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ASSESSING A COLLEGE READINESS MODEL FOR AN INDEPENDENT
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

by

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Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
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May 2015

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSING A COLLEGE READINESS MODEL FOR AN INDEPENDENT
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Natalia Dorovskaya Collins
Old Dominion University, 2015
Chair: Dr. Dana D. Burnett

Interest in the topic of college readiness is growing as more and more high school graduates are not prepared for college-level work (Bok, 2006, 2013; González, 2012; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003; Professor X, 2011). Most models offering assessment of the college readiness of students concentrate strictly upon the academic part of the issue – high school GPAs, high school course titles, standardized test scores – while disregarding non-academic elements, such as time management, the ability to demonstrate college-level academic behaviors and a general awareness of the environments present in different institutions of higher education. The purpose of this exploratory study was to identify certain key mechanisms, programs, and initiatives developed by a singular boarding school to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education. The study also examined the influence those programs and initiatives had on students. To accomplish this, the researcher interviewed school faculty, administrators, senior class students, and school alumni. The foundation for the interview questions was a college readiness model developed by Conley (2008) which included the examination of both academic and non-academic aspects of college readiness.

The results of this research revealed that the programs, methods, and techniques developed and implemented by the private school under study had a positive influence on increasing the college readiness of its students.

For my daughters Isidora and Seraphima. Concerns about your education proved to be quite thought provoking.

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It appears that the time has come for me to sing “Gaudeamus Igitur” for the third time in my life. Undertaking a doctoral degree has been amongst the most difficult and most rewarding tasks I have ever embarked upon in my life. In some way it feels much as Julius Caesar must have felt when stepping foot into Britannia for the first time. A mysterious island shrouded in myth and mystery where awe-inspiring hostile forces awaited, yet the obstacles themselves were the true reward. I would never have been able to surmount this obstacle without the guidance of my committee members Dr. Burnett , Dr. Pribesh, Dr. DeVitis and Dr. Keesee who stood as a bulwark against my occasional faltering.

To my advisor and mentor, Dr. Dana Burnett, your “sink or swim” educational strategy seems to have had remarkable results on me. You allowed me to participate in special projects which greatly expanded my knowledge about higher education. Your never-ending care, remarkable patience, your positive attitude and excellent guidance made this journey possible. You supported me and lifted my spirit through the maelstrom of enormous pressures. I can never thank you enough. Dr. DeVitis, the philosophical perspective that you brought to every class gave me a greater understanding of the true nature of what it means to be an educator, the books you chose for the classes exposed me to facets of the Ivory Tower seldom afforded to students in this day and age. You have left an indelible mark upon me forever. Dr. Keesee, I appreciate your openness and desire to help with this project in every way possible, your input was invaluable. Dr. Pribesh, thank you for your time and effort. To my auditor who kept me on track, you did not allow me to get lost in the wilderness of my own thoughts. To my participants:

this study would not have been possible without you! I owe a debt of gratitude to each of you and many more individuals.

I would like to thank my parents who always believed that if something is humanly possible then I definitely can do it. I thank my sisters and my brother who always supported my desire to undertake any educational endeavors. Last but not least, I thank my husband Ryan; you are my sword and shield, my greatest proponent and my sounding board. On many occasions I wondered what it was more difficult to be: a Ph.D. student, or to be a spouse of a person who is studying for a Ph.D. Even though I enjoy learning, I do not plan on pursuing any more degrees. That's a promise!

Vivat academia! Vivant professores!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This manuscript examines college readiness. It is dedicated to revealing and describing certain programs and mechanisms that have been initiated by a private independent high school in order to prepare its students for the intricacies of college life. This manuscript is also about the influence that those initiatives have on high school students. It explores the practical application of the theoretical recommendations on the ways to increase college readiness in high school graduates. I was particularly interested in the methods – the *know-how* of the school. *How* exactly does an institution of secondary learning “create and maintain a college-going culture in the school?” (Conley, 2010a, p. 19). What *methods* can a high school use to “teach key self-management skills and [then] expect students to use them?” (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). *How* can a school “make the senior year meaningful and challenging?” (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). I also sought to find out the efficiency, the practical value of the structures and the techniques initialized and used by the school in order to prepare its students for postsecondary life. I shall refer to the school under study as “Templeton Academy.”

Templeton Academy is an independent educational institution located in the state of Virginia. While much has been said on the general unpreparedness of high school graduates for college work (González, 2012; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003) and, thus, increasing college attrition rates (Bok, 2013), educational research seldom concentrates on studying the private sector and the mechanisms it created to prepare its students for college. On one hand, it is quintessential to pinpoint the programs and initiatives that do not work and, if possible, correct and adjust them. On the other hand, it is of outmost importance to examine the practices that do work, that do make

students ready for post-secondary education. It is essential to reveal how such initiatives work, what influence they have on high school students, and how they can be replicated and applied to other secondary institutions – private and public – in order to increase the college readiness of high school students.

In September 2012, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education released a report titled “Time to Lead” (2012) announcing to the public that “one-third of students who enroll in Massachusetts public colleges and universities are not prepared for college-level work” (p. 10). The situation is similar in other states as well (Carmichael, 2012). The report (“Time to lead”, 2012) continues by asserting that the state is not as advanced in measuring student success in college as Virginia or Texas. DeVise (2010) calls the goal of preparing students for college “elusive” (para. 1) as different states undertake various initiatives to measure the college readiness of their students. The questions that puzzled me were: Is the real issue of insufficient student preparation truly rooted in *measuring* student successes and failures? Or is it in the programs initiated by the majority of schools, programs that do not accomplish the goal of college preparation? Or does the matter lie in the very foundation of modern era schooling – as Gatto (2010) put it “[s]chool trains children to be employees and consumers...” (p. xxii)? I touch upon these issues in chapter two.

This research primarily concentrated on the characterization of college readiness offered by Conley (2008). How can a school effectively prepare its students for college? The concept of college readiness developed by Conley (2012) emphasizes the following: Being ready for college involves not only the academic readiness required to take on learning more rigorous than is found in high school - college curriculum, but it also

involves such aspects as persistence, self-awareness, motivation, self-efficacy, time management and other such qualities. The model that examines the college readiness of students and of initiatives implemented by the school to prepare students for college consists of four major elements. These are (1) key content knowledge, (2) key cognitive strategies, (3) key learning skills and techniques also referred to as academic behaviors, and (4) key transition knowledge and skills also referred to as contextual skills and awareness (Conley 2010a; 2012). Each of these aspects is defined elsewhere in this chapter. Detailed explanation of the four elements is provided in chapter two.

Research reveals that the transition from high school to college can be challenging as many of the students are not quite prepared for college-level work as well as for the college environment (González, 2012; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003). Pascarella et al., (2003) describes nonacademic experience as participation in various extracurricular activities, athletics, and so on, and highlights the importance of student's participation in such activities from the stance of cognitive and psychological development. Conley's (2008) model provides a way to examine both the academic and non-academic – extracurricular – sides of college readiness.

Historically, the idea of educating the whole person, as opposed to promoting the development of strictly intellectual needs of a student, has traditionally been in the foundation of the private institutions of secondary learning (Williams, 1999). Only later was it rediscovered by the institutions of higher education. Moving away from long-established forms of lecturing with no emphasis on the application of knowledge towards a more comprehensive education, which besides classroom experiences also includes student's involvement in extracurricular activities, has been proposed as a better method

of education (Keeling, 2004). Thus, from the standpoint of post-secondary education, both academic and nonacademic experiences play an equally important role in student's successful transition to college and subsequent engagement in active learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine one of the private residential schools located in the state of Virginia, to learn about the approach to education it implemented in order to increase college readiness in its students. This research examined the programs and practices created by the school through the prism of theoretical framework developed by Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012). More specifically, this work identified the particular mechanisms, programs, and initiatives an independent boarding school had developed to address the issue of college readiness in its students. Another goal of this study was to examine the influence of such programs on college readiness of the students.

During the research I explored specific school wide strategies and classroom practices deliberately created and implemented by the Templeton Academy with the purpose of increasing the college readiness of its students. In particular, an aspect of the school's mission to provide college preparatory education was analyzed using the model developed by Conley (2008). Another focus of this project was to identify the efficiency of the school's initiatives by having conversations with senior class students and school alumni. The specific method which was utilized to accomplish these goals is identified in one of the subsequent sections of this chapter and described in greater detail in chapter three. At this point it is necessary to mention that the four constituencies who primarily influence the development of college readiness in high school students participated in this

study: students, teachers, administrators, and alumni. Interviews with faculty and school administrators helped me to pinpoint the programs identified in the school curriculum, lesson plans and classroom strategies, extracurricular activities, and other such initiatives created with the purpose of preparing students for college. Conversations with senior class students and alumni contributed to my understanding of how those programs work and what influence they have on the students. I was particularly interested in the overall environment created by the school in order to increase college readiness in its students.

To add clarity to the purpose statement, it is important to emphasize the following. This study does not claim to prove that the approach to education implemented by Templeton Academy is the ultimate practical application of Conley's (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) model. Proper adjustment might be necessary before any of the programs or activities can be applied to other high schools in the United States independent or otherwise.

Further research in the complex area of college readiness is of necessity as there is a need to reduce the gap between the multifaceted high school and college academic environments. Specifically, it would be important in further research to address the issues related to inadequate college preparation of some high school graduates, such as a number of first generation college students, by comparing a school with a successful college preparatory model to a less successful one and to suggest possible ways to address any noted imperfections or deficiencies.

Research Foci

In order to explore the college readiness of students in the school under study, to examine mechanisms and strategies utilized by the school to partially fulfill its mission as

a college preparatory school, and to achieve the purpose of this study the following research foci were developed.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

Significance of the Study

Research demonstrates that approximately 60 percent of high school graduates have to take remedial education courses in their first year of university studies (Gonzales, 2012). There are a number of studies dedicated to searching for and proposing new ways to improve the current state of affairs and to raise well educated and intelligent citizenry (Klein, & Hoff, 2008; Schweitz et al., 2005; Wagner, 2008). However, there is little research that examines and identifies the strategies, mechanisms and best practices utilized by the private sector of the secondary education in the United States in order to increase college readiness in high school students.

Needless to say, the majority of freshmen students in the U.S. come from public schools. In fact, in the year 2014-2015 only nine percent or 0.3 million of high school

students are projected to graduate from private institutions, as compared to three million graduates coming from the public sector (NCES, 2014a). A majority of public high school graduates who are eligible for college, however, enter institutions of higher learning unprepared for college-level work or a college environment (Bok, 2013; Conley 2010a; González, 2012; Gross, 1999; Pascarella, et al., 2003). Therefore, while it is important to identify and study the programs initiated by the public sector that do not work, that graduate a mass of high school students ill-equipped for college, it is also important to recognize and examine the structures and initiatives that do work, to explore how they work, and what influence they have on students. It is essential to study the environment created by many of the independent schools to promote college readiness in students, the environment that differs greatly from the atmosphere maintained in the majority of public high schools. After all, as Allen (2005) put it “[e]nvironment is but [our] looking glass” (p. 5). In other words, we are surrounded by cultural forces that shape us, that form our worldview. People have an innate desire to fit in. By creating a certain atmosphere an educational institution can often unintentionally encourage or discourage learning, can promote or disregard college knowledge (Conley, 2010a). Research shows that the major advantage of private secondary schools is the supportive learning environment “...for hardworking students who, in public schools, are often subjected to peer pressures *not* to study – ‘nerd harassment’...” (Murray, 2008, p. 65). Teenagers are creative; they adjust their behaviors and attitudes to be a part of that environment. In short, “[n]ecessity has a powerful effect on ... creativity” (Greene, 2006, p. 104). This research examined the atmosphere created by the Templeton Academy in order to prepare students for college, thus, contributing to the existing literature on the

ways the environment influences human behavior and shapes personal philosophies – Weltanschauung.

This preliminary study was dedicated to exploration of specific programs developed by the Templeton Academy to prepare its students for success in post-secondary institutions. Another goal of this research was to understand the specific influence of such programs on promoting the college readiness in students. Certain programs initiated by Templeton Academy might prove useful when creating college remedial and developmental courses. The results of this study reveal that college readiness is associated not only with the academic preparation of a student, but also with the overall readiness to survive in a college environment. In addition, the results of this research may prove helpful to institutions of secondary education when initiating strategies targeted towards alleviating challenges associated with college transition; as well as to colleges and universities that are in the process of developing programs to assist specific populations of freshmen students, such as first generation college students, with their college experiences. Institutions of higher learning might pattern certain programs existing in the school under study to aid their respective freshmen class with college transition. After all, as “the link between education and economic success is tightening” (Conley, 2005, p. 154) and the worth of a high school diploma is decreasing (Pulliam & VanPatten, 1999), “there is a general sense that a college education should become as universal in the twenty-first century as a high school education was in the twentieth” (Conley, 2005, p. 154).

Finally, replicating this research and conducting similar studies in other independent as well as public schools in Virginia and beyond could emphasize the pros

and cons of schools' existing models and point out any areas that need improvement as well as ways to improve them. By researching the phenomenon of high school graduates college readiness, this preliminary study could serve as a foundation for future work focusing on developing the most applicable model for preparing students for college.

Methodology

This study was constructed as a case study with some elements of heuristic inquiry. An approach such as the examination of a single case, as opposed to a comparative analysis of hypothetically similar cases, was chosen because it allowed me to conduct a more in-depth description of Templeton Academy and analyze the possible reasons for certain events, trends, and tendencies, than any other approach would have permitted (Creswell, 1998). In other words, I followed in the steps of the Greek historian, Polybius, and looked for reasons by applying Aristotelian formula to history and social investigation: "the method of arriving at all great social and political truths...by the investigation of [such cases] where development has been normal [and] rational..." (Wilde, 2003b, p. 1228). By employing such a method, I was able to examine the case of the Templeton Academy in detail while analyzing and separating the forces which affected the decision of the school to restructure its approach to teaching and learning and the way such change had influenced the school community. Furthermore, I focused upon examining the impact of the approach to teaching and learning, adopted by the Templeton Academy, upon the college readiness of its students. Employing some elements of heuristic inquiry allowed me to compare and contrast my personal high school experiences to those of the senior class students at Templeton Academy (Patton, 2002).

The design and the organization of case studies are best characterized by a funnel (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998). Specifically, I began with broad exploration of the site and a thorough examination of the existing documents, and then narrowed the focus down as the research progressed and during the data analysis phase of the study. During this exploratory study I engaged in document analysis, interviews with school teachers and administrators, focus group interviews with students of the senior class, as well as observations. Each element of the data collection procedures is discussed in chapter three with greater details.

After all of the necessary data were collected, I left the field and distanced myself from the details of the collected data to come back with new enthusiasm. Such an approach helped me grasp the bigger picture and examine the project from the outside, which is a proven method for identifying new connections among data as well as for determining previously not noticed categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). At the same time, recalling my own high school experience, as a part of heuristic inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Patton, 2002), helped me analyze and evaluate the responses of the student-participants. One independent investigator, who on many occasions served as an auditor, was engaged in examining and analyzing the data besides the researcher. Since the particular perspective and values the researcher holds can affect the data analysis, inviting an independent investigator to examine the collected data helped avoid biases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002; Yin, 1989). Chapter three will provide further description of the methodology of the study.

Delimitations

This study was conducted on the premises of the residential school located in the state of Virginia. Huberman and Miles (1994) identified a strategic approach to determining a case to study as one of the main characteristics of qualitative research. The Templeton Academy was selected for the following reasons. First, its mission statement promises students preparation for college. Second, several years ago the school completely revised its curriculum and initiated a different approach to teaching and learning which affected not only the academic side of the school programs, but also extracurricular activities. In other words, the school implemented a model that addresses both the academic and non-academic elements of college readiness.

Templeton Academy does not consider itself “elite.” More specifically, it does not meet some of the criteria of the elite independent schools. I provided the definition of the term “elite schools” in the “Terminology” section of this chapter. In short, Templeton does not meet some of the criteria of what Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) delineated as elite, namely a school can be typologically elite, scholastically elite, historically elite, demographically elite, or geographically elite. Templeton Academy does offer a scholastically broad and intricate curriculum, however, it cannot be considered typologically elite as it does not possess a large endowment; it is not historically elite as influential social networks have not played a vital role in the school’s development; it is not demographically elite as it enrolls students with various backgrounds including international students, as well as students with varying abilities and preparation levels; and finally it is not geographically elite – it is located in a rural area, but it does not greet its visitors with “...stone buildings with marble columns, archways covered in ivy,

golden domes and tall steeples...[or possesses] ...the almost unlimited abundance of...pastoral landscape associated with elite status and wealth...” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, pp. 37-38).

The attrition rate at Templeton Academy is low, the student body consists of boarders as well as day students and the tuition is within the range of the average tuition rate calculated by the National Association of Independent Schools (2012). Specifically, during 2012-2013 academic year the average tuition rate for day time students approximated 19,150 U.S. dollars, and the average rates for boarding students approximated 40,500 U.S. dollars (NAIS, 2012). Templeton Academy is a co-educational institution where the majority of students are boys. I was particularly interested in the influence the programs and initiatives implemented by the school have on its male population. It is not a secret that the male dropout rates from the institutions of higher learning are higher than those of females (NCES, 2014b). Only 34.2 percent of male students who entered institutions of higher learning in the United States graduated within four years, as opposed to 43 percent of female students (NCES, 2013). In the fall of 2014 approximately 12 million females attended colleges and universities in the U.S., as opposed to nine million male students (NCES, 2014a). In other words, there are fewer males than females who opt to enter colleges and universities while the attrition rate of male students is higher than that of their female counterparts. There are a number of works dedicated to the problem of poor performance of boys in the institutions of secondary learning (Meeker, 2008; Pollack, 1998). As Pollack (1998) put it: “[o]ur schools, in general, are not sufficiently hospitable environments for boys...” (p. 231). Therefore, it was interesting to find out the approach taken by the Templeton Academy in

order to prepare its predominantly male population for college. What sort of atmosphere has the school created that made the learning more efficient and college preparation more effective? I elaborate on this issue in chapters four and five.

I spent approximately six months on site collecting data. All observations were conducted on the school campus. The teachers of the senior class and administrators currently employed by the school were interviewed, and focus group interviews were limited to the senior class students. All school alumni were interviewed telephonically. The school documents relevant to the exploration of the programs, initiatives, and key mechanisms implemented by the school to prepare students for college were examined in both traditional and electronic formats.

Limitations

Relatively small sample size can be considered to be one of the limitations of this research. Due to the nature of independent boarding schools – certain selectivity in admissions process: an option to admit some applicants while rejecting others, competition amongst schools for students, rigorous academic curriculum, requirement to pay for education, and so on – most of them remain comparatively small in size (Baird, 1977; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009; Noll, 1985). Despite the advantages in student-faculty ratio and individual attention provided to each student during academic and extracurricular activities associated with small population of the school, a comparatively small size of senior class is a possible limitation to the generalizability of the study.

Another potential limitation is the diversity of the school student population. Compared to other independent schools, the student population at Templeton Academy appears to be demographically, socio-economically, and academically diverse (School

Website, 2013; NAIS, 2012). Specifically, there are many international students, students with various socio-economic backgrounds, as well as several minority students enrolled in the Templeton Academy. It is worth mentioning that the female enrollment at Templeton continuous to grow as well as the school's non-white population (School Website, 2015). The overall student population, however, is still predominantly White and male.

Moreover, the education at the Templeton Academy is not free of charge. Even though the school offers financial aid to applicable student applicants, it makes attendance for students from the low socio economic stratum challenging. Moreover, Templeton, unlike public high schools, has a freedom to reject certain applicants that are found unfitting academically or otherwise. Such circumstances can produce difficulties when generalizing study results. However, the tuition the Templeton charges for boarding as well as for day-time education is comparable to other independent boarding schools in the area (NAIS, 2012). The student population of Templeton Academy is similar to other analogous schools in the area, which can make the results comparatively generalizable.

The selected independent boarding school does not necessarily define a broader spectrum of independent boarding schools in the state and/ or nationwide. Therefore, the results cannot be easily generalized to the existing independent institutions of secondary learning. Despite certain similarities among the student population of independent boarding schools, there are a number of differences which cannot be disregarded, such as the background of students, the schools' mission and values, single-sex institutions versus co-educational schools, et cetera (Talbert, 1988). However, the purpose of this

preliminary research is not to claim that any approach to teaching and learning developed and adopted by the Templeton Academy is the only right way to make students ready for college. The intention of this study is to examine the model and the practical approach utilized by the Templeton Academy, and to explore the mechanisms developed specifically to address the idea of college readiness in its students. In order to generalize the results of the study, this research will have to be replicated in a different school setting.

Terminology

Further discussion of the topic of college readiness, values of education, and mechanisms independent schools have established to promote those factors, might be challenging without specific definitions of the key terms that will be referred to throughout this study. Below are the major terms in the alphabetical order.

Boarding schools - also known as *residential schools* - are institutions “where students live and study” (“Boarding school”, 2011). Commonly the terms boarding school and residential school are interchangeable.

Church school - among preparatory schools of secondary education, there are a number of schools in Virginia which belong to the *Church School System* in the Diocese of Virginia. Such schools were founded by Episcopalians – bishops, laymen, and clergy – in the first quarter of the 20th century; therefore, they are also referred to as *Episcopal schools* (Williams, 1999).

College readiness - according to Conley (2012) “A student who is ready for college ... can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses

leading to a baccalaureate or certificate ... without the need for remedial or developmental coursework” (p. 1).

Education - the term *education* is most commonly referred to as a process; however, the term embraces not only processes but also programs which lay the foundation for the certain process of transferring specific knowledge (Decker, 1972). This work will examine both programs and processes.

Elite schools - often time the term “elite” is taken with a certain degree of snobbism. That is, if the school is elite it is considered socially exclusive and beyond the reach of the average citizenry. In this sense the Templeton Academy under study does not consider itself elite or socially exclusive, it does not define itself as “a carefully selected group of students [who take] advantage of a broad range of opportunities within a context of abundance defined historically and institutionally as elite” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, p. 39). There are five distinct characteristics of elite independent schools:

- typologically elite, by virtue of their identification as “independent schools”; [u]nlike most independent schools, elite boarding schools have endowments that could be the envy of most liberal arts colleges;
- scholastically elite, by virtue of the extensive and sophisticated curriculum they offer;
- historically elite, by virtue of the role that elite social networks have played in their historical development;
- demographically elite, by virtue of the population that attends elite boarding schools; and

- geographically elite, by virtue of their physical character and location.

(Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, pp. 26-39)

Independent schools - also known as *private schools* – “nonpublic preschool, elementary, and secondary schools...” (Virginia Counsel for Private Education [VCPE], 2012). The schools are independent because they are self-governing and are independent of the state system.

Key cognitive strategies - “key cognitive strategies are the ways of thinking that are necessary for college-level work” (Conley, 2012, p. 2). They are comprised of problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy.

Key content knowledge - includes the ability of students to gain an understanding of the subject matter and the structure of knowledge, as well as to retain the knowledge of the “...key foundational content and ‘big ideas’ from core subjects” (p. 2).

Key learning skills and techniques - the term key learning skills and techniques is comprised of two elements: ownership of learning and learning techniques. Ownership of learning includes “goal setting, persistence, self-awareness, motivation, progress monitoring, help seeking, and self-efficacy...” (pp. 2-3). Learning techniques consist of time management, study skills, strategic reading, collaborative learning, test taking skills, technology proficiency, memorization, note taking skills, and self-monitoring (pp. 2-3).

Key transition knowledge and skills - are identified as knowledge and skills “...necessary to navigate successfully the transition to life beyond high school” (p.2). They include such aspects as “postsecondary awareness..., postsecondary costs..., matriculation..., career awareness..., role and identity..., self-advocacy...” (p. 3). The subsequent Chapter explains each of the four aspects of Conley’s model more accurately.

Preparatory school - the term *prep school* or *preparatory school* is utilized by a majority of independent secondary institutions meaning a “school that prepares students for entrance to a higher school” (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate encyclopedia*, 2000, p. 1305).

Public School - in the United States a public school is usually a state sponsored and controlled institution which a student attends free of charge (“Public school”, 2012).

The Templeton Academy - for the purposes of this research and in order to protect the integrity and privacy of the school and its students, the institution of secondary learning under study located in the rural area of Virginia henceforth is referred to as Templeton Academy.

Chapter One Summary

Chapter one established the framework for the remainder of the study as it drew the reader’s attention to the subject of college readiness. In this chapter I identified and explained the concept of college readiness and identified the four elements it is comprised of: (1) key content knowledge, (2) key cognitive strategies, (3) key learning skills and techniques also referred to as academic behaviors, and (4) key transition knowledge and skills also referred to as contextual skills and awareness. Definitions for the major terms that are used throughout this report were also provided. I identified the purpose of the study: to examine specific programs and initiatives implemented by the Templeton Academy to make its students college ready through the prism of Conley’s (2008) model, as well as to explore the effectiveness of such initiatives. These dual purposes were determined and explained. The following research questions were identified:

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

This chapter also determined the delimitations of the study as well as provided the possible limitations, such as relatively small sample size, diversity of the school population, and the overall generalizability of the findings.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized in the following manner. Chapter two overviews the research conducted in the area of college readiness. It extrapolates upon the advantages, disadvantages, misconceptions, and limitations of the existing theories and attempted studies, as well as examines various approaches towards addressing the concept of college readiness. A brief comparative analysis of private and public high school sectors is provided. Chapter two describes the background of the Templeton Academy by inserting a parallel to the culture of boarding schools in general. Conley's (2008) model which lays the foundation for the present research is examined and explained.

Chapter three identifies the method adopted for this study. I paid extra attention to ethical considerations during the study. Chapter three also effectually describes the procedures related to data collection and analysis, as well as the settings for the research. The criteria for selecting the particular school under study and for choosing the participant within the school setting is also explained.

Chapter four is about data collected during the study. It is based on the interviews conducted with school faculty and administrators, Templeton alumni, focus group interviews with senior class students, as well as observations of the teachers. It examines the culture of the Templeton Academy and explores the influence that the environment has on preparing students for college. I then introduce the study participants using the pseudonyms they chose for themselves at the beginning of this research project. In order to provide additional clarity, the chapter is subdivided into two major sectors. Each sector corresponds to one of the two research questions of the study.

In chapter five I provide some of the conclusions drawn from this study and discuss implications for the future research. Chapter five also explores the connections between the practices utilized by the Templeton Academy and the theory to increase college readiness identified by Conley (2010a). I also discuss the contribution of this research project to the existing literature on college readiness.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Overview

First, I introduce the framework for the current research project; after that I overview the historical background of private education in Virginia. I specifically emphasize the differences in approaches to teaching and learning originally taken by the private and public sectors. I then present a summary of the culture of private boarding schools specifically examining the aspect of preparing students for college as a part of the mission statements of the schools. The chapter moves on to describe existing research in the area of college readiness. Finally, as the chapter narrows down, Conley's (2008) model addressing college readiness, which lays the foundation for the present research, is presented and examined in great detail. The chapter summary concludes chapter two.

Framework of the Study

Educational institutions in the United States are divided by levels: elementary schools, secondary schools, post-secondary institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). The educational institution examined by this study belongs to the level of secondary education. Traditionally, the second stage of education – secondary education – begins between ages 11-13 years and ends around age 15-18 years (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate encyclopedia*, 2000, p. 1451). In the U.S. there are approximately 99,000 public institutions of elementary and secondary education (NCES, 2011), there are 1,101 independent institutions – members of the National Association of Independent Schools (National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2012), and there are other private schools not accredited by member associations of the NAIS.

The educational system in the U.S. has traditionally prided itself in offering the best quality of teaching to satisfy the needs of the growing diverse population (Lee & Rawls, 2010). In fact, the desire to enroll in one of the U.S. institutions of higher education has been enticing international students from throughout the world (Garrod & Davis, 1999). For many years the United States had been ranked number one in post-secondary attainment (Lee & Rawls, 2010). Bok (2013) argues, however, that "...our impressive standing in the world owes less to the success of our own system than it does to the weakness of foreign universities, which were long overregulated, underfinanced, and neglected by their governments..." (p. 3). As a result the most recent survey reveals the fact that the number of degree holders in the U.S. has dropped, positioning the country in sixth place right after New Zealand (Lee & Rawls, 2010). One of the more recent concepts endeavoring to explain the reason for such a state of affairs is the idea that high school students are not ready for college (Conley, 2005; 2010b; González, 2012a; 2012b; Gross, 1999; Pascarella et al., 2003; Wagner, 2008), hence they drop out of the institutions of higher education, increasing the attrition rates, and, in turn, affect the overall number of post-secondary degree holders in the country. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the doors of access to higher education are wide open to the majority of U.S. citizenry, tempting every new applicant with implied promises of better aka higher paying jobs, career growth, and in turn bigger houses and more expensive cars. There is no list of college standards posted on the front door, or a warning sign "enter at your own risk." Hence, a lot of newcomers who wander in through the front doors simply because everyone goes to college these day, turn out to be unprepared, and as one of the English instructors noticed "[o]ut of about fifteen students, at least ten

seemed to have no familiarity with the English language” (Professor X, 2011, p. 27).

More often than not, institutions of higher education end up “...teaching and failing the unprepared who often don’t even know they are unprepared” (Professor X, 2011, p. xix).

In other words, while so many government and nongovernment organizations have been concentrating on ensuring access to college to everyone who wants to go and

encouraging those who do not to change their mind, little attention has been paid to proper preparation of the prospective college students to the intricacies of academic and non-academic life at the institutions of higher learning. Therefore, the doors of college admission open wider and wider, but the graduation doors remain ajar. Not everyone graduates. Bok (2013) suggests “... [if] high schools could align their courses properly with the demands of college work, more students would enter adequately prepared and fewer would become discouraged and leave” (p. 222). Strictly speaking, the college readiness, or, more precisely, college unpreparedness, of high school graduates affects institutions of higher learning in various ways, many of which are yet to be discovered.

As of today, lawmakers are not satisfied with the college graduation rates, parents complain about unrealistically high student loans that their children have to re-pay, while employers criticize institutions of higher learning for graduating students who “...cannot write clearly, think analytically, work collaboratively, deal with other people effectively, or observe proper ethical standards” (Bok, 2013, p. 2).

More often than not, the concept of college readiness is presented strictly from the academic perspective, completely disregarding other no less important aspects of what it really means to be ready for college. The majority of the research discussed below addressing the idea of college readiness amongst high school students is quantitative in

nature. While it is important to know *how many* high school graduates are not ready for college, it is equally essential to understand the *reason* for such a calamity. It is also critical to identify programs and initiatives that do work and do successfully prepare students for college. The purpose of this exploratory research was *not* in any way to employ a nihilistic approach and at the end to conclude that the existing models of preparing high school students for college do not work; hence they need to be eliminated and new models have to be put in place of the old and outdated ones. This qualitative case study attempted to look for existing structures and practical mechanisms created by a college preparatory boarding school specifically to address the issue of college readiness, to describe and analyze these tactics through the spectrum of Conley's (2008) model, to examine the efficiency of the methods initiated by the school under study, to draw conclusions as to the uniqueness of this case, to recognize the importance of the holistic approach to education (Conley, 2005; 2010b; Keeling, 2004), as well as to identify possible strategies for future research in this area.

Examination of the growing attrition rates among the nation's high schools (Abrams & Haney, 2004; Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Rumberger, 2004) reveals that the educational system in the U.S. has developed a number of glitches, which, if not properly addressed, could serve as catalysts leading to a collapse of the existing system as a whole. This chapter, as well as the study in general, applies deductive reasoning to the issue of college readiness. Chapters one and two present the premises, the foundation, and the context from which the problem of college readiness was examined. More specifically, I establish a larger framework upon which some of the explanations for the present day issues in the area of college readiness can be revealed, examined, and clarified.

Historical Background of Private Education in Virginia

This section of the chapter establishes the context for the origins of the traditional approaches to teaching and learning in American institutions of secondary learning. It provides the background and discusses the possible causes for the present state of affairs in the field of college readiness. In other words, it creates a framework for the examination of the academic component – key cognitive strategies and key content knowledge – of the college readiness model originated by Conley (2010a; 2012).

Generally, the daily activities of present day school administrators, teachers, and policy makers consist of taking care of current necessities and dealing with contemporary issues in the field of education. Many educators find history to be irrelevant to modern society, thus disregarding the impact certain historical occurrences have had on the formation of the American educational system (Pulliam & VanPatten, 1999). As Machiavelli (1883) noted “the same disorders are common at all times” (p. 125) because many individuals choose to neglect the lessons of the past. While, if closely examined, “it should be an easy matter to foresee [the future]... and to apply such remedies as the ancients have used in like cases, or... to strike out new ones, such as they might have used in similar circumstances” (Machiavelli, 1883, p. 125). Scilicet, in order to minimize the effect of past mistakes and to avoid committing new ones, it is essential to examine the history of education in Virginia – the first colony – and the way initial ideas and views of education which the first colonists possessed have affected the development of public and private sectors of secondary education.

Virginia was settled in 1607 when the first pioneers arrived at Jamestown (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Life style, societal structure, forms of government, and institutions of

education in colonial Virginia very closely resembled those of English society (Heatwole, 1916; Wells, 1969). Social institutions established on the new continent found their prototype in England, therefore, a close relationship between the church and education in colonial Virginia is not surprising (Heatwole, 1916). A national system of education did not exist in England during the early 17th century, there was no legislature addressing this issue. In the late 16th century English king Edward III passed several acts known as the “Poor Laws” that among other aspects, determined the formal relationship between a master and an apprentice, thus officially identifying a form of teaching (Buck, 1952; Heatwole, 1916). The first settlers brought this very same system to the North American continent.

Some of the first educational institutions in Virginia were founded and sustained either by a religious organization, by generous in-kind and monetary contributions from wealthy benefactors, or received other forms of private support (Bell, 1969; Heatwole, 1916; Wells, 1969; Williams, 1969). Organizationally not much has changed since then. The apparatus of a typical independent school of the 21 century consists of a board of trustees that is responsible for establishing the infrastructure of the school, hiring the headmaster, and supervising the school’s financial operations. Boards of trustees are “usually made up of alumni, large donors and other community leaders identified by the school as enlisted to fulfill particular advising or funding roles” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, p. 27). Present day independent schools are independent from the pressures to comply with the state implemented curricula. However, often times they form their own curricula and extra-curriculum activities around the desires and recommendations of the affluent school constituencies (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). Hence independent

private schools today in many ways preserve the tradition of the first educational institutions established in colonial Virginia.

The idea of public education emerged as an alternative to the private tutors whose purpose was to prepare the children of Virginian nobility for college (Williams, 1999). As opposed to college preparation, which was deemed crucial by the early private educational institutions, developing the mind was not one of the goals of early public education: “Virginians considered academic preparation beyond primary education necessary only for the learned professions” (Williams, 1999, pp. 198-199). In other words, only individuals who considered becoming medical doctors, lawyers, and ministers needed to attend institutions of secondary and post-secondary education. For the rest of the professions, it was more cost-effective to simply obtain the necessary skills and training on the job.

Hence, it is important to emphasize that the public high school system by its original design is different from a wide range of private independent schools. The foundation, the original set of principles and concepts of the public high schools, is based on the idea of providing teenaged students with the general knowledge necessary to become a part of the workforce. Preparing students for college was not a part of the mission of public schooling (Pulliam & VanPatten, 1999; Wagner, 2008).

Until several decades into the twentieth century, students who aspired to attend institutions of higher learning were sent to private college preparatory schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Heatwole, 1916; Wagner, 2008). Public school teachers for the most part were not trained to teach critical thinking skills, ways to construct an argument, or to participate in a debate (Wagner, 2008). The textbooks used by high schools to teach and

test did not evaluate a student's ability to reason, but they did teach and assess the ability of students to memorize certain sets of random facts and to regurgitate paragraphs from the books (Wagner, 2008). That is to say, the public sector of high schools in the U.S. is based upon a very different approach to teaching and learning which was established at the creation of the public education system when physical labor vastly outweighed the importance of mental work (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Heatwole, 1916; Wagner 2008). This foundation, and subsequently the approach to teaching, has not changed since then. The expectations about the skills and abilities that a high school graduate should possess, however, have.

The distrust expressed by many members of society towards “placing their children under the charge of the state for education” (Heatwole, 1916, p. 119), in part initiated the foundation of the Church School system – Episcopal schools in the Diocese of Virginia (Williams, 1999, pp. 17-29). A majority of these schools were established in the first quarter of the 20th century (Bell, 1969; Williams, 1999). Education in church affiliated schools did not center on teaching only academic subjects, it also targeted developing desirable moral characteristics in the students as well as instilling Christian values (Bell, 1969; Williams, 1999). Episcopal schools focused on the concept of a holistic education. History shows that private religiously affiliated schools were not the first ones to emphasize the importance of educating the mind and developing the character. Aristotle believed education was synonymous to character building and the development of moral values, as opposed to schooling or teaching skills, or training in various forms of industrial art (Curren, 2000; Moore, n.d.): education is the only path leading to happiness and personal fulfillment, only through education a man can “learn

the business of being human and become truly human” (Hummel, 1993, p. 49). The focus on holistic education is the idea that oftentimes differentiates private educational institutions from their public counterparts.

In the 21st century it is difficult to find an independent secondary school – and Church schools are not an exception – that would not have college preparation as a part of their promise to the incoming students (“Foxcroft School”, 2012; “Middleburg Academy”, 2012; School Website, 2013). To be more precise, while the original purpose of public education was to prepare students to become a part of the workforce, private institutions of secondary learning traditionally concentrated on teaching classical curriculum and preparing students for college. Moreover, private school pupils often times perceived education as a general duty, partially due to high expectations from their families (Cookson & Persell, 1985), entered institutions of secondary learning better prepared, therefore, private schools, besides having a holistic approach to education (Williams, 1999), traditionally have had higher demands and set more intricate goals and tasks for students (Wagner, 2008) than their public counterparts (Cookson & Persell, 1985). The attitude of the students towards education and the surrounding environment sets forth another issue. While oftentimes society tends to blame bad quality teachers or inadequate instruction for the poor progress reports or less than desirable outcomes in the students’ learning, virtually no attention is paid to larger social dilemmas. Specifically, “...the quality of public education may have more to do with problems of family, neighborhood, and poverty than with prevalence of mediocre teaching” (Bok, 2013, p. 410). Most of the private educational institutions, with the exception of certain generously endowed schools, charge tuition in order to stay afloat. “A tuition is

commitment, and the poorer the student the larger commitment it presents” (Noll, 1985, p. 192). It is only natural that parents who send their offsprings to tuition charging schools hold them accountable for their learning and place high expectations on the learning outcomes, thus, encouraging their children to study hard.

A majority of private schools today do not receive financial support from any government entity. They are self-governing and independent of any state system (VCPE, 2012). Being a private school, however, does not imply complete autonomy. In order to ensure the transferability of school credits for students and of teacher licensure credits for teachers between the public and private sectors, independent schools are required to obtain accreditation from a state recognized accreditation agency (VCPE, 2012).

Culture of Boarding Prep Schools

The previous section of this chapter I examined the historical background and established the foundation for the existing norms and academic rigor present in the majority of private educational institutions, including the Templeton Academy, today. The purpose of this section is to formulate the context specifically for the non-academic component of college readiness (Conley, 2008; 2012) through an examination of the culture of boarding schools as presented in existing research. Exploring the culture of boarding schools is not a simple endeavor and can easily become a topic for a separate research dedicated specifically to the differences and similarities found in the cultures of existing boarding schools, or to an exploratory study in the field of culture of elite and non-elite boarding or independent schools. Culture that surrounds us shapes our attitude, influences our behavior, and forms our mentality, “[p]eople don’t rise from nothing... The culture we belong to and the legacies passed down by our forebears shape the patters

of our achievement in ways we cannot begin to imagine” (Gladwell, 2008, p. 19). In this section I strived to portray a general atmosphere and present the organization of a boarding school without examining the specifics. It is beyond doubt that every independent boarding school has its own unique environment; however, there are certain fundamental structures that are present at the vast majority of boarding schools in the U.S. (Chang, 2011). Boarding schools exist as a part of a broader encompassing independent school system. According to the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) (2012), there are 86 accredited independent schools in the state and three new members are currently working their way through the accreditation process. Out of 86 independent schools, 20 are considered boarding (VAIS, 2012).

First of all, it is necessary to mention that there are three distinct kinds of boarding schools: college preparatory schools, junior schools, and therapeutic boarding schools (“Boarding school review”, n. d.). Since this exploratory case study examined one of the college preparatory schools, this particular section is dedicated to the depiction of the culture of a college prep school. Second, the term *culture* can be defined in many different ways. When applied to schooling in general, *culture* can be defined as “...socially transmitted behavior patterns, ways of thinking and perceiving the world, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought” (Spring, 2010, p. 3). Culture consists of certain norms, traditions, “ideas, beliefs...customs, taboos, rituals, ceremonies, and symbols” (*Merriam-Webster's collegiate encyclopedia*, 2000, p. 421).

James (1988) offers a theory which refers to the establishment and the development of the private sector in education as “a private alternative”, when “... one

group [demands] a ‘better quality’ product than the median voter choice...” (p. 109).

Discovering what exactly the “better quality product” might look like from not necessarily an academic perspective is the purpose of this section.

Mitchell (1991) while researching life in boarding schools, often refers to them as “total institutions”, in the sense that the school has complete control over a large group of students who are separated from the general society for an extended period of time (pp. 3-8). This totality provides the school with the power to establish a set of rules and regulations for the entire community, and to control and direct the lives of the students towards the ultimate goals of the institution. One has to fit in, work hard and be smart (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). Different students proceed through the process of assimilation with the school environment at a different pace and in a different way. However, it is always the students who undergo the process of self-identification and eventually internalize the school culture; the school itself does not change.

To be a part of the school culture, to be a student at a boarding school for many means: “...you are...a high-achieving...rigorously smart person...who isn’t necessarily pushing the boundaries, but pushing forward towards...a greater goal” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, p. 67). Students who attend private boarding college preparatory schools are often perceived as smart and hard working individuals (Crosier, 1991; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). Nevertheless, a majority of boarding students understand that in order to fit in, one either has to be naturally talented or stay focused and work hard both in the classroom and during co-curricular activities (Cookson & Persell, 1985). This determination to be smart and to work hard is in the air of boarding schools and is encouraged and supported by the numerous rituals and symbols. These lofty aspirations

can also be considered the main aspect of the selectivity of contemporary boarding schools “contrary to the image...as protective enclaves of an exclusively white society, the schools have actively sought black and other minority students” (Baird, 1977, p. 36). Many schools provide students with financial aid once they are accepted (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009; NAIS, 2012).

Numerous students seek out boarding schools because “they get really bored with their [public schools]” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, p. 69). Others, when accepted, experience culture shock not simply because of the rigorous curriculum and demanding co-curricular activities, but also due to the realization that “...there are all these other people who are at least as good if not significantly better than I am” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009, pp. 68-70). Competition in academic as well as in extracurricular activities is as much a part of the climate of the boarding schools as the encouragement of collaborative work. The schools establish a set of rewards and restrictive rules and regulations to support those students whose intrinsic motivation failed them (Cookson & Persell, 1985).

Boarding college preparatory schools emphasize the importance of academic knowledge by creating challenging curriculum and by underlining the significance of homework: most schools have study halls specifically designed for students to work on their homework assignments. A study conducted in 1985 revealed that 48 percent of boarding school students do not watch television during a regular school week, and only 12 percent watch more than two hours per day (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Although the study is almost 20 years old, observing the general tendency of the boarding schools’ adherence to traditions, with some exceptions it would be logical to suggest that not

much has changed since then. Typically, the schools challenge students academically and athletically so that there is almost no time left for watching television. Moreover, as I emphasize and exemplify in chapter four, by the junior and senior years a majority of students have a solid understanding of the time management concept.

The typical boarding preparatory school accentuates extracurricular activities by requiring every student to participate in daily practices and/ or club sessions, even though students sometimes view non-academic activities as a way to enhance their applications for institutions of higher education (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). The idea behind establishing a set of extracurricular requirements is to "...add to the variety of cultural experiences", to provide "...exposure to people who have a heightened sensitivity to nature, art, and beauty..." so that "...the experiences [of the students] will be further enriched by a variety of responses" (Esty, 1974, pp. 152-153).

More often than not, boarding preparatory school students are perceived as those who will be likely to follow the family tradition to become a medical doctor, or a lawyer; those who know exactly what college they want to attend and the application process for it; those who are entitled to go to college (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009). In some cases such perceptions are true, as some students feel pressured when the school leadership refers to them as "'the leaders of tomorrow' qualified to attend a specific kind of college" (Crosier, 1991, p. 16). However, there are many boarding school students who know nothing about colleges, they do not know what institution of higher education will fit their needs, or the application processes associated with college admissions: "My family and I had no resources on the college admission process until I met my college counselor" (Chang, 2011, p. 66). In other words, certain

societal perceptions and stereotypes are not as accurate, generalizable or applicable to all of the contemporary boarding school students.

Depression and loneliness are as much an indivisible element of a boarding school as the excitement, competition, and entitlement. At times, students enjoy the comfort of the big family represented by the boarding school, and at some point, as students mature, their system of values crashes or clashes with the system of existing values offered by the school, which often results in personal despair (Cookson & Persell, 1985). “The lack of adult supervision and insufficient adult support established both physical and psychological void, which presented an ideal setting for getting into trouble and feeling lonely and depressed” (Crosier, 1991, p. 56). Prep schools inevitably encounter all of the challenges associated with growing and maturing teenagers. Many problems have been identified and are being addressed through a number of workshops and professional development sessions organized specifically for independent school teachers and administrators (Crosier, 1991; NAIS, 2012). Some other challenges are still in the process of reevaluation and others are yet to be discovered.

Examining College Readiness

A majority of college and university faculty members agree that there is an abundance of freshmen students who enter institutions of higher learning unprepared (Bok, 2013; Conley, 2005; Professor X, 2011; Wagner, 2008). The existing research in the field of college readiness confirms the decline in the general preparedness of high school graduates for the challenges associated with college (Conley, 2005; 2010; González, 2012a; 2012b; Pascarella et al., 2003; Wagner, 2008). It is not my intention to present a comprehensive analysis of all current theories, concepts, perspectives, and

approaches used to measure and assess the college readiness of high school graduates. However, it is important to explore the major trends that research in this area has taken, as well as to discuss the possible limitations of the approaches and measures. This section of the chapter is divided into three segments. These three segments represent traditional approaches to evaluate the college readiness of high school graduates (Roderick et al., 2009); they do not attempt to disregard any of the emerging strategies and trends, but simply to classify the existing ones.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Institutions of higher education traditionally use test results as an indicator of content knowledge and academic skills a student possesses, as well as a measure of the cognitive capabilities of a student. Colleges evaluate student's GPAs to identify whether or not a particular student mastered the content knowledge of the high school courses and obtained basic knowledge taught in those courses. High school course grades also serve as an indicator of the academic behaviors of the student: the ability to follow deadlines and complete work on time, persistency when working on a challenging project and so on (Roderick et al., 2009).

However, some studies have revealed a boost in high school grades (Conley, 2010b). In other words, many of the high school graduates, if judged by their GPA scores, appeared to be ready for college work, which in practice has often turned out to be a false claim (Bok, 2013). To address this issue, some of the colleges and universities have raised their GPA admission requirements. To compensate for raised admission requirements "individual high schools have adopted their own weighing criteria, leading to myriad of ways to compute a student's GPA" (Conley, 2010b, p. 25).

Tests

Reducing the number of dropouts from high school became one of the national education goals (Rumberger, 2004). Therefore, there are a number of studies dedicated specifically to the various reasons behind increasing dropout rates, practical guides to impact attrition rates; as well as to the programs and initiatives which might help decrease them (Abrams & Haney, 2004; Balfanz & Legters, 2004; Lehr, et al., 2005; Rumberger, 2004). It is beyond the scope of this research to attempt to study high school dropouts or prevention programs. However, there are a few federal government initiatives which besides the main idea of decreasing the dropout rate have identified the preparation of students for college as one of their goals. One such project dedicated to increasing college readiness is Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiated and sponsored by the federal government (“Gaining Early Awareness...”, 2012). The foundational measure of whether or not participating students of the GEAR UP project are ready for college is a set of tests (“Gaining Early Awareness...”, 2012).

Another set of tests to evaluate whether or not a student is ready for postsecondary learning is offered by American College Testing (ACT), which purports to predict a correlation between a student’s success in the certain test elements and in the corresponding first-year college course (ACT[®] test, 2012; Conley, 2010b; “Issues in college readiness”, 2010). The ACT measures the college readiness of high school students through a set of College Readiness Benchmarks, which “are the minimum ACT test scores required for students to have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses—English Composition, social sciences courses, College Algebra, or

Biology” (“Issues in college readiness”, 2010, p. 1). According to Conley (2010b), there is a 50 percent probability that students who meet the benchmarks will obtain at least a course grade of B and a 75 percent probability that they will receive a grade of C in the corresponding course at an institution of higher learning (“Issues in college readiness”, 2010). In other words, the set of benchmarks attempts to reflect and to predict the probability of success of a freshman student in college courses, referred to as general education, will experience. It measures the academic element of college readiness.

I identified a number of various state tests created for the purpose of measuring how well students are ready for college. These tests are based upon reasonable probability and may serve as a good indication of student’s academic abilities, and therefore, readiness for college academic curriculum; but they do not necessarily measure “the knowledge, strategies, and dispositions needed for college success” (Conley, 2010b, p. 26). Moreover, there is no clear way to interpret the results of the tests. In other words, there is no “clear outcome level that corresponds with postsecondary success” (p. 27).

High School Course Titles and College Courses

One of the approaches utilized to assess the college readiness of high school students is the examination of course titles offered by a certain high school (Conley, 2010b). Some of the research conducted by the federal government concluded that “completing a challenging high school curriculum is the strongest pre-collegiate indicator of bachelor’s degree completion” (Conley, 2010b, p. 23). When utilizing this approach to assess college readiness, it would be logical to come to the conclusion that in order to better prepare students for college, there is a need to increase the rigor of high school

curriculum and to better align high school and college courses (Bok, 2013). However, since the studies were conducted based on titles of the high school courses, the final idea was to increase the number of courses with appropriate names that a student should enroll in through the high school years (Conley, 2010b). This method can work if a high school has a good academic standing and the content of the courses as well as the method used to teach that content are reasonably challenging. However, if the school has low academic standing and has already established low performance expectations for the students as a part of its culture, then neither the number of courses students register for, nor the titles of the courses would make a serious impact.

Traditionally, the data gathered by the federal government does not indicate the rigor of the courses which students took to graduate. To be more specific, the data presents a comparison of numbers, the proportion of students who graduated from high school and those who did not. Such an approach does not reflect *how* they graduated (Kaufman, 2004). So long as the students successfully pass the tests, the rigor of the courses they took does not matter.

The absence of a general alignment between high school courses and college courses (Conley, 2005; 2010b; Pulliam & VanPatten, 1999), the great disconnect between high school graduation tests and college entrance exams (“Closing the expectation gap...” 2011; Vanezia & Voloch, 2012), as well as a general lack of awareness about postsecondary curriculum and college life (Conley, 2005; Vanezia & Voloch, 2012) are arguably some of the biggest issues in the area of college readiness. As a result of such incongruity, the number of freshmen students who must enroll in one or more remediation courses (Smith, 2006) has increased significantly as the percentage of

college-age students who enroll in postsecondary education has increased.

Approximately 60 to 90 percent of matriculating students on any given public college campus enroll in some type of a remedial course (Conley, 2010b; Gonzales, 2012b).

Conley (2005; 2010b) and his team of researchers, while studying the topic of college readiness, dedicated approximately eight years to the analysis of the differences among traditional high school and college courses, as well as to the examination of the expectations higher education faculty members have towards freshmen students. The tendency to align high school programs and exit exams with college entrance examinations and higher education work load is relatively new. One of the initiatives in this area is the Common Core State Standard initiative (CCSS), which was developed to provide a set of guidelines for the skills and knowledge which high school graduates need to possess in English language arts and in mathematics (CCSS, 2012; “Closing the expectation gap...” 2011; Gonzales, 2012b). The standards in English and mathematics are designed to be measured by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and are to become a “common platform” to compare achievements in the two subject areas across the states (PARCC, 2012). Specifically, this initiative aims to provide better alignment between the content of college and high school English and mathematics courses, and subsequently between the exit and entrance tests. It is designed to measure the academic element of college readiness. It, therefore, misses the non-content based component of college readiness, which is as essential for college readiness as the content-based academic one. Research has indicated, that many freshmen students drop out of college because of bad practices in academic behavior, such as poor attendance, inadequate time management and so on (Conley, 2005; 2010b).

Such a state of affairs in the field of college readiness at this point poses more questions than provides strategies and clues to answer the existing questions. It is not difficult to notice that the majority of research concentrates around the public sector of secondary education. However, it might be too impetuous to disregard the strategies created and implemented by the private sector of education specifically to attend to the issue of the college readiness of its students. Although, the private sector is only responsible for less than 10 percent of the total number of high school students in the U.S. (Wagner, 2008), certain mechanisms and methods, if adjusted, can provide possible answers to a number of issues stated above. After all, the results – poorly prepared students – only reveal the consequences of good or bad strategies implemented by an institution (Collins, 2010; Collins & Hansen, 2011). In other words, the key mechanisms and the fundamental structures that are created and implemented by an institution, play a leading role in predicting the outcomes, and in generating the final results that ultimately reveal whether or not the school graduates are ready for college.

College Readiness Model

In his book *The global achievement gap* Wagner (2008) expresses the idea that “there is a profound disconnect between what students are taught and tested on in most high schools today..., versus what the real world will demand of them as adults...” (p. 264). Despite certain inconsistency in the way Wagner (2008) discusses teaching and learning practices: “...[they are] universal, transcending the requirements of a particular time and place” (p. 255) at the same time as those successful practices “... and methods of teaching [in the U.S.] are nearly a century old and hopelessly obsolete” (p. 264), the core idea is that: high school graduates are not ready to enter the real world either in a

professional way, or as postsecondary learners. The complex topic of career readiness can serve as a platform for future research endeavors, while the purpose of this study was to explore the college readiness aspect of the problem.

The idea that many college students these days come to college unprepared is not new (Bok, 2013; Conley, 2012a; González, 2012a; 2012b). As discussed above, the topic of college readiness of students has been approached from several perspectives: tests, Grade Point Averages (GPA), course titles offered in high schools and college courses. This research employed a comprehensive model developed by Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) and applied by other researchers (Edmunds, 2012; Roderick, et al., 2009) to examine the college readiness of students. The model consists of four elements that evaluate the college readiness of a student: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques (academic behaviors), and key transition knowledge and skills (contextual and awareness skills) (Conley, 2008; 2012). All four elements are not distinctly separate, but interrelated. To be more specific, a high school graduate cannot truly be considered ready for college unless the student demonstrates an ability to process an adequate amount of knowledge in all four aspects presented in the model. If a college freshman is lacking knowledge in the area of the academic behaviors expected of a college student, that student is likely to encounter a number of problems regardless of the knowledge present in the other three remaining areas. There are other important factors that directly or indirectly affect the ability of a student to attend college. Financial means, family support, pressure from peer groups just to name a few (Conley, 2012). However, at this point it is not in the capacity of the secondary institution to

teach, address, or influence those aspects. On the other hand, the four proposed elements can be encouraged and controlled by school.

Key Cognitive Strategies

All too often, a significant amount of time in a regular classroom is spent on providing students with information necessary to pass their forthcoming examination, or merely to discipline students by keeping them occupied with simple tasks to keep the auditorium quiet (Conley, 2010). As a result, many high school graduates do not possess the level of cognitive development necessary for college work. Developmental psychologists, following Piaget (Bybee & Sund, 1982), state that the process of cognitive development involves two stages: first is “readiness” in which an individual “gathers the prerequisites for a higher level of functioning”; and the second stage when an individual actually employs the strategies that were learned during the first stage (Knefelkamp et al., 1978, p. 37). The role of a high school is to provide their students with the necessary requisites and fundamentals essential for higher level college work.

College and university faculty expect incoming freshmen students to possess certain qualities and employ certain thinking strategies when dealing with problems and questions posed in class (Bok, 2006; 2013). Several research projects related to faculty expectations, enabled Conley (2010b) to identify five key cognitive strategies that are critical for those who enter institutions of higher learning: problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, precision and accuracy.

Problem formulation involves the ability of a student to apply certain strategies for solving various problems, as well as the ability to distinguish amongst the strategies and determine the best one to apply under provided circumstances. *Research* includes the

skills of a student to locate appropriate sources to the posed questions, to differentiate between reliable and unreliable sources of information, and to be familiar with the ethical rules of research. *Interpretation* involves the ability of a student to examine and analyze collected information, to identify pros and cons in the existing research and to summarize findings. *Communication* comprises the ability of a student to construct a solid argument when presenting the findings, to provide reasoning and logical justification for a selected argument. *Precision and accuracy* includes the ability of a student to accurately and appropriately evaluate the context in order to attain proper results and to provide the most reasonable conclusion based upon the presented evidence (Conley, 2010b, pp. 32-35).

Key Content Knowledge

Key content knowledge is the second of the two elements addressing the academic aspect of college readiness model. Conley (2010b) identifies it as the groundwork “foundational to the understanding of academic disciplines” (p. 35). The interrelatedness of the two elements is inevitable. As students enter college, they are expected to read and to write extensively. They encounter reading the materials in a format different from high school and the necessity to evaluate them through utilizing well-organized writing. In other words, reading and writing are “overarching academic skills” every high school graduate is required to possess in order to be academically prepared for college (Conley, 2010b, pp. 36-37).

Key content knowledge also includes a basic proficiency and understanding of certain academic subjects, such as English, math, science, social sciences, world languages, and the arts (Conley, 2010b, pp. 37-39). The core idea of *understanding* the academic subjects on the level of high school serves as the foundation upon which

college work can further build existing knowledge. Despite the fact that most of the high school students in the U.S. are required to take courses with the same or equivalent titles, many do not gain the applicable knowledge to engage in college work. Much of the importance related to the basic proficiency in *English* is closely related to reading and writing, and involves vocabulary building, strategic reading and evaluation of complex texts, and understanding of central ideas. Knowledge in *math* encompasses not only exposure to the basic concepts and ideas, but an actual understanding of those concepts, as well as the ability to interpret the mathematical results based upon the provided context of the problem. The core skill a high school should teach in order to prepare students for college courses in *science* is the ability to “think like a scientist” (Conley, 2010b, p. 37). In other words, students should not only know the basic vocabulary and laws of science, but also be able to examine and analyze each problem from a systematic perspective. Basic knowledge in *social sciences* is closely related to the set of skills discussed in the previous segment of the college readiness model. A student should possess the ability to identify, research, and analyze a problem and draw parallels to the larger all-encompassing theories. Learning *world languages* allows the student to acquire an understanding of different cultures through the language. It is more than memorization of the appropriate rules. Through learning a second language, learners should be able to understand the basic structure of the language they study as well as that of their own in a holistic way. In the area of *the arts*, students who are ready for college should develop a keen appreciation for various forms of art, understand the function of the arts in the world, identify personal artistic vision, and develop the ability to recognize art in the environment around them (Conley, 2010b).

Key Learning Skills and Techniques

Key learning skills and techniques represent a set of academic behaviors essential for those who aspire to attend institutions of higher learning. This third element of Conley's model (2010a; 2010b; 2012) is a compilation of non-content related general qualities and behaviors. These skills and techniques do not correspond to any particular academic subject, but are more of a representation of an attitude which a student takes towards controlling personal behavior. They comprise a set of qualities possible to be developed and examined through student activities that are not limited to the academic or in-classroom ones.

Study skills or learning techniques include, but are not limited to, the abilities a student possesses for collaborative learning, persistence, independent learning, time management, and note taking (Conley, 2010b; 2012). In other words, key learning skills and techniques are a group of certain non-content related skills, a set of habitual behaviors developed by a student throughout the years of high school that are essential tools for a college student.

Key Transition Knowledge and Skills

Similarly to the previous one, this element of the model is also not directly related to the content of any academic subject taught in school. Conley (2010b) also refers to this dimension of the model as “contextual skills and awareness” or “college knowledge” (p. 40). Conley (2005) dedicated an entire book *College knowledge*® to this particular aspect of college readiness, where the amount of knowledge which high school students possess is examined, and possible strategies to improve such knowledge and to increase the awareness of students about the system of higher education are described.

College knowledge – understanding the ways in which postsecondary systems of education work – is essential when selecting a college to attend, going through the application process, applying for financial aid, and other related processes. Knowing specific traditions and norms of the system helps students with navigation within the university structures and programs. Students should be aware of the differences between formal and informal types in information, should be responsible enough to follow the timelines and deadlines, should be aware that every institution of higher learning has its own culture and traditions, and so on (Conley, 2005; 2010b). Presented in another light, in order to be ready for college high school graduates need to possess basic knowledge about the many institutions of higher education.

Throughout his work, Conley (2005; 2010a; 2010b), while proposing various strategies to address each of the four elements of college readiness, insists that every institution of secondary learning can utilize a set of different methods when preparing students for college. These methods and programs depend upon the environment, location and culture of the school and other aspects related to a particular school. This study examined the existing strategies and mechanisms created by the Templeton Academy to prepare students for college and explored the way each of these specific mechanisms relate to the four aspects of college readiness presented by Conley (2008): key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills. To be more precise, using qualitative methods, this study explored the *practical* model created and implemented by the college preparatory school through the prism of Conley's (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) *theoretical* model.

Chapter Two Summary

In this chapter I presented an overview of the origins of private education in Virginia, and paid special attention to the fundamental differences in the philosophy and traditions of approaching teaching and learning between the private and public sectors. The context for the study and the possible explanations for the existing state of affairs in the field of college readiness were established. First, the approach of college preparatory schools towards college readiness was presented and supported by historical evidence. Second, the general culture of prep schools was described with the purpose of providing a framework, which serves as a basis for examining the non-academic aspect of college readiness. Third, major tendencies in the existing research on college readiness were presented and analyzed. Finally, the Conley's model that lays the foundation and provides a structure for the present study was described and examined.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three Overview

This chapter describes the method the researcher used to conduct the study and to address the following research foci.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

This section of the study describes the basis for choosing a qualitative design for this research and illustrates the general setting and context within which the research took place. Also covered are the process utilized for selecting participants in the study, data gathering techniques such as, document analysis, observations, interviews, and focus group interviews. This chapter also identifies data analysis strategies and gives special emphasis to ethical considerations and the strategy to avoid causing any harm to the participants of the study (Punch, 1994). Limitations to the selected design of the study are discussed in the final part of this chapter. A chapter summary concludes this section.

Design Rationale

The main purpose of this study was not only to explore whether Templeton Academy has created a number of certain programs, extracurricular activities, and other mechanism which prepare its graduates for college, but also to find out *what* they are and identify *how* those structures work in practice, as well as discover the influence the programs have on students. One of my goals was to discover the elements of the model of preparing students for college created by the Templeton Academy and compare them with the four components of the College Career Readiness model proposed by Conley (2008). Another goal was to determine the effectiveness of the school's initiatives. In order to seek answers to the posed problems, this research utilized a qualitative method design. Qualitative design gave me an opportunity to enrich the findings and to gain a better and more advanced understanding of the phenomenon under study (Hanson et al., 2005). Through examination of the findings, I was able to provide "a complex, holistic picture" to answer the *what* and *how* questions of the study (Creswell, 1998, pp. 15-18).

This qualitative research was designed as a case study with some elements of heuristic inquiry. Stake (1994) affirms that "the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (p. 245). One of the aspects of the heuristic inquiry is to provide the in-depth description of the experiences of the study participants and to reveal the possible interconnectedness of those experiences with personal reflections of the researcher (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Patton, 2002). The original meaning of the word heuristic can be traced back to a Greek word meaning "to discover" (*Merriam Webster Online*, n.d.). The central focus of the heuristic inquiry lies in the comparison of the researcher's experience to the experiences of the research participants (Patton, 2002).

Therefore, instead of detaching myself from the high school experiences and emotions discussed by the Templeton students who participated in this research project, in the subsequent chapters I analyze and compare my personal high school sensations, feelings, and sentiments to those expressed by the study participants. The idea behind such a comparison is not to contrast or evaluate the differences and similarities in the educational systems or approaches to teaching and learning, but to create a vivid picture of what it means to be a student at Templeton.

This research is an in-depth examination of a single case – the Templeton Academy and specifically the structures it has created to ensure college readiness in its students. In order to be able to conduct a case study, unambiguous limits had to delineate a particular case (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995). The study took place on the premises of the school and lasted approximately six months during which the data were collected. Case study methodology was chosen as a method of inquiry because the students, the teachers, and the administrators who comprise the population of the school were studied in their “natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 17) and if one group or all groups of the participants were to be removed from the school campus, “it may lead to contrived findings...” (Creswell, 1998, p. 17). Specifically, both context and participants play a vital role. The purpose of this study was to explore various programs established by the Templeton Academy in order to make students ready for college and to examine those programs and initiatives through the prism of Conley’s (2008) model. To accomplish this, I employed the methods of instrumental case study, which were to “... draw the researcher toward illustrating how the concerns of researchers and theorists are manifest in the case” (Stake, 1994, p. 243).

Data were collected through examination of multiple sources of information: analysis of documents, observations, interviews, and focus groups (Patton, 2002). A detailed description for each of the data collection techniques is provided below. The findings provide a comprehensive picture of the case addressing each aspect of college readiness: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key transition knowledge and skills, key learning skills and techniques, implemented or not implemented by the Templeton Academy.

This is a single-case study, because there is a need to explore the distinctive approach Templeton Academy has taken to provide an education that will prepare graduates for success in college (Creswell, 1998). The research adopted an embedded design and took a “funneling approach” (p. 188) to provide comprehensive descriptions and detailed analysis. In the previous chapter, I introduced the broader picture: a brief overview of the history of education in Virginia where Templeton Academy is located, as well as a succinct examination of certain academic and non-academic issues experienced by male students when they enter college. It is essential to create comprehensive context for the study as it explains the reason the particular case for analysis was selected. The study sequentially narrows the focus down to the school campus – the research site. By taking such an approach, I was able to analyze the general environment and the chronological events which have shaped the dual private-public sectors of education in Virginia and affected the views on teaching and learning that are currently present in the state. An understanding of the general environment surrounding Templeton Academy provides a likely explanation for the new restructured approach to teaching and learning the school implemented a few years ago.

The study then narrows down even further and explores the particular case of one boarding school which, while being an inseparable part of the surrounding environment, decided to question its views about teaching and learning and reconstruct its own curriculum as well as its approach to the concept of extracurricular activities. The study examines and describes the key methods and strategies the school created specifically to address the subject of college readiness as viewed through the context of Conley's (2008) model.

Creswell (1994) states that it is necessary for the researcher to clearly indicate the form of narrative that is to be used in the data analysis section of the manuscript. Since this case study incorporates some of the elements of the heuristic inquiry, I found the "confessional tale" (Creswell, 1994, p. 159) to be the most suitable primary form of narrative for the subsequent chapters.

Research Setting

The main focus of this exploratory research was investigating college readiness in high school graduates and discovering key structures that were established and implemented by a school in order to promote the college readiness of its students. College readiness in this case is examined through the prism of the College Career Readiness model developed by Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b) and encompasses four aspects. These are (1) key content knowledge, (2) key cognitive strategies, (3) key learning skills and techniques also referred to as academic behaviors, and (4) key transition knowledge and skills also referred to as contextual skills and awareness. The rationale behind selecting an independent school for this study as opposed to selecting a public high school was as follows. First of all, independent high schools were founded

on the territory of the North American continent long before any public system of education was established (Baird, 1977; Bell, 1969; Heatwole, 1916; Williams, 1969). Therefore, such schools have deeper roots, richer traditions, and a far longer history of preparing graduates for college and civic services than public schools. Moreover, the original purpose of the public schools was to prepare the graduates to become a part of the workforce, not to prepare them for college (Gatto, 2010; Pulliam & VanPatten, 1999; Wagner, 2008; Williams, 1999). Consequently, the private sector of education has traditionally maintained a learning supportive environment (Cookson & Persell, 1985), while peer pressures and the general atmosphere sustained in many of the public institutions oftentimes is discouraging of learning (Murray, 2008). Second, independent schools are referred to as independent for a reason: they are generally not tightly restricted into a system of standards with which they are methodically controlled by the state government. Thus, they have a better opportunity to adjust their curriculum and their specific ways of teaching and learning to the needs of the students and the community they serve than do public schools (Scott & Meyer, 1988; Williams, 1999). Third, the Episcopal schools – and the school under study is not an exception – have traditionally pursued a holistic approach to education (Williams, 1999). Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) argues that successful college preparation encompasses the development of the whole person. Therefore, promoting the development and assessment of strictly academic part of a student, however important it might be, does not lead to successful college preparation. Lastly, the number of accredited independent schools in Virginia is close to one hundred (“Virginia Association of Independent Schools”, n.d.). The majority of independent schools which include grades 9-12 among them have

mission statements that in one way or another declare college preparation as a significant part of their mission, proclaiming the schools to be college preparatory schools or prep schools (“Foxcroft School”, 2012; “Middleburg Academy”, 2012; School Website, 2013).

Since I sought to identify and explore various strategies and key mechanisms developed by the schools in order to prepare graduates for success in college, it was logical to select a residential school with a mission centered on preparing students for college and search for structures it has established to support such a mission. Moreover, the school understudy – Templeton Academy – is predominantly male. Since, as I discussed in previous chapters, the majority of college dropouts are males (NCES, 2014b), I was curious to find out the atmosphere that the academy created and the methods it uses to prepare boys for college. It was also interesting to see the influence such methods have on the male population of the school.

Catholic schools have been traditionally responsible for the largest sector of private, religiously affiliated education in the United States (Cooper, 1988). However, in order to increase the diversity present in the student population and to encompass a wider variety of activities required to attend to a diverse student body, I decided to avoid examining student readiness in one of the Catholic schools in the area. This study, however, can be replicated in one of the schools affiliated with the Catholic Church in the future. One of the Episcopal schools – Templeton Academy was selected for this study for five main reasons. First of all, the student population of the Episcopal Schools consists overwhelmingly of non-Episcopalians, as opposed to only 17 percent of those who attend Catholic schools who can be considered non-Catholics (Cooper, 1988, p. 27).

Second, Episcopal schools are considered some of the most prestigious schools in the nation (Cooper, 1988; Williams, 1999); therefore, it was interesting to find out whether or not one of such schools have established a better system of preparing students for college. Third, the school under study is predominantly male; therefore, it was interesting to reveal the programs initiated by the school to prevent its male population from adding to the national statistic of college dropouts. Fourth, several years ago the Templeton Academy adopted an interdisciplinary skill-based approach to teaching and learning. It has recreated its curriculum, redefined the goals and objectives of each department and of the school as a whole, established a number of new extracurricular activities in order to take a holistic approach to education. In other words, it has taken an approach that Keeling (2004) identified as educating a whole person. Finally, the Templeton Academy does not consider itself an elite boarding school as defined in chapter one, does not appear to reveal its intentions to become one in its mission statement, and does not hold a very strict admission criteria based upon previous grades and scores; therefore the student body that attend the school – boarders and day students – is somewhat more diversified from academic and socio-economic perspectives than elite boarding schools.

Participants Selection

Participants in this research were teachers and administrators employed by the Templeton Academy, as well as students of the senior class and school alumni. All of the participants were selected based upon the purposeful sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). Huberman and Miles (1994) argue that “qualitative researchers must characteristically think purposively and conceptually about sampling” (p. 441). The rationale behind

adopting such an approach to this study was the following: to examine as large a variety of data related to the case as possible in order to identify common themes and patterns.

I examined the case from four different perspectives: from the position of teachers, from the perspective of school administrators, from the standpoint of students, and from the viewpoint of school alumni. The three groups – teachers, administrators, and students – play a vital role in establishing key mechanisms within the school that are responsible for the college readiness of students (Conley, 2010). The fourth group – school alumni – was important to this research because each interviewed member of this group had applied, was admitted, and had successfully studied in an institution of higher learning for at least one semester. Thus, this group was able to critically examine the school's programs in retrospective. Individual participants from all four groups were identified and selected in the following manner.

First, the school leadership was contacted with a request to identify senior class school teachers who were likely volunteers to participate in the study. The Templeton Academy implemented its new approach to teaching and learning approximately five years ago. Therefore, six of the participating teachers were those who had been working at the school for at least five years and have experienced both the old and new way in which the system works. Other participating teachers have been employed by the school for fewer than five years, i.e. they joined the academy after restructuring had already occurred, but who have previous work experience at other schools. The rationale for such a selection was as follows. Teachers who experienced both systems provided invaluable data by comparing the two systems: the past and the present. And those teachers who were relatively new to the academy shared their daily activities, such as

preparation to courses, successful teaching strategies, and evaluated them against their previous work experience.

Second, with the assistance of the school's leadership, I identified, the administrators who were directly or indirectly affected by the restructuring of the academy. After those individuals were indentified, I randomly selected five administrators and contacted them asking them to participate in the study. Each teacher and administrator was presented with a consent form. The official consent form (Appendix D) informed a participant about the major purpose of the study, about possible benefits and risks associated with the study, about protecting the privacy of the participant and keeping the responses confidential, and contained a statement confirming the right of the participant to stop and withdraw from the study at any point in time (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Upon signing this form an individual agreed to officially participate in the study. Prior to the beginning of the interview each of the participants gave oral permission to the researcher to digitally record the interview.

Third, the alumni relations office was contacted in order to identify a group of alumni who graduated no more than five years ago. Templeton Academy started restructuring of its curriculum approximately five years ago, therefore, alumni who graduated earlier than the restructuring took place were excluded. Each of the school graduates was sent an electronic invitation (Appendix A) followed by a consent form (Appendix D) for those who agreed to participate. A total of six telephone interviews were conducted.

Fourth, the school leadership was contacted in order to indentify the number of students in the senior class. The senior class was selected based upon the following

criteria: they have experienced the reorganized school structure longer than their junior, sophomore, or freshmen peers; they would be graduating at the end of the school year and applying for college, therefore, they should be college ready. School leadership provided the information regarding the number of years each member of the senior class has been attending the Templeton Academy. A total of 14 senior class students were identified and sent an invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B). The students were then randomly divided into two groups and each group participated in one one-hour focus group interview. I complied with all the necessary forms and procedures required to conduct ethically responsible research (Sieber, 1992).

Lastly, faculty members who teach senior class were invited to participate in one class session long observation (Appendix C). Participating teachers were presented with a consent form (Appendix F). The implementation of the school's restructured curriculum was the primary target of the observation. Teacher's conduct in the classroom was observed in accordance with the observation protocol (Appendix J). A more detailed explanation of the process is described elsewhere in this chapter.

Data Collection

When conducting a case study, the most comprehensive information to answer research questions is obtained through observations, inspections of documents, and interviews (Creswell, 1998). The data for this research was collected using the following techniques: examinations of school records and other documents, observations, as well as individual and focus group interviews. Upon obtaining access to Templeton Academy I spent approximately six months collecting data.

Examination of Documents

One of the main aspects of the case study is the recreation of the site in a detailed manner which is as exact as possible (Yin, 1989). Examination of school documents provided rich in-depth data about the school organization and setting, as well as presented the background and the probable explanations for the shift in the approach to teaching and learning that the academy decided to undertake five years ago. I requested access to the official electronic portal of the school from the school leadership. Once access was granted, every possible report, meeting minutes, archival document, student's and faculty's guidebooks, event schedules and description, class schedules, athletic competitions and et cetera were meticulously examined. Inspection of the school electronic portal allowed me to "experience" and understand the culture of the school. Library archives were also explored with the purposes of recreating a picture of the "old way" of schooling and compare it to the "new way." Books and articles describing the founding and the traditions of the school were also studied. Such in-depth examination of the documents not only helped to describe and evaluate the key mechanisms and structures created by the academy to ensure college readiness of its students, but also served as a cross-check point during the data analysis stage of the research.

Observations

Throughout the study the researcher conducted a number of observations. After access to the school campus was granted, I spent several weeks on school campus engaging in observation of the school's daily activities. Observation is one of the most useful techniques of gathering data when conducting a case study (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 1989). The researcher selected the method of unobtrusive observations with part

participant/part observer for the following reason: to limit the effect of the observer on any meeting as much as possible. Patton (2002) notes: “[u]nobtrusive measures are those made without the knowledge of the people being observed and without affecting what is observed” (p. 292). I kept field notes that later served as descriptive notes as well as memos, reflections, thoughts and ideas which proved to be indispensable when recreating the picture for the final report (Creswell, 1998). All of the notes were taken in electronic format during the process of these observations. The reflections were added to the side of the field notes in the form of comments or were recorded as a separate file named “reflections”. Such reflections were recorded to view and examine the academy’s daily life through the prism of Conley’s (2008) model.

Another form of observation was more structured. As a part of this study, I created an observation protocol (Appendix J) that besides the date, duration of the observation, time and place (Creswell, 1998), contained several key ideas based on the model proposed by Conley (2008). The researcher observed teachers’ conduct in the classroom evaluating it through the lens of the model. Such observations took place in a classroom setting during senior class meetings. I obtained access to visit and observe each site from the school leadership, and the participating teachers signed the necessary consent form (Appendix F). Prior to the beginning of the class session, I was introduced to the class and the purpose of my presence was explained to the students. I only took electronic notes; no video or audio recording took place. Rich descriptive notes of the site were taken to help the reader clearly picture the location where the illustrated events took place (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). I present the notes in chapter four. Upon conclusion of the observation, the observer left the site after answering any possible

inquires that participants had. I then sought out a quiet location and added reflective notes as commentaries to the side of the main observation document.

Interviews

As a part of the data gathering procedures, the researcher conducted interviews with school alumni, as well as teachers and administrators employed by the Templeton Academy. Interviewing participants of the study is a procedure widely used in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Patton, 2002). A blueprint of all interview questions was carefully examined by four experts in the field of education. Upon reaching a consensus, a pilot study was launched. In order to ensure the clarity of the interview questions to those who might not possess necessary expertise in education, two doctoral candidates from two different institutions and one Ph.D. holder were asked questions designed for administrators and teachers. Two recent high school graduates were asked to answer the questions designed for the alumni of the Templeton Academy. One interview of the pilot study was conducted telephonically. The wordage of a few questions (Appendixes G and H) was slightly simplified as a result of the pilot study.

The researcher identified the interviewees for the study based on the process described above. All interviews were conducted in one of the following formats: in person, via electronic telecommunication, or telephonically. In person interviews took place on the school campus, in a quiet room with minimal distraction or extraneous noise to prevent disruption and outside disturbance during recording. Interviews took the form of one-on-one conversations and lasted approximately 45 minutes with school administrators and members of the faculty, and no longer than 20 minutes with school alumni. Interview protocols (Appendix G & Appendix H) were created prior to the

interviews. The protocol contains indirect, paraphrased, and simplified questions related to the research topic with every question addressing each step in the college readiness process as defined by Conley (2008). I allocated approximately three minutes at the beginning of the interview for small talk that served the purpose of an ice breaker (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Questions created for teachers and administrators (Appendix G) address the subject of college readiness in a slightly different manner than those questions constructed for the school graduates (Appendix H). The protocol containing interview questions was sent to the participants by email once they agreed to partake in the study (Creswell, 1998).

At the time of the in person interviews, the study participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix D) and allowed the researcher to digitally record the interviews. Participants of the interviews that were conducted telephonically or via electronic devices consented orally and agreed to be recorded. Each participant was briefly reminded about the purpose of the study, the complete confidentiality of the whole process, my plan to use the results, and the option to stop the interview at any time during the interview. A complete final report was electronically sent to the participants for examination.

The interviews included semi-structured open-ended questions. Such an approach allowed the researcher to maximize comparability across responses, to minimize as much as possible variation in questions asked while giving all the interviewees the same stimuli to answer the questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002). In other words, the interviewee, as a speaker, was offered some control over the interview process and over the interviewer, as a listener. At the same time, however, the semi-structured open-ended approach to the interviews provided the researcher the organizational control over the

whole interview process for the study: it made interviews easier to protocol and to compare (Patton, 2002). In order to avoid the uneasiness of sharing information with an outsider, the researcher took every possible opportunity to become familiar with the school campus in general and with study participants in particular. Interviewees were also offered to create pseudonyms to conceal their real names in the final report.

Focus Groups

The researcher invited students from the senior class to participate in focus groups. Focus group interviews are usually preferred as a data gathering technique in cases when participants are similar to each other, when communication among them can encourage every interviewee, who might be shy or unconfident during one-on-one interviews, to share information and to feel comfortable (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Krueger, 1994; Patton, 2002). Two focus group interviews were conducted during this study. An invitation to partake in this study was electronically sent to all senior class students who were 18 years or older at the time of the interview (Appendix B).

I then contacted the school's leadership and requested a quiet auditorium on school premises which was spacious enough to host seven students and a researcher. I served as a moderator. Participants of both focus groups were senior class students. Each group consisted of no more than seven participants. Each student signed a consent form (Appendix E) and was explained the purpose of the study and the importance the focus group interviews play in it. The students then created pseudonyms that are used in this final report. Two digital recording devices were placed in the room. The participants were once again informed of the purpose of the study, the amount of time the

meeting was going to last, the way the results of the interview would be used, and their ability to leave the room without any consequences at any time during the interview process should they have felt uncomfortable or uneasy.

The researcher created a protocol (Appendix I), which was examined and approved by experts in the field of education, prior to the beginning of the focus group interviews. To prevent one or two students from dominating the discussion, as well as to let everyone in the group share their ideas, I encouraged the quieter participants to express their ideas by personally addressing them. I did not deviate from the established protocol in any fashion. Staying accurate to the protocol, when conducting two different focus group interviews, served to generate more comparable results. (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). It also brought to a bare minimum the possible desire of the interviewees to deviate from the topic of the discussion and move on to any other abstract issue. As a moderator, I carefully tracked the amount of time each student utilized to answer the posed questions, and, if necessary, reminded the participants that they had a certain amount of time to discuss the issue at hand. The focus group interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Data Analysis

There is no agreement on the best forms of analysis of qualitative data which exists among researchers (Creswell, 1998), therefore, this study employed an array of data analysis techniques to ensure the thoroughness and reliability of the collected information. When analyzing data in research that was designed as a case study, a comprehensive description of the case and the context becomes a part of the process of analysis of a particular case (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998). According to

Bogdan and Biklen (1992), it is a good practice to detach and distance oneself from the collected data and to engage in research of non-related activities before starting data analysis. Such temporary distancing provides the researcher with an opportunity to look at the case from a different perspective and start reading data with new enthusiasm. At the same time, as a part of heuristic inquiry, during the data analysis stage I started evaluating, examining, and reliving my personal experiences and connecting them to the experiences of each individual student-participant in the study as well as to the culture of the school (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Patton, 2002).

First of all, I engaged in general reading through the collected data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002) while adding memos – general thoughts, possible questions and ideas – to the one-on-one interview transcriptions, observational field notes, examination of documents, and transcriptions of focus group interviews. All data were stored and examined electronically, and all memos were added in the form of commentaries on the side of the main text. I then recorded an in-depth description of the case and its background (Creswell, 1998).

All data were read and examined through the prism of Conley's (2008) model. Main themes and categories were identified and coded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Patton, 2002). After that I aggregated a number of patterns from the initial themes and categories. In order to make the findings more visual, a table for each of the four college readiness elements was created. The data that were collected by examination of the documents, by interviews, by observations, and by focus group interviews were sorted and inserted into the appropriate table (Wolcott, 1994). As a result, four different tables were created in order to increase the visual clarity of data. Those four tables were named

in accordance with Conley's (2008) elements of college readiness: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, key transition knowledge and skills. The excerpts of data regarding the efficiency of the school initiatives were written in italics. The portions of interviews with teachers and administrators in each table were highlighted in gray, the excerpts from focus group interviews were highlighted in yellow, the parts of interviews with school alumni were highlighted in green, and the data gathered by observing teachers were highlighted in light blue, while my own reflections were highlighted in red. After the process of inserting the portions of data – direct quotations from the interviews, certain parts of observations, et cetera – into the appropriate table was completed, I compared the results in all four tables. Such cross-checking of data promotes the trustworthiness of the results (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Another question that I posed to all of my participants encouraged them to identify the elements of the restructured curriculum that needed some improvement. I recorded their answers in a separate Word document. The excerpts of data were highlighted in accordance with the color scheme mentioned above: teachers and administrators – gray, students – yellow, alumni – green.

After examination for themes and patterns of data collected by each of the presented techniques: document analysis, interviews, focus groups, and observations, I conducted a cross-check examination amongst the data and the results described in the literature. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) argue that the researcher is usually "...part of a dialogue about the topic" (p.175) and engages in data analysis with a preexisting set of values and beliefs; "all knowledge and claims of knowledge are reflexive of the process, assumptions, location, history, and context of knowing and the knower" (Altheide &

Johnson, 1994, p. 488). Creswell (1994), in turn, affirms that an additional investigator “...might provide an ‘audit’ trail of the key decision made during the research process and validate that they were good decisions” (p. 158), hence addressing the possible concern regarding internal validity. Consequently, in order to avoid biases, to ensure data triangulation, and internal validity, one more independent, carefully selected investigator was invited. The investigator held a terminal degree in education and was a graduate of a public secondary institution in the United States. At this point all the names of the participants were substituted with pseudonyms. The independent investigator and I examined the collected data separately and then discussed the findings which emerged. The independent investigator on many occasions served as an auditor who made certain as much as possible that the researcher’s personal experiences did not bias the data collected during the study.

The rich in-depth description of the outcome of the case in this report is followed by an explanatory interpretation for such an outcome (Creswell, 1998) derived from the data collected. Finally, the general patterns of the case were compared and contrasted with the existing literature which addresses issues related to the college readiness of students. Reaching the point of data saturation (Patton, 2002) or “...redundancy of data...” while collecting and analyzing the data decreases the possibility to misinterpret the findings and is another triangulation procedure (Stake, 1994, p. 241). The results and the discussion of the findings are discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Ethical Considerations

One of the major aspects of research in the social sciences is dedication to protecting the rights and interests of research participants. It is particularly important to

take into account ethical considerations when conducting a qualitative research “... because the academic enters into a relatively close relationship with the researched” (Punch, 1994, p. 93). All too often a researcher might unintentionally overlook certain features of the research that might have detrimental consequences on daily lives of the participants. Every institution that receives federal funds for the purposes of conducting research is required to establish an Institution Review Board (IRB) or to use the IRB of another institution (Sieber, 1992). Every member of the institution when conducting research in social sciences is mandated to comply with the IRB procedures and adapt the research to meet ethical and legal criteria. However, since all of the participants in this research have reached the age of majority, I was able to file an application for exempt research and, as a result, obtained a permission to conduct the study from the college of education – Human Subjects Review Committee.

Throughout the study, I took every possible precaution to avoid any potential ethical issue that might affect the wellbeing of the participants. Prior to entering the field, a request was sent to the Templeton Academy leadership. Once access was granted, I asked every participant to sign a consent form (Appendix D, Appendix E, & Appendix F). All participants were informed about the essence of the study and the interview questions were sent to them electronically ahead of time.

Moreover, I ensured that focus group questions as well as the process of conducting focus group interviews did not involve greater risks than students’ normal daily life activities. The questions for the focus groups were designed in a way as to prevent discussion of personal information irrelevant to the study. The researcher served as a mediator; kept the groups focused on the topic in order to prevent sharing of too

much information, which could potentially harm the welfare of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Sieber, 1992). Prior to the beginning of the focus groups, the participants were informed of possible risks related to disclosure or personal information. All of the participants were 18 years of age or older; therefore, no risk from a developmental perspective can be expected.

Special emphasis was made to preserving the confidentiality of each participant. Teachers, administrators, and students were offered to choose a pseudonym to be referred to in the final report. I avoided using any real names, ranks, titles, and other information that could lead to potential identification of the participants (Patton, 2002; Punch, 1994). Observations were continually conducted throughout the study and field notes as well as reflections were written and kept in the electronic format. For the purposes of protecting confidentiality, each participating teacher, administrator and student initially was assigned a number, and was referred to all through the field notes and reflections as follows: T1 – teacher 1, A1 – administrator 1, S1 – student 1 and so on.

None of the gathered data were shared with/ amongst the participants. Each interview was transcribed and an electronic file of it was stored on a secured device. All gathered data including field notes, reflections, transcribed personal and focus groups interviews were stored on electronic devices. The electronic devices were kept in a secured location to ensure any unintentional revelation of personal information to public (Patton, 2002; Punch, 1994). Upon completion of the research, the gathered data were destroyed.

Limitations to Design

This research was conducted using the single-case embedded design study because the purpose of it was to examine the unique case (Yin, 1989) of the Templeton Academy – a boarding school that has made an attempt to reconsider its own and traditionally accepted approach to teaching and learning and reform the school structures around this new approach. Although my decision to opt for the embedded design as opposed to a holistic one can be seen as a limitation, since a holistic design offers a richer description of the entire case (Creswell, 1998); this study concentrates on the examination of specific subunits in the case that are related to college readiness. Therefore, an approach providing a more comprehensive description of certain programs and mechanisms of the case as they fit into a bigger picture was preferred to the depiction of theoretical ideas and abstract conceptions.

The major portion of the research was based upon the interviews, which in essence can be viewed as self-reported perceptions. The limitations related to any interview – “possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness...” (Patton, 2002, p. 306) can be challenging if not impossible to control or avoid. In order to alleviate the impact of such limitations on the results of the study, I continuously cross-checked the data gathered from other sources with the responses of each individual participant as well as compared the responses among the different groups of participants.

The process of continuous observations of school life was chosen as one of the qualitative research techniques. To address the limitation related to observer’s bias during the process of observations, I kept two separate journals: a descriptive journal and

reflective journal. The descriptive journal contained the field notes, and the reflective journal contained memos and the researcher's personal reflections (Creswell, 1998). Moreover, the data gathered by observations were verified by comparing it to data obtained by other methods. Punch (1994) argues that the presence of the research in the site may disrupt the normal daily routine and affect interactions amongst the participants, which in turn may cause certain ethical issues to arise. To avoid such issues, I always considered the dimensions of the observations and always contacted the school leadership before engaging in any kind of observational activity.

Chapter Three Summary

This chapter focused on the approach the researcher utilized in order to answer the following research questions.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

The chapter also elucidated the rationale behind the chosen approach to answer the stated research questions, described the research settings and the reasons for such

arrangements. I explained the procedures associated with gaining access to Templeton Academy with the purpose of conducting the study as well as the criteria for selecting participants for the study. Data collection procedures together with approaches chosen for data analyses were identified and described in specific sections of the chapter. A set of interview questions specific to the group of school teachers and administrators, questions utilized for interviewing the school alumni, as well as questions developed for focus groups with student-participants are presented in Appendix G, Appendix H, and Appendix I. Throughout the chapter I addressed the issues of the validity and the trustworthiness of collected data. Special attention was paid to the possible ethical issues related to data collection and analysis. Finally, some of the limitations to the design of the study were identified.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter Four Overview

This chapter is about results. It presents the findings of the study conducted on the premises of an independent residential school in order to address the following research foci.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

The findings are based on a six month-long data collection process during which the following techniques were used: examination of school records; semi-structured interviews with school faculty, administrators, and alumni; class observations; and focus group interviews with students of the senior class. In addition, the field notes as well as a personal reflective journal are integrated into the findings of the study presented in this chapter. Whenever possible, I always opted for using the original voice of the participants as they described their personal experiences or divulged information in discussion of the school's programs and curriculum. Thus, to justify the findings and

provide solid evidence basis, first person singular was often preferred to paraphrasing of the participants. Occasional language inconsistencies are also authentic to the interviewees. Data triangulation and particular emphasis on data interactions are the cornerstone of this study (Charmaz, 2004).

This chapter is organized in the following manner. The first section – Culture of the School – illustrates the culture of the academy by highlighting the school community and interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. It presents several excerpts from my field notes, a personal reflective journal, and observation memos. In order to demonstrate the way the school perceives itself and its mission, vision, and values, I present several extracts from official electronic and non-electronic records belonging to the academy. The real name of the school remains confidential and is, therefore, changed in the main text as well as in the reference blocks. The purpose of this section is to provide an in-depth description of the site so as to place the reader in the heart of action (Creswell, 1998).

The second section of the chapter – Description of Study Participants – focuses on portrayal of the research participants. There were four groups of participants: faculty, school administrators, students, and school alumni. I dedicate quite some time to introducing the study participants to the reader. It is my intention to emphasize the fact that the participants are real people and not fictional characters from a book, even though their real names have been substituted with pseudonyms for the purposes of confidentiality. With the help of such a detailed introduction, I would like the reader, not the author, to be able to imagine having firsthand conversations with the participants.

The third section – Four Key Elements of College Readiness – is further subdivided into four parts: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills. Each part presents the methods Templeton Academy utilizes to develop a certain sets of skills and abilities in students. Interviews with faculty and school administrators were dedicated to revealing such methods and discovering specific programs and initiatives the school created to prepare its students for success in an institution of higher learning. Interview questions for faculty and administrators were direct; they asked to describe a method or a program created to develop a particular skill (Appendix G).

The fourth section – The Efficacy of the School Curriculum – examines the efficiency of the methods utilized by the school to promote college readiness in its students. This section is further subdivided into three parts: students, alumni, and things to improve. It is primarily based on interviews conducted with senior class students and school alumni with some exceptions. A majority of the questions presented to students (Appendix I) and alumni (Appendix H) were indirect, oftentimes the participants were asked to comment on certain situations and scenarios. The objective of the conversations was to examine the aspect of effectiveness of stated methods and programs. The final section of the chapter – Chapter Four Summary – provides a succinct summary of the present chapter.

Culture of the School

The function of this part of the chapter is to begin answering research question one, the “how” question. How does the school promote the development of certain skills and abilities in students?

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

Below I provide a comprehensive description of certain school traditions and the culture which itself inevitably contributes to the way that the academy develops key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, key transition knowledge and skills in its students. The school created an atmosphere where learning takes place and which affects the development of the four qualities above. In many ways we are all products of our environment.

This section is primarily based on my observations, field notes, reflective diaries, and examination of the school documents and records. I took the liberty of changing or omitting the names of the buildings and individuals I met during my observational trips to campus simply to preserve the confidentiality of the institution and the people in it. All other data unaltered.

Different thoughts rummaged through my head as I was approaching the school campus. On one hand, I was excited to finally start the actual field work for this research after spending a great deal of time on administrative functions and other formalities. On the other hand, I had performed a great deal of research into the theory of the subject that a mere attempt to explain it to the participants would take ages. A feeling of intimidation encroached upon me and started taking over the logical part of my brain as I drove into the campus only to find that the parking lot was full. Surely a bad omen, I thought, as my

mind raced to find a swift solution for the dilemma. Luckily, I did not have any interviews scheduled for my first day. In fact, my sole purpose was to walk around and examine the school premises. I made a u-turn hoping that I could park somewhere along the driveway. Suddenly I noticed a tiny sign that read “Visitors Parking.” It was attached to the pole of the white fence that surrounded of what seemed to be an enormous green field. Finding the parking lot served as a true ego booster. As I forced my way through the grass, my excitement was heightened by realization that I do not drive a low sport car – no Mustang could possibly plow through this much grass. I was dreaming of entering the field one day while reading numerous books and articles on the topic, constructing theoretical framework, and examining school’s documents. The field I did enter, quite literally.

Anxious not to leave any of the important things behind, I checked the battery charge on my phone – the primary note taking device that I always use to type up my thoughts and observations. I began my way through the field heading for the main campus. It was a hot morning and the grass was still wet from the dew. I did not know whether I wanted to appear more like a student, a staff, or a teacher, but wet shoes were definitely not part of my plan. I stopped and looked down when I reached the paved walkway. My feet were soaked, so much for the water resistant coating. My thoughts were everywhere except the place they should be: the school campus. It was one of the most important days of my research and I could not concentrate. I was looking down to inspect how much real damage was done and, more importantly, how much would other people be able to see. Somehow we always believe that the people around us notice a lot more than they actually do. I suddenly heard panting and noticed a pair of moccasins

standing by my wet shoes. I raised my head: “hi, do you know how to say ‘all the best things are rare’ in Latin?” I felt stunned. I certainly did not expect such a question from a high-schooler. What is this place? – I thought to myself. Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry? When one cannot concentrate or does not know the answer, the best strategy is to answer a question with another question. If nothing else, it buys time. “Why would you want to know?” – I replied. The rosy cheeked boyish looking student informed me in a deep voice which resonated with his appearance, that he made a bet with one of his classmates that he would translate the phrase without surfing the Internet. I was desperately trying to remember my undergraduate years and Latin phrases I spent days memorizing. “If I tell you, you will point me in the direction of the administrative building.” The location of the offices I was heading to was not completely unknown to me, but I felt too nervous to ask for anything else in return. “*Omnia praeclara rara*” – I blurted out. He repeated it several times to himself, reluctantly raised his hand and showed me the little paved trail I needed to go. I spent several months wondering around the school campus collecting data. I have never seen him again. Ever.

I imagined the administrative building, which among other offices was a home to the office of admissions, to be the closet to the “visitors parking” to make it easier for the anxious prospective students and their pretentiously confident parents. It was not. In fact, it was one of the last ones in a row of the red bricked constructions. After my first visit I realized that it was done on purpose: by the time any visitors find their way to the office of admissions, they would be absolutely in love with the school campus. A slow walk and the view of the students sitting on the grass and studying or playing foursquare

might also release the anxiety of the younglings and help them remember the questions they wanted to ask.

It was quite early in the morning and the class was about to start. At Templeton classes do not start until nine a.m. I was informed about research that dealt with the biological clock of teenagers. Evidently, a teenager's head is completely free of productive thoughts in the morning up until around nine a. m. when some ideas start coming back and a student is finally able to concentrate (Dills & Hernandez-Julian, 2008; Kirby, Maggi, & D'Angiulli, 2011; Nolan, n.d.). I wondered why my school, when I was a teenager, did not start the classes until nine. In the Soviet Union where I spent my childhood everything started at eight. Sometimes my school even had a P. E. (physical education) class at seven fifteen in the morning followed by geometry at eight. After running around the track, throwing the discus and the javelin, no one could concentrate on Pythagoras.

As I was walking through the campus Templeton students appeared to be unperturbed with a certain amount of running between the dorm and classrooms. Or, I should say, between the classrooms and the residence hall as the five centuries old word *dormitory* is out of fashion these days.

I decided to take a tour around the school premises. After all, many of the administrators at Templeton teach and it was class time so I chose to wait until the first class was over before approaching them with my research. I wish I could state that I entered the field with an open mind. It is difficult to state that any researcher does. Certainly, a mind can be open and ready to absorb and examine new ideas but it is never completely blank. It is always filled with preexisting thoughts, opinions, and judgments.

We perceive reality through a plethora of our own experiences. Our paradigms are formed way before we enter the field of study. Examining the endless streams of literature about the subject at hand, preceding research, and previous life experiences play a vital role in shaping our expectations.

My personal experiences led back to the Soviet Union where everything that was not public or that did not come from the government was considered inappropriate and altogether bad. For many different reasons a majority of people expected the government to make the right choice and the correct decisions for them. Life was always busy. No one was willing to spend much time thinking about education. After all, educating young people was someone else's aka the government's job to do. The government did and to this day still does set the standard. Was I against it? No one openly supported or opposed it, it simply was the way things ran. Therefore, when I entered the field my mind was open but my feelings were mixed. First of all, Templeton is a small private institution. Second, it is a residential one. In my childhood there were only two types of residential educational establishments: ones for students who were mentally challenged and, therefore, deemed by the government as an impediment to the progress of society; and the ones for children of single parents who had to work and were not able to take care of their offspring – the shame of the society. Those students were essentially placed within these sort of institutions to be hidden from the world. They were not *normal*. And everything outside of the boundaries of the norm set by the government was bad. And, if revealed, such students had to be changed – “improved,” or concealed if the desired “improvement” was not possible. One was not allowed to be left-handed, or curl up one's straight hair, or put on a pair of knee-length gym shorts. Teachers were the ones

responsible for “improving” such abnormalities for the greater good. Not all teachers paid much attention to every single rule set by the government. The students sensed the double standard, thus, certain teachers became favorites and others had silly nicknames created for them and proliferated amongst the students.

During endless hours of my research at Templeton I realized two major things that inevitably affected my existing assumptions. First: private is not bad. Second: tradition and atmosphere play a much more important role in shaping the mind of a teenager than the standard or the norm set up by an outside authority. At the beginning of my research process one of my interlocutors cursorily mentioned: “I think that we teach them through ...[being] who we are as a community... through everything that we do. [So when a student misbehaves] I can say: ‘Are you living up to the things that we as a community treasure?’” (Abby). Only after spending hours and days on the school campus, talking to students and alumni, did I truly understand what Abby was trying to convey. It is not difficult to find somewhat universally valued qualities that the society believes every student or a school graduate should possess, such as critical thinking, or help seeking skills, or civic responsibility, or problem solving abilities, or communication skills. However, officially announcing them to be the norms that the institution values does not necessarily mean that everyone in the school community instantly begins living by those standards ordered from above. No one likes to be told what to do, not many individuals especially in their teen years like to follow orders. It is much more natural to thrive in an environment of shared values, or amongst like-minded individuals, where you do things because you believe in them not because someone tells you to believe in them. More specifically, “you cannot ‘set’ organizational values, you can only discover

them. Nor can you ‘install’ new core values into people. Core values are not something people ‘buy in’ to. People must be predisposed to holding them” (Collins, 2000).

To uncover such community values was precisely what the Templeton Academy attempted to do almost five years ago when faculty and administrators gathered together to delineate basic core values that everyone in the community cherished. Shortly thereafter, an all-encompassing new curriculum emerged. It consisted of the academic curriculum and extra-curricular activities. It concentrated on the “exit skills” which every graduate was to have as opposed to content-driven teaching (School Website, 2013). It was based on the traditions, norms, and qualities identified by the members of the school community. It created a context that students could better understand and relate to

...we teach core values – acceptance, integrity, [and so on], we talk about them a lot... if a student makes a slipup somewhere we might be talking to the student about ‘how does that portray the core value of integrity that we are trying to teach you? (Paisley)

In other words, the new curriculum was what faculty and staff at Templeton had already valued, but putting it on paper separated the wheat from the chaff. It accentuated the priorities and defined the meaning behind the core terminology. It created a focus for every department in the school. It made the outside world see the mission, vision, and values of the academy.

This work primarily concentrates on the college preparatory aspect of the school’s mission. The new curriculum essentially redefined the meaning of college preparation at Templeton. College preparation was no longer viewed from a solely academic

perspective. It became more in line with the model identified by Conley (2008; 2012). A college ready Templeton graduate today is someone who is not only prepared for the rigors of college curriculum. It is someone who is also prepared for the challenges of non-academic life. It is a student who holds some knowledge of postsecondary education; it is a student who can write a research paper and present it to an audience; it is a student who is aware of the high demands of college classes; it is someone who possesses self-monitoring and time management skills, who has enough motivation to persist through challenges and graduate.

I visited the Templeton campus a number of times in search of such near-graduates. I observed a few classes looking for certain cues and methods the teachers used to instill knowledge and skills that were expected of future college students. I was watching the everyday life of the school community as it unfolded in front of my eyes as a documentary, as a film getting ready to be sent to the Festival de Cannes. My childhood school did not have red bricks. It had gray bricks. It did not have bright green grass that stretched like a blanket from building to building. It did not have paved walkways. My old school building was gray. It had gray asphalt around it that we used as a running track during our P.E. classes. It had a field covered in gray dirt that was used for soccer practices or javelin. The Soviet Union did not concern itself with aesthetical beauty. It was concentrated on practicality and efficiency. Most constructions of that era were gray. Beautiful architectural creations of the previous era were painted gray. It was deemed that in case of an air raid it was more difficult to target a building the color of dirt. It was just as confusing to distinguish among the buildings if all of them

were gray. The absence of grass around municipal buildings or paved pathways did not concern citizenry. The reasons for the gray palette were common knowledge.

Templeton did not worry about air raids. The absence of gray did not alarm its population. Its quiet atmosphere promoted reading and thinking. The electronic tablet in my hand and a phone in my pocket, which were perfect for taking field notes, looked like a mismatch as I was walking along almost a century old paved walkway. I wished I had a book or two instead. The pavement reflected the history of the academy: it started with a solid educational tradition followed by an era of defiance of everything old and long-established – patches of aged concrete cutting through the brick paving symbolized that time. The period of confusion and identity search came to replace the era of defiance – old buildings were reconstructed, cracked cement mended, and old bricks replaced with the newer ones. A wider walkway with a few parking slots along the way that lead to the brand new modern construction represented the current state of affairs. Revealing further historical details might unintentionally compromise the confidentiality of the institution, therefore, describing the storied history of the school is beyond the scope of this manuscript.

I sat on the bench under a huge tree taking notes. One of the classes was over and students began pouring outside. Imitating college sessions Templeton has longer classes. Some students looked tired but all of them were happy to be out in the sun. I was not sure what exactly I expected to see. I was not sure what a student, who encompassed all those character traits and skills that the school promotes, would look like. All of them appeared to be regular teenagers. They reminded me of myself at that age: a little lost in style and in search of self-identity, slightly rambunctious to hide the shyness within, a

little pompous, a touch bombastic, a bit dreamy, slightly bashful, but always ambitious and looking for the next opportunity to conquer and change the world. Many of them shared the bench with me or sat around on the grass under the tree. I noticed a boy and a girl walking in my direction with the laptops snugly tacked under their arms. I wondered whether raging hormones prevented some of the students from concentrating on their studies. The boy and girl suddenly stopped in the middle of the green field not far from me, sat on the grass and began completing their Spanish homework. I was taken aback. I do not know what I expected to see but certainly not Spanish homework. The boy was calling out some words in Spanish and his friend was giving the English equivalent. I spent endless hours doing my foreign language homework in public parks during my freshmen and sophomore years of college when I had to share a small dorm room with four other girls. I would sit on a bench or pace back and forth trying to memorize words and dialogues. Passersby gazed at me as if I was out of my mind. At Templeton no one looked at the studying pair like that. In fact, I observed a few more groups of students who were feverishly gesticulating, pointing at the computer screen and fighting about something. Some other boys appeared to be dead - stretched on the grass.

I decided to seize the moment and headed to the administrative building. I was nervous and excited at the same time. On my way I overheard a dialogue between a teacher and a student happening in the middle of the street:

- Mrs. Warren! My sister has finally given birth!
- Oh, wonderful news!
- Yeah, it's a little boy who doesn't like to sleep. I can't wait to see him.
- Well, maybe you can Skype.

- Yeah, I am doing that tonight.

To say that I was surprised about what I accidentally heard is to say nothing at all. Never would my teenage brain dream about sharing something personal like that with my teacher. When I was in school, there was an unspoken rule among the students: one does not discuss inconsequential nothings with a teacher. My classmates and I did not perceive teachers as actual human beings with families and kids. To us they were robots interested only in the subject they taught. Some robots were kind and nice but they still did not possess the emotional range wide enough to be called humans. A majority of the teachers followed their unspoken rule as well: if your presence instills fear that means you are respected.

Sometime later at Templeton I observed a few senior class sessions which were structured more like college seminars. Many teachers addressed their students as Mr. or Ms. so and so, there was no need to constantly discipline the audience, there were no dull expressions on students faces, teachers appeared to be passionate about what they were doing, if the class discussion seemed to be fading out, the teacher would ask some provocative questions challenging certain points of view; or would call upon students who were particularly quiet to comment on a phrase or theory. Most importantly, I did not sense any fear in the atmosphere. I posed the question about teacher-student relationships to my interviewees. Below are some of the answers I received.

... my job is not so much as the teacher but more as the facilitator for helping them to find the knowledge... I'd use a lot of sports analogies because most of them play sports on teams, so I will say "look, I am your coach, I am not just your teacher, I am your coach in this room, I am coaching you to get the best grade in

this class that you possibly can, and if I was a basketball coach and you were having a difficult time getting those three-pointers, I might look at you and suggest things to do better. As you coach in this class, I'm gonna [sic] look at you and when you get that three-pointer I'm gonna [sic] pat you on the back, but if it is the rim 9 times out of 10, I'm gonna [sic] ask you to look at what you're doing and re-evaluate it. And if you really want to hit that three-pointer every time, it's gonna [sic] take a little bit of hard work and listening to what I am saying and then internalizing that and producing the work that's gonna [sic] get you that B- and opposed to the C +, or the A- as opposed to the B+. (Jack)

... we are trying to teach them that the teacher is not all knowing powerful dictator of the classroom, the teacher is in partnership with the student to help learning happen and so a student has to be an equal partner in that. And so ... they are free to talk to their teacher, to express concerns or need for help ... (Abby)

... our basic notion of how a class most successfully operates is one where for each student there is a problem that she or he has to wrestle with, namely, what am I curious about? What do I need to do in order to satisfy that curiosity? What are the obstacles that I have to overcome? So, that's at the heart of our academic program. (Henry David)

...I think it's really just being adults with them and having kind of intellectual adults around them constantly who are helping them identify exactly what the

issue is that they need to try to solve, whether it's an academic problem or whether it's a social problem. (Joe)

It was nearing lunch time and the school campus was coming to life. I noticed quite a few ladies pushing strollers with little babies who were giving every passerby an evaluating stern look, and young children running around. I could not help but wonder who they were. It turned out they were family members of the teachers and administrators who lived on the school premises. They shared lunch. Students headed for the cafeteria waved at them as if they have known each other for ages. The cafeteria was located in the basement of one of the residence halls. It was a spacious room with rows of tables inside. The students were piling their backpacks in the foyer as they were hurrying in to get some food. The cafeteria was organized in a buffet style with a few meal selections and a salad bar. To me the food appeared to be great especially when compared to the choices available in most school canteens. When I expressed my opinion out loud, one of the students whispered that in reality it was quite easy "to get tired of eating dead fish every Thursday." As I was standing in line to get my own share of dead fish, looking at the students hustling and bustling around, laughing and talking with their mouths full, I remembered my own high school cafeteria. How lucky these Templeton students were if their biggest concern was dead fish every Thursday.

By the time I reached high school the Soviet Union had collapsed. There is an old Chinese saying that states something similar to: there is nothing worse than living in the era of changes and transitions. At that point I was a teenager unaware of the proverb. I welcomed change. Change meant adventure. It also meant that our parents were not right about everything in the world which made my teenage mind quite happy. The wind

of change became much colder when I realized that I could not leave my backpack or my coat unattended in the classroom or hallway as someone might steal it; or when the school food became so bad that I often opted to wait until the classes were done and eat at home; or when I had to read the *War and Peace* under candle light because the electricity was cut off for hours a day; or when teachers were not paid their salaries for months in a row or were paid with government IOUs which made them stressed and agitated. Most younger teachers left, the older ones stayed because there was no place to go. During my last year of high school my friend and I decided to switch schools because our old institution was missing a few crucial classes, due to no instructor who would teach them. My old school was within walking distance. The new one was 50 minutes away and we had to use public transportation.

Templeton students were most fortunate, I was thinking to myself, as I placed a big piece of dead fish onto my plate. All they really needed to worry about was academic success. The school was taking care of everything else. The boarders missed their families whom they could meet no more than a couple times a year, so the teachers brought their spouses and children to create an atmosphere approximating big family lunches. Every group of five to seven students was assigned an advisor – a parent like figure who was there to discuss not only academic but also personal matters with the advisees.

...I think what is ... important, at least in my view, is that students develop relationships with adults and they know how to act on those relationships. We have them over to our houses as advisees, my advisees group was at my house

just the other night for dinner. And so I think that kind of stuff happens a lot and that makes them realize they can go talk to people. (Joe)

Every so often Templeton had community lunches. It was a time when advisors shared a table with their advisees during the lunch break. I partook in such lunches several times during my campus visits. Students who shared the table with me were from a senior class with a teacher-advisor whose class I happened to observe at a later time. Some of the students at my table sat and ate quietly, others were complaining about how much they want to play video games on big screen monitors, yet others were talking about tests and college admissions. More than anything, the teacher at the table acted as a mentor, or a parent and some students appeared to be feeling a bit awkward when asked certain questions about their lives. It was an example of a very typical family dinner atmosphere in a house with teenage children. I remember when my parents would start asking me questions quite matter-of-factly and I would feel as if I was interrogated by the enemy soldiers. The teenage brain is a strange thing.

As I was observing some of the classes I thought back to my own school. I did not have integrated classes or lesson plans – it was student's job to make connections and see the interrelatedness of knowledge. I failed to make those connections in high school. I realized they existed only after I took my first semester of philosophy course as a freshman in college. My classes in high school were not seminars. I typically had to read a chapter at home, then come out in front of the class and retell what I learned before the teacher would start explaining the next chapter. I was not encouraged to think about the surrounding community and volunteer at a local pet shelter. All of my community work was mandatory. We had one Saturday a month or every two months when we had

to paint benches, clean classrooms, wash school windows, or plant flowers outside. At the end of summer vacation we were also bused to the nearest potato field where we spent the entire day or at times two picking up potatoes. It was not for the community I lived in, my country wanted it. As I was listening to the senior speeches and jokes that the students made about their high school life and experiences, I could not help but wonder what sort of speech I would have given if my school had such a tradition. What sort of factors contribute to a good high school experience? I was looking for such features as I was sharing conversations with the research participants.

Description of Study Participants

During this study three groups of participants were interviewed: teachers and administrators, students, and school alumni. The teachers, administrators and alumni were engaged in one-on-one semi structured interviews, while senior class students participated in focus groups. All participants were 18 years of age or older. Participation was voluntary. Below is a brief description of each of the participant. All of the names were changed to protect confidentiality. I avoided using detailed information to avoid possible recognition. It is challenging to introduce a person without providing any background information. Therefore, pursuing the objective of emphasizing a distinct personality of each participant to the reader, I provide an excerpt from the interviews – a personal statement of the participant, attitude towards the school, a testimonial, a succinct description, or a remark – to each account. Such quotations in original voice depict the background of the participant, which in turn influenced the answers the participant provided to the interview questions. Any possible connections, however, will be examined more closely in the next chapter.

Teachers and Administrators

The teachers and administrators of the Templeton Academy were not separated into two distinct groups because many teachers perform administrative duties while many participants with an administrative title engage in teaching. The school introduced the new curriculum approximately five years ago. Therefore, five years serves as a defining parameter when describing participants. All participants in this group had associations with the senior class either in teaching or administrative capacity. This group had a total of ten participants. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and the interview questions are presented in Appendix G. Table 1 offers a short introduction of the participants in alphabetical order.

Table 1

Introduction of Teachers and Administrators

Participant	> 5 years	Personal remark
<i>Abby</i> – administrator	X	“...being part of the community is not about the individual always being the best, it is about some selflessness. ... in order to be a community you have to give a little bit of yourself.”
<i>Alice</i> –faculty/ administrator		“Because teachers do extracurricular [activities] ... it brings in that we are more than what just one piece of a puzzle is.”
<i>Global Nomad</i> – faculty/ administrator		...I think that’s probably our biggest challenge: it takes so much work ...and ... people get tired and it’s hard to really devote as much time to developing your own classes because you have all these other things that you have to do.
<i>Henry David</i> – faculty		“...our notion of the residential program is that we want students to be within, within our structure, but our structure is designed to encourage them to be independent.”
<i>Jack</i> – faculty	X	“... my job is not so much as the teacher but more as the facilitator for helping them to find the knowledge,

		understand [the subject], and then present an opinion based on [it].”
<i>Joe – faculty/ administrator</i>	X	“So what we’re really trying to say is ‘we’re going to do college-type work but at high school level’.”
<i>Luke – faculty</i>	X	...it seems that there’s just nothing better at a boarding school than somebody that can be their teacher in the classroom but also be out on the field or on the court with them and develop that sort of relationship, and then also be on dorm.”
<i>Paisley – faculty/ administrator</i>	X	...yes, we want winning teams and we want students going into really good colleges. But if that’s not what a student is, we know that he would go into an average college but still be a great team member in our team. That’s sort of our message.
<i>Paul – faculty</i>		“The expectation is crafting these incredibly thoughtful lessons but there are other expectations also... So ideally there would be more time to devote to these types of lessons...”
<i>Sol Kaplan – faculty</i>	X	...I like the idea of the college preparatory program. I support it, I push it, I find myself frustrated when elements of it are taken away for the belief that making an adolescent a world citizen is something that I think in many ways can be done post secondarily rather than at this particular point.

Students

There were 14 students who participated in this research. All of the students belonged to a graduating senior class and were 18 years of age or older at the time of study. A total of two focus group interviews were conducted. Both group one and group two had seven participants. There were five international student-participants which approximate the ratio of international students at Templeton. Each interview took place during the afternoon break and lasted approximately one hour. The interview questions are presented in Appendix I. The sorting parameter when describing participants in these

groups is the year they joined the Templeton Academy: freshmen, sophomore, or junior year. One of my goals was to determine whether the number of years students spent studying at Templeton affected their overall preparation for college. In other words, I sought an answer to whether the curriculum at Templeton affected student's preparation for college. Participants in both groups were asked about their college aspirations. The whole notion of preparing a student to attend an institution of higher learning would be obsolete if that student feels indifferent or does not desire to attend one. Aspiring to go to college and deciding on a specific institution to attend describes a general atmosphere at Templeton. It does not matter what particular college one aims for, it is the daring and the ambition that counts. As one of the faculty members noted

I would say our school is not a school that says ... "we sent a kid to X school, Ivy League, or whatever." I tell my families and anybody who wants to listen that if I had one statistic that I would like to know to determine our success, it would be that 100 percent of our graduates went to college and stayed at that college for four years. (Joe)

Most senior class students plan to attend an institution of higher learning after graduating from Templeton. Table 2 describes college aspirations of each of the participant.

Table 2

Introduction of Students

Participant	Year joined	College aspirations
<i>Becky</i>	junior	"I hope to be a surgeon..."
<i>Caitlin</i>	freshman	"My plan is to go to ... college and do something with communications..."
<i>Charlie</i>	junior	"I would like to attend a four-year university and my future from then on is undecided at this point. Hopefully in college

		I can find a true passion I can chase the rest of my life..."
<i>Donny</i>	sophomore	"I would like to be a professional athlete of some kind..."
<i>Ellen</i>	junior	"I hope to go to college and study environmental studies..."
<i>Jerome</i>	junior	"I've applied to ... mostly smaller private colleges with some exceptions. I hope to go in the military someday ... and do something in private business [after that]."
<i>Kedron</i>	freshman	"I aspire to be a writer or maybe like a magazine editor."
<i>Lilah Beebe</i>	freshman	"I would like to work in international relations..."
<i>Mirza</i>	freshman	"I want to go to the medical school and be a doctor or a physical therapist"
<i>Patrick</i>	freshman	"...[my] dream I guess is either to go into some kind of business field or journalism..."
<i>Pete</i>	freshman	"In the future I hope to do something with business."
<i>Ricardo</i>	junior	"In the future I'd like to play sports of some sort and go into a medical school."
<i>Richard</i>	freshman	"I'd like to [study] biological engineering and I want to be working in the medical field..."
<i>Shirley</i>	junior	"I want to work in sociology."

School Alumni

There were six school alumni interviewed during this study. There was one who graduated three years ago, three of the participants graduated two years ago, and two students claimed their alumni status one year ago. Two participants were majoring in science and four had other non-science majors. Each interview was conducted telephonically and lasted 20 to 30 minutes. All of the alumni were contacted and invited to participate in the study by the means of electronic communication. The interview questions are presented in Appendix H. Many private schools boost their reputations by advising their students to attend highly selective institutions of colleges and universities.

Templeton alumni in Table 3 describe their experience with the college selection process. Such description provides the central point of the student's aspirations as well as reflects on the desire and ability of the school to support those aspirations.

Table 3

Introduction of Templeton Alumni

Participant	Graduation year	College selection
<i>Austin</i>	2013	"I knew what I wanted to do but [Templeton] helped me a lot deciding where I wanted to go and what kind of [environment] I'd fit best in."
<i>Jack II</i>	2012	"It was due to my interest in sports... as the colleges show interest with me that I would show interest back, but I would only choose a college if they have my intended major. The college counselor was very helpful."
<i>Mary Beth</i>	2012	"I really tried to consider not only how well I thought that the college would prepare me, but also what kind of people and what kind of college life-style it had."
<i>Sam</i>	2013	"Well, my parents and I sat down and went through what I wanted from a college, we looked at colleges and what type of students they had and [their requirements]..."
<i>Sarah</i>	2010	"I heard about the college I go to from one of the admissions counselors at Templeton ...[who] actually graduated from the same college..."
<i>Tom</i>	2012	"Well, I knew I wanted to be an engineer, so I was looking at engineering colleges and I didn't want to go to a big school so ..."

Four Key Elements of College Readiness

This section of chapter four focuses on describing data gathered through interviews with school teachers and administrators. It consists of four parts in accordance with the four elements of college readiness: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills.

This section responds to research question number one regarding the methods the academy uses to develop a certain skill in students.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

Cognitive Strategies

Key cognitive strategies include problem formulation skills including the ability to distinguish among various theories; research skills including the basic knowledge of ethical rules necessary to work on a college-level research project; and communication skills essential in order to analyze and present the research results with precision and accuracy (Conley, 2010b). In other words, key cognitive strategies equip student with research skills and shape the state of mind critical for post-secondary level work. They form the attitude that is needed and expected from a college student.

The Templeton academy utilizes the following methods to develop cognitive strategies in its students. First of all, the school has created the idea of “Skill Days” (School Website, 2013). Those are two days every three weeks that differ from the routine schedule. As Jack, a faculty member, shared

...we have grade level teams made up of faculty that primarily teach those grade levels and they determine which skill set the whole of that class will work on together in each discipline. So...they will do the same skill and apply it to the English class, apply it in the math class, apply it in the science class or history

class at the same time... That way the kids can see the links between that skill and how it applies... in different content areas... The 12th grade skills are more aligned to their final research project that they do, but some of the skills we emphasize [at each grade level], for instance, interviewing skills, presentation skills, or learning how to do good research, write a good research paper, how to cite sources, how to deliver a good research presentation. (Jack)

During the “Skill Days” the classroom instructors stop teaching content and start teaching academic skills. These skills include research, communication, problem identification, problem formulation, theory application, topic development, and so on.

... if we are trying to teach about research [during the Skill Days] ...[the students] will learn about how to organize the paper in history and then in science they'll go and do that as well, so they get repetition as well as different discipline's approach to it, now [they] know how [to] do research in science as opposed to history. (Paul)

Different grade levels have different projects and, therefore, are challenged by the instructors with variable intensity. One-on-one work is not unusual during these “Skill Days.” Joe, a faculty member, denoted

...in the academic classroom we work with them on how do they go about identifying a topic and an argument and how do they figure out what the debate is. So we move them from writing a kind of descriptive paper “let me give you a bio of George Washington” to more argumentative, analytical type essays...even in the classroom it's one-on-one work. (Joe)

The ability to develop and formulate a problem is one of the skills that Conley (2010b) identified to be a part of the cognitive strategies element of the college readiness model. When I posed a question about the way a teacher can help students identify an issue, or a problem, or a topic for their research paper, faculty members, agreed

...In the classroom through proper, well thought and guided prompts for writing or for discussion; outside the classroom through involvement with co-curricular and sport activities, weekend activities, special activities that are bound ...with the school program. (Sol Kaplan)

Well... it is through pretty intentional instruction ... you read a case study or you create a hypothetical [situation], or whatever you might do as a teacher and you apply analysis of some kind. So I think there is deliberate instruction. (Global Nomad)

Jack, another faculty member, shared his personal strategy to address this issue

As a teacher ... I am very careful, I just present them the facts and then I allow them to research those facts, debate those facts. Because it's more important for them to look at the science behind some of these issues and then come up with their own opinion themselves rather than me just telling them what my opinion is, that's not how it should be. (Jack)

It is not a secret that every teacher has a unique approach to motivate and encourage each student individually. Templeton does not avert but supports such personal initiatives. A faculty member shared: "Different teachers inspire in different ways. What I had my kids

do was I took them outside and I told them ‘find something that you can see and you want to know more about’” (Paul).

Developing research and communication skills is one of the aspects which Templeton Academy places a great emphasis on: “In previous years it was mostly covered in History and English classes sort of tied to whatever project they had to do...this year ... all the teachers ... are going to be...instructing [about these skills] in their own discipline” (Paisley). Another faculty member noted

Within each class there is always a research piece even if it is a mathematics or music, so research is built into the program. Each student every year does a larger interdisciplinary research project. So, we spend a lot of time on what we call disciplined research which means within each discipline. (Henry David)

Creating an outline, identifying reliable sources, searching through databases, narrowing down the topic, organizing papers, citing other works, recognizing the difference between primary and secondary sources, creating a solid argument, presenting one’s work, and so on is part of the school curriculum.

...we have gotten very intentional about teaching research skills, and we will take them to the library to show where sources are available, we have whole classes devoted to research in the library. We talk about source validity, what sources are valid for your particular purposes ... To keep track of your research they are using a [special computer program] which captures text from the Internet, adds the citation and stores it all in one place for them. So we teach them: “if you find something good what you should do is write the citation down first, the bibliographic information and under that you will include the quotation that you’ll

use with quotation marks around it, and under that - so you'll remember - you'll write your explanation of why this quotation adds value to your paper, or how it'll improve your thesis." So we say: "citation, quotation, explanation." And that is something by the senior year they really know how to do. (Paul)

At each level – freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior – students are expected to write and present a research paper as well as evaluate research completed by other scientists as well as publicly present their own work. The projects grow longer and more complicated with each grade level.

...By the time they reach their senior year and they are doing their independent [research] project, they really should have had some experiences in that process... And in the sophomore and senior years they actually present it to peers and faculty, they get feedback on both their work and their presentation of that work. (Global Nomad)

Conducting some semblance of research and writing papers is something that most high school students in the U.S. are expected to do. It is the approach that the school follows, the expectation of the quality and level of work that differentiates Templeton from other secondary institutions. Furthermore, the academy subscribes to certain databases that colleges would likely have in order to introduce the students to the college-level research process.

...I would say [developing research skills] is probably number one the most important academic skill that we can teach the kids... We walk them through a process of "how do you come to an issue? How do you get to a point of argument? What type of research do you need then to support that particular

argument? What is valid research? What does a balanced set of research mean for proving your point and defending your thesis?” ...So we really try to put as much college-like work in front of them. ... I think a lot of schools expect their students to do research, I think *the type* of research that we expect them to do is the key thing. We expect them to do research that is problem-based, that is issue-based rather than “write a paper describing what happened ten years ago.” (Joe)

Conley (2010b) identified the ability to communicate one’s ideas correctly and accurately to be the part of cognitive strategies. I asked a specific question about the ways that the academy develops this particular skill. Several teachers shared their methods of promoting this skill outside of classroom.

... it’s kind of intertwined in everything and then certainly a little more specific as far as helping teach communication skills, let’s say, to a captain who is on varsity soccer team and them wanting that dynamic of being looked at as the leader of that team. But how should they appropriately communicate to different people, different players on their team? (Luke)

...We take these trips that are in part academic ... every grade has a common read, and there’s conversation as a whole class and then subgroups of that class on those trips. So it’s outside of the classroom but it’s recognizing that authentic learning happens in lots of places. It could happen in an interview with a member of a [native American] tribe on the freshmen trip where you’ve read a book about the life on the reservations and now you’re meeting this person who is a native American still very much involved with his tribe, and he’ll talk to you about what his life is like...that takes the communication piece into a real world experience.

So you listen to your friends ask a question, you're listening to what the question is but also what the answer is, and then you might follow up. (Global Nomad)

During the classes, both humanities and science, students oftentimes are required to present the results of their research as well as listen carefully to the presentations made by other classmates, which in turn develops their communication abilities.

...[On project that they have to present to class] the students work together... in teams so there is a skill there "team work" and they are responsible for communicating the information regarding [the topic of their presentation]. ...And then they each evaluate the presentations. So we have an oral report evaluation whether or not on the scale of 1 to 5 whether the group shows knowledge of the subject, whether they have good voice projection, whether they make good eye contact, whether they make good use of visual aids like the handout, whether they are creative and enthusiastic during the presentation, whether they have the ability to remain focused during the presentation. And then good response to questions as the [class] has to ask them questions, and then we see how well they respond to them. Whether they've provided in the presentation evidence of thorough research, whether they presented the material clearly, and whether they had the ability to summarize all views on the topic that's the 'pro' and 'con' arguments and things like that. (Jack)

Paisley, another faculty member, acknowledged that the students at Templeton learn communication skills – oral and written – in two different ways. They practice their oral skills by simply being a part of the community, a part of boarding populations of the

school – outside of classroom; and they learn and compare written skills during the classroom hours.

I think our [boarding] students are in an advantage because, number one, they've already lived on dorm and have had to communicate with a hall leader and a roommate and so they get that experience ... [students] are encouraged to speak in class, to come for help to their teachers so that they get more facility in speaking with adults, so that's a lot of the oral communication. But then the written communication ... I would say every teacher including even some of our math teachers have the students write so they get a lot of practice in the written communication and what is appropriate for instance in science as compared to English. (Paisley)

The academy also established a system of advisors. Students learn to communicate clearly by discussing certain issues with their advisors.

... Our class setup: we have a 75 minute class, and then at the end of each class, we have a 15 minute period that is designed specifically for one-on-one. So if a student is either really excited by something or really struggling with something, built into the class is a time when he or she can ask his or her teacher for help. Then, each student has an advisor who they meet with regularly, so ... the students leave us in that habit of having conversation with grown-ups about all manner of things, from "how do I do my laundry" to "why does it matter that we know what is meant by the word ontological?" (Henry David)

Summarizing the above data it is necessary to clarify the techniques that the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop cognitive strategies in its students. The methods include “Skill Days,” deliberate and well thought every day instruction, teacher’s desire to promote curiosity in students as opposed to presenting them with a number of important facts, instruction based on sources other than the text book, emphasis on the importance of research, introduction of college-level database search. The technique also consist of teaching presentation skills and developing the ability to communicate with precision and accuracy, improving interview skills, developing the ability to listen and critically evaluate other people’s work, encouraging the improvement of analytical thinking, as well as discouraging blind and thoughtless recitation of the work of others.

Content Knowledge

The main idea of this segment of the college readiness model is that high school graduates should have a foundational knowledge in core subjects such as English, math, art, science and social sciences, as well as the world languages (Conley, 2010b; 2012). The foundational knowledge does not mean simple memorization of certain facts or historical events, or famous people, or mathematical theorems. It means gaining a foundational understanding of the subject matter which serves as a platform for more complicated college-level work. It means the ability to read, comprehend, and evaluate the articles published in academic journals. It means being able to express one’s thoughts clearly in writing. It means having a holistic view on learning and being able to link together various ideas learned in different classes (Conley, 2010b).

The interconnectedness of knowledge is the core idea that forms the foundation of the academic curriculum at Templeton Academy (School Website, 2013). The creation

of “Skill Days,” discussed in the previous part of this chapter, where students are taught the same skills and learning techniques in different classes and from the perspective of different subjects, is one way to familiarize the students with the holistic concept of knowledge. The debate about the best way to enable learners to remember the core content of a subject is a never-ending one. Below I provide a few of the techniques utilized by the Templeton faculty in order to achieve this goal. I roughly divided the answers provided by the instructors who teach humanities and those who teach precise science (social sciences excluded).

Humanities:

...when we teach something, we are teaching the students to apply it...we make them practice it over and over and talk about being active learners, we show them how the brain works, we show them how the memory works, we come up with mnemonic devices to help them remember, we teach a skill ... and we say it over and over throughout the year. (Paisley)

...I try to dwell on the absolute necessity for proper mechanics: spelling, sentence construction, punctuation, [et cetera]... And the core element besides the mechanics is the particular purpose. Are we trying to persuade? Are we trying to enlighten? Are we trying to expose some new information? ...and what I do is every year I start off and give them the designation and the understanding what these cores are for, and that these are the building blocks for ...widespread success in completion of the task ahead. (Sol Kaplan)

... students can look up anything that I know ... content wise, so the way that I try to keep them focused on the big ideas is ... we really revolve around questions,

and ...everything that we do lenses through those central questions... so the students know that that is really what they're learning about and that the content that they learn is just in service of those particular sets of questions. And so if this what class is about and we're learning about President X, the information that you should be taking notes on is not when he was born, or how tall he was, or where he lived but how do the conflicts of his life relate to these bigger questions. (Joe)

Science:

And this is what we're exactly wrestling with in the [our] department. We are old school, [science] teachers are like that by nature, we are drilling and getting it all done, and yet we do know that there's this fun part [in what we teach] so how do we connect the two? So [at first it was] "let's just have calculators and talk about 'what if...'" And then we were seeing that the kids with very few skills were struggling more and more and more, so that's why we've come more [to the] center with the skill lab every day for them. So I think it helps balance it out, but it's a struggle we are having to this day. ...Every [science] teacher would say "we don't stress the content mastery enough, or enough that we are comfortable with", but at the same time we all believe in this "they just need to be critical thinkers, they can figure out the math as it goes through", you know. ...And definitely with [science] we have countries that drill, drill, drill all the time and are doing better than our kids. So how do we make those two things come together in the best way? So that's what we're wrestling with. (Alice)

... I'll stress over and over again is a.... "I want to help you be a problem solver". And so my interest is not so much on any particular knowledge of any material. I think actual knowledge of material is pretty easily obtainable nowadays ...what's important is that you're able to solve problems. ...I am a big fan...of open note and open book. I don't really think it's important that you memorize formulas and have memorized stuff, as long as you know how to use it. I tell that story every year to my kids, when they get their first open book, of my first open book test, and how I didn't study and thought it'd be easy. I just figured it was open book, open note - no problem ... and spent the whole time looking through my notes trying to find stuff ... I describe that to them so that they know that it's about practicing, it's about knowing where the stuff is, where it is located, and that's kind of a problem solving mentality... just knowing where to look for everything, not to really be so bogged down on having it all memorized. It's just knowing where to find it and figuring out the pathways. (Luke)

Effective teaching of course content does not end with the instructor teaching textbook material. Henry David, a faculty member, confessed

... I put big emphasis, I think our school does, on metacognitive work, on really getting students to spend time in class personally engaged with thinking about whatever the subject is and so we spend probably at least 15 of 75 minutes on our metacognitive reflection. [Students do it] either on their own in writing or as a class reflecting on that.... For instance ...what is the relationship between what we're learning about Hinduism and this place, this campus? (Henry David)

According to Conley (2010b), familiarizing high school students with the structure of knowledge, adding a reflective piece to the study process, in other words, introducing and explaining the meaning of metacognition helps students become more effective learners and, in turn, prepares them for college-level work. The new academic curriculum implemented in school has an added piece of extra-curricular activities. Such activities are designed to reinforce the knowledge gained in classroom, provide students with the real world examples, give life to theory, and make students reflect upon their thoughts and their observations (School Website, 2013). These activities include yearly immersion trips that the students participate in starting from grade nine.

...the reflecting piece is very essential to the curriculum. And I think the work comes up the most on these immersion trips where kids go out into the small communities and are being impacted by real world decisions and they are asked to reflect on it “how do you know what you know about this place? What is your experience?” And after immersion trips, I do reflection exercise in my class. I will tweak the verbiage because they don’t want to hear the word “reflect” anymore because they did it so much. So I’d say “give me your thoughts on this”... We ask them to reflect upon their classroom experience as well. I think they are generally very reflective. (Paul)

Joe, another faculty member, agreed

...I would say in at least 70 percent of the classes here there is a journal in which they have to write about what they are learning, what’s that making them think, write their own contradictions, write their own questions. ...And then the nature of the classes themselves... since they are around the questions, there is a lot of

that kind of reflective process built into the teaching methods. I think what we really have is we have a college curriculum for high school students...at our school we do college work but we have more support for them for when they struggle and more structure to help them through that college work. So we may have one big paper but we have a whole bunch of checks to help them along that process, but the end product or the end intellectual expectation is really kind of built around at least the liberal arts model of collegiate academics.... And the “how” is really it. ... the “how” is not just the academic “how” which is really important, but it’s also “how do I make sure I am doing what I need to do to be as successful as I can be?” And I think our teachers, our school, our curriculum really put a premium on that. (Joe)

The response provided by Joe reminded me of my college graduation day. It was an unusually warm and sunny day in mid-June. Everyone was overwhelmed with excitement. No one was thinking about the future or the past, that day we all lived in the moment. Endless study nights without sleep and infinite lines in the library did not matter anymore. I remember the thrill of that day, but it is difficult to recall the exact sequence of things. I will never forget, however, a speech that one of our professors gave: “Now that you have forgotten everything you’d learned during the past 5 years, always keep in mind one thing. You might have forgotten the ‘what’ but you will never forget the ‘how.’ And that means our job is done. That means you are ready. Don’t be nervous when applying for graduate school or for jobs. You already know ‘how.’”

The Templeton community puts a lot more emphasis on the “how” portion in education rather than on the “what” piece, asking students to reflect upon their

knowledge and their thoughts only reinforces that approach. Retention of the big ideas and core concepts at Templeton does not happen through pure memorization. Certainly, teachers do repeat important thoughts and notions a number of times throughout the semester, but every time those ideas are presented in multiple contexts encouraging students to look beyond the academic subject and to see the practical application of the theoretical concepts. Students are emboldened to view each class as a building block not as an end in itself.

Learning Skills and Techniques

The previous two sections of this chapter, Key Cognitive Strategies and Key Content Knowledge, concentrated on discussion of the academic knowledge and content study strategies as foundational for college-level work. The following two elements of Conley's model (2010a; 2010b; 2012) are focused on developing attitudes, habits, and general behaviors necessary for comfortable existence in college environment, inside as well as outside of classroom. Key learning skills are acquired habits and attitudes towards learning. They include the abilities of the student to set goals and follow through with them, to monitor one's own progress, to seek help if necessary, to be a self-motivator (Conley, 2012). Key learning techniques are comprised of certain behaviors exercised by the student that lead to more efficient learning. These are time management skills, collaborative learning skills, certain study skills such as memorization, strategic reading, note taking, et cetera (Conley, 2010b; 2012). In other words, key learning skills and techniques are the tools necessary for college success.

To be more precise both learning skills and learning techniques describe certain qualities that a student should possess in order to be a successful learner in college.

Learning skills illustrates such characteristics of students' behavior as motivation, persistence, and help seeking abilities. Learning techniques includes time management skills, study skills, collaborative learning skills, and self-monitoring abilities. These are primarily technical skills, established tricks and abilities to apply certain methods to make learning more effective.

Some recent studies show that motivation and persistence – namely the grit – are the two essential elements necessary for success in an academic institution. The grit matters more than general intelligence, or talent, or background (Duckworth, 2013). Since Conley (2010a; 2010b; 2012) attributed these elements to learning skills, it would be logical to conclude that they can be taught and learned. Below I describe the method that Templeton Academy established to develop those two skills in its students to make them ready for college. First of all, the atmosphere of the school plays the vital role:

...in an environment like ours, and I would say not just ours but an independent boarding school in particular is: everybody is expected to succeed so there is a high level of expectation for everybody. So you put people who maybe haven't initially succeeded and you put them with everybody else who now has a common goal which is to be college ready [and] that really provides a lot of motivation because their peers are on the same motivation level. (Joe)

...we model behavior: *we* [emphasis added] don't give up...we work really hard to teach them that when the going gets tough you don't just give up. If there's really something that's preventing you from being able to do well, then you need to be able to self-advocate, you need to be able to find a path that's going to help you reach your desired outcome, and giving up can't be part of that. (Abby)

... it's not one person's job because we are community that lives together.

...instead of letting a student hide or quit or not follow through, we might make them go back and try it again...we help develop habits where they know how to persist or have to break something up into smaller parts so it's not so overwhelming. We have different levels of the assistance as well. On hall... if the student seems unable to complete a full night of homework, they are sort of moved out of their own room and into the study area where someone may keep a closer eye on them and talk them through what needs to be done... (Paisley)

Some teachers shared their personal know-how about the ways and methods they use to develop persistence in students and to motivate them to pursue their goals and to always strive for excellence.

I talk about [great people] in the co-curricular context mainly...that people are great and people want to get better. And certainly that starts with talking about the great teams, the great players, but I expand it and say, you know, it applies to everything. It's just about people trying to get better. And so that's what I talk about: motivation and perseverance, and doing everything you can, and taking care of the little things. (Luke)

At the beginning of the year I give out something called "Habits of Mind" and I go over this day one in class. Time management is addressed, self-advocacy is addressed, persistence is addressed, and I address that head on right at the beginning of the year. I say: "in this class I'm gonna [sic] raise the bar for you. I don't want you to be mediocre; I don't want you just to shoot to be average... I want you to get the best grade you gonna [sic] get in this class, and if you stick at

it whether it is something that you're really interested in, or if it's something that's a little bit harder for you to get into, but you got to stick at it." And the analogy I give is Rocky Balboa, I say: "when Sylvester Stallone as Rocky runs up to the steps of the art gallery in Philadelphia, he didn't go up there and throw his arms in the air and go 'yeah! I am average! Yeah! I am mediocre!' He threw his arms up in the air and was like 'yeah, baby! I just kick butt! I am the best I can be!'" I say: "that is my goal for you in this class, and that's my goal for you on every piece of work that you do whether it's homework, whether it's a presentation or whatever." ...And I help them to get there by encouragement like I send an email to those kids who did a great job, or sometimes not necessarily in the class, it might be in passing, I might say to them "hey, that work you did for me, how long did you spend on that really?" And they'll be honest and say: "well, about 20 minutes." And I say: "yeah, I expected you to spend at least 45 minutes on it. So next time you might want to think about going an extra yard." (Jack)

Teaching motivation and persistence does not stop with the end of class periods. Every student at Templeton participates in some sort of after school activities – sports, drama production, and other extracurricular engagements similar in nature – which usually take place in the second half of the day.

... we demand them to be uncomfortable, and the easiest way is outside of a classroom 'cos [sic] they know they're not getting graded, and in some ways it's even harder because they just know it's their peers that they have to rely on and / or be relied upon. So they get nervous socially. But I think as a school we do a

great job in demanding that they have to challenge and be confronted with that.

(Alice)

... the most obvious place is in the co-curriculas [sic] where in particular if you are a varsity athlete, that's inherent in being a varsity athlete. Within the classroom it's encouraging risk-taking, it's encouraging failure, it's encouraging students to attempt then revise, attempt, revise, all those kinds of skills. Grit and resilience are built into the vocabulary that we use. They are built into that three hours in the evening, where students aren't allowed to just say "I don't get this," but they're pushed. (Henry David)

... many of us are very aware of the pit falls of the notion that your are given certain amount of intelligence and if you're not good at something, well, you just stuck now not being good at it. And so we ... give them opportunities to achieve, perhaps in small chunks, until they recognize that effort has led to achievement and then once they believe they can do that, they're much more likely to be persistent. I think that one of the ways is helping them recognize that effort yields results, whether it's on the playing field or the classroom, or where ever it might be in their life. (Global Nomad)

Another important element of the Learning skills, as Conley (2010b) sees it, is the ability to search and ask for help. I posed a direct question to the interviewees regarding this aspect of the college readiness model. The school community as a whole promotes the idea of not being afraid of having conversations with adults, of knowing what to say, of not being timid to ask for help when needed.

...we have structural things in place to [provide help], but I think what is more important is that students develop relationships with adults ... We have them over to our houses as advisees, my advisees group was at my house just the other night for dinner. ... Teachers coach, teachers do dorm, teachers have advisees. So the students get to see teachers not as the enemy but as kind of allies in this goal that they are trying to get to and that simple relationship fact makes it easier for students to go up and approach adults ... teachers, adults, professors are people, you can come up and talk to us. We have kids, we have dogs, we are just normal people. (Joe)

We've put several opportunities in place for kids to get help when they need it. So specifically, every student has an advisor. ... They are my advisees. I keep close watch on them. I meet with them once a week for 50 minutes. We have little outing, and innings together. ... And so our kids know they can always go to their advisor with any issue. But on top of that, the boarding students have adults that live at the end of their halls – their dorm parents, coaches... I had kids come to me with problems they're having from really personal things going on in their lives to, you know, struggling in a math course... they really know the concept of office hours and, you know, to go see people academically. (Luke)

Luke, a faculty member, was not the only one who emphasized the importance of having an advisor system structured into the curriculum in order to develop help seeking abilities in students.

... it starts often with advisor system. Each advisor has about four to six advisees and they meet every day, they lunch together twice a week, they spend 30 minutes

together every Wednesday, and the advisor is responsible for communicating with their parents, [and] they keep really close watch on grades. We also have these periods built in our class day: after every class we now have 15 minutes of what we call “plus time” when kids can come and see teachers about anything they missed, and sometimes when they are in trouble but won’t advocate for themselves... (Paul)

Several faculty members remembered certain techniques that at Templeton Academy are structured into the curriculum in order to familiarize the students with the idea of seeking help from teachers. One such techniques is “plus time”

This year we instituted the idea of “plus time.” I think what’s good about it is it’s a non-threatening structure in which a kid just staying after to start their homework. It’s not a sign of “oh, you’re the bad kid that the teacher needs to come back for extra help”. And there are some kids who just learned to stay in the class, wait for the group to come out and then say “you know, I really didn’t understand what we talked about today.”... I think we’ve done a great job scheduling wise and by putting the structure in place where asking for help and getting help is not ridiculed, it’s actually encouraged. (Alice)

Sol Kaplan, a faculty member, explains the whole notion of a “plus time”

We have extra help programs built in at the end of every class period now. For the purpose of either enrichment for those who are excelling during the class period or to hold back those who are not achieving, and we can use it at any time at the end of any given class period and it’s built in to the schedule. (Sol Kaplan)

All the data presented in this chapter will be thoroughly discussed in the next one. At this point it is necessary to summarize the methods institutionalized by the academy to develop certain skills. At Templeton they teach motivation and persistence by personal example, by talking about famous individuals who succeeded in life, by not accepting failure, by encouraging trial and error, by not limiting the learning process strictly to the classroom, by setting high expectations for every student. Templeton develops help seeking abilities in students by initiating “plus time”, a hand-on advisory system, “dorm parents,” faculty office hours, and encouraging personal relationships between students and teachers.

In order to find out what mechanisms have been implemented to develop learning techniques in its students, I asked the faculty to provide me with examples of the methods used to develop time management skills, study skills, collaborative learning skills, and self-monitoring abilities. According to some responders, time management is one of the most difficult skills to teach.

... the other kind of big issue for our kids is that time management piece. I think that that's the biggest thing kids coming [to us] from public schools lack, is how to manage their own time, how to look forward with assignments and plan those accordingly. It's normally not that they can't do it, it's they never been expected to do it before. And I think that's what we struggle with the most. And then you get them in the environment where everybody is working towards that same goal and they are much more willing to engage in the process... I don't think we have a set plan “here is how you teach time management” other than we have to put in front of them those things that are gonna [sic] require of them time management.

And then on the dorm...the study proctors certainly say “well, let’s look ahead.

What do you have three weeks from now?” (Joe)

...this year we have academic statuses so if you’ve earned high grades you don’t have as much structure. So they can be on their phone all quiet hours, they can do what they want to do. So you earn privileges...for our high achieving kids or kids who want to achieve highly we have a system for them to figure out what free time looks like and how they want to manage it and ‘was it really the best time to Skype mom when you had History test tomorrow’ that kind of scenario. And then the kids who are poor performers we actually put in more structure. (Alice)

Well, we as a school, and all schools wrestle with this, we are very structured but our structure is penetrated with metacognitive opportunity. That is where we’re constantly explaining why this structure [sic], we’re constantly engaged in conversation about the structure, we’re constantly helping them internalize the structure, because the structure is designed to be college preparatory and that’s what makes a boarding school. A boarding school has that wonderful built in nature to it that it is like a college campus. So, the kids really have a good deal of time which is theirs to make decisions, but within a structure where [always explain to them] why it’s important to sleep, to eat a good diet, to manage your time, to not play too many video games, all those things. (Henry David)

We have skills periods where the younger students are scheduled to be somewhere but the older ones are not. How are you using that time? What are you doing in that time? Are you going to play video games, which might be ok once a

week, but are you doing that every day or every other day? Could you not be using that? ... Sometimes they just learn the hard way, when they had a very bad grade the next time they might try to figure out or ask for help. (Paisley)

Time management is not the only skill that is difficult to teach. Finding the right way to teach students the ability to monitor one's progress is another skill vital for survival in college but hard to embrace by an adolescent mindset. These two skills are interrelated. Every parent and every teacher hopes to instill certain behaviors and make them habitual. Behaviors that the student will internalize and will keep following once the structure is taken away. A "... whole self-monitoring concept is probably really hard for the freshmen in college... [who are] suddenly given this whole big amount of freedom ..." (Abby).

... this year nightly routine is based on where students are academically, their overall GPA and their age. They have different levels of structure at night so as students get older and they're doing well then we loosen that structure. So if a student, let's say, has a 3.6 then we don't have any kind of structure for them at night, and then as soon as they fall below that below a 3.5 then we reinstitute that structure. So we're trying to create structure that gives them freedom if they're successful and then once they find that success if they don't manage it well, then we put the structure back in place to get them to see "so what got them successful is the structure and not something else." And so far we've had a lot of luck with it... we're really trying to think about structure not as "you are sitting here for two hours" but structure as "what are you as an individual and what type of guidelines do you need to help you be successful." And as they move up that "success

ladder” [we] almost give them just enough “rope to hang themselves with” so that they have to understand the importance of structure, so when they’re in college and there’s nobody there to look after them ... that they’ve already learned that before they get there. (Joe)

I think that with the fact that we have so many different types of people on dorm duty and they engage the kids in different ways that challenge them to a different kind of self-eval. ... the night the business manager does dorm duty for us with the girls she [asks]: “how do you feel about what’s going on in class? ...” And the girls have to talk to her about it and: “oh, I don’t think I did well today...” She does it from this... “I don’t know what your life’s like so explain it to me” approach. And I am like “I know exactly what your life is like – get your work done” perspective. ... So because there’s a variety of people on their dorm with a variety of different backgrounds, different ages, different purposes that we get kids to think ... beyond what they [think they] know... (Alice)

As far as developing self-monitoring skills during the class time, two faculty members noted that making the students keep a folder with past assignments, as well as recognizing accomplishments and positively reinforcing success are some of the strategies teachers use.

All of the grade books of all our classes are all open and they are online. ... So we encourage them to keep abreast of their grades. They will get feedback from the teacher on where they need to improve or what they didn’t do or what they did do. So I send the kids email... saying “you guys did a great job on that report! Well done!” And they are like “oh, man, that’s great! Thank you for letting us know!”

So they can get the positive feedback and also the “well, you missed points by doing this sort of thing.” So there is that avenue and a lot of them do check their grades because they are, some of them, very concerned about what they got.

(Jack)

[We promote it in] two fashions: the assessment, whatever it is – a test, an essay paper, a project whatever it may be – judged by the teacher as to its quality; therefore, did the students seemingly do the work to his or her skill level. Second would be, we have an honor code in place that holds the student to the level that cheating, plagiarism, anything along these lines are grounds for dismissal – if found guilty of this. If the student adheres to the honor code and the student does his or her own work, we can presume that the student is self-monitoring good, bad, or otherwise... So the student ... self-monitors, in regards to my class, by keeping a portfolio of all written work, quizzes, tests, essays whatever to use in looking at elements from the beginning of the year, good, bad or otherwise writing skills, how they have improved or how they’ve not improved as the year goes on. And ... it is used by me in the class to be mindful of looking at improvement in writing style, writing skills, writing elements... (Sol Kaplan)

Presented below are the thoughts of the student-participants on the way the school promotes the development of time management skills “...our senior year assignments are mostly all long term projects. And so having like four or five different long range assignments at the same time, you have to figure out when you want to do them” (Caitlin).

By the senior year most of my class teachers would assign homework but they don't check it. They only do the quizzes and the big projects, and long term assignments. And these depend on oneself[sic], so it's kind of a check point on how do you do in this class but not like somebody looks over your shoulder[sic]. You have to know those things. (Richard)

The main skill that I am picking up here, that I know I will apply in college, is like they have large projects that are due at the end, [but] they break up that project here into a lot of smaller assignments, so if you do these smaller assignments along the way by the end you'll have most of it done. So you pretty much go up the pyramid block by block starting at the bottom. (Charlie)

Kedron, a senior class student, shared the way the school's efforts to develop time management skills outside of classroom affected her.

... in lower classes, usually we would play like four square and hang out with friends. But now, like, especially when you are in a sport and you get back late you want to get some sleep you use your break time to catch up on your work... As you get older you realize that this break time isn't really like "just hang out and do whatever you like" but you actually have to utilize it. (Kedron)

It seems that there are no secret rules or hidden agenda utilized by the school in order to develop self-monitoring skills and abilities in student. It is teaching teenagers to engage in adult behaviors by reflecting upon ones actions whether in class or in personal life, by setting high expectations and establishing trust, implemented in this case by the honor code and semi-structured study hours, and by positive reinforcement and

encouragement coming from the teachers – people whose opinion students hold in high regard. Throughout my years of secondary schooling my parents never asked me about my grades. They always believed that they were good. From my perspective “C” or below was more than just a bad grade, it would have been my irresponsible behavior that brought discredit to me and damaged the faith and trust given by my family. The expectation was that by simply being a part of this family I could do much better than that. No one is going to volunteer to comply with an honor code set by a school unless everyone, each individual student in the community, is expected to do it; unless it becomes a disgrace not to honor it.

Templeton has been trying to find a path to get away from the idea of teaching to the test ever since the implementation of the new curriculum. Taking the standardized tests out of the equation is not an easy task primarily because majority of institution of higher education still use test scores to weed out inept applicants. As students progress through the four years of high school and get closer to the day when they have to take the necessary test, many of them worry that they might not be able to score high enough simply because they were not taught how to do it. As students note “SATs may be stupid, but they are still a big part of how we get into college” (Lilah).

I think they’ve done a great job academically preparing us for college but I think that *getting us into college* [emphasis added] part they can still work on. ... I feel like within the school here, I’ve never really had help with that [the SAT preparation]. I had to do programs outside of it... (Ellen)

Learning about the best way to prepare students to *get into* a college of their dreams is fascinating but lies beyond the scope of the present research. This work is about college

readiness. And, according to Joe, test taking skills is not a core part of what being college ready really means at Templeton.

...we don't do SAT prep, we have it available if parents and kids want it, but it's not a part of our curriculum, we fundamentally don't think it is what "college ready" is, and we don't think we should dedicate time in the class to get them ready to take a test that will not help them in college. So we believe that we need to get them be able to think, we need to get them be able to reason effectively, to write effectively, and that those are the skills that are really necessary for college. We believe that through that process they will do better on the standardized test. And ... as we get better and better at the curriculum, our standardized test scores are increasing. And I don't think that's because our student body has changed, our demographics are pretty much the same. ... if we teach the SAT we might get them into college but we won't get them out of college ... (Joe)

Test taking, however, does stop with SATs. In many cases it is a big part of college curriculum.

...I know there is a big push at the school not to do multiple choice test but I do give multiple choice test, in science we're doing that, because in a lot of colleges that's one form of evaluation... I've had students telling me that my class is the only class some of them have experienced multiple choice test here. ... I gave my college level kids a multiple choice test on three chapters which is kind of like a college experience. And I run that course based on like a college seminar class. And I was surprised at how poorly the kids did on the multiple choice test. Not because they did not necessarily know the content but because they didn't know

how to answer multiple choice questions. Now, not everybody is in the same position as I am here in regards to multiple choice ...I've been trained on how to write a good multiple choice question and those were the ones on the exam. ... And some of the tests you get are not that good so you have to be selective. So I am very selective on what type of questions I use. I use different levels of Bloom's taxonomy in my selection of multiple choice questions. So there are some that are just knowledge, you got to know this. ... But then there are other questions which then involve more sort of application of the knowledge, more synthesis of the knowledge. I might give them an experimental scenario and ask them questions on it so there is [sic] some critical thinking questions in that multiple choice set. So I don't want us to move away from that because I am worried that if we do, then we're not gonna [sic] be preparing our kids for college. ... I mean, we can't throw the baby out with the bath water in terms of that. ...and I am even more adamant after hearing from some of my students who have left ... (Jack)

Besides test taking abilities Learning Techniques also include strategic reading, memorization, and note taking skills. These three aspects of Learning Techniques – study skills – did not produce much dissonance in responses.

With each grade we have grade level teams: the ninth grade level team establishes a set of skills, exit skills, expectations for every exiting freshman. The sophomore team – same thing – what skills are expected based from the previous exit skills do they foresee to the end of tenth grade, eleventh grade – similar, senior year – similar. So each team scaffolds on that, with the foundation in ninth, to add to

them by [twelfth]. These include study skills, writing skills, speaking skills, reading skills; all in an attempt to focus each child on the ability to succeed in college by being able to use all these skills. (Sol Kaplan)

... I do assign this identification “here is the term, now not only define it but explain why it is significant? Why do we care? Why is it important?” So that requires memory recall, often when we have essays I say “you need to include three specific pieces of historical evidence in each paragraph.” I also do reading quizzes which ask them to recall certain things ... we hope that what they read expose them to the vocabulary and so on... So it is something we struggle with ... the course content cannot be thrown away, it’s just that content has to be used to build skills as opposed to simply memorized and regurgitated. (Paul)

...[then again] this year we have a 50 minute time period every day that’s embedded for skills, and so different things are being taught in those areas at different times from just the common application for getting to college and how that works, to research skills, but it depends which grade [sic], you know... Some of the younger grades, two days a week they’re doing just basic [study] skills so on top of their subject that they’re learning... they’re going over the basic skills and really emphasizing them so that they’ve mastered those instead of just kindda [sic] know them (Luke)

In summary, the school has created a variety of methods in order to develop Learning skills and techniques in its students. They include study skills sessions, long term assignments, semi-structured evening study hours, implementation of the honor

code, explanation of the reasons behind the necessity of memorization, positive reinforcement, reflection, high expectations, a system of advisors, after class “plus time”, and personal example.

Transition Knowledge and Skills

The last of the four elements of Conley’s (2010a; 2010b; 2012) college readiness model is key Transition Knowledge and Skills. It is also known as “college knowledge” (Conley, 2010b, p. 40). This element is comprised of a general awareness of college life and of the abilities of the student to be able to navigate in a new culture. General awareness means understanding the difference between small liberal arts colleges and large research universities, familiarity with the college application process, awareness of the existing financial aid, and other post-secondary system specific knowledge. In order to be able to survive and successfully navigate in the new college culture, a student should be able to self-advocate, to be aware of personal goals and possible career options, to have a developed identity.

The school approaches this particular challenge of teaching students transition knowledge and skills from two different perspectives. The first one is more technical – teaching the ways to distinguish between various types of institutions of post-secondary learning, to apply for financial aid, to fill out a college application, to figure out the necessary GPA and/ or SAT scores, and other related procedural skills. The second one is about personal development and personal growth: students have to understand who they are and what they are looking for in college and in life. This is what Conley (2010a; 2010b; 2012) refers to as role and identity development. It takes more than a class or a

skill period to understand these aspects of student's personality. It takes collaborative community work.

In the previous section Luke, discussing study skills, has already mentioned that the seniors at Templeton use the 50 minutes study skills sessions incorporated in the curriculum to learn about college admissions, the college application process and other related procedures. Other ways of familiarizing students with post-secondary life include instilling the habits of independent life, conducting workshops, having conversations with college graduates, and overall being surrounded by like-minded individuals.

Everybody here goes to college. So they are all thinking about going to college, they are all talking about going to college, and they have that network of sharing information of where their brother went, where their sister went... And so then on top of that we do we have one person who is our college placement person [who] visits with all the students one on one and has workshops to talk about colleges and the process of getting into college. ... [And] then you just have this dynamic in boarding schools of "I live on campus" and certainly college life comes up as part of the conversation. I can remember at least having five to ten each year.

(Luke)

The boarding school student has an edge on the public school or day student by virtue of the fact of living on campus. ... The activity on the dormitory hall, be it interaction with roommate, interaction with hall members, interaction with the hall monitor, any of these elements get the student used to the idea of living in a communal situation away from home... They know when the hours are for meals, they know the respectability of having to dress for meals and not to come in a

slovenly manner, they understand these particular time slots... So these things kind of lend themselves to making the student aware that ... “if I don’t get down to dinner, dinner is going to be closed and I will not eat”. So we have...built in that’s kind of a timetable that they need to follow that lends itself to a kind of a college situation... (Sol Kaplan)

Some of the intentional strategies to develop transition knowledge and skills include organizing presentations conducted by current college students – Templeton alumni, encouraging students to have productive conversations, that is share their thoughts, desires, and fears, with school teachers – former college students, as well as providing support to those students who decide to visit a college campus.

... [It] is by developing kind of close relationships with adults who have gone to college...on our staff we have probably 35 different colleges represented in undergrad and graduate school...so when they develop those relationships with 15 different people, they hear them talking about their 15 different collegiate experiences [and] that really helps them see what college is like and what the end result of it is. ... We do college work shops throughout the year for parents and for students... We give leave so students can go visit colleges. (Joe)

Before opening of the school this year we had two very recent alums, one is a college sophomore, one is college senior, who addressed all of the pre-season athletes and talked about what their experience has been in college. We have elderly alums and everything in between come back, so we have a whole series of programs particularly for seniors talking about what has this experience here yielded in their lives both in college but also beyond. (Global Nomad)

Once students are familiar with the ways post-secondary education systems work and can distinguish amongst different programs and majors offered by the institutions of higher learning, they need to understand themselves, to know who they are and what college is right for them.

I think part of our college preparedness is actually helping the students discover who they are, and then discover what is gonna [sic] be the right fit for them long term. So it's not just about the name of the school, but it's about the relationship that the student can create with the school and help us helping them find that right relationship. (Abby)

...at our ninth grade level our overarching theme for them throughout the year is "what is my place here in the community?"... and then it goes up from there "what is the larger picture?"... And then larger than that "what is our home in the Atlantic area?" and then seniors do "what's going on in the world?" So the freshmen do begin by "who am I, and what's my place in the world?" and they have readings that they do. (Paisley)

The question is then not what college is like, but 'what college life and what college culture will be most comfortable for me.' The school promotes identity development in the following manner.

...I think the college counselor here offers a healthy way of approaching "what do you think you wanna [sic] do? What is out there for you to do? ...Do you think you gonna [sic] stay in the math or sciences? Do you think you gonna [sic] be in the humanities?" very big pictures ...she [talks about] finances, family, geography... [Also]... we went to the game one day and I said "well, let's stay on

campus” and we got a tour of the campus. So I think there is a natural inclination from all of us to say ...“do you want to be in a city campus, do you wanna[sic] be on a big campus, do you wanna [sic] be on a small campus, do you want many majors, do you want no majors” those kind of things. ... I think everybody is pretty much “what is best for the kid in front of us?” (Alice)

I can tell you for our school... we are not ...a pipe line to Harvard... Each kid’s kinda [sic] learning their unique value here. And I think that helps when they get to college of not getting down the wrong path, really knowing a little bit more of who they are while they live here... I think there’s a variety of reasons why, it just a really diverse campus in terms of where kids come from: economically where they come from, geographically where they come from, ethnically where they come from. And a lot of people come here for a second chance. It’s just a very accepting place. (Luke)

Concluding the section about Transition Knowledge and Skills it is necessary to briefly review some of the main points. The general understanding at Templeton is that every graduate is going to college regardless of the type of college a student prefers. Therefore, there is at least one common goal shared by the community. Students who are willing to go an extra mile and study a bit harder in order to get to a particular school are not ridiculed as nerds or book worms. On the contrary, they are surrounded and reinforced by the efforts of other students who have similar ideas and desires. They are encouraged by adults, who instead of telling a boy that he is not college material and was not made for Harvard, take the boy to different school campuses allowing him to make his own choice. Faculty share stories about their personal experience with college life,

thus, providing an insider's view on different types of schools and programs. The new curriculum at Templeton contains several overarching questions that stretch throughout four years of high school and aim to promote role and identity development in students. The technical aspects such as filling out a college application or submitting the necessary paperwork to apply for financial aid are explained during workshops or one-on-one sessions with the college counselor.

The Efficacy of the School Curriculum

This section of chapter four is about the efficiency of the methods and techniques applied by the Templeton Academy in order to develop the four key elements of college readiness in its students. This part provides data to answer research question two.

- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

This portion of the chapter presents the description of data gathered through interviews with school alumni as well as focus group interviews conducted with students of the senior class. For clarity this section is further subdivided into three parts: students, alumni, and things to improve. The first part – students – describes data collected through the focus group interviews with the senior class. It focuses on the knowledge and skills students acquired during their studies at Templeton. In this part I compare data gathered from students who have been at Templeton for the entire period of four years to the data from transfer students – those who have been studying at Templeton for fewer

than four years. I look for similarities and differences in students' reactions to similar stimuli. The second part – alumni – is based on the data provided by the school alumni. It concentrates on the application of skills and knowledge acquired by the school alumni during their years at Templeton. The third part – things to improve – focuses on describing data from the interviews with faculty, administrators, students, and alumni. It provides ideas verbalized by the study participants regarding possible areas for improvement that may need to be addressed in order to further improve the efficiency of the school curriculum or the co-curricular activities. Again, at this point I present the data. The analyses and explanations will be provided in the subsequent chapter.

Students

In the previous section of this chapter I have briefly introduced each of the student participants. At this point it is worth re-emphasizing the number of years each student spent at Templeton. Students with four-year experience are: Lilah Beebe, Pete, Mirza, Kedron, Patrick, Richard, and Caitlin. Students who have spent fewer than four year at Templeton – transfer students – are: Charlie, Jerome, Ricardo, Donny, Shirley, Ellen, and Becky.

The first question I posed to the students was about the process of writing a research paper. The purpose of this question was to find out whether or not students possessed skills such as critical thinking, research, interpretation, note taking, communication, precision, accuracy, and technology proficiency. The answers that I receive from both groups were quite similar.

When I first get a paper or an assignment, I'll go onto Google and type in whatever it is and try to find information on it, and as it gets more serious, I'll go

to the library and try to find books on the topic. Maybe read up a little bit, or there is always J-Store and stuff that [Templeton] offers and I can go through that and search through online database that way. ... and sometimes .com and .net, they have good information, you just have to be able to decipher through different aspects of the site and that just use your judgment. (Pete)

I use this school's...library ... you can go to a reader topic like history or stuff like that and it brings up a bunch of like databases that have like good information: primary sources and so on, so I mean it's useful... [you know if the site is reliable] if you actually read through the site you will be able to tell most of the time, and then you look at the clues like has the author cited anyone... (Lilah Beebe)

...I mean you can start with Google but anything you find on Google and, God forbid, Wikipedia you definitely need to triple check. But if it's on J-store or any of the school private databases, you can pretty much rely on it. It's good. If you can find the same information in two places then you can go ahead and use it. And another thing to look at is if it ends in .org or .com... If someone is trying to sell you something, look for a different website! But if I find something on the reputable university's website, I can pretty much rely on that, especially if I can cross reference it. (Jerome)

Most of the time if it's like a term paper or something, if it's for history then I usually have some notes on it, but then we have primary sources that we use throughout the year to look at whatever it's probably asking you questions on. So

I try to use those but I also try and look online and read what people have analyzed so I can understand it better, and I incorporate that a lot too. (Ellen)

I incorporated a fictional scenario in the second question. The scenario was about a new student in school who after a month or so felt academically adrift. The student was struggling to memorize the facts and other required information in the course and did not know how to find a way out of the situation. The focus group participants were then asked to give some advice to the struggling soul. This scenario was focused on the following skills: persistence, help seeking, self-efficacy, study skills, collaborative learning, time management, strategic reading, test taking abilities, technology proficiency, memorization, and self-monitoring. The advice that I heard from both groups of students were similar: asking teachers for help, or advisors, or upperclassmen, or Shirley suggested a study group.

We have a prefect system here too. Usually they are willing to talk and they are open and easy to talk to, so [the student] can maybe ask one of them. They are usually upperclassmen and usually well-rounded, so they can help... [Also] I think it is easier to learn on a more personal level. So like when you and your teachers have good relationships and actually care then you have that base or foundation to build knowledge, to build your confidence and everything. So I think that's really helpful to have that relationship as a foundation so then you can take your learning more independently and be more comfortable with learning. (Kedron)

I think [the student] can start with talking to your advisor. We have advisor system here. Because if [the student is] shy in front of the teacher or classmates,

the advisor will communicate better than [the student] and arrange some help from the teacher. (Richard)

...and also emails are very helpful, like if it's past the hours and I am doing my homework at home, they are usually at their computers, so I'd ask them over email. Obviously they can't explain everything in the email. And it depends on different teachers, some respond until two am... (Lilah Beebe)

Some of the transfer students also provided a comparison between their Templeton and before-Templeton experiences.

Last night Mirza came into my room...so we could go to this teacher's apartment and knock on the door and get information. And that's kind of accessibility that you won't normally find. I went to a public high school before here with 12,000 plus students and you couldn't have dreamed about doing that... And while no one babysits you here...you know that there are teachers looking out for you...they offer solutions rather than just punishments or rather than just correcting you they like to work with you. ...compared to a public high school [where] no one cares about you. You might have a teacher that likes you a little bit, but they have so many other students they can't really get on you about getting your work done or finding a different way to do your work that might be more advantageous to the way you learn. (Jerome)

Ellen and Donny recalled the troubles and uncomfortable situations they encountered when they transferred to Templeton. They attributed their initial bumpy experience in

classes to the lack of exposure to certain assignments and expectations, as well as to the absence of one-on-one teacher-student learning experience at their previous institutions.

...when I came here last year ... I've never really written long papers so ... I'd just stay behind and I would ask [the teachers] I'd say that I was inexperienced and that I wasn't used to the curriculum and I would ask them what they thought I could do to improve my writing skills because I wasn't making very good grades on papers, so they'd help me, you know... (Ellen)

This [inability to stay on track in a course] actually has happened before with me [sic], I usually ask questions in class but I then stayed over after class and asked questions one-on-one and I learned a lot better ... because I could keep asking the questions I had. So that's one thing I do now. And now we have like "plus period" which is like the time designated for that so it makes it easier for me so I don't have to stay [after class]... (Donny)

Another scenario that I presented to the students was about a student cheating on an assignment by copy-pasting an entire paper from the Internet. The teacher failed the student because the student copied a newspaper article from an online source and submitted it as a part of the assignment. I asked my participants to explain whether the student was right and the teacher did not have any basis to give a bad grade, or the teacher was right and the student should have known better than copy-pasting an article from the Internet. The purpose of this particular scenario was to check if the students possess the problem formulation skills, critical thinking skills, research and interpretation abilities.

The thoughts of the transfer students differed slightly from the ideas of those who have been at Templeton for four years. They all believed that the teacher was correct and that the student, who cheated on the assignment and plagiarized the paper, was ultimately wrong. The reasons behind such responses differed, however. Many of the transfer students believe that cheating and plagiarism are bad primarily because of the punishment that follows if the student is found guilty of such actions. Gaining knowledge by completing the assignment the proper way was important “you are not learning anything if you are just clipping the web pages” (Ellen), but not as overwhelming as the fear of punishment and the desire to get a good grade.

So the memo I get from the school is that the grades are important but to the teachers “you knowing it” is much more important than the grades. You have to just have the knowledge, that’s more important to them. For me personally, my grades are very much important, more than anything else. (Becky)

...if you [cheated on the assignment], oh my gosh, there is honor council. You will get into so much trouble! Your life is done! Plagiarism is so scary here. Never ever do it. It is such a big issue here. (Shirley)

We spend so much time learning how to cite sources and make it-text citations... well, it’s not like you can’t use that source as a basis for your paper and it’s so easy with all these tools we have... you just highlight a block of text and you hit a button and it makes bibliography for that note and it shows you in-text citation in any format you want to use and how that note would look like. And then when you copy the text directly into your paper or use your own take on what that quote

was. It's just so easy not to cheat. It's almost remarkable that people still try.

(Jerome)

Donny analyzed the fictional scenario from two different perspectives: from the point when he was a student at a public high school, and from the point of a Templeton student.

...it's a big issue here but in my old [public] school that's what I did. So they told us to write a paper and I wouldn't actually write it myself, I would just copy paste a bunch of quotes that I thought were good and just put it in, and I would add a couple sentences to make it fit. And that's how I thought you did papers! And, like, when I got here it was a lot different. So three years ago I would say the teacher was wrong, but now I guess I am in a different system, and I would say that I was wrong in that situation. ... The biggest plagiarism that happens here is not like copying or something but not citing your sources. So like you look something up, you thought it was good, you put it in and you don't cite it. It's like the most common one here, or you cite incorrectly. (Donny)

Templeton "old timers" – senior class students who entered the academy as freshmen – provided a slightly different perspective on the idea of cheating and the reasons why it was bad to plagiarize "...generally it's not about the grade, it's about the understanding of what the issue was. Because in [your paper] you really want to get across your feeling, not to give the information..." (Patrick)

Part of the schooling here is trying to mold and shape an independent thinker. So I think once you are given a prompt you wanna [sic] be able to not take someone else's words, you want to be able to have your own opinionated idea on the issue at hand. So I think therefore there are a couple variables to the situation: first of

all, the teacher is correct and that's inevitable. Second of all, the way that the student copied and pasted the article is not only wrong because it's plagiarism but the student is also cheating himself because he is not able to formulate his own opinion honestly disabling him to really formulate his own thoughts. (Pete)

...you plagiarized so you'll probably get in trouble for that. [But] also they are asking you the question so you have to read about what the world is saying, other sources are saying, but then you need to apply what you think about that [sic]. They are asking you the formation of your own mind with knowledge from the outside, but, I mean, you are just taking some else's thoughts completely. (Lilah Beebe)

Below is the process the school institutionalized to address the cheating problem.

It matters whether you did it consciously or in ignorance, whether you were plagiarizing knowingly or accidentally by mistake, like you forgot to cite something. I think they really try to hammer in the idea of "must cite, must not plagiarize, and how to cite properly" so even if you plagiarized by accident, they really try to hammer in the fact that we know how to cite other people's work. (Mirza)

So the teacher would bring you aside and if it's your first time they may be lenient on you. And if it is a serious offence like that, like actually coping and pasting for a grade then you'll be brought to a student led honor council, and our council will talk to you and give you their story and then you tell your story, and your advisor is there with you as well to be on your behalf. And then the student would leave

and your advisor talks to the honor council on your behalf and then the council makes a decision as to what the punishment would be. (Caitlin)

The honor council is headed by a teacher but he doesn't really talk, so it's pretty much students and they come to an agreement about guiltiness and what the punishment should be and then they send that punishment to the headmaster and he reviews it...and might recommend something. (Lilah Beebe)

The next question I posed to the focus group participants had to do with post-secondary awareness. I wanted to find out whether the students had already decided what they wanted to do in college, what major they chose, I wanted to see their level of motivation in regards to higher education and who helped them make those choices. In other words, this section addresses the "key transition knowledge and skills" part of the second research question.

Our [college counselor] helps a lot. So I didn't know what I was doing so I went to [see the college counselor] and she like helped me figured out what's good for me, how I would fit into these schools, and then she found me decent schools. (Ricardo)

...first thing my parents look at is ranking from US News and World Report, and that is like the first selection, like a big range of schools. And then we look at the locations whether it is near a big city or not, if it is near a big city then you have a good opportunity to do internships and research and stuff like that. Also the size of the school matters. It shows how many colleagues you will have and how many

resources will be available for you, and also teacher-student ratio is important.

(Shirley)

You do “first level searching” like you hear about it or you just keep looking at schools and check them out, and the most important thing for me right now is if they have my major. I mean there are a lot of excellent schools that don’t have my major, so I am focusing only on those that have my major. Location and academics are also something I look at... I’ve never really looked at rankings

(Ellen)

For me it’s a little different. ... I would like to be a professional athlete... [And] my mom told me two things: find the school that you like, and find a school that I can pay for. And that’s all she told me. It can be anywhere as long as I like it and she can pay for it. (Donny)

In the future I hope to do something with business... I’ve always been kindda [sic] forced to look at strongest academic institutions I can get into, as far as my parents go ...it’s more like: how are you gonna [sic] be the best fit for the life after college. What’s gonna [sic] get you that job. (Pete)

A majority of the senior class students who participated in the study knew where their inspiration lay and what major they would most likely choose. By the end of the Fall semester many of them have placed their applications to several colleges and universities. Of course, not all of the students have discovered their true passions, but it is the general atmosphere prevailed in school that encouraged the students to have dreams, goals, and aspirations.

...it's a big thing to know that everyone here cares about something. At public high school they are waiting till they get to the legal age so they can drop out. It's hard to succeed when no one else wants to succeed. (Jerome)

One of the best things about boarding schools is being around people that want to "go for it" with their lives and want to move on past the high school level. I was exposed to a lot of people who didn't really care about their future, and when you come here everyone has some kind of goal that they are trying to reach and that kind of positivity spreads throughout the community. (Ricardo)

Alumni

I interviewed six Templeton alumni during the process of this study. The primary reason for including alumni into the research was to find out whether the students actually applied the knowledge they learned at Templeton Academy to their college endeavors. Each graduate was asked ten questions (Appendix F) and the duration of the interview was approximately 30 minutes. Conley's (2010a; 2010b; 2012) model was the foundation for all selected questions. The interview, therefore, concentrated on the four elements of college readiness: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills. Since all of the interview questions are interrelated some skills and abilities are repeated in different questions and are examined from different angles.

In order to find out whether a Templeton graduate possessed key transition knowledge and skills – postsecondary awareness, self-advocacy, knowledge of personal role and identity, goal setting, self-awareness, motivation – I posed a question about college selection process.

I knew what I wanted to do but [Templeton] helped me a lot deciding where I wanted to go and what kind of [environment] I'd fit best in. I had a lot of conversations with the [college counselor] and she helped me a lot... (Austin)

It was mainly due to my interest in sports, specifically, soccer. So as the colleges show interest with [sic] me I would show interest back, but I would only choose a college if they have my intended major. The school college counselor was very helpful. (Jack)

I chose my college based on academics and community if that makes sense. I really tried to consider not only how well I thought that the college would prepare me, but also what kind of people and what kind of college life-style it had. Which college had the best package. Then I applied to schools that had engineering...I was considering schools that were very strong in science and math and that have very reliable engineering departments. (Mary Beth)

Well, I knew I wanted to be an engineer, so I was looking at engineering colleges and I didn't want to go to a big school so ... [Templeton] had like a counselor but our meetings were short because I already knew where I wanted to go...(Tom)

The purpose of the next two questions was to reveal the following skills: critical thinking, communication skills, precision, self-awareness - awareness of personal role and identity, collaboration, leadership, civic responsibility, and character development. The first one was about college extracurricular activities that Templeton graduates were involved in.

Right now I am in RA [Resident Assistant] and other than that or other than doing like a community service, we have an engineering counseling here that I was also involved with last semester ... And next semester I am trying to get on the school's senate ... I did RA because I was a prefect at [Templeton] at I liked it. And then this student's senate when I do that it will be pretty similar to the National Aid Society ... and I did National Aid Society at [Templeton]. And I have experience of like being used to community service and stuff ... I would say when I came to college I came knowing that I would be doing stuff like that because I've already been doing it at [Templeton]. And I also knew that I would be able to handle it because at [Templeton] I had a full academic schedule and I also had extracurriculars[sic] with it. I think [Templeton] pretty much paved the way to college. (Tom)

I am on the club sailing team, so that's the sport. I am in a few academic clubs... I am also in the academic fraternity... and then there are also some non-academic sports groups. ...Some of these activities I really enjoyed in high school so that's why I joined the club crew team. I really liked doing that in high school. (Mary Beth)

Most of the Templeton alumni followed the passions they discovered at Templeton when selecting extracurricular activities in college.

As of now, I only do sailing. I've been sailing at [Templeton] for four years... The [sailing] coach at [Templeton] ... was a captain of [my college] sailing team so I took a recommendation from him before I came [to this college]. (Sam)

I participated in a lot of co-curriculars [sic], I did JV basketball, varsity basketball, JV sailing, varsity sailing, YMCA and boys and girls club. Now I do a lot of volunteering and helping out on campus doing some of the projects, but I don't do any of the sports other than intramurals. (Austin)

The longer students stayed in college, the more familiar they were with post-secondary life, the more extra-curricular activities they tended to enjoy. All of the Templeton graduates confessed that many times the reason for choosing a particular extra-curricular activity in college, was their previous experience with it that they gained back at high school.

The second question was about particular academic and non-academic programs and activities the students were exposed to during their high school years that they felt had helped them adapt to college life.

Well, definitely being a part of the girls' soccer team was a huge impact. I also was a prefect there, so it was unique experience [for me] because it really allowed me to kind of develop in that leadership role. And we did prefect retreats to kind of develop leadership which was really cool. And also like the river immersion activities. ... so I wasn't just doing athletics all the time so that was kind of able to get me a different perspective, develop a broader perspective, I guess. (Sarah)

There are several things, I think. I was pretty active in sports in high school, such as field hockey and others, so it taught me how to manage my time with academics and planning my schedule, planning my time studying. I also found National Honor Societies to be very helpful in organizing and planning events, it got me interested in volunteering, and different stuff like that. (Mary Beth)

I would say time management is the thing in college. ... I feel like the problem a lot of kids have is ... when they were in high school they had like school and maybe some team and then they were done for the day. At [Templeton] I had to balance school with co-curriculars [sic] and then they created like study time and all that, so [Templeton] wasn't easy. While I was there I was trying to figure out what I could study and like the best use of my time at some point. So I feel like part of my time at [Templeton] I spent figuring that stuff out and so when I was in high school I figured that stuff out, and when I came to college I already knew that I could do it, and I knew like how much time I should dedicate to something and what I should or should not be doing with my free time. I think free time is a problem in high school that you ought to figure out that I figured out at [Templeton] and I'd say it helped me in college. (Tom)

The focus of the next questions was to reveal the following skills: persistence, help seeking, self-efficacy, study skills, collaborative learning, time management, strategic reading, test taking skills, technology proficiency, memorization, self-monitoring, problem formulation and problem-solving. The school alumni were asked about steps they take when they find themselves struggling with an assignment.

A lot of times I just take a step back and breathe a little bit, and be like "ok, what did I learn to do in this situation?" so "you better use like the websites that could help you that [Templeton] directed you to help you with" [sic], and if that didn't help, you can ask TAs if they know anything. ...I don't really request a lot of help. Everything seems pretty easy as of now. (Austin)

The first thing I do is I just talk to other people who are working on it and if they are not having trouble then usually they can help me, and then if everyone is having trouble then I go back and, you know, you just try again and if I can't do it then I say something to the professor... (Sam)

...a lot of times when I am struggling I found good study groups to be helpful. So I'd go to my study group first and if for some reason they can't help me ... then I during the office hours I will meet with a TA or with the instructor himself. ...I think [Templeton] did a really good job preparing me to hold myself accountable and to be independent, I would say. They prepared me enough to be responsible to do my assignments on my own, and kind of hold myself accountable for my actions, which I think is really helpful now because I can kind of sit down and make my own study schedule and plan out my day which made my transition from high school to college more manageable... (Mary Beth)

Oftentimes Templeton alumni were able to recognize certain connections between programs and initiatives they were exposed to at Templeton and their present day college experience. Tom attributed his ability to seek help from professors during the office hours to his exposure to the same idea that was structured into the curriculum at Templeton. Sarah, on the other hand, found the atmosphere at her current institution to be very similar to the one at Templeton.

Usually I go and meet with the professor ... and it's nice having smaller class sizes just because I do feel comfortable approaching that professor, they usually know you by name ... And they are usually very willing to work with you and kind of learn how you learn and how best they can help you to go about it. ... at

[Templeton] and I felt the same way: all the teachers were really engaged in every single one of their students' academic progress. (Sarah)

...now that I am at a big school it's different. ...At [Templeton] I knew all my classmates, I knew everyone because it was a small school. And at a big school you have to strive to reach out to classmates and become friends... a lot of studying I've done was in collaboration between me and other students. ... And the other thing that I do which [Templeton] did help with is like getting used to dealing with professors and their office hours. [Templeton] had it structured in, you had a set time every day that you could get a hold of any of your teachers and get extra help with your work. So I got used to doing it before I came to college. I knew that I could get help from my professors during office hours and I know like what to say and stuff. So that's what I do. (Tom)

In summary, when the students are struggling academically, they feel comfortable reaching out to the course instructors, participating in study groups, engaging in collaborative learning, or working individually by using certain websites to find the answers they seek.

The last set of skills that must be emphasized is information literacy, initiative, self-direction, and goal setting. The Templeton graduates were asked about their plans for the future once they receive their baccalaureates degrees: "for a year I am actually planning on coaching soccer in Nicaragua, but after that I'd like to go to business school at University of Virginia" (Sarah). Jack decided not to compete for jobs right after graduation but to fulfill his childhood dream: "My dream since I was a little kid was to play soccer at a school, so before I pursue any type of career path I'm gonna [sic] try and

play for school” (Jack). While Austin has already made his decision regarding the future career: “I want to work in law enforcement and help people through law enforcement. I am interning at the police department soon, so that will help me out a little bit” (Austin).

...Ideally in the next ten years I’d like to work in the transportation industry for a few years... I am an engineer so I’d like to use that degree and then I’d like to go back to school and get my Master’s or PhD so just kind of higher level of engineering. And then I would ideally like to, in about 15 years, be working with life cycle analysis and kind of help build structures with integrity and kind of just designing things with the life cycle in mind. (Mary Beth)

What I would like to do is to do internships ... I’d like to be a concept artist so I’d like to try and break into that and sort of feel it... that’s sort of my mental sketch but I feel as if I can rely on the art professors here to help me figure out a way to do it. (Sam)

I am not sure about my long term goals, like how far along I am planning, but right now I am trying to find certain internships so that when I graduate I will have experience and connections of job I can potentially get. We have career fairs – one per semester – and I’ve already talked to potential employers and I found a couple jobs that I would like to have right out of college, they seemed like exactly what I was looking for, and I found some places that I think can offer good internship experience that I am trying to get before I do graduate... (Tom)

All of the college students I interviewed had a set of goals that they were trying to accomplish. They were familiar with the concept of internships and were confident

enough to take some initiative and progress in the right direction. It is difficult to say whether they are going to follow their dreams or alter them along the way. That might be a viable topic for a different research project.

Things to Improve

This section is about particular aspects in the school curriculum which, in the eyes of the participants, could be improved. I discovered one interesting detail when I piloted the interview questions. There were a certain number of the respondents who answered that they were not in the position or they did not have the authority to make any changes. Therefore, the direct question about “what would you change...?” had to be substituted with “what are the pros and cons...?” or “if you were in charge how would you change...?” or “if you were a headmaster of the school what would you change...?”

Three groups of the participants faculty, students, and alumni mentioned the necessity of some improvements in the science-math departments. In particular, by emphasizing the big questions, integration and interconnectedness of knowledge that students gain from different classes, the curriculum might not be focusing enough on the basic content. And naturally the subjects that require the knowledge of the basic content – math, languages, natural sciences – before moving on to discussing big questions appear to be the most disadvantaged.

We do more of “what’s the larger question?” ... The questions themselves are more difficult so in that way college prep comes more into play. On the other hand, sometimes I do believe teachers have asked “the big question” without maybe taking the time to ensure that students have learned the basics and so my voice has been: yes, this is a great curriculum; however, you have to scaffold

there, you can't just jump to the larger questions especially for sophomores. They need steps to get there. They still need to be taught the skills before they can just jump in and answer critical thinking questions. (Paisley)

...Some disciplines lend themselves some more of that essay kind of critical thinking, 'pro' 'con' kind of study. But I do believe that every discipline needs to have a certain amount of content before you can actually have those critical debates. In science we are very aware of making sure that we have to teach content to get students ready to go on and be successful in college science courses. We are incorporating that interdisciplinary aspect in each of our grade levels around the time when we do some of the immersion trips, around the time we do the skills, but we cannot *not* [emphasis added] cover that content in science. And some of that content does not land itself - in some of the pure sciences - to have those debates. Sodium is sodium, you can't debate that. (Jack)

And the students chime in with the teachers. Kedron felt that the whole notion of integrated science was a bit confusing when it came to taking college entrance exams. Richard also confessed that it was more difficult to pursue personal interest in certain discipline when everything in the curriculum was integrated.

... I would change ... the math and science sections. ...having taken the SATs three times now ... [O]ur whole general idea is to integrate everything and to implement that in all of our subjects, which is awesome in English and History and all of those things, but when you are trying to do math and science and you are trying to take these huge tests that get you into college and then you maybe

didn't learn something in Algebra or Geometry because we have a mixed kind of curriculum it's kind of hard to do... (Kedron)

I agree with Kedron on the part of the science because from freshmen to junior we all have one kind of science, it's all mixed. In senior year we have like chemistry and biology and that kind of thing, but from freshman to junior it's only integrated science. So I think it's better to have like separate interests... so some people like physics, some people like chemistry so they can take whatever they like instead of what the school offers right now – one kind. (Richard)

Templeton alumni agreed with the senior class students: “I may want to improve the math and science program. I don't feel that integrated science is the way to go. Because coming here [to college] most of the people I've met are much stronger at science than me” (Sam).

... one thing I'd change is the emphasis on math and science... I definitely think there needs to be a greater emphasis on those subjects. Especially offering higher levels of math and more science opportunities, because I know I am in the engineering school and when I came in, having taken all of the math courses that [Templeton] offered and all of the science courses, and I was placed into the lowest math and the lowest science at UVA. Which was good for me because it gave me some easy classes... [B]ut I'd definitely say: more math, more sciences, even add some technology classes ... (Mary Beth)

Another challenge – lack of time for class preparation, lack of opportunities for personal and professional development, and a general overload – were primarily expressed by the Templeton faculty.

There is expectation on crafting these incredibly thoughtful lessons but there are other expectations also. ... There are all kinds of issues with kids and all, so after I am done with my day, and I am at the admissions office afterwards talking for 30 minutes to the prospective students, then I have practice from four to six, and then I have to go out into the dorm and make sure everything is ok there, and then I have to figure out how to craft a perfect lesson. So ideally there would be more time to devote to these types of lessons... (Paul)

...I would probably lift some of the workload from teaching faculty so that they can spend more time learning, having professional development opportunities. I would devote more resources to graduate and post-graduate studies for faculty. I would look to have some sabbatical program so that people can go off and do some things and come back energized because I think that's probably our biggest challenge is that it takes so much work and we are really small but the work still needs to be done and I think people get tired and it's hard to really devote as much time to developing your own classes because you have all these other things that you have to do. So that would be the change I would try to do. (Global Nomad)

Lack of time for class preparation oftentimes means uninteresting and/or altogether boring classes, which in theory were not supposed to play any role in the new curriculum. General overload and a lack of sufficient time or opportunities for personal

improvement of professional development can lead to a loss of enthusiasm and creativity. In order to overcome such impediments to organizational success, the 3M corporation crafted a solution: it established a tradition that encouraged employees to spend 15 percent of their work day on projects of personal interest (Collins & Porras, 2002). This approach inspired imagination and creativity, which, in turn, encouraged "...innovators to remain innovators rather than become managers" (Collins, 2000, para. 5).

Chapter Four Summary

In this chapter I presented the results of this half a year study. There were five sections in this chapter: Culture of the School, Description of Study Participants, Four Key Elements of College Readiness, The Efficacy of the School Curriculum, and Chapter Four Summary. The first four sections introduced data collected by performing interviews with school faculty, administrators, senior class students, and alumni, as well as by examining the school's documentation and records and conducting observations of the teachers. The focus of this chapter was to answer the following research questions.

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?

- key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

Two of the sections – Culture of the School and the Four Key Elements of College Readiness – focused on presenting data to answer the first research question and to describe certain programs and initiatives that the school uses to develop particular skills. While the purpose of the fourth part of the chapter - The Efficacy of the School Curriculum – was to provide an answer to the second research question. This chapter also included an in-depth description of the school culture which was revealed to be one of the successful methods of developing college readiness in students. All data were presented through the prism of Conley's (2012) model.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Five Overview

This chapter is about major findings and future implications. In the previous section of this manuscript I presented the results and described the data collected during the six months period. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the discussion and analyses of those results. My goal is to avoid ambiguity and to draw the most logical conclusions from the statements of the study participants. At the same time, as an author, I would like to leave some room for ideas. I would like to believe that this chapter does not sound as if it is the final ultimatum or the only possible plan of action. I would like to believe that this chapter provides food for thought, that it might encourage the reader to take another, more critical look at the issue of college readiness as well as reconsider certain strategies and methods utilized by the main stream education behemoth as the only way for preparing high school graduates for success at the institutions of higher learning.

This chapter is also about future research which can build up on this study as well as the recommendations provided by Conley (2010a). Conley's (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) model served as a theoretical foundation for this research project, while the purpose of this case study was to find out how the model works in practice. More specifically, I sought to answer two research questions:

- What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?

- key transition knowledge and skills in its students?
- How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop
 - key cognitive strategies in students?
 - key content knowledge in its students?
 - key learning skills and techniques in its students?
 - key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

In this chapter I also provide a brief summary of the study and draw some reasonable conclusions.

Summary of the Study

The college readiness model created by Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012) served as a foundation for this case study. The conceptual model presents a more comprehensive approach to examine the college readiness of high school graduates. The four elements of college readiness – key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills – were used to examine the college preparation methods and programs implemented by a residential school in the state of Virginia. The purpose of this study was not only to reveal the structures and mechanisms created by the school in order to increase college readiness in its students, but also to explore the influence such initiatives had on high school seniors. The two research questions stated above served as a primary focus of the study.

Main stream secondary schooling in the U.S. has long been criticized for not taking adequate steps in order to prepare graduates for college (Conley, 2008; DeVise, 2010; González, 2012; Pascarella, et al, 2003). “Our secondary schools are shambles... [High school] does not perform its proper function for preparing youth either for

citizenship or for higher education...” (Gross, 1999, pp. 187-188). In other words, the model the main stream secondary schooling follows in order to prepare students for college, or to evaluate how well prepared they are, at some point became irrelevant.

For this case study, I selected one independent boarding school – Templeton Academy – that has initiated several programs and created certain mechanisms in order to successfully prepare its students for college life and college level work. Such initiatives were examined through the prism of Conley’s model. The study was conducted on the school premises. The data collection process for this project took approximately half a year. In order to answer the first research question

What method/s does the Templeton Academy utilize to develop

- key cognitive strategies in students?
- key content knowledge in its students?
- key learning skills and techniques in its students?
- key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

I engaged in the examination of school documents and records, and engaged in observations of the school culture. I also conducted several classroom observations (Appendix J) and interviewed Templeton teachers and administrators (Appendix G).

To find the answers for the second research question

How effective are the method/s the Templeton Academy utilizes to develop

- key cognitive strategies in students?
- key content knowledge in its students?
- key learning skills and techniques in its students?
- key transition knowledge and skills in its students?

I primarily concentrated on interviewing school alumni (Appendix H) as well as conducting focus group interviews with senior class students (Appendix I). All of the interview questions were created by the researcher, examined by experts in the field of education, and a pilot study was conducted prior to the beginning of the main research project. All collected data were cross-checked and details of data analysis were described in chapter three. The results of the study were presented in the previous chapter. The purpose of the next section of this report is to discuss and analyze the major findings.

Discussion of Major Findings

During the process of this research I revealed several strategies, methods and techniques implemented by Templeton Academy in order to promote college readiness in its students. I also uncovered the influence certain programs and initiatives have on students. One of my most important discoveries, however, was the simple fact that college readiness as a concept does not have a hierarchy. It means that there is no perfect program which, if properly implemented, prepares students for success in college much better than any other programs. There is no universal answer to all of the turmoil that secondary education is experiencing; additionally, there is definitely no perfect standardized test that can accurately measure the level of preparedness of students for college life and college level work. There is no correct way to say that student X is 100 percent ready for college and that student Y's college readiness equals only to 65 percent. It means that there is no "one size fits all." There are different kinds of programs and methods that work for different kind of students. Those programs, however, cluster around the basic four elements proposed by Conley (2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2012). These elements are key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge and skills, key learning

skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills. A student should possess basic knowledge of in all four areas in order to succeed in a general institution of postsecondary learning. There is no prescribed way or method, on the other hand, to ensure that each element can be developed by initiating a certain prescribed program. Methods vary and objects in the rearview mirror may appear closer than they are. Each school should examine its own community, its own student body before implementing a program that successfully worked in another institution. Some methods might not work at a particular high school not because they are altogether bad or flawed, but simply because they were meant to address a completely different student body, or because the school environment, sometimes unintentionally, sends a signal opposite to the one dispatched by the program. For successful implementation, there has to be an alignment between the school community and the initiative it is trying to establish.

Templeton Academy attracts certain types of students. Students who fit into the environment the academy has created. An atmosphere that supports hard work and learning while discouraging looking for easy ways around problems inspires the students to go the extra mile and not to accept lack of effort and completion of only the minimum work required; an atmosphere that promotes integrity and does not offer accord to cheating or plagiarism. That is not to say that other schools, public or private, do not support and uphold similar ideas. There is a distinct difference, however, between supporting a principle and living up to it. The entire Templeton community is structured around six core values of curiosity, kindness, self-confidence, acceptance, respect, and integrity (School Website, 2015). Faculty, administrators, coaches created those values, they expect everyone to follow them and they organize their daily activities around those

six principles. Most importantly, those values were not promulgated from above by the headmaster or by the board of trustees. They emerged as a result of collaboration among the school constituencies. Therefore, no one had to enforce them. Likeminded individuals usually attract other individuals with similar world views (Collins, 2000; 2002). Students who were unable to believe in those principles simply did not fit in. Others, who did share the values but, due to previous experiences or plain teenage stubbornness, chose to test the limits of the community's patience, had to adjust their behaviors and learning strategies. Based on the data presented in the previous chapter, discipline at Templeton was exercised based on the six core values. Those who strived but fell short, received support and positive reinforcement, those who rebelled against the basic rules of the community were advised to find an institution that would fit them better. Furthermore, it was difficult to do the minimum when everyone else was endeavoring to do their best, when a student was looked down upon not for being too smart, but rather for not trying hard enough. Intelligence was celebrated, mediocrity was discouraged. An atmosphere quite opposite from what is prevalent in many other secondary institutions where peer pressure often negatively affects the behavior of students who are willing to study harder and to go an extra mile (Murray, 2008; Pollack, 1998). Programs and methods initiated by the school to address the issue of college readiness were also structured around these six core values. The initiatives worked efficiently because of the school environment that supported them. Reinforcing the findings, another study conducted by TABS (The Association of Boarding Schools) revealed that "...boarding schools play a direct and influential role in shaping the

personal values and ethics of their students, fostering a wide array of desirable traits in a supportive and motivating environment” (TABS, 2004, p. 9)

Moreover, similar to other independent schools, Templeton charges tuition, which holds the students more accountable for their learning and promotes responsibility (Noll, 1985). It also encourages parents to have higher expectations of their children’s accomplishments. It is basic human psychology: things that we pay for, whether with money or in some other form, are much more difficult to disregard. That is not saying, however, that *all* parents who send their children to tuition free schools have low expectations, only that tuition quantifies the exchange of service.

I received my education in two municipal tuition free schools. Neither one of them had a particularly supportive learning environments. It was considered a student’s duty to study just like the duty of an adult was to work. From first grade on students were taught not to whine about their desire to play and not to go to school. It was explained that most parents would have also preferred to go on vacation but it was their duty to go to work as it was our duty to study. Similarly, my parents would tell me that every single day they did their best to support the family so I had to do my very best at school as well. Family was team work; I had to do my best to be a part of the team. My schools were tuition free. In fact every educational institution in the Soviet Union was free of charge starting from tennis classes, to choir singing, to university education. Therefore, the concept of “you have to do well because we paid for you” did not exist as a principle; nothing was explained to the children through the prism of financial burdens. The school did not positively encourage learning because it was parents’ job to do it. At school mediocre students who were not willing to study harder or to give it one’s best

shot were often ostracized. The general view was that everyone was capable of studying, but not everyone was willing to push the limits. In fact, limits did not exist. Instead of praising and reinforcing the good students, the bad students were made uncomfortable in an attempt to make them study harder, make them want to fit in with the rest of the class. No one wanted to be mediocre, it was shameful. At Templeton teachers discuss remarkable people and their accomplishments so that the students might feel encouraged to follow the example of those people and become great as well. In my school the emphasis was placed upon discussing unfortunate events that happened to individuals who were doing the bare minimum throughout their lives. No one wanted to end up like *them*.

Three of the six core values promoted at Templeton – curiosity, kindness, and integrity – during my school years were supposed to originate at home. A pupil was expected to be curious and adhere to moral and ethical principles right from the start. Because that is what it meant to be human, everything else was considered to be beneath human dignity. Teachers did not have to use a big stick to instill respect or simply to make students concentrate and listen. Similarly, at Templeton students were expected to respect their teachers. The reasons for such expectations differed. At Templeton a teacher was a coach, a facilitator of knowledge, an older friend. In the Soviet Union adults in general and teachers in particular were figures of authority, therefore, they were respected. There was an alignment between the school values and family values. In short, though the reasons for respect in two institutions were dissimilar – at Templeton a teacher was respected because he was a good and knowledgeable person, in my school a teachers was respected because she was scary – the basic idea behind it was the same: if

you had to prove your authority that meant you did not have any. Respect did not have to be instilled, it was expected.

Templeton Academy created an environment that promotes self-confidence by positively reinforcing students in class: to take their time and correct their mistakes, to put extra effort into their homework assignments, to restructure difficult tasks into a set of smaller manageable ones, to take a step-by-step approach, to make several attempts and to look at the issue from several different angles, to never accept failure. Self-confidence was also encouraged outside of the classroom: through sports where every accomplishment served as an ego booster, through leadership opportunities – one could become a part of the honor council or a prefect, through immersion trips where every student was pushed out of their comfort zone and had to learn how to manage the situation, and through the simple fact of semi-independent living of boarding students – the absence of parents who oftentimes try to control every step their child makes. The atmosphere in my school was considerably different. Again, lack of self-confidence was considered bad and no one wanted to be bad. We had to memorize hundreds of poems and excerpts from classical literature and then properly recite them in front of everyone in class; in order to “improve” a bad student, a good student was assigned to lend a helping hand; we had loads of homework that often took longer than five hours a day to complete. In fifth grade we were assigned to read one of the classics – a book that was not part of our textbook in literature. My friend and I went to the school library only to discover that they ran out of copies. We went back to the teacher to ask for her advice on whether or not she knew of a different place where we could find the necessary book. The teacher’s eyes measure us with a great deal of contempt: “If by this age” – I was ten

– “you don’t know where to find books, I might as well tell you to check out the local haberdashery.” We felt ashamed and challenged at the same time. The atmosphere at my school was not very friendly, but solving small challenges like that definitely increased self-confidence.

The last core value – acceptance – was not a part of the culture of my school. Uniformity was promoted. One could be secretly different in private life, but in public everyone had to appear the same. Templeton, on the contrary, celebrated the idea of diversity. The school admitted students from various countries and cultures, students with various socio-economic statuses, and students with different learning abilities. The faculty of the school dedicated a lot of time to one-on-one work searching for the best way to approach a particular student, while the students confessed that they were encouraged to find the best way of learning that worked for them. During my time at Templeton, I met students who followed the fashion trends in their attire and those who simply opted for the daily khaki-polo combination. I watched the school community as they cheered their near-graduates giving senior speeches. I noticed that some students were more excited about participating in sports than participating in class discussions. They were all different, but they all shared the same fundamental principles and core values.

Traditions and Expectations

This work concentrated on discovering particular methods and practices initiated by Templeton Academy in order to promote college readiness in its students. It also focused on the efficacy of those initiatives examined through the views and perspectives of senior students and school alumni. This section of the chapter discusses college

preparatory traditions – old and new – of the school as well as their efficiency through the lens of seven principles proposed by Conley (2012a). These seven principles or seven recommendations are the general guidelines for a school to follow in order to successfully prepare students for college life and college level work. The principles are based on the four core elements of the college readiness model – key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills – that set the foundation for this research project. The recommendations are very general, they can be interpreted and understood in many different ways, and secondary schools, both public and private, can find their own unique way of implementing these principles.

The first one recommends that every high school which has a goal of preparing students for success in college needs to “create and maintain a college going culture ...” (Conley, 2010a, p. 19). Templeton Academy is a college preparatory school. It announces successful college preparation as a part of its mission (School Website, 2015). There are several methods, which I described in the previous chapter, that the academy created in order to successfully maintain a college going culture. Those include the system of advisors that in practice serve in a dual status. On one hand, an advisor plays the role of a parent for a student away from home; on the other hand, an advisor is a knowledgeable adult who, much like a university advisor, can give a useful advice on attending college, choosing major, and other college related information. Furthermore, having one-on-one conversations with adults – course instructors, advisors, coaches – exposes the students to the idea that the adults are there to help them, not to sink them or to bring them down. It diminishes the unexplainable fear of authority.

Exposing students to leadership opportunities - whether in residence halls, in sports, or on campus in general - encourages them to be more accountable for their own actions. After all, other students look up to them. Making high school classes last as long as a typical college class does, and conducting a class in way of a college seminar, sets or often adjusts the expectations of the students of a college classes and exposes them to the difference between high school and college courses. Moreover, most of the independent schools, and Templeton is not an exclusion, have an established system of rewards for those students who are academically successful as well as a support system for those students who need their motivation to be boosted from time to time (Cookson & Persell, 1985). In other words, the schools create an environment that encourages learning (Murray, 2008).

The very nature of a boarding school where students live semi-independently and without parental control, where they have to plan their day on their own around classes and extracurricular activities, where they have to know dinner hours in order not to go hungry, where they have to realize that the laundry does not wash itself, all these and many more small factors become a part of the big picture of what it means to thrive in college and succeed living independently.

The core principle promoted at Templeton, which is at the basis all of the techniques mentioned above, is the development of habit. Meaning that by their senior year the students do not have to be reminded about upcoming visits with the advisors, or the college counselor, or the faculty office hours, or the times when their assignments are due. All these behaviors became habitual, became a part of their lives. Tom – one of the school alumni – recalled that when he was a college freshman he spent quite some time

observing other students who did not engage in many of what he thought of as natural college behaviors, which oftentimes resulted in them failing the class. Templeton graduates and senior class student revealed behaviors, necessary for success at an institution of higher learning, without realizing it. They were against plagiarism, they knew how to cite sources in a research paper and how to utilize certain computer programs in order to organize a list of references, they were aware of the differences between articles printed in a newspaper and those published in an academic journal, they were familiar with the concept of office hours and could easily ask a class instructor for help. They were doing all those things not because it was an appropriate college behavior, but because by the 12th grade it became a part of them, it became a part of who they were. They already knew that "...students who succeed in getting degrees must necessarily have learned how to allocate their time, set priorities, and discipline themselves" (Murray, 2008, p. 97). Templeton graduates oftentimes understood that not all college freshmen engaged in these sorts of behaviors only when they started attending an institution of higher education and could compare themselves to others. Such behaviors necessary for success in college became an intrinsic part of their nature because the school *purposefully* structured its curriculum and initiated programs that promoted those traits. It is true that some people prosper despite the obstacles. A majority of high achievers are successful because of the environment they were raised in, the environment that shaped their personalities and worldviews (Gladwell, 2008).

The second recommendation is to "create a core academic program that is aligned with and leads to college readiness by the end of the 12th grade" (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). It is important for a student to be able to see the interconnectedness of knowledge. In

order to accomplish this, it is necessary to align all course syllabi by identifying the major outcomes of each course.

When students enter an institution of higher education, college instructors have certain expectations about their study abilities, character qualities, thinking strategies, and other matters of similar nature (Bok, 2006, 2013; Professor X, 2011). More specifically, college faculty expect students to possess some knowledge in problem formulation, research, interpretation, and communication areas, as well as the ability to make the most logical conclusions with precision and accuracy (Conley, 2010b). Templeton Academy implemented the idea of “Skills Days.” Those are days designated to develop those precise qualities in each of the students starting from grade nine. During Skills Days the instructors of the academy stop teaching course contexts and start developing skills. In other words, they stop teaching the “what” – facts, and start teaching the “how” – the process of argument development, research, presentation, and so on. Certain skills such as citations rules, interview and presentation skills are taught at each grade level. Teachers emphasize the importance of possessing those skills as they apply to their subject or area of expertise. As a result, students revealed an understanding of the word plagiarism and the reasons for not plagiarizing the work of others. Naturally, some of the students revealed a certain fear of the consequences that follow – such as the honor council. Others, however, demonstrated an understanding of the concept regardless of the consequences. They argued that plagiarism was stealing and stealing was contrary to the notion of integrity – one of the school core values. Interestingly, the students assured me that the teachers in school were interested in the opinions and ideas of a particular student, not of some other authors; they were interested in the learning outcomes of a

student, not in the student's ability to retell someone else's work. Donny – a student who transferred to Templeton from a public school – confessed that he previously knew of no way of writing a research paper other than copy-pasting excerpts from various articles from the internet and adding a few connecting sentences. He did not consider it plagiarism; it was a norm until he came to Templeton. Templeton, on the other hand, consistently encouraged explorations of personal ideas and opinions until it becomes a habit. A senior class student Jerome admitted that for him it was easier not to cheat than to cheat.

Wagner (2008) argues that more and more high schools these days concentrate on the students' abilities to memorize a number of facts and then regurgitate them during the final test. Templeton did not believe in tests. Instead, as one of my teacher-participants Joe noticed, students were expected to utilize the abilities they obtained during the Skills Days and conduct a research paper evaluating pros and cons of the issues at hand, as opposed to simply presenting certain facts. Moreover, another teacher stated that he never simply presented the class with an argument. Instead he presented simple facts and asked the students to conduct a research examining the scientific value of those facts, and generate their own opinion based on that research. Not someone else's opinion, but their own. The students were then challenged to present their research in public.

Additionally, teaching did not stop in a classroom. As a part of the curriculum, Templeton initiated immersion trips where students of each grade level were taken on various journeys in order to study and interview the local population and examine their living conditions, or with other goals of similar nature. During such trips students applied the skills and content, they learned in class, to practice. A majority of the school

alumni interviewed for this study recalled that the most important academic skill they learned at Templeton that they made their lives easier in college was the ability to conduct research.

The third recommendation was to: “teach key self-management skills and expect students to use them” (Conley, 2010a, p.20). High school students, Conley (2010a) continues, need to learn and become comfortable with the idea of collaborative learning, they should be able to work independently and in groups on short and long term assignments, as well as participate in study groups. Templeton Academy created several structural arrangements in order to address this issue.

Traditionally college preparatory private high schools have had higher expectations about the students’ achievements both academically and otherwise than their public counterparts (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Wagner, 2008). They set higher demands towards students’ academic accomplishments and their personal behaviors. Students who transferred to Templeton from public institutions – Jerome and Ricardo – agreed that the atmosphere that they had been exposed to in high school did not promote learning because the majority of students at those institutions did not have long term goals; they just wanted to finish their studies as soon as possible. Templeton’s environment, on the contrary, encouraged them to develop and have bigger goals because everyone in the community held dreams and goals in their lives that they were trying to achieve. Joe, a faculty member, explained that a lot of students who transferred to Templeton could not manage their time or could not write a good paper, not because they were incapable of doing that, but simply because no one has ever expected them to do that. Once they found themselves in an environment of like-minded individuals, they were much more

willing to try. Henry David, another faculty member, noted that students typically expected to be pushed to their limits, they were taught resilience. They were taught the idea that "...a rational being can turn each setback into raw material and use it to achieve its goal" (Aurelius, 2003, p. 108). Global Nomad agreed by admitting that Templeton provided students with a number of opportunities to achieve certain goals, so that the students could understand the falsity of the notion that as individuals they were only given a certain amount of intelligence.

Moreover, throughout the year, as described in chapter four, students were given individual as well as group assignments. Students were challenged not only to work in groups but also to present the results of their work in a form of a PowerPoint© presentation. Student-participants also remembered that whenever they struggled with their homework, participating in study groups was one of the ways to solve the problem. Some of the academy alumni admitted that they opted for the help of study groups when they experienced troubles understanding certain academic concepts in college. Templeton also initiated less structured evening study hours. Lofty achievers who earned a high enough GPA were not required to study during the evening hours that were designated for the students to complete their homework. Alice, a faculty member, noted that such students were entrusted with freedom because by having a high GPA they showed satisfactory self-management skills and did not need the school to set up a structure for them. One of the senior students confessed that he learned the consequences associated with the absence of the structure the hard way. Once his GPA was high enough and the structure was taken away his grades became worse and he was quickly returned back to the structured study hours. It took him some time to understand that he

actually needed some structure, that he was able to succeed in the first place because of the structured study hours.

Templeton students also had 24-hour access to their grade books which were electronically posted on the school's portal. Jack, a faculty member, also stated that most of the teachers exchanged emails with students on a regular basis discussing the grades for the assignments, and mistakes that could be avoided in the future projects. Students found such responsiveness of teachers to be very supporting and encouraging.

To address the issues associated with non-academic behaviors, Templeton created the six core values discussed above, values that everyone in the community was compelled to adhere to. Moreover, the academy initiated a prefect system in the residence halls. Prefects were selected from the students, and the study participants regarded them as well-rounded individuals. Tom, Templeton alumni, admitted that being a prefect in high school gave him enough confidence to apply for leadership positions later on college campus. Another initiative was establishing an honor code. Every student agreed to follow the honor code and to face the consequences if found guilty of breaching it. In order to be found guilty or not guilty a student had to stand before the honor council primarily comprised of other students. While the reasons for facing the honor council were primarily academic in nature, the existence of the student led honor council promoted students to evaluate their personal behavior. Based on the responses provided by the student-participants, the honor council was not regarded as a mechanism created by teachers to bring students down. Interestingly, it was treated as a law, as a motive to examine personal behaviors and attitudes.

The fourth recommendation is to “make college real by preparing students for the complexity of applying to college and making the transition successfully” (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). It would be wrong to say that all new students who entered Templeton had a clear idea of what type of college they wanted to attend. Contrary to the common myth, many of them were not high achievers or extremely smart (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009), and some of them had certain challenges associated with studying in a typical classroom. Many of the students did not possess any knowledge about institutions of higher education in the United States (Chang, 2011). One of my participants admitted that his familiarity with college and universities was limited to school who have big athletic teams. Hence, he wanted to be an athlete of some sort. Therefore, it was through the efforts of the school that the students discovered what they want to be and what college would be right for them.

There is a special time set aside in the curriculum designated to familiarize students with the technicalities of submitting a college application. There is also a lot of one-on-one work between a student and a college advisor. Sarah, a Templeton graduate, was mesmerized by the institution her college advisor attended. Templeton encourages students to visit various universities in the local area and beyond. Moreover, after some of the athletic events a teacher might stop by a near-by college and take a tour so that the students can understand the differences between an urban and a suburban campus, between a big research university and a small liberal arts school. Conley (2005; 2010b) emphasizes that freshmen students need to be aware of the variety of cultures that exist in different institutions of postsecondary learning before they apply to them. According to school teachers and administrators, Templeton does not have a goal of sending as many

students as possible to the Ivy League schools or other high ranking institutions.

Students and alumni, as if supporting that statement, reported that the school faculty and the college counsel strived to find a college that would be the best fit for a particular student. All of the alumni interviewed during this project revealed complete satisfaction with the college they attended, their plans to stay at the same college for all four year and to graduate.

At Templeton students learn about the non-academic part of college life and necessary college behaviors by discussing college experience with teachers who are always there to offer advice and share stories about the culture of their alma mater. Students learn college life by living on a school campus that is, on one hand, structured, but, on the other hand, organized in the way as to present students with the basic idea of what it means to live on a college campus. Semi-independent living and long-term assignments promote the development of time-management skills. Students are aware of deadlines and the consequences of not conforming to them. The environment created by the academy is such that it encourages the students to learn from small mistakes in high school in order to avoid big mistakes in college. Kedron, a student participant, noticed that by the senior year the majority of the students knew how to effectively manage their time, when to stop and chat with friends, and when to concentrate on doing some work on a long-term assignment. Another student assured me that the teachers did not babysit or control the students in every step on the way, whether academically or otherwise. The teachers were there when a student needs help but they did not overemphasize their authority by offering unnecessary assistance.

That is Templeton's way. Some research suggests another way of promoting successful transition to college: the method of teaching high school courses on a college campus where high school students not only familiarize themselves with the nature of college, but also take some of the courses together with college students (Edmunds, 2012). Students learn college behaviors by observing the behaviors of the actual college students. They are also taught "college behaviors and skills" in an academic course (Edmunds, 2012, p. 87). I see two flaws in such approach. First of all, not all freshman college students behave appropriately, that is they might not set the best example for a high school pupil. Research demonstrates that some freshmen students at community colleges or at certain four-year schools with open admissions are not prepared for college level work (Bok, 2013; Gross, 1999; Professor X, 2011). Therefore, the example that they might set seems to be dubious at best and destructive at worst. Second, teaching non-academic behaviors in an academic setting might not be as affective because we do not always apply the theory to practice. Sometimes theory does not apply to certain situations; at other instances we are unable to see a correlation between the two; yet at some point in our lives we understand what we need to do but cannot make ourselves do it simply for the lack of practice. One might know exactly what a certain Chinese character looks like, know in theory the sequences with which the lines have to be put on paper, but without practice the final product end up only resembling the original character, become a scraggly version of it. Similarly, a high school student who was only exposed to the idea of time management in class but never had a chance to apply it to practice might only be marginally better than a student who never heard of the concept.

However, both of those students are at a disadvantage to the one who was able to repeatedly practice the skill of time management for quite some time.

The fifth recommendation was: “create assignments and grading policies in high school that more closely approximate college expectations” (Conley, 2010a, p. 20).

During the entire ten years of my secondary schooling, college was not even once mentioned in class. Paradoxically, starting from the fifth grade the teachers’ behavior in class and the overall demand of the school classes closely resembled those that I later encountered in college. Secondary school classes were not as long as the college lectures and a student could not choose a major to pursue. However, there were a number of courses that resembled college seminars, there was always a lot of homework, students had to make presentations in front of the class, teachers never controlled the step-by-step process of assignments, and the final grade for the class was always heavily affected by the final exam. Certainly, not all classes in high school had an official final exam, but all classes in college did. Neither school nor college ever had tests, all the exams were conducted in the form of oral discussions with the course instructor. There was never a focus on the *process* of obtaining knowledge. Secondary school was a little more structured than college, but certain homework was assigned simply for student’s self checking. In college a student could enroll in a class then miss the entire semester only to show up for the final exam. If that student was smart enough to support a conversation and answer all of the questions posed by a course instructor, he would get an excellent grade. Both secondary school and college exercised minimum control. If a student needed more structure in order not to fall behind, it was the parents’ job to create it, not the school’s.

I found certain similarities between Templeton and my personal high school experience. First of all, Templeton Academy stepped away from the idea of teaching to the test. Joe, one of the participants, explained that the goal of the education at Templeton was not to get students to some of the most prestigious colleges and universities, but to make sure that the students could succeed in any college they chose to attend. In other words, the school concentrates *not on getting* students to college, but on teaching them how to survive and *prosper* throughout that time *once* they are *admitted*. In fact research shows that many institutions of higher learning do not require students to present SAT or ACT scores, instead they base their admission on "...grades, cocurricular [sic] activities, portfolios, and interviews" (Texley, 2007, p. 31).

Second, students at Templeton, as in college, are assigned long term projects. Caitlin, a Templeton senior, shared that during the senior year students have several long term assignments and it was a student's responsibility to find time to complete those projects. Charlie, another senior student, noted that starting from his first year at Templeton he was taught on how to manage big, long term assignments, how to break them down into smaller more manageable pieces, and approximately how much time needed to be allocated to each of those pieces. Richard also noted that during the senior year teachers often assigned certain homework but they did not check it, students were trusted to complete it in order to ensure that they understood the concepts discussed in class.

Third, Sol Kaplan, the Templeton faculty member, recalled that the academic curriculum at the academy was reinforced by certain purposefully designed extra-curricular activities. Mary Beth, the school alumna, remembered that involvement in

sports and various volunteering opportunities helped her learn time management skills, and helped her understand the amount of time she needed to allocate to certain assignments. Also, despite her initial struggles to adjust to a big university coming from a small high school like Templeton, Mary Beth felt that she was quite prepared academically, she was motivated enough and could study independently without constant encouragement and control, she was aware of the professors' office hours and where to look for help when the help was needed, and she was comfortable learning in study groups. Austin, another academy alumnus, named his exposure to certain websites and databases and the ability to conduct research project as one of the most helpful things that the high school equipped him with.

Finally, Templeton encourages students to make mistakes, not to give up, to correct what can be corrected, and to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. The idea is that if a student makes a mistake in a supportive environment it would be easier to recuperate. Tom, an academy alumnus, provided an example from his personal experience. He believed that one of the biggest issues that freshmen face in college was time management as a lot of them could not manage their free time which was the reason they oftentimes fell behind and failed a class. He admitted that he already made the same mistakes in high school that some of his college classmates were making in college. He figured out his own learning style back in high school where he was given enough support to recover from mistakes.

The sixth recommendation was to: "make the senior year meaningful and challenging" (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). Conley (2010a) argues that for many high school students the senior year is too easy, that they often become bored, that high schools need

to expose students to challenging projects, encourage them visit college campuses, and put them in uncomfortable situations. The early college model discussed above promotes the idea of conducting high school classes on college campuses (Edmunds, 2012).

Templeton did it in a different way.

Mary Beth, Templeton alumna, shared that very often the Templeton faculty intentionally created situations where she was pushed out of her comfort zone. She did not particularly enjoy those moments but they helped her get a better understanding of what sort of person she really was. As a result, when she entered college she decided to forget the shy girl she once was in high school and started applying for certain leadership positions in various students' organizations. She felt confident enough to do it.

Moreover, Austin admitted that his freshmen year in college was quite comfortable, he did not experience any social or academic challenges that made his transition difficult, he knew where to look for help if he needed it, and he did not find his college courses to be much more challenging than the high school ones. Tom, the Templeton alumnus, remembered that he found certain courses in high school quite difficult but he was aware that teachers were there to help him. He learned the concept of office hours, he figured out how to talk to faculty and what sort of questions to ask. He knew all that because Templeton had it structured into the curriculum, and he applied that experience to college life.

The last recommendation was: "build partnerships with and connections to postsecondary programs and institutions" (Conley, 2010a, p. 20). Templeton encouraged students to apply to any college or university that the students believed they would fit in. There were no institutions of higher education that the school particularly favored or

promoted. Templeton did not have AP (Advanced Placement) courses, it offered Honor courses instead. Honor courses were more challenging than the regular ones but they still did not offer college credit to the students who completed them. One of the teachers shared that there was only one course in science, completion of which allowed students to get three credit hours from a local community college.

The notion of building partnerships between high schools and colleges is based on the assumption that there is great disarray between high school and college courses (Conley, 2010a). That high school and college curricula need to be better aligned (Bok, 2006, 2013). This research project revealed that this assumption is not always right, that some high schools do organize their courses in a way similar to colleges without building any partnerships with near-by colleges or universities.

Another suggestion that lies in the foundation of high school-college partnership is that high school teachers should have more interactions with college instructors, thus become more like them in the ways they conduct classes or assign homework (Conley, 2010a). It is difficult to agree with Gigliotti (2009) who argues that the most important piece of college preparation is competent teachers. Her research discusses the model initiated by Rice University "... that could be implemented by any continuing education unit with the goal of increasing the pipeline of college-ready students..." (Gigliotti, 2012, p. 167). While well trained and highly competent teachers are of utter importance when preparing students for the academic rigors of college-level work, they are only partially responsible for successful preparation of students for college. Other essential components of college readiness, as discussed above, are non-academic, they are responsible for preparing students for college life. Furthermore, as Bok (2013) noted, it

is always easier to focus our attention on the things that are readily detectable and that can be studied and measured; it is much harder to account for other factors that might be affecting students' learning at a greater degree than inadequate teaching, such as family issues, poverty, and the general environment that surrounds the student.

Implications for Future Research

There is an overabundance of research dedicated to the failures of high school graduates. Colleges and universities complain that the majority of freshmen students are unprepared for college-level work; employers grumble that the graduates are not apt for the work environment, that they do not possess the abilities to think critically or express themselves clearly; while society expresses overall dissatisfaction with the irresponsible behaviors of the young generation (Bok, 2013). It might be time to stop looking for a scapegoat and start researching the problem from a different angle. If we consider for a moment that high school graduates are only the images thrown on the wall by a projector. The images are unquestionably more interesting to study than the projector. Those images, however, can only be as good as the apparatus that projects them. Some projectors can be old and outdated but still produce vibrant colors and realistic pictures. Others can be newer and more technologically advanced but constructed with parts of a doubtful quality, therefore, the essential characteristics of the images such projectors generate can only be frowned upon and criticized. Maybe it is time to stop finger pointing at the images, and take a closer look at the projector as well as examine the pieces it is made of. Maybe it is time to compare those components to the parts of the projectors that traditionally have been able to create good quality images year after year. In other words, let's not be obsessed with the looks or brand names, let's research the

intrinsic values of the school programs and initiatives and single out those that do work. After all, “[w]e are not imprisoned by our circumstance...or ...by crushing setbacks, self-inflicted mistakes or our past success. We are not imprisoned by the times in which we live... we are free to choose, free to become great by choice” (Collins & Hansen, 2011, p. 183).

The results of this study can be used as a foundation for building up further research of high school programs and initiatives as they apply to the concept of college readiness. High school administrators can replicate this study and examine their own programs and techniques of preparing students for college using similar methods utilized by this research. It would also be interesting to compare the results of this study to similar case studies of different high schools public and private, boarding and day time. Certain programs, structures, and initiatives implemented by Templeton with some adjustments might also be carried out in other high schools.

This research project might also be helpful to the practitioners in the higher education field who are dedicated to improving the high school-to-college transition process for certain groups of students, especially for first generation college students. Certain programs and methods initiated by Templeton Academy can be adjusted and implemented on a college campus to make the transitions easier. This research might also prove useful to devoted professionals in the area of remediation. It is essential to examine the issue of remediation through the lens of the overall college readiness of a student. To be more precise, it is necessary to explore the reasons for taking remedial courses not simply from the point of the academic unpreparedness of a student, but also from the point of non-academic inability to handle college life. Certain initiatives

implemented at Templeton to address the non-academic side of college readiness might prove vital if introduced on a college campus.

Conclusion

It is not the intent of the researcher to generalize the findings of this study to the public sector, or to disregard the possible complications in the public secondary education that make addressing the issue of college readiness in public schools an extremely difficult task. Moreover, the purpose of this research was not to study the intricacies of the U.S. secondary school system; the point was to identify strategies that *work* and, if properly implemented, do prepare students for college. Once identified, they can serve as a platform for following research projects dedicated to the finding particular ways to implement some of the strategies in a public or private educational setting.

It is not always possible to look for universal generalizations. Moreover, in certain instances the rule of generalization does not work at all. It would be inappropriate to argue that the state of Texas represents the American life style. Similarly, it would be improper to declare that all public schools are bad or all private schools are good. Approximately two decades ago scientists around the world shifted their attention from searching for universals – all encompassing general ideas, and concentrated on examination of particular cases and scenarios – variability (Gladwell, 2004). They stopped looking for universal rules that define human behavior and taste, and focused on differences and variations. In fact, if a group of two hundred people was determined to find the perfect taste of coffee, after much debate, there would be no more than 60 percent agreement on all the qualities of the drink. If that same group was, however, divided into several smaller groups than the satisfaction level with the taste of coffee in

each group would rise to 75 percent (Gladwell, 2004). The difference between 60 percent and 75 percent is the difference between being unsatisfied and absolutely loving it.

It is difficult to find an American educational institution that does not strive for diversity. Many schools embraced the concept of diversity as a part of their mission. The tests intended to assess the academic preparedness of high school students for college are, however, universal. So, the logical goal of such a scenario would be: to take a diverse population of students nationwide and make them the same, the average. By the same token, we could take a group of two hundred coffee drinkers ranging from sweet, weak, and milky lovers to a dark roast no milk variety, test them on drinking cappuccino, and examine how much each participant winced. Education, of course, is not coffee. However, the food industry stepped away from searching for universal answers around the same time that the science did, while the system of secondary education is still searching for the perfect universal test to measure the academic preparedness of high school graduates for college.

This study has revealed a variety of programs and uncovered a number of structures and mechanisms initiated by Templeton Academy in order to increase college readiness in its students. It would not be proper to argue, however, that each program and initiative without any adjustments could be implemented in any high school setting. The implementation of the programs would depend upon the culture of the school, the location, the number and the types of students enrolled, and other factors of similar nature. Further research is needed in this area. Nonetheless, it would be appropriate to state that it is worth our effort to take a look at the whole concept of college readiness

form a different perspective. So far, the government's efforts to better the public sector of secondary education – “crude standardized tests, bonuses for teachers to reward demonstrated improvement, and an emphasis on workplace skills coupled with neglect of the arts and humanities and other fields of study that do not help the economy to lend themselves standardized measurement” (Bok, 2013, p. 214) has not been proven successful in preparing students for college life or college level work. It might be time to step away from general tendencies – the way Templeton did, and take a closer look at variability – the way science did. Such a strategy may prove useful at increasing the college readiness of students – preparing high school graduates for college level work and college life – one school at a time.

It is my hope that this study will provide some measure of encouragement for educational professionals to look at the issue of college readiness from a different angle, to critically examine the approach taken by the main stream to address this matter, and to conduct further research, comprehensively exploring the college preparation programs and techniques implemented by other schools in the public and private sectors.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate in Interview**Invitation for Teachers, Administrators, and School Alumni**

Dear <insert name>:

My name is Natalia Collins and I am a doctoral candidate in Old Dominion University's Higher Education Administration program. The research project is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education.

To accomplish this study the researcher will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. My goal is to examine the initiatives the boarding school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, I would like to explore certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities initiated by the school to prepare the students for the challenges of college life.

You are invited to participate in one 30-45 minute long interview to discuss this topic. Your participation will enhance my understanding of the school community life, academic as well as co-curricular activities. Your knowledge and experience are truly invaluable for my research project. You can find the questions that will be asked during our interview in the attachment.

Please, be assured that all of the information we share during the interview is confidential and that any recorded evidence of the interview will be destroyed at the end of my project.

If you have any questions about this research project, please, contact me at ncoll011@odu.edu or via phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Thank you for helping me with this valuable research.

Sincerely,

Natalia D. Collins, M.A.

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Old Dominion University,

Norfolk, VA

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in Focus Group Interview**Invitation for Students**

Dear <insert name>:

My name is Natalia Collins and I am a doctoral candidate in Old Dominion University's Higher Education Administration program. I am currently collecting data for my dissertational research. The research project is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education.

To accomplish this study I will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. My goal is to examine the initiatives the school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, I would like to explore certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities initiated by the school to prepare the students for the challenges of college life.

You were selected to participate in one hour long focus group interview to discuss this topic. This is a discussion session where eight to ten students will get together and will be asked their opinion on certain questions and problems regarding school life. Your participation will enhance my understanding of the school community life, academic as well as co-curricular activities. Your knowledge and experience are truly invaluable for my research project.

Please, be assured that all of the information we share during the focus group session is confidential and that any recorded evidence of the session will be destroyed at the end of my project.

Please note that you must be 18 or older to participate.

If you agree to participate or if you have any questions about this research project, please, contact me at ncoll011@odu.edu or via phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Thank you for helping me with this valuable research.

Sincerely,

Natalia D. Collins, M.A.

Doctoral Candidate

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Old Dominion University,

Norfolk, VA

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Observation

Invitation for Teachers

Dear <insert name>:

My name is Natalia Collins and I am a doctoral candidate in Old Dominion University's Higher Education Administration program. I am currently collecting data for my dissertational research. The research project is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education.

To accomplish this study the researcher will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. My goal is to examine the initiatives the boarding school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, I would like to explore certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities initiated by the school to prepare the students for the challenges of college life.

You are invited to participate in one class session long observation, during which I will quietly sit in the back of the classroom observing your classroom routine and the activities you organized for the class. Your participation will enhance my understanding of the academic life of the school. Your knowledge and experience are truly invaluable for my research project.

Please, be assured that all of the information shared during the session is confidential and that any evidence of the session will be destroyed at the end of my project.

If you agree to participate or if you have any questions about this research project, please, contact me at ncoll011@odu.edu or via phone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. Thank you for helping me with this valuable research.

Sincerely,

Natalia D. Collins, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
Old Dominion University,
Norfolk, VA

Appendix D: Interview Consent Form Old Dominion University**Informed Consent Form (teachers, administrators, alumni)**

PROJECT TITLE: Assessing a college readiness model for an independent residential school.

INTRODUCTION

The dual purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

RESEARCHERS

Dana D. Burnett, Ph.D. Professor, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

Natalia D. Collins, M.A. Doctoral candidate, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

This exploratory study is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education. To accomplish this study the researcher will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. The researcher will examine the initiatives the boarding school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities of the school will be examined.

If you say YES, then your participation will last approximately 45 minutes. The interview will be conducted on the school premises and will be electronically recorded. Approximately 20 similarly situated participants will be taking part in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

You must be age 18 years or older to participate in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: No known risks to health, well-being, career advancement or academic success have been identified.

BENEFITS: By participating in this research you will not only gain experience in the field of social research, but will also provide invaluable information to the topic of college readiness. The results of this project will be made available in the form of a dissertation. It is researcher's hope that this study will have a profound impact upon initiatives and programs developed and implemented by the school in order to prepare students for college-level work.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to provide any monetary payment or form of compensation for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, it will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants will be assigned a code number and/or will be offered to select a pseudonym so that their name will not be attached to his or her responses. Only researchers involved in the study will have access to data sheets. All data and participant information will be kept in a locked and secure location. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not personally identify you. Documents and records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with legal oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to provide you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. Shall you have any questions, you may contact Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form in its entirety or have had it read to you in its entirety, that you are satisfied that you fully understand this form without exception, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

By signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should provide you a copy of this form for your records, but it is your responsibility to obtain a copy and by signing agree that you have been presented a copy of this form.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date
--	-------------

Appendix E: Focus Group Interview Consent Form Old Dominion University**Informed Consent Form (students)**

PROJECT TITLE: Assessing a college readiness model for an independent residential school.

INTRODUCTION

The dual purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

RESEARCHERS

Dana D. Burnett, Ph.D. Professor, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

Natalia D. Collins, M.A. Doctoral candidate, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

This research project is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education. To accomplish this study the researcher will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. The researcher will examine the initiatives the boarding school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities of the school will be examined.

If you say YES, then your participation will last approximately one hour. The focus group interview will be conducted on the school premises and will be electronically recorded. Approximately 20 similarly situated participants will be taking part in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

You must be age 18 years or older to participate in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: No known risks to health, well-being, career advancement or academic success have been identified.

BENEFITS: By participating in this research you will not only gain experience in the field of social research, but will also provide invaluable information to the topic of college readiness. The results of this project will be made available in the form of a dissertation. It is researcher's hope that this study will have a profound impact upon initiatives and programs developed and implemented by the school in order to prepare students for college-level work.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to provide any monetary payment or form of compensation for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, it will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants will be assigned a code number and/or will be offered to select a pseudonym so that their name will not be attached to his or her responses. Only researchers involved in the study will have access to data sheets. All data and participant information will be kept in a locked and secure location. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not personally identify you. Documents and records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with legal oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to provide you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. Shall you have any questions, you may contact Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form in its entirety or have had it read to you in its entirety, that you are satisfied that you fully understand this form without exception, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

By signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should provide you a copy of this form for your records, but it is your responsibility to obtain a copy and by signing agree that you have been presented a copy of this form.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date
---	-------------

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date
--	-------------

Appendix F: Observation Consent Form Old Dominion University

Informed Consent Form (teacher observation)

PROJECT TITLE: Assessing a college readiness model for an independent residential school.

INTRODUCTION

The dual purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

RESEARCHERS

Dana D. Burnett, Ph.D. Professor, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

Natalia D. Collins, M.A. Doctoral candidate, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

This exploratory study is dedicated to identifying certain programs and initiatives developed by the school in order to prepare its students for the rigors of a college education. To accomplish this study the researcher will conduct several interviews, focus groups, and observations of class sessions. The researcher will examine the initiatives the boarding school undertakes to prepare its students for college. Specifically, certain strategies and programs, academic and co-curricular activities of the school will be examined.

If you say YES, then your participation will last the duration of one class session. The observation will be conducted in the classroom and notes will be taken. Approximately three more class sessions besides this one will be observed.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

You must be age 18 years or older to participate in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: No known risks to health, well-being, career advancement or academic success have been identified.

BENEFITS: By participating in this research you will not only gain experience in the field of social research, but will also provide invaluable information to the topic of college readiness. The results of this project will be made available in the form of a dissertation. It is researcher's hope that this study will have a profound impact upon initiatives and programs developed and implemented by the school in order to prepare students for college-level work.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to provide any monetary payment or form of compensation for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, it will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants will be assigned a code number and/or will be offered to select a pseudonym so that their name will not be attached to his or her responses. Only researchers involved in the study will have access to data sheets. All data and participant information will be kept in a locked and secure location. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not personally identify you. Documents and records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with legal oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to provide you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. Shall you have any questions, you may contact Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form in its entirety or have had it read to you in its entirety, that you are satisfied that you fully understand this form without exception, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Natalia Collins, Doctoral Candidate, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dr. Dana Burnett, Chair of the Dissertation Committee, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX

By signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should provide you a copy of this form for your records, but it is your responsibility to obtain a copy and by signing agree that you have been presented a copy of this form.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Teachers and Administrators

Questions for teachers and administrators of the school (45 minutes interviews):

1. Could you please create a pseudonym to be referred to in the final report?
2. How does the school develop problem formulation in students?
3. How does the school develop research skills in students?
4. How does the school develop communication skills in students?
5. How does the school promote the retention of the foundational ideas from core subjects in students?
6. How does the school familiarize the students with the structure of knowledge?
7. How does the school promote persistence in students?
8. How does the school promote motivation in students?
9. How does the school develop help seeking abilities in students?
10. How does the school develop time management skills in students?
11. How does the school develop study skills in students such as test taking, memorization, strategic reading, and note taking?
12. How does the school develop collaborative learning skills in students?
13. How does the school develop self-monitoring skills?
14. How does the school develop postsecondary awareness in students?
15. How does the school promote role and identity development in students?
16. What are the pros and cons of the new curriculum?
17. If you were in charge, how would you change the program?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix H: Interview Protocol

School Alumni

Questions for school alumni (30 minutes interviews):

1. Could you please create a pseudonym to be referred to in the final report?
2. How many years ago did you graduate?
3. How did you select a college to attend?
4. What kind of college extracurricular activities do you enjoy?
5. What activities or programs you participated in during high school do you find to have been the most helpful during your college years?
6. How would you describe your grades?
7. When you find yourself struggling with certain assignments or courses, what do you normally do?
8. What do you plan to be doing after you receive your Bachelor's degree?
9. If you were to become the headmaster of your high school, how would you change it?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add to help me better understand your college experience?

Appendix I: Focus Group Interview Protocol**Students**

Questions for focus group interviews with students (1 hour):

1. Let's briefly introduce ourselves: please tell me your name and a bit about yourself.
2. When you need to write a term paper for a class, how do you find information? What websites do you use and why?
3. Now I want to present a scenario for you. Pretend that I am new to your class. The semester started 4 weeks ago but I am already struggling with my history course. I just cannot get all the reading done on time and I am falling behind with the facts and dates I need to memorize. I feel a bit scared because everyone else seems to be doing great. If I ask too many questions everyone will look at me as if I am stupid. I simply don't know what to do.

What would you do if you were in my shoes?

4. Here is another scenario. I am a 10th grader. My assignment was to write a one-page response to the question "What effect do plastic bottles have upon the environment?" Since I only have two days to complete this assignment, I open a web browser, type in my question, and click "search." On the first page I see four different newspaper articles written on this topic. I read them all, choose the one I like, copy paste it into my paper, and submit it the next day. The teacher gave me an "F".

Who was right, the teacher or me and why?

Why do you think the teacher gave me an "F"?

What would you do if you were me?

5. What are you going to do after you graduate from high school?
6. If you were in charge of this school, how would you change the program here?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion today?

Appendix J: Observation Protocol**Semi-structured observation protocol (teachers):**

Observation points	Notes
How does the teacher refer to students?	
Classroom management issues.	
What kind of homework is assigned? Is it in the form of projects or textbook assignments?	
Does the teacher mostly refer to the textbook or are there other means of conveying knowledge involved?	
Is the class conducted in the form of a lecture with the teacher disseminating knowledge or in the form of discussion?	
Does the teacher require students to raise their hands to speak?	
How does the teacher encourage students to show initiative?	
How does the teacher encourage collaboration?	
How does the teacher promote critical thinking? Is the teaching based on challenging some theories or on strict memorization of them?	
How does the teacher promote information literacy? Does the teacher require the students to use the course textbooks exclusively when searching for answers or are other sources of information permitted?	
Additional comments	