

Increasing Postsecondary
Education & Employment Planning
through a High School Advisory Program

by

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods action research study examined the effectiveness of an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) Advisory Program on students' formation of postsecondary education and employment plans.

The study took place at a public high school in northern Arizona. Participants included thirty-three 11th-Grade Advisory students, four 11th-grade advisors, and me, the action researcher. One quantitative data instrument and three qualitative data instruments were used for data collection. Each of the four data collection instruments provided insight about one of the study's research questions.

The quantitative data from this study addressed whether the intervention had an impact on the ECAP Advisory Program's ability to enhance students' postsecondary knowledge. Results from the quantitative data demonstrated significant positive change, indicating that, through their participation in an ECAP Advisory Program, students developed their postsecondary education and employment knowledge.

The qualitative data from this study addressed how the participants experienced the intervention by providing a deeper understanding of their experiences with their ECAP Advisor and the ECAP Advisory Program. Results from the qualitative data indicated that students' perceptions of postsecondary education and employment planning changed substantially during their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program. As the study progressed, student participants reported they could more appropriately visualize the postsecondary education and employment environments that aligned with their interests. Furthermore, because of the time allocated for lessons and activities in the ECAP Advisory Program, students participants also reported feeling more prepared to

pursue postsecondary education and employment opportunities as the ECAP Advisory Program progressed. And perhaps most importantly, student participants reported that their advisor positively impacted their postsecondary education and employment planning.

Overall, in association with their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program and relationship with their ECAP Advisor, students expanded their postsecondary education and employment knowledge levels, developed and modified their education and employment goals, and felt more prepared to pursue postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife and children. My wife, Tiffany, you supported me through this process and reminded me to stay focused. I also dedicate this work to my children, Lucas and Isabelle. Every day, I am grateful for the unconditional love and joy you give me.

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Chapter One

Context

Introduction and Context

There are many compelling benefits to postsecondary education participation. Individuals with postsecondary education experience are more likely to participate in the labor market (United States Department of Education, 2015), and be compensated with higher wages and career advancement (DeVol, Shen, Bedroussain, & Zhang, 2013) than peers who do not pursue formal educational opportunities beyond high school. The United States Department of Education (2015) reported that the average earnings of college graduates are about twice as high as that of workers with only a high school diploma. In addition to higher earnings, individuals with postsecondary education credentials have greater financial security. Individuals with higher levels of postsecondary education experience are more likely than others to be employed, covered by employer-provided health insurance, and be offered retirement plans by the employers (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016).

Alongside the financial benefits, there are many other important benefits from postsecondary education experience. For example, individuals with postsecondary education experience are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors. The National Center for Health Statistics' National Health Interview Survey (2014; Ma et al., 2016) reported that 69% of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree reported exercising at least once a week, compared to only 45% of high school graduates. Additionally,

smoking rates of individuals with postsecondary education experience are significantly lower than others (Ma et al., 2016; National Center for Health Statistics, 2015).

Combined with the benefits for individuals, the societal benefits of postsecondary education participation are also extensive. When companies and organizations pay their workers more, it creates more business revenue and a greater tax-base for federal, state, and local governments (Van Horn, Greene, & Edwards, 2015; Hoffman & Rex, 2012; Noguera, 2009). For example, it is estimated that adding an extra year of schooling at the postsecondary level for all Americans by 2025 would increase gross domestic product (GDP) growth by between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion, providing an additional \$150 billion in state, local, and federal taxes (Van Horn et al., 2015; Carnevale & Rose, 2011).

Research also demonstrates that postsecondary education experience acts as a safeguard against divisive political trends and promotes a more inclusive civic environment (Van Camp & Baugh, 2016). In terms of political trends, during the 2014 midterm election, the voting rate of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree was 45% compared to a 20% voting rate from high school graduates (Ma et al., 2016; US Census Bureau, 2014). Postsecondary education programs play an important role in educating citizens towards political engagement. Political engagement includes the formation of knowledge, skills, and identity, all of which can be enhanced with postsecondary education experience (Van Camp & Baugh, 2016).

In terms of a more inclusive civic environment, individuals with postsecondary education experience are more likely engage in volunteer activities. "Among adults age 25 and older, 16% of those with a high school diploma volunteered in 2015, compared with 39% of individuals with at least a bachelor's degree" (Ma et al., 2016, p. 40; Bureau

of Labor Statistics, 2015). With regard to civic engagement, knowledge, identity, and participation, scholars have used the term “civic empowerment gap” (Levinson, 2010), which describes an inequity among social groups in terms of their civic participation and influence. More educated groups typically have more political voice and civic participation than other groups (Van Camp & Baugh, 2016; Coley & Sum, 2012; Kahne & Sporte, 2008).

Problem Statement

Although the overall benefits of postsecondary education are compelling, in economic terms specifically, we still find the number of high school graduates enrolling into postsecondary education programs must increase in order to meet the demands of the labor market. Under current projections, the United States will need 11 million more workers with postsecondary education experience between 2014 and 2020 to satisfy the labor market’s demand (Van Horn et al., 2015; Carnevale & Smith, 2013). It is estimated, by 2020, 65 percent of job openings will require at least some postsecondary education and training, with an estimated 35 percent of job openings requiring at least a bachelor’s degree and another 30 percent requiring at least some college or an associate’s degree (Carnevale & Smith, 2013; Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2014; Van Horn et al., 2015; The White House, 2015).

The United States Department of Education reported similar information. Of the 30 fastest-growing occupations, about two-thirds require postsecondary education or training (USDOE, 2012). Approximately, 3 million students in the United States will complete their secondary education with a high school diploma at the end of this current academic year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). And because only 2 million of these

individuals will immediately enroll into and begin a post-secondary education program (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015), the proportion of high school graduates enrolling into a postsecondary education program are not projected to meet the demands of the labor market.

To provide students with an educational foundation to meet the demand of the labor market, over the past several years' state legislatures have increasingly adopted mandates that support student's postsecondary education and employment planning. Currently, legislatures from 29 states have mandated a type of postsecondary planning requirement for high school students (Hobsons, 2015).

The need for legislation to mandate student's postsecondary planning is evident in Arizona. In Arizona, an average of only 53% of high school graduates enroll into a postsecondary education program (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016). In 2008, the Arizona State Board of Education adopted *Board Rule R7-2-302.05*, mandating the use of an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) for each student in grades 9-12, effective for the graduating class of 2013:

“...Schools shall develop an Education and Career Action Plan in consultation with the student, the student's parent or guardian and the appropriate school personnel as designated by the school principal or chief administrative officer. Schools shall monitor, review and update each Education and Career Action Plan at least annually. Completion of an Education and Career Action Plan shall be verified by appropriate school personnel...”

The schools were empowered to focus on specific areas of career and college readiness such as: creating a 4-year academic plan that will lead to postsecondary education or career-related employment; making efforts to apply to at least one postsecondary education institution; and formalizing resources to assist students in the postsecondary education and employment application processes (Arizona Department of Education, 2017).

Problem of Practice

School counselors are integral to the daily operation of a school, and their guidance towards students' postsecondary education planning is vital. Previous research has found that the more information and support a school provides to students regarding postsecondary education, the more likely the students are to enroll in such a program (Morrison, 2015; Perna, 2004; King, 2004; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999).

Supporting students' postsecondary education planning is traditionally a role for school counselors. However, in public schools across the nation, the average school counselor has a caseload nearly double the amount recommended by the American School Counselor Association, and in some states, these rates are as high as four times the recommended number of students per counselor (Savitz-Romer & Liu, 2014).

Due to this type of caseload, public school counselors spend less than one-third of their time talking to students about education after high school (National Association for College Admissions Counseling, 2006). NACAC (2006) estimates that under current ratios and current time on task allotments, students in public schools can expect less than an hour of postsecondary education counseling during the entire school year.

Although Arizona has mandated postsecondary education planning for all its high school students, and although most high school students within the state need additional preparation to handle the increasing expectations of postsecondary education planning (Association for Career and Technical Education, 2010), the Arizona State Board of Education does not mandate school counseling programs (Arizona Secretary of State, 2016; Arizona State Board of Education, 2014), and therefore, does not directly include financial support for school counselors.

As a result, school districts within Arizona have been left with extremely limited levels of funding for school counseling programs. Previously, this caused many school districts within our State to initiate a class-action suit and request legal guidance for the determination of financial support towards the development and implementation of school counseling programs. This request eventually forced Attorney General (A.G.) Janet Napolitano (2001) to clearly define the source of State-based funding for use towards school counseling programs. In short, her analysis [*Opinion 101-014 (R01-020)*] resulted in a judgment for public schools to include and utilize the *Classroom Site Fund (CSF)* for the purposes of compensating school counselors and funding school counseling programs. Prior to her analysis, this fund was to be used to compensate certified teachers for their performance and duties within the classroom. Because the language of the fund describes “certified” individuals to receive this compensation, A.G. Napolitano determined the additional inclusion of certified school counselors and counseling programs as eligible recipients of this fund.

However, the use of the *CSF* to financially support the implementation of school counseling programs forces a decision for many school districts throughout the State. In

practice, a school district may use much of the financial support from the *CSF* to assist in their commitment towards an effective counseling program, at the cost of higher per-pupil ratios within their respective classrooms. Alternatively, a district might choose to use the financial support to stabilize lower per-pupil ratios within their respective classrooms without implementing a school counseling program.

Generally, school districts within the state have chosen a third option and used a smaller percentage of the *CSF* towards school counseling programs while negotiating per-pupil class sizes. Ultimately, across the state, this has resulted in the employment of an insufficient amount of school counselors having extremely large caseloads of students and inability to effectively support students' postsecondary education planning.

Local context

The public school district in which I work is recognized throughout the Southwest Region of the United States for its progressive educational programs, modern facilities, and outstanding faculty. The district is one of the largest geographical school districts in the United States, encompassing 4,450 square miles (Combrink, Fox, & Peterson, 2012). The district has grown to include 15 schools, offering Kindergarten through Grade 12 instruction to approximately 11,100 students in FY2017.

The high school in which I am the assistant principal is one of three high schools within our district. Our school is recognized as an 'A' school by the Arizona Department of Education. It is currently seeking to achieve recognition as an 'A+' school by the Arizona Educational Foundation. In FY2017, the school had a population of approximately 1612 students. The student demographics are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Student Demographics

Demographic	Percentage of Total Population (%)
Gender: Male	48
Gender: Female	52
Race: Caucasian	49
Race: American Indian	25
Race: Hispanic	19
Race: Asian	<1
Race: African American	<1
Race: Pacific Islander	<1
Economic Status: Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility	63
Education Status: Individual Education Plan Eligibility	14

Due to our school’s relatively large student enrollment, students in the same grade typically attend the majority of their classes together as a cohort within a specialized program of study. Examples of the types of specialized programs include the Advanced Placement (AP) program, and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program, which develops cohorts based on student interests in nursing, business, computer-aided design, photography, beauty and fashion, automotive technology, and trades in carpentry and welding. For students holding an IEP, we offer specialized programs for sensory communication accommodations, autism, cognitive disabilities, and emotional disabilities and behavior support. These programs exist along with our inclusion program of students with IEPs who are able to achieve academically in the specialized programs offered to the general student body.

I have witnessed the problem of inadequate support for students’ postsecondary education planning within my professional setting. At our school, the School Counselor to pupil ratio for the current school year is 322:1 (1612/5). As a result, our current

postsecondary education preparation program consists of a ‘crash program’ in which our school counselors work with students within their English class intermittently throughout the school year. In practice, this means the counselors meet with the students, during the English class, over the course of four days, typically two days in the Fall Semester and two days in the Spring Semester, respectively.

As the outcome of the current preparation program, since 2009, an average of 61% of our students have enrolled into a postsecondary education program after receiving a high school diploma. In the past two recent years, however, these percentages fell to 58% and 59% respectively (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016). Although all of these aforementioned percentages are well below the national percentage for total postsecondary education enrollment, these percentages are still higher than the State [Arizona] average of 53% (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016).

Conclusion

To address the problem of practice of inadequate support for students’ postsecondary education preparation, I developed an Advisory Program that was implemented as an intervention strategy to increase the support for students’ postsecondary education preparation. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the research literature that has informed my thinking about my intervention.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives Guiding the Research

Introduction

This chapter connects my action research study with theoretical perspectives through a brief and focused review of literature that is salient to postsecondary education preparation and the intervention for my study. First, I introduce four theoretical perspectives that have informed my thinking: Stage-Environment Fit (Eccles & Midgley, 1989); Self Determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985); Distributed Counseling (Institute for Student Achievement, 2017); and Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). I then provide a brief review of literature pertaining to individual learning plans and advisory programs, and conclude with a description of the intervention for my study and my research questions.

My approach to this review of the literature began with an inquiry about research-based benefits of advisory programs. Effective advisory program components, communities of practice, distributed counseling, postsecondary education and employment, individual learning plans, and stage-environment fit theory were then explored. My strategy for research included an extensive review of books concerning career and college readiness and advisory programs. Databases included, but were not limited to, EBSCO, Proquest, Sage, ERIC, Dissertations and Thesis. Library research included searches of scholarly articles and dissertations concerning postsecondary enrollment, college preparation, and general high school statistics related to advisory programs. Studies were included that showed changes in elements of postsecondary education and employment planning, as well as, positive results from advisory programs.

Theoretical Perspectives related to study

Stage-Environment Fit Theory. Understanding the impact of a high school advisory program on postsecondary education planning requires a conceptual framework for thinking simultaneously about 1) advisory programs as a context in which this preparation is strengthened within a school community; and 2) about the changing academic, personal, and social developmental needs of students as they mature in age and grade-level, leading to their postsecondary education transition. The stage-environment fit theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) provides a useful conceptual framework to guide the development and implementation of an advisory program for this action research study. Drawing on ideas related to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Eccles and Midgley (1989) argue that because students have changing social needs and personal goals as they mature, schools must be responsive and adapt in developmentally appropriate ways to continually provide the context that will consistently address these students' needs and strengthen the achievement of their goals. Their stage-environment fit theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989) continues to argue that educators must create a responsive environment that provides a match between student's developmental needs and the opportunities afforded within the classroom and school (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Eccles et al., 1993). Teachers can foster a responsive learning environment that supports adolescents' evolving needs by providing increasingly sophisticated and challenging curriculum, active and relevant instruction, high quality relationships characterized by care and trust, and opportunities for exploration (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010).

Self Determination Theory. Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory supports and augments stage-environment fit theory. The authors propose that individuals have basic needs for self-efficacy, autonomy or independence, and belonging. Schools that facilitate the fulfillment of these basic needs have a positive impact on students’ motivation, learning, and academic outcomes (Hagenauer, Reitbauer, & Hascher, 2013; McHugh et al., 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Split, & Oort, 2011; Deci et al., 1991).

The successful implementation of a high school advisory program must provide students with opportunities to “develop their cognitive abilities and competence, to gain independence and autonomy, and to connect positively with adults and peers” (Meece, 2003, p 112). The fulfillment of students’ need for independence, connection and proficiency is crucial for students’ learning (Hagenauer et al., 2013); and can all affect postsecondary education preparation and enrollment.

Characteristics such as self-awareness and self-monitoring align to the basic-needs described within Deci and Ryan’s (1985) Self-Determination Theory and can be fulfilled through students’ involvement with the proposed intervention for this study. Self-awareness and self-monitoring [i.e.: self-management] are forms of metacognition—the act of thinking about how one is thinking. Research on the self-determined characteristics of successful learners has shown that such individuals tend to monitor actively, regulate, evaluate, and direct their own thinking (Ritchhart, 2002). In turn, the implementation of an advisory program with the purpose of informally promoting and supporting these self-determined characteristics will be a benefit to students.

Examples of some other key, self-determined areas to be supported within the postsecondary planning processes found with an advisory program are the students’

awareness towards their level of mastery and understanding of a topic or academic subject-area, their ability to reflect on what worked and what are needed improvements regarding a particular academic task, and their competency to transfer learning and strategies from familiar settings and situations to new ones (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Perhaps, most important in pertaining to the intervention for this action research study, an additional self-determined skill for students to align towards their postsecondary education and employment planning, is their ability to participate successfully in a cohort or group [i.e.: collaboration, participation], and recognize its potential value as a support structure in their postsecondary pursuits.

Distributed Counseling. In traditional high school settings, teachers are often responsible for the academic progress of students, while the school counselor is responsible for addressing their postsecondary education and employment planning. In contrast, using the framework of distributed counseling, teachers and counselors regularly work together to support students' academic progress and postsecondary planning. The concept of "distributed counseling" diverges from the more typical arrangements of a traditional high school. The teachers, with support from school counselors, develop a "context-specific college-preparatory sequence of activities to ensure that students and families will be informed about what they need to do to be prepared for college" (Institute for Student Achievement, 2017).

To support a distributed counseling framework, Myrick (1990) suggested that, "effective teachers have the same perceived characteristics as effective guidance and counseling specialists" (p. 15). These characteristics include: empathy to students' perceptions; personalization of the educational experience; facilitation of class-

discussions connecting students' real-world experiences; building relationships with students and parents; and promoting positive learning experiences (Myrick, 1990). The rationale within his study (1990) relies on the idea that a school's guidance counselor may not be a student's first choice for seeking advisement. A finding of his study was adolescents will seek assistance from individuals they interact with on a regular basis, such as teachers (Myrick, 1990).

With the absence of the innovation for this action research study, my school fosters an environment where students compete to find connections with teachers for advisement and guidance. To address this dilemma, the concept of the advisory program emerged as a distributed counseling platform for students to receive more connection with an adult, and to help them with mentoring and guidance (Tocci, Hochman, & Allen, 2005; Meloro, 2005). Additionally, a focal point of an advisory program rests with the notion that school guidance counselors have become overwhelmed in high schools by a high ratio of students, and therefore, it is recommended that another adult should be available on frequent basis for individual students and their needs (Tocci et al., 2005; Jenkins, 1992; Myrick, 1990; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). While the structure and content of advisory programs differ at each individual school, nonetheless, an advisory program can effectively employ a distributed counseling framework.

Communities of Practice. Communities of practice are developed through the participation of its members as defined by Wenger (1998). Through their participation, members of the community develop a vested interest in a shared practice. The practice being shared amongst its members is two-fold. The first is through the obvious and

fundamental procedures of the practice. The second are the unspoken, imbedded protocols of that particular practice, which cannot be clearly articulated or often repeated in another community.

Engagement is a major tenet that supports Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998). Ultimately, within the proposed innovation for this action research study, this engagement is intended for students and an advisor who share a community whose practice is to foster new knowledge and preparation (i.e., postsecondary planning). Dynamic advisory discussions, which extend past routine collaborative activities, must contribute to this type of engagement. When community members of a practice are provided opportunities for dynamic engagement, it provides opportunities for them to develop new interpretations of what they have learned as it pertains to their future (Wenger, 1998).

Each classroom, or mini-community (Toch, 2003), within the advisory program is relatable as a, “community of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998). In an advisory program, such as at my school, students simultaneously connect within a single environment (the school-wide community) under a variety of community of practices (each classroom advisory), for a given objective (postsecondary education and employment planning). In short, several communities of practice occur simultaneously during the advisory program.

Related Literature guiding the Study

Although many efforts are underway to assist students in their postsecondary planning, led by the federal government, national foundations, and other organizations, only a few are conducting, or planning to conduct systematic analysis of such

interventions. Two interventions that have been subject to more systematic analysis are Individual Learning Plans and Advisory Programs.

Individual Learning Plan. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a “student directed planning and monitoring tool that customizes learning opportunities throughout students’ secondary school experience, broadens their perspectives and supports attainment of goals” (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2010). Students utilize the ILP process to identify postsecondary education and employment goals early into their secondary education level, and consistently develop greater awareness of the academic courses needed to prepare them in attaining these goals (Solberg, 2012). In short, most ILPs allow students to identify education and employment goals as a guide map for course selection (Hobsons, 2015).

Previous studies have shown that Individual Learning Plans are an effective strategy to prepare students for course selection, as well as, postsecondary education and employment planning (Solberg, 2012). In support of this claim, Hobsons (2015) conducted research to identify ILP initiatives throughout the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (2015) data base of ILP mandates was used to identify each state’s ILP policy. The investigation revealed that 29 states and the District of Columbia mandated ILPs for all students (Hobsons, 2015). “The most common ILP elements included: an academic plan; identification of academic, career, and personal goals; a career exploration tool; and the capacity to update ILPs annually” (Hobsons, 2015, p. 8). The most commonly found ILP component, academic plans, included course mapping for graduation requirements, as well as postsecondary education and employment goals (Hobsons, 2015). Table 2

provides reference to the commonality of each ILP component found within each states' mandates:

Table 2

ILP Mandate Components (by state)

ILP Components	Number of States that include each component
Academic Plan	49
Academic, Career, and personal goals identified	45
Career exploration	45
Updated annually	41
Strengths and needs assessment	21
Resume builder	18
Personal reflection	17
Service learning	16
Action Plan	15
Personality and learning style assessment	10
Learning support referral	10

(Hobsons, 2015, ILP, p. 8)

Advisory Programs. For the purposes of this study, an advisory program is defined as a structure built into the school day in which an adult and a small group of students meet regularly for academic guidance and individual support (Schanfield, 2010; Poliner & Lieber, 2004).

Research identifies the implementation of Advisory Programs as a promising practice for increasing student learning and outcomes (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). There is already a great amount of expository literature for developing and implementing a holistic advisory program within secondary schools. The literature on advisory programs in high schools that has emerged has typically attempted to connect high school students with the school community and their teachers (i.e.: school connectedness; student-teacher relationships) (Martin, 2002; National Association of

Secondary School Principals, 2004; Chung-Do et al., 2013). Very little literature exists that discusses the explicit success of advisory programs on students' transition into college. The connection of advisory programs to higher education is of particular importance in high school because the fundamental stages are taking place at this level for post-secondary success (i.e. Postsecondary Planning). High school students need diverse support to gain the many skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college including academic competencies, college application guidance, cognitive and critical thinking skills, civic awareness, time management and teamwork strategies, and healthy social-emotional coping skills (Malone, 2009).

History and Purpose. Advisory programs were established in formal educational settings during the early years of the twentieth century with the introduction of homerooms (Galassi, Gullledge, & Fox, 1997). The first reported form of an established advisory program occurred within a high school in Illinois, which teachers acted as support-coaches and guides for their students (Borgeson, 2009; Jenkins, 1992).

From this setting grew advisory programs. Broadly defined, advisory programs are organized and structured to which an “adult advisor meets regularly within the school day with a small group of students to provide personal, social, and academic mentorship and support, to create personalization within the school, and to facilitate a small peer community of learners” (Shulkind, 2007, p. 3; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 67; Juvonen, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Constant, 2004).

As the twentieth century continued, advisory programs became most popular to implement at the middle school-level (Galassi et al., 1997). The first call to action for the creation of advisory programs as a mainstream initiative at the high school-level came

from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. The Council's report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989), recommended a comprehensive program that addressed the importance of developmentally appropriate advisement for students (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). More specifically, the report advocated for schools to promote personalization and the development of communities of learners to assist with the developmental transition student face from adolescents to adulthood (Shulkind, 2007; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

The most recent organization to place advisory programs on the national educational reform agenda at the high school-level is the National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (2004), includes seven cornerstone strategies for improving student performance in high school. Number three on the list (p. 6), states that schools should:

“Implement a comprehensive advisory program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to plan and assess his or her academic and social progress with a faculty member” (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 6).”

While the structure and scope of advisory programs differ across the various contexts of schools, advisory programs are still a significant component of contemporary educational reform efforts (Tocci et al., 2005).

Current trends in high schools. Advisory programs are used for a variety of reasons, under a variety of contexts, within a multitude of differing school environments.

Every school has a different approach, ranging from a simple extension of a homeroom period to designating a significant time each day or week for academic guidance and support (Poliner & Lieber, 2004). One of the fundamental reasons that high school-level practitioners and scholars advocate for advisory programs is rooted in research on 9th-12th Grade students, which shows that when students have a lasting, meaningful relationship with at least one caring adult in the school, academic achievement improves and dropout rates fall (Chung-Do et al., 2013). Ultimately, high schools have implemented advisory programs to help make the transition to high school easier (Lampert, 2005), help at-risk students (Martin, 2002), and promote general school improvement by providing a mini-community (Toch, 2003).

Often, advisory programs become “homeroom opportunities to distribute formal paperwork to the entire school community, or time for school announcements and/or review of school expectations” (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 10). An effective, well-planned advisory program can offer much more. The intervention for this action research study employed an advisory program that provided an opportunity for individual students to develop knowledge to assist their attainment of a postsecondary education and/or employment opportunity; assisted in the development of students’ sense of autonomy, independence and ownership of their own learning; and helped students to recognize options and choices based on shared experiences communicated with their respective advisor.

Problems associated with Advisory Programs. There is little empirical data on advisory programs (Shulkind & Foote, 2009; Shulkind, 2007; Makkonen, 2004). Few quantitative, systemic studies have emerged supporting advisory programs with

comprehensive data regarding its outcomes (Makkonen, 2004). Schools preparing to develop and implement a comprehensive advisory program for students have been previously required to use institutional and antidotal information as evidence of success (Shulkind & Foote, 2009).

In addition, Boregeson (2009) pointedly cites the general lack of research on advisory programs at the high school level. My search for academic publications resulted in similar results. Table 3 summarizes the research by educational level:

Table 3

Literature on Advisory Programs by Education Level

Education Level	# of Studies	Total Percentage
Secondary Education	34	32.6%
Middle School	24	23%
High School	22	21.1%
College/Higher Education	5	4.8%
Elementary School	19	18.2%
Total	104	99.7%

The low percentage of research on high school advisory programs validates the need for additional studies at the high school-level.

Advisory Program in the Local Context.

Our school supports the development and implementation of our advisory program using the actions recommended in *Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004). This publication promotes five strategies for the successful execution of an advisory program. These strategies include: the establishment of a professional development program for advisors; comprehensive support for incoming, transfer, and graduating students; student recognition of self-made achievements; exploration of higher education opportunities and

scholarships; and student portfolio development for presentation of student success (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004, p. 10).

The perspectives and literature described above suggest the need for an advisory program at our school to effectively support students' postsecondary education and employment planning. To meet this need, I implemented an intervention that I devised, the ECAP Advisory, during the Fall 2017 semester. The purpose of this study was to document my process in developing and implementing the intervention, and to assess the extent to which the ECAP Advisory effectively supported participating students' postsecondary education and employment planning through their growth of knowledge and reflection.

The ECAP Advisory Intervention. The ECAP Advisory is a structured program that is designed to construct students' postsecondary education and employment preparation in developmentally appropriate ways from freshman to senior year. Lessons for freshmen and sophomores are designed to increase students' interactions with their classmates, teachers and staff at our school. These lessons encourage students to find their niche at our school and participate in school-related activities, to build their attachment to the school, enhance their school involvement, and develop connections with their ECAP advisors and peers. Lessons for juniors and seniors specifically aim to motivate students to engage with their educational and employment aspirations after high school and provide useful skills and products (i.e., resumes and personal statements) to support their postsecondary goals.

Structure. Our school implemented an advisory program based on the belief that it is the responsibility of all the staff in the school to provide a structured and supportive

environment for students' postsecondary planning. The advisory program is directed by our teacher-led, Advisory Team. This team coordinates and disseminates lesson plans and resources to advisors to utilize once-weekly for thirty-five (35) minutes during a regularly scheduled Advisement Period. Each advisor leads 25 students or less and assists them with academic, career, and personal/social development. Our advisory program is comprised of approximately sixteen-hundred students and sixty-one advisors.

Curriculum. The curriculum blends two main elements. First, the curriculum includes traditional career exploration and college search activities intended to increase students' knowledge and skills for accessing 2-year and 4-year colleges. This part of the curriculum features activities common to many college preparation programs that conceive of college access as a knowledge-oriented, developmental process (Tierney et al., 2005). Some examples of this part of the curriculum include: investigating possible academic majors and their relations to future careers; evaluating various post-secondary education options; and learning how to complete college admissions and financial aid applications.

The curriculum's second part focuses on increasing students' exposure to and success with college academics and experiences, with the aim of fostering postsecondary education knowledge. This part of the curriculum features the following: investigations into in-state, out-of-state, and community colleges; and, presentations by their advisors about their own postsecondary education and employment planning during their high school career. The ECAP Advisory Program's curriculum was created to span an 8-week study. The curriculum's scope and sequence is outlined in Table 4, below.

My intervention of an ECAP Advisory Program concentrated specifically on 11th grade students. Studying 11th-grade students, during a time period in which they typically intensify their postsecondary education explorations and preparations, allowed me as a researcher, to more effectively support them when planning for the ECAP Advisory Program.

Table 4

ECAP Advisory Program Curriculum Scope and Sequence

Period	Curricular Focus Highlights
Weeks 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review college admission requirements • Explore post-secondary educational benefits and options • Complete a Financial Aid overview
Weeks 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about many scholarship opportunities for high school graduates • Review guidelines for scholarship essays & prompts
Weeks 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Panel of Experts: Advisors Share Their College Preparation Experiences</i> • <i>Panel of Experts: Advisors Share Their College Experiences</i>
Weeks 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the ACT and SAT and prepare for test review • Survey curricular programs for Arizona Two- and Four- year colleges and universities • Learn about the Out-of-State undergraduate exchange programs

In Chapter 3, I present my research questions and the methods in which I structured and approached my data collection and analysis for this action research study.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of my action research dissertation study was to examine the characteristics and effects of an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) Advisory Program on high school students and advisors in a public high school. Throughout my action research study, questions and considerations were posed to help guide our school community in planning and assessing the ECAP Advisory Program. I intend my findings to be a resource for school staff to continually foster the development and emergence of a successful program. An associated ‘Toolkit’ is being developed and adapted from the findings of my study.

My action research dissertation study answers the following research questions:

1. To what extent do students differ in their knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning as a function of their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program?
2. How do students understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?
3. How do students understand and describe the extent to which advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?
4. How do advisors understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?

Setting

Our school is one of three public high schools within our public school district. Our school is recognized as an ‘A’ school by the Arizona Department of Education. It is currently seeking to achieve recognition as an ‘A+’ school by the Arizona Educational Foundation. For FY2017, the school had a population of approximately 1612 students and is proportionally categorized as forty-eight percent (48%) female and fifty-two percent (52%) male (Flagstaff Unified School District, 2018). The racial composition of the student body during FY2017 is as follows: 49% Caucasian; 25% American Indian; 19% Hispanic, and <1% for Asian, African American, and Pacific Islander (Flagstaff Unified School District, 2018b). For FY2017, 63% of our students qualify for free or reduced-cost school lunch (Flagstaff Unified School District, 2018c). Additionally, 14% of our student hold an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and receive special education services (Flagstaff Unified School District, 2018d).

Participants

The participants in this action research study include 33 students from the 11th-grade Advisory Program, four advisors, and me, the action researcher. 11th-grade students and advisors were purposively selected to participate in the study. Purposive sampling allows the researchers to strategically select the study’s participants to best understand the effectiveness of an instructive or reform program (Flick, 2009; Patton 2002).

Recruitment & Selection. Recruitment of the study’s participants was completed by me, the researcher. Potential participants were given a recruitment letter during

scheduled face-to-face individual and group meetings that was held between May and August 2017. See Appendixes E, F, and G for the consent forms.

Student Participants. Teddlie and Yu (2007) defined a purposive sampling framework consisting of three general categories: sampling to achieve representativeness or comparability, sampling special or unique cases, and sequential sampling. In this action research study, the purposive sample of the school's 11th-grade students is within the category of sampling special or unique cases (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Studying 11th-grade students, during a time period in which they typically intensify their postsecondary education explorations and preparations, allowed me as a researcher, to more effectively support them when planning for the ECAP Advisory Program. All students scheduled with the selected advisors for this study were invited to participate in this study. Of these students, I was able to recruit 33 student participants for this action research study.

Advisor Participants. I recruited four faculty members for this study, due to their 11th grade-level participation with the ECAP Advisory Program at our school. These faculty members were purposively selected in order to study their understanding about the effectiveness of the ECAP Advisory Program on their students' postsecondary planning at this grade-level.

Role of Researcher. As an administrator of the school, I acted as both researcher and practitioner for this study. To initiate this action-research study, I invited appropriately qualified staff members of our school to participate in the study and provided sufficient information to the selected participants about the purpose and procedures for the study. Additionally, I provided initial professional development to the school-wide staff, focusing on the purpose and pathways of implementing a successful

advisory course. My primary role as a practitioner was to offer instructional support and resources throughout the implementation of the intervention. My primary role as researcher was to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data from the study.

Research Methodology

This study employed an action research design. More specifically, I employed a form of action research entitled *practical action research*. According to Creswell (2015) and Schmuck (1997), the purpose of this form of action research is specific to a school situation with a view towards improving practice. A major idea of practical action research is that educators are learners, reflective practitioners, and individuals engaging in research (Mills, 2013).

This study also employed a mixed methods research design. A mixed methods research design incorporates procedures for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a research study in order to understand problems and inform improvements within the action researchers' settings (Creswell, 2015). The central notion for a mixed methods design is that the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone (Creswell, 2015).

There are six mixed methods designs commonly used in education (Creswell, 2015). For this action research study, I utilized the convergent approach, which allowed the researcher to simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, compare the results, and explain any discrepancies in the results (Creswell, 2015). The quantitative data from this study addresses whether the intervention had an impact on the ECAP Advisory Program's ability to enhance students' postsecondary knowledge.

The qualitative data assesses how the participants experienced the intervention by providing a deeper understanding of the advisor's and student's perceptions and experiences with one another and with the ECAP Advisory Program.

Data Collection Instruments

Recognizing the value that a mixed methods design brings to education research, this study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to explore the influence of the ECAP Advisory innovation on student's postsecondary education and employment planning. One quantitative data instrument and a total of three qualitative data instruments were used for data collection. Each of the four data collection instruments provided insight about one of the research questions. An inventory of the instruments is presented in Table 5, below.

Table 5

Data collection instruments

Research Question	Data Type	Instrument	Detail
One	Quantitative	Postsecondary Education/ Employment Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre/Post Innovation • 6-Point Likert-Scale • 2 Constructs and 5 Components • 20 Items • 33 Students • Weeks 1 & 8
Two	Qualitative	Student Journal Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Prompts Total • Varied in Topics • 33 Students • Weeks 1 – 8
Three	Qualitative	4:1 Student Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Prompts Total • 16 Students • Weeks 5 – 8
Four	Qualitative	1:1 Semi-Structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Prompts Total • 4 Advisors • Week 8

Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey. The survey was constructed using a Likert Scale with a range from a low of 1 to a high of 6, with the values corresponding to the response options of the constituent survey items: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Slightly Disagree (3); Slightly Agree (4); Agree (5); and Strongly Agree (6). Low composite scale scores indicate that respondents gave more negative answers (Strongly Disagree and Disagree) to the scale’s question-statements, while higher scores indicate that respondents gave more positive answers (Strongly Agree and Agree) to the same question-statements.

The survey contained two main constructs, with ten question-statements per construct. The first construct measures students’ Postsecondary Education Knowledge.

Within this construct, there were three components that were also analyzed to provide a more nuanced measure of student learning: Admissions Processes; Financial Responsibilities; and, Program Compatibility. The second construct measured students Postsecondary Employment Knowledge. This construct contained two components, Job Search/Hiring Competencies and Job Compatibility. See Appendix A for the complete pre- and post-intervention survey. See Appendix A.1 for the complete survey organized by construct and components.

The survey was administered to student participants, both prior to the start of the intervention, and again at the conclusion of the intervention. The initial pre-intervention survey was administered during the first week of the Advisory Program. The post-intervention survey was administered during the 8th week of the Advisory Program.

The survey instrument specifically addressed research question (RQ) 1: *To what extent do students differ in their knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning as a function of participation in the ECAP Advisory Program?*

Student Journal Responses. Throughout the study, students had regular opportunities to reflect on and make meaning of the ECAP Advisory Program and their postsecondary education and employment planning during each week's advisory period. Although each journal prompt varies depending upon the particular curriculum covered during each week's advisory period (Weeks 1 – 8), the prompts had two constants: they contained open-ended question-statements and, in one way or another, they always offered students time to consider their 'next-steps' in their individual postsecondary education and employment planning. See Appendix B for the journal prompts.

The specific research question that the Student Journal Responses answered was RQ 2: *How do students understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

Student Focus Groups. The focus group protocol was semi-structured in nature, featuring a mix of 10 pre-determined questions designed to probe more deeply into the students' replies about their ECAP advisor. See Appendix C for the student focus group protocol. There were four rounds of focus group interview sessions. Each session occurred during weeks 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the intervention.

The specific research question that the Student Focus Groups addressed was RQ 3: *How do students understand and describe the extent to which advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

Advisor Interviews. The interview protocols for the advisor interviews were semi-structured in nature, featuring a mix of five predetermined open-ended questions and three general identification questions. See Appendix D for the Advisor interview protocol. The advisors were interviewed individually, near the conclusion of the intervention, during week 8.

The specific research question that the Advisor Semi-Structured Interviews addressed was RQ 4: *How do advisors understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

Procedures

During the first few months of the study, specifically, June through August 2017, an emphasis was placed on recruitment and selection of participants. The complete

implementation of the intervention and study occurred from September through November 2017. Analysis of the results from the data instruments occurred for the duration of the study, from September 2017 through January 2018. The specific procedures and time frame for the implementation, data collection and analysis is outlined in Table 6:

Table 6.

Procedures and time frame for implementation and data collection

Time frame	Actions	Procedures
June – August 2017	Recruit teacher and student participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer the opportunity to participate in the study • Distribute and retain Consent Forms
July – December 2017	Provide advisors support for successful implementation of the Advisory Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer e-mail, phone, and in-person support, as needed
August 2017	Administer Pre-Intervention Data Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proctor survey administration for student participants
September – November 2017	Facilitate Student Journal Responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proctor Student Journal administration for student participants
October 2017	Conduct ECAP Advisor Interviews Conduct Student Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and record interviews • Proctor Student Focus Groups
November 2017	Administer Post-intervention Data Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proctor survey administration for student and teacher participants
November 2017 – January 2018	Analyze Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribe and analyze audio recordings of Teacher Interviews • Conduct Qualitative analysis of Student Focus Groups • Conduct Quantitative analysis of Student and Teacher Pre- and Post- Intervention Surveys • Conduct Qualitative analysis of Student Journal Responses

Data Analysis Procedures

As data was collected with the four different instruments, analysis began immediately upon collection so that initial findings potentially informed the course of the study, particularly with regard to modifying the innovation to make it more effective.

Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey. I used data from the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey to answer RQ 1: *To what extent do students differ in their knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning as a function of participation in the ECAP Advisory Program?* The data for each pre- and post-intervention survey was entered into SPSS Statistic 24 © and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For the descriptive statistics, I analyzed the mean, and standard deviations of survey data.

For the inferential statistical analysis, I conducted paired sample t-tests to investigate how the student participant's mean scores on each of the 2 constructs and 5 components found within the survey changed between September and December 2017.

Student Journals. Data from the student journals was used to answer RQ 2: *How do students understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

Creswell (2015) identifies organizing and preparing the data for analysis as the first step in the data analysis process. To begin, I organized and sorted the student journal responses into separate colored files based on each advisor participant. For qualitative analysis of the student journal responses, codes were developed a priori from

theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. I analyzed each student journal separately in order to identify themes related to the theoretical perspectives from each data source.

Then, I committed to the second step and re-read through each student journal response separately as well as wrote notes and recorded key ideas (i.e., themes related to the theoretical perspectives) from the data sources (Creswell, 2015). The purpose of this step was to ensure that I would assign codes that “were conceptually meaningful, clear and concise, and close to the data” (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011, p. 143). I then highlighted and drew circles around possible data within each of the student journal responses using different colored pencils to distinguish between each of the themes. I continued by completing the same process in successively reading each of the remaining participants’ student journal responses.

Creswell (2015) identifies completing a detailed analysis with a coding process as the third step in a data analysis process. Through the coding process, I identified relationships and differences amongst themes related to the theoretical perspective and the data in order to create codes. I then created a list of these codes and combined their related themes into major theme-related components of the theoretical perspective identified. Fourth, I created a codebook complete with codes (Appendix H).

Student Focus Groups. I used data from Student Focus Groups to answer RQ 3: *How do students understand and describe the extent to which their advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

I utilized the same qualitative analysis approach to analyze the student focus groups as I used for the student journals. I began by organizing and sorting the student focus group transcriptions into separate colored files based on each advisor participant.

For qualitative analysis of the student focus groups, codes were developed a priori from theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. I analyzed each student focus group transcription separately in order to identify themes related to the theoretical perspectives from each data source. Then, I committed to the second step and re-read through each student focus group transcription separately as well as wrote notes and recorded key ideas from the data sources (Creswell, 2015).

I then highlighted and drew circles around possible data within each of the student focus group transcriptions using different colored pencils to distinguish between each of the themes. I continued by completing the same process in successively reading each of the remaining student focus group transcriptions. Finally, third, through open coding, I identified relationships and differences amongst themes related to the theoretical perspective and the data in order to create codes. Fourth, a list of these codes and combined theme-related components of the theoretical perspective identified are located in a codebook for the student focus groups (Appendix H).

Advisor Interviews. I used data from the Advisor Interviews to answer RQ 4: *How do advisors understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?*

I continued to utilize the same qualitative analysis approach to analyze the semi-structured interviews as I used for the student focus groups and the student journals. Please see Appendix H for the codebook containing the major theme codes I created for the semi-structured Advisor Interviews.

Threats to Validity

All research studies need to address issues of validity and reliability and provide evidence that these issues have been addressed so that the reader can be confident in the findings (Shulkind, 2007). Credible research needs to be conducted systematically – design, data collection, and analysis. Therefore, I documented all aspects of these processes to guarantee that I have used systematic, replicable procedures.

In my study, the largest credibility issue is my own bias as a proponent of advisory programs. I believe that advisory programs have a positive impact on students and adults in the school. While I cannot change my bias, I mediated the impact of my bias by documenting my process thoroughly.

A second area of concern for validity was the Hawthorne Effect. Dickson and Roethlisberger (1966) described the Hawthorne effect as the result in which participants in studies change their performance in response to being observed. As a researcher, I must consider to what extent behavior changed because of my presence. I informed the advisors about the data collection in advance, so that the advisors were prepared and comfortable. I put them at ease by letting them know that I truly want to see the normal functioning of the advisory program and not a special presentation for my benefit. Since I have presented myself as a doctoral candidate interested in what advisors and students are doing with the advisory program, I am hopeful they know that I was there to learn rather than give critical feedback.

My third validity consideration is the limited number of participants. Because I had limited parental consent, and thus limited student participation, my findings are not generalizable to all schools. While the findings may not be generalizable, the process for

assessing advisory programs that I developed informs our own approach to advisory, and may be useful for other advisory programs at the high school level as well.

Conclusion

The participants in this action research study include 33 students from the 11th-grade Advisory Program, four advisors, and me, the action researcher. 11th-grade students and advisors were purposively selected to participate in the study. Recruitment of the study's participants was completed by me, the researcher.

This study employed a mixed methods research design. One quantitative data instrument and three qualitative data instruments were used for data collection. Each of the four data collection instruments provided insight about one of the research questions.

In Chapter 4, I present the results from my study, organized by my four research questions.

Chapter 4

Results

In this chapter, I report on the analysis and findings for the following four research questions:

1. To what extent do students differ in their knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning as a function of their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program?
2. How do students understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?
3. How do students understand and describe the extent to which advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?
4. How do advisors understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?

Recognizing the value that a mixed methods design brings to education research, I used both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools in this study to explore the influence of the ECAP Advisory innovation on student's postsecondary education and employment planning. One quantitative data instrument and three qualitative data instruments were used for data collection. Each of the four data collection instruments provides insight about one of the research questions.

RQ 1: To what extent do students differ in their knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning as a function of participation in the ECAP Advisory Program?

The specific data instrument used to address RQ 1 was the pre- and post-intervention Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey. The survey was administered to the 33 student participants, both prior to the start of the intervention, and again at the conclusion of the intervention.

The survey contained two main constructs, with ten question-statements per construct. The first construct measured students' Postsecondary Education Knowledge. Within this construct, there are three components that were also analyzed to provide a more nuanced measure of student learning: Admissions Processes; Financial Responsibilities; and, Program Compatibility. The second construct measured students Postsecondary Employment Knowledge. This construct contained two components, Job Search/Hiring Competencies and Job Compatibility. See Appendix A for the complete pre- and post-innovation survey, and Appendix A.1 for the survey questions organized by construct and component.

The data for each pre- and post-intervention survey was entered into SPSS Statistic 24 © and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For the descriptive statistics, I analyzed the mean and standard deviations of survey data. For the inferential statistical analysis, I conducted paired sample t-tests to investigate if the student participant's mean scores on each of the 2 constructs and 5 components found within the survey differed significantly between September and November 2017.

Results from the Post Education and Employment Survey. The following tables describe the results of the two constructs and five components on the student participant survey. The survey was constructed using a Likert Scale with a range from a low of 1 to a high of 6, with the values corresponding to the response options of the constituent survey items: Strongly Disagree (1); Disagree (2); Slightly Disagree (3); Slightly Agree (4); Agree (5); and Strongly Agree (6). The descriptive statistics for the complete Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Pre- and Post-Intervention Descriptive Scores for the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey Constructs

Data Instrument	<u>Pre-Intervention</u>		<u>Post-Intervention</u>	
	M	SD	M	SD
Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey	3.43	0.78	4.80	0.69

The mean score for the complete post-intervention survey was higher than the mean scores for complete pre-intervention survey. This data suggests that student participants' involvement in the ECAP Advisory Program is associated with an increase in their overall knowledge of both Postsecondary Education and Employment planning.

Additionally, the standard deviation for the post-intervention survey was lower than reported from the pre-intervention survey. This data indicates that the Likert-scale responses by student participants on the post-intervention survey were more tightly clustered around the mean, suggesting a reduced range of variation in responses. The shared experiences of the student participants involved in the ECAP Advisory Program

may have contributed to the reported reduction of standard deviation on the post-intervention survey from the pre-intervention survey.

As previously described, the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey contained two main constructs: Postsecondary Education Knowledge, and Postsecondary Employment Knowledge. The descriptive statistics for each construct are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Pre-, and Post-Intervention Descriptive Scores for the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey Constructs

Construct	<u>Pre-Intervention</u>		<u>Post-Intervention</u>	
	M	SD	M	SD
Postsecondary Education Knowledge	3.33	0.76	4.74	0.78
Postsecondary Employment Knowledge	3.56	0.87	4.87	0.63

Similar to the differences in mean scores between the complete pre- and post-intervention surveys, the mean score for each of the constructs on the post-intervention survey were higher than the mean scores for each construct on pre-intervention survey. This data suggests that student participants’ involvement in the ECAP Advisory Program is associated with an increase in their knowledge of both Postsecondary Education and Employment planning.

The standard deviation for Postsecondary Education Knowledge is slightly higher at post-intervention, while the standard deviation for Postsecondary Employment Knowledge is somewhat lower, suggesting that variation in participant responses was

relatively similar from pre- to post-intervention for education knowledge, and slightly more tightly clustered around the mean for employment knowledge.

A descriptive analysis was also conducted on each of the components for each construct to see whether mean scores and standard deviations measures increased or decreased during the study. An inventory of descriptive statistics for each component of the survey is presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Pre-, and Post-Intervention Descriptive Scores for the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey components

Component	<u>Pre-Intervention Survey</u>		<u>Post-Intervention Survey</u>	
	M	SD	M	SD
Admissions Processes (Postsecondary Education)	3.33	0.97	4.77	0.86
Financial Responsibilities (Postsecondary Education)	2.61	0.98	4.42	0.94
Program Compatibility (Postsecondary Education)	3.86	0.96	4.94	0.76
Job Search/Hiring Competencies (Postsecondary Employment)	3.57	1.07	5.01	0.62
Job Compatibility (Postsecondary Employment)	3.55	0.94	4.69	0.85

The mean score for all five components at post-intervention were higher than the mean scores from the pre-intervention survey. The Financial Responsibilities component, which pertained to postsecondary education knowledge, had the highest increase of mean score [+1.81]. Both the Admissions Processes and Job Search components reported identical increases for the mean score [+1.44] from pre- to post-innovation. The Job

Compatibility [+1.08] and Program Compatibility [+1.18] also had substantial increases for mean scores between the surveys. As with the findings for the overall survey and main constructs reported in Tables 7 and 8, the standard deviation for each component was also lower on the post-intervention survey, as compared to the pre-intervention survey.

For the inferential statistical analysis, I conducted paired sample t-tests to investigate how the student participant’s mean scores on the overall survey, the survey constructs, and each of the five components found within the survey changed between September and November 2017. To begin, the results for the complete survey are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Survey Response Differences, From Pre-Survey to Post-Survey

Survey		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	m₂-m₁	t-test statistic	p-value
Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey (20 Items)	Mean	3.43	4.80	1.36	-7.871	.000
	SD	.776	.693			

The difference between the mean scores for the pre-intervention survey when compared to the post-intervention survey was found to be statistically significant at t=-7.871, p=.000, indicating that the students’ knowledge about postsecondary education and employment planning did increase significantly as a function of participation in the ECAP Advisory Program.

To investigate the student participants' mean scores for both Postsecondary Education Knowledge and Postsecondary Employment Knowledge, I conducted an additional Paired T-Test for both constructs found within the survey. Results for each construct are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Survey Response Differences, by Construct, From Pre-Survey to Post-Survey

Construct		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	m₂-m₁	t-test statistic	p-value
Postsecondary Education Knowledge (10 Items)	Mean	3.33	4.74	1.41	-7.940	.000
	SD	.763	.780			
Postsecondary Employment Knowledge (10 Items)	Mean	3.56	4.87	1.31	-7.350	.000
	SD	.870	.626			

The difference between the mean score for the Pre-Intervention Survey compared to the Post-Intervention Survey for the Postsecondary Education Knowledge construct was found to be statistically significant at $t = -7.940$, $p = .000$. The Postsecondary Employment Knowledge construct was also found to be statistically significant at $t = -7.350$, $p = .000$.

I concluded my analysis of the Postsecondary Education and Employment Survey with a final Paired T-Test to investigate the student participants' mean scores for each of the components found within the survey. An inventory of construct results is presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Survey Response Differences, by Component, From Pre-Survey to Post-Survey

Component		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	m₂-m₁	t-test statistic	p-value
Admissions Process (Postsecondary Education)	Mean	3.33	4.77	1.44	-6.550	.000
	SD	.968	.856			
Financial Responsibility (Postsecondary Education)	Mean	2.61	4.42	1.82	-7.669	.000
	SD	.977	.936			
Education Program Compatibility (Postsecondary Education)	Mean	3.86	4.94	1.08	-6.167	.000
	SD	.960	.760			
Job Search/Hiring Process (Postsecondary Employment)	Mean	3.57	5.01	1.44	-7.326	.000
	SD	1.07	.620			
Job Compatibility (Postsecondary Employment)	Mean	3.55	4.69	1.31	-6.122	.000
	SD	.943	.850			

The comparison of the Pre-Intervention and Post-Intervention surveys indicates statistically significant differences in the mean scores for all five components. The Financial Responsibility component was found to have the greatest statistical significance at $t = -7.669$, $p = .000$. The Job Search/Hiring Process component was found to have the second greatest statistical significance at $t = -7.326$, $p = .000$.

Summary of results for the Postsecondary Education and Employment

Survey. The results from the pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys indicate that student participants' involvement in the ECAP Advisory Program is associated with a significant increase in their knowledge of Postsecondary Education and Employment planning. Additionally, the standard deviation data suggests that the shared experiences of the student participants involved in the ECAP Advisory Program may have contributed

to the reduction of variation in responses on most of the components and constructs measured.

RQ 2: How do students understand and describe the extent to which the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?

The specific data instrument used to address RQ 2 was the Student Journal Responses. Throughout the study, students had regular opportunities to reflect on and make meaning of the ECAP Advisory Program and their postsecondary education and employment planning at the end of each week's advisory period. Although each journal prompt varied depending upon the particular curriculum covered during each week's advisory period (Weeks 1 - 8), the prompts had two constants: they contained open-ended question-statements and, in one way or another, they always offered students time to consider their 'next-steps' in their individual postsecondary education and employment planning. See Appendix B for the journal prompts.

As described in Chapter 3, codes for the qualitative analysis of the student journal responses were developed a priori from theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. Table 13, below, describes the theoretical perspective(s), themes related to data, and the codes used for the analysis of the Student Journal Responses.

Results from the Student Journal Responses. Deci and Ryan's (1989) Self Determination Theory helped to inform the analysis of the journal responses. To begin, the evidence for students' need of efficacy in their own postsecondary planning was present from the very beginning of this study. Student journal responses revealed that postsecondary education and employment planning evoked an immediate emotional

response in students. Many students reported feeling “overwhelmed, stressed-out, and concerned” for the task of planning postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

Table 13

Theory-Driven Codes from Student Journal Responses

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Self Determination:</i> Schools that facilitate the fulfillment of self-efficacy, autonomy, independence and belonging, have a positive impact on students’ motivation, learning and academic outcomes	-Develop their cognitive abilities and competence, -Connect positively with adults and peers -Proficiency in Students’ learning	-Emotional Response of Topic -Visualization of Opportunity -Position (Agree/Disagree) -Evaluation/Extent of Benefit (Most/Least Helpful) -Postsecondary Goal Setting -Postsecondary Requirements -Commitments/Responsibilities -Acquiring Skills/Knowledge

The results of the student journal responses indicate students had opportunities to address their concerns regarding a lack of efficacy and to “develop their cognitive abilities and competence” (Meece, 2003, p 112). As the study progressed, student participants reported their efficacy towards planning for postsecondary education and employment opportunities increased. Midway through the study, one student journal response stated, “Today’s lesson made me feel more confident in my college search.” Another student responded in their Journal, “It [ECAP] Advisory has helped me greatly

and I have less weaknesses now. I feel I can achieve my postsecondary goals more easily.”.

Echoing Ritchart’s (2002) research on the self-determined characteristics of successful learners, this study also shows that student participants gained independence, autonomy, and progressed to “monitor actively, regulate, evaluate, and direct their own thinking” (Ritchhart, 2002). According to the student journal responses, student participants were better able to define and evaluate their specific interests for postsecondary education and employment opportunities as the study progressed. As a student wrote, “The lesson did benefit me. I enjoyed seeing what options I have for medical school.” Another student responded, “It helped me know that I should go to trade school.” Student participants also clearly identified they were benefitting from having time to develop more specific academic and career goals. As an example, one student wrote, “The lesson was good for students that want to go to an out-out-state college, now like me.” Another student wrote, “I now know what colleges offer mechanical engineering.”

Student participants also affirmed that they were benefitting from having time to develop more specific academic and career goals as the study progressed. One student wrote, “I always wanted to go to UND but found out they don’t have the program I want to do. But through our [ECAP] advisory, I found another college with the program that I like.” Another student wrote, “I’m set with joining the military, but because of advisory I have changed the branch I want to join. I was going to try the Army, but instead, I think the Marines with the Navy as a backup is a better option for me.”

Moreover, the fulfillment of students' need for proficiency is crucial for students' learning (Hagenauer et al., 2013). According to results, student participants also recognized they were benefitting from the ECAP Advisory Program by improving their self-determined levels of mastery or competencies for postsecondary opportunities. Within their Journal Responses, student participants cited the appropriate steps necessary for postsecondary education and employment planning. One student stated, "I will sign-up for FAFSA." Another student stated, "It [ECAP Advisory Program] gave me vital information for taking the SAT." A following student responded, "I even learned how to get financial aid." Another student continued, "It informed me about admissions tests for college." During the Week 4 Lesson, many students responded in the student journals, "The most helpful part of the lesson was learning to write a cover letter."

Results from student journal responses also depict the ECAP Advisory having a positive impact on students' self-determined motivation, learning, and academic outcomes (Hagenauer, Reitbauer, & Hascher, 2013; McHugh et al., 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Split, & Oort, 2011; Deci et al., 1991). Student participants reported feeling more prepared about postsecondary planning as the semester progressed. In response to the Week 7 Journal prompt, many students identified their increased competencies towards their postsecondary education and employment planning. One student's journal response stated, "I can see I am perfecting my interview skills." Another student's journal response stated, "It's [ECAP Advisory] helpful because I know how to write a cover letter and how to customize it."

Summary of results for the Student Journal Responses. The results from journal responses indicate student participants engaged in opportunities during the ECAP

Advisory Program that assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans. The results of the student journal responses consistently indicated that student participants were able to develop their own competence towards postsecondary education and employment planning. More specifically, the results from journal responses showed that student participants felt that the ECAP Advisory Program enabled their progression towards directing and evaluating their own postsecondary education and employment planning. Student participants affirmed they were benefitting from having time to develop more specific academic and career goals as the study progressed.

RQ 3: How do students understand and describe the extent to which advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans? The specific data instrument to address RQ 3 was the Student Focus Group Protocol. The focus group protocol was semi-structured, featuring a mix of 10 pre-determined questions designed to probe more deeply into the students' replies about their ECAP advisor. See Appendix C for the student focus group protocol. There were four rounds of focus group interview sessions, with varying amounts of students in each session. The sessions occurred during weeks 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the study.

For qualitative analysis of the student focus groups, I utilized the same approach as the student journal responses, in which codes were developed a priori from theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. Table 14, below, describes the theoretical perspective(s), themes related to data, and the codes used for the analysis of the focus group responses.

Results from the Student Focus Groups. Focus group interview data aligned closely with the Stage-Environment Fit Theory (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). According to

this theoretical perspective, schools must be responsive and adapt in developmentally appropriate ways to continually provide the context that will consistently address these students’ needs and strengthen the achievement of their goals.

Table 14.

Theory Driven Codebook from the Student Focus Group Protocol

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Stage-Environment Fit:</i> Schools must be responsive and adapt in developmentally appropriate ways to continually provide the context that will consistently address these students’ needs and strengthen the achievement of their goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Responsive learning environment -Active and relevant instruction -High quality relationships -Opportunities for exploration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advisor is accessible -Advisor is a Quick Reference -Advisor keeps planning going -Advisor shares experience -Advisor is knowledgeable

Results from the student focus group interviews indicate that the student participants were able to benefit from establishing “high quality relationships” (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010) with their ECAP Advisor. More specifically, student participants benefited from hearing their ECAP advisor’s personal experiences of postsecondary education and employment. One student explained how hearing her advisor’s experiences was beneficial towards her own understanding of postsecondary education and employment opportunities. She stated, “Honestly, I think it has to do with my advisor sharing his personal experience. We can go online and look these things [postsecondary opportunities] up that we’re talking about in class. But because our advisor has gone through these experiences, we can ask him personal questions about what it was like going to a university. Or, how did you get there? What was difficult? What was easy?”

In addition to sharing experiences in planning for postsecondary education and employment opportunities, students also reported their engagement in “active and relevant instruction” (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010). Student participants learned about financial resources and responsibilities associated with these opportunities. One student participant explained how her advisor helped her better understand and pursue the financial resources available for postsecondary education. She stated, “I definitely feel like I have gotten a lot of benefit from our advisory. It seems silly, but paying for college was a topic that I didn’t really think about. I knew I wanted to go to college, but I really didn’t think about, okay how am I going to pay for that? And so by having our advisor, he’s shown me where to get scholarships, and I found them because of my advisor. And that was really important to me, because it helped me figure out what I should look into and what is going to [financially] help me.”

Student focus group interview results additionally indicate that ECAP Advisors created a “responsive environment” (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Eccles et al., 1993) to support the personal needs of student participants. For example, student participants reported that the accessibility of their ECAP advisor was more beneficial in comparison to the accessibility of other school resources, like school counseling. A student explained, “I try to find a way to meet with my counselor. But the hard part about that is our counselors have 400 students to take care of. And so having our ECAP advisor, it’s awesome, because he’s another person that I can ask a question about this scholarship. And, I know he can help.” Another student echoed this idea when she commented, “I could go to my counselor but I feel like he would not share personal experiences like my

advisor had.” Other students commended that having an ECAP advisor also helps them. One junior remarked, “I think counselors have a lot of resources. You might not necessarily have that with your [ECAP] advisor. But if you have just a small question, you don’t have to go [to the school counseling office] and fill-out a request slip and schedule a meeting with your counselor. You can just walk into class and ask a question about this, and maybe he can help you.”

Additionally, many student participants discussed the regularly, weekly accessibility of their ECAP Advisor as being beneficial towards their postsecondary education and employment planning. One student explained, “My advisor plays a role [in my postsecondary planning]. He is an additional resource that is available every week.” Another student stated, “I am motivated to talk with my [ECAP] advisor. Because high school is busy, there’s a lot on your mind. It’s [advisory] a once a week thing. So our advisor helps us keep on track [for postsecondary planning].”

Furthermore, focus group interview data indicated that ECAP Advisors provided “opportunities for exploration” (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010) that supported student participants’ postsecondary education and employment planning. Multiple student participants commented directly that their ECAP Advisor helped them with exploring their postsecondary options. One junior remarked, “I think my [ECAP] advisor definitely changed the way I plan in my future because she made me realize that there is a lot more to college than going to school and learning.” Another 11th Grade students stated, “I think she helps us plan for our future. She gives us many programs and things we can’t find on our own. She helps

encourage us to get into it [planning] and to do whatever we can to find the college or career you want.”.

When prompted to provide responses about their perspectives of the advisory program, a student participant cited Peer Support as being the greatest benefit of the ECAP Advisory Program. She stated, “I can talk with my advisor about these things, but you get to talk to others students and hear what their plans are, it kind of gets you thinking about stuff you may not have thought about.”

Summary of results from the Student Focus Groups. The results from the focus group interviews indicate student participants perceived that advisors assisted in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans. Student participants reported that advisors were responsive, adaptive, and implemented the ECAP Advisory Program ways that continually addressed their needs for postsecondary education and employment planning. Results from the student focus group interviews also indicated that the student participants were able to benefit from establishing “high quality relationships” (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2010) with their ECAP Advisor. Additionally, many student participants discussed the accessibility of their ECAP Advisor as being particularly beneficial for their postsecondary education and employment planning.

RQ 4: How do advisors understand and describe that the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?

The specific data instrument to address RQ 4 was the Advisor Interviews. Advisor participants were interviewed at the end of the study using a semi-structured interview

protocol that was more flexible for the researcher and comfortable for the advisor participants to share their experiences and thoughts regarding the ECAP Advisory Program.

For qualitative analysis of the advisor interviews, I utilized the same approach as the student journal responses and student focus group protocol, in which codes were developed a priori from theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2. Table 15 describes the theoretical perspective(s), themes related to data, and the codes used for analyzing the advisor interviews.

Table 15

Theory-Driven Codebook for Advisor Interviews

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Distributed Counseling:</i> Teachers and counselors regularly work together to support students' academic progress and postsecondary planning.	-Context Sequence of Activities -Personalization of the educational experience -Connecting students' real-world experiences -Promoting positive learning experiences	-Structured Activities -Diverse Lessons for Learners -Student Application -Realistic Topics

Results from the Advisor Interviews. All ECAP Advisor participants reported that the ECAP Advisory Program assisted in students' formation of postsecondary education and employment planning. Each advisor participant had a different response to the overall reason the program benefits the students.

Advisor A felt that the ECAP Advisory program offered students an opportunity for "personalization of the educational experience" (Myrick, 1990). More specifically, this advisor reported feeling that the ECAP Advisory program provided a system to learn new information or solidify their understanding of pre-existing information towards

postsecondary opportunities. As Advisor A stated, “I think it helps fill some of the gaps that students are missing. I think students have some of the information they need, but are missing certain aspects that will help them better plan where they are going in the future after high school.”

Advisor B felt that the ECAP Advisory program promotes “positive learning experiences” (Myrick, 1990) that enabled students to engage in the realistic aspects of postsecondary education and employment. When prompted during the interview about the ECAP Advisory, Advisor B stated, “I believe the ECAP Advisory starts the conversation. For a lot of kids, they hear about college or what happens after high school, but they don’t really know how to get to that end goal. I feel the ECAP Advisory helps kids get to that point of thinking about their end goal.”

Advisor C reported the ability of the ECAP Advisory Program to enable “discussions that are connected to students’ real-world experiences” (Myrick, 1990). Advisor C felt the ECAP Advisory Program empowered students with information and resources that are beneficial to students’ postsecondary education and employment planning. She cited the students’ ability to apply the information presented through the advisory program as being the greatest benefit of the program for students. As stated, “It is a good opportunity to have a practical application for things that are really necessary for them [students] to be successful in the next year and a half. I hope that they [students] will apply these things, so that their burden is not so heavy financially, or so they have a positive way to plug these things [postsecondary opportunities] and make them work to their advantage. That way they are not financially-strapped later, and they can garner full employment.”

Advisor D felt that the structure of the ECAP Advisory Program assisted the students the most with their postsecondary planning. As Advisor D stated, “What was most effective with the ECAP Advisory Program was definitely the lessons. They were structured. They had meaning behind it. Implementing the lessons to the students was not difficult at all. A lot of the material was effective because how detailed the topics were, and how it applied to the junior class.” According to this advisor, what seemed to be most effective for student participants’ formation of postsecondary education and employment planning was their ability to execute a “context-specific college-preparatory sequence of activities to ensure that students and families will be informed about what they need to do to be prepared for college” (Institute for Student Achievement, 2017).

Summary of results for the Advisor Interviews. The results from interviews indicate that the advisors believed the ECAP Advisory Program assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans in a number of ways. Advisor participants reported that the ECAP Advisory program provided students with a system to learn new information or solidify their understanding of pre-existing information towards postsecondary opportunities. Advisor participants also reported that the ECAP Advisory program enabled students to engage in the realistic aspects of postsecondary education and employment planning. Advisor participants additionally reported the ability of the ECAP Advisory Program to empowered students with directly applicable, “real world” information and resources that are beneficial to students’ postsecondary education and employment planning.

Conclusion

Results from this study indicate that both the ECAP Advisory Program and the ECAP Advisors assisted students in their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans. The results indicate that student participants' involvement in the ECAP Advisory Program was associated with an increase in their knowledge of both Postsecondary Education and Employment planning. The results also showed that student participants felt that the ECAP Advisory Program enabled their realistic progression towards directing and evaluating their own postsecondary education and employment planning. Results additionally show that ECAP Advisors implemented the ECAP Advisory Program in ways that continually addressed students' needs for postsecondary education and employment planning.

In Chapter 5, strengths of this study and implications for research are discussed.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I deliver some final thoughts regarding this action research study. A discussion on the strengths of the study is first offered. Then, a summary of positive impacts on the student participants is provided. Recommendations for enhancing the ECAP Advisory Program and implications for future research are also discussed. I conclude with a reflection on lessons learned and a brief narrative of my future direction as a scholar.

A degree in higher education is increasingly important for our students to successfully engage in our economy. By 2020, 65 percent of job openings in the United States will require at least some postsecondary education and training, with an estimated 35 percent of job openings requiring at least a bachelor's degree and another 30 percent requiring at least some college or an associate's degree (Carnevale & Smith, 2013; Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2014; Van Horn et al., 2015; The White House, 2015). In Arizona, with an average of only 53% of high school graduates enrolling into a postsecondary education program (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016), it is evident that the proportion of high school graduates enrolling into a postsecondary education program will not meet the projected demands of our local labor market.

Strengths of the Study

This action research study provides a solution to address inadequate school counseling services supporting students postsecondary planning. Although school counselors are integral to the daily operation of a school, the overwhelming multitude of

tasks these professionals are responsible for hinders their support for our students' postsecondary education and employment planning processes. The results of this study suggest that ECAP Advisors could alleviate some of the weight currently place on high school counseling services by more directly and effectively assisting students with their formation of postsecondary education and employment plans.

Additionally, this action research study suggests a possible solution to address low postsecondary education enrollment rates. Students reported that the ECAP Advisory Program and it's ECAP Advisors assisted them in developing a stronger formation of their postsecondary education and employment plans. This stronger formation may support students in the application process more effectively and lead to greater postsecondary education enrollment outcomes.

Finally, the positive results from this study could help to inform other schools seeking guidance on strengthening their postsecondary education and employment advisory programs. Replicating this type of study in varying contexts and at a larger scale could build on the findings and this study and continue to strengthen the research base on advisory programs and students' formation of postsecondary education and employment plans.

Impact on Student Participants

Results from the quantitative data demonstrate that the students' participation in the ECAP Advisory Program led to significant gains in their postsecondary education and employment knowledge.

Results from the qualitative data indicate that students' perceptions of postsecondary education and employment planning changed substantially as a result of

their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program. As the study progressed, student participants reported they could more effectively visualize the postsecondary education and employment environments that were aligned with their interests. Furthermore, because of the time allocated for lessons and activities in the ECAP Advisory Program, students also reported feeling more prepared to pursue postsecondary education and employment opportunities as their participation in the ECAP Advisory Program progressed.

Through the lessons of the ECAP Advisory Program, students expanded their postsecondary education and employment knowledge levels, developed and modified their education and employment goals, and felt more prepared to pursue postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Even when student participants already had a more developed sense of their postsecondary plans, the Student Journal Responses suggested that they were still receiving benefits from the advisory program. One student remarked, “I do not feel my ideas have changed. However, I have gained a few good resources to successfully achieve my postsecondary goals.”

Student participants also reported that their advisor positively impacted their postsecondary education and employment planning. Most cited the accessibility of their advisor as having a positive impact on their planning. This study determined that ECAP Advisors benefited students most when advisors and students developed strong relationships, met regularly, and shared their experiences planning for postsecondary education and employment opportunities. These research findings are consistent with related literature, which suggests that the ECAP Advisors are providing a match between

student's developmental needs and the opportunities afforded within the classroom and school (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Eccles et al., 1993).

The goal of high school advisory programs generally is to create a structure built into the school day in which an adult and a small group of students meet regularly for academic guidance and individual support (Schanfield, 2010; Poliner & Lieber, 2004). This study provided evidence that the ECAP Advisory program fulfilled that goal, while positively impacting student-teacher relationships. Data collected for this study revealed that student participants described the ECAP lessons as ways in which they connected with their Advisors specifically. There was also strong evidence that the advisory program positively impacted their connectedness to the school community generally.

Recommendations for Enhancing the ECAP Advisory Program

This section highlights factors that I believe are important for effective and sustained implementation of the ECAP Advisory Program, and that were not directly related to the research questions. These areas include professional development opportunities for ECAP Advisors and the need for greater family involvement in students' postsecondary education and employment planning.

During this study, limited professional development opportunities were provided to the ECAP Advisors. These professional opportunities included a formal presentation by the Advisory Team of the toolkit containing the content and lessons for the program. The study did not investigate what kind of professional development would most benefit an ECAP advisory program. My experience in implementing the study, however, suggests that more targeted and sustained professional development opportunities, including preservice training for new ECAP Advisors as well as adaptive instructional

methods for existing advisors, would be beneficial. Schools interested in creating a ECAP Advisory Program may want to consider investing in greater professional development opportunities that produces more personalized learning experiences for students, resulting in more effective postsecondary education and employment planning.

Lack of family involvement was another area of importance that this study of the ECAP Advisory Program did not investigate, but that its implementation suggested. As Tierney et al. (2005) explained, postsecondary education planning efforts must include families for the student to be most successful. Students' families need to be more actively invited into the postsecondary education and employment planning process. I recommend that family members be invited to their students' ECAP Advisory class, or be included with a homework extension of the lesson. These extensions should be interactive, allowing families to better engage in their student's postsecondary education and employment planning. With the inclusion of family members, the lessons would further students' discovery and strengthen their understanding of postsecondary education and employment planning.

My final recommendation results from the lack of connection between the ECAP Advisory Program and real-world applications such as college and career-related field trips. These field trips are an integral part of building students' tangible postsecondary education and employment planning. The trips enable students to imagine and envision themselves on an education campus or work-site. Therefore, I recommend that field trips be integrated into the ECAP Advisory Program's academic calendar. Every student should have the opportunity to visit a minimum of two colleges and/or career-related work-sites per semester of each academic year.

Implications for Research

The results of this study suggest areas for further research. Action research is an iterative, cyclical process that includes planning, collecting and analyzing data, reflecting, and repeating. According to Creswell (2015) and Schmuck (1997), the purpose of practical action research is specific to a school situation with a view towards improving practice. A major idea of practical action research is that educators are learners, reflective practitioners, and individuals engaging in research (Mills, 2013). Having a greater understanding from this cycle of the study points the way to improved actions for further research. Upon reflection, this cycle of action research points to some intriguing questions that warrant further consideration. Table 16 offers some potential questions for further research:

Table 16

Potential Questions for Further Research

- How might changes to the structure of the ECAP Advisory Program influence students' formation of postsecondary education and employment plans?
 - How could our school best collaborate with parents and families to enhance students' postsecondary education and employment planning?
 - What are the most effective tools for evaluating advisory programs, and how could those tools be used in improving advisory practices?
-

Overall, when Advisors do not have support and resources, advisory programs tend to be less effective. Some schools encounter time constraints within the school day and are unable to enact a regularly scheduled advisory program using their Master Schedules. Other schools need more informational resources and training about the postsecondary planning process to increase their effectiveness in creating a well-developed advisory program. Conducting a future study to research the multitude of

existing advisory models would enable options for the design and implementation of advisory programs in schools. Looking at the length of time, the frequency of the advisory, and developmental-stage of single grade advisories, could continue to inform the discussion on advisory programs generally, as well as discussion focused specifically on advisory programs for postsecondary education and employment planning.

Finally, from an Arizona perspective, a future study about how high school advisory impacts the implementation of the ECAP mandated by *Board Rule R7-2-302.05* will be critical to creating enduring and successful practices focused on the increased personalization of education through Individualized Learning Plans.

Lessons Learned

This action research study and its resulting dissertation have been in the making throughout the course of my doctoral studies. During this time, my professional values have been tested, refined, and strengthened. Below, I share some of the ways in which this action research experience has helped me to develop as an educational leader.

This action research process provided a context and rationale for my advocacy for students' postsecondary education and employment planning. As a result, I was empowered through this process to provide greater support for my students within my school community. The purpose of this action research study was to understand how to more effectively assist students in forming postsecondary education and employment plans. The increased understandings I gained from developing and implementing this study will further allow me to advocate for improvements in their postsecondary education and employment planning. Action research provided a vehicle by which, as

both a practitioner and researcher, I can further utilize the knowledge gained through each cycle to strengthen my advocacy for my students and their planning.

Future Direction

In terms of next steps in researching advisory programs, I would explore how improving the personalization of the ECAP planning process influences students' development of postsecondary education and employment knowledge. As a future study, I would research how differently structured advisory programs with more personalized advisement to individual students' postsecondary planning might benefit students' outcomes in grade twelve.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter and dissertation, I want to acknowledge the connections I have formed with my student participants. They are all bright individuals who are capable of achieving their postsecondary education and employment goals. I hope to forever know these individuals. I cannot thank them enough for their participation and support for this study.

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APPENDIX A
STUDENT POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT KNOWLEDGE
PRE & POST QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT

Pre-Intervention Student Survey

As you know, we are working to improve your access to postsecondary education and employment opportunities. I appreciate you taking the time to contribute to this survey. Your honest answer will allow us to help you and other students to gain the skills, knowledge and responsibilities needed to access these opportunities. Your truthful responses will also help our future students.

The following twenty questions will ask you to consider how knowledgeable and skilled you think you are when it comes to accessing postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Make sure to read each question-statement carefully and choose the answer that best represents your viewpoint. This survey should take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions while taking this survey, just raise your hand and I will come to your location to assist you. Thank you, again,

W James Donner

Question Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1. I know how to develop a cover letter.						
Q2. I know how to apply for the different types of financial aid.						
Q3. I know the admission requirements for different types of colleges.						
Q4. I know how to prepare for an in-person meeting or interview.						
Q5. I know the differences among the various types of financial aid.						
Q6. I know how to complete a job application						
Q7. I know the employment-training necessary for many different careers.						
Q8. I know how to apply to different types of colleges.						
Q9. I know the differences among the various types of colleges and the degrees they award.						

Q10. I know how to prepare for a college entrance exam (ACT, SAT, etc.).						
Q11. I know the qualifications necessary for many different careers.						
Q12. I know how to give a speech or presentation.						
Q13. I know how to match my interests to future college major(s).						
Q14. I know the approximate cost of attending different types of colleges.						
Q15. I know how to develop a resume.						
Q16. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about colleges.						
Q17. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about job opening.						
Q18. I know the employment-training necessary for a specific career of their interest.						
Q19. I know the qualifications necessary for a specific career of their interest.						
Q20. I know how to match their career goals to future college major(s).						

Thank you!

Please be assured that your answers will not be shared with any reference to your name or identity. Thank you again for your thoughtful responses!

Please write the first three letters of your mother's first name _____

Please write the last four digits of you telephone number _____

Post-Intervention Student Survey

As you know, we are working to improve your access to postsecondary education and employment opportunities. I appreciate you taking the time to contribute to this survey. Your honest answer will allow us to help you and other students to gain the skills, knowledge and responsibilities needed to access these opportunities. Your truthful responses will also help our future students.

The following twenty questions will ask you to consider how knowledgeable and skilled you think you are when it comes to accessing postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Make sure to read each question-statement carefully and choose the answer that best represents your viewpoint. This survey should take 15 to 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions while taking this survey, just raise your hand and I will come to your location to assist you. Thank you, again,

W James Donner

Question Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q1. I know how to develop a cover letter.						
Q2. I know how to apply for the different types of financial aid.						
Q3. I know the admission requirements for different types of colleges.						
Q4. I know how to prepare for an in-person meeting or interview.						
Q5. I know the differences among the various types of financial aid.						
Q6. I know how to complete a job application						
Q7. I know the employment-training necessary for many different careers.						
Q8. I know how to apply to different types of colleges.						
Q9. I know the differences among the various types of colleges and the degrees they award.						

Q10. I know how to prepare for a college entrance exam (ACT, SAT, etc.).						
Q11. I know the qualifications necessary for many different careers.						
Q12. I know how to give a speech or presentation.						
Q13. I know how to match my interests to future college major(s).						
Q14. I know the approximate cost of attending different types of colleges.						
Q15. I know how to develop a resume.						
Q16. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about colleges.						
Q17. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about job opening.						
Q18. I know the employment-training necessary for a specific career of their interest.						
Q19. I know the qualifications necessary for a specific career of their interest.						
Q20. I know how to match their career goals to future college major(s).						

Thank you!

Please be assured that your answers will not be shared with any reference to your name or identity. Thank you again for your thoughtful responses!

Please write the first three letters of your mother's first name _____

Please write the last four digits of you telephone number _____

APPENDIX A.1

STUDENT POSTSECONDARY

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT KNOWLEDGE

PRE & POST QUESTIONNAIRE ORGANIZATION

CONSTRUCTS & COMPONENTS

Construct 1: Postsecondary Education Knowledge	
Components	Questions on Survey
Admissions Process	<p>Q3. I know the admission requirements for different types of colleges.</p> <p>Q8. I know how to apply to different types of colleges.</p> <p>Q10. I know how to prepare for a college entrance exam (ACT, SAT, etc.).</p> <p>Q12. I know how to give a speech or presentation.</p>
Financial Responsibility	<p>Q2. I know how to apply for the different types of financial aid.</p> <p>Q5. I know the differences among the various types of financial aid.</p> <p>Q14. I know the approximate cost of attending different types of colleges.</p>
Program Compatibility	<p>Q9. I know the differences among the various types of colleges and the degrees they award.</p> <p>Q13. I know how to match my interests to future college major(s).</p> <p>Q16. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about colleges.</p> <p>Q20. I know how to match their career goals to future college major(s).</p>

Construct 2: Postsecondary Employment Knowledge	
Components	Questions on Survey
Job Search/Hiring Competencies	<p>Q1. I know how to develop a cover letter.</p> <p>Q4. I know how to prepare for an in-person meeting or interview.</p> <p>Q6. I know how to complete a job application</p> <p>Q15. I know how to develop a resume.</p> <p>Q17. I know how to effectively use the internet and other reference materials to learn more about job opening.</p>
Job Compatibility	<p>Q7. I know the employment-training necessary for many different careers.</p> <p>Q11. I know the qualifications necessary for many different careers.</p> <p>Q18. I know the employment-training necessary for a specific career of their interest.</p> <p>Q19. I know the qualifications necessary for a specific career of their interest.</p>

APPENDIX B

STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE ECAP ADVISORY PROGRAM

STUDENT JOURNAL RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Student Journal Protocol

September 13, 2017—What do you think of when you hear the word “college”?

How do you feel when you think of going to college?

September 20, 2017— How was today’s ECAP Advisory Lesson for you? How did the lesson benefit you? What would have made the lesson better?

September 27, 2017— Read the statement below, determine whether you agree or disagree with it, and then explain your position. “Today’s lesson was beneficial towards my planning towards achieving my postsecondary goals”.

October 4, 2017— Please describe your ECAP Advisory Lesson?

- Which parts of your lesson were most helpful to you?
- Least helpful?

October 11, 2017— How would you describe the discussions we’ve held together in our ECAP Advisory to someone (perhaps a friend) who was not in our class?

October 25, 2017— Have your ideas about postsecondary education and employment changed this semester? If yes, how? If no, why do you think not?

November 1, 2017—How has the ECAP Advisory helped you to identify your strengths and weaknesses towards your postsecondary goals?

November 8, 2017— In what ways could this class be improved to better help students in the future?

APPENDIX C

STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF AN ECAP ADVISOR

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Student Focus Group Protocol

1. Tell me about the ECAP Advisory Program at our school.
2. Tell me about the role of the ECAP Advisor at our school.
3. In what ways, if any, does your advisor help you with postsecondary education and employment planning?
4. What kinds of activities does your advisor prepare to engage you in postsecondary education and employment planning?
5. Does your advisor shape the way students plan for their future once they graduate high school? If so, how? If not, why?
6. Does your advisor help you to plan ‘academically’ for postsecondary education and employment opportunities? How?
7. What are some of the activities that the advisor prepares to specifically support your academic-planning for postsecondary education and employment opportunities?
8. If you did not have an advisor, who would you collaborate with to plan for postsecondary education and employment opportunities? How would this person differ from your advisor in their assistance towards your postsecondary planning?
9. Beyond the guidance and support of an advisor, how do you think students could figure out what they must know to properly plan for postsecondary education and employment opportunities?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your postsecondary education and employment planning, your advisor or the school’s advisory program?

APPENDIX D

ADVISOR UNDERSTANDING OF AN ECAP ADVISORY PROGRAM

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**ECAP Advisor
Interview Protocol**

1. Just for transcription purposes, could you tell me your name and your role at FHS?
2. For coding purposes, could you please tell me the first 3 letters of your mother's first name?
3. Again, for coding purposes, could you please also tell me the last 4 digits of your phone number?
4. How did you become a ECAP Advisor?
5. What are your own goals and aspirations for the ECAP Advisory Program? What do you hope it will achieve for your students?
6. What do you believe the ECAP Advisory Program does that is most effective in assisting students towards their postsecondary education and employment goals?
7. Are there aspects of the curriculum or program that don't seem to be working as well?
8. How can we provide greater support to assist our students' postsecondary planning with the ECAP Advisory Program?

APPENDIX E
PARENT CONSENT DOCUMENT
STUDENT PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

PARENT PERMISSION FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Increasing Postsecondary Education & Employment Planning through a High School Advisory Program

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are asked to allow your child to participate in a research study conducted by William James Donner, M.A. and Carl Hermanns, Ed.D. from the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he/she is a student at Flagstaff High School, a Flagstaff Unified School District 1 school that operates an advisory program under the administration of William James Donner. Your child's participation in this research study is voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how and to what extent high school students construct postsecondary education and employment plans through their participation in an advisory program at Flagstaff High School

PROCEDURES

If you allow your child to volunteer and participate in this study, we will invite your child to complete a pre- and post- survey, as well as, complete journal responses and participate in a focus group to gather input for the study. The focus group will be audio tape-recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The surveys and focus group will take time to complete. Your child will need to take 15 minutes to complete the surveys. Your child will also need to take 20 minutes to participate in the focus group. There are no anticipated risks to participation. If at any time, a question makes you uncomfortable, you or your student may decline to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Your child will contribute to the minimal literature on the impact of advisory programs on postsecondary education and employment planning. The research questions are designed to provide advisors and school leaders with the information that they seek to help them understand the value of increasing postsecondary education and employment planning, and ultimately, postsecondary success. Answering these questions will not only help our school community and students of other high schools, but also inform the national debate on this issue.

COMPENSATION / CREDIT FOR PARTICIPATION

You or your child will not receive compensation or credit for participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removing all references to the site and the organization. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the participants' identities will be concealed and participants will be given aliases. The data generated from observations, confidential interviews, and surveys will be assigned codes. Data will be used for educational purposes and will be kept in the researchers' homes and not accessible to anyone but the researchers. Once the research is completed, all tapes and documentation will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to allow your child to be in this study or not. If you allow your child to volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw your child at any time without consequences of any kind.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact the co-principal researchers:

William James Donner, 928.773.8115, wdonner@asu.edu or wdonner@fusd1.org
Carl Hermanns, 602.543.6343/6300, Carl.Hermanns@asu.edu

RIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your child's participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your child's participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a parent/guardian of a minor participating in this research study, contact:

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
IRB – Arizona State University
CenterPoint, 660 S. Mill Avenue Suite 315
Mail Code 6111
research.integrity@asu.edu
(480) 965-6788

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Child

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR OR DESIGNEE

In my judgement, the parent/guardian is voluntarily and knowingly giving permission for his/her child to participate in this research study.

Name of Investigator or Designee

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Please Note: The “Signature of Investigator” section is intended to be used by the investigator (or designated member of the research team) to document that as part of the informed consent process the investigator/designee has ascertained that the parent/guardian has understood the information provided in the informed consent process. If an in-person parent/guardian permission process is not conducted (e.g., permission form is mailed to the parent), the “Signature of Investigator” section should not be included on this document.

APPENDIX F
STUDENT ASSENT FORM
STUDENT PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

PERMISSION FOR MINOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Increasing Postsecondary Education & Employment Planning through a High School Advisory Program

Dear Student:

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by William James Donner, M.A. and Carl Hermanns, Ed.D. from the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a student at Flagstaff High School, a Flagstaff Unified School District 1 school that operates an advisory program under the administration of William James Donner. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how and to what extent high school students construct postsecondary education and employment plans through their participation in an advisory program at Flagstaff High School.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer and participate in this study, we will invite you to complete a pre- and post- survey, as well as, complete journal responses and participate in a focus group to gather input for the planning of the study. The focus group will be audio tape-recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The surveys and focus groups will take time to complete. You will need to take 15 minutes to complete the surveys. You will also need to take 20 minutes to participate in the focus group. There are no anticipated risks to participation. If at any time, a question makes you uncomfortable, you may decline to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

You will contribute to the minimal literature on the impact of advisory programs on postsecondary education and employment planning. The research questions are designed to provide advisors and school leaders with the information that they seek to help them understand the value of increasing postsecondary education and employment planning, and ultimately, postsecondary success. Answering these questions will not only help our school community and students of other high schools, but also inform the national debate on this issue.

COMPENSATION / CREDIT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive compensation or credit for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removing all references to the site and the organization. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the participants' identities will be concealed and participants will be given aliases. The data generated from observations, confidential interviews, and surveys will be assigned codes. Data will be used for educational purposes and will be kept in the researchers' homes and not accessible to anyone but the researchers. Once the research is completed, all tapes and documentation will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact the researchers: William James Donner, 928.773.8115, wdonner@asu.edu or wdonner@fusd1.org
Carl Hermanns, 602.543.6343/6300, Carl.Hermanns@asu.edu

RIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a minor participating in this research study, contact:

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
IRB – Arizona State University
CenterPoint, 660 S. Mill Avenue Suite 315
Mail Code 6111
research.integrity@asu.edu
(480) 965-6788

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Minor

Signature Minor

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR OR DESIGNEE

In my judgement, the minor is voluntarily and knowingly giving permission to participate in this research study.

Name of Investigator or Designee

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Please Note: The “Signature of Investigator” section is intended to be used by the investigator (or designated member of the research team) to document that as part of the informed assent process the investigator/designee has ascertained that the minor has understood the information provided in the informed assent process. If an in-person parent/guardian permission process is not conducted (e.g., permission form is mailed to the parent), the “Signature of Investigator” section should not be included on this document.

APPENDIX G
ADVISOR CONSENT FORM
ADVISOR PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Arizona State University
Doctor of Education : Leadership and Innovation Program – Mary Lou Fulton Teachers
College
Teacher [Advisor] Consent to Participate in Research

Increasing Postsecondary Education & Employment Planning through a High School
Advisory Program

Dear Teacher:

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by William James Donner, M.A. and Carl Hermanns, Ed.D. from the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Doctor of Education: Leadership and Innovation Program at Arizona State University. The faculty sponsor of this study is Carl Hermanns, Ed.D., a professor in the Educational Leadership Program at the same institution. Dr. Hermanns' contact information is 602.543.6343/6300. email address: Carl.Hermanns@asu.edu.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study, because you 1) are an advisor at a school where the youngest students are in high school, 2) have an advisory as a part of the core mission of your school and have advisory as a regularly scheduled part of your school program. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine how and to what extent high school students construct postsecondary education and employment plans through their participation in an advisory program at Flagstaff High School.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will invite you to participate in an interview to gather your input for the planning of the study. We will audio record your interview. Separate permission will be obtained for your students to participate in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The interviews will take time to complete. You will need approximately 20 minutes to participate in the interview. There are no anticipated risks to participation. If at any time, a question makes you uncomfortable, you or your students may decline to answer.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Your participation in this study will contribute to the minimal literature on the impact of advisory programs on postsecondary education and employment planning. The research questions are designed to provide advisors and school leaders with the information that they seek to help them understand the value of increasing postsecondary education and employment planning, and ultimately, postsecondary success. Answering these questions

will not only help our school community and students of other high schools, but also inform the national debate on this issue.

COMPENSATION / CREDIT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not receive compensation or credit of any form for your participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removing all references to the site and the organization. In order to protect the privacy of the participants, the participants' identities will be concealed and participants will be given aliases. The data generated from observations, confidential interviews, and surveys will be assigned codes. Data will be used for educational purposes and will be kept in the researchers' homes and not accessible to anyone but the researchers. Once the research is completed, all tapes and documentation will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

If you have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact the co-principal researchers:

W. James Donner, 928.773.8115, wdonner@asu.edu or wdonner@fusd1.org

Carl Hermanns, 602.543.6343/6300, Carl.Hermanns@asu.edu

RIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact:

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance
IRB – Arizona State University
CenterPoint, 660 S. Mill Avenue Suite 315
Mail Code 6111
research.integrity@asu.edu
(480) 965-6788

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Research Subject

Signature of Research Subject

Date

Signature of investigator or designee

In my judgement, the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving permission for his/her child to participate in this research study.

Name of Investigator or Designee

APPENDIX H

THEORY DRIVEN CODEBOOKS

QUALITATIVE DATA: STUDENT JOURNAL RESPONSES;

STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS; ADVISOR INTERVIEWS

Theory-Driven Codes from Student Journal Responses

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Self Determination:</i> Schools that facilitate the fulfillment of self-efficacy, autonomy, independence and belonging, have a positive impact on students' motivation, learning and academic outcomes	-Develop their cognitive abilities and competence, -Connect positively with adults and peers -Proficiency in Students' learning	-Emotional Response of Topic -Visualization of Opportunity -Position (Agree/Disagree) - Evaluation/Extent of Benefit (Most/Least Helpful) -Postsecondary Goal Setting -Postsecondary Requirements -Commitments/ Responsibilities -Acquiring Skills/ Knowledge

Theory Driven Codebook from the Student Focus Group Protocol

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Stage-Environment Fit:</i> Schools must be responsive and adapt in developmentally appropriate ways to continually provide the context that will consistently address these students' needs and strengthen the achievement of their goals.	-Responsive learning environment -Active and relevant instruction -High quality relationships -Opportunities for exploration	-Advisor is accessible -Advisor is a Quick Reference -Advisor keeps planning going -Advisor shares experience -Advisor is knowledgeable

Theory-Driven Codebook for Advisor Interviews

Theoretical Perspective	Theme-Related Components	Codes
<i>Distributed Counseling:</i> Teachers and counselors regularly work together to support students' academic progress and postsecondary planning.	-Context Sequence of Activities -Personalization of the educational experience -Connecting students' real-world experiences -Promoting positive learning experiences	-Structured Activities -Diverse Lessons for Learners -Student Application -Realistic Topics