements. The participants, however, indicated that it became a moral dilemma, as they sometimes have to decide which master to serve. Most of the participants managed their dual role by learning how to balance their tasks and compartmentalize. While the participants were dealing with their dual role, their focus was on taking care of what NTCC wanted them to do to ensure student success.

The second guiding question was: *What experiences influence dual credit teachers' performance and sense of efficacy in instructing dual enrollment courses at the high school site?* The results of the study indicated that many of the participants' experiences influenced their performance and sense of efficacy. The participants mentioned many best practices and skills that they employed to effectively manage their dual role as teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school campus. Their organizational strategies, skills, and preparation to teach the subject matter influenced their ability to teach the dual credit courses well. Knowing the subject matter well, teaching it well, and understanding the stakeholders affected their performance as well.

Aside from the participants' best practices and skills, some experiences affected the participants' sense of efficacy. The four sources of self-efficacy are performance outcomes, verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, and physiological feedback. Awards, as well as positive and negative experiences, affected the dual credit teacher's performance outcome. Comments related to dual credit courses being watered down at the high school affected the teachers. Still, they continued to elevate or maintain the rigor of the instruction. Positive and negative feedback provided to dual credit teachers, either by NTCC department chairs and high school administrators, affected the participants' sense of efficacy through verbal persuasion.

The participants developed a sense of efficacy through the support of their peers, as the support from high school administrators and NTCC was minimal. The absence of a mentoring program geared explicitly towards dual credit teachers did not help with the participant's efficacy. Moreover, the stress the participants went through during the challenging Blackboard certification process in the Summer of 2020, the workload, and the pay not proportional to their efforts affected their sense of efficacy. However, all the participants possessed an overall feeling of love and joy when witnessing their students graduate with an associate degree while obtaining a high school diploma.

The third and final guiding question of this study was: *How do high school teachers instructing dual credit courses, describe the experience of learning and improving their instructional practices through collaboration with peers and faculty counterparts in post-secondary institutions, professional development, and targeted support from school administrators?* The participants identified the three sources of support provided to them. One of the most common sources of support was from their peers. The dual credit teachers who taught from the same campus collaborated amongst themselves. They also reached out for

support to other dual credit teachers from other schools who were teaching the same course. Alliance, assistance, and sharing of best practices amongst dual credit teachers in the area existed, but it was a self-selected collaboration. Another source of support was from department chairs at NTCC, although it mainly consisted of answering questions whenever the dual credit teachers have questions or concerns. There was minimal support when teachers struggled to complete their Blackboard certification. On the other hand, the high school administrators supported the participants by allowing them to attend professional development and department meetings. Other than this and the provision of required resources, the support from high school administrators was minimal.

Collaboration between dual credit teachers and faculty counterparts was also minimal. There was no mentoring provided to dual credit teachers. For many years, dual credit teachers were treated as a separate category during department meetings and professional development. The participants considered this a demeaning experience. When it came to professional development, the participants indicated that there were many opportunities provided to them, from both institutions. The high school provided professional development opportunities throughout the year. NTCC provided mandatory training once at the beginning of the year, and there were also optional webinars and training that the participants can attend. Some participants indicated the training provided to them was beneficial. However, one participant revealed that there is room for improvement in the workshops offered at NTCC. Nevertheless, many opportunities were provided to dual credit teachers, but it was up to them to take advantage of them.

Discussion

The literature review in Chapter Two was divided into six sections. The first section included an overview of the social cognitive theory. The second section provided information on high school to college transition. The third segment highlighted the dual enrollment program. The fourth section introduced the high school and post-secondary partnerships. The fifth section discussed professional development. The final segment provided literature on school administration support. The connection between the theoretical and empirical literature in Chapter two and the findings of this research are discussed in this section.

Theoretical Literature

Social cognitive theory, specifically its derivative on self-efficacy, provided a framework for this study. Self-efficacy is a “belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). These beliefs are not fixed character traits; they are learned throughout one’s lifetime (Bandura, 2006). The study focused on dual credit instructors, so teacher’s self-efficacy supported this study. Teacher’s self-efficacy is the belief in their ability to implement instructional and learning strategies (Bandura, 1997). Teachers can have a high or low sense of efficacy. Teachers with a strong sense of efficacy are more organized and plan ahead of time than their counterparts with a low sense of efficacy (Blonder & Rap, 2017b).

The current study confirms that being organized and prepared helped the participants to develop a high sense of efficacy. The participants indicated that being organized was one of the best practices that allowed them to perform their dual role effectively. Being organized for the semester allowed the dual credit teachers to stay on top of due dates for tasks that must be done for both institutions. Moreover, being organized allowed the participants to discuss expectations

and specifics of assessments and tasks for the course. Along with organizational skills, the study found that the participants regarded preparation as another key factor to teach dual credit courses successfully. Being prepared led to the participants' confidence to successfully deliver the content and teach skills required for the class. The study extends on the previous research that efficacious teachers are organized and plan ahead of time. Aside from these two traits, implementing other key factors contributed to the participants' efficacy regarding teaching dual credit.

The three key factors are knowing your subject matter, teaching the subject matter well, and understanding the stakeholders. Knowing the subject matter entails being the subject matter expert, being confident with their teaching skills, and being passionate about teaching and learning. The participants indicated that being able to teach the subject matter well involves outsourcing so teachers can focus on what is important to teach to the students. It also involves pedagogical skills and having a detailed syllabus. The participants highlighted understanding the stakeholders as another key factor to succeed in dual credit teaching. The participants emphasized building caring relationships with dual credit students, flexibility, keeping an open mind, being a team player, and willingness to reach out for support.

Aldridge and Fraser (2016) indicated that "affiliation (the extent to which teachers can obtain assistance, advice, and encouragement and feel accepted by colleagues) significantly influenced teacher self-efficacy, both directly and indirectly and influenced job satisfaction indirectly" (p. 302). An essential component that influenced the participants' efficacy in this study is the support they obtained from their peers. Although this involved reaching out for support from either dual credit teachers who teach on the same campus or off-campus instructors who teach the same course, the participants indicated that collaborating with others helped their

efficacy. Goddard and Kim (2018) emphasized that “when teachers work together, they are likely to experience positive outcomes that may lead to improved morale and teacher efficacy” (p. 2). Moreover, some participants received assistance, not necessarily a structured collaboration with NTCC faculty when they reached out or during a department meeting. This helped the participants to improve their knowledge and skills.

The findings of the study do not corroborate with the claim that lack of release time for faculty to collaborate affects the quality of instruction adversely (Priebe, 2016). The study found that the dual credit teachers’ high school administrators were always willing to provide release time for them to attend department meetings and professional development at NTCC to improve their instructional practices. Moreover, the study supported the idea that the provision of opportunities for teachers to work together helps teachers’ personal and professional growth and efficacy (Goddard & Kim, 2018). In addition, this study confirmed that providing time for the participants to grow professionally impacted teachers’ performance ability and efficacy in teaching dual credit courses (Hanson et al., 2015). Although the alliance mainly occurred among dual credit teachers and happened minimally with college faculty counterparts, the study corroborated the assertion that collaboration leads to increased self-efficacy. The study confirmed that when “teachers are working collaboratively on instructional practices, their mastery experiences were affected by their collaborative work, thus increasing their level of teaching efficacy” (Goddard & Kim, 2018, p. 3).

The participants’ efficacy was a result of their reflection and evaluation based on information interpretation from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Teachers’ mastery experiences or performance outcomes, which is the most influential source of efficacy (Blonder

& Rap, 2017a; Hinnant-Crawford, 2016; Zakeri et al., 2016), motivated the participants to continue using effective instructional strategies with their dual credit students. Gerald indicated that when his dual credit students won an award and were recognized nationally, he felt confident that what he was doing was well worth repeating. Positive experiences by the participants such as this provided the most authentic evidence that corroborated the idea that high school teachers instructing dual credit at the high school have what it takes to succeed.

The teachers can develop self-efficacy through other people's performance. Bandura (1997) noted that vicarious experiences are effective in the development of high or low self-efficacy. Ideally, this involves having a role model who is perceived as similar to the individual, and when the role model openly struggles and overcome obstacles, an individual's self-efficacy is enhanced (Kitsantas, Zimmerman, & Cleary, 2000). The participants gravitated towards other dual credit teachers as they experienced the same challenges and experiences. They leaned on each other for support. Although the participants collaborated with other dual credit teachers teaching the same content, partnership with their college counterparts was very minimal or lacking. Mentoring program was not available for all participants except Misty. Therefore, the study is inconclusive in the development of teacher efficacy through vicarious experiences.

Social or verbal persuasion is the third source of information in the development of self-efficacy. Praise, encouragement, and sincere messages can have a powerful effect on developing one's efficacy (Shunk, 2011). Social networks of teachers help shape their efficacy beliefs through the access of information and peer support (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010). The current study confirms this as the participants collaborated with other fellow dual credit teachers. Furthermore, findings from the study confirm that evaluative feedback of influential people may impact an individual's efficacy beliefs (Morris et al., 2017). Influential people refer

to supervisors who can strengthen individuals' belief that they have what it takes to succeed. The current study found that feedback from NTCC department chairs was powerful in developing the participants' efficacy.

Positive feedback regarding their performance on instructor evaluation encouraged the participants. Positive feedback from the department chair to Sheldon regarding his status as one of the NTCC Professors encouraged him to elevate his performance. Negative feedback that adversely affected the participants' efficacy was the stigma associated with teaching dual credit courses at the high school level. High school teachers instructing dual credit students are to provide quality instruction and the same experience as traditional college students (Piontek et al., 2016; Priebe, 2016). The study found that the participants elevated their expectations and followed the same curriculum and syllabus as their faculty counterparts to uphold the college standards. However, it discouraged the participants when they were treated as a separate category during staff development and when they heard negative feedback regarding the rigor of the course.

Misty exclaimed that it was discouraging when she heard colleagues comment that high school teachers do not have any business teaching a college level course. Although the high school teachers instructing dual credit courses in South Texas have the same qualifications as NTCC professors, Field (2021) noted that there is a disagreement whether they are qualified to teach the course and if the high school dual credit teachers are holding the students accountable to the same standards as college professors. The study concluded that high school teachers teaching dual credit courses might provide flexibility regarding due dates under extenuating circumstances, but nevertheless, they are maintaining the college standards. This confirms that dual credit teachers work hard to ensure the curriculum taught is as rigorous as entry-level

college classes and that teachers feel proud that their students have earned their college credit (Tensen, 2018).

The participants indicated that feedback from current and former dual credit students regarding the rigor of the course encouraged the teachers. The current study extends research indicating that evaluative feedback of influential people such as supervisors may impact an individual's efficacy beliefs (Morris et al., 2017). Surprisingly, influential people who can influence teacher efficacy in this current study include current and former dual credit students. Janet and Misty stated that students' course evaluations at the end of the semester were positive and motivated them even more to continue teaching dual credit courses. The students' genuine constructive criticisms helped them grow professionally and become even better instructors. Most participants were encouraged by the fact that former students told them that the teachers prepared them for the upper-level courses. Students' feedback that their place was not only earned but merited at a high level because the dual credit teachers prepared them well confirmed that students highly influence the participants' efficacy.

Physiological and affective states are the fourth source that can influence self-efficacy. An individual's state of well-being, such as stress, fatigue, anxiety, and mood, can affect one's interpretation (Morris et al., 2017). The study found that participants have to meet two institutionalized expectations and perform two tasks. For example, the requirement from the high school for teachers to be Google certified and the college to earn Blackboard certification caused a lot of stress. Most participants were unhappy that their efforts were not commensurate to the stipend provided by NTCC. One participant, for example, indicated that she was waiting until the last minute to always finish the task for NTCC. The current study provides evidence that teachers' income satisfaction is directly related to their work satisfaction (Song, Gu, &

Zhang, 2020). However, the study found that participants' love and care for students helped them persist with their efforts and overcome challenges (Bandura, 2000) and continue to do the best they can to experience a high level of satisfaction in their job (Song, Gu, & Zhang, 2020).

Empirical Literature

As dual credit is increasingly becoming popular as a college pathway for low-income and at-risk students in South Texas, school districts utilize their teachers to meet the program's growing needs. However, this practice met criticism. There is a growing concern regarding the rigor and depth required for college curriculum (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019) in dual credit courses. The current study found that the concerns are not legitimate as the participants follow the same curriculum and syllabus as their faculty counterparts. Upholding college standards was the first theme identified in the current study. All participants were aware that it was their responsibility to elevate expectations and ensure that dual credit students meet the requirements to earn college credit. Therefore, the study confirms findings of another research that suggest that dual credit courses taught at the high school were at least as rigorous if not more stringent than general education courses taught at the community college (Ferguson et al., 2015).

Concerns over the rigor of dual credit courses occur as they are not monitored for quality, unlike the AP program, which requires students to take an assessment in May (Clayton, 2021; Taylor & Yan, 2018). Participants indicated that since NTCC sought accreditation from NACEP, several changes occurred to comply with the college standards. The participants also get formally evaluated either in person or recently based on the modules published in individual dual credit teacher's Blackboard. The participants also mentioned that they must follow the same curriculum as their college faculty counterparts and are provided shell to follow in their syllabus. The findings of this study corroborate the statement that concerns over rigor in dual

credit courses “are not empirically supported and based only on anecdotal evidence” (Taylor & Yan, 2018, p. 3). The study provided additional evidence that there is an explicit agreement between the partner college and among high school teachers teaching dual credit courses that dual credit courses taught at the high school are at least, if not more rigorous than community college courses (Ferguson et al., 2015).

The participants of the study agreed that there is an issue regarding student readiness, especially in stacked classes and when students are forced to take a dual credit class because they are in Early College High School program. The study confirmed that the concerns regarding high school students’ maturity and readiness for college curricula (Howley et al., 2013) are valid. Although taking dual credit courses is beneficial for students who are ready, the dual credit program is not for everyone. Some participants reported that the dual credit program pushes students to mature quickly, which “might inadvertently cause students to miss out on key adolescent social, cultural, and age-appropriate experiences” (Hornbeck & Malin, 2019, p. 257).

Participants who worked as adjunct faculty at NTCC in the summer or after school reported that most students at the high school who are taking dual credit courses are more dedicated and have the time to invest in their studies compared to typical students at NTCC. Moreover, dual credit students thrive in their courses because of the support they receive on campus. Similar to previous research, the current study found that students felt supported because their teachers at the high school helped them achieve their goals (Adams, Williams, & Lewis, 2020). The participants indicated that since the students are on campus all day, they can access their dual credit teachers anytime. The participants reported that the provision of support to their students is part of their job. Similar to another study, this research concurs that academic

and social supports can bolster a broader range of student participation in dual credit courses (Barnett et al., 2015).

The current study also corroborated findings of another research suggesting that high school students taking dual credit courses at the high school campus perceived themselves as just secondary students and were not yet at the same level as college students (Lile et al., 2018). The participants reported that some students do not take the assignment deadlines seriously. Most participants mentioned that although the majority of dual credit students already have the idea of college instilled in them, a few students still do not commit to the fact that they are college students and therefore must comply with the requirements of the post-secondary institution. Janet mentioned that “some students still believe that the high school system of being able to turn in certain assignments late will save them from failing the course.”

Challenges are part of the entire experience of teaching dual credit. Similar to another study, one of the challenges involve the liminal role of delivering college-level courses without benefitting from the academic freedoms typically experienced by college faculty, such as autonomy in course content, methods, protections from the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and smaller class loads (McWain, 2018). The participants reported that their academic freedom was taken away when they were provided a shell for their curriculum and syllabus to follow. Moreover, the participants mentioned that academic freedom is questionable when they can talk about any content, except for topics that may be off-limits because it is deemed inappropriate for students under 18. The participants mentioned that they are usually under a lot of pressure to divulge grades to parents and coaches for eligibility reasons, but FERPA dictates them not to.

Furthermore, the study found similarities in another research regarding dual credit teachers who must abide by the expectations of the school district where they are fully employed and at the same time follow the requirements of the partner college. Dual credit teachers felt accountable to abide by both the secondary and college sectors (Duncheon & Relles, 2021). Similar to the previous study, the current research found that the dual credit teachers were serving two masters as they abide by two administrative and grading expectations. However, unlike the previous study, this research found that participants do not abide by two contrasting curricular and pedagogical expectations. The participants of the study emphasized that they comply with the curricular expectations of NTCC to uphold the college standards. Although the participants mentioned that they were often praised for their pedagogical skills by their NTCC department chairs, the participants did not indicate that they were required by both institutions to implement one teaching strategy over another. The current study extends the previous research by incorporating how the dual credit teachers managed their dual roles, the formal teachers' evaluation conducted by both institutions, and the professional development that they attend.

Research indicates that allowing dual credit teachers to engage in professional development along with college faculty around curriculum and assessment results in better course alignment (Pierce, 2017) and can change teachers' competence (Dean, Heaton, Orme, & Woodward, 2015). If high school teachers and college faculty engage in professional learning together, they may engage in collegial dialogue about teaching practices related to teaching and learning (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). The study found that dual credit teachers were provided many opportunities for professional development. The study, however, is inconclusive with previous studies concerning collaboration with college faculty because the participants reported a lack of or minimal interaction with them. Two participants, however, mentioned that high

school teachers and college faculty who are teaching the same course share resources to ensure consistency (Hanson et al., 2015), but unlike the study, it did not necessarily create a sense of belonging for the dual credit teacher. The study is inconclusive regarding trusting collaboration with college faculty as a “positive and effective model for shifting teaching beliefs and practices” (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). The dual credit teachers were considered a separate category when attending meetings or professional development at the college. This study is consistent with the claim that there is a lack of mentorship to dual credit teachers (McWain, 2018).

Unlike another study that support for dual credit teachers is mainly left to the secondary school where they are employed (Swafford & Waller, 2018), this research found that department chairs at the college provided support. There is substantial evidence in this study that does not support a previous study indicating that teachers could not pursue meaningful professional development and collaborate with other teachers because of a lack of release time (McWain, 2018). All the participants in this study reported that the high school administrators were gracious in providing the dual credit teachers’ time to meet with other teachers during department meetings or professional development.

Most participants mentioned a hands-off approach by high school administrators to matters pertaining to dual credit as they trust that teachers are doing what they are supposed to do for the college. Vera mentioned that the administrators are not deficient in the implementation of their responsibilities; it’s just that they have other tasks that require their attention the most. The study is consistent with research that highlights the many duties and responsibilities of school leaders compete against each other for their time (Crow, 2010). With much emphasis placed on school accountability, the role of school administrators is becoming more challenging and stressful as they juggle their many roles and, at the same time, try to meet

state-mandated accountability measures (Paletta, 2019). The study supports previous findings of the lack of empirical evidence on school leadership activities that promote students' college and career readiness, specifically on multiple stakeholders' practices (Malin, 2017a).

Implications

The theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the current study will be addressed in this section. The implications of the findings from this study warrant further consideration that may be important for policies, practice, and theory. The current study confirms the four sources of efficacy apply to dual credit teachers. Specific recommendations for both institutions of learning are revealed. Empirical implications revolve around the rigor of dual credit courses and challenges experienced by high school dual credit teachers. Practical implications were provided based on the need for mentoring and collaboration opportunities and the need for support from high school administrators.

Theoretical Implications

Self-efficacy, a derivative of social cognitive theory, refers to an individual's perceived belief in one's capabilities to perform a designated task (Bandura, 1997). When regarded within the teaching context, teacher efficacy refers to one's capabilities to affect student learning (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Individuals reflect on and assess their efficacy based on information from four sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological/affective states (Bandura, 1997). The current study supports previous findings that individuals who successfully completed a task or achieved goals are more than likely to repeat it, whereas those who failed to master a specific task will undermine their efficacy belief (Bandura, 1997). Overall, the participants expressed fulfillment in their role as dual credit teachers as they achieved specific tasks and goals required by both learning institutions.

The participants mentioned several key traits and skills they implemented to succeed in teaching dual credit teaching. The participants mentioned three key factors that they practiced mastering their dual credit teaching role: know the subject matter, teach the subject matter well, and understand the stakeholders. As the participants implemented these key factors, they received positive feedback in their formal evaluation for many years, both from the high school administrators and NTCC department chairs, during in-person teaching. Dual credit teachers insist that brand new dual credit teachers implement the same traits, skills, or best practices if they want to succeed. This implies that mastery experience is an essential source of efficacy.

Vicarious experience is another potent source of developing efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Individuals develop high or low self-efficacy vicariously through other people's performances. The current study showed that the participants developed their efficacy through collaboration with other dual credit teachers but not from their faculty counterparts. The participants felt that they were treated differently as they were considered a separate category during staff development or department meetings. The experiences of the participants suggest that partner colleges must commence with a mentoring program as well as support a collaborative partnership between the faculty and dual credit teachers.

Social persuasion is the third source of information in developing an individual's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Evaluative feedback from influential people can impact one's efficacy (Morris et al., 2017). Praise and encouragement from influential people, such as supervisors, can have a powerful effect on developing one's efficacy (Shunk, 2011). The participants mentioned many positive feedbacks from the formal evaluation they received from their department chairs at NTCC. The feedback validated the participants' efforts and increased their sense of efficacy. On the other hand, the hands-off approach and lack of feedback from the high

school administrators neither encouraged nor discouraged the participants. It may be beneficial for high school administrators to pay attention to what is happening in the dual credit courses and provide specific feedback to teachers to help them grow professionally.

Surprisingly, the current study added to the self-efficacy theory in terms of influential people credible enough to effectively influence verbal persuasion. Former students who have gone to college and provided feedback to the participants of their readiness to tackle upper-level college courses due to the rigor provided in their dual credit courses are influential people who effectively encouraged teacher's performance. The participants were encouraged and inspired by the positive feedback from former students. This implies that the positive feedback from students invalidates the stigma attached to the lack of rigor in dual credit courses. Dual credit teachers at the high school try their best to uphold the college standards. The partner college can provide more frequent informal and formal evaluation, instead of once a semester, on the teachers instructing dual credit courses offered at the high school to ensure or confirm the quality of instruction is similar to the college counterparts.

Physiological feedback or emotional arousal is another source of efficacy for dual credit high school teachers. Affective states such as excitement or anxiety can influence an individual's feeling of mastery or inadequacy (Zakeri et al., 2016). The summer of 2020 was a stressful time for the participants as they were required to be certified to become online instructors if they wish to continue teaching dual credit courses the following year. A couple of the participants were already certified, but most were not. In addition, the participants had a deadline to go through the modules and put together their entire first course on Blackboard. As a result, some participants felt discouraged and thought about calling it quits. The participants felt stressed, and the anxiety level was high because of time constraints, lack of support from both

institutions, and absence of stipend. Most participants stressed the many hours of work they put in without being compensated. This implies that the provision of an additional stipend may be something that the partner college can consider.

Empirical Implications

Concerns over rigor in dual credit courses taught by high school teachers are common (Field, 2021; Hornbeck & Malin, 2019). In Texas, high school instructors indicated that they felt compelled to lower the standards to keep the passing rate high in dual credit courses and that professors who taught upper-level core classes complained about students' readiness and struggles (Field, 2021). The current study found that the participants elevated their standards to comply with the expectations of the college and follow the same curriculum and syllabus as the faculty counterparts. The participants indicated that former students' feedback indicated readiness to upper-level courses. Based on the findings of the study, rigor is provided to dual credit courses at the high school.

Since concern over the quality of instruction continues despite anecdotal claims of teachers elevating expectations, it may be beneficial for partner colleges such as NTCC to develop a local plan to monitor rigor for the dual credit courses at the high school. This will be in addition to NACEP accreditation. Provision of meaningful professional development to address the rigor of content in dual credit courses may be vital as well. Since concerns over the rigor of dual credit courses occur as they are not monitored for quality, unlike the AP program, which requires students to take an assessment in May (Clayton, 2021; Taylor & Yan, 2018), end-of-year dual credit assessment may be considered for dual credit courses. Provision of a self-assessment system for school districts may aid in identifying areas of strength and barriers to improve rigor in dual credit courses offered at the high school.

High school students usually have to choose between Advanced Placement or dual credit courses to achieve an advanced course load. Some Texas schools offer a stacked class that combines dual credit courses and AP in one class. Stacked class of AP and dual credit is largely unexplored, but findings of a study suggested that participation in AP English, AP math, and dual enrollment increase first-year fall-to-fall college retention (Bowers & Foley, 2018). However, a study found that students who scored a three or higher in their AP exam were more successful in college in terms of enrollment, grades, persistence, and graduation rate (Wyatt, Patterson, & Di Giacomo, 2014).

Concerns brought up by participants who taught stacked classes lie in the differences of curriculum between the College Board and the college. The participants face the challenge of covering both curricula within the school year. Anxiety loomed over the participants who offered stacked AP/DC courses as the expectation was to follow the dual credit curriculum. One participant repeatedly mentioned that he was afraid that the opportunity to offer college courses at the high school might be revoked. Participants also discussed challenges pertaining to stacked classes with a mix of regular students and those in dual credit. School district officials may have to revisit options to separate AP and dual credit courses and dual credit courses and regular classes.

The current study confirmed that the concerns regarding high school students' maturity and readiness for college curricula (Howley et al., 2013) are valid for some students. Despite the availability of support from dual credit teachers (Adams, Williams, & Lewis, 2020), which possibly increased the participation rate in dual credit courses offered at the high school (Barnett et al., 2015), the participants indicated that dealing with students who are not ready for college coursework and those who do not want to be there remains a challenge. The current study

corroborated findings of another research suggesting that high school students taking dual credit courses at the high school campus perceived themselves as just secondary students and were not yet at the same level as college students (Lile et al., 2018). Since research informs practice, schools may explore ways to increase awareness among stakeholders about what it takes to be in dual credit courses and revisit the recruitment process of students in the Early College High School program since most students taking dual credit courses are in the program.

Practical Implications

Provision of opportunity for dual credit teachers to engage in professional development along with college faculty around curriculum and assessment results in better course alignment (Pierce, 2017) and can change teachers' competence (Dean, Heaton, Orme, & Woodward, 2015). Furthermore, being engaged in collegial dialogue with college faculty about instructional practices related to teaching and learning enhances dual credit teachers' competence (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015). The current study found that the participants were provided many opportunities to engage in professional development, which is consistent with the findings of Burdick and Greer (2016). However, some participants did not take advantage of the optional webinars or workshops. When the participants attended the mandatory training, there was a lack of collaboration with faculty counterparts, as the dual credit teachers were treated as a separate category.

Aside from the lack of collaboration with faculty counterparts, the current study is also consistent with the research finding that there is a lack of mentorship to dual credit teachers (McWain, 2018). Participants reached out to other dual credit teachers for support. Although some participants connected with faculty minimally during department meetings or workshops, collaboration was nonexistent. The lack of collaboration and mentoring programs implies a need

for the partner college to make these happen. Building a professional and collegial relationship with dual credit teachers can improve the dual credit program.

A faculty mentor can be assigned to a new dual credit teacher and serve as the content expert regarding the curriculum (Stodyk, Johnson, & Grandone, 2020). Partner colleges can use the information provided in this study that there is a need to provide a collaborative partnership between faculty and dual credit teachers. In the partnership, high school dual credit teachers can share their expertise in delivering the curriculum and can provide insights on how they assist students in their transition from secondary to the post-secondary institution (Stodyk, Johnson, & Grandone, 2020).

Equally critical to faculty and dual credit partnership is the provision of support to the teachers. The participants mentioned that department chairs at NTCC were helpful in terms of the dissemination of information. Participants also pointed out that high school administrators assisted by allowing them to attend department meetings and professional development at NTCC. Most participants mentioned a hands-off approach by high school administrators to matters pertaining to dual credit as they trust that teachers are doing what they are supposed to do for the college. While it may be true that the many responsibilities of school leaders compete against each other for their time (Crow, 2010) and the focus on state-mandated accountability measures (Paletta, 2019) take them away from what matters the most, school administrators must start paying attention to dual credit courses offered at the high school.

The current study's revelation of lack of awareness and support from high school administrators calls for leadership activities that promote college and career readiness. School leaders can facilitate a dialogue with high school teachers regarding challenges they face, such as loss of instructional time due to being pulled out to administer state-mandated tests, double work

not commensurate to pay and take necessary action. School administrators can create awareness among multiple stakeholders to ensure everyone is aware of what is going with dual credit, most especially in matters concerning FERPA regulations. This can help ease the anxiety of several dual credit teachers who are constantly pressured to provide information about grades. Furthermore, stakeholders and the partner college must be aware of the dual credit teachers' experiences as they navigate both worlds of their work.

Delimitations and Limitations

Limitations and delimitations were present in this study. The first delimitation was the boundaries set for this study, specifically the participants: high school teachers teaching dual credit in South Texas. This study was delimited to high school teachers teaching dual credit in South Texas and are considered adjunct faculty to Nordville Texas Community College. Dual credit teachers employed by Nordville Texas Community College who travel to the high school site to teach dual courses to high school students were not included in the study. The researcher avoided this option because it is essential for school administrators from both the high school and partner university to understand the experiences of high school teachers who straddle two worlds of work: the high school and post-secondary. Moreover, as they navigate both worlds of work, the stories of the high school teachers teaching dual credit must be heard as their voices are absent from the literature.

Related to the first delimitation is the geographic region covered in the study. This was considered as another delimitation. Due to the unique purposive sample chosen for the study, it is possible that the results of the study could be generalizable to educators who (a) are high school teachers teaching dual credit and are adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community

College, (b) in South Texas region and (c) have taught more than one year as a dual credit teacher.

A third delimitation is the phenomenological approach chosen for this study. The phenomenological approach attempted to obtain multiple perspectives regarding the experiences of high school teachers involved in educating students through dual enrollment courses. Last but not least, the fourth delimitation of the study is the theoretical framework used in the study. Social cognitive theory is the theory that guides the study. The theory is broad. Only a derivative, which is efficacy, is included in the study. Specifically, the four sources of efficacy framed the study dealing with the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit.

The study also has limitations, which are beyond the control of the researcher. The qualitative nature of the study had a limitation that may be related to the validity and reliability. The study was conducted in a natural setting and some elements of the study, such as the participants were unique. One way to overcome this was for the researcher to intentionally identify elements of the qualitative study that can be repeatable and those that are not. Moreover, the researcher made sure that the procedures in the study were implemented with fidelity. Triangulation using multiple sources of data was done faithfully to increase the credibility or internal validity of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The primary data collection method in this study was in-depth interviews. Patton (2015) indicated that interviews allow researchers to enter into the participants' perspectives. It is possible that during the interview process, participants may over-or-under report information (Creswell, 2009). To ensure reliability and dependability, "the research questions were clear and the features of this study design were congruent with them" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 312). Furthermore, to address quality and integrity as the researcher was the main instrument in this

qualitative study, the researcher's role and status within the sites were clearly described. Epoché was implemented with fidelity throughout the process of the research. Critical self-reflection of the researcher's biases and assumptions regarding various elements of the study was done.

Aside from the qualitative nature of the study as a limitation, another constraint considered was the present condition that the geographic region was experiencing, but worldwide. The limitation may have constrained the generalizability of the research as K-12 educators worldwide, including participants of the study, were adjusting to novel remote instruction. The reliability of the data gathered from the interviews may have been influenced by the experiences the participants were going through at that time. There was much anxiety resulting from teaching remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic. One of the interview questions for the third research question addressed the provision of support for remote instruction. This was also discussed in the section that delineates recommendations for further research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study filled a gap in research, but its transferability to the larger population may be limited. Replicating the study may help determine if the findings are transferable. Any attempt to replicate the study must follow the delimitations set in the study to ensure a sample who experienced the phenomenon. It is highly recommended that any duplication of the study involves a phenomenological study and expanding the region covered, preferably the entire State of Texas or other regions outside of South Texas. Expansion of research participants to other regions could help determine if the findings apply to the entire dual credit program in the United States or just for a specific region.

This study described the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit in South Texas. In the future, a phenomenological study capturing the lived experiences of adjunct faculty going to the high school campuses to teach dual credit courses would corroborate or extend findings in this study and provide data from their perspective. In addition, the comparison of how the adjunct faculty describe their experiences as they teach dual credit courses at the high school may provide a complete picture of the dual credit program offered at the high school.

Another possible study would be a high school case study investigating the dual credit teachers' experiences as they transitioned to distance learning during the COVID pandemic. The study would provide a complete picture of how the high school teachers adjusted their instruction to meet the needs of students who were learning virtually. In addition, the research will provide rich and detailed information on how the dual credit teachers met the challenges that came with remote learning and how they navigated their dual role during the pandemic.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. The participants' stories provided information on how they experienced the phenomenon. The descriptions of the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses generated five themes: upholding college standards, institutionalized expectations, double-edge experiences, key factors to succeed in dual credit teaching, and training and support. The findings of the study confirmed previous research regarding teachers' organization as a key factor that influences self-efficacy beliefs. In addition,

the study extended the research by providing more traits that enhanced the teachers' efficacy beliefs based on performance experience or outcome source.

Aside from performance experience, three other sources of efficacy in relation to the experiences of the dual credit teachers' experiences were discussed. The participants discussed collaboration with other dual credit teachers as an influential source of efficacy through vicarious experiences. The lack of mentoring programs from the partner college was thoroughly discussed. Verbal persuasion from influential people such as department chairs from the partner college encouraged the dual credit teachers' performance. The study extended the influential people to include former students who provided feedback that their dual credit teachers at the high school prepared them well for upper-level courses. Finally, the dual credit teachers provided general feedback of unhappiness over managing dual roles, which is not commensurate to their stipend. However, the teachers indicated a general feeling of persistence and a rewarding experience of what they do because of their passion for teaching, love for students, and a desire to help them achieve their goals of earning college credit or associate degree.

The findings of this study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. Provision of a mentoring program, a collaboration between dual credit teachers and faculty counterparts, increasing stipend, hands-on approach for high school administrators, separation of stacked classes, and a plan to monitor rigor in dual credit courses were discussed. Based on delimitations and limitations, recommendations for further research can validate the findings of the study.

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APPENDIX A**IRB APPLICATION APPROVAL****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 28, 2021

Cynthia Cid
Sharon Michael-Chadwell

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-251 Navigating Two Worlds: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of High School Teachers Instructing Dual Credit Courses in South Texas

Dear Cynthia Cid, Sharon Michael-Chadwell:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46: 101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of

continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B
LETTER TO PRINCIPAL

Dear Principal:

I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am writing my dissertation to examine the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses. I am defining high school teachers instructing dual enrollment courses as the teachers teaching one or more dual enrollment classes for one or more years at the high school setting. The high school teachers must be considered as adjunct professors at Nordville Texas Community College. I believe the experiences of the high school teachers as they teach dual enrollment courses are important in ensuring the alignment of expectations and policies between the high school and the partner higher education institution to promote student success. An examination of the teachers' experiences will provide information as to what type of support the dual enrollment teachers need from school administrators.

For me to commence the process of the study, I am requesting names and email addresses of the high school teachers on your campus who are teaching dual enrollment courses for at least one or more years. I will be contacting the teachers via email to request their permission to participate in the study.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to contribute to the extension of the knowledge base related to dual enrollment.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Cid

Doctoral Student

APPENDIX C

SITE APPROVAL LETTER

The template of the site approval letter acknowledging receipt, review of the request, and approval to interview teachers teaching dual enrollment teachers in a particular school is below. Since the actual site approval letters contain the school's name, they were not included here.

Date

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear Mrs. Cynthia Cid:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled NAVIGATING TWO WORLDS OF WORK: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS INSTRUCTING DUAL CREDIT COURSES IN SOUTH TEXAS, I have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at [name of district/school/facility].

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Company/Organization]

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Dual Credit Teacher,

I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am conducting research to examine the lived experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses at the high school setting. The purpose of my research is to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older and currently employed as a high school teacher teaching a dual credit course while also employed as adjunct faculty at South Texas College for at least one year. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a video recorded interview using Zoom or Google Meets. During the interview, participants will share a photo that illustrates their impressions or experiences of teaching a dual credit course in South Texas. If participant supplied photo is unavailable, researcher will provide a selection of photos that participant can choose from. Participants will be provided an opportunity to review the transcript one week after the interview. Participants must provide feedback to the researcher one week after receipt of transcript. The interview will last for approximately 60 minutes. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please call me at [REDACTED] or email me at [REDACTED] to confirm your eligibility.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you are determined to be eligible to participate, please type your name and the date on the consent form and return it to me by email prior to the interview.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Cid

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW UP RECRUITMENT LETTER

Date

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

[Address 3]

Dear [Dual credit Teacher]:

Greetings. As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. Ten days ago, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond to the invitation to participate. The deadline for participation is [Date].

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a video-recorded interview using Zoom or Google Meets. During the interview, you will be asked to share a photo that illustrate your impressions and experiences of teaching a dual credit course in South Texas. If participant supplied photo is unavailable, researcher will provide a selection of photos that you can choose from. It should take approximately 60 minutes for you to complete the procedure listed. One week after the interview, you will be provided an opportunity to review the transcript. Your feedback will be emailed to the researcher one week after receipt of the transcript. Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please call me at [REDACTED] to confirm your eligibility.

A consent form is attached. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research. If you are determined to be eligible to participate, please type your name and the date on the consent form and return it to me by email prior to the interview.

Thank you so much for your kind consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Cynthia F. Cid
Graduate Student

APPENDIX F

Consent

Title of the Project: Navigating Two Worlds: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences of High School Teachers Instructing Dual Credit Courses in South Texas

Principal Investigator: Cynthia F. Cid, Graduate Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older and currently employed as a high school teacher teaching a dual credit course while also employed as adjunct faculty at South Texas College for at least one year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of high school teachers instructing dual credit courses for which they serve as college adjunct faculty in South Texas. It is the goal of the study to address an existing gap in the literature regarding the experiences of high school teachers teaching dual credit courses who are integral in the success of the dual enrollment program.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a virtual interview through Zoom or Google Meet. The interview will be recorded using the video recording capability of the conferencing platform, with the possible use of verbatim quotes in the final product of the study. Questions about documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and South Texas College's policy with partner school districts may also arise during the interview and the participant will be asked to discuss them. During the interview, provide one or two pictures of anything, except pictures of individuals, to illustrate your impressions and experiences of teaching dual credit courses at the high school. You may use existing images you have or available online to portray your experiences of teaching dual credit courses. If you do not wish to provide a picture or a quote, the researcher can provide images that you can choose from during the interview. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.
2. A transcript will be provided to you one week (five business days) after the interview through email. You will have one week (five business days) to review the transcript and provide any feedback to the researcher through email.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include improving the dual enrollment program in South Texas. Moreover, the study will provide school administrators at the high school level and the higher education sector several critical information on how to provide targeted support for the dual credit teachers.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and locked safe. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted and all physical records will be shredded.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

The researcher serves as an administrator at Weslaco East High School. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, the dual credit teachers participating in the study are not under the researcher's Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) direct supervision load. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the school district/high school you are employed in. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Cynthia F. Cid. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] and/or

email at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, D. Sharon Michael-Chadwell at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is your highest educational attainment?
3. What types of teaching certifications do you hold?
4. How long have you been teaching, and how long have you been teaching dual credit course at the high school level?
5. As a dual credit teacher in South Texas, what aspect of your job is the most rewarding?
What aspect is the least rewarding?
6. As you navigate both the world of high school and higher education in your role as a DE instructor, describe your experiences in trying to accomplish tasks for both institutions.
7. Tell me how you incorporate the educational philosophies, expectations, and requirements of your high school with the educational philosophies, expectations, and requirements of higher education within your dual enrollment role.
8. Describe your experiences with the curriculum, syllabus, grading policies, and other standards set by Nordville Texas Community College as well as your secondary institution.
9. What types of obstacles or challenges prevented you from accomplishing your tasks as a dual enrollment teacher, who must follow both requirements from your high school and Nordville Texas Community College?
10. Tell me examples of characteristics, skills, and practices that you are more than likely to repeat and/or recommend to a brand-new dual credit high school teacher.

11. Describe any positive or negative experiences you have had that influence your ability to perform your job as a dual credit high school teacher.
12. Describe your experiences where anyone or anything may have encouraged or discouraged you that have impacted your self-efficacy as a dual credit high school teacher. Describe how you felt in each experience.
13. As an adjunct faculty at Nordville Texas Community College, what type of support have you received from NTCC coordinators and high school administrators?
14. Tell me about a time when you received positive or negative feedback or both from an administrator, either at the high school or the partner college.
15. Describe how you feel about teaching dual credit courses at the high school level.
16. Describe the obstacles or challenges that you have experienced as a dual credit teacher and how you overcame them.
17. What are your thoughts about the professional development opportunities provided to dual credit teachers? How often are the PD opportunities, and how does it help you as a dual credit teacher?
18. What collaboration or mentoring opportunities from NTCC and the high school are provided for dual credit teachers?
19. Describe your experience and the level of support you received from both the high school and NTCC as you transitioned to teaching dual credit courses online due to the coronavirus pandemic.
20. What else you would like to say about your experiences as a dual enrollment teacher at the high school that was not covered in any of the questions?

APPENDIX H

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTO INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE

Instructions to teachers before the Photo Interviewing Process:

During the interview session, you will be asked to provide one or two photos that illustrate your impressions and experiences of teaching dual credit courses at the high school. Feel free to take a photo, use an existing photo that you already have on file, or you may use an image available online to portray your experiences of teaching dual credit courses. If you do not bring a photo, I can provide a selection of images, and you may choose one that best captures your experiences as a dual credit teacher.

Instructions during the Photo Interviewing Process:

The following will be used to help dual credit teachers facilitate discussion pertaining to the photo they brought:

1. Describe the photo you brought.
2. Why did you choose the photo to illustrate your experiences as a dual credit teacher?