

MOTIVATING UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE AND PURSUE
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

by

Lynnette Adams

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 qualitative, single case study was to understand the roles of the faculty at one Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Early College High School (ECHS) combined school and how the faculty motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Student motivation is generally defined as the overall need or enthusiasm of students to achieve specific goals through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The theory guiding this study was self-determination theory, as it places emphasis on how educators can address students' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) to increase students' intrinsic motivation to achieve. Faculty at one AVID and Early College combined school in South Carolina were interviewed and observed to gain an understanding of how the strategies used through these programs work to motivate underrepresented students. Documents were also analyzed to support the work of the faculty with students. Qualitative data analysis procedures were used to understand, theorize, contextualize, and synthesize the data to establish a thorough understanding of how the school functions to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Three themes emerged from the data that include relationships, a student-centered focus, and specific strategies, all of which faculty at the school utilize to motivate students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Keywords: underrepresented students, motivation, AVID, Early College, first-generation, academic middle

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my parents, Jim and Teresa Adams, who have always supported me and whatever I set out to do. They set the example for me and my sister, showing us what it means to work hard, persevere, and dedicate our careers and lives to helping others. I am forever grateful for their love, generosity, wisdom, and words of encouragement. I would not be the person that I am today without them.

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List of Abbreviations

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

Early College High School (ECHS)

Kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The issue of student motivation has been researched in various ways for many years (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2020), including research that centers on strategies that educators use to increase student motivation, otherwise referred to as self-determination, to achieve and pursue postsecondary education (Todhunter-Reid, et al., 2020; Kirk & Watt, 2018). Historically, underrepresented students achieve and pursue postsecondary education at lower rates than their majority peers (Plano Clark, et al., 2017), which requires educators to utilize additional programs and strategies that work specifically with underrepresented students (Xu, et al., 2021). This chapter discusses the background of the need to motivate underrepresented students from an historical, social, and theoretical context and includes information on how underrepresented student motivation relates to the overall theory of self-determination. The specific problem this study addresses is detailed and the purpose and significance of the study are also discussed. Fundamental research questions are presented to provide an overall guide for the study.

Background

Postsecondary education, also referred to as a degree or certification beyond a high school diploma, has become increasingly important over the last several decades for individuals to obtain adequate employment and earn a livable wage (Carnevale, et al., 2020). Underrepresented individuals are described as belonging to one or more of the following categories: ethnic or racial minority, low socio-economic status, non-gifted and talented (academic middle), first-generation college students, or first in the family to graduate from high school (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Historically, underrepresented students have not enrolled in

postsecondary education programs at the same rate as their majority peers, which has led to an increase in specialized programs in K-12 education that target underrepresented students' specific needs (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Through the use of multiple theories of motivation and achievement, educators have developed strategies and programs that serve to aid underrepresented students in achieving academically as well as in postsecondary programs (Morley, et al., 2020; Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019; Plano Clark, et al., 2017).

Historical Context

Society places great emphasis on the need for a skilled and educated workforce, which is a major shift in what used to be considered the norm (Kirk & Watt, 2018). In 1973, only 28% of the workforce had some sort of postsecondary education but by 2020, 65% of jobs required postsecondary education that includes some college coursework up to a graduate level degree (Carnevale, et al., 2020). Additionally, 64% of job openings in 2020 required workers to obtain education beyond a high school diploma (Carnevale, et al., 2020). With advances in technology, changing demographics, and changes in the needs of the people and economy in the United States, the workforce has been forced to evolve and adapt to meet and keep up with the changes (Carnevale, et al., 2020). Postsecondary education has become vital for not only comfortable living, but for many individuals' ability to survive and meet the needs of a family. K-12 education has also had to make significant changes to provide an education for all students so that each might be able to graduate from high school and become a productive member of society and the workforce (Kolbe, et al., 2018). However, it has been historically more difficult for educators to reach all students, many of whom are labeled at risk, or part of underrepresented populations (Kolbe, et al., 2018).

Historically, underrepresented students have enrolled in postsecondary programs at far

lower rates than their peers, which can prevent them from obtaining stable employment in the future (Kolbe, et al., 2018). Since a college degree or postsecondary certification has become crucial for many individuals to earn a livable wage in today's society, it has become even more critical for educators to support, encourage, and motivate underrepresented students to not only achieve their goals, but to also enroll in and complete some form of postsecondary education (Kolbe, et al., 2018). Educators have worked for decades to develop programs, strategies, and distinctive practices that specifically target underrepresented students in an effort to address the gap in postsecondary program enrollment and completion (Plano Clark, et al., 2017).

To combat the needs of traditionally underrepresented students, educators and investors across the country began to devise specific programs, interventions, and strategies aimed at not only closing the ever-present achievement gap, but also geared toward closing opportunity gaps (Kirk & Watt, 2018). One such program is Advancement Via Individual Determination, otherwise known as AVID. AVID was founded in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, a high school English teacher in California, to assist students in the "academic middle" (Todhunter-Reid, et al., 2020). The premise of AVID states that when students are presented with a rigorous curriculum and provided with research-based, data driven, college preparatory strategies, those students will rise to the occasion and achieve at higher rates (Morley, et al., 2020). The program aims to provide specific learning strategies that will aid students in academics, but also seeks to change the college going culture for students and families that may not have the same opportunities otherwise. While the AVID program originated in an English classroom in Texas serving 32 students, the program reached the national level in 1995 and there are currently 2,300 middle and high schools in 36 states and 15 countries serving more than two million students each day (AVID, 2021).

Another such program emerged in 2001 and has been one of the more successful and innovative models to aid underrepresented students in achieving a college education (Vargas, 2019). This program is known as the Early College model, aimed at providing students with a high school diploma as well as college credit up to an Associate's degree through dual enrollment courses by the time the student graduates from high school (Vargas, 2019). Dual enrollment courses include courses that students take through a local community or technical college after which the students earn college and high school credit simultaneously for the courses (Xu, et al., 2021). With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, along with several other notable donors, the Early College High School Initiative was launched in 2002 as a way to increase the likelihood that underrepresented students would attend postsecondary programs after high school (Adams, et al., 2020). By placing emphasis on rigor, relationships, college readiness, and relevance, the Early College model in 2021 serves more than 80,000 students in approximately 280 programs across 28 states. Although the Early College High School (ECHS) model has grown a great deal since its' inception, it is a fairly new approach compared to other intervention programs like AVID (Adams, et al., 2020). However, the success of the program in boosting postsecondary enrollment after graduation is evident (Walk, 2020).

Social Context

The United States economy has maintained steady growth despite the challenges that a worldwide pandemic presented in recent years, and the number of jobs that are newly created - as well as those vacated due to retirement - are expected to continue to grow (Carnevale, et al., 2020). Individuals who obtain a college degree are estimated to be twice as likely to become gainfully employed and earn approximately 65% more per week than people with only a high school diploma (Fruht & Chan, 2018). In 2020, it was estimated that approximately 65% of all

jobs would require some form of postsecondary education beyond a high school diploma (Carnevale, et al., 2020). The need for high school graduates to obtain some level of college education or training has become necessary, which requires that all students can easily access postsecondary programs. Specifically, students from underrepresented populations are historically less likely to pursue postsecondary programs after high school for a variety of reasons that include lack of access to resources and a lack of knowledge of the college process (Knaggs, et al., 2020).

Results of one study indicated that underrepresented students are less likely to attend postsecondary programs and, in turn, less likely to enter into a career that will provide the wages necessary to be considered part of the middle class in society (Knaggs, et al., 2020). Kolbe, et al. (2018) attributed this phenomenon to differences in family expectations, lack of knowledge regarding the importance of postsecondary education, disparities in academic and college preparation, and lack of understanding of the postsecondary application and enrollment process. For this reason, a variety of college preparatory programs aimed at targeting underrepresented students have emerged over the last several decades (Song, et al., 2021). Many underrepresented students who grow up in low-income households and without proper education or training, could potentially continue the cycle of poverty (Duncheon, 2020). Through educational interventions such as AVID and Early College programs that target the underrepresented student population, studies have shown that the likelihood of completing postsecondary training or earning a college degree is higher and graduates are more likely to secure stable employment with higher pay (Duncheon, 2020).

Theoretical Context

Student motivation has been at the forefront of educational research and there are

multiple theoretical frameworks that have been used to examine student motivation, or self-determination. Kirk and Watt (2018) applied Tinto's model of student persistence to the research conducted, placing emphasis on the importance of building relationships with students as a way for teachers to connect with students, as well as students to connect to other students, in an effort to motivate, encourage, and persist in difficult situations (French, 2017). Tinto's model is based on two essential principles - academic and social integration - which are key components of the AVID and Early College programs. Academic performance is a key component of both programs, but Tinto surmises that social interactions are equally as important because students who interact more with faculty and peers, along with other leadership and extracurricular opportunities, will feel more satisfaction, receive more affirmation, and ultimately persist at higher levels (French, 2017). Key elements of the AVID and Early College program models include frequent peer interactions, faculty-student advisory, community service, and leadership, all of which are incorporated in Tinto's theory for student success and persistence (Kirk & Watt, 2018).

Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory explains how a students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can affect overall motivation (Morley, et al., 2020). Like Tinto's theory, Deci and Ryan (2020) suggest that a students' intrinsic motivation, or self-determination, is increased by connections with others, learning, and mastery. Students, especially those in underrepresented populations, require additional supports to aid in the growth and development of these concepts, as well as to gain autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Motivation is a key component of the AVID and Early College programs, as both programs require that students push themselves beyond what is comfortable and reach farther to achieve goals (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019; Plano Clark, et al., 2017). Students are more likely to be motivated to reach

their academic, personal, and social goals, and self-determination is more likely to rise through the use of extrinsic motivators that are part of the AVID and Early College programs (Morley, et al., 2020; Burns, et al., 2019).

Ahn, et al. (2021) applied self-determination theory by studying how teachers' motivations can affect teaching practices and, more specifically, how those practices support students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness which, in turn, support students' motivation. Coudevylle, et al. (2020) also utilized self-determination theory to study students' motivation and determined that students tend to be more intrinsically motivated when teachers provide them with meaningful choices, explanatory rationales, and allow students' opinions to be voiced, which are all examples of helping to fulfill the students' need for autonomy. To fulfill the need of relatedness, Coudevylle et al. (2020) proposed that teachers must be patient, warm, caring, and giving with their time and attention, while fulfilling the need of competence requires that teachers clearly communicate expectations and provide constructive feedback to students. All of these needs are addressed through the strategies that are incorporated in the AVID and ECHS models (AVID, 2021; Adams, et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that underrepresented students do not pursue postsecondary education at the same rates as their majority peers (Markle & Dyckhoff Stelzriede, 2020; Roksa, et al., 2020; Walk, 2020; Kirk & Watt, 2018). Underrepresented students tend to face additional challenges that their peers may not experience that include lack of access or knowledge about postsecondary education and no clearly defined pathway to postsecondary options (Taylor Phillips, et al., 2020; Wahleithner, 2020). Much of the research that focuses on motivating students examines the students' perspectives (Ahn et al., 2021; Shin & Johnson, 2021), while some of the research also

considers teacher behaviors (Shelton-Strong, 2020; Shin & Bolkan, 2021), and others study student achievement as it relates to motivation (Coudevylle, et al., 2020; Jenó et al, 2018). Despite the extensive research that exists surrounding the topic of student motivation, there is very little information that concentrates exclusively on schools that focus solely on underrepresented students and the pursuit of postsecondary education.

Historically, underrepresented students are less likely to enroll in and complete postsecondary programs, which may significantly lower the possibility of obtaining employment that will provide a livable wage (Kirk & Watt, 2018). It is imperative that teachers who work with underrepresented students are equipped with specific strategies and practices that aid in motivating students to not only achieve their personal and academic goals, but to extend those goals beyond high school and into some form of postsecondary education (Duncheon, 2020). While the results from previous studies on student perspectives can be useful for teachers, the roles and processes of faculty in a school that works with underrepresented students each day can also be quite useful in determining which strategies and practices have shown to be successful in motivating students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, embedded single-case study was to understand the roles and practices of the faculty and staff at one AVID and ECHS combined school and how the faculty and staff work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Student motivation was generally defined as the overall need or enthusiasm of students to achieve specific goals through autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The theory guiding this study is self-determination theory, as it places emphasis on how educators can address students' basic psychological needs

(autonomy, competence, and relatedness) to increase students' intrinsic motivation to achieve specific goals (Ahn, et al., 2021; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Significance of the Study

While there is a significant amount of research centered on how the AVID and Early College programs can be properly utilized and the benefits to underrepresented students, there has been little research conducted on the combined efforts of both programs and the roles and functions of the educators who utilize the strategies within these programs to motivate underrepresented students. In this case study, the faculty and staff at one AVID and ECHS combined school described their roles within the school and how the two programs in conjunction aid in motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. By examining the function of the school and the roles of the educators within the school, this case study shows how, when combined, the AVID and ECHS programs support Deci and Ryan's (1980) theory of self-determination and expand upon the current literature on self-determination and student motivation.

Empirical Significance

Previous and current research identifies the ECHS program model as effective in not only educating students, but also providing a quality college preparatory program that affords the opportunity for underrepresented students to get a jump start on postsecondary education (Song, et al., 2021; Berger, et al., 2014). The AVID curriculum is much older than the ECHS program model and a significant amount of research has been conducted indicating that AVID is a successful program with proven strategies that aids underrepresented students in successful completion of college preparatory work, as well as postsecondary enrollment (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Vargas (2019) asserts that the more resources available to underrepresented students, the

higher the likelihood that those students will be successful in high school and dual enrollment programs. Vargas (2019) also contends that underrepresented students are more likely to attend and graduate from a postsecondary program at higher rates if provided with additional supports. This case study adds to the existing literature by providing a better understanding of teachers' roles at one AVID and ECHS combined school and how those roles contribute to the overall functioning of the school to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Theoretical Significance

The results of this case study have theoretical significance for the expansion of Deci and Ryan's (1980) theory of self-determination and provide a greater understanding of self-determination theory overall. Through the use of Ryan and Deci's (2020) theory, this study aids in helping educators to better understand how schools can utilize specific programs and strategies to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education (Shin & Bolkan, 2021). The results of this case study will also help researchers to understand how combining programs like AVID and the ECHS models impact underrepresented students' motivation as it relates to autonomy, relatedness, and competence, and how teachers can aid in increasing students' overall motivation through the facilitation of self-determination (Ahn, et al., 2021; Shin & Johnson, 2021).

Practical Significance

By studying the roles of teachers that incorporate both the AVID and ECHS programs simultaneously, as well as the overall processes and functioning of the school, not only will the educators participating in the study be able to identify ways to make the current program stronger, but other ECHS programs across the country can utilize the information provided by

participants as a potential model for how to incorporate the AVID curriculum and strategies into existing ECHS programs to better serve underrepresented students. For educators at schools that do not currently have an ECHS or AVID model in place, this study provides an explanation of how teachers can incorporate specific strategies with underrepresented students to increase motivation and encourage postsecondary education. School and district administrators across the country can utilize the results of this case study to further develop existing programs for underrepresented students or create new programs within their school districts that apply specific strategies that educators participating in this study use to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

Central Research Question

How do the faculty and staff at one Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School combined school motivate underrepresented students?

Sub-Question One

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for autonomy?

Sub-Question Two

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for relatedness?

Sub-Question Three

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for competence?

Definitions

1. *Autonomy* - students' perception as the cause of their own behavior, learning, or motivation (Shin & Bolkan, 2021).

2. *College preparatory* - interventions that provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in high school courses and prepare students to attend college (Kolbe, et al., 2018).
3. *Competence* - the perception being capable of effectively completing tasks assigned by the teacher (Coudeville, et al., 2020).
4. *Dual enrollment* - college courses that high school students can take to receive high school and college credit (Walk, 2020).
5. *First-generation* - students who are the first in the family to attend postsecondary education or the first in the family to graduate from high school; neither parent has a college degree (Schwartz, et al., 2018).
6. *Intrinsic motivation* - innate desire to achieve or behave in a specific manner because those actions are fulfilling to the student (Shin & Johnson, 2021).
7. *Postsecondary education* - education or training programs students attend after graduating high school (Morley, et al., 2021).
8. *Relatedness* - the development of significant relationships with classmates and teachers (Coudeville, et al., 2020).
9. *Underrepresented students* - students of color, low socioeconomic status, and first-generation college students (Kirk & Watt, 2018)

Summary

For a variety of reasons, students who are classified as underrepresented are not pursuing postsecondary education at the same rates as their majority peers (Kirk & Watt, 2018). In light of this information, many schools and districts have implemented specific programs and strategies to provide additional supports to underrepresented students in an effort to encourage and

motivate them to achieve and pursue postsecondary education (Ahn, et al., 2021). This qualitative case study examined one AVID and ECHS combined school that solely serves underrepresented students and how the faculty and school functions to motivate students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education through the lens of Ryan and Deci's (1980) self-determination theory.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review provides a detailed description of the theoretical framework used in this study, how the theory has been used in previous research, and how it will be incorporated into the current study. Literature that is directly related to this study was examined to provide an in-depth understanding of the essential elements of the study. These elements include details about first-generation students, underrepresented students and motivation, the purpose of dual enrollment programs, the AVID and ECHS program models, and specific strategies these programs offer to aid in motivating students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Theoretical Framework

This qualitative case study utilizes the theoretical framework to guide the research process. The theoretical framework is used to offer support for the research study, as well as a view through which the research study can be perceived (Galvan, 2017). This literature review explores Edward Deci and Richard Ryan's self-determination theory, in which they assert that people choose self-determined actions and behaviors based on expected outcomes to provide the greatest amount of gratification (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Through the assessment of specific strategies used to assist underrepresented students, the researcher was able to understand teachers' roles in motivating those students to achieve and pursue postsecondary options. The results of this case study provide educators with information regarding how teachers utilize two research-based programs that have been shown to raise academic achievement and pursue postsecondary education through self-determination to motivate underrepresented students.

Self-Determination Theory in Prior Research

Numerous research studies have used Deci and Ryan's theory of self-determination as the framework that guides their research. Shin and Bolkan (2021) investigated how teachers' behaviors may influence students' motivation. It was determined that teacher behaviors had a direct influence on students' perceived engagement and intrinsic motivation, further supporting the premise of self-determination theory. The way that teachers address and interact with students plays a pivotal role in not only holding students' attention but also in supporting intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve (Shin & Bolkan, 2021). This research furthers Deci and Ryan's theory of self-determination as it relates to this study, which focuses on teachers' roles in motivating students to achieve. Ahn, et al., (2021) focused on how teachers' own intrinsic motivation influenced the students' intrinsic motivation. When teachers have autonomous motivation for teaching, students' autonomous motivation is positively impacted (Ahn, et al., 2021). Teachers who are excited about teaching and actively work to engage students in a variety of ways are inadvertently supporting students' needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, which are all a focus of this study.

Shelton-Strong (2020) examined how advising, or providing a deliberately structured dialogue, may assist in meeting the needs of language learners in the classroom and promote autonomous motivation. Through these structured social learning advising activities, teachers promote valuable learning and academic performance, student adaptability, and foster autonomous motivation in the classroom (Shelton-Strong, 2020). By participating in structured dialogue with students, teachers provide further support for students' basic needs for autonomy and competence. Shin and Johnson (2021) investigated how relationships among peers in the classroom impact students' autonomous motivation. Student-to-student confirmation was

examined as it relates to an indirect influence on intrinsic motivation. Students exhibited greater perceptions of feelings of relatedness and competence, which shows a positive indirect influence on students' intrinsic motivation. When students are grouped or paired together for various activities and are able to provide feedback and confirmation to one another, it can be inferred that those students will be autonomously motivated to achieve (Shin & Johnson, 2021).

Henry and Thorsen (2021) utilized Deci and Ryan's theory as the framework for examining teacher-student relationships, teacher self-disclosure, and students' need for relatedness. Through the observation of teacher lessons, it was determined that the teacher-student relationship established in the classroom is important in meeting students' need of relatedness. When students perceive the teacher to be relatable, caring, and genuine, intrinsic motivation is also increased (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). Scales, et al. (2020) studied how teacher-student relationships aid in meeting students' needs of relatedness and autonomy. In a diverse student population, the researchers found that when teachers develop positive relationships with students, students have more academic motivation and positive perceptions of the school's climate (Scales, et al., 2020). The work of these researchers furthers the assertion of Deci and Ryan (2020) that when teachers form positive working relationships with students, the students are more intrinsically motivated, feel more connected to the teacher, and perform at higher rates academically.

Self-Determination Theory in This Research Study

Deci & Ryan's (2020) self-determination theory provides a theoretical framework for this research study as it relates to underrepresented students' motivation to achieve and pursue postsecondary options. Examining faculty roles within the school not only provides a deeper understanding of how those teachers utilize need-supportive practices in the classroom to

facilitate student growth and need satisfaction, but also offers strategies and practices that may not be common at other schools that traditionally serve a higher population of underrepresented students. Much of the research surrounding self-determination theory and student motivation centers on the perceptions and experiences of students, but there is little research that examines the roles of teachers that utilize need-supportive practices on a regular basis to further students' intrinsic motivation.

Prior research indicates that students' intrinsic motivation to achieve can increase when the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence are met. Examples of specific need-supportive practices have also been researched, but there is little research that reviews the roles of faculty within a system that utilize those specific research-based practices to not only meet the needs of students and increase motivation and achievement, but also promote student goal-setting and postsecondary options. This study examines all aspects of meeting student needs and promoting student motivation and postsecondary options for underrepresented students through the lens of self-determination theory.

The research questions that guided this study were derived directly from the foundation of Deci and Ryan's (2020) self-determination theory. Interview questions originated from the central and sub research questions and each interview question directly relates to portions of the theory. This study adds to self-determination theory by contributing valuable information about the roles of faculty in an AVID and ECHS combined school and how, through these research-based programs, students are able to become more self-motivated to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Related Literature

This section reviews the existing literature that is related to self-determined motivation, programs that target underrepresented students, and increasing students' intrinsic motivation through need-supportive practices. The review includes the following: components of self-determination theory, need-supportive practices, underrepresented students and a description of the various groups of underrepresented students, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), AVID strategies and motivation, dual enrollment, the Early College High School model, ECHS strategies and motivation, and the benefits of these programs as each relates to aiding teachers in increasing underrepresented student motivation. Each section includes research studies that have been conducted regarding these programs and student motivation to show a gap in the literature as it relates to this study.

Self-Determined motivation

Upon review of existing literature, there were several themes that centered on increasing student motivation and self-determination to achieve. Across the continuum of motivation, self-determined, or autonomous, motivation drives student engagement and the desire to achieve, whereas controlled motivation occurs when students feel a desire for approval or a desire to avoid punishment (Ahn, et al., 2021). Deci and Ryan (2020) assert that intrinsic, or autonomous, motivation is optimal and is affected by the level of gratification of three prevailing psychological needs. These needs include the students' need for autonomy (independence in the learning process), relatedness (the development of positive relationships), and competence (demonstrated proficiency of content) in the classroom (Coudevylle, et al., 2020). To meet these student needs, teachers must provide instruction to students through individualized, student-centered, needs-supportive, teaching methods (Domen, et al., 2019). A student-centered

approach to teaching and learning also aids in the engagement and motivation of students to achieve (Xie, et al., 2020).

Autonomy

According to Deci and Ryan (2020), the need for autonomy is one of the main psychological needs that must be met for students to be intrinsically motivated to achieve. While it is not possible to allow for students to be completely autonomous in every aspect of education, there are ways in which teachers can interact with students in the classroom that allows for autonomous decision-making, which can also lead to autonomous motivation to achieve (Ahn, et al., 2021). Teachers promote student autonomy in the classroom by providing students with meaningful choices, demonstrating the relevance and significance of lessons and activities, listening to understand, and communicating intentions, lessons, and directions in a non-controlling manner (Ahn, et al., 2021). Students who are provided with some sense of choice when engaging in specific activities and are allowed the opportunity to express opinions, thoughts, and ideas without the threat of punishment or guilt are more likely to achieve a sense of autonomy and, therefore, a self-determined motivation to achieve (Coudeville, et al., 2020). Autonomy, or a sense of independence, in the learning process supports higher rates of learning and achievement due to the personal investment students have in the process and its outcomes (Ahn, et al., 2021).

Relatedness

The student need for relatedness can be nurtured through the development of meaningful relationships with teachers and peers (Coudeville, et al., 2020). Teachers support relatedness by actively working to get to know each student individually and forming positive working relationships through warm, caring, and genuine communication (Coudeville, et al., 2020).

Previous research has suggested that learning is a social process and students are more likely to be motivated to learn and achieve when feelings of emotional and social connectedness are present (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). While connecting with every student may not always be an easy task for teachers, the relationships that teachers develop with students over time have been linked to an increase in intrinsic motivation for students which, in turn, may lead to substantial improvements in engagement, learning, and academic performance (Scales, et al., 2020).

Teachers who make an effort to form and develop positive working relationships that are based on mutual respect, care, a sense of shared power, and high expectations are more likely to have higher achievement from students overall, but notably those that are considered as underrepresented students (Shin & Bolkan, 2021). Teachers also support relatedness by fostering positive peer relationships among students in the classroom setting, as well as a positive school climate (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). Connections among peers within the classroom and the school aids in the motivation of students to achieve and succeed together (Coudeville, et al., 2020).

Competence

Strategies that help to develop and support an organized, predictable, and structured environment in which students are able to focus on learning aids in building a students' sense of competence (Ahn, et al., 2021). Teachers should provide high, yet realistic, expectations to students, communicate rules and directions clearly and directly, offer informative and constructive feedback, and provide adequate assistance when students require help (Ahn, et al., 2021). When students have issues with understanding specific concepts or assignments, it is important that the teacher facilitates the problem-solving process by helping the student to critically think through the issue and produce their own solutions (Domen, et al., 2020). The procedures that teachers utilize in the classroom provide students with a sense of structure and

confidence in the environment, the teacher, and the learning process, which aids in boosting self-confidence in their mastery of the material (Domen, et al., 2020). Structure within the classroom and the learning process gives students a sense of control over personal learning outcomes and has previously been found to promote autonomous motivation (Domen, et al., 2020). A perceived sense of competence is especially important for the academic achievement of underrepresented students, as many traditionally feel left behind in one or more ways due to societal or other conditions (Jeno, et al., 2018).

Need-Supportive practices

To support and facilitate students' basic needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, teachers must incorporate need-supportive practices into daily classroom activities (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Shelton-Strong, 2020). Ryan and Deci (2020) assert that, based on data from numerous studies, it is essential for teachers to exhibit need-supportive teaching behaviors to increase autonomous motivation in students. To fully support students' needs and promote intrinsic motivation in students, teachers must exhibit autonomous motivation for the profession, as teachers' motivation has been linked to student motivation and performance in the classroom (Ahn, et al., 2021). When students believe that their teachers are excited about teaching and truly want their students to learn, grow, and achieve, they are more likely to perform well in the classroom (Shin & Bolkan, 2021; Shelton-Strong, 2020). The need-supportive practices of teachers in the classroom have been positively linked to students' perceived need for satisfaction and report more autonomous motivation, as well as higher academic performance per student (Shin & Bolkan, 2021).

Teachers support student autonomy by offering students meaningful choices, providing relatable rationales for activities, actively listening and taking students' ideas and opinions into

consideration, and demonstrating patience, especially during frustrating situations or encounters (Coudeville, et al., 2020). Underrepresented students may require additional support from teachers that includes mentoring, opportunities to express feelings and interact with teachers and peers, and relating lessons and concepts to students' real-world experiences (Domen, et al., 2020). Henry and Thorsen (2021) suggest that effective need-supportive teaching centers on the teacher's ability to create and build positive relationships with students, as well as maintaining social and emotional connectedness with each student. Students are more likely to be engaged in the learning process if they believe that the teacher is genuinely interested in them and their well-being (Domen, et al., 2020). This practice may require some teachers to move beyond comfort levels to disclose some personal information without crossing specific boundaries (Henry & Thorsen, 2021). Self-disclosure may be difficult for some teachers in the beginning but through the formation of positive relationships, student motivation and engagement is likely to increase (Henry & Thorsen, 2021).

Positive peer interactions also play a significant role in students' autonomous motivation and creating opportunities for students to interact with one another in the classroom setting is an additional way that teachers support this need (Shin & Johnson, 2021). Student-to-student validation helps to not only support student autonomy, but also reinforces the elements of relatedness and competence (Shin & Johnson, 2021). Teachers can structure student-to-student interactions in the classroom in several ways that still allow for some choice on the part of the student. Interactions include pairing students to work together on a specific assignment or project, or grouping students together to conduct tutorials based on academic concerns (Shin & Johnson, 2021). Need-supportive practices in the classroom require teachers to strategically plan lessons and activities that address the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence, and

research supports the assertion that student motivation and achievement will increase as a result (Jeno, et.al, 2018).

Underrepresented Students

Underrepresented students are students who are classified in one or more of the categories of first-generation college, low socio-economic status, racial or ethnic minority, English language learners, and students that are considered to be in the “academic middle” (Brooks, 2018; Kirk & Watt, 2018). Much of the research surrounding underrepresented students and the pursuit of postsecondary education centers on those that are first-generation, from families that are considered to be of low socio-economic status, and minority students (Adams, et al., 2020; Morley, et al, 2020). Students who are first-generation and also of low socio-economic background tend to face additional obstacles regarding postsecondary aspirations, enrollment, and retention due to lack of resources (Kolbe, et al., 2018; Todhunter-Reid, et al., 2020). While students classified in the “academic middle” may not necessarily face additional obstacles, many require added encouragement and support to realize academic potential and pursue postsecondary education since academic success does not occur as easily (Hodges, et al., 2018). Enrollment and retention rates in postsecondary education programs have historically been significantly lower for underrepresented students as compared to their majority peers, which has prompted educational institutions to seek additional programs and opportunities to help motivate and encourage underrepresented students to achieve (Song & Zeiser, 2019).

First-Generation College

First-generation students are those students whose parents did not attend and graduate from college, but also includes students whose parents may not have even graduated high school (Roksa, et al., 2020). First-generation students are much less likely to enroll in and graduate from

college than their majority peers for a variety of reasons (Taylor Phillips, et al., 2020; Atherton, 2014). Students who do not have family members that have attended college generally have a lack of knowledge about the college application and financial aid process, as well as how to navigate the college process overall (Roska, et al., 2020). Many parents of first-generation students value the workforce over postsecondary education due to the familiarity of working to survive and thrive (Atherton, 2014). Postsecondary education has become a critical factor in the ability to enter into many careers that produce a livable wage, but many first-generation students require additional supports to ensure success at the postsecondary level (Schwartz, et al., 2018). Educators and advocates propose making postsecondary education more accessible to first-generation students through specific programs that help to prepare students and families for the college search and application process, enrollment procedures, and success and retention while in school (Markle & Dyckhoff Stelzriede, 2020; Becker, et al., 2017).

Programs that have been created to assist first-generation students place emphasis on preparing students for college-level coursework and navigating the college process (Michelsen Wahleithner, 2020). These programs reinforce the need for students to be able to read and write at a college level, have appropriate study skills and habits, possess specific note-taking strategies, and demonstrate strong self-advocacy and communication skills to increase the likelihood that they will be able to manage a college course load and lifestyle (Markle & Dyckhoff Stelzriede, 2020). Part of preparing first-generation students for college-level coursework includes preparation for success in a career after college (Michelsen Wahleithner, 2020). Previous research supports the assertion that, by providing additional supports for first-generation students, academic and interpersonal development increases, as well as engagement in the college process overall (Markle & Dyckhoff Stelzreide, 2020; Taylor Phillips, et al., 2020).

In many instances, parents of first-generation students are not able to assist their student with daily academic tasks or information related to postsecondary options, due to a lack of experience or knowledge in those areas (Roksa, et al., 2020). For this reason, many high schools have worked to implement specific programs that not only assist the student with certain tasks, but also to help teach parents about how to navigate the educational process and beyond (Schwartz, et al., 2018). Prior research has indicated that, while many parents may be slightly intimidated by the academic and college process, most still desire to be involved and informed and want to help their children achieve and reach goals that were out of reach for them (Roksa, et al., 2020). Researchers contend that it is equally important for first-generation students to receive family support in addition to the supports received at school to increase the likelihood of success and persistence in postsecondary education (Schwartz, et al., 2018).

Racial/Ethnic Minority Students

Students who are considered to be part of a racial or ethnic minority are students that are of African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Native American descent (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Research has shown that the academic performance of minority students in the classroom, as well as enrollment and retention in postsecondary programs, has been consistently lower than their majority peers (Isik, et al., 2018). Some additional research has indicated that minority students tend to be presented with, or enter into, more vocational and certification options than higher education programs (Isik, et al., 2018, Isik, et al., 2017). While enrollment and retention rates in higher education among minority students has increased in recent years, those rates are still not equivalent to the enrollment and retention rates of Caucasian students (Li-Grining, et al., 2021). For this reason, many school districts develop and implement specific programs that focus on assisting minority students with academic preparedness, motivation, goal setting, college and

career research, and parental involvement to boost academic achievement, as well as enrollment in postsecondary programs (Isik, et al., 2018).

Academic Middle

Educators begin to identify students as gifted and talented in the early grades of elementary school through the use of standardized tests and IQ scores, course grades and performance, and teacher recommendations (Hodges, et al., 2018). Students who have special academic or learning needs may also be identified in the early grades due to a significantly lower performance, or ratings, on the same measures (Xuan, et al., 2019). Those students who are not notably underperforming in the classroom or exceeding standards and expectations are known as middle-achieving students, or those in the “academic middle” (Brooks, 2018; Kolbe, et al., 2018). Students in the academic middle generally make average letter grades of B and C (2.0-3.5 grade point average) on assignments and have standardized test scores that fall within an average range (Kolbe, et al., 2018). Most gifted and talented students excel academically and do not require additional supports to aid in academic success and motivation (Hodges, et al., 2018), while most students with special needs receive additional assistance to provide an equitable academic experience (Xuan, et al., 2019). Students in the academic middle do not generally receive any added academic support to achieve and many do not attract additional attention from teachers unless grades or test scores begin to drop to the below-average range (Kolbe, et al., 2018).

Low Socio-Economic Background

Students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds tend not to pursue postsecondary education for a variety of reasons, but one primary reason includes the financial obligations and long-term financial commitment of attending higher education (Browman, et al., 2017). For

families that live paycheck to paycheck, below the poverty line, or with no real means to save a significant amount of money, the prospect of attending college and possibly having to pay thousands upon thousands of dollars may deter many students from pursuing postsecondary education (Adams, et al., 2020). Many school districts have implemented programs that aim to make college more accessible to students from low socio-economic backgrounds, increase students' aspirations to attend postsecondary education programs, and help students understand that postsecondary education is realistically attainable (Cunninghame, et al., 2020). Prior research indicates that, through various student support and engagement programs, schools are able to increase students' self-determined learning and value for education, which also increases motivation to achieve, as well as the desire to pursue postsecondary options (Cunninghame, et al., 2020).

Underrepresented Students and Motivation

The need to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary options continues to be an issue for educators across the United States, as it has become increasingly important for all students to earn a postsecondary education of some kind to obtain full-time employment that will provide for the cost of living (Knaggs, et al., 2020). Historically, underrepresented students are more likely to face challenges inside, as well as outside, of school that may affect learning and the motivation to set and reach goals related to postsecondary education (Fruht & Chan, 2018; Kirk & Watt, 2018). Students who are considered at-risk, or underrepresented, are likely to be first-generation college students or, perhaps, first-generation high school graduates (Kirk & Watt, 2018). These students may also fall into one or more of the categories of racial or ethnic minority, low socio-economic status, and non-gifted and talented, otherwise referred to as the "academic middle" (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Some researchers have

even identified males as part of the group of underrepresented students that attend postsecondary education programs, maintaining that females now tend to enroll in college more than their male peers (Watt, et al., 2017). Underrepresented students all have the potential to succeed in high school and in postsecondary education programs, but many may require additional supports that include a variety of strategies and programs shown to increase students' autonomous motivation to achieve (Brooks, 2018).

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

The AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program model is a non-profit program that was founded in 1980 by an English teacher in California who hoped to change the way underrepresented students learned and were supported in school, and sought help to compensate for the lack of equity in opportunities for those students (AVID, 2021; Brooks, 2018). The program is designed to support the needs of underrepresented students, including students who are first-generation college, minority, low-socio economic status, and part of the “academic middle” (Brooks, 2018). The goal of the AVID program is to provide educators with specific tools to support the unique needs of underrepresented students in the learning environment while also encouraging postsecondary education by exposing students to postsecondary options and resources (Kirk & Watt, 2018). The AVID curriculum requires that teachers utilize culturally relevant teaching tools and strategies to not only empower students to live up to their potential but also to ensure that the teacher is knowledgeable about culturally relevant topics and how to build relationships with students from all backgrounds (Boyko, et al., 2016). The AVID curriculum is also designed to prepare participating students for success in college and in the workplace through specific college and career readiness skills and strategies (Wilson, et al., 2021).

Research has shown that college and career readiness is impacted by the students' ability, or lack thereof, to navigate and comprehend postsecondary components that include interpersonal relationships, responsibility, academic expectations, and financial or other requirements (Morley, et al., 2020; Wooldridge, 2017). As part of the AVID curriculum, students take part in the research of potential careers and postsecondary educational opportunities, visit colleges or technical education programs, and work with other students to accomplish specific academic and career goals (Morley, et al., 2020). Research conducted nationally by AVID officials determined that students who participated in the AVID program throughout high school are four times more likely to graduate from a post-secondary education program than their majority peers (AVID, 2021). The overall success of the AVID program in addressing the needs of underrepresented students is well documented and while most AVID programs are implemented in the high school setting, there are programs across the United States in middle and elementary schools that aim to begin preparing students and parents for college and beyond (AVID, 2021; Morley, et al., 2020).

The AVID program is offered to students as an elective course and provides a challenging college preparatory curriculum that emphasizes the WICOR model (Writing to learn, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading to learn), which was developed by Walter Pauk during his time as an educator at Cornell University (Kirk & Watt, 2018; Watt, et al., 2017; Pauk, 2001). While students at the middle and high school level may have to apply and be selected for participation in the AVID program, there are schools across the United States that are classified as full AVID schools, which means that every student in the school takes AVID as a credit-bearing elective course and every teacher in the school is required to be periodically trained to utilize AVID strategies in their classrooms (AVID, 2021). Regardless of whether all

students in the school participate in the AVID program, the overarching objectives of the program are to increase student motivation for academic achievement, promote college and career readiness, and increase enrollment and retention in postsecondary education programs after high school graduation (Todhunter-Reid, et al., 2020).

College and Career Readiness

The AVID curriculum emphasizes the need for all high school students to be college and career ready upon graduation (AVID, 2021; Watt, et al., 2018). For many years, society placed great emphasis on the need for high school graduates to complete a four-year college education to obtain a suitable career, while career readiness skills and career-related programs were not considered to be as important (Budge, et al., 2021). The AVID program aims to educate students not only about the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in a four-year college, but also career-related postsecondary programs and specific skills that are needed to be successful in any occupation (AVID, 2021; Kirk & Watt, 2018). Kelley and Buchanan (2017) contend that the skills necessary for students to master in order to be college and career ready include critical thinking, relationship building, collaboration, literacy, soft skills, and independence, or autonomy. The AVID curriculum incorporates rigorous academic standards, provides opportunities for students to experience college and career options, and engages students in activities that demonstrate the importance of relationships, persistence, and goal setting to facilitate students' confidence to effectively manage life after graduation from high school (AVID, 2021; Todhunter-Reid, et al., 2020).

AVID Strategies

The strategies utilized in the AVID program are designed to equip students with the necessary knowledge, academic behaviors, experiences, and skills needed to attend and be

successful in high school and postsecondary courses (Kolbe, et al., 2018). These strategies are research-based approaches that have been shown to be effective methods for increasing student engagement through accountability, ownership, and critical thinking (Morley, et al., 2020). The AVID curriculum provides specific research-based strategies that teachers utilize with students to not only provide rigorous instruction in every classroom, but also specific and individualized interventions with each student and exposure to college and employer expectations and opportunities (Wooldridge, 2017). The foundation on which AVID stands emphasizes that the specific skills and behaviors students need for academic success can be learned, a positive culture of peer-to-peer relations can be created, academic mentalities can be nurtured, and building strong teacher-student relationships creates a world of difference for students (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017).

The AVID curriculum is based on the WICOR standards, which incorporate specific strategies for teachers to utilize with students. Writing to learn involves a specific note taking method, identified as Cornell notes, and requires students to take notes on one side of the page while formulating thoughtful questions on the other side of the page that may be points of confusion or those in need of clarification (Evans & Shively, 2019; Pauk, 2001). By recording notes in a systematic and organized way and formulating questions that arise throughout the process, students are able to more effectively study and retain the information for later use (Alzu'bi, 2019; Pauk, 2001). To complete the Cornell notes process, students are then responsible for writing a concise, but comprehensive, summary for each page of notes taken, which requires students to analyze the notes and critically think about the important parts of the lecture for the summary and study purposes (Evans & Shively, 2019; Pauk, 2001). Pauk (2001) maintained that the Cornell notes method fosters deeper cognitive processing that affects the way

information is stored in long-term memory due to the transfer of information from sensory memory to working memory, and from working memory to long-term memory throughout the note-taking process (Alzu'bi, 2019). Researchers have affirmed that the Cornell notes method is an effective way to support and improve students' skills in writing and language, as well as organization and critical thinking (Alzu'bi, 2019).

The strategy of Inquiry teaches students a specific investigative approach that uses varying levels of questioning and requires students to define, analyze, and apply concepts, as well as affords students the opportunity to be accountable for their personal learning process (Morley, et al., 2020; Sepanik, et al., 2018). While the Cornell notes method of note-taking requires Inquiry skills, teachers also facilitate group and individual inquiry methods with students through the AVID curriculum (Morley, et al., 2020). The goal of Inquiry strategies is to teach students to problem solve and reach their own conclusions through critical thinking techniques (Morley, et al., 2020). The Collaboration strategy categorizes the teacher as a facilitator and guide, while students work together in structured pairs or groups for academic tutorials, Socratic seminars, and philosophical chairs (Sepanik, et al., 2018). The goal of Collaboration strategies like Socratic seminars is to provide interactive learning through collaborative discussions, reasoning, and critical thinking, as well as a shift in preconceived notions (Martin, et al., 2021; Griswold, et al., 2017).

The Organization strategy provides students with specific tools to organize and study efficiently (Kolbe, et al., 2018). Students are required to utilize a three-ring binder and organize the binder in a specific order, maintain a daily calendar agenda, and implement graphic organizers to aid in the learning process (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017). The AVID teacher, along with core content teachers if the school is a full AVID school, completes planned and unplanned

binder checks to ensure that students stay organized and have all relevant information in a logical and meaningful order (McGinnis, et al., 2014). Student binders must contain colored subject tabs to separate classes, a zipper pouch with pens and pencils, notebook paper, a daily agenda, and tutorial reflection forms (McGinnis, et al., 2014). For each subject, students must keep Cornell notes, tests and quizzes, and any other assignments that were graded and returned to the student (McGinnis, et al., 2014). Teachers utilize a rubric for scoring the level of organization for each students' binder and provides the students with feedback on how they can improve their organization when needed (McGinnis, 2014).

The Reading to learn strategy stresses critical reading skills where teachers model a practice or skill before gradually turning the learning process over to the students, which helps to develop reading skills and autonomy in the learning process (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017). Teachers utilizing the AVID curriculum aim to ultimately instill in students the ability and desire to take control of their own learning process to increase academic achievement and student motivation to set and achieve goals (Wilson, et al., 2021). The AVID tutorial program is designed to help students gain autonomy in learning through structured collaborative time with other students, as well as adult tutors, to review previous information from classes, discuss points of confusion, give and receive feedback and information from peers, and reflect on the learning process at the conclusion of the tutorial (Daws & Schiro, 2012). Students are grouped together based on academic need and self-identification to work collectively to critically think through and solve problems (Daws & Schiro, 2012). The AVID program provides funds for, and requires that schools hire, part-time tutors who participate in the tutorial process and provide assistance for any academic concerns that arise (McGinnis, et al., 2014). The strategies utilized through the AVID program serve to help students gain academic competence and autonomy in learning and

supports the development of positive relationships among students and teachers (Kirk & Watt, 2018; Huerta & Watt, 2015).

AVID and Student Motivation

AVID teachers not only use learning strategies with students to promote academic preparedness for postsecondary education, but also utilize structured activities that aid in preparing students for the necessary social requirements and knowledge that is essential for postsecondary education and a career (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017). The AVID program actively promotes positive peer relationships, expectations of college eligibility for every student, postsecondary education and career aspirations, and a focus on postsecondary education completion (AVID, 2021; Watt, et al., 2018). Students who participate in the AVID program all four years of high school report a more positive outlook on school and academics, higher enrollment and completion rates in postsecondary programs, and noteworthy advances in college readiness (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017). The culture created by the AVID program curriculum among students mimics the suggested school culture of Deci and Ryan's (2020) theory of self-determination, as the strategies utilized in the program aim to promote students' intrinsic motivation to achieve and pursue postsecondary education, increase perceived competence, and foster relatedness among students.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment courses are those courses that high school students take at the college level, earning credits for both high school and college simultaneously (Xu, et al., 2021; An & Taylor, 2015). Partnerships between school districts and local community, technical, and four-year colleges are formed in an effort to increase the likelihood that students will earn college transferable credits that will lead to an accelerated path toward earning a college degree after

high school graduation (Lawrence & King, 2019). Schools that offer students the opportunity to participate in dual enrollment courses seek to provide students with exposure to the academic rigor that is required to be successful in postsecondary programs while also providing the support that high school students, especially those from underrepresented populations, may still need (Martinez, et al., 2018; An & Taylor, 2015). For underrepresented students, dual enrollment courses can play a vital role in providing access and exposure to college level coursework which can, in turn, increase the likelihood that those students will enroll in and complete a postsecondary education program after graduation from high school (Martinez, et al., 2018). The Early College high school model is one specific program that provides all of the students in the program with the opportunity to take up to 60 credit hours of dual enrollment courses on a college campus, as well as the potential to graduate high school with an Associate's degree alongside a high school diploma (Adams, et al., 2020).

Early College High School Model

The Early College high school program model was established as a joint effort by multiple educational foundations in 2002 with the aim of increasing underrepresented students' chances of attending postsecondary education after high school and improving college readiness (Adams, et al., 2020; Walk, 2020). The educators that developed the model were looking for a way to not only improve high school graduation rates among underrepresented students, but also increase enrollment and attendance in college and improve overall student achievement (Kaniuka & Vickers, 2010). The founding principles of this model requires the school district's and the faculty's commitment to supporting the needs of underrepresented students by providing the opportunity for those students to earn up to two free years of college credits, or an Associate's degree, while still in high school (Adams, et al., 2020). Through the program, students attend

high school and college courses on the campus of a local community or technical college and are combined with the general college population no later than their eleventh grade year (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019). The overall goal of the Early College program is to facilitate students' growth and socialization into postsecondary education by teaching students the skills, dispositions, and knowledge to be successful in college, while also reducing the financial burden of college for students and families (Duncheon, 2020; Edmunds, et al., 2010).

Most Early College high schools are small, personalized learning environments with a limit on the number of students accepted each school year (Duncheon, 2020; Edmunds, et al., 2010). The size of the school, or program, is limited so that teachers are able to provide students with a more personalized learning experience that provides underrepresented students with the academic, social, and individualized support needed to be successful not only in high school, but also in college courses (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019; McDonald & Farrell, 2012; Edmunds, et al., 2010). Emphasis is placed on teaching students the necessary skills to be prepared for the academic rigor of college courses, but also the social and personal experiences that come with the college experience (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). The Early College model aims to teach students competence through rigorous instructional methods, autonomy through purposeful design, and relatedness through personalized instruction and interactions (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019; Edmunds, et al., 2010).

Since the models' inception, many impact studies have been conducted to determine whether the Early College model is an effective way to adequately prepare underrepresented students for the rigor of college and beyond (Zeiser et al., 2020). Results of one impact study that utilized a focus group of current students in an Early College program indicated that students felt the program adequately prepared them for the responsibility of college and provided them with

the autonomy to learn and problem solve, while also affording them the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with peers and teachers (McDonald & Farrell, 2012). Researchers in a later study followed a group of underrepresented students in a normal high school setting along with a group of students in an Early College program and found that, over time, the students that participated in the Early College program earned considerably more college credits, graduated from high school, and enrolled in postsecondary education programs at much higher rates than the group of students from a normal high school setting (Edmunds, et al., 2017). One additional longitudinal study followed a group of Early College students, as well as a group from a normal high school setting, over a ten year period and found that the Early College students were more likely to have enrolled in college after high school graduation and a significant number completed a bachelor's degree in a shorter amount of time than traditional college students (Zeiser, et al., 2020).

The impact of the Early College program model on its students has been researched in a variety of ways and the results have been consistent over time, providing data that indicates that the program model not only provides adequate preparation for college-level coursework, but also aids underrepresented students in the process of enrolling in, and graduating from, postsecondary education programs at higher rates than their majority peers (Zeiser, et al., 2020; Atchison, et al., 2019; Berger, et al., 2014; Edmunds, et al., 2012). Through research-based practices and strategies that are aimed at encouraging competence, autonomy, and relatedness in all students, the program has shown to aid underrepresented students in classroom achievement, graduating from high school, and enrolling in a postsecondary education program at higher rates than their majority peers in a normal high school environment (Zeiser, et al., 2020; Atchison, et al., 2019).

Early College Practices

Students identified as underrepresented apply during eighth grade to attend an Early College program full-time for grades 9-12 (Duncheon, 2020). Prior to the beginning of ninth grade, all incoming freshmen participate in a Bridge Week event during which all students come to campus and participate in a variety of activities to not only get to know the other incoming students, but also to begin building relationships with teachers and staff (Song, et al., 2021). Research has shown that by building positive relationships with other students, as well as with teachers, students are likely to feel more comfortable with the school environment and, in turn, be more intrinsically motivated to fully immerse themselves in the learning process (Rhoden, 2017). The Bridge Week program provides structured team-building activities that require students to work together to solve problems, get to know fellow students through games and coordinated interactions, and get to know the teachers who will be working with them throughout the ninth-grade year (Song, et al., 2021).

One significant component of the Early College model is the advisory program (Adams, et al., 2020). Research has shown that a successful advising and mentoring program has a considerable impact in meeting students' need of relatedness, as well as increases intrinsic motivation (Fruht & Chan, 2018; Moeder-Chandler, 2018). Through the advisory program, incoming freshmen are assigned a teacher who acts as a mentor to the same group of students for grades nine through twelve (Adams, et al., 2020). Students take part in scheduled weekly advisory time during which the advisory group participates in specific family and team building activities, social growth through community service and service-learning projects, and skill building activities (Fruht & Chan, 2018). The teacher, or advisor, acts as a mentor to the entire advisory group by providing socioemotional support to each student, academic and cognitive support and guidance, and identity development support (Fruht & Chan, 2018). Prior research

indicates that strong student-teacher relationships aid in preventing a decline in student motivation, can have a positive impact on students' academic performance, and increase students' positive perceptions of the school's climate (Scales, et al., 2020). The advisory program also helps students to build strong and lasting connections with a core group of peers who encourage and motivate one another to set and achieve specific goals throughout their time in high school (Moeder-Chandler, 2018).

Many of the bonding activities in which students participate are centered on community service and service-learning projects (Fruht & Chan, 2018). Lucman (2020) contends that it is important for students to actively participate in community service activities to not only give back to the community, but also to learn to fully appreciate and address the issues that exist for many individuals in the community. Giving back to the community can also help students to learn the value of serving others, as well as how to critically think through specific issues that may arise and potential solutions to resolve those issues (Lucman, 2020). Many Early College programs require their students to participate in community service activities to give back to the community that is comprised of the local taxpayers, as tuition for dual enrollment college courses is paid for by the local school district (Duncheon, 2020). Community service is also required of many high school students to help strengthen college and scholarship applications for students who wish to demonstrate leadership and service to others (Nemiro, et al., 2020). The advisory program within the Early College model is an ideal way to have students work together as a team to complete specific community service activities and simultaneously form bonds with peers (Fruht & Chan, 2018). By embedding community service into the Early College program model, teachers and administrators teach leadership skills to all students, as well as service to others above self (Nemiro, et al., 2020).

Service-learning projects provide realistic and meaningful experiences for students and teachers (VanDemark & Haraway, 2020). According to Lucman (2020), service-learning helps students to learn, grow, and thrive through active involvement in thoughtful and organized experiences that focus on serving others. The projects are generally chosen by the students and center on specific topics or passions that the students wish to highlight, then provide educational materials or a presentation to their peers (Nemiro, et al., 2020). Whether individually or through the advisory program, students coordinate projects that meet the needs of the community or the student body, carry out the carefully planned project, develop a presentation, and utilize the presentation as a teaching tool for other students to learn more about the issue or organization the project was based on (Lucman, 2020). Berger Kaye (2004) suggests several essential elements of service learning that include recognizing a community need, collaborating with others to develop a project that will meet the community need, serving the community through a well-developed action plan, reflecting on the project, and teaching others about the community need, as well as how the need was met through service-learning. The Early College programs that incorporate service-learning into their advisory curriculums provide students with the opportunity to work together with their peers and advisor to offer meaningful experiences that can serve as teaching tools for other students while helping others within their communities (Lucman, 2020).

Parent involvement has been identified in previous research to be a significant component needed for students to succeed academically and socially (Jensen & Minke, 2017). While parents tend to be quite engaged in the lower grade levels, there is a trend of disengagement for parents at the secondary level for a variety of reasons (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Because parental involvement is equally, if not more, important at the high school level, it is another significant component of the Early College model (Vargas, 2019). Through the Early College model,

parents are involved in personalized meetings with their students' school counselor to discuss the students' academic standing, career goals, and the course and program options students have available through the partnering college (Adams, et al., 2020). None of the parents of Early College students have earned a four-year college degree, while some never graduated from high school, and the teachers and staff of the school are relied upon to provide guidance as it relates to student academics and postsecondary options (Amaro-Jimenez, et al., 2020). Results from previous research indicate that, by involving parents in the academic and postsecondary planning process, students demonstrate more intrinsic motivation, higher rates of academic achievement, a more positive sense of security, and a stronger desire to pursue postsecondary education beyond high school (Amaro-Jimenez, et al., 2020). Early College students not only have the goal and responsibility of successfully completing high school, but also have the additional responsibility of attending college while in high school, which is why Early College programs take additional measures to involve parents in their students' academic, social, and personal development (Adams, et al., 2020; Vargas, 2019).

The Early College model incorporates a student-centered approach to learning and engagement as a way to motivate students to achieve and hold themselves accountable for their learning (Vargas, 2019). Prior research indicates that student-centered engagement and accountability leads to improvements in learning, motivation, academic achievement, and preparation for college (Xie, et al., 2020). Early College programs incorporate student-led conferences, which not only engage the students in their own learning, but also includes parents in the process (Clemensen, 2021). The students' advisor provides the structure and specific requirements for the conference, but the student is solely responsible for gathering and presenting their information to their advisor, parent, administrator, and counselor (Clemensen,

2021). Students are required to orally present their current academic progress, discuss any successes and areas for improvement, and present additional personalized information for their parent, then answer questions that their parent and advisor may have (Clemensen, 2021; Dominic & Bhalla, 2020). This process allows students to take ownership of and reflect upon their own academic progress and learning and engage in the growth and development process (Dominic & Bhalla, 2020). The Early College model provides many supports for students to be successful, but also teaches students to be accountable for their own learning, behavior, and success, which better prepares students for life outside of high school (Clemensen, 2021).

Early College and Student Motivation

The Early College high school program model places emphasis on motivating underrepresented students to achieve academically and pursue postsecondary education after high school graduation (Adams, et al., 2020; Burns, et al., 2019). As part of the model, students are not only challenged academically, but are also supported socially and emotionally through peer interactions and teacher-to-student mentorship opportunities (Fruht & Chan, 2018). Previous research indicates that underrepresented students display more intrinsic motivation to achieve and pursue higher education with these types of supports in place (Duncheon, 2020; Burns, et al., 2019). An additional support for students is that of parent engagement in the educational process, which has also been shown to increase student motivation (Jensen & Minke, 2017). The Early College model provides traditionally underrepresented students with the opportunity to pursue higher education in high school, which is likely to have a positive impact on students' intrinsic motivation (Duncheon & DeMatthews, 2019). This model utilizes Deci and Ryan's (2020) theory of self-determination by incorporating the support of students' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence into the daily operations of the program.

Summary

Current research emphasizes the importance of self-determination theory and the significance of meeting students' basic needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence to increase motivation to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Many studies have resulted in findings that stress how, by meeting students' basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, students are likely to be more intrinsically motivated to achieve academically. Applying the theoretical framework of Deci and Ryan's (2020) self-determination theory, this research study explored self-determination theory through the lens of student motivation to gain a deeper understanding of the advantages and obstacles of specific motivation strategies to support underrepresented students from the perspective of teachers. This framework is based on the notion that, when afforded the opportunity and provided with structured and individualized supports, underrepresented students are likely to be more intrinsically motivated to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Student motivation is a significant concern for educators, as it is vital for students to be successful in the classroom and beyond (Shin & Johnson, 2021). Related literature demonstrates how, with appropriate supports in place, underrepresented students are more likely to be motivated to achieve academically, enroll in postsecondary programs at higher rates, and become more college and career ready. There are a variety of programs and strategies available to educators to aid in supporting underrepresented students academically, personally, and socially. Two research-based programs that have been identified as being significantly successful with underrepresented students are the AVID and Early College program models. These models incorporate the principles of self-determination theory into the strategies, curriculum, and practices educators use with students each day. Both programs aim to successfully meet

students' basic needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence through structured and individualized approaches with students and parents.

The purpose of this qualitative, embedded single-case study was to understand the roles and practices of the faculty and staff at one AVID and ECHS combined school and how the faculty and staff work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. While there is research that highlights the experiences of students in a variety of ways, there is little to no research that examines the roles of the teachers responsible for educating students each day in the classroom. This case study aims to fill the gap in the research on underrepresented students and motivation and offer a greater understanding of ways in which educators can facilitate underrepresented students' motivation to succeed and pursue postsecondary education through research-based programs and curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, embedded single-case study was to understand the roles and practices of the faculty and staff at one AVID and ECHS combined school and how the faculty and staff work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. This chapter includes the research design of this qualitative case study to better understand the roles of the faculty at one Early College High School and how they work to motivate underrepresented students. Information about the research questions, setting, and participants is also included. The procedures of the research study are described so that the study can be replicated by other researchers. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher's role as human instrument is discussed, as well as researcher positionality regarding an interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions. The data collection, analysis, and synthesis process are detailed and the methods used to establish trustworthiness are described. Finally, the chapter includes ethical considerations for the study.

Research Design

This section includes the qualitative method, design, and approach that were used in this study. The method that was used was qualitative and studied a single system. To provide an in-depth description of the system, the case study design was used (Yin, 2018). The approach was a case study because the researcher studied a single case (an Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School combined school) that is within a real-world setting (Stake, 1995). A case study design was most appropriate for this study because the goal of the research is to describe and understand the roles of faculty and staff and the strategies used to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Through

the case study design, the description of the school and the roles of each of the participants is detailed and allowed the researcher to understand how the school functions to motivate underrepresented students (Yin, 2018). The study provides a comprehensive understanding of a system in a real-world context (Yin, 2018).

Other designs considered for this study included phenomenological and grounded theory, but neither of these were chosen because the methodologies are broader. A phenomenological approach to this study is not appropriate because the study does not seek to understand a specific phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), but rather an in-depth understanding of a single case in a real-world setting. The grounded theory approach is also not appropriate, as the study does not focus on actions or processes that the theory is meant to explain, and a new theory is not being developed as a result of this study (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The case study approach allowed the researcher to examine the school as a bounded system and describe in more detail the themes and issues that were discovered, as well as any assertions that can be formed based on the results (Yin, 2018).

This study is qualitative because it utilizes multiple sources of data to provide an in-depth description of a specific process or system (Mertens, 2015). By providing a more detailed understanding of the school and the roles of faculty and staff, the researcher can also add to current literature that centers on underrepresented students' motivation to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. This qualitative study narrows a gap in the literature by providing insight into one AVID and ECHS combined school and how the school operates with regards to motivating underrepresented students. The study was conducted in a setting where the information was collected from participants who have personal and professional experience with underrepresented students. Inductive reasoning was used to establish themes that arose from the

information provided by participants in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher was the main instrument in this qualitative case study, analyzing various means of data collection, and offering an in-depth understanding of the system. A qualitative approach to the research was most appropriate for this study because investigating how the system functions helped to provide a more detailed understanding of the overall system and how it addresses the problem (Patton, 2015).

Quantitative research places emphasis on hypotheses, numerical data, and statistics, and does not permit individual responses to be evaluated (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). Quantitative research also requires there to be measurable variables within the study and involves experimental, causal-comparative, or correlational research methods to be used, which does not allow for a thorough description of a process or system (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research requires that the researcher is the key instrument, collecting data through interviews, observations, and even documents, to conduct research through a theoretical lens and provide an in-depth explanation of a system (Yin, 2018). This study functions through a specific theoretical lens to describe a single system and how that system addresses the overall problem to be studied, which requires qualitative methods for research.

The case study approach was the most appropriate for this study, as it examined the school as a bounded system and identified themes as well as any assertions that can be formed based on the results (Yin, 2018). Case study research aims to identify the hows and whys of a contemporary issue and provides an in-depth description of that topic through a variety of data collection methods (Yin, 2018). This case study aims to identify the hows and whys of student motivation and provide a detailed description of the roles of the teachers within the school and how they function to motivate students. The embedded single-case design requires data to be

collected from multiple sources and provides a more extensive description of the case through the triangulation of the data (Yin, 2018). Through the use of interviews, observations, and document analysis, the research was triangulated and the results are thoroughly described to provide a more in-depth understanding of the roles of faculty at the school and how they function to motivate underrepresented students.

I chose to conduct an embedded single-case study design because underrepresented student motivation, achievement, and the pursuit of postsecondary education is a real issue in many schools across the country (Domen, et al., 2020) and the research places emphasis on gaining insight into a single case in which the problem is addressed (Stake, 1995). While a single case, or organization, was the focus of the study, the analysis of the study included systematic data from a component (faculty) within that organization (Yin, 2018). Roles of the faculty participating in the study were examined through an open-ended interview to obtain a deeper understanding of the mission of the school and how each stakeholder contributes to the overall purpose of the school. By using an embedded case study, diverse perspectives were presented to provide a broader illustration of underrepresented students' motivation to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

Central Research Question

How do the faculty and staff at one Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School combined school motivate underrepresented students?

Sub-Question One

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for autonomy?

Sub-Question Two

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for relatedness?

Sub-Question Three

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for competence?

Setting and Participants

This section provides a detailed description of the site, or setting, where the case study took place, as well as the make-up of the site. A detailed rationale for the use of this particular site is also described. Specific demographic information regarding the participants of the study is provided in narrative form and includes general information about age, gender, ethnicity, and experience relevant to the site and study.

Site

ECHS is a pseudonym that will be used throughout this study to reference the school in which the research took place. ECHS is a small high school located in South Carolina and is housed on the campus of the local technical college. It is located in the third largest county in South Carolina (SC Association of Counties, 2021), with students being transported from every locality in the county to attend. This school was chosen for the study because it has been in existence since 2008 and all students who attend are classified as underrepresented students in one or more ways (HCS, 2021). Students are required to be first-generation, not gifted and talented, and meet specific reading levels to apply in the middle of 8th grade and must be accepted to begin attending ECHS in 9th grade (Horry County Schools [HCS], 2021). There are less than 400 students in the school in grades 9-12. The school is classified as a Title 1 school with approximately 70% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. There are approximately 20 teachers on staff, many of whom have worked at the school for more than five years, as well as

three administrators, one school counselor, and 11 support staff (HCS, 2021).

ECHS has a head principal, an assistant principal, a curriculum coach, a school counselor, and a mental health counselor, and several additional office and operations staff that aids in the overall functioning of the school. The principal is the instructional and operational leader of the school, while the assistant principal provides administrative and instructional support as needed. The curriculum coach and school counselor are considered part of the administrative team and work collaboratively with both administrators on a variety of instructional and administrative tasks. The school only offers core subjects that include math, social studies, English, science, AVID, physical education, and Spanish. Students take courses at the technical college to supplement their high school course requirements. Each department has a lead teacher who facilitates the meetings and activities for the department, but there is only one Spanish and one physical education teacher due to the size of the student population. All teachers, regardless of subject area, are required to be trained on AVID strategies and are required to utilize those strategies each day in the classroom (HCS, 2021).

The ECHS and AVID programs both require students to be first-generation college, but also considered to be in the academic middle. Students in the academic middle cannot be classified as gifted and talented, generally make average grades, and perform at or above grade level on district and state reading and math assessments. For many families, the students who attend ECHS are the first to attend college and for some, the first on track to graduate high school (HCS, 2021). Students begin taking college courses in their sophomore year and, provided that they make sufficient academic progress, take a full-time college course load during the senior year. Students at ECHS have the opportunity to earn an Associate's degree, or 60 college credit hours, that can be transferred to a four-year college. For students who do not

intend to go to a four-year college after high school, the option is provided for them to take courses during their senior year that are geared toward a specific career such as Welding, Cosmetology, Computer Networking, and others. The school places emphasis on all students graduating with their high school diploma while also being college and career ready.

Participants

Participants in this case study were faculty members at an AVID and ECHS combined school. There were 11 participants in this case study who were drawn from a sample pool of 25 potential participants. Each participant has more than five years of experience with the AVID and ECHS combined program models. Specific demographic information for participants is outlined and pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of all participants in the study (Patton, 2015).

Researcher Positionality

This section reviews information about my own interpretive framework for this study, as well as my philosophical assumptions that guided the study. It is important to consider the interpretive framework for qualitative research because I had to interpret the meaning of my research based on my own beliefs and background (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is equally as important to consider my own philosophical assumptions that I bring to this study because these assumptions drive the direction of my research goals and include my beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology), what constitutes knowledge and how that knowledge is justified (epistemology), and the role values have in my research (axiology) (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Interpretive Framework

This study was guided by the paradigm of pragmatism, as it examined how faculty and staff describe the system and subsequent programs, as well as how students, the community, and

society are affected by the school's contributions to society as a whole. Pragmatism allows the researcher to study the school as a system, through multiple methods of data collection, to describe the system's processes and identify practical implications to address the problem (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Through a case study model, I was able to gain a better understanding of the system and how it functions, which includes the programs and processes implemented to assist students, as well as how the school can improve to help all students succeed. Through general and open-ended questions, the faculty and staff were able to convey the processes of interactions with students and one another to help the researcher to understand and interpret all perspectives. These two programs, Early College and AVID, are near and dear to me, as I have seen firsthand how they can change students' lives. I have not, however, viewed either program from the eyes of a teacher or administrator and am invested in learning from a variety of perspectives to accurately describe how the system functions to serve underrepresented students.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of the researcher form and determine the direction the research study will actually take (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research, it is important that the researcher not only acknowledge their own philosophical assumptions, but also present those assumptions as part of the research process. Each philosophical assumption plays an important role in all aspects of the qualitative research process (Guyotte & Wolgemuth, 2022).

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions are based on the researchers' own assumptions of the nature of reality and its features (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this case study, I have my own views on the reality of the world, but I also recognize that the participants of the study may not have the same reality as myself. This study aimed to describe a system and how that system functions, which

does so under the reality that the programs and strategies provided to the students at the school are successful in addressing the problem of underrepresented students' lack of knowledge and access to postsecondary education. Multiple forms of data were collected and analyzed to formulate themes that addressed each participants' perspectives on this single reality. I believe that, although each participant has their own perspectives on reality, there is ultimately one reality that encompasses all perspectives.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions address how knowledge is identified through the subjective experiences of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, it was important to conduct research in the setting in which the participants work each day to better understand their perspectives on the functions of the system. I know each participant on a professional level, which enables me to be as close as possible to them throughout the course of the study. I have a personal relationship with the focus and problem in this study because I have spent my career as an educator working with underrepresented students. I have my own knowledge of how to best motivate underrepresented students to achieve, but it was important that I examined the knowledge of others to gain a deeper understanding of their expertise to provide a comprehensive description of the system to others.

Axiological Assumption

Disclosure of the axiological assumptions of the researcher are significant to this study because qualitative research includes the role of the researcher's values and potential biases in the research itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I have spent my entire career in education working with underrepresented students and families, many of whom did not think that postsecondary education was a remote possibility due to personal, academic, economic, or other factors. I have

always believed in the potential all students possess to succeed in academics and in life and have used my position in education to encourage those students to strive beyond all obstacles and reach for what may be considered the impossible. For the past five years, I have worked in an Early College high school that embraces underrepresented students and provides a significant amount of college preparatory support, social and emotional learning activities, academic support, and personal guidance, and I am invested in the values students are taught each day. As a first-generation college student, I am able to recognize and appreciate the values, supports, and strategies that the AVID and ECHS programs provide. The nature of the study is value-laden not just based on my own values, but those of every faculty and staff member at the school involved in the case study. The values of mentorship, motivation, resilience, flexibility, and adaptability are emphasized each day at the school, as well as throughout this study.

Researcher's Role

As a first-generation college student, I am able to relate to the students at ECHS because I recall what it was like for me to try to navigate the college process with parents who were not experienced in what to do or how to make college a reality. I entered into education as a School Counselor 19 years ago because I wanted to help students realize and reach their goals, especially for those students who may not have thought certain goals, like college, were possible for them. I have always had a passion for helping motivate students to reach farther than they thought possible and to achieve all that they are capable of achieving. After learning more about the ECHS and AVID models and how each is utilized to motivate students to set and reach their goals, I wanted to understand more about how teachers use the strategies within these programs in the classroom to motivate first-generation students. Through interviews with faculty and observations of strategies being used in the classroom, I analyzed and recorded the specific

processes used so that other ECHS programs may become more aware of the potential benefits of combining program practices for first-generation students.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the human instrument, collecting and analyzing data to provide a deeper understanding of the problem being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). My role as human instrument in this case study is to collect and analyze the data I receive from faculty interviews, classroom observations, and documents to provide a detailed account of the roles of the participants as it relates to the functioning of the school and student motivation. As an employee of ECHS, I have a professional relationship with the participants as their colleague and am familiar with each participant on a professional level. I maintain professional boundaries with all teachers, administrators, and staff. I am not in a position of power or authority over any of the participants in this study. I do not play a role in the hiring, evaluation, or placement processes of any of the participants. To prevent bias and guarantee validity of the findings, I used several data collection methods that included faculty interviews, classroom observations, and documents provided to me by the participants. I also met with an objective party at the district office to review the data and findings to remove any bias in the research.

Procedures

This section provides the steps that were required to conduct this case study, including an explanation of required permissions to begin research and participant recruitment procedures. Information about the data collection process and data analysis process are included. Justification for how the study will accomplish triangulation is also described.

Permissions

Prior to beginning the research process, it was necessary to obtain approval from the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University (see Appendix A) as well as the school district (see Appendix B). IRB approval was sought prior to seeking site approval. Site approval was sought after receiving IRB approval by emailing the IRB approval letter and other requirements to the appropriate contact at the school's district office. Per district policies and procedures, I made contact with the school's principal once the case study had been officially approved by district personnel and the IRB. The dissemination of information about the study, as well as informed consent, was discussed with the principal and a plan for distribution and collection of that information was obtained.

Recruitment Plan

After the approval process was completed, procedures for recruiting participants for the study began. I requested that the school's assistant principal act as the liaison between the researcher and faculty and to send out all correspondence to faculty as needed. The selection of participants was intentional, as current faculty are familiar with the AVID and ECHS program models and would be able to provide a detailed understanding of the strategies and practices utilized to motivate students, as well as the overall functioning of the school. For this reason, sampling was purposeful and convenience sampling was used, as purposeful sampling includes the identification and selection of potential participants that are specifically knowledgeable about the system being studied (Patton, 2015).

The sample pool of participants included 25 teachers and administrators at the school. The sample size consisted of 11 participants, as a minimum of 10 are needed to guarantee information-rich data and provide sufficient opportunity to identify specific themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). No more than 15 participants are needed, as it is likely that no new information will be discovered, and saturation will be achieved with fewer than 15 participants (Patton, 2015).

Detailed information about the study was provided to all faculty as part of the informed consent process. Faculty that indicated an interest in participating emailed me a copy of the signed informed consent prior to proceeding (Appendix C). After all informed consent forms were signed and returned, a cumulative list of participants was developed, and an online Google form survey was sent to all participants requesting information regarding the best days and times for each participant to schedule an interview with the researcher. After all surveys were completed, a schedule was formulated for interviews and participants were contacted through calendar invitations regarding their assigned day and time.

Data Collection Plan

Several data collection methods were used in this case study, including interviews, observations, and the evaluation of documents that include ECHS and AVID curriculum and strategies, as well as any other documents provided by the participants. These three data collection methods were used to triangulate the data in an effort to reduce any potential bias and substantiate the findings of the study (Bowen, 2009).

Individual Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary source of data collection to gain an in-depth understanding of the roles of faculty regarding the functions of the school and how processes relate to student motivation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews were used to identify the “hows” and “whys” of key elements of the study and provided significant information that reflected the participants’ perspectives (Yin, 2018). Prior to beginning the interview process, all interview questions were reviewed by experts in the field to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the study (Yin, 2018). In person interviews were conducted one on one and by scheduled appointment to guarantee confidentiality for each participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interview

questions were presented in an open-ended format that allowed for participants to share as much as possible for each question (Yin, 2018). All interviews lasted no more than one hour. During the interview process, I asked participants questions that were developed from the research questions and also used probes to allow the participant to go into greater detail regarding their answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of participants' roles within the school and how the school functions as a system to motivate first-generation college students.

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me, including your educational background, how long you have been employed at an Early College High School (ECHS), and roles you have held at the school. CRQ
2. Please describe, in detail, the mission of both the ECHS and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs. CRQ
3. Describe the successful strategies you use inside and outside the classroom when working with underrepresented students. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
4. What professional development opportunities have you participated in that are directly related to serving the student population at ECHS? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
5. How did the professional development activities affect the way that you teach underrepresented students? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
6. What challenges have you faced when working with first-generation students that are considered to be in the "academic middle" and how have you addressed these challenges?
SQ1

7. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student autonomy. SQ1
8. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student relatedness. SQ2
9. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student competence. SQ3
10. What strategies do you (or the school) use to motivate students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education? SQ1
11. Describe any additional information about the way the school functions and the role the faculty play in motivating students that would be helpful for me to know. SQ1, SQ2, SQ3

Questions 1 and 2 are knowledge questions that provide background information on each participant's experience in education as well as their experience in the research setting. These questions were also used to establish a rapport between the participant and the researcher (Patton, 2015). Research has shown that underrepresented students benefit from specific programs and strategies that provide additional supports and students that participate in those programs are more likely to persist into postsecondary education (Vargas, 2019). It is important to understand the role of the faculty that utilize these strategies each day with their students. Questions 3 through 10 are open-ended questions that provided the participants with the opportunity to describe their own role within the school, including specific strategies, for motivating and teaching underrepresented students. Questions 4 and 5 allowed participants to describe the specific professional development opportunities that are directly related to the ECHS and AVID programs while questions 6 through 10 place more emphasis on how participants utilize various strategies to motivate students.

Question 11 serves as a concluding question that allowed participants to provide any additional information to the researcher that they felt relevant. Participants were able to share any final thoughts, feelings, or information that they believed to have been left out of the interview process or that needs to be added to the information already provided (Ruben & Ruben, 2012).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Participants were interviewed to provide their input on how their roles help to promote student motivation as it relates to the ECHS and AVID program models. All interviews were recorded, and interview answers transcribed onto an electronic form. Through the process of initial coding, significant words and phrases were highlighted and grouped together based on the themes that developed (Yin, 2018). Each theme was color coded to create a separation in the data and organize any primary themes that emerged. This process helped me to gain a better understanding of the content of the interviews (Yin, 2018).

Document Analysis

The documents that were analyzed in this study were generated by the faculty and included documents regarding student college and career plans, documents utilized in class with students, and any additional documents the principal or faculty provided. All documents examined were directly related to the work that the faculty does with underrepresented students, strategies that are used to motivate students, and college and career planning. These documents included the vision and mission statements of the school, the school's strategic or school improvement plans, the school's state report card, and additional data regarding student performance. AVID instructional materials and strategies were examined to determine how faculty facilitate the growth of students' autonomy, relatedness, and competence in the

classroom. Through the examination of physical documents, or artifacts, I was able to develop a more comprehensive description of the ways the faculty utilize specific strategies with students that is deeper than what can be observed directly in the classroom setting (Yin, 2018).

Document Analysis Data Analysis Plan

Documents provided by the faculty were analyzed to determine which strategies faculty utilize with their students. By generating notes on these documents based on the data analyzed, the process of memoing helped to organize and compare data in a meaningful way (Yin, 2018). The notes from each document were recorded and organized into themes to triangulate the data and develop an understanding of the clear themes that were generated. Through these three analysis processes, the data can be better described and explained (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Observations

Observations were used to gain a more detailed understanding of how faculty utilize specific strategies and activities to motivate students. Through observations, I was able to assess the classroom environment, which provided additional details about the culture of the school (Yin, 2018). As a non-participant observer, I conducted one announced observation of each faculty member participating in the study that lasted approximately 45 minutes each. These observations were an important component to this study, as it enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the ways faculty interact with underrepresented students as a catalyst for motivating students to achieve and meet their needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Parent permission was not required to observe classes, as the observations were directed at the classroom teacher. Notes from all observations were recorded on an observation form (see Appendix E), as well as reflections of all observations to provide further information about the roles of faculty (Yin, 2018).

Observations Data Analysis Plan

Data from classroom observations was recorded in a separate document and bracketing was used to eliminate any personal bias and interpretation in the data recorded (Patton, 2015). This procedure was essential because I am aware of many of the specific strategies and activities faculty utilize with students and it is important that my views are not reflected in the observation data (Patton, 2015). After bracketing was complete, key words and phrases were highlighted and color coded based on the themes previously established.

Data Synthesis

The data collected for this study was triangulated to gain a better understanding of the school and how it functions to motivate underrepresented students. Through the pattern matching process, data was analyzed and synthesized to identify patterns that aid in the explanation of the roles of the faculty participating in the case study (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) suggests that the pattern matching process aids the researcher in identifying the “hows and whys” of the case study, which makes it one of the more suitable analysis techniques for qualitative case study research. Thematic analysis techniques such as coding and memoing were used in this case study to identify and organize themes in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through in vivo coding, the data was organized to identify themes and the relationships between those themes (Saldana, 2016). The process of memoing allowed for reflection of the coding process and further describe the research data for increased understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Stages of analysis were also utilized to analyze the data for themes. These stages included compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data was compiled through interviews, observations, and documents and disassembled through coding and the identification of themes. The data was then reassembled

through context analysis and pattern identification and interpreted through the description process. The conclusion process connected the results and identified possible themes for future research. These techniques were used to gain a better understanding of the information, organization for meaningful examination, comparison across participants, and the development of detailed description of the data (Patton, 2015). The goal of the data synthesis process was to formulate a comprehensive description of the faculty's roles to provide an in-depth understanding of the overall functioning of the school with regards to motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Trustworthiness

This section describes the various ways in which trustworthiness was established in this study. The section focuses on credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Authenticity of the study and findings were established through each of these elements, as well as the reflexivity of the research (Patton, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research requires the researcher to connect the results of the research to reality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility also creates trustworthiness with the researcher, as well as the certainty of the research results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To attain credibility in this case study, I utilized multiple methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the roles of the faculty as they relate to student motivation, to triangulate the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). These methods included persistent observation and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I allowed all participants to review the information recorded from the interviews to confirm that no mistakes were made, otherwise known as member-

checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These practices helped to guarantee that all the information is accurate and credible during the research process.

Transferability

Transferability allows for the content and findings of the research to be transferred to others' real-life experiences and contexts (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As the researcher, I examined my own biases as they relate to the research to ensure that those biases did not influence the process or findings of the study. I also provided a thick description of the data and conclusions to further achieve external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing a thick description of participants' responses and context, the roles and function of the school may become more significant to other people and settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data from the study was also triangulated to attain transferability (Yin, 2018). While circumstances for transferability were created by the researcher, the persons reading the research must ultimately determine transferability of the findings of the study.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is important because it demonstrates that the findings of the study are not only consistent but can be replicated by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Dependability also serves to ensure that the data is accurate and that the researchers' conclusions are supported by the data (Patton, 2015). I used an external audit to certify that the data is correctly organized, promotes the accuracy and validity of the study, and to receive feedback to confirm that the data and results are adequate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research serves to minimize bias on the part of the researcher and ensure that the findings of the study are formed from the participants and not the

researchers' own motivations or concerns (Patton, 2015). To establish confirmability in this study, I fostered reflexivity by disclosing my own beliefs, assumptions, and values to minimize bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also maintained the confidentiality of participants' information and responses by using pseudonyms and I maintained the confidentiality of participants' answers, as recommended by Patton (2015). All participants were allowed to review the information recorded to confirm the accuracy of the data and findings (Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

The Belmont Report provides important ethical principles to steer the research process that include respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016). Permission from the school district was obtained prior to making contact at the research site. Once permission was obtained, the school's assistant principal acted as the liaison to provide information to potential participants. After individuals indicated interest in participating in the study, informed consent was secured from all participants and not only served as their agreement to participate in the study but also provided instructions to inform participants that they may exit the study at any time. Any potential harm to participants was minimized and possible benefits maximized, and all participants' information remained confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Potential risks and benefits were discussed with each participant prior to beginning the research process. Through the current research plan, there were no known risks to participants or the site. All data collected was protected and remains confidential through password protection for electronic documents and a locked file drawer for paper documents. All data will be destroyed after three years by permanently deleting electronic records and shredding paper documents. Both positive and negative aspects of the research findings were presented as part of the study.

Summary

Chapter Three presents a detailed description of the specific tools, procedures, and design used in this qualitative case study. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and other documents. The researcher served as the human instrument, collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing data to deliver a detailed account of all participants' roles and the overall functioning of the system, or school. Confidentiality of all participants was maintained throughout the interview and observation process, as well as in the data analysis stage. Trustworthiness of the study was upheld through measures of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. All ethical considerations were presented and risks to participants minimized.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative, embedded single-case study was to understand the roles and practices of the faculty and staff at one Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School combined school and how the faculty and staff work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. This chapter reviews descriptions of the participants, the three types of data that were collected and analyzed, themes that emerged from the data, and how those themes relate to and answer the research questions.

Participants

The following section provides a description of each participant in the case study. Each description provides information about the educational background of the teacher, the number of years each has worked at ECHS, and the roles held at the school. Table 1 shows the years of experience at ECHS and the educational background for each participant.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level(s)
Monica	15	Masters	Spanish Language, Literature, & Culture	10-12
Jerry	13	Masters (2)	Secondary Social Studies, Educational Leadership	10
Debbie	16	Masters	Teaching	9, 10
Michelle	13	Bachelors	Special Education	9-12
Mike	17	Masters (2)	Science Education, School Administration	9, 11

Anna	16	Masters (2)	Counseling, School Administration	12
Teresa	8	Masters	Intruactional Design	9
Jim	14	Masters (2)	History, Educational Leadership	11
Wanda	15	Bachelors	Math	9-11
Sandra	17	Masters	Teaching	9-11
Dana	9	Masters	Education	9, 11

Monica

Monica is a certified Spanish teacher at ECHS, where she has been teaching for 15 years. Upon completion of her Master's degree in Spanish Language, Literature, and Culture, she began her high school teaching career at ECHS. She teaches dual enrollment Spanish 101, 102, and 201, which means that she is also certified to teach for the local technical college. All students at ECHS take at least one level of Spanish with Monica and earn high school credit as well as college credit for the courses that she teaches. Monica incorporates a variety of AVID strategies in each of her classes and has done so throughout her 15 year teaching career.

Jerry

Jerry has a Bachelor's degree in business but decided to change careers and earned a Master's degree in secondary social studies. He has taught Government and Economics, as well as Leadership Development, for 10th grade students at ECHS for 13 years. While teaching at ECHS, he returned to school to earn an additional Master's degree in educational leadership. Jerry also sponsors one of the larger civic organization-affiliated student clubs at the school and

attends multiple community service projects throughout the county along with the students. Jerry has continuously incorporated AVID strategies into his Government and Economics classes throughout his teaching career.

Debbie

Debbie earned a Bachelor's degree in United States History and a Master's degree in Teaching. She has taught at ECHS for 16 years and ECHS is the first and only teaching assignment in her career. While at ECHS, Debbie has taught Civics, Human Geography, Government and Economics, and AVID. She also serves as the Social Studies department chair and the sponsor of the Student Council. Although her teaching assignments have been limited to students in the 9th and 10th grades, she works with students of all grade levels through Student Council. Debbie currently utilizes many AVID strategies in her 9th grade Human Geography classes.

Michelle

Michelle began her teaching career at ECHS and has taught students in all grade levels for the last 13 years. Michelle has a Bachelor's degree in Special Education, with a specialization in Learning Disabilities. For most of her time at ECHS, she has taught 10th grade AVID, which aims to help students navigate through high school and their first college courses. Michelle has also served as the AVID department chair for several years and as the special education case manager for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Michelle's background in special education is similar to the AVID framework that aims to aid underrepresented students to increase academic achievement and pursue post-secondary education. As an AVID teacher, she not only teaches students specific strategies but also provides academic support as needed.

Mike

Mike has taught science at ECHS since the school opened 17 years ago. He earned two Bachelor's degrees, one in Science Education and one in Chemistry, and also earned two Master's degrees in Science Education and School Administration. Prior to beginning his career at ECHS, he was a science teacher and an administrator in another state. At ECHS, he has taught 9th grade Physical Science and 11th grade Chemistry and Anatomy courses. Mike has a specialized point of view regarding the ECHS and AVID programs, as he has seen and helped it to evolve over the years.

Anna

Anna is a certified K-5 elementary teacher, as well as a K-12 School Counselor. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, a Master's degree in School Counseling, and a Master's degree in School Administration. During her 16 years at ECHS, she has been the sole 12th grade AVID teacher. She is able to teach 12th grade AVID because it is a local school board approved course, which means that she does not have to be certified to teach high school students to teach the course since she is a certified School Counselor. Many of the lessons taught in senior AVID directly relate to topics on which School Counselors would work with students and families, that including college application and financial aid information, and other career and postsecondary planning activities.

Teresa

Teresa is a veteran teacher of 26 years, eight of which were at ECHS. She is certified to teach math and Physical Education, and has taught both while working at ECHS. Teresa earned a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education and in math, and a Master's degree in Instructional Design Technology. While at ECHS, she has taught 9th grade Physical Education, Algebra I,

Geometry, and several 10th grade elective courses that include Physical Education 2 and SAT/ACT test prep for math. Teresa utilizes a variety of AVID strategies in all of her classes which has been, most recently, Physical Education.

Jim

Jim earned a Bachelor's degree in Social Studies and Education and also earned two Master's degrees, one in History and another in Educational Leadership. He has been teaching social studies for 19 years and has taught United States History at ECHS for the last 14 years. His Master's degree in History allows him to teach dual enrollment U.S. History to 11th grade students. Students who take his dual enrollment course both semesters earn six college transferrable credits. In addition to incorporating AVID strategies into his classroom, Jim also utilizes the strategy of gamification, which originated from a similar theory of motivation and directly relates to promoting student autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Wanda

Wanda is a certified math teacher and has taught at ECHS for 15 years. She has a Bachelor's degree in Math and has taught Probability and Statistics, Geometry, and Algebra 2 at ECHS and is in her second year of teaching 11th grade AVID. Wanda also supervises the school's Yearbook club and sponsors the Recycle club with two other teachers. As a math teacher, Wanda utilized many of the AVID strategies to aid in student engagement and learning. As an AVID teacher, she teaches 11th grade students how to organize, plan, and implement academic and postsecondary goals.

Sandra

Sandra was a career-switcher, having spent over 10 years as a stay-at-home mother, then a number of years as a grocery store manager. She has a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and

Finance and returned to school to earn an additional Bachelor's degree in Math. She also earned a Master's degree in Teaching and another in School Administration. Sandra has worked at ECHS since it opened 17 years ago and has taught math and AVID. As a math teacher, she taught mostly Algebra I, but also taught Geometry and Algebra II. Most recently, she serves as the school's Instructional Coach, AVID coordinator, and Title I coordinator.

Dana

Dana is a certified science teacher with a Bachelor's degree in Biology and a Master's degree in Education. She has worked at ECHS for nine years and has taught Physical Science, Chemistry, and Anatomy. She recently became a 9th grade AVID teacher. Dana also sponsors the National Honor Society and has worked with several other student clubs in the past. While teaching science, Dana incorporated many AVID strategies into her classroom. As a 9th grade AVID teacher, she works with students to learn organization and study skills, set realistic goals, and research how to reach goals.

Results

This section includes the results of the data analysis. The results are categorized into three overarching themes that include multiple sub-themes. The data was triangulated through three data collection methods that include interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In-person interviews were conducted with each participant for approximately 30 minutes. Interview questions were open-ended to allow participants to share all information they believed to be relevant to each question. The interview questions facilitated participants' viewpoints about how the roles of faculty members of the school contribute to the motivation of students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Two classroom observations of each participant were completed, one announced and one unannounced, and detailed notes were taken for each visit using a structured observation data collection form (Appendix E). During the classroom observations, I was able to clearly see the identified themes and sub-themes reflected through the teachers' use of specific strategies and interactions, as well as how the students interacted with one another. Participants also provided documents they use in the classroom with students. The documents were analyzed and coded to identify other potential themes and for support of previously identified themes. The three themes identified are discussed below and include relationships, student-centered focus, and strategies.

Relationships Are Key

Each of the participants identified the need for the development of positive relationships with the students that attend ECHS, all of which are classified as underrepresented students based on one or more criteria. Participants classified the building and facilitation of relationships as one of the most important roles they have at the school and emphasized the importance of maintaining positive relationships to aid in students' personal, social, and academic success. Anna stated that the faculty must "be genuine and students must be able to clearly see that the faculty has a vested interest in them" to be motivated to achieve their goals, while Sandra emphasized the importance of also building a relationship with the students' families "to help bridge the gap between school and home." Classroom observations also demonstrated several strategies used by teachers to develop and maintain relationships with students and facilitate positive relationships among the students.

Michelle discussed the importance of building trust with underrepresented students "because they need to have at least one consistent person that they trust to talk to when they are having difficulties" while Jerry believes that, by creating a positive and consistent relationship

with students, “they know that they can rely on you to help them with whatever they need and they are more likely to reach out when they are struggling.” In her interview, Dana discussed the importance of fostering relationships with each of her students and the importance of “taking the time to truly listen to them and try to relate to how they are feeling and what they are going through” to provide a sense of encouragement, empowerment, and belonging. Additionally, Wanda discussed how, in her experiences with underrepresented students, when they connect with the adults in the school they are “more likely to work harder for those teachers and be more engaged in the learning process.”

Collaboration

All participants identified collaboration as one of the main strategies needed when working with underrepresented students. This includes teacher to teacher, teacher to parent/guardians, and student to student collaboration. Jerry discussed the importance of teacher to teacher collaboration, stating that “it is essential for teachers working with underrepresented students to collaborate with each other to determine what strategies work best with specific students.” Additionally, Sandra stated that “it is important for teachers to work to keep students engaged in the learning process, which often requires collaborative planning within academic departments and across subject areas”. Teachers also collaborate with one another to discuss specific students’ needs that include circumstances that occur in their lives outside of school, as well as academic needs that may require differentiation of instruction to meet those needs.

All participants stated that they believe that building relationships with parents and guardians of underrepresented students aid in students’ success and motivation in school. Sandra emphasized the importance of establishing a “positive and collaborative relationship with each students’ parents or guardians to best support the needs of the student.” According to Debbie,

“when underrepresented students’ parents are engaged in the educational process, the likelihood of academic and personal success increases”. One of the main criteria for students to attend ECHS requires that the students’ parents have not earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, which generally means that the parents do not have the background or knowledge to assist their student with the postsecondary process. Anna stated that, by collaborating with families, “the faculty at ECHS are able to not only provide support to the student, but also guide and support the parents on how best to help their child succeed and pursue postsecondary education.”

Each participant discussed the importance of student to student collaboration as a necessary classroom strategy that facilitates teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, and problem solving. Many of the AVID strategies that are utilized in each classroom at ECHS require a great deal of student to student collaboration through group projects and presentations, table talks, academic concerns tutorials, and other collaborative activities. Participants discussed how collaboration among students helps to not only foster student relatedness, but also promotes competence and autonomy in a number of ways. Jerry mentioned that, while students may not necessarily form friendships through the process of collaborating with one another, they do learn “proper forms of social and professional interactions, specifics about roles and responsibilities, leadership skills, and problem solving strategies,” all of which are essential for postsecondary education and the workplace.

Advisory

Each participant discussed how the advisory program at ECHS helps to build long lasting, positive relationships among the students, as well as between students and teachers. ECHS operates on an advisory schedule on Fridays so that students have time with their assigned advisory group to bond, participate in team building activities, or participate in schoolwide

challenges with other advisory groups. Teresa recognized advisory as “the students’ family at school”, while Wanda stated that “the great thing about advisory is that not only do the students form tight bonds with one another, they always have a designated adult they can go to and feel completely comfortable with.” All participants discussed advisory as a way for faculty to demonstrate to students that there are adults and students that genuinely care about their well-being and want to see them be successful in whatever they attempt. “Advisory provides time each week for students to come together and be there for each other”, according to Michelle.

Anna discussed how the advisory family “creates a bond between students and not only teaches them how to treat others, but also promotes teamwork,” while Dana discussed how important the advisory program is for students to “provide support and encouragement for one another,” which she believed to be an important component for underrepresented students to experience. Students look forward to advisory each Friday and “have a lot of fun together, especially during the schoolwide advisory challenges,” according to Debbie. All participants stated that they believe these types of relationships positively influence student motivation to achieve and reach for their goals and dreams. While it does alter the school schedule every Friday and academic classes are shorter, Jerry believes that the advisory program is worth that sacrifice because it “creates a bond between advisors and advisees that lasts well beyond their high school years.”

Student-centered Focus

All participants emphasized that when working with underrepresented students, especially those who are first-generation and in the academic middle, a student-centered focus must be present within the school. Dana stressed the importance of “learning about where each student comes from, what they deal with outside of school, and how they learn best are all

critical to motivating underrepresented students.” According to Michelle, learning about each student includes taking the time to truly understand the students’ personal circumstances as well as culturally relevant information that can be useful in working with students from all backgrounds. As teachers learn more about their students, they can incorporate specific information presented in the classroom and “relate it back to what the students know, value, or find important, which will help them to better understand and retain the material.”

Through the AVID elective class, students at ECHS explore potential careers, postsecondary options, and learn how to set personal goals to help them reflect on their progress. Jim stated that, by recognizing that all students are unique and have different abilities, needs, and goals, teachers at ECHS can “help to guide students toward their personal goals and teach them how to realistically reach those goals.” Mike stated that a student-centered focus also empowers the students to “learn more about themselves and think about their own wants and needs, and what they can do to get to where they want to be in life.” While some teachers may consider this process to be a great deal of extra work on the part of the teachers, Debbie believes that it is important for teachers, and the school as a whole, to “do all things for the good of the students first, which may be additional work on the front end, but the payoff is much greater in the long run.” This includes fostering a schoolwide college and career readiness culture that centers around the needs, interests, and goals of the students.

Schoolwide Culture

Participants discussed the importance of creating and maintaining a schoolwide culture of college and career readiness to provide additional encouragement and support to all students. The AVID curriculum requires that all students participate in college and career exploration activities on a regular basis. Monica stated that, in a schoolwide college and career readiness culture, “all

faculty are invested in exposing students to a variety of career and college opportunities.” These opportunities include career interest assessments and virtual career tours, as well as career days when professionals throughout the community visit the school to discuss their careers with students. Faculty also demonstrate a college-going culture and continuously encourage students to pursue postsecondary education to reach their career goals. Students are provided the opportunity to tour the programs offered on the campuses of the local technical college, tour local and nearby institutes of higher education, complete college fair projects, and complete virtual college tours to gain exposure to as many postsecondary options as possible. Michelle described the schoolwide culture at ECHS as “helping change family trees, one student at a time, through exposure to opportunities they may not ever have otherwise.”

Students at ECHS are all the first in their families to attend college and they and their families do not always have the background knowledge or the resources to take the next steps after high school. Jerry believes strongly in “helping students to alter the course of their lives through education and opportunity” and by immersing students into a schoolwide culture that emphasizes college and career readiness, students are able to see all the possibilities. By having all teachers at ECHS on the same page and promoting a college-going culture, Teresa believes that students are “able to see what is possible for them if they put in the work and push through when it gets hard.” Anna described how, by teaching students to set realistic goals and self-reflect, “they learn how to advocate for themselves, take accountability, and navigate the postsecondary process for themselves,” which she identified as important for all students.

Goals and Self-reflection

The AVID curriculum requires that students continuously set and work toward specific goals, reflect on their goals, and make adjustments as needed. At ECHS, all students participate

in an AVID commitment ceremony during the first semester of ninth grade where they are celebrated and sign a contract dedicating themselves to their academics and the goals that they have set for themselves regarding college and career aspirations. Teachers of all subject areas also incorporate goal-setting into their classrooms to help students learn accountability, responsibility, and self-advocacy. Mike identified a challenge that teachers face when working with underrepresented students as that of “changing students’ mindsets about their abilities and counteracting self-doubt, helping them to see that they can achieve their goals.” Teachers continuously ask students to reflect on all aspects of their academics and their goals through a variety of assignments, projects, and conferences. According to Sandra, these practices help students to “constantly assess and reassess where they are, what they are doing well, what they might need to change, and it holds them accountable for their own learning and success.”

While asking students to self-reflect and reevaluate may be met with resistance by some in the beginning, Anna believes that students will learn to “appreciate what the teachers are trying to teach them,” while Debbie described the potential resistance as “a temporary means to an end.” Students at ECHS are expected to participate in goal setting and self reflection activities so that they can learn at an earlier stage to “hold themselves accountable for improving and reaching the goals that they set for themselves,” according to Jerry. Additionally, Michelle believes that the AVID curriculum teaches students how to become responsible for their own learning and “allows them the freedom to choose what part they will play in their academics as well as in their own lives.” All teachers at ECHS participate in training so that they can teach these specific tools to students, regardless of the subject they teach.

Strategies

All participants discussed the importance of utilizing a variety of strategies with underrepresented students to keep them engaged, invested, and excited about learning. Teachers at ECHS have a wide array of strategies in their teaching toolbox to use with students inside and outside the classroom to not only teach the necessary academic content, but also to provide encouragement and help students to grow. While all agreed that this is not always an easy task, Debbie described it as necessary and believes that “teachers have to push students to do more. They might not believe that they can do it in the beginning but over time, their confidence grows and they begin to thrive.” All participants agreed that pushing students out of their comfort zones while implementing specific teaching strategies, along with other tools, is the most effective way to motivate underrepresented students to succeed.

Sandra recognizes that all students learn in unique ways and part of the teachers’ responsibility is to “determine exactly how each student learns best and adjust accordingly.” She believes that when teachers alter the way they present information and assess the students’ learning, they provide the best opportunity for each student to not only understand and retain the information, but also demonstrate mastery. Monica discussed the importance of teachers being willing to learn new forms of technology to use with students because “that is what they know” and that the “old school” way of lecturing and giving tests is no longer as effective. Keeping students engaged is one of the biggest challenges for teachers, according to Jim, so it is important to utilize “more creative, out of the box strategies to hold their interest and facilitate participation from all students.”

Teaching Strategies

All participants discussed the importance of utilizing a variety of teaching strategies with underrepresented students to keep them engaged in the learning process. Sandra expressed the

need for teachers to continuously reflect on what is and is not working in the classroom and “be willing to adjust and readjust accordingly.” Several participants discussed the importance of figuring out each students’ specific learning styles and providing a variety of assignments and assessments for all learning styles, while other participants discussed the need to relate information and concepts to the real world so that students are able to better understand the content. Jerry stated that “providing students with options helps to not only build students’ confidence but also helps them to take charge of their own learning.” All participants identified the need for providing consistency and positive reinforcement to students while simultaneously requiring them to think critically, problem solve, and collaborate throughout the learning process. All teachers at ECHS are required to utilize AVID teaching strategies in their classrooms, but each incorporate the strategies in their classrooms in different ways to meet the needs of all students.

Jim utilizes a specific strategy called gamification in his United States history course, which requires students to think critically, work as a team, and be creative as they play a variety of games. He believes that this strategy helps students to “have fun while learning the necessary facts they need to remember” and requires that they help one another through the process. Jim acknowledged that history is not always the most engaging subject for some students, so he enjoys “thinking outside the box to give them projects that will keep them interested.” Jerry is also a social studies teacher and utilizes many of the AVID questioning and note-taking strategies to keep students involved in the necessary lecture portions of his class. He believes that the Cornell note-taking strategy helps to “keep students focused on the important parts of the lecture, but also requires them to reflect on what they learned that particular day.” All

participants emphasized the importance of utilizing a variety of teaching and assessment strategies so that all students have the opportunity to learn and grow.

Setting Students Up For Success

The participants stated that they utilize most of the AVID teaching strategies in their classrooms to teach academic content and also discussed the importance of teaching students specific life skills that can be applied throughout multiple areas of their lives. Anna discussed how she teaches students to advocate for themselves by “empowering them to recognize their abilities and teaching them how to navigate the academic and college process so that they are able to advocate for themselves.” Many of the participants agreed that underrepresented students do not generally have the background knowledge to navigate the postsecondary education process and may lack the confidence to challenge themselves academically, which is why they may require additional supports that other students may not need to be successful. Some participants also discussed the importance of teaching underrepresented students accountability and perseverance. According to Mike, these are “essential qualities that students need to be successful in high school, college, and in life.”

While teachers are required to teach students specific concepts, standards, and facts, all participants agreed that their job does not end there. Teresa discussed the importance of also teaching students the soft skills that are necessary for the world of work and college. She believes that, while technology can be a wonderful thing, “it has taught our youth to rely on it for communication. They don’t know how to talk to or communicate with others in a professional way.” For this reason, the AVID teachers at ECHS provide students with specific lessons that focus on soft skills that include how to email a teacher or professor, how to address someone in a professional way, and how to communicate effectively with their peers. Wanda discussed how many students need support in these areas so that they “address people and situations

appropriately instead of how they might text or talk to their friends.” Most participants discussed how they make it a point to go above and beyond their required duties because they believe the students will benefit in the long run. While this may not be possible at larger high schools, it is one of the features that makes ECHS unique.

Outlier Data and Findings

This section includes specific outliers that were identified during the interview and classroom observation process. While all participants agreed on many aspects of the identified themes, there were two specific outliers that participants identified that are not totally in line with the themes and research questions. These outliers function as a caution for faculty that work with underrepresented students.

Outlier Finding #1

All participants discussed the importance of getting to know their students and developing positive relationships with each student, as well as with their family. While discussing relationships, one participant commented on how some teachers tend to have more blurred lines than others when setting and maintaining boundaries. Several participants commented about their own experiences with establishing boundaries with students and families and discussed how, for some younger teachers, it can be difficult to set and keep clear boundaries with students because of the small size of the school, their close proximity in age to the students, and a desire to be well liked. All participants agreed that establishing positive relationships with students does require faculty to disclose some personal information about their own lives and experiences, but it is important that they set clear boundaries so that students and families understand the limits of those relationships.

Outlier Finding #2

One participant stated that, while they do believe it is important for faculty to provide guidance and utilize specific strategies with their students, they do not believe that it is helpful to the students to provide so much support and assistance that they are unable to do things on their own after they have graduated. When providing underrepresented students with guidance and support, faculty must also help students to learn how to navigate through specific issues on their own and help them to understand how to problem solve independently.

Research Question Responses

This section provides responses to the research questions. Responses were obtained directly from the three data collection methods. The central research question and the three sub-questions' responses address the purpose of this study.

Central Research Question

How do the faculty and staff at one Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School combined school motivate underrepresented students?

The teachers at ECHS have a schoolwide plan for motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. All students at ECHS are required to take an AVID elective course each semester, which exposes them to a variety of opportunities that they would not have had otherwise. Through the AVID program, students are taught specific skills that help them to prepare for and succeed in rigorous courses, but also to explore career and college options and learn how to navigate both. The curriculum in AVID is structured differently for each academic grade level and is designed specifically to set underrepresented students up to be successful in their academics as well as their college and career aspirations beyond high school. The AVID elective course also provides additional supports to students in the form of

tutoring and academic coaching and peer collaboration through academic concerns time so that students are able to receive assistance with anything with which they struggle. Debbie said that “the AVID elective class is so important for our students because it helps to provide that support that they may not otherwise receive at home. It helps to build confidence in themselves and their abilities.”

The ECHS model automatically exposes students to the rigor of college courses, which provides students with the opportunity to eliminate some of the potential obstacles that tend to stand in the way of enrolling in and attending a postsecondary education program. Jim discussed how, in addition to introducing rigor to underrepresented students, the ECHS model also provides students with the knowledge and skills that are necessary to “take responsibility for their own learning and to think about things in different ways.” Jerry stated that “by helping the students to consider different perspectives, options, and solutions, students are learning to think critically about their academics, but also to see the possibilities for their future.” Many underrepresented students are not able to visualize the various possibilities for their futures but the teachers, staff, and administration at ECHS continuously utilize a student-centered mindset that helps to eliminate obstacles so that students can learn about and uncover the possibilities that exist for them.

Relationships hold a significant role in motivating underrepresented students, according to participants. Michelle discussed the importance of truly getting to know the students, along with their life circumstances, so that the teacher can better understand their life circumstances and adjust accordingly. Wanda reasoned that by creating positive relationships with each student, the teacher is “able to help students see the bigger picture and provide the encouragement that is necessary to persevere and overcome obstacles that may appear in their paths.” While many

underrepresented students may have a great deal of support and encouragement from home, the teachers at ECHS have found that when students believe that their teachers are genuine and have a vested interest in them, they are more motivated to achieve. Dana believes that by developing and maintaining positive relationships with the students at ECHS, “the students are more likely to naturally want to do more; make better grades, go to college, or do something that will help them to have a career and make a positive contribution to society.”

Sub-Question One

How do the faculty and staff meet the students’ need for autonomy?

The teachers at ECHS teach students how to set goals, reflect on those goals, and discuss with each student how they will realistically reach each goal that they set for themselves. Many goal-setting activities occur through the AVID elective classes, but teachers in all content areas provide assignments that require students to reflect on their goals in different ways. Anna stated that “it is important to help students set goals and constantly ask that they reflect on those goals to empower them to achieve things on their own.” The teachers at ECHS strive to teach students responsibility and accountability for self so that they feel empowered to be independent, problem-solve on their own, and advocate for themselves when needed. According to participants, teaching underrepresented students how to set realistic goals and to continuously reflect on those goals is an important step in helping students feel more autonomous - not just with their academics - but also in their everyday lives.

Several participants discussed the importance of providing students with choices to help promote autonomy. Teachers at ECHS provide several academic assignments that allow students to choose how they would like to complete the tasks assigned based on their personal learning styles and preferences. Jim stated that he has found that “when I provide students with several

options for how they can complete an assignment or project, they tend to enjoy the process more and when they are interested in what they are doing, they are more likely to learn and retain the information.” Teachers who provide students with choices for assignments set parameters to ensure that students will learn the concepts they need to learn while still allowing students the autonomy to be creative, engage in the learning process, and absorb the information in the way that they learn best.

Sub-Question Two

How do the faculty and staff meet the students’ need for relatedness?

Participants identified relatedness as the top need that must be met when working with underrepresented students. According to participants, making connections with others is a top priority. Teachers take the time to get to know each student in their classes through a variety of activities in the classroom and one on one conversations. According to Anna, through the process of making meaningful connections with students, it becomes necessary for teachers to disclose information about themselves to students “so that students can learn our stories, the things that we had to overcome to get to where we are, and hopefully they can better relate to us and learn about persevering.” The teachers at ECHS also include activities in their classrooms that help students to get to know one another and learn teamwork through collaboration, group and table partner work, and other activities that require students to work together to solve problems as a team or class.

Participants identified the advisory program at ECHS as one of the main ways that students learn to build relationships with one another and their assigned advisor. Dana discussed the advisory program as a “family within the school where they get to know a core group of students and are able to provide support for one another throughout their time in high school.”

When the students are assigned to an advisory as incoming freshmen, they participate in a summer Bridge Week program where they meet their advisor, fellow advisees, and participate in various activities to get to know other incoming freshmen. Participants believe that the faculty at ECHS is invested in the Bridge Week program because they believe in the importance of helping students make connections with one another, as well as adults at the school to meet the need for relatedness.

Sub-Question Three

How do the faculty and staff meet the students' need for competence?

The teachers at ECHS utilize a variety of strategies with students to help develop competence. Many of the strategies are research-based strategies that are part of the AVID curriculum like Cornell or focused note-taking, socratic seminars, interactive notebooks, and philosophical chairs. Teachers incorporate these strategies into their classrooms to help students learn and understand the academic content in different ways and relate that content to the real world. Students are required to critically think, problem-solve, and reflect to gain a deeper understanding of concepts and content. A variety of assessment tools are also used in the classroom instead of using traditional assessment methods to allow students to demonstrate their competence of the subject matter in different ways. The teachers at ECHS constantly reevaluate what works and what does not work with their classes and make adjustments accordingly.

In addition to academic tools and strategies, the teachers at ECHS promote student competence in other ways. All participants discussed the importance of providing positive reinforcement to help build students' confidence in the subject matter and in themselves. Monica believes that "when they feel confident in themselves and what they are doing, it helps them to feel competent with the content." Teachers at ECHS work to set students up for success, which

they believe helps build confidence as well as competence. The small learning environment at ECHS allows teachers to be able to spend more one on one time with students and provide the encouragement that is necessary to help students feel successful, confident, and competent. The teachers also make adjustments in the classroom when they see that students are not demonstrating competence the way they expected them to. Participants identified the characteristics of flexibility and willingness to reflect as key strategies teachers can use for themselves to help promote student competence.

Summary

This chapter presented a descriptive summary of the participants in the study and provided insight into the roles of the teachers at ECHS. Each participant's narrative included their background and years of educational experience and work at ECHS. Three themes emerged from data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of documents. These themes included relationships, a student-centered focus, and strategies that teachers utilize with students. Finally, the central research question and sub-questions were analyzed to better understand the findings that included participants' emphasis on establishing relationships with students, providing opportunities to first-generation students, and providing students with the necessary tools to be college and career ready.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study described how the faculty and staff at one Advancement Via Individual Determination and Early College High School school work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Data was collected in this study through classroom observations, individual interviews, and document analysis. The data was analyzed using Creswell's (2009) six steps for data analysis. This chapter includes sections that provide a discussion and interpretation of the research findings, implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to understand the roles of the faculty at one AVID and ECHS combined school and how the faculty motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Research that examined high schools that utilize both the ECHS and AVID models is scarce and there is little research that examines the roles of the faculty at AVID and ECHS combined schools. The ECHS and AVID models both require that students are classified as underrepresented in one or more of the following categories: first-generation, minority, low-socioeconomic, and academic middle. Previous research on motivation as it relates to underrepresented students suggests that most underrepresented students require a variety of additional supports to achieve at higher rates and pursue postsecondary education. The findings of this case study add to the existing research discussed in Chapter Two regarding motivating underrepresented students to achieve and encouraging those students to pursue postsecondary education by promoting relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The faculty members that participated in this study utilize evidence-

based teaching strategies, as well as a variety of interpersonal skills, to connect with and motivate students at ECHS.

Interpretation of Findings

This section includes a summary of material from emerging themes and subthemes that were discussed in Chapter Four. The three themes that developed include relationships, student-centered focus, and strategies. The interpretation of findings support and correlate with the research questions. The findings of this study demonstrated that the faculty and staff at ECHS hold a key role in motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Eleven teachers of varying subject areas at ECHS shared their perspectives through semi-structured interviews. The data was collected through in-person interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of documents provided by participants. These three methods were used for the purpose of triangulation of the data. Three themes emerged after the data was analyzed in this study. The themes include relationships, student-centered focus, and strategies.

High Expectations. Participants were asked to disclose their experiences and perspectives regarding their role, and the role of their colleagues, in motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Theories on student motivation support the premise that, in order to motivate students, especially those considered underrepresented, schools must provide additional supports that are aimed at helping students not only to learn, but also to set and reach attainable goals (Ahn, et al., 2021). Participants discussed the importance of helping underrepresented students to set attainable goals while teaching them how to realistically reach those goals. The participants thought that, to achieve this, teachers must set high

expectations for all students, regardless of innate ability, achievement, or level of motivation. They reasoned that, because most underrepresented students' families do not have the background knowledge necessary to help them aim higher and push themselves, it is up to the school personnel to provide that level of support for the student and their family. Research has shown that by providing information and access to parents of underrepresented students and by maintaining high expectations for students' abilities to pursue postsecondary options, school personnel can increase the likelihood that parents and students will have a solid knowledge of and confidence in the college-going process (Amaro-Jimenez, et al., 2020).

Participants also discussed how, in their experiences, they have found that underrepresented students tend to have little faith in themselves and their abilities, so it is important for them to hold students to high expectations and not allow them to give up on themselves when things become difficult. A participant mentioned a quote from Les Brown that said "no one rises to low expectations," which seems to be a leading source of the passion that the participants have for pushing their students to achieve, realize their abilities, persevere, and pursue postsecondary education. The participants believe that, to motivate students to achieve to their full potential and pursue more beyond a high school diploma, it is necessary to set and maintain high expectations while providing additional supports, guidance, and the education necessary to reach the goals that they set for themselves.

The AVID curriculum requires teachers to utilize a variety of strategies and activities that not only hold students to high expectations, but also help them to build confidence in their abilities to succeed and achieve their goals (Boyko, et al., 2016). Since students at ECHS begin taking college courses in the tenth grade, the ECHS model also requires students be held to high expectations and provides the additional support necessary to become acclimated to college-level

expectations and coursework requirements (Adams, et al., 2020). Holding students to high expectations does not always mean challenging them academically, but also includes teaching students how to treat others, how to interact with others, along with other soft skills that will be useful in their lives after high school (Cunninghame, et al., 2020). The participants of this study believe that the faculty at ECHS are fully invested in holding all students to high expectations academically, personally, and socially, and credit the work of the entire faculty for the success of students, as well as the school as a whole.

College-going Culture. The students at ECHS begin taking college courses on the campus of the local technical college in their sophomore year, provided that they maintain good grades in their high school courses throughout their ninth grade year. While all students at the school may not be four-year college material, the opportunity is provided to all of them to take college transferable courses and they are taught specific strategies for how to be successful in those courses. The participants work diligently with students to teach strategies for success while also providing support and encouragement for all students. Two of the participants discussed the dual enrollment courses that they teach to all students at the school which provides, at minimum, nine college credits. While there are specific challenges that some students face in dual enrollment courses, as not all students desire to go to a traditional college to earn a four-year degree, by exposing students to college, it provides an opportunity that they may not otherwise have (Adams, et al., 2020).

Participants discussed ways that they work with students to help them set goals for their future. Active discussions about college options take place on a regular basis among teachers and students, and all students participate in college tours at the local technical college as well as the local four-year institution. If a student is unsuccessful in completing college transferable courses,

they are still offered the option to pursue a special program at the technical college during their senior year. Other students who choose to pursue a special program are also allowed to do so during their senior year. By requiring students to do research on potential careers and the postsecondary options available to reach that chosen career, students are able to begin to understand what is required and expected of them in order to achieve their goals (Browman, et al., 2017).

Participants also discussed how the definition of postsecondary education does not always mean that the four-year college track is the best option, so the faculty work to encourage students to follow the path that will help them to reach their goals. Certification programs, Associate's degrees, and four-year college are all a part of the college-going culture that is cultivated at ECHS, according to participants. Until recently, the AVID curriculum focused solely on a four-year college track and almost exclusively encouraged that track for all students that participated in the AVID program (Watt, et al., 2018). However, in recent years leaders and advocates of the AVID program have changed course and determined that postsecondary education does not have to look the same for all students, with the demand for credentialed and skilled graduates to enter the current workforce (Kirk & Watt, 2018). According to participants of this study, this is a welcome and necessary change that they have seen success with in the student population that ECHS serves.

Cultivating Connections. Each participant discussed the crucial role that relationships have in motivating underrepresented students. The participants begin building relationships with and among rising ninth grade students the summer prior to the start of school. Creating positive relationships among students through team building activities allows students to get to know their classmates on a more personal level, work together on a variety of activities, and build

friendships (Wooldridge, 2017). Students who attend ECHS have opted to forego the traditional high school setting and most do not have previously established friendships with other students at the school. The participants recognized the need for students to have positive peer relationships and supports throughout their high school journey and utilize the advisory program to help create a school family for each student. The students know that they always have a core group of students, as well as their advisor, with whom they have built connections with and on whom they can rely for support and encouragement through the entirety of their high school experience.

The participants also recognized the need to create meaningful connections with each student they teach. Several participants discussed how important it is for teachers to build relationships with each student, especially those classified as underrepresented. They believe in going the extra mile to truly get to know each student, their backgrounds, likes, dislikes, and any other relevant information that can help them better relate to the students in the classroom. When students believe that their teacher genuinely cares about them, they are more likely to be motivated in the classroom (Ahn, et al., 2021). Participants talked about how students who have graduated continue to communicate with their ECHS teachers because of the connections that they made with them while attending the school. They discussed how, more than anything else, they believe that making meaningful connections with students is necessary to motivate them to achieve and makes a lasting impact on the students. Underrepresented students require additional support and encouragement that positive relationships between teachers and students clearly provide (Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2017).

Research has shown that when underrepresented students believe that there are adults in the school that are invested in them and genuinely care about their success, they are more likely

to be motivated to achieve in those teachers' classrooms, as well as in school overall (Xuan, et al., 2019; Xie, et al., 2020). Additionally, when school personnel build positive connections with the parents and guardians of students, parent engagement in their students' education is likely to increase (Clemensen, 2021). Participants discussed the many ways in which ECHS works to reach out to families and keep parents involved in their students' education. Through a variety of evening events where the school provides dinner, to student-led conferences and individual graduation plan meetings, participants believe that each event helps to foster positive relationships and stated that most parents remain engaged in the educational process until their student graduates.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This section includes possible suggestions for policy and practice. The specific implications for policy relate directly to school districts, as well as the other entities that provide funds for schools. The implications for practice are suggestions for educators at other ECHS programs, AVID schools, and all educators who work directly with underrepresented students.

Implications for Policy

Previous research indicates that both the AVID and ECHS program models work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and to pursue postsecondary education (Song, et al., 2021; Wilson, et al., 2021). The findings of this research study confirmed the participants' viewpoint that the combined efforts of the ECHS and AVID programs are successful in not only motivating underrepresented students, but also in further promoting postsecondary options. While the school district in which ECHS is located cannot start another ECHS program, they could consider adding AVID programs into other schools within the district. The AVID program model has specific curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school students and requires that

participants of the program are classified as first-generation, academic middle students. If the district chose to implement AVID in more elementary and middle schools, those students could not only benefit from the AVID curriculum, but also prepare to apply for the opportunity to attend ECHS for high school. This would require that school district leaders allocate more funds to implement and maintain AVID programs in multiple schools, which would include additional training opportunities for faculty at those schools, as well as providing funding for more faculty overall.

There are also implications for policy at other school districts throughout the country. School districts that already have an ECHS program may use the findings of this, along with other studies, to consider adding the AVID curriculum into the existing ECHS program to provide additional supports to the student population. Additionally, school districts that do not currently have an ECHS program in their districts may consider adding the program, along with the AVID curriculum, to strengthen district supports for underrepresented students. Adding either of these programs will require a change in policy regarding the budget and allocation of funds, partnerships with local community or technical colleges, transportation for students, and the addition of more faculty to accommodate the changes. Developing and implementing an ECHS program is a significant undertaking and will require visits to other ECHS and AVID programs, as well as substantial planning and follow-through for all involved.

Implications for Practice

The participants hold a strong belief in the success of the ECHS and AVID programs, as well as the strategies utilized throughout the school to motivate students and promote postsecondary education. It is clear that the strategies used by the faculty at ECHS work with the underrepresented students they serve, and may also prove to be useful in other ECHS programs.

Participants of this study were passionate about how important relationships are to the success of the students, as well as the school overall. Educators who work in an ECHS program, an AVID program, or any school that serves underrepresented students may find it helpful to utilize some of the relationship building strategies that the faculty at ECHS uses to foster positive relationships with the students and their families. Educators may also consider how to create a schoolwide culture that promotes postsecondary education and career preparedness to all students and provides the encouragement needed to set and achieve the goals they hope to accomplish.

A current ECHS program or a traditional high school that does not have an AVID program can still utilize some of the strategies that are promoted through the AVID curriculum, as they can provide benefit for all students. These activities include realistic goal setting, self-reflection, inquiry strategies, questioning, and even structured peer interactions in the classroom. Helping students to reflect on themselves and their learning can aid in creating a dialogue for how to improve by creating opportunities for students to “dig deeper” through inquiry and questioning techniques can help them achieve higher level thinking. Regardless of the subject, teachers can teach realistic goal setting to their students to help them academically, but also to help them plan for their future. Many students look to the adults in the school to provide advice and guidance about more than just academic content and, by talking with students about the goal they have for the future, teachers can help direct students on how to reach those goals and achieve what they set out to achieve.

Schools that already have an AVID program in place may not be able to establish an ECHS program within the school, but faculty and staff can work to encourage underrepresented students to take dual enrollment courses to earn some college credits while in high school.

Students may not leave high school with an Associate's degree like those at an ECHS school, but they will be challenged to reach higher, experience college-level coursework, and learn how to manage a challenging courseload to better prepare them for postsecondary education. While students that participate in the AVID program are exposed to college and career readiness activities, not all students in the school receive the same information and exposure that the AVID students do. For this reason, faculty and staff at the school can work to create a schoolwide culture that actively promotes postsecondary education, career research, and college readiness so that all students are exposed to the same expectations and information and taught the importance of postsecondary education, whether it means four-year college or a trade.

Theoretical Implications

This study utilized Deci and Ryan's (1980) self-determination theory as a framework to examine the faculty's roles in motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. The premise of Ryan and Deci's (2020) self-determination theory asserts that students are motivated when three main needs are met. These needs include the need for relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1980). One significant finding that emerged in this study was the theme of relationships, which directly correlates with Deci and Ryan's theory that students, especially those who are considered to be underrepresented, require positive relationships with other students and their teachers to be motivated to achieve. Participants of the study felt strongly about how crucial positive relationships are for the overall motivation of the underrepresented students they teach. For example, they believe that underrepresented students who feel a genuine connection to their teachers are more likely to be motivated to achieve at higher rates than students who do not feel that they have meaningful connections with any adults in the school.

Further analysis of the data showed how teachers utilize a variety of strategies in the classroom to help students demonstrate the mastery of specific concepts. Faculty provide multiple opportunities for mastery through classroom discussions, projects, regular assessments, and group activities. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), students are more likely to be motivated to achieve when they believe that they are competent in the subject matter. By teaching concepts to students in a variety of ways and providing multiple means for them to demonstrate their competence in the subject matter, teachers are facilitating students' need for competence and helping them to feel success, even when they struggle. Many underrepresented students require additional support and encouragement to persevere, especially when they struggle with specific concepts or subjects (Atherton, 2014). When students are able to feel success, demonstrate competence, and feel confident about what they are learning, they are more likely to be motivated to persist (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

By forming meaningful relationships with their students early in the semester, teachers are able to determine each students' learning styles and strengths, which allows them to promote competence and autonomy in the classroom. Deci and Ryan's (1980) theory of self-determination supports the notion that, by allowing students to make choices about their learning process, they are more likely to be motivated to achieve and master what they are supposed to be learning. The teachers provide students with a variety of ways they can demonstrate mastery and complete specific tasks or assignments to allow students to choose the way they feel most comfortable learning and being assessed. For example, students may be assigned to demonstrate mastery of a specific concept, but are allowed to choose their own topic or method within an established list of boundaries. Allowing the students the independence to choose their own topic or how they want to present their topic (verbally, digitally, artistically, etc.) provides them with

the opportunity to do something that interests them, in a way that interests them, and they are more likely to learn and accomplish more (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Underrepresented students at ECHS are likely to be motivated to achieve and pursue postsecondary education if the faculty that works with them fosters positive relationships with the students, as well as among the students. The findings revealed that the role of the faculty in the motivation and guidance of the students is crucial and their experiences with educating underrepresented students have an impact on the motivation of their students to not only achieve but also to pursue education beyond high school. Part of self-determination theory is based on the faculty's ability to help meet the students' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. This case study supports the literature on strategies faculty can use to motivate underrepresented students and extends the work of Deci and Ryan's (1980) theory of motivation.

Empirical Implications

This research provides information that can be useful to educators, administrators, and key stakeholders who work with underrepresented students, especially in an ECHS, AVID, or combined ECHS and AVID setting. Empirically, this research adds depth to the continuously growing amount of research on student motivation. This study reveals the crucial role faculty has in motivating underrepresented students since they are the individuals responsible for educating the students through a variety of strategies, providing guidance to students, developing positive relationships with students and their families, and creating a schoolwide culture of achievement and postsecondary opportunity. According to Boyko, et al. (2016), underrepresented students who receive additional supports in school are more likely to be motivated to achieve. These students are also more likely to pursue postsecondary education when they are provided with support and encouragement from trusted adults within the school (Cunninghame, et al., 2020).

This research helps to show how, through the use of effective research-based programs like the ECHS and AVID models, faculty can provide support and opportunities to underrepresented students that they may not have had otherwise. Previous research has shown that the AVID program is an effective curriculum for use with underrepresented students (Kirk & Watt, 2018). Through the use of evidence-based AVID strategies, the participants discussed how they teach students the skills of organization, note-taking, time management, and other college preparatory activities. These strategies have proven to be helpful for underrepresented students, especially those that are first-generation college students (Morley, et al., 2021). The ECHS model has also been shown to be an effective program for aiding underrepresented students in college readiness, as well as providing them with exposure and opportunities that they may not have had otherwise (Song, et al., 2021). Based on participant input, it can be inferred that the combination of these two programs models provides significant benefits to the underrepresented students that ECHS serves. The teachers that participated in this study disclosed the ways in which they have found success in working with underrepresented students and how they contribute to fostering a schoolwide culture of high expectations and postsecondary education.

Previous research has emphasized the importance of building and maintaining positive relationships with underrepresented students, which can aid in their academic success (Scales, et al., 2020). The findings of this study suggest that teachers must work to get to know each of their students in order to better help them achieve inside and outside the classroom. While previous empirical research studies have shown how teachers utilize the ECHS and AVID models to motivate students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education, there is little research that examined how both programs can be combined to further motivate students. Teachers are the adults that interact with students on a consistent basis and play a significant role in what and how

students learn (Domen, et al., 2020). When examining the data, it was clear that participants felt strongly about the role that they have in providing encouragement, support, and reinforcement to the underrepresented students they serve through the establishment of positive relationships. All agreed that when students believe that their teachers have a genuine and vested interest in them and their success, they are more likely to be motivated to accomplish more. Additionally, participants agreed that it is imperative that schools create and foster a schoolwide culture of high expectations, achievement, and postsecondary education to expose students to opportunities and motivate them to set and reach their goals. The findings from this research add to the literature on student motivation and help to clarify the role teachers have in motivating students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

Limitations

One limitation of this study included my own familiarity with the school and participants in the study, as I have worked at the study site for more than seven years. While I am not a teacher at the school, I had to be careful to eliminate my own personal biases throughout the progression of the data collection process so that I did not insert my own beliefs or preconceived notions into the process. Due to the professional relationship I have with each of the participants, I provided opportunities for the participants to check for accuracy of their interview answers to guarantee any possible bias did not occur. I also assured participants that their responses would remain confidential, as I did not want a participant to question whether any of the answers shared with me would be discussed with the administrators at the school. I also had to be mindful of how I described what I saw and heard throughout the classroom observation process so that I did not insert my own interpretations or biases while taking descriptive notes. Since I am familiar with each participant on a professional level, I had to be careful not to enter into the classroom

observations with any preconceived notions about the participant's instructional and relational skills.

The second limitation is that the research focused on only one ECHS and AVID combined school. The sample size of participants is small and, while satisfactory for the purposes of this study, is not enough to allow the results to be generalized to a larger population of educators. Additionally, because there are so few ECHS and AVID combined schools and so little research that focuses on combining the two models, there is little to compare the findings of this study to, so further research is needed.

Delimitations

Delimitations helped to refine and limit the criteria of the study to keep the sample size small for the purposes of a case study. The case study model was selected for this research because of the way in which the school utilizes both the ECHS and AVID models to serve underrepresented students, which is quite rare. Most schools offer either an ECHS or AVID model for students, but not both. To provide a more in-depth description of the role the faculty has in motivating students at the school, the participants were required to have taught at the school for a minimum of five years. This requirement allowed for me to hear from and observe faculty that have utilized the ECHS and AVID strategies long enough to be familiar with what is most successful with underrepresented students in their classrooms. Faculty members who have taught at the school for less than five years are likely to still be in the process of familiarizing themselves with specific strategies and determining how to best incorporate those strategies into their classrooms.

Recommendations for Future Research

The need to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education remains an issue that educators and researchers continue to examine. While there is an extensive amount of research that centers on these issues, there are gaps in the literature that require further research to identify effective strategies that educators can utilize to motivate underrepresented students. The findings of this study may shed light on the roles of faculty and how important they are to the motivation of underrepresented students. The information from this study can be used to aid educators who have a significant population of underrepresented students to add the AVID program to their schools, the ECHS program to their district, or provide both programs in a similar model as the site from this study.

The results of this study may provide further insight into the significance of the role that teachers have in motivating underrepresented students and, in turn, may help district level and school board personnel with information on how the ECHS and AVID models contribute to their overall success. It would be beneficial to determine how many ECHS schools in the country also utilize the AVID curriculum and study how the faculty at those schools motivate their student populations to achieve. Additionally, it would be helpful to establish how those schools provide support to their students with regards to the promotion of postsecondary education options and enrollment.

The AVID program is run by the AVID national organization, which conducts their own research about each AVID site, their student populations, college application and enrollment statistics, and overall student success. Schools that are solely ECHS programs do not have a national organization that oversees the implementation and maintenance of the program and there is no data collected each year about the students. It would be useful for future research to

study schools that have the ECHS program model to gain insight into the same information that the AVID organization requires of all AVID schools to compare how those programs support the students' achievement and enrollment into postsecondary education programs.

The formation and preservation of positive relationships among teachers and students was emphasized by participants as one of the main ways that they motivate students to achieve. Participants attended several national conferences at which they were challenged to confront their own biases and backgrounds and learn about the challenges that underrepresented students and their families deal with inside and outside of school. It would be interesting to learn how other educators who have not participated in such in-depth self-discovery and training confront their own backgrounds and learn about the issues their students may face. Additionally, future research may also focus on data obtained from teachers of ECHS and AVID programs to determine which strategies they have found to be most effective for establishing and maintaining those relationships. This information may be useful for educators in any setting.

Future research could also include data collected from underrepresented students who attend the ECHS and AVID combined school featured in this study. While this research centered on the perspectives of faculty, it would be noteworthy to collect data that places focus on the students' perspectives on how the ECHS and AVID models work to motivate them to achieve and pursue postsecondary education. Data such as grades, attendance, and test scores can be collected, but by interviewing students who have participated in the programs for a number of years, personal experiences and perspectives can be analyzed for use with the faculty at the school. The data could also be combined with data from this study to assist educators at other ECHS and AVID schools, as well as all educators who work with underrepresented students.

This would help provide all stakeholders with a comprehensive overview and the ability to compare results from previous research more completely.

Conclusion

This study enhanced the research on motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education by exploring faculty perspectives on their roles within an ECHS and AVID combined school. The research for this study was conducted using in-person interviews, classroom observations, and the analysis of documents provided by participants. The participants included eleven teachers who have worked at the school for more than five years and had experience working with underrepresented students. Using Deci and Ryan's (1980) theory of self-determination, I examined faculty perspectives on the role that they have in motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education through the use of the AVID and ECHS program models. The findings suggested that teachers at the school have a crucial role in motivating students. By fostering relationships with students and parents, maintaining a student-centered focus, and utilizing specific research-based strategies, teachers create a positive college-going culture that motivates students to achieve and pursue educational opportunities beyond high school. Additionally, relationships were identified as the key factor that participants believe must be present to motivate underrepresented students.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

August 22, 2022

Lynnette Adams
Denise Nixon

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1227 Motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education: A case study

Dear Lynnette Adams, Denise Nixon,

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 46:104(d):

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(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) 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(s) 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

Site Approval



June 15, 2022

Dear Lynnette Adams,

Your request to conduct research titled *Motivating underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education: A case study* approved subject to the following conditions:

1. You must comply with the conditions set forth in the District policy, "Research Involving Students," and § 1232h, "Protection of pupil rights," of the U.S. Code;
2. You are not to release, present, or publish any personally identifiable information concerning students, their parents, or District staff members;
3. You are not to identify Horry County Schools or any school in our District in any publication, presentation, or release of information associated with your research without my written permission;
4. The records and raw data associated with your study are to be destroyed when they are no longer needed for the purposes set forth in your request; and
5. You are to provide a copy of your completed research report to me at the District Office.

I hope your research goes well. If you have any questions or are in need of further assistance, please contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Heather C. Sheehan
Director of Assessment
Horry County Schools

Appendix C

Consent

Title of the Project: Motivating Underrepresented Students to Achieve and Pursue Postsecondary Education: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Lynnette Adams, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, must have a bachelor's degree, must be a faculty member at an established Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Early College High School (ECHS) combined high school in South Carolina, and must have at least five years of experience as a faculty member at HCS Early College High School and have utilized AVID strategies with underrepresented students. 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.

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

The purpose of the study is to understand the roles and practices of faculty at an AVID and ECHS combined school and how the faculty work to motivate underrepresented students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in a 30-45 minute, in-person, interview. This interview will be audio-recorded.
2. Be observed twice while you are teaching while using specific strategies in the classroom for approximately 30-45 minutes. Observations will not be audio recorded.
3. Share any instructional documents related to strategies used to motivate underrepresented students. This will take approximately 10 minutes. Participants will be asked to provide documents at the time of the interview.

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 a better understanding of how the roles of faculty teaching in an ECHS and AVID-combined model impact the larger motivation theory.

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. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- 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 in a locked filing drawer. 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.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research and presentation process. Participants will not be identifiable to anyone other than the researcher.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, HCS Early College High School, or Horry County Public Schools. 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 Lynnette Adams. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Denise Nixon, 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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

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 study team 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 audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to me, including your educational background, how long you have been employed at an Early College High School (ECHS), and roles you have held at the school.
2. Please describe in detail the mission of both the ECHS and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) programs.
3. Describe successful strategies you use inside and outside the classroom when working with underrepresented students.
4. What professional development opportunities have you participated in that are directly related to serving the student population at ECHS?
5. How did the professional development activities affect the way that you teach underrepresented students?
6. What challenges have you faced when working with first-generation students that are considered to be in the “academic middle” and how have you addressed these challenges?
7. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student autonomy.
8. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student relatedness.
9. Describe successful strategies you use when working with underrepresented students that are directly related to promoting student competence.

10. What strategies do you (or the school) use to motivate students to achieve and pursue postsecondary education?
11. Describe any additional information about the way the school functions and the role the faculty play in motivating students that would be helpful for me to know.

Appendix E

Observational Data Collection Form

1. Layout of the classroom
2. Observations of students in the classroom (interactions, differences, organization)
3. Observations of the teacher (interactions with students, relatedness)
4. Detailed description of classroom atmosphere
5. Strategies used by teacher to facilitate the lesson and motivate students
6. Struggles of the students
7. Struggles of the teacher
8. Successes of the students and teacher