

EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL: HISPANIC STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND
EXPERIENCES FROM A TEXAS CAMPUS

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Early college high school (ECHS) is a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to earn college credits while in high school. ECHS was developed with the intention of attracting students to pursue a 4-year college degree, especially students who might not attend college without intervention. The program targets students from low-income families, students who have low academic achievement, and students from minority groups including Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students about their experiences in an ECHS, and to better understand how their ECHS experiences affected motivation to engage in academics. The expectancy theory and college-going culture provided the theoretical framework for this case study. Semi-structured interviews captured the experiences of the participants. The study focused on 10 Hispanic students, 5 seniors and 5 juniors, enrolled at an ECHS located on a community college campus in Texas.

The study found that students with higher motivation to work at high school and college courses had several reasons for choosing to attend ECHS. The reasons included a chance to earn a high school diploma and associate's degree simultaneously, free college tuition, and an accelerated program to get through college. The students also identified rewarding outcomes for completing college. Those outcomes included satisfying career, personal satisfaction, ability to provide for their

family and making their family proud as the first high school graduate and college attendee. One student had a lower motivation to work at high school and college work. He chose to attend ECHS to seek more freedom than a traditional high school. He was not certain about graduating from high school and doubtful about college graduation.

This study contributes to the ECHS literature by providing details on students' experiences at an ECHS. Using the qualitative method of an interview allowed the researcher to discover the richer picture of students' experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Early college high school (ECHS) is a dual enrollment program that allows high school students to earn college credits while in high school (Roberts, 2007). ECHS is one of many high school reform programs aimed at reducing high school attrition and increasing college enrollment and graduation. ECHS was developed with the intention of attracting students to pursue a 4-year college degree, with the intended beneficiaries to be students who might not attend college without intervention, including students from low-income families, students who have low academic achievement, and students from minority groups including Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans (Barnett & Bragg, 2006; Greene & Forster, 2003). ECHS is a relatively new program, and little research on how students experience and respond to these schools has been published. This study examines the experiences and perspectives of Hispanic/Latino juniors and seniors enrolled in an ECHS program based in a Texas community college.

Chapter 1 contains a brief background of the ECHS program and includes a discussion of the impact attending college has on individuals. It also includes the purpose and significance of the study, an explanation of the importance of going to college, the theoretical perspectives, and a brief description of the methodology for the proposed study. The assumption, limitations, and delimitations are also discussed.

Background of the Problem

Attending college has considerable effect on individuals' lives. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that individuals who have college degrees have a

considerable net occupational advantage over individuals who only have high school degrees, vocational degrees, or other license-certificate degrees. The same research also reported that as the amount of post-secondary education increases, the likelihood of unemployment significantly decreases. Individuals who have post-secondary education earn more compared to their counterparts who do not have post-secondary education. These authors also report that adding post-secondary education training to a resume, even without getting a degree, significantly increases an individual's earnings. In 2007, the average annual income of men with a bachelor's degree was \$70,898 compared to \$39,375 for men who had some college credit without a degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). That is a difference of over 55% earnings potential. Women who have a bachelor's degree have a 61.5% earning advantage over women with some college credit but no bachelor's degree (U. S. Census Bureau, 2007). The mean annual income in 2007 for women with a bachelor's degree was \$43,127 compared to \$26,527 for those with some college but no degree.

The absence of a high school diploma lowers annual salary potential even more. The 2007 U.S. Census Bureau report showed that among adults, 25 - 64 years old, the average earnings of high school drop outs was \$21,484, significantly lower than for those with a high school diploma (\$31,286), some college (\$33,009), an associate's degree (\$39,746), and college graduates (\$57,181).

In terms of job satisfaction, individuals with post-secondary education have higher job satisfaction ratings (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). "Job prestige and earnings, job autonomy, and nonroutine work" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 535) are the factors contributing to higher job satisfaction of individuals who have post-

secondary education compared to individuals who do not have one. However, this assertion is not true when the person who has post-secondary education holds a job that does not require a college degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Individuals clearly benefit from having a post-secondary education and utilizing it in their job.

Barriers to High School Graduation and College Enrollment

While the advantages of graduating from high school and continuing to college are well known, many high school students do not graduate from high school or enroll in post secondary education. African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are less likely to attend college than White or Asian students. The National Center for Education Statistics published a report about high school drop outs and completion rates that included the most current data from the class of 2007 (National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, 2010). There were 27.3 million seniors in the class of 2007, and 24.5 million were classified as completers. The percentages of completers by ethnicity were 65.3% White, 13.3% African American, and 14.7% Hispanic. The U. S. Department of Education (2011) report on college enrollment states that in fall 2007 there were 18.3 million students enrolled in degree-granting institutions.

Table 1 shows the total population of 18 to 24 year olds in 2007 and the number enrolled in college by ethnicity. The data illustrates that minorities were underrepresented in the college in 2007 with 33.1% of African American and 26.9% of Hispanics enrolled in college. In 2007, 45.2% of white students were enrolled in college (Ryu, 2010).

Table 1

2007 College Participation Rates for 18 – 24 Year Olds

Ethnicity	Total Population 18-24 Year Olds	Number Enrolled in College	Percent Enrolled in College
All	44,725,803	18,248,128	40.8%
White	23,949,384	10,825,122	45.2%
AA	6,642,831	2,198,777	33.1%
Hispanic	7,108,639	1,912,224	26.9%

Learning styles and individual interests also affect success in the typical pathway to higher education (Barnett & Bragg, 2006). To increase the chances for success of diverse students, Barnett and Bragg (2006) argue that high school students need to be exposed to different pathways in pursuing post-secondary education. Some students respond well to the concrete learning and job-related rewards associated with career and technical education; whereas others are attracted to small, personalized educational opportunities, such as the middle and early college high schools. Students who are bored in high school may become engaged in their education through opportunities to participate in dual enrollment or by attending school on a college campus; others may flourish when they have opportunities to engage in experiential learning that yields college credit, such as career-related internships and externships (Barnett & Bragg, 2006).. Furthermore, distance learning can broaden the range of courses available to students, especially those living in remote rural areas, and can become an academic pathway in and of itself (Barnett & Bragg, 2006).

Nationally, many high school initiatives to bridge the gap between high school completion and college enrollment have been developed (Martinez & Kloptt, 2005). Some of these programs include dual enrollment, middle college high school, tech prep and 2+2 articulation, Project Grad, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). ECHS is one approach used in many states, including Texas, and is an educational program that combines the curriculum of high school and college with the intention of attracting underserved students to attend college (Roberts, 2007). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation® (www.gatesfoundation.org), Ford Foundation® (www.fordfoundation.org), Kellogg Foundation™ (www.wkkf.org), and Carnegie Corporation® (www.carnegiecorporation.org) are some of the organizations that provide funding for ECHS programs (Born, 2006). According to Barnett and Bragg (2006), ECHS evolved from the middle college high school model from the 1970s. Middle college high school also is a dual enrollment program whose main goal is to decrease high school attrition and prepare students for college education by exposing them to advanced learning comparable to college education (Martinez & Kloptt, 2005).

The ECHS initiative began in 2002, when the Ford Foundation funded a new college program design (Lieberman, 2004). ECHS adopted most of the middle college features; the significant differences between the two programs were based on their goals. The ECHS model is more concerned with linking secondary education with post-secondary education and accelerating the transition from high school to college (Lieberman, 2004). The goal of middle college was to successfully educate underprivileged students and those at risk of dropping out through a five-year sequence

of courses beginning in Grade 10 and ending at Grade 14. Students could earn a high school diploma at the end of Grade 12 and an associate's degree at the end of Grade 14 (Wechsler, 2001).

In ECHS programs, students can earn college credits while still in high school. While enrolled in ECHS, students are exposed to college-level classes comparable to the coursework of a typical college program. After students graduate, the college credits that they earned from ECHS may transfer to the college of their choice if they decide to seek a four-year degree.

In a typical ECHS program, entering high school students, typically 9th graders, choose a career path based on a set of career themes (Brewer & Stern, 2005). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have nine career themes: allied health and medicine; biotechnology; engineering; international business; liberal arts; linguistics; mathematics, science and technology; Native American culture; and teacher preparation (Brewer & Stern, 2005, p. 12). By 10th grade, the students are expected to take college-level course work based on their chosen theme; Courses include basic academics, pathway specific courses and also 'college life' and career planning (Brewer & Stern, p. 12). ECHS programs target three groups: students from low-income families, students who have low academic achievement, and students from underrepresented groups, especially Hispanics, African Americans, and Native Americans. The ECHS benefits students from low income families who do not have the financial resources to attend college by reducing the amount of time it will take a student to finish the college degree, and, as a result, reducing the cost of college tuition (Barnett & Bragg, 2006). ECHS is also designed to benefit students with low academic achievement by providing them

“more personal attention and better addressing their needs than traditional high schools” (Roberts, 2007, p. 20).

Hispanic, African American, and Native American, public school, students also benefit from ECHS programs. According to Greene and Forster (2003), students from these three groups were less college ready in terms of academic qualifications than white and Asian-American students. The authors also reported that the low college readiness rate in these groups led to their under-representation in college application and enrollment. Greene and Forster (2003) argued that the reason for the college under-representation of these groups is the lack of college skills acquired during high school not financial limitations or ineffective affirmative action policies. They concluded that the relatively lower enrollment percentage of African Americans and Hispanics in colleges reflected the college readiness rate for both demographic populations.

Theoretical Perspective

Two perspectives guided the design of the study. Motivation theory, particularly expectancy theory, provided the framework for explaining the decisions of individual ECHS students. The second perspective, college-going culture—describes aspects of the ECHS context. These perspectives are described below.

Expectancy Theory

There are many approaches to understanding motivation—the force that energizes effort in a particular direction and determines how hard and how sustained the effort is. One approach is expectancy theory, developed by Vroom (1964) to explain

an individual's decisions in the work environment. Vroom's theory was later elaborated by others and applied to educational settings. Expectancy theory has become a widely accepted theory for explaining how people make choices among alternatives. It is a process theory that assumes people are rational actors who make choices for how to spend their time and energy.

Expectancy theory proposes that when deciding among different courses of action, people will choose the option with the strongest motivational force. That force is determined by three perceptions: expectancy—the belief that effort will lead to the desired performance; instrumentality—the belief that the performance will lead to a reward; and, valence—the value of that reward to the individual. A person's belief or expectancy that effort will lead to the desired performance is affected by things such as the individual's past experiences, self-confidence, the perceived difficulty of the task, and perceived clarity of the task. The individual's effort is determined by the belief that effort will lead to a performance outcome that, once achieved, will lead to a valued reward. The stronger the individual belief that effort leads to successful performance, the stronger is the individual perception of the link between performance and reward; and the more desirable the reward is to the individual, the greater is the individual's effort.

Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele (1998) elaborated on this theory and applied it to education. They examined how family and school shape individual beliefs and argued that students will engage in learning activities at school if they are confident of success and place a high value on doing well in school. Ethnic, racial, gender stereotyping and school practices that communicate low expectations can affect their self-confidence.

The value of doing well in school is affected by the student's belief that being a good student is appropriate for him or her. Finally, students consciously or subconsciously weigh the perceived intrinsic and extrinsic benefits associated with success in school against perceived costs, such as fear of failure, fear of success, or opportunity costs when deciding how fully to engage in school.

Eccles (2006) used the "expectancy-value theories of achievement motivation and task engagement" to explain racial/ethnic differences in school achievement. She argued that part of the disparity among groups "lies in the impact of discriminatory experiences at school both on students' confidence in their own ability to master the school material (the expectancy component of expectancy-value models) and on the value they place in being fully engaged in the learning tasks provided in their schools" (p. 200). In summary, this approach focuses on the individual student as a decision maker and provides a framework for considering how school and other external conditions may affect their decision-making.

Other research shows the importance of the learning environment in motivating students. As cited by Ormrod (2008), Graham and Weiner claim that motivation is "partly a function of the learning environment –a phenomenon known as situated motivation" (p. 452). In the classroom, "the kinds of instructional materials that a teacher uses (whether they are interesting, challenging, relevant to students' needs, and so on), the extent to which students find themselves having to compete with one another, and the ways in which students are evaluated are all likely to play a role" (Ormrod, 2008, p. 452). This further maintains the assumption that the design and curriculum are the key factors in determining the success of the program.

College-going Culture

Recent efforts to improve the college-going rates of underserved students have focused on school culture. Advocates argue that creating a “college-going culture” in pre-K – 12 schools will increase the probability that underrepresented students will graduate from high school and enter college. A college-going culture builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students, not just the best students, and supports them in reaching that goal (College Board, 2006). College Board (2006) believes that a college-going culture helps all students set and achieve high goals. It also generates appreciation of academics, desire to succeed, and a drive to attend college and become a lifelong learner.

A college-going culture is especially important for those students who consider the idea that college is the next step after high school to be unrealistic. Many of them are low-achievers, from middle-to low-income families, underrepresented minorities, and families where no one has attended college before. Some find that graduating from high school is a challenge (College Board, 2006). A campus with a college-going culture understands the necessity of college and focuses on building the expectation that their students will attend college.

The College Board argued that for a high school campus to create a college-going culture they must have measureable goals and be flexible to change those goals based on measureable results. With the current state of accountability at the state and national level, some of the common categories for the goals to create a college-going culture could be state test scores, national test scores, state standards, curriculum decisions, graduation requirements, school climate, attendance, parent communication,

personalization, and professional development (College Board, 2006). Each school would determine their goals based on its community and students. Campuses can set goals for each of those categories with the emphasis on college as being the next step.

The College Board (2006) suggested six small-scale ideas to make a campus college friendly. They include appearance of the school grounds, appearance and attitude of the staff, course handbook, counseling office, curricular ideas in math and language arts. Large-scale programs to make a campus college friendly include implementing an advanced placement program, collegeEd packaged curricular resource, and AVID in Grades 5 – 12. Another large-scale program recommended by College Board (2006) is Recognizing the College Dream, an outreach program for schools through a curriculum guide that increases college access for underrepresented and low-income students. The federal government runs two large-scale outreach programs to motivate and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They are Upward Bound and Talent Search (College Board, 2006). Upward Bound serves students from low-income families in which neither parent went to college. Talent Search assists disadvantaged students with academic, career, and financial aid counseling; as well as, assisting high school dropouts to reenter the system (College Board, 2006). The College Board (2006) suggests implementing the large-scale initiatives through a campus advisory. Students who are in advisories have an opportunity to a higher level of academic success and personal growth when at least one caring adult closely knows them. This increases their chances of applying to college (College Board, 2006).

Campuses can offer outreach programs for students and parents through college

fairs and college majors night. College fairs allow parents and students the opportunity to meet college representatives from different institutions at their own high school.

College majors night is another opportunity to emphasize the expectation that college is for everyone by reviewing different areas of study. It includes a general presentation to discuss the basics of selecting a college major. In addition, the presentation covers students' academic strengths, required courses in college, the kinds of jobs for this major, employment forecast, and variety of career paths,

A high school with a college-going culture exhibits five characteristics (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). They are academic momentum, understanding how students develop college plans, mission statement, comprehensive services that help students apply for college, and college support.

The first characteristic, academic momentum includes offering challenging academic courses taught by qualified teachers, dual enrollment or advanced placement (AP) classes, expectations that students read at or above grade level, and existence of relationships with local colleges. The second characteristic, understanding how students develop college plans, is determined by how the campus supports college aspirations throughout the student's career, The third characteristic, a clear mission statement, should include college expectations and an action plan. The fourth characteristic, comprehensive services to help students apply for college and financial aid, is determined by the level of support and assistance that the campus has in place assist with this process. The fifth characteristic, coordinated and systemic college support includes engaging all stakeholders in the school with helping students achieve college goals (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). As described earlier in this chapter, the ECHS model is

designed to create a college-going culture that supports students from underserved populations.

Researchers at UCLA wrote a resource guide to create and improve college-going cultures in K-12 schools. The researchers found that college-going cultures exist in schools where all students prepare for a variety of post-secondary options (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006). College-going cultures exist in schools where there is a college preparatory curriculum, staff is committed to students' college goals, college is a reality, and communication supports college expectations. Dr. Patricia McDonough, an expert in college access and professor of education at UCLA's Graduate School of Education identified nine critical building blocks of an effective college going culture. The critical principles include college talk, clear expectations, information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family involvement, college partnerships, and articulation (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006). Definitions and indicators for each critical principle are provided in Table 2.

A student's college readiness has implications for college enrollment and completion. MacDonald and Door (2006) identified five factors that contribute to college readiness. They are rigorous high school courses; high teacher expectations; high quality college counseling; admissions and financial aid information; and parental involvement in the college process. A campus that creates a college-going culture based on the nine principles will have a positive impact on a student's college readiness.

Table 2

Nine Critical Attributes for Creating a College Going Culture

Critical Principle	Definition	Indicators
College Talk	Clear, ongoing communication about college so that all students develop a college-going identity.	Newsletters, newspapers, posters, College Club for middle school students, essay contest based on college application questions.
Clear Expectations	Explicit goals of college preparation must be defined and communicated clearly, consistently, and in a variety of ways by families and all school personnel.	School mission statement, four-year plans for all students, frequent communication with students about their college options, ongoing opportunities to discuss college preparation and define goals.
Information and Resources	Students must have access to up-to-date, comprehensive college information and schools must build college knowledge infrastructure.	College-related periodicals, PSAT/SAT/ACT materials, financial aid materials, college catalogs, workshops on test prep and financial planning.
Comprehensive Counseling Model	All counselors are college counselors and all student interactions with counselors are college advising opportunities.	All high school counselors attend state college conferences, counselors at all grade levels have ongoing collaboration, counselors distribute college information to all students, faculty, and staff.
Testing and Curriculum	Students must be informed about necessary tests, must be given the opportunity to prepare for these tests, and testing fees must be taken into account	PSAT given on school day to all 10th graders, with fees waived (Contact College Board), master schedules changed to make more college prep classes available, students learn organizational skills.
Faculty Involvement	Faculty must be active, informed partners with counselors, students, and families and professional development opportunities must be available.	Classroom decorations and "college corners," College Talk in class time, mathematics teachers work with PSAT-takers, teachers understand their roles in college prep, teachers visit counseling office.
Family Involvement	Family members must have opportunities to gain college knowledge and understand their role.	College Fairs for students and their families, evening/weekend parent workshops to learn about college preparation, financial planning, parents supported in their belief that their children are "college material."
College Partnerships	There should be active links between K-12 schools and local colleges and universities that can lead to field trips, college fairs, and academic enrichment programs.	Students at all grade levels have visited local college campuses, college dress days, door decoration contests, guest speakers, tutoring programs, pen pal program with college students.
Articulation	Students should have a seamless experience from Kindergarten through HS graduation, with ongoing communication among all schools in a feeder group, and work at one school site should connect with activities at other levels.	Students hear a consistent message at all grade levels, middle schools connect with students as young as fifth grade, as early as kindergarten students should see themselves as college material, high school and middle school counselors are pooling resources and making connections.

Los Angeles Unified School District's District 7, Locke High School, University of California Los Angeles' (UCLA) Center X and SRM Evaluation Group coordinated a project to capture students' and teachers' beliefs and expectations for college. The project was entitled the College Going Culture Survey project and was conducted from 2002-2006 at Locke High School (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). The California Department of Education reports that two-thirds of California graduates do not complete course requirements to be eligible to attend college (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). African American and Hispanic students are two of the groups with the lowest percentages of students completing these requirements (25% and 21% respectively) (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). Researchers selected Locke High School for this study because it is composed of 36.8% African American and 62.9% Hispanic students. Researchers conducted the survey in December 2002, June 2004, June 2005, and June 2006. In December 2006, researchers wrote a final summary report. Researchers administered the survey with the intention of understanding how students and staff view themselves, their school, and their community at large (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006).

The research team organized the data for the final report around Dr. McDonough's (2006) nine principles of college-going culture (see Table 2). They specifically used six of the nine principles to organize their data: college talk, clear expectations, school resources and environment, testing and curriculum, faculty and administration involvement, and family involvement.

The researchers found that when it comes to college talk, students look to their counselors first, then teachers and parents. However, over one-third of the students did not talk to their counselors at all (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). Researchers recommended

that teachers and parents must be informed about college information because they are not getting that information from the counselors. With respect to clear expectations, the researchers found that most students have high expectations for themselves and teachers and staffs have much lower expectations for students (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). The researchers found that 35 – 40% of students did not believe they had adequate resources or access to the resources. In addition, the teaching staff indicated they are not satisfied with working conditions of the school and resources available (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). The researchers (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006) recommend resources must be available to create a college-going culture. The majority of the students (68%) believe that the testing and curriculum prepares them for college (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). The researchers believe that faculty involvement within high schools is key to the creation of a college-going culture because the faculty and staff are the main resources for students. The researchers found that the faculty and staff want the students to succeed. The researchers suggested that faculty and staff must look beyond high school graduation to help students reach their goal of attending college (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). Researchers found that the majority of the staff (75%) believes the high school does not do a good job of involving parents (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). They are unsatisfied with the encouragement that they believe parents are providing to their students (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006). Researchers suggested creating workshops about college preparation, financial aid, and having college fairs would involve parents in the college-going culture (Slocum & Gerardi, 2006).

In 2008, researchers from the University of North Texas conducted a study to explore the perceptions of the culture to support college-going culture in six urban high

schools (Harris, Tucker & Willis, 2008). Two of the high schools were early college high schools in their second year of operation and the other four were identified by the Texas Education Agency amongst the lowest 10% for college going in the state. Researchers referenced tools for assessment of school culture published by the College Board in 2006 and the studies completed at Locke High School by UCLA's Center X (Harris et al., 2008). The researchers developed case studies based on information gathered from the high school campuses through review of websites, direct observations during two to seven site visits, and interviews (Harris et al., 2008). The student survey included questions about likelihood to attend college, their college knowledge and expectations, college readiness, and preparation for college. Teacher survey questions focused on their perceptions of the college focus on campus, students' potential to earn a college degree and assess their college knowledge. The parent survey asked questions about their college expectations about their child going to college, their child's college readiness and whether or not they have thought about college for their child. The results of their findings were reported so that the ECHS students results were compared to the comprehensive high school students results. The ECHS students often surpassed the comprehensive high school students in perception of their levels of college knowledge and commitment (Harris et al., 2008). The ECHS faculty viewed their campus as more college focused than the comprehensive high school faculty, and they were more likely to view their students as college material. Most of the ECHS parents (82%) wanted their child to go to college compared to the comprehensive high school parents (52%) (Harris et al., 2008). The ECHS parents' perceived the college going culture of their campus higher than was perceived of the comprehensive high school parents (Harris et al.,

2008). The student, teacher and parent results from the ECHS are not surprising given the exclusive focus of ECHS on college participation (Harris et al., 2008).

Summary

The two perspectives, expectancy theory and college-going culture, help explain the decision-making and behavior of individual students within the context of ECHS. Early college high schools are designed intentionally to create a college-going culture that supports underserved students as they move through high school and make decisions about applying to and entering an institution of higher education.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine what perceptions and expectations Hispanic/Latino students are developing in an ECHS. The research focused on Hispanics because of their low rate of college completion and the rapid growth of their numbers in the U.S. According to Fry (2009), only 26% of Hispanics between the ages of 18 and 24 are enrolled in college, as compared to 41% of Whites and 32% of African Americans of the same age. Transition difficulties documented in the literature range from social and academic, to financial (Fischer, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996), and difficulties in the transition from high school to college could be the main factor in the attrition (Fischer, 2007).

ECHS is an educational reform program that specifically targets the challenges faced by Hispanic students as they consider the transition from high school to college (Shear, Song, House, Martinez, Means, & Smeardon, 2005). ECHS programs are

designed to support students as they transition to college with the familiar support of their high school surroundings. What is unknown is how ECHS affects student motivation. Though there is a base of outcomes data that focus on credits earned, enrollment and retention, to date there has been no examination of the perceptions and experiences of ECHS Hispanic students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students about their experiences in an ECHS to better understand how motivation is impacted by participation in ECHS. This research adds to the literature about the perceptions and experiences of Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS and provides insight into the role motivation plays in supporting ECHS students.

Significance of the Problem

Because ECHS initiatives are relatively new, there is only a limited research base focusing on ECHS program outcomes. This study contributes to the limited base of scholarly research focusing on ECHS by contributing insight into the role that motivation can play in supporting student success in such programs.

This study also contributes to educational practice, and the results provide information that could help high school institutions refine their ECHS programs in ways that could reduce attrition rates and increase college enrollment rate among Hispanic students. The results also may lead to the identification of important student concerns and experiences that could be beneficial in increasing the retention rates in institutions that use the ECHS educational program.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS programs in Texas. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What expectations do Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program have of succeeding in the program and enrolling in college?
2. How are these expectations being developed in the ECHS program?
 - a. How are expectations for academic success perceived by students?
 - b. How are expectations for social integration in college perceived by students?
 - c. What supports do students identify as available to ensure their success?
3. What barriers do Hispanic students feel they face in ECHS?
4. How do students characterize their motivation to pursue a college degree?
 - a. How does participation in ECHS support that motivation?
 - b. What factors negatively impact student motivation?

Nature of the Study

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods emphasize the experiences and reflections of the participants (Creswell, 2007). Through “interviews, observations, documents, and records” (Broussard, 2006, p. 213), the experience of the participants were captured. A qualitative methodology is appropriate because interviews were used to focus and capture the experiences of Hispanic students in an ECHS programs in Texas. Moustakas (1994) claims that:

Phenomenological research returns to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions. These descriptions then provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of the experience. First, the original data is comprised of ‘naïve’ descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue. Then, the researcher describes the structure of the

experience based on reflection and interpretation of the research participant's story. The aim is to determine what the experience means for the people who have had the experience. From there general meanings are derived. (p. 1)

Semi-structured interviews were used to capture the experiences of the participants. The study focused on Hispanic students enrolled at an ECHS located on a community college campus in Texas.

Assumptions

A series of assumptions underlie this study. First, it was assumed that participants would respond honestly to produce a reflection of their experiences and opinions. To increase the likelihood that the participants would provide honest answers, confidentiality was assured in the informed consent forms and reinforced at the beginning of each interview.

A second assumption was that study participants have the capacity to verbalize their ideas and their perceptions about ECHS. The interview questions were designed to capture the experiences of the participants as ECHS students. It was assumed that the prepared questions were adequate in capturing the experiences of the participants.

A final assumption was that I was able to collect and interpret the data accurately. Through accurate data management, the interpretation of data was expected to be more accurate and reliable.

Limitations

Because the study included only 10 students from a single school using a single ECHS model, the findings are limited. The nature of interview-based qualitative

research is not to generate conclusions that can be widely generalized but to draw insights within specific parameters set by the researcher, and this must be acknowledged as a limitation of this type of study. However, the richness of the data from the interview can provide greater clarity and depth to the issue and provide a basis for additional study that could support a better ability to generalize the results. An intentionally small number of participants was chosen for the interview process. A small sample was appropriate for a qualitative approach to make possible richer exploration of the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding ECHS programs (Cresswell, 2005).

The results of this study may also be limited due to the inherent disadvantages of relying exclusively on interviews for the collection of data. The limited amount of time allotted in the interview sessions may have restricted an exhaustive assessment of the issue, and capturing the complete experiences of the participants may not have occurred. Response bias may exist, as students may have been tempted to tell me what they think I wanted to hear. Students may also have lacked the insight to speak comprehensively about their perceptions and attitudes.

In addition, it must be noted that the participant pool itself might have been limited, as parents of ECHS students who are in the U.S. illegally may not have been willing to give permission for their student to participate in the research study. This may limit the diversity of the responses within this already narrow sample.

Finally, if my practices are left unchecked, a possibility exists that some of the findings might be influenced. In order to minimize the influence of bias, I consciously adopted a stance in which preconceptions and biases were set aside. During the

analysis of the interviews, the focus was on the responses of the participants enabling vigilance against bias entering into the results.

Delimitations

A number of delimitations were identified in the study. The participants included only Hispanic students enrolled as juniors or seniors in one school representing one ECHS model. Texas has one of the largest populations of Hispanic students in the country (American Community Survey, [ACS], 2006). The rationale for the selection of Hispanic students as the study's sample is that Hispanic students are among the primary beneficiaries of ECHS (Barnett & Bragg, 2006).

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

- Hispanic or Latino -Those people who classify themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories "Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, or Cuban." Origin can be viewed as the heritage, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States (U.S. Census, 2009). The term "Hispanic" is used in this study to be consistent with the term that is used in the Texas Education Agency.
- English language learner (ELL) - An active learner of the English language who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the United States to describe pre-K-12 students who are deemed not

yet fluent in English based on a prescribed assessment data (National Council of Teachers of English, [NCTE], 2008).

- English as a second language - Formerly used to designate ELL students; this term increasingly refers to a program of instruction designated to support the ELL. It is still used to refer to multilingual students in higher education (NCTE, 2008).

Summary

ECHS is an education reform program aimed at underserved minority students (Roberts, 2007). First generation Hispanic students who belong to the low socioeconomic status (SES) bracket could benefit from ECHS programs (Barnett & Bragg, 2006; Greene & Forster, 2003). Problems with transition to college is one of the factors influencing student attrition (Fischer, 2007). Problems in college transition and success could be alleviated by the design of ECHS programs, in which college-level classes are offered while in high school (Lieberman, 2004).

Chapter 1 contained an introduction to the problem statement and purpose statement to provide the direction, intent, and objectives of the research effort. A qualitative study was identified as an appropriate research methodology to address the research questions for the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of the current literature on ECHS and the challenges experienced by Hispanic students in the United States.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 presented the purpose of the study, which was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students in Texas about their experiences in an early college high school (ECHS). The background, significance, and theoretical framework that served as the guide in the analysis were discussed. A brief background on the methodology of the study was also provided.

Chapter 2 provides the review of available literature on ECHS programs and the educational experiences of Hispanic students in the United States (U. S.). The literature review is divided into three sections: research on the ECHS initiative, the transition from high school to college, and Hispanic students. The research on the ECHS initiative includes research on program evaluations and individual settings. The research on the transition from high school to college includes research on the decision to attend college, adjustment to the transition from high school to college, academic adjustment, social adjustment, and college retention and attrition. The Hispanic student research includes research on their participation in postsecondary education, their transition to college, and their involvement in ECHS's programs. Each section ends with a summary.

Identifying Sources

Information describing the ECHS initiative is readily available (AIR 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2009). Evaluation studies provide evidence of outcomes, such as graduation rate, college credits earned, and types of courses taken. However, there are few studies that address the experiences and perceptions of students while enrolled in the ECHS program. A literature review was conducted on areas that included ECHS, college

retention and attrition, and college adjustment. The keywords and terms associated with the topic included the ECHS initiative/program, benefits of ECHS, Hispanic students and ECHS, disadvantages of ECHS, and college retention/attrition.

The search for relevant research entailed the use of many sources including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed journals located with EBSCOhost® (www.ebsco.com) and ProQuest© (www.proquest.com) databases, books, peer-reviewed publications, newspapers, dissertations, and government reports. The most popular search engines Google® (www.google.com) and Yahoo!® (www.yahoo.com) were used to identify sources available online.

Early College High School Initiative

The early college high school initiative (ECHS) was created to provide underserved students the opportunity to earn a college degree by earning college credits while in high school (Roberts, 2007). The goal of ECHS is for underserved students to earn a high school diploma, an associate degree, enter a 4-year college, and earn a 4-year degree (Brewer & Stern, 2005).

Program Evaluations

While there were precursors to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation® (www.gatesfoundation.org) ECHS initiative, this literature review focused on research in ECHS programs. This is not an extensive body of research. The most extensive research comes from national evaluations of the program conducted for the Gates Foundation with year-end reports published in 2005, 2006 and 2007, and an evaluation

synthesis report published in 2009 by the American Institute for Research (AIR). The evaluations included extensive descriptive information on the ECHS organizational structure and state policies; however, this review focuses on those aspects of the evaluations that directly addressed ECHS student experiences and the program's effects on students' progress. AIR reported that, in the period covered by the evaluations, few schools had been in existence long enough for a cohort of students to finish the four-year program. However, the evaluations did show that the ECHSs were serving the intended population of students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education and that these students are progressing through the grades as intended (AIR, 2007).

The American Institutes for Research (AIR, 2005) released the first report. This evaluation team collected data with surveys, interviews, and site visits during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years. This evaluation was designed to describe the demographic, structural, organizational, and institutional characteristics of ECHSs, identify factors that support or inhibit the planning and development of ECHSs, and document the intermediate and long-term outcomes for students attending ECHS, especially for students traditionally underserved by the postsecondary system.

The report showed that in 2001-2003, 22 ECHSs served approximately 3,500 students, primarily from racial and ethnic minority groups and from low-income families. AIR (2005) concluded that most ECHSs were making good-faith efforts to create environments for teaching and learning that are characterized by the key attributes of high-performing small schools endorsed by the foundation. The attributes include: common focus, high expectations, personalized environment, respect and responsibility,

time to collaborate, performance-based assessment, and technology as a tool. Of these attributes, a personalized environment was implemented at a higher rate than the others were. Most students surveyed during the first evaluation mentioned that the personalized environment in their ECHS was a major benefit. Personalization helped with student success, keeping students engaged, and schools safe (AIR, 2005).

The first AIR report found that the ECHS staff demonstrated two other key attributes: a common focus and high expectations. However, the instructors in the institution of higher education (IHE) in the partnership appeared to have lower expectations for ECHS students than the secondary school staff in the partnership. The IHE staff reported that they had to water down the curriculum because students could not be successful with the rigor of college coursework (AIR, 2005).

The report identified several staff-related issues. ECHSs developed strong professional communities that allowed staff the time to collaborate. However, the IHE instructors did not always view themselves as part of the ECHS professional community and were often not involved in their staff development training. Thus, the strong communication and collaboration among the ECHS secondary level teachers did not include the IHE staff.

A key finding was this strong collaboration among ECHS staff produced a family-like atmosphere. The 2005 evaluation reports on the importance of a personalized environment for students who have not been successful academically. The students reported that there was a strong support for a college-going culture. There were no data collected on the students' perceptions about the rigor of the curriculum or their experiences of being enrolled in an ECHS.

ECHS staff and IHE staff communicated, particularly if there were problems with students; however, relationships between both have been very challenging. In many of the ECHS campuses there are problems coordinating between the IHE staff and ECHS staff. These issues appear to be greater when the ECHS campus is not located on the college campus (AIR 2005).

The AIR 2005 evaluation recommended broadening of the base of support for the ECHS among faculty and administrators at each of the participating IHEs, but particularly at four-year institutions, and engaging both high school and IHE faculty in professional development that focuses on student-centered teaching and learning and the development of diversified instructional strategies. The evaluation concluded that chances for improvements of student performance will increase by strengthening the faculty and the teaching strategies.

The 2005 evaluation contained information about providing opportunities for Hispanic students and their academic expectations and success. It reported that ECHS staff understands that their students are unprepared for the academic and social demands needed to be successful in an ECHS. Support systems must be in place for students to work on academic skills and social skills. Some of the support systems in place were evening, weekend, and summer tutorials that focused on academic skills to meet the rigor of college-level work. Advisories were used at some ECHS sites to provide students with an adult advocate on campus. This is relevant for the research questions of this study. This case study explored what academic and social supports are available for students at the ECHS.

In 2006, AIR released its second annual ECHS initiative evaluation synthesis

report. The findings are based on information derived from a school-level survey, visits to and interviews with a sample of students at ECHSs, and interviews with funded intermediaries. The evaluation team gathered qualitative and quantitative data from 25 ECHSs and 13 intermediaries. The research questions used in this evaluation were the same three research questions used in the 2005 evaluation. Confirming results of the first evaluation, the 2006 report found that ECHS's enrolled students from the targeted populations, such as minority and low-income students; however, English language learners and students receiving services through Special Education remained underrepresented.

The 2006 AIR evaluation focused on 3Rs – rigorous instruction, relevant curriculum, and supportive relationships in all ECHS classrooms. “Rigorous instruction was defined as teaching that requires students: build upon existing knowledge and skills to create or explore new ideas; demonstrate conceptual understanding of important content; organize, interpret, evaluate, and synthesize information; communicate clearly and well; and, revise work based on informative feedback” (AIR, 2006, p. vi).

The evaluation did not provide specific information on students' perception of rigor in their coursework. However, the report found through interviews of ECHS teachers and classroom observations that teachers attempted to use rigorous instructional strategies to prepare students for academic success. The mathematics classrooms exhibited less rigorous than English language arts classrooms.

The 2006 report provided other information about student perceptions. Students attending an ECHS located on a college campus were more likely than students in a program not located on a college campus to report feeling like they were enrolled in

college. Students felt they had closer and more personal relationships with teachers, staff and with other students at ECHSs than at their previous schools. Interviewed students appreciated the respect accorded to them by college faculty. When asked about their post ECHS plans, students had a variety of responses. Some were very unsure about what their next step was going to be. Some responded that they wanted to study music, pursue a career in acting, or become a flight attendant, which are all careers that do not require a college education. Others described very definite academic plans and goals. These students were very specific about continuing their education to obtain a college degree and had identified their college majors. Most of the students with concrete college plans were 11th and 12th grade students. Students developed more concrete plans as they progressed in the program. The lower-level students having plans that did not require a college education and 11th and 12th graders having developed more clear plans.

In 2009, AIR released the fifth annual ECHS initiative evaluation synthesis report, which summarized the previous six years' evaluations. This report analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were gleaned from an online school survey, an online student survey, public information sources, and student information system. The student information system is managed by Jobs for the Future, which coordinated the ECHS initiative and provided support (Job for the Future, [JFF], 2011) www.jff.org. The JFF requested data from the ECHSs on students' academic progress, transcript information and background information. The qualitative data were gathered from site visits, interviews, and graduate interviews. This was the first evaluation report to include data from graduates.

The 2009 evaluation concluded that the overall picture after six years of implementation was promising. Students said they were engaged; their attendance levels improved; they were enrolled in college courses; and they had expectations of continuing their postsecondary education. The report stated that 61% of ECHS students had taken at least one college class. The report concluded the level of participation in college courses would have a positive impact on students' future achievements. They are more likely to graduate from high school and pursue a college degree at a 4-year college as a full time student. In addition, alumni reported feeling challenged by college after attending the ECHSs, but they felt prepared for it and attributed this level of preparation to the ECHS experience. The evaluation concluded that ECHSs appear to be successful in helping students from underrepresented populations prepare for college.

Because ECHSs are based on the Gates Foundation model were started in 2002, the number of ECHSs that had graduated an initial cohort and the total number of graduates by 2009 were quite small. The data on students' post graduation activities were very limited. A cohort takes four to five years to complete. Once more cohorts have graduated, there will be more data available pertaining to the number of college credits earned while enrolled in high school; the number of associates degrees earned; high school completion rates; and enrollment in college.

Consistent with the first two evaluation reports, the 2009 report addressed how the ECHSs were serving the target student groups. The 2009 report stated that 67% of students enrolled in an ECHS were from underrepresented minority groups. According to the school surveys, that is 6% higher than the percent of minorities in the local school

districts where the ECHS are located. In addition, the ECHS targets low-income students. Fifty nine percent of students enrolled were classified as low income, defined as qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

In addition to information on income and ethnicity, the 2009 evaluators looked at first generation college students. In 2007–08, evaluators found that 31% of students who attended ECHSs reported that their mothers had graduated from college, and 28% said that their fathers had graduated from college (of the students who knew this information about their parents). These percentages are about the same as what was reported in the 2006–2007 evaluation report. In the remainder of the 2009 report, students were identified as first-generation college students if they reported that neither of their parents had attended college. In 2007–08, 46% of ECHS students reported that neither parent had attended college.

Two-thirds of the students enrolled in ECHSs nationwide in 2007-2008 were from minority backgrounds — more than half of them with either African-American or Hispanic origins. Further, three-fifths of students were from low-income families. The 2009 evaluation concluded that, given the ECHS’s commitment to serve high school students who are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, these proportions represent “stable indicators” that the initiative was achieving its goal in this area. Nevertheless, the ECHS’s overall appear to be consistently serving a high proportion of low-income students and students of color. The ECHSs may make a significant contribution to our understanding of how to stimulate postsecondary success for underserved students.

The primary change from 2006–07 to 2007–08, according to the AIR

researchers, was that the number of ECHSs increased. AIR attributed the increase to school districts exploring different opportunities that are available to help keep students in school and reducing the dropout rate, especially among minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Most students, by Grades 12 and 13, received support in preparing college applications. Earlier evaluation reports have identified some tensions that schools faced as they implemented the ECHSs. The tensions were due to logistical challenges when ECHSs tried to blend two institutions with different practices. However, as the ECHS model has grown, the focus for many key stakeholders has moved beyond those logistical kinds of challenges to focusing on students' goals and interests as well as their social and academic developmental needs.

The AIR 2009 report examined the extent to which students were receiving instruction on college campuses as opposed to a high school campus. Students at ECHSs located on a college campus were more likely to take a college class on a college campus than students at ECHSs located on a high school campus (adjusted percentages of 93 and 41, respectively). Of the surveyed ECHS students taking a college class, 83% noted at least one college class was located on a college campus, either in a traditional college classroom or in an ECHS classroom. The number of courses on college campuses was not surprising, because 53% of all ECHSs are located on college campuses. Students in 11th grade were significantly more likely to take a class on a college campus than students in 9th grade (46% for 9th grade and 80% for 11th grade, adjusted). Many off-campus ECHSs sent students to the college for classes (AIR, 2009).

Evaluators found that ECHS students are more likely to take courses on the

college campus as they progress through the program. Students could be enrolled either in a regularly scheduled college class with traditional college students or in a class arranged specifically for the ECHS students. As students progress through the ECHS, they are more likely to be integrated with traditional college students in college classes. This finding aligns with a common ECHS approach, which involves giving students more college-level experiences as they mature.

Although not every ECHS student had access to a “college-level” class located on a college campus, 61% of students had taken at least one college level class (AIR, 2009). More than half of the students enrolled in college classes were taking one in a core academic subject area. Some of these course selections were made by the ECHS, and some were made by students, as several schools noted different approaches to the degree to which the course-taking path for students was prescribed. Although not all college classes were offered in a traditional college setting, most ECHS students had experienced a college setting by their junior and senior year in high school.

Overall, the 2009 report found that students reported experiencing many rigorous and relevant instructional activities at least weekly. They felt connected to their instructors and reported that the instructors, both ECHS and college, had high expectations and supported them. This was a change from the first evaluation, which reported that the college instructors did not necessarily have high expectations. Students also reported that they experienced positive peer interactions and did not engage in disruptive behavior.

Almost all ECHSs offered tutoring and support classes, though a number of students reported that they did not use tutoring. AIR (2009) noted that, each year, more

types of data become available, and these data consistently support the conclusion that students in ECHSs, overall, are doing well. Below are some of the preliminary findings on the most recent data:

- ECHS students are engaged with their education and have a positive academic self concept
- Over several years, ECHSs have had high average daily attendance rates, consistently averaging higher than 94%
- ECHS outperform their local district high schools on state assessments by almost 7% points in both ELA and mathematics; 74% of students reached proficiency in ELA and 67% did so in mathematics
- In the 38 ECHSs with transcript data, students' average high school GPA was 2.7, similar to that found in a national transcript study, which showed an average GPA of 2.8
- Students estimated that their college GPA was about 3.1. However, at the 30 ECHSs with transcript data, the average college GPA was 2.2
- On average, about 85% of students made the progression each year from one grade to the next
- For 12 ECHSs, estimates indicate that 66% of entering 9th-grade students will graduate from their ECHS on time. These rates, on average, are higher in comparison to the traditional secondary campuses located in the districts
- The evidence from different data sources showed that students graduated from ECHS's with about a semester to a year's worth of college credits
- ECHSs reported that 88% of graduates enrolled in college in the fall after graduation (AIR, 2009)

Another finding that appears consistent over time covered in the AIR reports is that the ECHSs provide adequate academic, social, and personal supports to help students succeed in their ECHS programs. Data from student surveys from AIR 2009 indicate that most students who are enrolled in high school courses seek assistance from their high school teachers. The student survey also showed that students perceived their college instructors to be supportive, although minority students felt less

supported by their college instructors (AIR, 2009). The data show that academic and college transition supports are universally available to students. Data also confirm that the supports that students take advantage of are primarily accessed through the ECHS rather than through the college, even though partnership agreements often make college supports available to ECHS students. However, the AIR 2009 report concluded that, in the first year or two, the newest schools report that they struggle with issues of adequate support services due to small enrollments and limited funding. The ECHSs on average are doing a good job of supporting students to persevere in their educational programs — as attested to by the students themselves as well as by school survey data.

On a less positive note, the 2009 report found that strong collaboration between high school and college instructors continued to be infrequent as reported in the earlier evaluations. Although, collaboration and commitment are high at upper administrative levels of ECHS partnership agreements, collaborative relationships do not develop between classroom instructors at the high school and college levels. The AIR researchers found some collaboration with the college teaching staff and high school teaching staff, but they could not determine that this characterizes the ECHS initiative. AIR report noted two conditions contribute to the lack of collaboration. One is the separate physical locations of high school and college campuses. The AIR researchers found more collaboration when the ECHS is located on the college campus. Another barrier to collaboration is the tendency for college staff teaching ECHS students to be adjunct faculty who are employed part-time, and are therefore less connected to the institution of higher education and less available to work with other instructors.

Research on Individual ECHS Programs

The remaining research was conducted in individual ECHS settings. As noted above, the ECHS initiative funded by the Gates Foundation began in 2002, so there has not been time for longitudinal research or for a large amount of data to be accumulated outside of the funded evaluations. However, several narrow studies have been published.

Brewer and Stern (2005) investigated the need for high school reform in the areas of academic preparedness, student attrition rates, and the transition to success in college. They recommended ECHSs as a strategy to improve high school achievement and promote a smoother transition to college. They noted that ECHSs shared similarities with other dual enrollment programs where the goal is to ease the transition to college and prepare students for college level work. Bailey and Karp (2003) examined the effectiveness of three dual enrollment programs: advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), and technology preparation. The results of the 2003 study suggested that these dual programs were effective in increasing the college enrollment rates for students enrolled in either one of these programs. The study also revealed that dual program students who enroll in college eventually do well in college, especially in terms of satisfactorily meeting the academic course work.

Brewer and Stern (2005) pointed to Bard High School Early College in New York, established in 2001 and not part of the Gates Foundation network, as an example of the success of ECHS, because 90% of its first graduating class enrolled in colleges as sophomores and juniors. An important gauge of success in an ECHS program, based on the Gates model, is if the programs were able to enroll underserved students into an

ECHS program and if the attrition rate is minimized towards the latter part of the program (Brewer & Stern, 2005). However, the ultimate success of ECHS programs is determined by the percentage of students who earn high school degrees, associate degrees, and a four-year degree in college (Brewer & Stern, 2005).

Gurwitz and Raphan (2008) examined one class at Brooklyn College Erasmus Hall High School in Brooklyn, New York, and found that it was effective in preparing students to meet the demands of a college-level, standard, introductory programming course. Gurwitz and Raphan (2008) designed a college computer-programming course for this ECHS. They knew that the standard Computer Science 1 course in college had a low student success rate. For the ECHS they split the one semester course into two semesters to help students make the transition to college-level work and to adjust to the academic rigor. They also provided supplemental materials to those students who needed to be challenged. The pacing of the course was slower, and more emphasis was given in assisting the students. At the end of the semester, Gurwitz and Raphan (2008) gave a final exam, comparable to the final exams taken by college students who take the course, to the participants of their study. All of the students passed the final exam, with an average GPA of 3.3. Moreover, interviews revealed that these students felt that the course was helpful and enjoyable (Gurwitz & Raphan, 2008).

However, the researchers identified some barriers. One was students' apparent lack of motivation to do work outside the classroom. According to the authors, college students usually do a substantial amount of work outside the classroom, while the students in this ECHS class did not. Gurwitz and Raphan (2008) also found that, as the course progressed, absences increased. Further investigation by the authors revealed

that this behavior was a symptom of typical high school seniors; they tend to lose their motivation as the term closes.

One study looked at common benefits of ECHS for students and state government. Experts in school finance, Palaich, Augenblick, Foster, Anderson, and Rose (2006), created a financial analysis model for calculating the return on investment for early college high schools. The researchers found ECHS to benefit students and their families, particularly in terms of finances. Students who attend an ECHS are able to earn up to two years of college credit free and attain their college degrees more quickly. The financial benefit of two year's worth of free tuition is very attractive to students and their parents. Palaich et al. (2006) also reported that students in ECHS programs gained more benefits compared to students from traditional high schools with respect to both future salary and total cost of obtaining a college degree. The researchers also found that states can benefit from investing in ECHS as long as the cost structure is not completely different from the cost structure of a typical high school.

Born (2006) interviewed ECHS students to determine how they confront the complexities of their educational and personal lives in the program. He reported that the motivations for enrolling at the ECHS included financial reasons because students are able to earn up to two years of college tuition free. Many ECHS students in this study had the desire to finish college early. Yet, the study found most ECHS students were not used to the level of academic rigor in college (Born, 2006). They experienced culture shock, especially because most high school students are used to "missing assignments, time for revision, and second chances" (Born, 2006, p. 51). These behaviors were not typically condoned in the college setting. In terms of academic

proficiency, writing was the most salient underdeveloped skill as reported by the high school students. Most students felt their writing skills were not up to the standards of college-level expectations and requirements for writing.

In summary, the three evaluations of the Gates-funded ECHS initiative and the smaller studies indicate that students have a personalized environment at ECHS, which the evaluators felt helps them to be successful. The AIR reports concluded that students are engaged, have high expectations, rigorous curriculum and there is strong support for a college-going culture. Hispanic students are targeted as prospective students for ECHS, as well as those who are first generation college students with low SES (Roderick et al., 2008).

Research on the Transition from High School to College

This section describes research about factors associated with the transition from high school to college, a transition the ECHS model is designed to improve. First, discussion will consider the typical success factors and challenges experienced by students in the United States. The literature review was instrumental in developing the research questions for this study.

Decision to Attend College

According to Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), three tasks are critical for students to have a successful path to college. “The first task is acquiring the necessary academic qualifications for college work. The second is securing a high school diploma, and the third is actually applying and enrolling in a four-year institution of higher education” (p.

6). These three critical tasks affect whether a prospective student might consider enrolling for college.

Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) identified the acquisition of a high school diploma as a determining factor when students are deciding to enter college. Greene and Forster (2003) reported that only 70% of the students graduated from public high schools. The graduation rate for White Americans was 72%, 79% for Asian Americans, 54% for American Indians, 51% for African American students, and 52% for Hispanic students. Public school students from the Northeast and Midwest states have respective graduation rates of 73% and 75%, while a 65% graduation rate in Southern states and a 69% graduation rate in Western states were reported by Greene and Forster.

Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) found that high school students who have the necessary academic qualifications tend to have higher enrollment rates in college compared to high school students who do not have the academic qualifications. Yet, Greene and Forster (2003) reported that only 32% of students in public high school have the academic qualifications for college. African Americans, Indian Americans, and Hispanics were the least prepared for college application in terms of high school academic credentials. According to Green and Forster (2003), only 20% of African American public high school students, 14% of Indian American public high school students, and only 16% of all Hispanic public high school students were qualified for college application. This was significantly below the college readiness rate of White Americans (37%) and Asian Americans (38%).

Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) said the most critical task was the actual college application process. The authors outlined college application hurdles that “include

concerns over college costs, uncertainties in the selection of major, completion of college applications forms and filling out extremely complex financial aid forms” (p. 7). The authors contended that this is an important task in relation to the path to college because even the most qualified student would not be able to attend college if he or she does not apply.

Barnett and Bragg (2006) contended that student support is important in making underserved high school students apply and succeed in college. The researchers suggested that support in the form of helping students familiarize themselves with the college application process and other pertinent information that includes information on college campus options and the course requirements for application might be helpful to prospective college students. Barnett and Bragg (2006) pointed out that many high school students do not know where the nearest college campus is located and do not understand what will be required of them in college courses.

Daddona and Cooper (2002) identified the 10 most pressing needs of freshmen college students' transition to college. A sample of 256 incoming freshmen students, identified that acceptance to professional school, selection of courses, finding a job after graduation, determining the appropriate career path, and getting excellent grades are the most pressing concerns of prospective college students. Other needs as revealed in the study included access to job opportunities, planning the schedule for the first semester, understanding the course requirements, access to academic assistance, and developing a study habit that fits the demands of college.

From a policy perspective, Pennington (2004) proposed three fast-track policies that would “ensure that all students complete a recognized postsecondary credential

(including apprenticeships and industry certification) by the age of 26” (p. 10). These fast track policies were: (a) providing an academic head start on college by giving students the option to accelerate the high school to college transition; (b) providing an accelerated career/technical option to students that would enable them to collect college credits while being equipped with entry-level job qualification and (c) a gap year/college in the community option in which students would have the option to “include a combination of a half or full year of community service and a half or full year of work experience” (Pennington, 2004, p. 11).

Pennington (2004) claimed that these three fast-track options shared several features. Each of these options would give students the opportunity to experience a more demanding high school curriculum comparable to college courses. All three options would also allow students to gain college credits transferable when they decide to enter college. Another significant shared feature is the exposure that they would give to students in terms of experiencing college atmosphere before entering college. All three options would also expand the learning opportunities of the students in attaining a college-level degree. These three options are related to ECHS.

Adjustment in the Transition from High School to College

The transition from high school to college is a difficult experience for many students. Hicks suggested that “because first-generation, precollege students may be perceived as having different expectations, poorer academic and social preparation, greater financial constraints, lower self-esteem, and insufficient parental support, they are likely to experience more adjustment-related problems in college” (Hicks, 2005, p.

1). The expectations and experiences of high school students entering college do not always match (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). The transition from high school to college poses a few adjustment issues for some students. According to Smith and Wertlieb (2005), the responsibility of waking themselves up for classes for the first time, “getting along with roommates, making new friends, or confronting choices about drinking and dating” (p. 54) are few of the adjustment issues that new college students might encounter.

College students face adjustment problems in their freshman year including academic adjustment, social relationships, time management, and general adjustment to the environment (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Other adjustment problems encountered by first-year, college students are financial aid/money/working, ethnic/cultural adjustment, feeling like an outsider, transportation, geographic adjustment, health, and historical events. According to student interviews, less than 1% experienced no adjustment difficulties during their first year in college (Hurtado et al., 1996).

Hurtado et al. (1996) also identified individuals who helped the students during their first year in college. According to the responses of the participants, college peers (boy-/girlfriend, roommates, other students) and family members were the individuals who helped the participants the most during the first year of college. Other responses of the participants included: friends (nonspecific); administration and faculty; myself; and high school friends, teachers, and counselors (outside college).

Roderick, Nagaoka, Coca, & Moeller (2008) tracked the postsecondary experiences of graduating students from Chicago public schools who were participants in the Consortium on Chicago School Research. Researchers spent two years

interviewing and tracking the academic success and progress of 105 students from three Chicago high schools. They used both qualitative and quantitative data to identify barriers students may face in the college search and college application process. The purpose of the research was to identify and understand students' post-secondary success and to look for areas of improvement. They reported four key findings.

First, according to Roderick et al. (2008) students who say they aspire to complete a four-year degree do not always follow through and actually apply to any college. Only 41% of the students who said they aspired to attain a four-year degree took the steps necessary to apply and enroll in a four-year college. Furthermore, Hispanic students have the most difficulty managing college enrollment. Only 60% of the Hispanic graduates who aspired to attain a four-year degree said that they planned to attend a four-year college in the fall after high school graduation. This is compared to 77% of African Americans and 76% of White/Other ethnic graduates. In addition, less than 50% of the Hispanic students who aspired to attain a four-year degree actually applied to a four-year college, compared to 65% of their African-American and White/Other ethnic counterparts (Roderick et al., 2008).

Second, Roderick et al. (2008) found that attending a high school with a strong college-going culture help students in the college application process. Roderick et al. (2008) determined that the college plans of Hispanic students were shaped by the expectations of their teachers and counselors and by connections with teachers. The researchers concluded that Hispanic students are more reliant than other students on their school for guidance and information.

Third, Roderick et al. (2008) found that applying to multiple colleges and applying

for financial aid increases the likelihood of being accepted and enrolling in a four-year college. The fourth key finding was that only one-third of the students enrolled in a college that matched their qualifications. The researchers used the concept of "match" to describe a college that is a good fit for the students because it meets a student's educational and social needs while supporting their intellectual and social development. Students were often mismatched because they chose to enroll in a two-year school instead of a four-year college or, they chose not to enroll at all.

Academic Adjustment

Academic preparation in high school affects a student's adjustment to college. Garton, Dyer, and King (2000) reported that grade point average (GPA) and ACT® scores are the best predictors of college achievement for freshmen. Unlike GPA and ACT scores, Smith and Wertlieb (2005) found social and academic expectations and experiences were not predictors of college achievement. The authors also reported that high school students who have unrealistically high academic and social expectations for college had lower GPA compared to students who had moderate expectations. Students should focus on raising their GPA and scoring as well as possible on the ACT. Doing so will have a positive impact on their academic adjustment to

Hicks (2005) reported summer classes such as those in the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Program (LSAMP) and the Preparation and Adjustment for College Entrance (PACE) were successful in preparing high school minority students to transition to college. Some of the activities in these summer programs included "initial course selection, intrusive advising, developmental instruction, study groups, tutoring,

and labs” (p. 6). These activities were helpful to minority and at-risk students because these activities allowed them to be exposed to a typical college environment, which would help them with their academic transition to college.

Social Adjustment

According to Ostrove and Long (2007), the social class background of students influences college adjustment. In their study, social class background was measured in terms of family income, parents’ education, and parents’ occupation. The results suggested students from low-income backgrounds generally experience negative adjustment issues in college compared to their middle-to-high income background counterparts.

Ostrove and Long (2007) used the concept of belongingness to link how social class background of the students influences college adjustment. “Social-class background was strongly related to a sense of belonging at college, which in turn predicted social and academic adjustment to college, quality of experience at college, and academic performance” (379-381). Students who belong to the lower bracket of the socio-economic status are likely to feel more alienated in college. The feeling of alienation and marginalization in college reflects low levels of sense of belongingness, which in turn results in poor college adjustment.

College Retention and Attrition

The rate of college attrition is highest during the freshman year (Hicks, 2005). According to Ramist (1981), the reasons for college attrition are due to academic

matters, financial difficulties, motivational problems, and personal considerations, dissatisfaction with the college, military service, and full-time jobs. Other reasons include the need to experience non-academic work and the lack of initial plans regarding their college goals. Lotkowski, Robbins, and Noeth (2004) cited two broad reasons for college retention: academic factors and non-academic factors. The academic factors for college retention include high school GPA scores, ACT assessment scores, academic-related skills, academic self-confidence, and academic goals; the non-academic factors for college retention include institutional commitment, social support, contextual influences (institutional selectivity), social involvement, contextual influences (financial support), achievement motivation, and general self-concept

Lotkowski et al.'s (2004) study found academic-related skills, academic self-confidence, and academic goals were the strongest predictors of college attrition, while institutional commitment, social support, institutional selectivity, social involvement, financial support, high school GPA, and ACT assessment scores were moderate predictors of college retention. General self-concept and achievement motivation were found to be weak predictors of college retention.

For the academic factors, academic performance in high school can predict college retention (Lotkowski et al., 2004). These authors reported, "postsecondary institutions, then, often focus attention on methods that improve first-year GPA as a way to motivate students to perform better academically and increase their likelihood of staying in college" (p. 12). The higher the GPA scores of the students, the higher the likelihood that the students will not drop out from college (Lotkowski et al., 2004).

Of the non-academic factors, Lotkowski et al. (2004) noted that many institutions use surveys and questionnaires that identify the specific needs of the students. Once these needs were identified, the institutions direct students to the respective programs that would respond to their specific needs. Singell (2001) also found that financial aid increases college retention. Singell (2001) reported, "The most needy students are less likely to enroll and re-enroll controlling for the level of aid, and that the retention effects of merit-based aid are smaller for needy students even after controlling for ability" (p. 2).

Experiencing a course that orients the students to pertinent issues in college appears to be beneficial both in terms of college retention rate and increase in academic performance. According to Sidle and McReynolds (1999), participation in a freshman experience course increases college retention rates in a medium-sized, regional, predominantly White, public, four-year University in the Midwest. Those who were enrolled in the experience course managed to continue to enroll for a second year in college. "The curriculum of this course includes such topics as understanding the goals of the university, planning a career and choosing a major, making ethical decisions, and learning time management skills to support academic success" (Sidle & McReynolds, 1999, p. 296).

Tinto (2000) outlined five factors that contribute to retention of college students. The first factor is expectations; it gives students a clear picture of what is expected of them in terms of the completion of the course work. According to Tinto (2000), setting clear expectations gives students an understanding of what is needed to achieve their goals and to be successful in college.

The second condition for college retention is support. Many students enter

college with insufficient level of support in meeting the rigors of college life (Tinto, 2000). Tinto operationalized academic support in the form of “basic skill courses, tutoring, study groups, and academic support programs such as supplemental instruction” (p. 2) and social support in terms of “counseling, mentoring, and ethnic student centers” (p. 2).

Feedback is another condition for college retention (Tinto, 2000). Tinto (2000) argued that dealing with potential problems and issues early in the form of faculty/teacher feedback allows students to make the necessary changes while the problem is still manageable.

Fourth, involvement is another condition for college retention (Tinto, 2000). According to Tinto (2000) “The more students are academically and socially involved the more likely they are to persist and graduate” (p. 3). Moreover, Tinto also noted “The more frequently students engage with faculty, staff, and their peers, the more likely, other things being equal, that they will persist and graduate” (p. 3). In terms of learning, Tinto proposed involvement in the classroom as an important factor of learning. Because much of the teacher and peer interaction occurs inside the classroom, students who participate and are involved tend to learn more (Tinto, 2000).

Finally, Tinto (2000) identified relevant learning as another condition for college student retention. “The more students find value in their learning, the more they see it as connected to their interests, the more likely they will become involved in learning and in turn learn more and persist more frequently” (p. 4). If students value education, they are more likely to be more motivated to deal with the hardships and obstacles typical in college education.

Summary

This section on transition to college raises key issues that shaped the research questions and research design for this dissertation on ECHS. The research shows that students must acquire the necessary academic qualifications to be able to do college work. They must have exposure to a rigorous curriculum at the high school level. The transition from high school to college is a difficult experience for students, who must make academic adjustments, social adjustments, learn time management, and financial adjustments. The attrition rate is highest during the freshman year. ECHS were designed to address these issues so that the transition from high school to college occurs smoothly. ECHS students will share their experiences from ECHS and their perceptions about graduating and perusing a post-secondary degree.

The Hispanic Student

Hispanics accounted for over 60% of the student population growth from in public schools 1990-2006 (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). Ten million Hispanic students attended U. S. public schools from kindergarten to high school in 2006 (Fry & Gonzalez, 2008). The 10 million Hispanic students represented 20% of all public school students in the country.

The American Community Survey (ACS, 2006) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities vital information about how they are changing. It is an element of the Census Bureau's redesigned 2010 census plan (ACS, 2006). ACS provides a comprehensive description of Hispanic students in the U. S. public schools. The report

revealed that 84% of Hispanic students were born in the United States. A vast majority was of Mexican descent (69%), followed by Puerto Rican descent (9%). Hispanic students in the country were primarily concentrated in Texas and California (ACS, 2006).

With regard to family background, the majority of Hispanic students were living with two-parent households (ACS, 2006). The median household income of a typical Hispanic, public school student was \$40,248, which was below the national median household income of \$60,342. Twenty-eight percent were living in poverty, with foreign-born Hispanic students more likely to live in poverty than native-born Hispanic students. Thirty-four percent of Hispanic students had parents who did not have high school degrees.

First-generation Hispanic students have a high risk of dropping out of school (Ishitani, 2003). In Huntington's (2004) report about the different generations of Hispanics and their respective high school completion rates, first generation Hispanics have significantly higher non-completion rate of high school (69%). The trend seems to suggest with each generation until the third, the non-completion of high school of Hispanics tends to decrease or more positively, with each generation, high school completion increases. For second-generation Hispanics, the rate of high school non-completion is 51.5%, whereas for third generation Hispanics, the non-completion rate is 33%.

Hispanic Student Participation in Postsecondary Education

Aud, Fox and Kewal Ramani (2010) wrote a report for the National Center for

Educational Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education. The report examined the challenges and educational progress of students by ethnicity/race. The report revealed an increase in the number of students who completed high school and pursued tertiary education over the years. However, the rate of increase varied among racial/ethnic groups.

From 2000–01 to 2007–08, the proportion of public school enrollment composed of White students decreased from 61 to 56%, while Hispanic enrollment increased from 17 to 21%, and Asian/Pacific Islander enrollment increased from 4 to 5% of the total; the percentage of Black (17%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (1%) students remained unchanged” (p. iv).

The study also cited the increase in the participation of minority students, particularly Asian and African-Americans, in various placement examination or aptitude tests. Among ethnic groups reported, Hispanics have the lowest percentage of adults with a bachelor’s degree.

In 2008, about 29% of U. S. adults (25 years of age or older) had at least a bachelor’s degree, including 52% of Asian/Pacific Islander adults, 33% of White adults, 20% of Black adults, 13% of Hispanic adults, and 15% of American Indian/Alaska native adults. (Aud et al., 2010, p.vi)

However, this is an increase from 2000, when only 10% of Hispanics over the age of 25 earned a bachelor’s degree (Nora & Crisp, 2006). Increasing these percentages would be one of the goals of ECHS.

Transition to College

Aud et al. (2010) revealed that the enrollment of Hispanic high school graduates to college had increased from 50% in 1980 to 62% in 2007. The researchers also reported in 2008, 26% of Hispanics 18 to 24 year-olds were enrolled in colleges and universities, which was an increase of 12% from 1980. Aud et al. (2010) stated that

between 1976 and 2008, total undergraduate fall enrollment increased for all racial/ethnic groups with Hispanics possessing the fastest rates of increase. Trends in graduate enrollments indicate that while there are increases in the rates for all racial/ethnic groups, the largest increases are for Hispanics (Aud et al., 2010).

According to Fischer (2007), Hispanics tend to be first generation college students and tend to belong in a low socioeconomic status (SES) bracket. Being first generation Hispanic and belonging to a low SES are associated with college difficulties that can lead to non-completion.

Hispanic students tend to have higher levels of sense of belongingness in college when they choose to participate in college activities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). The particular activities that Hurtado and Carter found to be most relevant for Hispanic students were social-community activities and religious activities. College satisfaction is enhanced by social adjustments. Fischer (2007) found that formal and informal academic ties are related to college satisfaction, which influences attrition. Formal ties include extracurricular organizations, whereas informal ties include having college friends (Fischer, 2007).

Hurtado et al. (1996) examined the difficulties experienced by Hispanic students in the transition from high school to college. They conducted a quantitative study on the adjustment of Hispanic college freshman and sophomore students using data from a longitudinal survey and a questionnaire on student adaptation to college. The researchers identified success factors of college adjustment for Hispanics based on four areas: (a) academic, (b) social, (c) personal-emotional, and (d) attachment to the institution. They found that school climate stressors are the most influential factor in

transitional difficulties for minority students. Hispanics are more likely to experience college difficulties and dissatisfaction when a perception exists that the minority students do not feel part of the institution.

To improve the retention of Hispanic students, Hurtado et al. (1996) recommended college programs that focused on student communication in improving the perceptions of minority students with regard to discrimination, group conflict, and misunderstanding. The strategy is particularly helpful during the first year of college.

In the same study, Hurtado et al. (1996) reported that the first year of college experience for minority students continues to have an effect in subsequent years. Some aspects of the first year college experience that influence subsequent successful college transition include management of student resources, geography of the campus, and the student's academic preparedness. They also found that upper-class students could play a positive role in the college adjustment process by serving as advisors who can facilitate social adjustment of the younger Hispanic college students. Hurtado et al. (1996) suggested future research on ways to improve the retention of Hispanic students.

Hispanics and ECHS

One of the rationales for the ECHS initiative is to provide educational opportunities to minority students from low-income families (Shear, Song, House, Martinez, Means & Smerdon, 2005). Shear et al. (2005) conducted a research report for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation designed to find examples of schools that were succeeding with Hispanic and African American low-income students. Surveys were

administered to principals, teachers and students of 24 new schools in their first year of operation. The 24 schools were beginning the process of redesigning their comprehensive high schools into smaller schools or learning communities. In addition, the researchers during site visits, conduct interviews, classroom observations and observed student focus groups. They found some evidence that showed that the ECHS is an effective program for increasing the rate of college enrollment among Hispanic students (Shear et al., 2005). The researchers report that the redesign into smaller schools or learning communities produced a positive school climate for students and a supportive relationship between the students and staff.

Sixty percent of ECHS students belong to low-income households (Hoffman et al., 2009). According to Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos (2009) Hispanic students who participated in dual enrollments in high school have higher rates of college enrollments than students who did not participate in dual enrollments programs such as ECHS.

Educational achievement is associated with cultural capital (Aviles & Garza, 2010). Cultural capital is defined by Soroka and Rafaeli (2006) as “the knowledge that enables an individual to interpret various cultural codes” (p. 1). Because the majority of students in ECHS programs are minorities and belong to low-SES bracket, Hispanic students are more likely to benefit from understanding cultural codes. They would benefit from understanding the cultural codes that as Hispanic students enroll in ECHS, they will be given the opportunity for academic success. The percentage of Hispanic students in an educational institution has some influence in the academic performance of Hispanics (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). According to Aviles and Garza, (2010) in educational programs in which the majority of students are minorities, teachers and

administrators are more likely to respond to the needs of the students particularly in terms of the development of the students' cultural capital.

Summary

The key issues of this section that influence the research questions and research design are that the Hispanic student population is increasing while the number that is graduating from high school and enrolling in college is not increasing at the same rate. Hispanic students have a high risk of dropping out of high school. Those who do attend college need academic and social support because many of them are first generation college attendees. ECHSs have addressed many of these issues. The literature review did not find information about students' perspectives about their experiences, how they benefit from ECHS, and what supports they find useful. This case study will explore the academic and social supports that are available for students in the ECHS of this study.

Conclusion

The literature review provides an outline of the findings on ECHS as an educational reform strategy. Few reports validate the effectiveness of ECHS programs in attracting students to pursue a college degree (Brewer & Stern, 2005). The ECHS program has been found to be beneficial in terms of cost to students and to the state (Palaich et al., 2006). It is rational for state policymakers to integrate ECHS into the educational system in the country, given the empirical evidence on the program's effectiveness.

There is little research about the experiences of Hispanic students who are

enrolled in an ECHS program. Roderick et al. (2008) outlined a few issues and problems that early college students experience. Born (2006) also identified key issues for early college students, including financial aid and getting a college degree earlier.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 contains the review of literature on ECHS programs. The rationale for the establishment of ECHS was discussed in order to understand the educational reform program's relevance in the reform system. The origins and the developments of ECHS are delineated and discussed. The decision of students to enroll in college, adjustment problems that college students experience, and college retention and attrition were discussed in order to contextualize the features of ECHS programs. The discussion includes the challenges experienced by Hispanic students. The current findings on ECHS, as the educational reform program relates to Hispanic students, concludes the current findings section. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology implemented in the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students in Texas about their experiences in an early college high school (ECHS) and their expectations for education beyond high school. An overview of the background and a discussion of the importance of the proposed study were provided in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 included a review of literature on the subject matter and provided the context for the proposed study. Chapter 3 begins with a discussion and rationalization of the research methods and design appropriateness. Following the method and design discussion is a review of the data collection methodology. Chapter 3 concludes with a review of the data analysis procedures.

The research project was a case study of 10 Hispanic juniors and seniors at an ECHS located on the campus of a community college in Texas. The research project was designed to describe Hispanic students' perceptions and experiences about their potential to be successful in college and their plans for post-secondary education. Qualitative methods, primarily semi-structured interviews, were used in order to "emphasize and expose experiences, reflections, and the ways in which experiences influence worldviews" (Creswell, 2007). An in-depth understanding can emerge from the interpretation of "interviews, observations, documents, and records" (Broussard, 2006, p. 213). This is particularly appropriate for this study because data was analyzed from interviews from students' perceptions and opinions of the ECHS. According to Merriam (1998):

A case study design is employed to gain an understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Results from case studies can influence policy, practice, and future research. They are descriptions of a single unit such as an individual, program, or group. (p. 19)

Yin (2003) defined case studies as the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the researcher has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. The data gathered from the interviews, specifically, the open-ended questions, provided the necessary information to address the research questions.

Appropriateness of Design

Several methodological options were considered for the proposed study. An alternative method that was considered for the study was a quantitative approach. Quantitative studies differ from qualitative studies in several ways (Jackson, Morrow, Bowles, Fitzgerald, & Blair, 2007). The first point of differentiation is in the method of data collection. In quantitative studies, researchers collect data through surveys of participants or closed-ended experiments. The data from the surveys and experiments are used to examine relationships among variables and to support hypotheses (Creswell, 2007).

Another way in which quantitative and qualitative studies differ relates to the research problem under examination. In quantitative studies, the fundamental research problem includes a statistical assessment of variables. Quantitative and qualitative studies also differ in the manner in which the data are interpreted (Broussard, 2006). Cochran and Dolan (1984) stated that quantitative studies are “confirmatory” (p. 29),

while qualitative studies are “exploratory” (p. 29). A quantitative approach was not suitable for this study because it would not align with the intent to explore student experiences at an ECHS in the interest of reducing attrition at such institutions and to investigate the perceptions of students concerning the nature of their experiences.

Based on this purpose, a qualitative approach provides the necessary methodological tools needed to query the perceptions of ECHS students, analyze the qualitative data and represent the results, providing answers for the research questions.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students in Texas about their experiences in ECHS and their expectations for the future. It was designed to uncover useful information by investigating the perceptions of students concerning the nature of their experiences, such as the rigor of their coursework, their perspectives of the teachers, and the degree of student support.

The research questions were:

1. What expectations do Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program have of succeeding in the program and enrolling in college?
2. How are these expectations being developed in the ECHS program?
 - a. How are expectations for academic success perceived by students?
 - b. How are expectations for social integration in college perceived by students?
 - c. What supports do students identify as available to ensure their success?
3. What barriers do Hispanic students feel they face in their ECHS?
4. How do students characterize their motivation to pursue a college degree?

- a. How does participation in an ECHS support that motivation?
- b. What factors negatively impact student motivation?

Participants in the Study

Qualitative research normally involves small sample sizes of participants, as opposed to quantitative research, which normally relies on larger sample sizes. Creswell (2005) recommends that the size of a qualitative sample should range from 1-25 participants, and Polkinghorne (2005) suggests that qualitative research include sample sizes of 5 to 25 participants. Patton (2002) stated that there are no specific rules for sample size, and that, “sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244).

A purposeful sampling procedure was used to include participants who met the criteria for inclusion— specifically, being Hispanic students enrolled as juniors or seniors in the ECHS program. Purposeful sampling is a non-probabilistic sampling method by which the researcher selects the particular research locations and participants to increase the probability that they will be able to provide the information necessary to answer the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2005).

The Independent School District was contacted to request permission to do research on the ECHS campus, and permission was granted by the principal on the condition that the research was conducted at the school. After permission was granted, I visited the campus and met with the principal to discuss the study, learn more about the campus, and answer any questions. The principal also agreed to help inform students and staff members about the research, help identify participants, and help

contact students.

Because the focus was on Hispanic students, all students had to be identified as Hispanic. Juniors and seniors were identified because they had more exposure to the ECHS program and were more likely than younger students to have formulated some goals for higher education and careers. The sample included six boys and four girls. Finally, to have a sample representative of the school population, the principal was asked to select junior and senior students who were not all ranked in the top 10 of their graduating class.

Once the 10 students were identified by the principal, I met with them at the ECHS to explain the case study, answer questions, and distribute the informed consent forms along with a letter of introduction. All participants and their parents signed an informed consent form that identified the purpose of the study, the criteria for eligibility, descriptions of the interview process, issues of benefits (in the form of incentives for participation, if any), possible risks to the participants, and information explaining how the data would be kept completely confidential at all times. There were no incentives for student participation. All informed consent forms were provided in English (Appendix B) and Spanish (Appendix C). The letter of introduction was provided in English (Appendix D) and Spanish (Appendix E) as well. Because the interviews were performed at the college campus, consent to use the premises was obtained from the Independent School District and principal responsible for the space. All parents and students initially identified for the study agreed to participate. The students in this study are not identified so that they may remain anonymous to protect their privacy.

ECHS Campus Description

The ECHS campus is part of a large urban school district and is located on the grounds of a community college. The 2010-2011 academic year was the first year that all four of the grade levels were housed on the community college campus. Before this year, the freshmen and sophomore classes were located at a large urban high school and the junior and senior classes were located at the community college.

The ECHS met adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2010 and is a Texas Education Agency Exemplary campus (see Appendix F). The AYP is a measure defined by the U. S. No Child Left Behind Act that allows the U. S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district is performing academically according to results on standardized tests (U. S. Department of Education, 2011). AYP reports three indicators for each district and campus in the state: reading/language arts, mathematics, and graduation rates (Texas Education Agency, TEA, 2011). Students are required to demonstrate AYP in both performance and participation in reading/language arts and mathematics.

At the state level of accountability, three base indicators determine the campus rating. They are Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test results, completion rates, and annual dropout rates. In order for a campus to be rated a TEA Exemplary campus in 2010, 90% of all students and 90% of students in each sub-population had to meet the passing standard for each subject tested. The subjects tested were reading/language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. The sub-populations are African American, Hispanic, White, and economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2011). Completer rate is defined by students who receive a high school diploma

with their class (or earlier) or have re-enrolled in the fall 2009 as a continuing student. For a campus to be rated Exemplary, 95% of all students and 95% of students in each sub-population must have met the completer rate. In addition, exemplary campuses must have less than the 1.8% standard for annual dropout rate for all students and students in each sub-population (TEA, 2011). The fact that this ECHS campus is a TEA Exemplary campus and met AYP is evidenced by the high level of academic achievement and student performance across all grade levels.

The first graduating class for this ECHS was in spring 2010. Fall 2010 enrollment was 252 students. The ethnic breakdown was African American 5.56%, Asian 3.57%, Hispanic 83.33%, and White 6.75%. The community college assigns a career counselor who is responsible for administering several inventories to help students determine a career path, and then the counselor provides her expertise to help students explore the chosen career.

College-Going Culture and ECHS Campus Description

The goal of cultivating a college-going culture is for all students to be prepared for post secondary options. College-going cultures exist in schools where students are expected to achieve high academic standards, college is a reality and staff is committed to students' college goals. Table 2 in Chapter 1 provides a framework of nine critical building blocks of an effective college-going culture (McDonald & Dorr, 2006). This framework provides indicators that provide visible evidence that the element exists in a school. Data from observations, interviews, and document reviews show that the ECHS in this case study has worked to establish a college-going culture as described below.

1. College talk: There is ongoing communication about college. The ECHS campus sends home newsletters and communicates about college field trips and college recruiting visits. Seniors ring the “college bell” during their advisory period to announce to the ECHS campus that they have received an acceptance letter. Seniors enroll in the senior independent study class designed to help them develop a college-going identity. College posters are visible throughout the halls of the campus and in the counselor’s office. Every Wednesday is college shirt day for ECHS high school staff. The ECHS participates in the ISD’s College Night for 5th grade elementary students and their families.
2. Clear expectations: The mission statement of the ECHS states that all students will graduate with a minimum of 45 college hours and/or an associate of arts degree. All students have a four-year plan that includes taking two college classes beginning their freshman year. Teachers and counselors communicate frequently with students about their college plans. Students declare a college major in their junior year at the ECHS.
3. Information and resources: Students have access to college catalogs, college information, and financial aid material in the ECHS Go Center. The ECHS provides guest speakers for parents and students about financial aid and the college application process. The ECHS counselor provides students information about the PSAT test dates, preparation material, and fee waivers for the tests.

4. Comprehensive counseling model: The ECHS counselor and the community college counselor meet regularly with the students. The ECHS counselor discusses the students' schedule to ensure they enroll in the proper classes and distributes college material. The community college counselor discusses college plans with the students. The ECHS counselor attends College Board conferences. She has scheduled outside consultants to communicate with students about interest inventories and how to understand college requirements.
5. Testing and curriculum: ECHS students must pass the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) test, which is required before the students take any college classes at the community college. Its purpose is to assess the reading, mathematics, and writing skills that entering freshman-level students should have if they are to perform effectively in Texas public colleges or universities (www.thea.com). ECHS students take the PSAT test in the 10th and 11th grades. Students take college classes every semester so that they may earn a minimum of 42 college credits by the time they graduate from the ECHS. The ECHS high school classes are pre-advanced placement classes. The curriculum is rigorous as students incorporate more problem solving and thinking skills in the coursework. There is more collaboration on projects and assignments. Students are often asked to reflect on their work upon completion to determine areas of improvement. The college-level classes are challenging and rigorous based on the reading level, the amount of reading, writing expectations, the depth of the material covered, and pacing

- of the coursework. Students study extra hours outside of class time to help them be prepared. They are expected to use their analytical and evaluation skills as they participate in classroom discussions in the college-level classes.
6. Faculty involvement: ECHS high school teachers are very involved with creating a college-going culture. Mathematics and English teachers help students prepare for the PSAT test. Teachers chose to work at the ECHS. They understand the goals of the school and students' academic expectations.
 7. Family involvement: Parents are an integral part of the ECHS application process. The ECHS campus hosts parent workshops for financial aid, completing the FAFSA forms, and AVID workshops. Parents stay informed about their child's progress through a variety of formats. The ECHS has a campus website with current information for parents and students. The website is updated weekly. Parents are able to view their child's grades online for the ECHS high school classes. The ECHS hosts an open house in the fall and spring semester for parents. The principal writes a monthly newsletter to communicate with parents.
 8. College partnerships: This ECHS operates under a formal partnership between a school district and a community college. The Memorandum of Understanding between the ISD and the community college district delineates the seven guiding principles that were used to establish the ECHS. They are:
 - establish partnership between community college and ISD
 - collaboration in planning, implementation and continuous improvement

of the ECHS

- provide rigorous college readiness and dual credit courses
- financial collaboration to operate program successfully
- location of ECHS on community college grounds
- shared use of facilities
- student selection reflects diversity of the region served by the ECHS.

All students are eligible for transportation services. The bus picks the students up at their home middle school campus. The ISD delivers box breakfasts and box lunches to the ECHS daily. The ECHS students have a specific room in the CC Student Center, which is the designated area where they eat.

An Early College Council serves as an advisory committee to the ECHS principal in establishing policies. Membership on the council includes representatives from the ISD, community college, ISD and community council Board of Trustees, and representatives from University of North Texas, a nearby research university. The early college council interacts with the North Texas Early College Consortium, which is a collaborative entity for ISDs engaged in the development of ECHSs.

9. Articulation: The ECHS articulates with the six feeder middle schools as well as with the community college. Students who are in the middle school AVID program hear a consistent message about seeing themselves as college material. Middle school AVID students take a field trip visit to the ECHS community college campus. The community college counselors and

admissions office assist ECHS students as they progress through the program to complete their associate's degree. Upon graduation from the ECHS, they continue to assist those who chose to enroll in the community college to complete their associate's degree.

In summary, this school is an example of an ECHS located on a community college campus where students take college courses with college students beginning in the 9th grade. Staff works to maintain a college-going culture that builds the expectation that students will continue their college career after graduation and works to assure that students have the ability to succeed in college. The student body reflects the population ECHSs were designed to target—first generation college students from populations underrepresented in higher education.

Data Collection

According to Moustakas (1994),

preparation for collecting data must be as follows: formulate the questions; define terms of questions; conduct literature review and determine original nature of study; develop criteria for selecting participants; establish contact; obtain informed consent; insure confidentiality; agree to place and time commitments; obtain permission to record and publish; and, develop instructions and guiding questions or topics needed for the phenomenological research interview. (p. 180)

Moustakas (1994) further discussed that data collection should include the following: engage and create rapport for conducting the interview; focus on bracketed topic and questions; and conduct the qualitative research interview to obtain descriptions of the experience (informal interview, open-ended questions and topical-guided interview).

There were many important considerations for the data collection phase of the

study. They included determining the sample size, the procedures for finding the participants to be included in the sample, obtaining informed consent for the participants to engage in interviews, and the specifics of the parameters under which the interviews were conducted, all of which were discussed in some length in the preceding sections.

Interviews were scheduled as soon as informed consent was given by all participants, parents of participants, and the proposal was approved. The participants were interviewed face-to-face at their respective campus for about 45 minutes each. Field notes from the interviews were maintained in a notebook that was divided into 10 sections, one section for each interview. Each section had a copy of the interview questions with extra space provided in between each question for notes. The interviews followed a prescribed set of questions that allowed flexibility for the interview to probe for additional details and to follow up on unexpected responses. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were based on the research questions and literature review. Demographic information was collected from students at the beginning of their interviews. It included age, grade classification, whether first generation college attendee, English as a second language (ESL) student, current class schedule, the number of hours per week spent studying, and whether enrolled in classes with college students. After the demographic information was collected, the students were reminded that the interview would be audio recorded. The audio recording began with interview Question 1 for each interview. The interviews were transcribed by a company specializing in transcriptions. Follow-up interviews were conducted by phone with four participants to clarify their answers and to gain more demographic information.

Explication of Data

This section reviews the data analysis methods used for the case study. The term “data analysis” is rarely used in qualitative studies. Researchers usually use the term “explication” of data because it better captures the transformation of descriptive data to interpretation (Groenewald, 2004).

According to Groenewald (2004), the explication process has five steps. The first step is *bracketing and phenomenological reduction*. This refers to the bracketing of the researcher’s personal views and preconceptions. This will include repeated listening to the audio recording of the interviews to become familiar with the context of the words used by the respondents. The second step is *delineating units of meaning*, where statements that are seen to illuminate the problem are extracted. “The researcher is required to make a substantial amount of judgment calls while consciously bracketing one’s own presuppositions in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgments” (p.18-19). The third step is *clustering of units of meaning to form themes*. Hycner (as cited by Groenewald, 2004) maintained that this can be done by grouping units to form themes. Next is the need to *summarize each interview, validate and modify*. The summary contains all the themes elicited from the data, and a validity check is conducted by returning to the respondent to confirm if the essence of the responses were captured. The modification as needed is a result of the validity check (Groenewald, 2004). Lastly, *general and unique themes for all the interviews and composite summary are identified*. Once the first four steps of the process are complete for all the interviews, the researcher looks for the themes and differences in all interviews (Groenewald, 2004). “Care must be taken not to cluster common themes if significant differences exist; the

unique or minority voices are important counterpoints to bring out regarding the phenomenon researched” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 21).

According to Merriam (1998), data analysis is best done in conjunction with data collection. The researcher makes notes and comments on the data. The researcher may write a separate memo about themes that are derived from data. All of this is done after each interview (Merriam, 1998). This procedure allows the researcher to determine if there are more questions that need to be asked in the next interview (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). Merriam (1998) believes that data can be overwhelming and unfocused without simultaneous, ongoing analysis.

In this study, each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews followed a protocol and used probes for additional details and follow up questions when appropriate. The semi-structured interview format offered opportunity for in-depth exploration of the topic and allowed the participants to offer insights via open-ended dialogue.

After each interview, recorded field notes were taken in the notebook to reflect on observations, impressions, ideas, and immediate thoughts. Upon conclusion of all 10 interviews, the field notes were reviewed, the audiotapes were listened to multiple times, and notes were taken. The notes were examined and processed into themes. For example, some of the themes from the notes related to research Question 1 were motivation, intentionality, and goal orientation.

The interviews were transcribed, and the transcriptions were reviewed for accuracy against the audiotapes and corrections were made to the transcriptions as needed. A copy of each transcribed interview was printed and I correlated the interview

questions to each of the four research questions. For example, interview questions 4e, 4f, 4g, and 10 (see Appendix A) were designed to address Question 1- What expectations do Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program have of succeeding in the program and enrolling in college?

An Excel™ (www.microsoft.com) spreadsheet was developed for each question and its corresponding interview questions; the students' responses were listed under the interview questions, and a blank column was added next to the student responses for coding purposes. Next, I coded the students' responses. For example, Question 4e asked: How confident are you that you are going to graduate from high school? Depending on how students answered the question, the response was coded as *very confident*, *confident*, *moderately confident*, or *not confident*. This process was repeated for all four research questions and their corresponding interview questions.

Reliability

In quantitative research, reliability is defined by the ability of the results of the study to be replicated over time and across studies (Golafshani, 2003; Merriam, 1998). In qualitative research, the ability to replicate or generalize the results of a particular study by doing another case study is not the emphasis (Golafshani, 2003; Yin, 2003). The emphasis is on the extent to which another researcher would arrive at the same conclusions if they were to use the exact same procedures as the first researcher (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Yin, 2003). One method of providing qualitative data reliability is through the gathering of rich data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The qualitative approach to the gathering of rich data is the inclusion of all codes and data that are pertinent to the

theme of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Qualitative researchers look to describe something from the perspective of those who experience it, not from the aspect that there is a single reality (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers can become more reliable through training and practice. According to Yin (2003), qualitative research should be conducted as if someone is always looking over your shoulder, as if you were being audited.

It is common practice in qualitative analysis to write down the researcher's foreknowledge or opinions in order to glean data from these thoughts and to identify potential sources of bias in advance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This practice was followed to achieve greater internal validity. Biases identified were that ECHS was a successful program for increasing the high school graduation rate for minority students, and a majority of the students were graduating with an associate's degree. Creswell (2007) maintained that reliability in qualitative studies is achieved through the preservation of data. To maintain the preservation of data in this study, field notes were taken during the collection and analysis of data, and all pertinent data were used to create codes, concepts, and themes during the data collection and analysis phases. These documents served as archives to the study and can be examined in the future as appropriate.

Validity

Ethics plays a big role in ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). The process for establishing validity in qualitative research is different from that used in quantitative research (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003; Jackson et

al., 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Giorgi (2002) notes that the difference lies in the essentials of each of the approaches. Giorgi (2002) wrote that quantitative studies “are more frequently paper and pencil affairs, which mean that they are *about* the phenomenon being tested rather than a direct living through of it” (p. 4). Validity is confirmed in quantitative research when the research phenomenon or relationships between variables within the research phenomenon are objectively measured against a set of standards (Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, the data are specific and subjective (Moustakas, 1994). Given the specificity of the data, the methodology to establish validity in qualitative research should be derived through methods that are alternate to those used in quantitative research (Giorgi, 2002; Golafshani, 2003; Moustakas, 1994). Merriam (1998) defined internal validity as how research findings match reality. It asks the question: What is captured in the findings? According to Merriam (1998), in qualitative research, what is being observed are people's construction of reality. Data collection and analysis in qualitative research are done by the researcher, not by an instrument that can be measured. Interpretations of reality are available through observations and interviews. Therefore, in qualitative research we are closer to reality than a data collection instrument (Merriam, 1998).

Validity in qualitative research can be established through several different methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Johnson and Christensen (2007) state that “validity in qualitative research is confirmed when the research is defensible” (p. 282). The research of this study is internally valid due to the defensibility of the research, particularly with the use of extensive coding of data

analysis. All students' responses to the interview questions were coded.

According to Creswell (2007), external validity refers to the ability to generalize the findings of a study to contexts and environments outside of that study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted that the ability to generalize the results of a study to other settings can be difficult. Yin (2003) defined external validity as the ability to generalize beyond the case study and further cautioned that there are barriers in case studies because a single case is a poor basis for generalizing. The results of the 10 case studies in this research study should not be used to generalize the results outside of this study.

Summary

The research method and design chosen for this study was a qualitative approach, which was more appropriate to this study than a quantitative approach (Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data were analyzed from the transcribed interviews of 10 Hispanic, ECHS, high school students.

Chapter 3 includes a presentation of the data collection and analysis procedures. Data collection was conducted through 45-minute interviews. Validity and reliability were maintained through the establishment of credible data. Chapter 4 includes a detailed presentation of the analysis of the data about the perceptions of ECHS high school students on ECHS education and factors influencing graduation and attrition rates.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students in Texas with regard to their experiences in an early college high school (ECHS). The descriptive case study of juniors and seniors in an ECHS located on a community college campus used a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The views and perspectives of 10 students were gathered using semi-structured interviews. The principal was interviewed, and she answered follow up questions by email. This chapter describes the results and it is comprised of three sections.

The first section describes the participants' characteristics and the interview process. The second section presents the data analysis results by providing discussion of the overall findings and emerging themes illustrated by the rich descriptions captured during data collection. The third section looks at three student cases. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What expectations do Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program have of succeeding in the program and enrolling in college?
2. How are these expectations being developed in the ECHS program?
 - a. How are expectations for academic success perceived by students?
 - b. How are expectations for social integration in college perceived by students?
 - c. What supports do students identify as available to ensure their success?
3. What barriers do Hispanic students feel they face in an ECHS?
4. How do students characterize their motivation to pursue a college degree?
 - a. How does participation in ECHS support that motivation?
 - b. What factors negatively impact student motivation?

Participant Characteristics and the Interview

Miles and Huberman (1994), who endorsed the use of a small and broad sample of participants for an in-depth study, informed the criterion for identifying participants. The selection process is described in Chapter 3. The students had varied backgrounds, but held the common experience of participating in the ECHS program.

The study involved 10 students, four female and six male students. Five were juniors and five were seniors. Seven had received English as a Second Language (ESL) services at some point in their academic career. Students enter and exit the program based on their English language proficiency (National Council of Teachers of English, [NCTE], 2008). To qualify children must speak a language other than English most of the time and have families where another language is spoken most of the time at home. Eight of these students were the first generation from their family to graduate from high school, and all were the first generation from their family to attend college. At end of the 2010-2011 school year, all students had earned college credits. The five juniors earned 10 – 39 college credits at the end of the school year, and the seniors earned 16 – 62 college credits. All five of the seniors received their high school diploma, and one graduated with an associate's degree in art. Table 3 provides a synopsis of participants' backgrounds. Pseudonyms were given to each of the 10 students who were interviewed. Descriptions of the students and their background are provided in the subsequent paragraphs.

Table 3

Participant Profiles

Participant	Age	Gender	Grade	First Gen HS	First Gen College	ESL	College Credits	Hours/week studying	Associates Degree
1	18	M	11 th	Y	Y	Y	10	7.5	NA
2	17	F	12 th	N	Y	Y	42	10	No
3	17	F	11 th	Y	Y	Y	39	25	NA
4	19	M	12 th	Y	Y	Y	31	10	No
5	18	F	12 th	Y	Y	Y	16	7.5	No
6	16	M	11 th	N	Y	N	35	5	NA
7	17	M	11 th	Y	Y	Y	39	25	NA
8	18	M	12 th	Y	Y	Y	62	15	Yes
9	17	F	12 th	Y	Y	N	39	20	No
10	17	M	11 th	Y	Y	N	26	-	NA

Student 1: Antonio, 18, was a junior when interviewed. He is the first generation from his family to graduate from high school and to attend college, if he attends. He was retained in middle school in the seventh grade. He has been enrolled in ESL classes. He heard about ECHS from a teacher at his middle school and decided to attend because he thought there would be more freedom than at a traditional high school. He did not work for pay. He says that his mom thinks that the ECHS is good for him, and she is very proud of him. Initially he stated that he would like to go into business, eventually running his own company. However, later he expressed some interest in acting as a career. As of the end of his junior year at ECHS, he had earned 10 hours of college credit, the fewest college credits of the 10 students interviewed. When asked what college he wanted to attend, he did not identify one.

Student 2: Blanca, 17, was a senior when interviewed. Both her parents are high school graduates; however, she is the first generation to attend college. She had been enrolled in ESL classes. She is pregnant and knows that it will be a struggle to raise a child while going to college. She has a part time job at a retail-clothing store. She wanted to attend ECHS because she could earn college credit, take classes on a college campus, and make her parents proud. She heard about ECHS from a friend who was attending ECHS. She visited with her middle school counselor to find out more information and obtained an application form. Her parents think ECHS is a great opportunity for her to earn college credit. She wants to be a role model for her younger sister. She wants to attend the University of North Texas and major in speech therapy. Blanca graduated from high school in May with 42 hours of college credit.

Student 3: Carmela, 17, a junior when interviewed, is the first from her family to

graduate from high school and attend college. She has taken ESL classes. What interested her about ECHS was that she could earn two years of college education for free, and she understood how valuable that was. She did not work for pay. Carmela's middle school math teacher told her about ECHS and encouraged her to apply. Her parents are happy that she earned two years of college credit for free. She wants to attend the University of Texas at Dallas and major in political science and minor in philosophy. After earning her bachelor's degree, she would like to attend Southern Methodist University law school. At the end of the spring semester, she will have earned 39 hours of college credit.

Student 4: Carlos, 19, a senior when interviewed, is the first generation to graduate from high school and attend college. He was the oldest of the students interviewed. He had taken ESL classes previously. His younger brother will be attending ECHS next year. His parents really wanted him to attend ECHS, and they feel he was blessed to be able to attend. He wanted to attend ECHS so that he could get a head start on his career, help him go to college, and earn a college degree. Carlos found out about ECHS when he heard other students talking about it in class. He did not work for pay. He plans to finish his associate's degree at the community college he is enrolled in currently then transfer to the University of North Texas where he wants to major in computer engineering. Carlos graduated from high school in May with 31 college credits.

Student 5: Reyna, 18, a senior when interviewed, is the first in her family to graduate from high school and attend college. She has taken ESL classes. She was proud of the fact that she only missed two days of school all year. Reyna was interested

in attending ECHS because it offered free college credit, so her mother would not have to pay. She also liked the idea of a smaller school where she could get more one-to-one help from her teachers. She heard about ECHS from her eighth grade math teacher. She did not work for pay. She said that her mom thinks she is more focused on school and earning better grades since she has been at ECHS. She wants to continue at the community college next year then transfer to the University of North Texas and major in pre-medicine. She was also interested in a nursing program. Reyna graduated high school in May and earned 16 college credits during her time at ECHS.

Student 6: Francisco, 16, was a junior when interviewed. Both parents were high school graduates. He wanted to attend ECHS because he wanted to earn his associate's degree and get ahead of his peers. He heard about ECHS at an assembly at his middle school. He said his parents are very proud of his accomplishments at the ECHS, and are very supportive. He is the first generation to attend college. He works 20 – 25 hours per week in the warehouse of a large national retail establishment. He wants to go to college so that he “does not have to work with his hands.” He wants to complete his associate's degree at the community college and transfer to either the University of North Texas or Texas Woman's University and major in business. He will have earned 35 college credits at the end of his junior year.

Student 7: Leo, 17, a junior when interviewed, is the first generation to graduate from high school and attend college. He was enrolled in ESL classes in elementary school. He was interested in ECHS because it would give him a chance to graduate with an associate's degree and high school diploma. Leo said it was beneficial because he is saving two years of college, so right after his senior year he can go to a university

and start taking college classes for his major. He found out about ECHS in middle school when students from the ECHS came to visit his campus and talked to the students. He says his parents are “excited and thrilled” and are very supportive of him. He did not work for pay. After graduating from high school, he wants to attend Texas Tech, the University of North Texas, Texas State University, or Baylor University. He wants to major in either physical therapy or business. He will have earned 39 college credits at the end of his junior year.

Student 8: Luis, 18, was a senior when interviewed. He was in ESL classes during the third and fourth grade. He is the first generation to graduate from high school and attend college. He has a sister who will enroll in ECHS next year. He was interested in the program because it promised two years of college classes while working on the high school diploma. He liked the idea of earning an associate’s degree and high school diploma simultaneously. He also liked that all of this was free. He wanted to succeed and be the first in his family to graduate from college and high school. His family is very supportive, proud, and is always talking about him to their family and friends. He heard about ECHS from his middle school counselor. His advancement via individual determination (AVID) teacher encouraged him to fill out the application. He worked 25 – 30 hours per week. At the time of the interview, he had already been accepted at the University of Texas at Arlington and plans to enroll in the fall. He wants to major in criminology and continue on to earn a master’s degree in psychology. At the end of the semester, he will have earned his high school diploma and associate’s degree from the community college. He has 62 college credits.

Student 9: Anita, 17, was a senior when interviewed, and is the first member of

her family to graduate from high school and attend college. She was interested in ECHS because it was an opportunity to earn free college credit and get an associate's degree. She thought it was "unbelievable" that she could earn both her diploma and her associate's degree for free. She also liked the fact that the school was smaller than the high school she would have attended. Anita found out about ECHS through a presentation at her middle school. Her family is happy she is taking college classes and finishing high school at the same time. She has a 27-year-old cousin who attends the same community college that she does. Anita's cousin pays tuition to attend the same classes. Anita said knowing that reinforces the benefit of this opportunity. She did not work for pay. She wants to continue at the community college, earn an associate's degree, and then transfer to either Texas Woman's University, University of Texas at Arlington, or Texas State University and major in nursing. At the time of the interview, she had earned 39 college credits.

Student 10: Marco, 17, was a junior when interviewed. He is the first in his family to graduate from high school and attend college. He was interested in ECHS because he could earn an associate's degree and high school diploma, and he wanted to try something different. He heard about ECHS because his middle school really advertised it. He did not work for pay. He was only moderately confident about attending college after graduating from high school. He has not given any consideration as to what he wants to do after graduating from ECHS and does not know what his major would be in college. He earned 26 college credits his junior year. His interview was the shortest because he had to leave to catch the bus. When I went back to the campus to finish the interviews, he was absent.

In most respects, this group reflected the target demographic of the ECHS reform. Only two had a parent who had graduated from high school, and all would be first-generation college students. Seven were raised in families where Spanish is spoken most of the time. Seven were attracted to ECHS in part by the opportunity to accelerate their education by earning concurrent college and high school credits, while four expressly mentioned the appeal of free tuition. Two were attracted by the relatively small size of the ECHS, while two cited less concrete reasons—seeking greater freedom than in regular high school and the desire to try something different. Most noted parental support for their participation in the ECHS, and some were motivated by a desire to make their parents proud. Surprisingly, only three students held part-time jobs in addition to attending school, suggesting that their families did not have to rely on them to supplement the household income. Francisco, who worked over 20 hours a week, spent the least amount of time studying, yet by the end of his junior year he had earned a year of college credit hours. Many expressed clear and pragmatic career goals.

Data Analysis Results

Expectations for the Future

The first research question more specifically asked about the students' expectations for succeeding in the program and enrolling in college. This question was answered through analysis of responses to six interview questions:

1. How confident are you that you are going to graduate from high school?
2. How confident are you that you are going to college after you graduate from high school?

3. If you are considering college, what schools are you considering?
Community college or four-year school? Or have you thought of that yet?
4. Do you know what you want to major in?
5. How confident are you that you are going to graduate from college?
6. Have you, or have you not applied to colleges yet?

These questions were grounded in expectancy theory and the assumption that there would be a connection between motivation, goal setting and confidence.

Generally, the ECHS juniors and seniors were very optimistic about achieving their immediate goal, but appeared less confident about their college plans. Nine of the students express strong confidence that they will graduate from high school. These high levels of confidence appear to stem from the fact that each report having a plan and being focused on his/her goal. Those with the highest levels of motivation, as evidence by clear goals and accrued college credits, were also those who demonstrated the highest levels of confidence in their future and in their ability to achieve the goals they establish for themselves.

Blanca, Carmela and Carlos emphasized their commitment to maintaining high grades and using resources to assure that grades remain strong. High level of confidence was a repeated theme in every response. Blanca noted, "I'm confident because I feel like I'm trying – like, I've been trying hard to keep up with my grade, come to school, and just do good, and make sure I graduate." Similarly, Carmela noted, "I'm really confident. Because of – apart from being determined, I have the grades, and I'm focused. That's really all you need."

While 9 out of 10 students felt confident that they could maintain grades at a level

that would assure their high school graduation, some students showed a commitment not just to being eligible to graduate, but to graduate with additional college credits or an associate's degree. Francisco stated:

I'm very confident that I'm gonna graduate from high school because my academics can show it. I'm a good student. I try to be a good student, and it's just motivation that keeps me going. So I can get my associate's degree and my high school diploma at the same time.

Francisco's confidence was well founded as he did earn the associate's degree at the end of the semester.

Luis was in a similarly strong position heading into graduation:

I'm very confident that I am going to graduate. The reason is because I have all my credits. I'm only taking two high school classes this year, which are my Spanish and my senior independent study. I don't necessarily need the senior independent study, but I just take it because it will help me out in the future. And Spanish, it's an extra class so I can graduate with recognition from the program as well.

Only one student appeared to be uncertain about whether or not graduation was within reach. Antonio replied that he was only moderately confident he would graduate from high school, noting that his own motivation rather than the ECHS program would determine the future. The student noted, "It just depends on how many years it would take for me to get my act together." Antonio emerged as the outlier in these interviews, identifying few personal or academic goals, and showing little intrinsic motivation to achieve academic success.

Student's confidence about attending college was less consistent than confidence about high school graduation. Six students provided responses that reflected high levels of confidence in their ability and intention to attend college, while two students expressed doubt. Antonio, who was unsure even about his high school

graduation, showed little optimism about going to college. While he had admitted that he did not have his “act together,” he cited money as the primary obstacle to attending college. Blanca was somewhat confident that college would be in her future, but she also noted that she was currently pregnant and had doubts about her ability to manage college and parent a small child.

For those students who expressed confidence in their pursuit of a college education, themes focusing on self-sufficiency and having a better life emerged strongly. Carmela stated, “I don’t see anything else other than going to the university. The only way out of poverty is through education.” Similarly, Carlos stated, “If I don't go to college, then I'm not gonna be anything in life. I really want to be something. I want to have a career and have money for my family.” Having a family and supporting a family were noted by three respondents as motivating factors for pursuing a college degree.

Those respondents with high confidence that they would attend college also noted that they had already taken steps toward that goal. Seven respondents had already identified or applied to colleges, and five of the seven were taking extra courses to aid the transition to college. Several also were taking courses related to their intended majors. One student stated he wanted to go to a four-year school but did not identify which one. Only 2 out of the 10 students interviewed had not thought about where they would like to go to college. For the 8 students who wanted to attend college, all intended to pursue a four-year degree, with three indicating they would begin at a community college and then transfer. Also reflective of their focus on future planning, all but one of the eight students had a college major in mind. Marco, who had not considered where he would like to go to college, had also not yet considered a major.

Though not all respondents were entirely certain about where they would go to college or what they would study, they shared a common level of confidence about their ability to graduate from college. Though several acknowledged that it would be a challenge, strong intentionality was expressed among eight of the 10 respondents. Antonio and Marco, who were also noted to be the least certain of their academic ability to attend college, showed moderate confidence in their ability to graduate from college in the future, but their comments also reflected a less focused goal orientation. Their comments reflected a belief that their destiny was beyond their control. For example, Antonio stated, "It depends. Just see how things go...it just really depends on where life takes me," and Marco responding only that he "would try and do that." However, Marco earned 26 college credits as a junior, so he was meeting ECHS expectations for earning college credits.

Responses from the other eight students showed that they were aware of potential difficulties in completing college, but they had developed strategies in the ECHS for managing them. Francisco noted that the skills he used in ECHS, such as study groups and getting outside help, would aid in his pursuit of a college degree. Leo similarly drew confidence from current success. Blanca, Carlos, and Anita noted that, though there are likely to be struggles, they intend to persist regardless of what barriers might occur.

This strong commitment to achieving a college degree is reflected in their responses to the question of how they view college as an aid to achieving their career and life goals. Eight of the 10 respondents showed a strong commitment to their future plans and goals. Carmela replied, "It's all I think about." Responses also reflected a

trend toward improving their own life situation and those around them. Anita noted that graduating from college was very important “Because I wanna be something in life than just working in a store. I wanna change somebody’s life. I wanna save somebody’s life one day.” Carlos and Reyna emphasized that motivation to achieve their goals stemmed from a commitment to their families. Carlos noted, “Really important, since I want to get a good job, to take care of my family and everything,” and Reyna stated, “It’s important to me because I’ll be the first one – the first generation in my family to even go to college and to finish high school and to get a career.” Blanca and Francisco highlighted the importance not just of making money, but of doing something that they enjoy. “It’s important because – not just money – it’s not based on money – but, it’s what I want to do in my future. I want to do something I enjoy” (Blanca). Francisco stated, “I don’t wanna work with my hands my entire life. I currently have a job, and it’s not good.”

Unlike the other students, Antonio, who was not even sure that he would graduate from high school, continued to struggle with establishing and maintaining a focus on future goals, stating that college is not necessarily required for his chosen field of acting. He first noted that college graduation cannot occur without first graduating from high school, and that remains uncertain. Further, he questioned the validity of the conventional wisdom about the necessity of a college degree. “Careers, people say you need to graduate to be in acting and stuff. It’s not needed. It’s just something that’s put out there for someone else to reach so that you can put you at a higher level so you can get your job.”

Expectations for Academic Success Developed in ECHS

Research Question 2a asked: How are expectations for academic success perceived by the students? This question was explored using the following six interview questions:

1. What courses or academic activities do you find most challenging?
2. Why do you find them challenging?
3. What things in your academic programs are most interesting for you?
4. What about them makes them interesting?
5. How well do you think you are doing in the ECHS program?
6. Why do you think so?

When asked about the most challenging academic activity, seven of the students noted that their mathematics classes were a challenge. As juniors and seniors, their mathematics class was either pre-calculus or algebra II. Antonio, Blanca, Reyna, Leo, Luis and Marco expressed concerns with their mathematics proficiency and the level of difficulty of the course. Blanca said, “Because I’m not a good math expert, I’ve been struggling with math all four years that I’ve been here.” Similarly, Luis stated, “The reason being is it’s – I mean math is pretty hard to me. Just basically I have never been good with numbers, but I overcame that challenge this year.” Marco said, “It’s just it gets harder, and you really have to put more extra effort into it.”

Carlos answered that the most challenging academic activity was his college classes in general. When students referred to “college classes,” they mean those that are taken with community college students. He said,

My college classes, because they’ll be just talking out of a book and that’s something I wouldn’t be used to, and they would just like give you a bunch of

notes. It's a different environment than high school. It was hard to stay on task and to pay attention.

Francisco and Marco stated that History and English, respectively, were the most challenging for them because of the amount of required reading. Francisco noted, "Because it's just a lot of reading. You have to do a lot of reading and sometimes I am not really good with applying myself to reading a certain passage or a certain summary." Marco said, "You have to read books and then do essays."

The students were able to identify quickly what they found to be the most interesting about their academic experiences at the ECHS, and their answers varied. Antonio, Carmela, Carlos and Reyna said their college classes were the most interesting. Their college classes have been a positive experience for them. Antonio stated,

I'm interacting with people that are way older than me, people that I've never been able to meet or have a chance to talk to because they're older. One would think that is bad, but that's the most interesting thing.

Carmela commented on the college classes and college professors. She said, "Oh, they don't hold back. It's not necessarily bad, we understand what they're saying and they're not afraid to like, if they need to cuss they will cuss." Carlos stated, "They give you like a rubric and they tell you how much the tests are worth and they even give you an extra credit and when it's due." Reyna commented on the classroom instruction, "They do lesson plans where it's fun but you're learning something at the same time you'll get the stuff." Marco said, "I find it's interesting that if you do your part, you'll get an associate's, and it gives you college credits."

Francisco commented on the online course that he was taking. Students have the option to take some online courses through the community college in addition to

classes with direct teacher instruction.

My economics class because it's a pretty cool class 'cause it's online, and you pace yourself. You pace yourself and all of that. So it's just if you're really into it, you can finish it. I actually already finished it and I got an "A" in that class. But it's interesting because I wanna go in the field of business administrator. It teaches you a whole lot of stuff from economics and microeconomics and stuff like that.

When asked how well they thought they were doing in the ECHS program, nine of the 10 students thought they were doing "well" to "very well." They were very confident that they were doing well academically. Antonio, however, did not think he was doing well, "I think I'm doing bare minimum. I don't think I'm doing what I can do in order to do better." He seemed to believe that the size of the campus, which is 252 students, had an impact on how he was doing. He said, "My numbers would be better at a bigger school. So I'd be able to do the bare minimum and not to be in the bottom half, I'd probably be in the top or the middle." Because Antonio stated that he only studies 7.5 hours per week and he does not have a part time job after school to occupy his time, this sounds like an accurate self-assessment of his academic achievement.

Blanca thought she was doing "pretty well," but admitted she did have struggles. She said, "Keeping up with my homework, that's a big struggle, because I also work at the same time." Eight of the ECHS students thought they were doing well because of their grades and class rank. Francisco stated, "I'm ranked number six out of my whole class. So I'm doing pretty good." Anita said, "I have the distinguished degree. I have a 3.5 in my college classes."

Expectations for Social Integration

Research Question 2b asked: How are expectations for social integration in

college perceived by students? This question was explored using the following interview questions:

1. How are your social experiences at early college high school different from those at the high school? Are you satisfied with the number of friends that you have here?
2. Does the early college high school do anything to help involve you in the college community socially, clubs, activities, things with the college?
3. What parts of the social life here at the early college high school do you like the best?
4. Is there anything about the social aspect of being here that you don't like?
5. How confident are you that you're going to fit in socially when you go to college because of your experiences that you have here?

Generally, the students responded that they were satisfied with the number of friends that they had at ECHS. Family, friends, and support from the environment also emerged as a theme that helped to guide goal setting, enhance confidence and support motivation. Some commented that there was a family-like environment on campus that they did not experience at their previous campus. In addition, students also enjoyed the smaller environment that allowed them to be friends with everybody. Blanca stated, "It's like we're more a whole family. Like, we interact with everyone. We just don't go and have our own little group of friends. We talked to everyone." Carlos agreed with the concept of family. He said, "Right here in this school, you're like friends with everybody. You're like a big family instead of like just being one part of a group. You're just one whole." Leo answered, "So it's like a small environment. So there are not a lot of people. So I have a few friends, but it's good." Reyna attributes the fact that she knows everybody in the small environment to not being as shy as she used to be. She said:

I'm not shy anymore. Throughout the years being here, I know everybody and I got used to them and I'm not shy anymore. I'm not afraid to speak out. That's one thing that I'm really proud of because I'm a really shy person.

Reyna's comments highlighted an additional theme that was related to the supportive relationship theme, and that is the way in which support from others, including friends and family, can enhance self-confidence in the classroom. Several students commented on the initial appeal of the small classes at ECHS, and several also commented on the ways in which this enhanced their own sense of competence and ability. Francisco identified with the maturity level of the students and the ways in which the expectations for mature interactions in the classroom improved student performance. He said, "I believe it's just more mature. You have to take responsibility because you're not gonna act like a high school student in college classes."

For all of the benefits of ECHS touted by the participants, one of the noted trade-offs was the lack of opportunity to participate in regular high school activities. With respect to other social experiences that are different at ECHS, four of the students identified the lack of extracurricular activities and athletic teams to support like there are in a regular high school. They seemed to miss that connection to high school. Blanca said, "It's different because here we don't have dances. We don't have a football team. And it's hard. Because we see that we never do anything, and we see the high school students having fun. And we're here."

Leo stated, "Well, I do wish sometimes that we had other activities 'cause in the regular high school they have more activities and more clubs, and more people." Some of the students also noted that they have lost contact with their friends from their home campus. They believed that their focus had changed since attending ECHS, and that

they did not have as much in common with them. Anita noted that she lost touch with her friends and it was hard, “because they wanted to have more fun than studying.”

Antonio also commented about losing contact with his friends when he said,

I’m satisfied with all the friends that I have. I just feel cut out if I was to go to another school and no one really remembers me. So, if I were to get kicked out of this program and I go back to another school it would be really hard for me to get back to my friends because they don’t talk to me.

However, eight of the students responded in a positive manner about the ECHS providing them with opportunities to get involved with the community colleges’ clubs and organizations. They were encouraged to join, they were provided brochures, or provided a bulletin board in the ECHS hallway with flyers about community college clubs and organizations. Blanca stated, “We have clubs. They have clubs that they provide - that if we want to go in, we can.” Francisco answered, “Yes, ma’am, they give us a lot of information and brochures on any events that are happening in college that we should check out.” Antonio was the only student who did not believe that the ECHS did anything to help get students involved in community college socially by getting them involved in clubs and activities. He answered, “Not really, unless you’re in Phi Theta Kappa, an honorary society, and that’s a self-choice. It’s not the school, it’s a self choice.”

When asked if there was anything about the social aspect of attending ECHS that they did not like, seven of the students responded that that there was not. They are as involved as they wanted to be and are not restricted from participating in anything on campus. Blanca stated, “I really – there is nothing that I don’t like.” Only two of the students identified something that they did not like about the social aspect of ECHS. One was the recurring theme of not having extracurricular athletic activities to

participate in or teams to support. However, they understand that the trade-off is their academic achievement. Luis stated,

That's one thing that I don't like is not having a team that I can play for and compete against other high schools. This program is made for education purposes. You go in there - you come here, you study, you get your degree, and that's it. It's not like other high schools.

The other comment was about the immaturity of the students. This was interesting because the maturity level of the students is what other students liked about the ECHS in previous responses. However, Antonio answered, "Immatureness on this campus. People call me immature, but they're really immature themselves." He commented on how the freshmen were always running around while they were hanging out in front of the building before school started. He stated that they were immature and got on his nerves. Antonio's responses continue to not be typical of the other students' responses.

The students were confident that their experiences at the ECHS would help them fit in socially in college. All students were either "confident" or "very confident" about their ability to acclimate to the college environment. Antonio stated, "I think I'll fit in pretty well." Similarly, Leo, answered, "I'm confident enough because I already know the experience of college and how the professors are and the environment of a classroom. So, I'm not stressing out because of that."

Student Services that Support Success

Research Question 2c asked: What supports do students identify as available to ensure their success? This question was answered using data provided from the following interview questions:

1. Have you used any academic supports for students, such as advisors, tutors, and study groups? What's your experience?
2. Has anyone from the school met with you to discuss approaches for financing college student loans, scholarships, how to apply for financial aid?
3. Have you ever met with a counselor either from the early college high school or the community college?
4. Was the counselor helpful to you?
5. What kind of help are you getting in learning how to apply for college?
6. Do you know what financial aid is available or do you know much about the college application process?

All the students responded that they utilized a variety of the academic supports that are available to them. They attended tutorials with their teachers, study sessions after school, writer's corner at the community college, and math lab. Reyna stated, "I go to the principal for her help. I also go to tutorials. I go to the principal for my writing because she helped me pass the Accuplacer." Despite the provision and use of academic support services at ECHS, it appeared that the bulk of the support available focused on academic content. Students mentioned little about formal guidance counseling regarding navigating the college selection and application process, and the overriding theme of concerns for paying for college indicated that students were largely unaware of what the true costs of college are and what resources are available to help pay for college. One noted exception was the Senior Independent Study class.

The five seniors were enrolled in a senior independent study class. They found the class to be very helpful because they discussed the college application process, scholarships, and financial aid and filled out the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA, 2011). They also discussed the cost of going to college, though some student comments suggested that they still did not fully understand the processes and

resources available in this area. The lack of understanding in this area also reflected a lowered confidence in their ability to pay for college, and many students cited their future success as hinging not only on succeeding in college, but on affording it. According to the ECHS principal, last year was our first graduating class, and we were disappointed at how few went to a four-year college after graduation, so we created the senior independent study class to walk them through the process. Of the 75 seniors, 45 of them have been accepted into a four-year college, with a total of 82 acceptance letters, and over \$300,000 in scholarship monies awarded. Most of the seniors who haven't gotten their associate's degree will plan to stay at the community college for next year. All seniors have applied to FAFSA®, which is the application most colleges use to determine eligibility for federal, state, and college-sponsored financial aid, including grants, educational loans and work-study programs (FAFSA, 2011). It may be wise for ECHS to look beyond completion of the FAFSA® as the only goal for the course, but to expand that focus to examine financial literacy and financial planning for college, as well.

Three of the juniors stated they have had some conversation with the counselors about the cost of going to college, but they all alluded to the fact that they would take the senior independent study class the following year. All the students had met with their ECHS counselor and community college counselor many times. They found them to be helpful as they registered for classes, worked on their high school schedule, college schedule, keeping up with credits earned, and discussed their college majors. Reyna answered,

My high school counselor, she'll talk about my credits for high school that I needed and what courses I needed to take. My college one, she gave me

information on the nursing program they have here and courses I need to take to get into the nursing program.

Barriers Faced by Hispanic Students at ECHS

Research Question 3 asked: What barriers do Hispanic students feel they face in ECHS? This question was answered through analysis of the following interview

questions:

1. Have your parents talked with you about how the family will finance the cost of higher education?
2. Will your parents be able to provide financial support?
3. Do you and your family have a clear idea of the costs of going to college?
4. What challenges or barriers are you experiencing here?
5. Are there supports that you would like to have that are not available?
6. Do you know of anyone who decided to withdraw from the ECHS?
7. Why did they withdraw?

Seven of the students responded that they have had conversations with their family about how they will finance college. Interestingly, one of the seniors stated, “No, not really. I’m planning just to work a lot to get the money.” Two of the juniors have not had any discussions with their family about the cost yet. Leo stated, “Yes, we have talked. My mom says that she’s willing to get two jobs.” Anita answered, “My parents told me they can support me until I’m 30, but as long as I don’t get pregnant.”

Determining how the cost of college will be handled is a concern for the students. Only three of the students stated their parents would be able to help pay for college. Four of the students thought that their parents might be able to help a little, and three were

certain their parents could not pay for college at all.

Some of the students thought they had a clear idea about the cost of a college education, but three of them did not think that their parents had a clear idea about the cost. One of the juniors stated that he was not aware of the cost of college.

In addition to financial barriers to future college enrollment, other current challenges that were identified by the students included lack of assistance from the college professors, being self-disciplined enough to do their work, and their math class. Two students, Carmela and Reyna, could not identify any barriers or challenges. Blanca stated, "The challenges would be not being able to meet with instructors when help is needed because they're busy or have a class." Carlos answered, "You have to maintain everything yourself. Nobody's watching over you anymore." While seven had been eligible for ESL at some point in their school careers, none of the students interviewed identified language difficulty or feeling like a minority on campus and not belonging as a barrier.

Six of the students could not identify any additional support they would like to have at the ECHS. Blanca said, "No, I think we have everything here." Similarly, Francisco agreed, "We're actually pretty good on support. If you ever need something, you can always ask a counselor." However, Antonio stated he did not know what he was getting into. "I knew I was coming to the school, but I didn't know who was gonna be here that I knew." Luis would like to have AVID back. He said, "I guess bring AVID back. It was helpful for me to learn organizational skills, manage your time, and learn more about college." Carlos stated he would like to have teachers tell him to study, although he quickly added, "but I know I shouldn't". He understands the high

expectations of ECHS. He would like to have someone prompting him to stay on task. He knows he is ultimately responsible for his own learning.

One of the advantages of attending the ECHS is the small size of the campus. Students commented on the fact that it is a family-like environment. Therefore, it was not surprising that all the students were aware of students who have withdrawn from the ECHS. According to them, the reasons for the students withdrawing varied. The most common response was that they could not handle the academics. Other reasons they gave were family issues and the fact there were not any extracurricular activities.

Motivation to Pursue a College Degree

Research Question 4 asked the question: How do students characterize their motivation to pursue a college degree? This question was explored through the interview question: How do you think ECHS has changed your motivations about school?

Research Question 4a explored the role of ECHS in supporting this motivation by asking: How does participation in ECHS support that motivation? This question was explored through the interview question, Are you more motivated about your education now than you were before you became an ECHS student?

The final research question, Question 4b, asked: What factors negatively impact student motivation? This question was explored by asking respondents: What things do you find de-motivating?

The students had much to say about how their motivation had changed since attending ECHS. Nine believed that ECHS had a positive impact on their motivation

level. Many of the students commented on their determination, focus, and importance of an education and goals for the future. Blanca stated, "If it wasn't for ECHS, I think, I would, like, slack off. It prepared me. I'm motivated to go to college." Carlos commented, "It helped me see the possibilities that you can have while having an associate's degree and not a high school diploma--that importance it has." Francisco answered, "I can do this. I can hang out with the college kids, and I can get my work done." Marco summed it up by saying, "It made me apply myself more and make sure that you will succeed in your education. Get as much education as you can." Antonio was the only student interviewed who did not seem more motivated. He replied, "It really hasn't changed that much. I just wake up every morning coming to school thinking the same thing again. It's the same thing."

Eight of the students answered "yes" when asked if they were more motivated about their education now compared to before coming to ECHS. The students see beyond getting a high school diploma and the reality of obtaining a college education.

Leo said,

Well, because when I was in middle school, I would only think about high school. Now I am not worried about high school at all. I'm more worried about college and finishing with my associate's, and after that going to university and finishing. And it has opened my eyes to see more of the – education is really, really important.

Luis thought his previous motivation was the same as it was in ECHS because he had support from his AVID teacher in middle school. He said, "I'm really the same because in seventh grade my AVID teacher motivated me so much to pursue the career and be successful."

The factors that had a negative impact on the students' experience at the ECHS were varied. There was no one emerging response to this interview question. Three of the students commented on the academic expectations because of the difficulty of classes, amount of work, and amount of reading that is required. Blanca said, "Sometimes the classes are difficult. There's times where classes are just hard and it just makes me not want to go to college, because of how hard it is." Carmela was concerned with the fact that there were only 40 students in her class, so that had an impact on class rank. She stated, "I'm number eight in ranking. I want to go up. How can I top these kids when they're getting A's, and I'm getting A's, too – like we can't move up." Two of the students said there was not anything that they found to have a negative impact of their motivation. Antonio commented on the fact that there are no extracurricular activities. He responded, "We don't have a football team, soccer team. Just don't have anything to do. All it is straight academics."

Student Cases

Not all students experienced ECHS in the same way. The program was developed to help students from underrepresented groups earn a high school diploma, enroll in college, and complete a four-year degree. The ECHS creates a college-going culture that develops motivation to attend college and provides support so that students are confident that they will succeed academically and socially in higher education.

These three students were selected to illustrate different levels of motivation and academic achievement. Luis was a highly motivated senior who was able to succeed academically as he earned a high school diploma and an Associate's degree. Reyna

was the senior who earned the fewest amount of college credits. Although she was motivated, she earned 16 college credits. Antonio was a junior who exhibited a low level of motivation and confidence in his responses.

Luis

Luis exemplified the ECHS expectations for its students. A senior when interviewed, he had been accepted to a 4-year college where he planned to enroll in the fall. At the end of the school year, he had earned both a high school diploma and an Associate of Arts degree from the community college with 62 hours of credit. He had identified his college major and planned to eventually get a master's degree.

Luis entered the ECHS after having participated in AVID as a middle school student. AVID focuses on raising expectations of students in the academic middle—B, C, and D students who are interested in attending college and willing to work hard. The program has been adopted in over 4,800 schools throughout the United States and has been successful in helping its students succeed in high school and transition to college. (http://www.avid.org/abo_whatisavid.html). Luis felt that “It [AVID] was helpful for me to learn organizational skills, manage your time, and learn more about college.” His AVID teacher also helped him complete the ECHS application. Luis stated that AVID had established his high motivation before he started high school, so ECHS did not affect his level of motivation. He said, “I’m really the same, because in seventh grade my AVID teacher motivated me so much to pursue the career and be successful.” As a middle school student, Luis learned that earning a college degree would have positive rewards for him.

ECHS provided a setting where he could continue on the trajectory begun in seventh grade with a program that provided support along with an opportunity to see that he could do college-level work. Luis cited the opportunity to earn an associate's degree and high school diploma simultaneously with no tuition costs. He had developed the ambition to excel, and he was willing to do more than required, taking two extra high school courses so he could graduate with recognition.

Not everything was easy, but he worked to be successful. Luis observed the amount of reading he was expected to do in his college classes was more than in high school classes. He stated he did find it difficult at first, but after a while, "you read so much you get the hang of it." He admits he struggled his sophomore year because he had to get a job to help support his family. He worked 25-30 hours per week. "I put more time into the job than in school." He proudly states he is doing pretty well now because, "I learned to handle my job, my school, and time management." Like many of the others, he identified mathematics classes as the most difficult: "I mean math is pretty hard to me. Just basically I have never been good with numbers, but I overcame that challenge this year." He felt that the absence of athletics at the ECHS was a drawback, as he would have liked to play for a team and compete against other high schools. However, he accepted the focus on academics.

In addition to the support from AVID and the ECHS, Luis benefitted from a supportive family that publically expressed pride in him and his accomplishments. The fact that his sister planned to enter ECHS the next year suggests that the family promotes college.

Expectancy theory would explain why Luis chose to work hard on his academic

subjects. In school, he learned that effort results in successful performance, even when the subject is not easy for him. He sees the link between academic performance in high school to academic success in college, and he sees college completion as personally rewarding. For Luis, ECHS was supplemented by the AVID experience in middle school and by family support.

Reyna

Reyna was an 18-year-old senior when interviewed. She will have earned the fewest amount of college credits upon her high school graduation with 16. Her eighth-grade math teacher is the one who encouraged her to apply for admissions to ECHS. She comes from a single-parent household. Reyna's mother is proud of her because she is passing all her classes and getting college classes free and "no money has been coming out of her pocket." She has a younger brother who is in the 10th grade and regrets not applying to go to school at ECHS. He asked her if she could talk to the principal to see about letting him enroll as a sophomore because according to Reyna, "he sees that he can get more done here than at a regular high school."

When interviewed in the spring she was very confident that she would graduate from high school because she had more credits than what was required for graduation. She planned to continue at the community college to earn an Associate's degree and then transfer to a four-year university. She identified the four-year institution and her intended major—pre-medicine. Her plans involve a career in medicine.

While expecting to attend college, Reyna was not as confident about graduating. She admitted: "I'm kind of in the middle. I know it can be hard to go through college, but

I'm planning to graduate." She has completed the FAFSA form and applied for five scholarships. She believes she has a clear understanding of the cost of going to college, but does not think that her mother does. She linked completion of college to outcomes she valued. Reyna stated, "It's important to me, because I am the first one – the first generation in my family to even go to college and to finish high school and to get a career." She had learned to work hard and focus on academics at ECHS. Reyna felt that her math pre-calculus class was the most challenging, yet at the same time the most interesting. She said it motivated her to learn and she wanted to learn it until she got it right. According to Reyna, her attitude towards learning something challenging prompted her mother to observe that she is much more focused now about school than when she was in middle school.

ECHS provided other supports to help her overcome other potential barriers. In addition to tutorials that she attended, she also received help with writing assignments from her principal. Reyna cited the benefits of the small, personalized environment at the ECHS, and liked the small school setting where she knew everyone and had become comfortable with them. Reyna believes that socially she adjusted very well to the college environment. She admits that she used to be very shy, but she is not shy anymore and often speaks out. She is very proud of herself for not being afraid to speak out anymore.

Reyna believes that ECHS prepared her for life and her future. It was important to her that she was going to be the first one in her family to graduate from high school, to attend college and have a professional career. She continually talked about the importance of having an education in order to be successful in life.

The expectancy theory helps to explain Reyna's determination and individual effort. She was very motivated and was able to see the connection between the effort that she put into her academics and her future.

Antonio

Antonio illustrated the tie between low motivation to work to be successful in high school with a low expectancy of succeeding in college and a perception that completing college would not provide rewards that he valued. Antonio was an 18-year-old junior when interviewed. He was the oldest student interviewed and was retained in middle school. He would earn 10 college credits at the end of his junior year. He had been drawn to ECHS because he thought there would be more freedom on a smaller campus. Like Luis, he benefited from the AVID program while in middle school. He especially liked the tutoring help that he received in AVID. He had been retained in middle school and found math to be challenging.

Antonio did not choose to engage strongly in any aspect of the ECHS. While he said his family was proud of him for attending ECHS he did not identify anything personally rewarding. In fact, he identified many negative results of attending. He commented that if he were at a larger high school he would not be in the bottom half of the class as he is at ECHS. He would have liked to have had the opportunity to take more elective classes. He also did not like the fact that there were not any athletic teams to support at the ECHS. He missed not being on a campus with school spirit and athletic events.

While socially, he liked attending college classes with the older students, he

thought that immaturity was a problem at the ECHS with the underclassmen. He felt he would have had more support if he were still at his other high school because he had more friends there. However, he was not sure he could reconnect with them if he left ECHS to return to that school.

Antonio admitted to low motivation to work at being a successful ECHS student. He did not think he was more motivated about school since attending ECHS. He referred to his efforts in school as doing the bare minimum and described his daily routine as “waking up every morning, coming to school, sitting in class, after class, after class and then leaving.”

He commented that sometimes he got really bad feedback from teachers on his coursework and that it made him not want to do anything. He was not confident about graduating from high school through ECHS. Although he stated he may be able to graduate from high school if he got better at what he was doing.

Antonio expressed reservations about the costs and benefits of college. He had concerns about the financial obligation involved with going to college. He said he might have to wait a year or two to save money after graduation in order to go to college. He said he had not thought about what college he would attend after high school, although he did identify business as a college major. He added that college was not a goal right now since he had to graduate from high school first. He also stated that college was not needed for everyone, for example, it was not needed for acting. He thought some people had withdrawn from ECHS because they were bored.

Antonio provided an interesting contrast to the other participants, particularly those high achievers among the group, like Luis. Antonio’s consistent focus on what

was not happening at ECHS reflected a lack of confidence not just in the program, but also in him. It was not clear whether his lack of motivation and goal setting stemmed from a lack of confidence, or whether Antonio's lack of confidence deterred him from maintaining motivation and setting goals. Whatever the case, these interviews highlight the mutual dependence between confidence, motivation and goals highlighted by expectancy theory. Though Antonio acknowledged the importance of college to achieving success, he was non-committal about his own college plans and not necessarily optimistic that he would ever graduate from college. His expectations were lower than those of the rest of the group. Though some participants, like Reyna, had doubts and concerns about their eventual success, they remained motivated to strive for their goals, while Antonio took the posture of expecting the worst while hoping for something better.

When viewed through the lens of expectancy theory, Antonio had not developed an expectation that his efforts would lead to college or that completing college would necessarily have any personally valuable rewards. He was not even confident that he would complete high school, though he did link graduation to his level of effort and focus. As noted above, he was attracted to the ECHS because he thought there would be more freedom than at a traditional high school, rather than by the opportunity to gain college credits and experience. Just as most of the other respondents highlighted the positive motivation outcomes of high expectancy for academic success and value of rewards associated with that success, Antonio illustrated the low motivation associated with little confidence that he would be able to complete college and few goals tied to college completion.

Update on Students Interviewed

The Hispanic students interviewed in this case study have successfully navigated through the college application process or are on track to do so. In a follow-up email correspondence with the ECHS principal at the end of fall semester, 2011, I was able to obtain the status of all 10 students interviewed.

The five juniors interviewed were Carmela, Francisco, Leo, Marco, and Antonio. Carmela, Francisco, and Leo are seniors this year. All three will receive their high school diploma and associate's degree in spring 2012. Marco withdrew at the end of spring 2011 semester to return to a traditional high school. Once school started in fall 2011, he decided to attend the ISD's Accelerated High School. He received his high school diploma in December 2011. The ECHS principal is working with him to get him enrolled in the CC for spring 2012 where the ECHS is located. Antonio, who was the only student to doubt that he would graduate, withdrew from the ECHS and moved to another school district where he is enrolled in high school and classified as a senior.

The five seniors interviewed were Carlos, Anita, Reyna, Blanca and Luis. All five graduated from high school. Carlos and Anita are enrolled full time at the CC where the ECHS is located and working on their associate's degree. Reyna moved to west Texas. She enrolled in a community college full time and working to complete her associate's degree. Blanca, who was expecting a baby when interviewed, and Luis are full time students at the University of North Texas.

Summary

This chapter presented an in-depth analysis of data related to each of the

research questions intended to explore the role and influence of ECHS on Hispanic students. Expectancy theory explains individual's decisions to work toward a goal if they believe its achievement will have a personally desirable reward and if they believe their efforts will actually help them achieve it. For eight of the students, the ECHS experience appeared to have convinced them that completing college would provide personally desirable rewards such as having a good and satisfying job, being able to support a family, and making their parents proud. Only two students, both juniors, did not link personally desirable rewards to a college degree.

Equally important in motivation is the belief that effort--choices such as studying hard in high school and giving up many extracurricular activities would actually lead to the desired goal, in this case high school graduation, success in college, and a four-year degree. Eight students were confident that they had learned how to be academically and socially successful in college and attributed this to their experiences in the ECHS. The two students who did not develop a strong expectation that they would attend college had not linked college graduation with personally valuable rewards. They also were less sure about their ability to succeed academically. While their statements in interviews showed these two less motivated to work toward college than the other students, both completed their junior year in high school with 10 and 26 semester credit hours that counted towards a college degree.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed discussion of the conclusions and implications stemming from the results. Recommendations for future research and improving practice are also offered.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the perceptions and experiences of Hispanic students enrolled in an early college high school (ECHS) in Texas. Nationally, and especially in Texas, the Hispanic student population is increasing, while the percent of Hispanic students that are graduating from high school and enrolling in college is not increasing at the same rate. Hispanic students have a high risk of dropping out of high school. Those who do attend college need support because many of them are first-generation college attendees. ECHSs are designed to provide needed supports to students who might otherwise not attend college.

Early college high schools were established to help students obtain a high school diploma and earn college credit simultaneously. ECHS programs target students from underrepresented minority groups who are the first generation to graduate from high school and who desire to pursue a degree in higher education. The role of the ECHS is to develop a college-going culture where minority students will develop the expectation of attending college and succeeding there.

Since 2002, the partner organizations of the early college high school initiative (2007) have started or redesigned 270 schools serving more than 75,000 students in 28 states and the District of Columbia (www.earlycolleghighschool.com). There are 45 ECHS campuses in Texas. The ECHS in this study is located on a community college campus and opened in 2006 with its first graduating class in 2010. There were 252 students enrolled in this campus at the time of this study. Hispanic students made up 82% of the student population (www.tea.state.tx.us).

Though ECHSs have been in existence for only about 10 years, there is some evidence about how well the ECHS model is achieving its goals. The review of the literature presented in Chapter 2 includes evaluations of schools funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The evaluations showed that ECHS students nationally are likely to have a personalized school environment, which helps them to be successful. In general, ECHS students are engaged, have high expectations, experience a rigorous curriculum, and have developed a college-going culture. ECHSs are serving their target populations--Hispanic students, as well as those who are first generation college students with low socioeconomic status (SES) (Roderick et al., 2008).

What researchers have overlooked to this point was an examination of the perceptions and experiences that Hispanic students in ECHSs have.

The purpose of this qualitative dissertation was to explore the perceptions and opinions of Hispanic students about their experiences in an ECHS, and to better understand how their motivation to engage in academic work to prepare for college is impacted through participation in ECHS. As explained in Chapter 3, the principal was asked to identify a range of potential participants so that not all students interviewed would be the highest achievers. Thus, this study provides information about the experiences of a variety of students.

Research Questions

Two perspectives guided the design of the research questions. Motivation theory, particularly expectancy theory, provided the framework for explaining the decisions of individual ECHS students. The second perspective, college-going culture, describes aspects of the ECHS context. The two perspectives shaped the questions to determine

the perceptions and experiences of ECHS Hispanic students.

The research questions that framed this study included:

1. What expectations do Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program have of succeeding in the program and enrolling in college?
2. How are these expectations being developed in the ECHS program?
 - a. How are expectations for academic success perceived by students?
 - b. How are expectations for social integration in college perceived by students?
 - c. What supports do students identify as available to ensure their success?
3. What barriers do Hispanic students feel they face in their ECHS?
4. How do students characterize their motivation to pursue a college degree?
 - a. How does participation in an ECHS support that motivation?
 - b. What factors negatively affect student motivation?

This study used a qualitative research design for collection and analysis of data.

Interviews were conducted to capture the experiences of 10 Hispanic ECHS students in a selected ECHS program located on a community college campus in Texas. Five seniors and five juniors were interviewed. Interviews were recorded and analyzed for analysis and review. Chapter 4 provides a full account of the data and the themes that emerged during analysis and Appendices A- F provide the interview protocol, consent forms, letters of introduction, and Texas Education Agency campus report.

Student Motivation

Almost all students interviewed described high motivation to do academic work and to succeed in high school and college. There were two different patterns of motivation among these students. They are described below. .

Students with Higher Motivation to Work at High School and College Courses

As described in Chapter 4, most of the students in this study reported that they worked hard at their academic tasks. Students who expressed high motivation to work identified academic goals as their reason for choosing to attend the ECHS. Those academic goals included the accelerated program that would allow students to earn college and high school credits simultaneously, free tuition for the college courses, and a chance to earn an associate's degree along with their high school diploma. They had developed a strong belief that a college degree was a key to being a successful adult with a personally and financially rewarding career. Additionally, many noted personally valuable outcomes, such as the personal satisfaction in being the first in the family to complete college, making their parents proud and serving as a role model for younger family members. They stated that they had become more motivated and focused at the ECHS, and they identified experiences and supports at the school that built their confidence that they could succeed in college. These experiences included academic supports such as tutoring and working with their counselors and other ECHS staff. One student reported that she received academic help from the ECHS principal. It was not usual for the principal to provide academic support to students on a regular basis. However, students stated that they knew that the principal would help them when asked to do so. When students were challenged with difficult courses, these services helped build the expectation that their efforts would result in good grades. Seniors mentioned a specific course designed to help them through the complex processes of college application and seeking financial aid.

This ECHS also provided a setting where students learned that they would fit into college socially. Students mentioned that they enjoyed taking college-level classes along with adults. They also valued the small school setting with a “family” atmosphere that reportedly helped some grow in social confidence. Some were involved in extracurricular activities at the community college. While they identified drawbacks to attending the ECHS, primarily the lack of competitive sports and high school social and extracurricular activities, they accepted these trade-offs for academic opportunities.

As shown in Table 4, expectancy theory provides a framework for understanding how the ECHS helped students develop high motivation to choose to engage in academic effort. These students were convinced that college would lead to a good adult life. Academic supports and experiences created a clearer path to that goal. In interviews, students attested to the change ECHS had made in their motivation.

Table 4

Students with Higher Motivation to Work at High School and College Courses

Reason for Choosing ECHS	Identified ECHS Experiences	Expectations for Academic Success	Rewarding Outcomes of College Completion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accelerated program -Free college tuition -Chance to earn AA and HS diploma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tutoring -Support from ECHS staff -Taking classes with college students -Overcoming academic challenges -Small school within a larger organization -Family atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High for HS diploma -Strong intention to complete college -Plans for graduate degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ability to support family -Satisfying career -Personal satisfaction -Making family proud

Student with Lower Motivation to Work at High School and College Courses

One student admitted that he was doing the “bare minimum” at ECHS and that he “did not have his act together” yet. Attracted to the ECHS by a hope for more freedom than a regular high school would offer, he had not developed a belief that college was necessary to be a more successful adult. Of all students, he was most concerned about the ability to pay the costs of higher education and was least able to identify personally rewarding outcomes of attending college. He felt that he would have to work at least two years after high school to save up the necessary money. Not only was he not focused on college, as were the others in the study, he was not even certain that he would graduate from high school at the time of the interview. He was the oldest student interviewed and he had been retained in middle school. For his senior year, he chose to leave the ECHS and enroll in a traditional high school. However, several months later the principal reported by email that he is proceeding on track to graduate from high school in May 2012. This student was falling through the cracks of the ECHS. He appeared to require more support, or a different mix of supports, than the other students interviewed.

While more focused students said that their ECHS experiences had made them more motivated, this student stated that the school had not had that effect. Instead, he identified personally non-motivating aspects of ECHS. At ECHS, he was in the bottom half of his class, while at his other school he thought he would have been in the top half with less effort than required at the ECHS. He had fewer friends at ECHS than before, and he noted the absence of competitive athletics, lack of school spirit, and reduced choice of electives. Bad feedback from his teachers further discouraged him. While he

mentioned that he liked being in college classes with older students, he also felt that his ECHS peers were “immature.” As shown in Table 5, expectancy theory also helps explain low motivation. The student did not see that his efforts to study in high school would lead to success in college, nor did he believe that he needed to attend college to have a good adult life. He mentioned a need to “get his act together” and thought if he applied himself, he might graduate. With low expectation for academic success, a concern about affordability of college, no belief that completing college guaranteed outcomes that he valued, he focused on the negative aspects of school. While not as motivated or enthusiastic as others in the group, he was making expected progress to graduation and had accrued college credits.

Table 5

Students with Lower Motivation to Work at High School and College Courses

Reason for Choosing ECHS	Identified ECHS Experiences	Expectations for Academic Success	Non-Rewarding Outcomes of Attending College
-Sought more “freedom” than available at his high school	-Lower academic rank -Fewer friends -Lack of extracurricular activities -Negative feedback from teachers	-Not certain about high school graduation -Doubtful about college graduation	-High Cost -Not necessary for a good job

Hispanic Students and ECHS

The literature review discussed the Hispanic students and their motivation for enrolling in an ECHS. Born (2006) reported that the motivations for enrolling at the ECHS included financial reasons because the students are able to earn up to two years

of college tuition free. Many of the ECHS students had the desire to finish college early. The Hispanic ECHS students interviewed in this study commented that the ability to earn college credit free, earn an associate's degree, and finish college early was one of the main reasons for enrolling.

According to Hurtado et al. (1996) college students face adjustment problems in their freshman year including academic adjustment, social relationships, ethnic/cultural adjustment, feeling like an outsider, and transportation. Hurtado et al. (1996) examined difficulties experienced by Hispanic students in the transition from high school to college. They concluded that Hispanics are more likely to experience college difficulties, as minority students often do not feel part of the institution. Ostrove and Long (2007) reported that the social class background of students influences college adjustment. Social class background was measured in terms of family income, parents' education, and parents' occupation. The results from their study suggested that students from low-income backgrounds generally experience negative adjustment issues. Students who belong to the lower bracket of social economic status are likely to feel more alienated in college. According to Ostrove and Long (2007), the feeling of alienation in college reflects low levels of sense of belongingness, which in turn results in poor college adjustment.

In contrast, one of the recurring responses from the Hispanic students interviewed in this study was the sense of belonging that they felt at the ECHS. Many responded about the family atmosphere at the school. They believed that the staff at ECHS provided them the support they needed to be academically successful. They attended tutorials with ECHS teachers, the principal, and math and writing labs at the

community college. None of the students commented that they felt like an outsider. They felt accepted in the college classes they were enrolled in at the community college. Other community college students, for the most part, did not realize that they were ECHS students. They also knew they could participate in extracurricular activities at the community college.

Although many of the Hispanic students interviewed had been in English as a Second Language class, none of them identified language as a barrier to their success. The literature review included research showing that language can be a barrier for English as Second Language learners. There was no data collected in this study to explain or give insight as to why this group of students did not identify language as a barrier. The ESL students interviewed seemed to have developed adequate language skills in English to be successful.

Roderick et al. (2008) tracked the post-secondary experiences of Hispanic students graduating from Chicago public schools. He reported that only 41% of the students who say they aspire to attain a 4-year degree took the steps necessary to apply and enroll. Furthermore, he found that Hispanic students have the most difficulty managing college enrollment and less than 50% actually applied to college.

In contrast, all of the students in this study were making expected academic progress. Of the juniors interviewed at the end of spring semester, 2011, all either were in school or had graduated a year later. The school was helping the student who graduated December 2011 with the college application process, but he had not been admitted at the end of the fall semester. All of the seniors were enrolled in a college in January 2012. Two of the five were enrolled at a 4-year university.

Contribution to ECHS Literature

This case study adds to the ECHS literature by providing detail about how students experienced one ECHS model—a 4-year school located on a community college campus that worked to establish a college-going culture among students. Using the qualitative method of an interview allowed the researcher to discover the richer picture of students' experiences. The 10 students were able to describe their experiences and their individual stories in the ECHS. Their perceptions and experiences could not have been captured in such depth with surveys or analysis of performance data from the ECHS campus. The qualitative method allowed the individual stories of the students' high school careers to emerge.

Students were able to describe the impact of a small school with a family-like atmosphere. Many of the students felt that the family-like atmosphere contributed to their success at ECHS. One student described how she had been shy and afraid to speak in class, but learned to be more comfortable and confident as she spoke in her smaller ECHS classes. She commented on the increase in her comfort level and confidence she now possesses when she makes oral reports and participates in class discussions.

The data collected describe students' ambitions and goals as they relate to graduating high school and attending college. Students discussed how ECHS has changed their attitude about college. They were able to describe their level of confidence of obtaining a high school diploma and their feelings about continuing on to college. The rich data collected indicate that initially many students were not sure about college, but their experiences at ECHS allowed them to grow more certain that they

wanted to attend college and could succeed. Students were able to describe their strong commitment to their plans and goals. Students discussed their strong belief that a college education would help them to achieve their goals. The data collected described the students' desire to make their families proud of them and to make a difference in their lives. The data describe the intensity of their ambition and the belief that finishing college is essential to having a good life. Frequently, the students stated their belief that there was a strong link between completing college and their definition of a good life, i.e. having a satisfying job that pays well. One of the students who had worked in a warehouse commented that he did not want to spend his life “working with his hands.” Although it may not be true that all students who have a college degree will have a good life, the ECHS students had bought into the belief that finishing college leads to their desired life.

Students also were able to describe their feelings about making the social transition to a 4-year university without any problems. They described how they felt that they fit in with other college students when attending college-level classes. They discussed how the experience of attending the ECHS made them feel they belonged in college. Research on Hispanic students transitioning from high school to college faced problems with social and ethnic/cultural adjustment that left them feeling like outsiders. Social adjustment was not an issue for this group of ECHS students. They had a close knit peer group of ECHS students, but they also felt comfortable in the larger college community. They considered themselves socially adjusted to the college campus and reported that they can participate in the community colleges' extracurricular clubs and organizations, if they chose. Students were able to describe some of the challenges

they encountered in their college-level classes. They described the level of difficulty due to the reading level, the amount of work they were expected to do, and the amount of writing they were expected to do. The students discussed how they were able to utilize the academic supports that were provided to them from the community college and the ECHS. Many of the students depended on these academic supports in order to be successful at the ECHS.

Summary of Findings

Student Expectations for Success

Research Question 1 addressed the expectations of Hispanic students enrolled in an ECHS program for succeeding in the program and ultimately enrolling in college. The interviews showed that almost all of the students expected to graduate from high school and enroll in college. Student optimism related to completing their ECHS program was generally high, but they were less confident that they would complete college. For most, concerns about college completion were related to non-academic issues, not a fear that they could not do college-level work or adjust to college. The themes noted from this exploration into expectations for success showed that their confidence in being able to complete high school was grounded in the evidence of academic progress, including grades, high school and college credits earned, and success in overcoming academic challenges in courses. Students' comments affirmed that the stated intent of the ECHS to support high school completion was being met. Although the students felt less certain about college, confidence, intentionality, and goal orientation all emerged as themes that related to their optimism about their ability to succeed despite challenges and barriers.

How Student Expectations are Shaped by the ECHS Program

Research Question 2 explored the ways in which the expectations of participating ECHS students were shaped by their experiences in the program. Students were asked about their expectations for academic success, social integration and available support. The results of the data analysis affirm the value of ECHS in supporting the academic success of Hispanic students at the selected school site. In general, 9 out of 10 students interviewed reflected strong optimism about their futures and their abilities to graduate from both high school and college. Repeated themes emerging from the data analysis include a strong emphasis on goal setting and motivation. However, students did acknowledge potential barriers to their success such as finances and having a child while still in school.

Students expressed appreciation for the support from the high school counselor and community college counselor. All students met with both counselors on numerous occasions, and the counselors provided them with needed guidance in setting their high school and college class schedule. Students were aware of their class rankings and number of high school credits and college credit earned. The senior independent study class, created this year, provided seniors with valuable information about the college application process, financial aid, FAFSA, the cost of going to college, and scholarship applications.

ECHS students' perceptions were shaped by their experiences in the program. Students in this study demonstrated that although they found various aspects of the program challenging, the ECHS program provided sufficient support to sustain student motivation and their sense of self-efficacy. Challenging coursework, the differing

demands of college coursework and college professors, and adjusting to the college environment were all noted themes that influenced student expectations for success. In addition, the benefits of social integration were discussed and the value of support services through the ECHS was noted repeatedly. Most of the ECHS students placed a high value on completing college because it produced benefits, such as a career, ability to support family, and the belief that completing college would make families proud.

The findings of this study provides qualitative evidence that supports the earlier findings of the AIR evaluation reports indicating that the ECHS model as studied here can provide adequate academic, social and personal support to help students succeed (AIR, 2009). The ECHSs are supporting students to persevere in their education.

In addition, the findings speak to the work of Roderick et al. (2008) who found that attending a high school with a strong college-going culture helps students navigate through the college application and financial aid application process. The theoretical perspective of a college-going culture states this will increase the probability that underrepresented students will graduate from high school and enter college (College Board, 2006).

Identified Barriers

Because one of the goals of ECHS programs is to aid students in overcoming barriers to postsecondary education, Research Question 3 explored the students' perceptions of the barriers that they expected to encounter on the path to a college degree. The most commonly mentioned barrier was students' concerns about their families' abilities to pay for the remainder of their college education. While this is a

realistic concern, they were not always aware of all of the scholarship and financial aid options. The lack of understanding about potential avenues of financial aid may lead students to narrow their options unnecessarily, and may lower their motivation to pursue goals in specific majors or at specific schools based on costs, or beliefs about cost. This is a point of vulnerability for these students, the majority of whom have high levels of motivation, and making students aware of all financial aid opportunities is something that ECHS needs to consider in their college guidance model. Many of the ECHS students from this campus (66%) are from low SES (TEA, 2010). Although they are able to receive two years of college credit free, the thought of paying for the last two years of college continues to be a concern.

The students need more information about college costs and opportunities for support. They need to begin hearing about it earlier in their high school career. The parents need more information about the financial aid process, as well.

The ECHS had responded to this need by adding an independent study class for seniors to help them navigate through the FAFSA application, financial aid and college application processes. This has resulted in more students being accepted into college and receiving financial aid upon graduation. However, the uncertainty of this group of students suggests that they need more information about the costs of various colleges and how to meet them. Another barrier students identified was not having the same access to their college instructors as they had with their high school teachers for tutorials. Despite these noted barriers, most students reported that they felt very well supported at ECHS, noting particularly the availability of the counselors and the small size of the school that created a family-like environment.

The results of this study support the foundational work of Tinto (2000), which showed that the more academically and socially involved students were, the more likely they will graduate. Tinto noted that students need to engage with faculty. These students affirmed they had access to the ECHS faculty more than the college professors due to the small, personalized environment. The one outlier student who was not involved socially or academically to the ECHS was not sure he would even graduate.

How Students Characterize Their Motivation

Research Question 4 explored the ways in which ECHS students characterized their motivation to pursue a college degree. Students were asked about their level of motivation toward attaining a college degree as well as the ways in which ECHS contributes to that motivation. In addition, students were asked to identify any detriments to their motivation.

Nine students believed that ECHS has had a positive impact on their motivation level. Many commented on their own determination, focus, and belief in the importance of an education and goals for the future. Overwhelmingly, the nine students believed that participation in ECHS had a positive impact on their motivation to succeed academically.

Students note that the challenges presented by the college coursework were motivating. They also noted that their ECHS experience presented opportunities for their future that they might not have learned about otherwise. ECHS counselors and community college counselors made students aware of these opportunities. Several

students also noted that they were compelled to succeed in their coursework and paid attention to their class standing.

Students identified a variety of discouraging aspects of the ECHS, but there were no common negative themes. Three students identified the difficulty of classes due to the amount of work and the amount of reading that was expected of them. One student was concerned about her class rank and not being able to move up due to the small number of students in the senior class, most of who are doing well academically. Students commented on the fact that there were not extracurricular athletics offered at the ECHS for them to participate in or to support. However, Antonio mentioned several negative aspects such as low class rank, fewer friends, lack of extracurricular activities, negative feedback from teachers, and maturity level of students.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several recommendations for future research in this area are suggested. Specifically, there are five recommendations that might be considered as a natural extension to this study, and hold the potential to advance findings in this area. The recommendations from students' experiences raise issues that deserve examination. The recommendations focus on gender, effects of retention, ethnicity, ECHS graduates experiences in college, and impact of AVID.

The first recommendation has to do with gender differences. One of the seniors interviewed was pregnant and recognized that a baby could be an impediment to progress in college. Yet, a year later she was one of the two students enrolled in a 4-year research university located outside of her community, which would appear to be

more challenging than staying at the community college or a 4-year college closer to home. Often pregnancy means that students drop out. Researchers could look more closely at the experiences of female students from ECHSs who have infants or children and are enrolled in college. What supports help to keep them there? What are the associated problems and how do the women respond to them? Are there corresponding benefits/satisfactions associated with being a parent?

The next recommendation is to examine the effect of ECHS on students who were retained in earlier grades. Repeating a grade is associated with dropping out of high school. The student least sure about college and high school graduation had been retained in the past. He was 19 years old when interviewed. He also was the least enthusiastic about the ECHS experience. This student is still in school and on track to graduate from high school. Researchers should examine possible advantages and disadvantages to being in an ECHS for students who have been retained?

Another recommendation focuses on ethnicity. This case study's findings counter much of the literature on Hispanics and low income students. Being non-native English speakers did not present an obstacle that could not be overcome. In addition, the four female students seemed to have family support for their aspirations. The students did not feel out of place in college as an ethnic minority and did not report negative comments from faculty, staff, or other students related to ethnicity. While all of these students would be first generation college students, many were first generation high school graduates and qualified for free/reduced lunch, only three were currently working part-time while in school. Therefore, the families do not require that students work to help support the families. These ECHS students are free to focus on school. Future

research could focus on family expectations for children working vs. expectations that the students work to excel in school. At this ECHS, Hispanics are the majority population. Do experiences of ethnic minorities vary with the degree to which they are represented in the organization?

Another recommendation pertains to ECHS graduates' experiences in college. What happens after they graduate from ECHS? How do they experience college where there are fewer supports available, school tuition is not free of charge, and they do not have the close community, family-like environment of the ECHS? Comparing experiences of students in different IHE settings could be interesting—who stays at the cooperating community college vs. who leaves and why?

The last recommendation is about the influence of the AVID program. Two of the students mentioned participating in AVID and benefits received in the middle school AVID program. There was another comment that students mentioned that they wish this ECHS continued to have AVID. Research on the impact of AVID and other interventions in ECHS would be of interest. Because ECHS does many of the same things AVID does, what does it add to the ECHS program? How could the influence of AVID be distinguished from that of the ECHS?

Beyond research, the application of this study also shows potential for improving practice in education. The final section of the paper provides recommendations for improving practice based on the results of the research.

Recommendations for Practice

The results of this research have the potential to inform practice as described below. Recommendations for educators and ECHS program planners follow.

Educators

The ECHS model seems to be a successful high school reform program that is graduating students from underrepresented minority groups, students from low-income families, and students who are the first generation in their families to graduate from high school and attend college. ECHSs may reduce the high school dropout rate by identifying students who have the potential to be academically successful with additional academic, social and personal supports. Nationally, ECHS students have scored higher on high-stakes accountability tests than other students in the school district in which they are located (AIR, 2006).

Financing college is a concern for these students, even though the ECHS gave them opportunity to earn college credits while in public school. Educators need to provide more information to parents and students about the college application process, financial aid and the cost of going to college beginning in the freshman year. Having this information earlier will allow parents and students to begin making plans for their future post-secondary education. This will also help to reduce the barrier of the concern about their family's ability to afford to pay for the remainder of their college education. More information about financial aid and scholarship availability may help reduce the concern about cost of college. However, paying for college is a realistic concern for potential students and their parents. . In 2011, the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center

reported that college costs have continued to outpace inflation at the same time that students and their families face economic conditions that make them less able to pay them (College Board, 2011).

Students often mentioned the importance of the family-like atmosphere they experienced at the ECHS. The smaller environment lends itself to the personalization. ECHS high school faculty members learn students' names, build relationships with them, and get to know their personal interests in and out of school. ECHS faculty members must make it a priority to get to know their students and to continue to offer academic support and safety nets.

The college-going culture has a positive impact on students at ECHS. It has contributed to the success of students based on the number of students who graduate from ECHS and enroll in college (MacDonald & Door, 2006). ECHS campuses should continue to create a college-going culture through college talk, clear expectations, college information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, rigorous curriculum, faculty involvement, family involvement, college partnerships, and articulation.

Program Planners

ECHS programs that are located on the community college campus give students the opportunity to take more college classes and foster a college-going culture. Program planners should attempt to build a relationship with their Institution of Higher Education (IHE) partner to secure space on campus for the ECHS. It may be difficult to find space on the IHE campus, students benefit from being on the college campus.

Summary

This qualitative research provides in-depth description of the experiences of the ECHS students interviewed. This qualitative case study focused on 10 Hispanic students, five juniors and five seniors. The interviews explored their perceptions about the experiences they encountered at an ECHS in Texas. The results indicate that students were motivated and confident about graduating high school and continuing their postsecondary education. Students are receiving academic, social and personal support, which is helping them to be successful academically. Students identified some barriers that were present. However, these barriers were not deterrents to their success in most cases. Students were exposed to a rigorous curriculum, as determined by the level of difficulty, pacing of the college classes, and assessments. They were challenged academically and learned to manage their time. Students, who had doubts of graduating from high school when they were enrolled in middle school, have changed their perceptions because of their experience at ECHS. As Luis, a senior who earned his high school diploma and associate's degree stated, "Now, I'm actually not worried about high school at all. I'm more worried about college and finishing that. It has opened my eyes to see education is really, really important."

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The students will be interviewed at the ECHS in 45 – 60 minutes sessions. Follow up phone calls will be conducted as needed for clarification.

Purpose: I am doing research to learn about what your perceptions and opinions are about your experiences at this ECHS program and how being in an ECHS might affect your future plans. I will be asking you questions about how you became interested in attending this school, what you think about your academic and social experiences at this campus, and how ECHS might affect your plans for the future.

Confidentiality Statement: The information will be used as the basis of a research report. Your name and school district will not be used in this report. Non-identifying pseudonyms will be used in the place of your name if specific examples are used in the report. No identifying information will be used. All of your information will be kept confidential.

Research Consent Form: Prior to the interview commencing, you and your parent/guardian will be given a research consent form. Please read it carefully and sign the form if you agree to participate in this interview and research study.

Questions:

Demographic information and Icebreaker: age, note gender, grade classification (freshman, sophomore etc.) first generation college, ESL. Are you taking courses just with ECHS students or are you enrolled in general college classes? What courses are you in this semester? Attendance—have you missed classes-if so, how many and why? How many hours/week do you spend studying and completing class assignments? Do you work outside of school?

Focus Questions:

1. What interested you in the early college high school (ECHS) program? Why did you want to attend school here?
2. How did you find out about the ECHS program?
3. How does your family feel about your participation in ECHS? Probe: Father, Mother, brother or sister.
4. I am going to ask you a few questions about your academic experiences in your ECHS program.
 - a. What courses or academic activities do you find most challenging and why?
Probe: What about the courses—e.g., content, instructional approaches, teacher attitude toward you, amount of work, reading level required. . .
 - b. What things in your academic programs are most interesting for you? Probe: What about them—e.g., content, teaching approaches, teacher attitudes toward the ECHS students, personal interest in topic, career relevance . . .
 - c. How well do you think you are doing in the ECHS program? Why do you think so?
Probe: Grades, test scores, teacher comments, comparative performance with other students?
 - d. Have you used any academic supports for ECHS students? Probe: advisors, tutors, organized study sessions, review sessions, specific feedback from instructors, basic skills classes, writing labs . . . If so, please describe your experiences with them.
Have you worked with any of your classroom instructors outside of class or sought advice from them? If so, please describe those experiences.
 - e. How confident are you that you are going to graduate from high school? Why do you

feel that way?

- f. How confident are you that you are going to go to college after you graduate from high school? Why do you feel that way?
- g. If you are considering college, what schools are you considering? Probe: Community colleges, 4-year colleges, specific names. If confident in attending college, what do you want to major in? How confident are you in graduating from college?
5. Have your parents talked with you about how the family will finance the costs of higher education? Will your parents be able to provide financial support? Do you and your family have a clear idea of the costs of going to college? Has anyone from the school met with them to discuss approaches to financing college: probe: student loans, scholarship availability, how to apply for financial aid.
6. I am going to ask you a few questions about your social experiences here at ECHS.
 - a. How are your social experiences at ECHS different from those at the high school? Are you satisfied with the number of friends you have at this school and with your social activities compared with your previous school?
 - b. Does the ECHS do anything to help involve you in the community college socially? Probe: clubs, activities, dances, study groups . . .?
 - c. What parts of social life here at ECHS do you like best? Least?
 - d. How confident are you that you will fit into the social life at college if you attend?
6. Have you ever met with a counselor either at the ECHS or the CC? If yes, was the counselor helpful to you? Why or why not? [Probe to see if offered by ECHS or by the CC]. Peer counselors?
7. What kind of help are you getting in learning how to apply for college and what

financial aid is available or in the actual college application process? Have you applied for college?

8. What challenges or barriers are you experiencing here? Are there supports that you would like to have that are not available?
9. Discuss how your experiences at ECHS may influence/impact your future plans. Have you identified a career? How important is finishing college to you in achieving your career and life goals?
10. Do you know of anyone who decided to withdraw from the ECHS? Why did they withdraw?
11. How do you think ECHS has changed your motivations about school? Are you more motivated about your education now than you were before you became an ECHS student?
12. What things do you find de-motivating? What barriers frustrate you and make you not want to work as hard at your studies?
13. Is there anything else that I did not ask that you think would help me understand your experiences at this program?

If the student brings up topics or ideas not anticipated, the researcher will probe if these are relative to the study.

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM – ENGLISH

PARENT GUARDIAN CONSENT WITH MINOR ASSENT (AGES 7-17)

University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to your child's participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: Early college high school: Hispanic students' experiences and perceptions

Principal Investigator: Judith Adkison, Ed.D, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of College of Education.

Key Personnel: Rose K. Brenner, M. Ed, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of College of Education

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to allow your child to participate in a research study, which involves your child responding to questions in a personal interview. The questions will be about their experiences and perceptions as a student in an Early college high school.

Study Procedures: Your child will be asked to respond to questions in a personal interview that will take about 45 minutes of your child's time. The interview will take place on your child's campus. The interview will be recorded for accuracy of records and transcribed. A follow-up telephone interview, if needed and appropriate, will be part of the interview process. I will ask student's for their phone number.

Foreseeable Risks: No foreseeable risks are involved in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to your child. The potential benefit of this study is adding to the body of research knowledge for educational practitioners.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: The confidentiality of your child's individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. The data collected will be handled with utmost care to ensure the privacy of the participants. All paper data will be stored in a secured and private cabinet at the University of North Texas. Soft data, on the other hand, will be stored in a hard drive in which only the researcher has access. Moreover, soft data will be password protected to prevent unauthorized access. All data, both paper and electronic, will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research according to UNT document retention policy.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Judith Adkison at telephone number xxx.xxx.xxxx, or Rose K. Brenner at telephone number xxx.xxx.xxxx.

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights: Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- You understand the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to allow your child to take part in this study, and your refusal to allow your child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your child's participation at any time.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as the parent/guardian of a research participant and you voluntarily consent to your child's participation in this study.
- You have been told you will receive a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Student Assent Form

You are being asked to be part of a research project being done by the University Of North Texas Department Of College Of Education.

This study involves responding to questions in a personal interview. The questions will be about your experiences and perceptions as a student in an early college high school.

You will be asked to respond to questions in a personal interview that will take about 45 minutes of your time. The interviews will take place on campus.

If needed and appropriate, there will be a brief follow-up telephone interview to clarify a comment or an answer you provided. I will ask you for your phone number at the beginning of the interview.

If you decide to be part of this study, please remember you can stop participating any time you want to.

If you would like to be part of this study, please sign your name below.

Printed Name of Student

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM - SPANISH

PADRE/GUARDIAN CON
CONSENTIMIENTO DEL MENOR DE EDAD (EADAES 7–17)

Mesa de Revisión Institucional de UNT

Formulario de Consentimiento Informado

Antes de aceptar que su hijo participe en esta investigación, es importante que lea y comprenda la explicación adjunta del propósito, beneficios, y riesgos del estudio y cómo éste se llevará a cabo.

Título del Estudio: Preparatoria para la Universidad: Experiencias y Percepciones de Estudiantes Hispanos (Early college high school: Hispanic students' experiences and perceptions).

Investigadora Principal: Judith Adkison, Ed.D; Universidad de North Texas (UNT) Departamento de Educación de la Universidad.

Personal Importante: Rose K. Brenner, M. Ed; Universidad de North Texas (UNT) Departamento de Educación de la Universidad.

Propósito del Estudio: Se le pide permiso para que su hijo(a) participe en un estudio de investigación que requiere que su hijo(a) responda a preguntas en una entrevista en persona. Las preguntas serán sobre sus experiencias y percepciones como estudiante en una escuela Preparatoria para la Universidad.

Procedimientos del Estudio: Se le pedirá a su hijo(a) que responda a preguntas en dos entrevistas en persona que tomará de 45 minutos de su tiempo. La entrevista se llevará a cabo en la escuela de su hijo. La entrevista será grabada para exactitud de los expedientes y transcrita. Un seguimiento a la entrevista por teléfono, si es necesario y apropiado, será parte del proceso de la entrevista. Pediré a los estudiantes su número telefónico.

Riesgos Previsibles: No existen riesgos previsibles en este estudio.

Beneficios a Participantes y a Otros: No se espera que este estudio tenga un beneficio directo para su hijo(a). El beneficio probable de este estudio será el que añada más conocimiento a previas investigaciones para las personas que están involucradas en el sistema educativo.

Procedimientos Para Mantener la Confidencialidad de los Expedientes de la Investigación: Se mantendrá la confidencialidad de la información individual de su hijo(a) en todas las publicaciones o presentaciones en cuanto a este estudio. Para asegurarnos de la privacidad de los participantes, la información recopilada se manejará con máximo cuidado. Se guardarán todos los documentos en un armario resguardado y privado en la Universidad de North Texas. Los documentos electrónicos

se guardarán en una computadora a la cual sólo el investigador tendrá acceso. Además, todos los documentos tendrán la protección de una contraseña para prevenir acceso no autorizado. Toda información, sea en papel o electrónica, será destruida cuando concluya la investigación de acuerdo con la póliza de retención de documentos de la Universidad de North Texas.

Preguntas Sobre el Estudio: Si tiene preguntas sobre el estudio, por favor hable con Dr. Judith Adkison al xxx.xxx.xxxx o con Rose K. Brenner al xxx.xxx.xxxx.

Revisión para la Protección de los Participantes: Esta investigación ha sido revisada y aprobada por la Mesa de Revisión Institucional de UNT (the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB)). Puede contactar a dicha mesa (UNT IRB) al (940)565-3940 si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de los derechos de los participantes.

Derechos de los Participantes en la Investigación: Su firma abajo indica que ha leído o se le ha leído este documento y que confirma lo siguiente:

- Usted comprende los beneficios y posibles riesgos y/o molestias del estudio.
- Usted comprende que no es necesario que su hijo(a) participe en este estudio y que usted puede rehusar que su hijo(a) participe y que su decisión de retirar a su hijo(a) del estudio no tendrá ningún castigo ni pérdida de derechos o beneficios. El personal del estudio puede tomar la decisión de que su hijo(a) deje de tomar parte en el estudio en cualquier momento.
- Usted comprende por qué y cómo esta investigación se está llevando a cabo.
- Usted comprende sus derechos como padre/guardián del participante en la investigación y puede consentir voluntariamente que su hijo(a) participe en el estudio.
- A usted se le ha informado que recibirá una copia de este formulario.

Nombre del Padre o Guardián (En letras de molde)

La firma del Padre o Guardián

Fecha

Formulario del Permiso del Estudiante

Por la presente pedimos tu permiso para que participes en un proyecto de investigación que está tomando lugar en el Departamento de Educación de la Universidad de North Texas.

Este estudio requiere que contestes a preguntas en una entrevista en persona. Las preguntas serán sobre tus experiencias y percepciones como estudiante en un early college high school.

Se requerirá que respondas a preguntas en una entrevista en persona que tomará de 45 minutos. Las entrevistas tomarán lugar en el campus.

Si es necesario y apropiado, habrá un breve seguimiento a la entrevista por teléfono para aclarar un comentario o respuesta que usted haya hecho. Le pediré su número de teléfono al inicio de la entrevista.

Si decides tomar parte en este estudio, por favor recuerda que puedes dejar de participar en cualquier momento que quieras.

Si quieres participar en este estudio, por favor firma abajo.

Nombre del Estudiante (En letras de molde)

Firma del Estudiante

Fecha

Firma del Investigador Principal

Fecha

APPENDIX D
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION - ENGLISH

Dear Parents or Legal Guardians,

My name is Rose K. Brenner, and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. I am conducting research on Hispanic students' experiences and perceptions that are enrolled in early college high schools.

I would like to request your permission to interview your child for my dissertation research. I have included an Informed Consent Form. Before agreeing to your child's participation in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the explanation for the purpose, benefits and risks of the study, and how it will be conducted. After reading the Informed Consent Form, if you agree to your child's participation in this research study and your child agrees to participate in this research study, you and your child will need to sign the consent form. Please return it in the self addressed stamped envelope provided for you. You will receive a copy of the signed consent form.

I have also included a copy of the interview questions I will use for my research study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I may be reached at xxx.xxx.xxxx. I look forward to meeting your child.

Respectfully,

Rose K. Brenner

APPENDIX E
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION – SPANISH

Estimados Padres o Guardianes Legales,

Me llamo Rose K. Brenner y soy una estudiante doctoral en la Universidad de North Texas en Denton, Texas. Estoy llevando a cabo una investigación sobre las experiencias y percepciones de los estudiantes hispanos de primer y segundo año que están matriculados en clases preparatorias para la universidad (early college high school).

Por la presente, pido su permiso para entrevistar a su hijo(a) para poder cumplir con la investigación de mi tesis. Por favor encuentre adjunto un Formulario de Consentimiento Informado. Antes de acceder a la participación de su hijo(a) en esta investigación, es importante que usted lea y comprenda la explicación del propósito, beneficios y riesgos del estudio, y cómo esta investigación se llevará a cabo. Después de leer el formulario de consentimiento informado, si usted accede a que su hijo(a) participe en esta investigación y su hijo(a), está de acuerdo en participar, ambos deben firmar el formulario de consentimiento. Por favor devuélvalo en el sobre sellado que encontrará adjunto. Usted recibirá una copia del formulario del consentimiento firmado.

También encontrará incluida una copia de las preguntas de la entrevista que voy a utilizar en mi investigación. Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor comuníquese conmigo llamando al número xxx.xxx.xxxx. Espero conocer a su hijo(a) en un futuro cercano.

Respetuosamente,

Rose K. Brenner

APPENDIX F
AEIS REPORT

Texas Education Agency | Performance Reporting

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
 Academic Excellence Indicator System
 2009-10 Campus Performance
 2010 Accountability Rating: Exemplary

Section I
 Total Students: 213
 Grade Span: 09 - 12
 School Type: Secondary

Gold Performance Acknowledgments:

Attendance (2008 09)
 Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Mathematics
 Commended on Social Studies

		State	District	Campus Group	Campus	African American	Hispanic	White	Native American	Asian/Pacific Is	Male	Female	Special Ed	Econ Disad	LBP
TAKS Met 2010 Standard Grade 9															
Reading	2010	92%	93%	92%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	86%	88%	86%	98%	*	98%	*	*	*	93%	> 99%	*	97%	*
Mathematics	2010	72%	75%	65%	86%	*	78%	*	*	*	> 99%	76%	*	85%	*
	2009	69%	70%	63%	82%	*	84%	*	*	*	87%	79%	*	84%	*
All Tests	2010	71%	74%	63%	86%	*	78%	*	*	*	> 99%	76%	*	85%	*
	2009	67%	67%	61%	82%	*	84%	*	*	*	87%	79%	*	84%	*
TAKS Met 2010 Standard Grade 10															
Eng Lang Arts	2010	91%	92%	91%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	88%	91%	86%	98%	88%	98%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	97%	*	97%	*
Mathematics	2010	75%	78%	69%	83%	*	86%	*	*	*	86%	81%	*	88%	*
	2009	67%	74%	55%	85%	75%	85%	> 99%	*	*	92%	82%	*	86%	*
Science	2010	75%	82%	69%	93%	*	93%	*	*	*	> 99%	90%	*	95%	*
	2009	67%	73%	55%	78%	75%	75%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	69%	*	80%	*
Soc Studies	2010	93%	95%	93%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	91%	93%	89%	99%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	98%	*	98%	*
All Tests	2010	66%	71%	58%	80%	*	84%	*	*	*	86%	78%	*	85%	*
	2009	56%	64%	41%	68%	50%	67%	> 99%	*	*	92%	58%	*	69%	*
TAKS Met 2010 Standard Grade 11															
Eng Lang Arts	2010	93%	93%	92%	97%	> 99%	97%	> 99%	*	*	95%	98%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	93%	94%	93%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
Mathematics	2010	89%	89%	87%	99%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	*	95%	> 99%	*	98%	*
	2009	82%	84%	79%	96%	*	98%	*	*	*	> 99%	95%	*	94%	*
Science	2010	92%	93%	91%	99%	> 99%	99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	98%	*	98%	*
	2009	86%	88%	81%	95%	*	94%	*	*	*	> 99%	92%	*	92%	*

Soc Studies	2010	98%	98%	97%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	97%	98%	97%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
All Tests	2010	83%	84%	78%	95%	> 99%	94%	> 99%	*	*	90%	97%	*	96%	*
	2009	76%	79%	69%	92%	*	92%	*	*	*	> 99%	87%	*	86%	*
TAKS Met 2010 Standard (Sum of All Grades Tested) (Standard Accountability Indicator)															
Reading/ELA	2010	90%	91%	91%	99%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	*	98%	99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	88%	89%	88%	98%	92%	99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	98%	98%	*	98%	> 99%
Mathematics	2010	84%	86%	72%	91%	83%	91%	> 99%	*	> 99%	93%	91%	*	92%	*
	2009	80%	83%	65%	87%	58%	89%	> 99%	*	80%	93%	85%	*	88%	80%
Science	2010	83%	88%	78%	97%	> 99%	96%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	95%	*	97%	*
	2009	78%	83%	68%	85%	78%	84%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	79%	*	84%	*
Soc Studies	2010	95%	97%	96%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	93%	96%	93%	95%	> 99%	99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	99%	*	99%	*
All Tests	2010	77%	80%	65%	85%	83%	88%	> 99%	*	> 99%	91%	88%	*	90%	*
	2009	72%	76%	57%	79%	42%	80%	> 99%	*	80%	93%	72%	*	78%	40%
TAKS Met 2010 Standard with TPM (Sum of All Grades Tested)															
Reading/ELA	2010	96%	97%	96%	99%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	*	98%	99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	95%	96%	95%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%
Mathematics	2010	91%	92%	87%	98%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	> 99%	98%	98%	*	97%	*
	2009	88%	89%	79%	97%	92%	98%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	96%	*	96%	> 99%
Science	2010	92%	94%	89%	99%	> 99%	99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	99%	*	99%	*
	2009	83%	87%	81%	97%	> 99%	97%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	96%	*	96%	*
Soc Studies	2010	99%	99%	98%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	98%	99%	98%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
All Tests	2010	88%	90%	82%	96%	> 99%	95%	> 99%	*	> 99%	96%	96%	*	96%	*
	2009	82%	86%	74%	96%	92%	96%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	94%	*	94%	> 99%
TAKS Commended Performance (Sum of All Grades Tested)															
Reading/ELA	2010	33%	33%	17%	26%	50%	19%	58%	*	*	27%	25%	*	22%	*
	2009	31%	32%	17%	20%	8%	20%	31%	*	20%	20%	20%	*	17%	< 1%
Mathematics	2010	29%	31%	15%	20%	25%	16%	38%	*	60%	30%	16%	*	18%	*
	2009	28%	31%	15%	18%	8%	18%	23%	*	20%	31%	12%	*	15%	< 1%
Science	2010	28%	33%	9%	18%	20%	15%	56%	*	*	31%	13%	*	13%	*
	2009	26%	32%	8%	13%	22%	9%	36%	*	20%	23%	8%	*	12%	*
Soc Studies	2010	47%	55%	38%	55%	40%	52%	> 99%	*	*	71%	49%	*	55%	*
	2009	44%	54%	33%	47%	78%	43%	73%	*	40%	61%	41%	*	44%	*
All Tests	2010	15%	16%	5%	10%	17%	7%	23%	*	60%	17%	7%	*	7%	*
	2009	15%	16%	4%	6%	< 1%	5%	15%	*	20%	12%	3%	*	4%	< 1%

**TAKS Met 2010 Standard (Sum of All Grades Tested, INCLUDES TAKS-Modified and TAKS-Alt)
(2011 Preview)**

Reading/ELA	2010	90%	91%	90%	99%	> 99%	98%	> 99%	*	*	98%	99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	88%	89%	86%	98%	92%	99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	98%	98%	*	98%	> 99%
Mathematics	2010	84%	86%	72%	91%	83%	91%	> 99%	*	> 99%	93%	91%	*	92%	*
	2009	80%	83%	65%	87%	58%	89%	> 99%	*	80%	93%	85%	*	88%	80%
Science	2010	82%	87%	77%	97%	> 99%	96%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	95%	*	97%	*
	2009	77%	83%	67%	85%	78%	84%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	79%	*	84%	*
Soc Studies	2010	94%	96%	94%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	> 99%	*	*	> 99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
	2009	92%	95%	91%	99%	> 99%	99%	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%	99%	*	99%	*
All Tests	2010	76%	80%	64%	89%	83%	88%	> 99%	*	> 99%	91%	88%	*	90%	*
	2009	71%	76%	56%	79%	42%	80%	> 99%	*	80%	93%	72%	*	78%	40%

**TAKS 2010 Commended Performance (Sum of All Grades Tested, INCLUDES TAKS-Modified and TAKS-Alt)
(2011 Preview)**

Reading/ELA	2010	32%	33%	18%	26%	50%	19%	58%	*	*	27%	25%	*	22%	*
Mathematics	2010	28%	30%	14%	20%	25%	16%	38%	*	60%	30%	16%	*	18%	*

2010 TAKS Participation (Grades 3-11)

Tested	98.6%	98.4%	98.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*	100.0%	*
By Test Version														
TAKS (1 or more)	90.8%	90.9%	90.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*	100.0%	*
Not on TAKS	7.8%	7.5%	7.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
TAKS(Acc) Only	2.3%	3.2%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
TAKS-M Only	3.3%	2.0%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
TAKS-Alt Only	0.8%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
Combination	1.3%	1.2%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
By Acct Status														
Acct System	90.0%	91.0%	89.8%	98.1%	100.0%	98.4%	92.9%	-	100.0%	95.8%	99.1%	*	98.3%	*
Non-Acct System	8.6%	7.4%	8.2%	1.9%	0.0%	1.6%	7.1%	-	0.0%	4.2%	0.9%	*	1.7%	*
Mobile	4.4%	4.3%	4.1%	1.9%	0.0%	1.6%	7.1%	-	0.0%	4.2%	0.9%	*	1.7%	*
Non-Acct Test	4.2%	3.1%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
Not Tested	1.4%	1.6%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
Absent	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
LEP Exempt	0.9%	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
Other	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
Total Count	3,175,337	16,877	903	156	12	125	14	0	5	48	108	2	116	3

2009 TAKS Participation (Grades 3-11)

Tested	98.5%	98.5%	98.3%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*	100.0%	100.0%
By Test Version														
TAKS (1 or more)	90.8%	91.8%	90.6%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*	100.0%	100.0%
Not on TAKS	7.7%	6.7%	7.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
TAKS(Acc) Only	2.3%	3.2%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
TAKS-M Only	3.3%	1.6%	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
TAKS-Alt Only	0.8%	0.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%

Combination	1.3%	1.0%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
By Acct Status														
Acct System	87.3%	88.9%	88.2%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	*	100.0%	100.0%
Non-Acct System	11.2%	9.5%	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Mobile	4.7%	4.4%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Non-Acct Test	6.4%	5.1%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Hurricane Ike	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not Tested	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Absent	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
LBP Exempt	0.9%	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	*	0.0%	0.0%
Hurricane Ike	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Count	3,132,150	17,060	581	192	12	162	13	0	5	59	133	1	138	5

Progress of Prior Year TAKS Failers

Percent of Failers Passing TAKS (Sum of Grades 4-11)

Reading/ELA	2010	46%	46%	58%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2009	43%	45%	50%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mathematics	2010	43%	46%	48%	65%	*	69%	*	*	*	69%	*	67%	*
	2009	36%	40%	32%	65%	*	69%	*	*	*	80%	60%	64%	*

Link to: [Progress of Prior Year TAKS Failers, by Grade Level](#)

Student Success Initiative

Grade 8 Reading

TAKS Met Standard (Failed in Previous Year)

Promoted to Grade 9

	2010	40%	22%	31%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	2009	25%	22%	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

English Language Learners Progress Indicator (2011 Preview)

2009-10	75%	86%	75%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	*	> 99%	*	> 99%	*
2008-09	76%	83%	71%	> 99%	*	> 99%	*	*	*	*	> 99%	*	> 99%	> 99%

Attendance Rate

2008-09	95.6%	96.1%	93.2%	96.2%	96.1%	96.3%	95.8%	-	*	96.4%	96.1%	*	96.5%	*
2007-08	95.5%	95.9%	93.7%	97.4%	97.8%	97.4%	96.5%	-	*	98.6%	96.9%	*	97.5%	97.0%

Annual Dropout Rate (Gr 9-12)

2008-09	2.9%	1.2%	2.6%	0.5%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	-	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%	*	0.7%	0.0%
2007-08	3.2%	1.7%	2.6%	0.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	*	0.0%	11.1%

COLLEGE READINESS INDICATORS

Advanced Course/Dual Enrollment Completion

2008-09	24.6%	27.2%	24.1%	7.8%	25.0%	6.7%	0.0%	-	20.0%	6.8%	8.2%	*	7.5%	0.0%
2007-08	23.1%	25.8%	21.1%	91.9%	100.0%	91.0%	100.0%	-	80.0%	90.2%	92.7%	*	92.8%	77.8%

AP/IB Results

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&prgopt=2010/aeis/alltypec.sas&... 11/21/2011

Tested	2009	21.2%	30.9%	19.6%	0.0%	*	0.0%	*	-	*	0.0%	0.0%	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2008	20.9%	32.5%	17.0%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
Examinees >= Criterion	2009	51.2%	65.1%	26.5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2008	50.1%	66.5%	27.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scores >= Criterion	2009	47.4%	55.9%	21.4%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
	2008	46.0%	56.9%	19.3%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas Success Initiative (TSI) - Higher Education Readiness Component															
Eng Lang Arts	2010	60%	60%	55%	61%	63%	56%	> 99%	*	*	55%	63%	*	58%	*
	2009	63%	67%	58%	73%	*	75%	*	*	*	80%	69%	*	76%	*
Mathematics	2010	66%	65%	59%	76%	75%	74%	88%	*	*	86%	72%	*	75%	*
	2009	62%	66%	55%	77%	*	78%	*	*	*	95%	68%	*	72%	*

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

District Name: CARROLLTON-FARMERS BRANCH Academic Excellence Indicator System	Section II
Campus Name: EARLY COLLEGE H S	Total Students: 213
Campus #: 057903010	Grade Span: 09 - 12
	School Type: Secondary

STUDENT INFORMATION

	-----Campus-----		Campus Group	District	State
	Count	Percent			
Total Students:	213	100.0%	53,631	25,819	4,824,778
Students By Grade:					
Early Childhood Education	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%
Pre-Kindergarten	0	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	4.4%
Kindergarten	0	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	7.6%
Grade 1	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	7.9%
Grade 2	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	7.8%
Grade 3	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	7.7%
Grade 4	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.6%
Grade 5	0	0.0%	0.0%	6.9%	7.5%
Grade 6	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.0%	7.3%
Grade 7	0	0.0%	0.1%	7.3%	7.3%
Grade 8	0	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.2%
Grade 9	30	14.1%	30.0%	8.6%	8.1%
Grade 10	48	22.5%	26.1%	7.2%	6.9%
Grade 11	79	37.1%	22.9%	6.9%	6.4%
Grade 12	56	26.3%	20.8%	5.8%	5.9%
Ethnic Distribution:					
African American	16	7.5%	4.7%	15.4%	14.0%
Hispanic	174	81.7%	85.5%	51.9%	48.6%
White	15	7.0%	8.3%	21.5%	33.3%
Native American	0	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%
Asian/Pac. Islander	8	3.8%	1.4%	10.9%	3.7%
Economically Disadvantaged	140	65.7%	70.6%	59.6%	59.0%
Limited English Proficient (LEP)	3	1.4%	6.4%	23.1%	16.9%
Students w/Disciplinary Placements (2008-09)	2	1.0%	25.6%	13.4%	13.4%
At-Risk	88	41.3%	56.7%	48.3%	47.2%

Mobility (2008-09) Number of Students per Teacher	8 22.8	4.0% n/a	18.1% 15.2	19.7% 14.9	18.9% 14.5
Graduates (Class of 2009):					
	-----Campus-----		Campus	District	State
Total Graduates	0	100.0%	9,541	1,553	264,275
By Ethnicity (incl. Special Ed.):					
African American	0	-	395	206	35,982
Hispanic	0	-	8,030	591	104,854
White	0	-	974	545	112,016
Native American	0	-	11	2	961
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	-	131	209	10,462
By Graduation Type (incl. Special Ed.):					
Minimum H.S. Program	0	-	1,066	362	46,313
Recommended H.S. Pgm./DAP	0	-	8,475	1,191	217,962
Special Education Graduates	0	-	822	92	25,929
CLASS SIZE INFORMATION (Derived from teacher responsibility records.)					
Class Size Averages by Grade and Subject:			Campus	District	State
Elementary: Kindergarten	-	-	-	19.6	19.3
Grade 1	-	-	11.0	18.0	19.1
Grade 2	-	-	-	17.9	19.2
Grade 3	-	-	-	18.2	19.3
Grade 4	-	-	-	18.2	19.9
Grade 5	-	-	-	21.4	22.4
Grade 6	-	-	-	23.3	21.1
Mixed Grades	-	-	-	-	24.7
Secondary:					
English/Language Arts	20.2	-	18.1	21.2	17.8
Foreign Languages	13.6	-	21.3	19.5	19.4
Mathematics	19.6	-	18.2	21.8	18.5
Science	21.9	-	18.7	21.1	19.3
Social Studies	18.2	-	20.0	23.3	20.4
STAFF INFORMATION					
	-----Campus-----		Campus	District	State
Total Staff:	11.0	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Professional Staff:	11.0	100.0%	91.3%	69.5%	63.2%
Teachers	9.4	85.1%	78.5%	54.0%	50.5%
Professional Support	0.6	5.8%	8.8%	11.2%	8.9%
Campus Admin. (School Leader.)	1.0	9.1%	4.0%	2.9%	2.8%
Educational Aides:	0.0	0.0%	8.7%	6.2%	9.8%
Total Minority Staff:	2.0	18.2%	57.5%	32.2%	43.9%
Teachers By Ethnicity and Sex:					
African American	1.0	10.7%	6.9%	6.8%	9.5%
Hispanic	0.0	0.0%	44.9%	10.5%	22.5%
White	8.4	89.3%	46.1%	79.5%	66.4%
Native American	0.0	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0%	1.9%	3.0%	1.3%

Males	3.0	32.1%	46.3%	21.5%	23.0%	
Females	6.4	67.9%	53.7%	78.5%	77.0%	
Teachers by Years of Experience:						
Beginning Teachers	1.0	10.7%	6.2%	4.3%	6.0%	
1-5 Years Experience	5.0	53.4%	31.5%	37.8%	31.0%	
6-10 Years Experience	1.0	10.7%	17.9%	23.9%	20.3%	
11-20 Years Experience	2.0	21.4%	24.2%	21.1%	24.4%	
Over 20 Years Experience	0.4	3.8%	20.2%	12.8%	18.3%	
Average Years Experience of Teachers:						
Average Years Experience of Teachers with District:		7.0 yrs.	11.8 yrs.	9.6 yrs.	11.3 yrs.	
		5.3 yrs.	8.0 yrs.	6.4 yrs.	7.6 yrs.	
Average Teacher Salary by Years of Experience: (regular duties only)						
Beginning Teachers		\$45,940	\$43,238	\$45,597	\$41,165	
1-5 Years Experience		\$47,684	\$44,586	\$47,661	\$43,527	
6-10 Years Experience		\$49,226	\$47,911	\$49,621	\$46,149	
11-20 Years Experience		\$52,053	\$52,349	\$53,188	\$50,151	
Over 20 Years Experience		\$70,260	\$60,596	\$63,779	\$58,427	
Average Actual Salaries (regular duties only):						
Teachers		\$49,457	\$50,215	\$51,275	\$48,263	
Professional Support		\$70,260	\$58,461	\$60,472	\$56,470	
Campus Administration (School Leadership)		\$96,173	\$75,922	\$81,384	\$70,209	
Contracted Instructional Staff (not incl. above):		0.0	6.5	0.0	1,722.9	
ACTUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE INFORMATION (2008-09)						
	-----Campus-----			-----Campus Group-----		
	General Fund	Percent	Per Student	All Funds	Percent	Per Student
By Function:						
Total Operating Expenditures	\$107,228	100.0%	\$550	\$1,055,897	100.0%	\$5,415
Instruction (11,95)	\$67,503	63.0%	\$346	\$776,292	73.5%	\$3,981
Instructional-Related Services (12,13)	\$1,898	1.8%	\$10	\$20,921	2.0%	\$107
Instructional Leadership (21)	\$75	0.1%	\$0	\$75	0.0%	\$0
School Leadership (23)	\$24,956	23.3%	\$128	\$176,898	16.8%	\$907
Support Services-Student (31,32,33)	\$12,636	11.8%	\$65	\$81,551	7.7%	\$418
Other Campus Costs (35,36,51,52,53)	\$160	0.1%	\$1	\$160	0.0%	\$1
By Program:						
Total Operating Expenditures	\$107,068	100.0%	\$549	\$729,228	100.0%	\$3,740
Bilingual/ESL Education (25)	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$204	0.0%	\$1
Career & Technical Education (22)	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0
Accelerated Education (24,30)	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$78,302	10.7%	\$402
Gifted & Talented Education (21)	\$1,914	1.8%	\$10	\$1,997	0.3%	\$10
Regular Education (11)	\$105,154	98.2%	\$539	\$648,725	89.0%	\$3,327
Special Education (23)	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0
Other (26,28,29)	\$0	0.0%	\$0	\$0	0.0%	\$0
PROGRAM INFORMATION						
	-----Campus-----		Campus Group	District	State	
	Count	Percent				

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=perfrep.perfmast.sas&prgopt=2010/aeis/alltypec.sas&... 11/21/2011

Student Enrollment by Program:					
Bilingual/ESL Education	3	1.4%	5.9%	23.3%	16.1%
Career & Technical Education	30	14.1%	69.6%	18.9%	21.3%
Gifted & Talented Education	7	3.3%	10.3%	9.4%	7.6%
Special Education	3	1.4%	9.6%	9.5%	9.0%
Teachers by Program (population served):					
Bilingual/ESL Education	0.0	0.0%	1.2%	11.3%	7.0%
Career & Technical Education	0.0	0.0%	11.9%	3.0%	3.9%
Compensatory Education	0.0	0.0%	1.6%	1.2%	3.4%
Gifted & Talented Education	0.0	0.0%	3.4%	2.7%	2.0%
Regular Education	5.2	55.7%	68.3%	68.5%	71.0%
Special Education	0.0	0.0%	8.4%	10.2%	9.6%
Other	4.1	44.3%	5.2%	3.0%	3.0%

- '^' Primary Spring Administration, plus October first-time 11th grade testers who pass all 4 tests in October.
- '?' Indicates that the data for this item were statistically improbable, or were reported outside a reasonable range.
- '*' Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.
- '.' Indicates zero observations reported for this group.
- 'n/a' Indicates data reporting is not applicable for this group.

[Link to 2009-10 Campus Comparable Improvement Report](#)
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