Supporting Improvement in Academic Outcomes and Self-Efficacy for Black Male Varsity Athletes

Katherine M. Currie

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Supporting Improvement in Academic Outcomes and Self-Efficacy for Black Male Varsity Athletes

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who have helped, supported and encouraged me. To EB Poziemski: you made this entire journey possible starting with my undergraduate career and I am forever grateful for your endless and unconditional love and support. You saw the possibilities inside of me long before I saw them in myself and it took me so long to believe you, but you never gave up on me. To Mike Teasley: you planted the seeds for this entire project. You challenged me to be the change that I wanted to see and to push others. I am immensely grateful for your constant patience, cherished friendship and consistent support. To Patty Damrow Currie: you are a wonderful mother who taught me what it is to be a strong woman. You taught me persistence and perseverance. You passed on a dedication to social justice and a commitment to leaving a place better than you found it. Thank you for helping me to be the next strong woman in a line of strong women.
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ABSTRACT

Athletics can have a profoundly positive impact on high school students and can be an avenue for the athletes to attend college. However, some athletes struggle to cope with the demands of athletics and this is especially true for Black male athletes who are already members of a historically marginalized community. The purpose of this study is to examine the support that the Academic Success Center (ASC) offers for students and its impact on their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. A mixed methods data analysis revealed three themes: positive impact on academic outcomes, positive impact on self-efficacy and student frustration with perception. As a result of the support offered in the ASC the students were able to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy but were consciously frustrated with the way that they were being perceived by their teachers.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Athletics can have a profound impact on high school students, as when they are playing at the varsity level, they devote as much or more time to athletics as they do to academics. For student-athletes, participation in athletics at the high school level can prove to be an invaluable experience. Participation in athletics, in its most ideal form, teaches cooperation, teamwork, dedication, hard work, accountability and time-management in addition to the benefits to physical health. These life lessons come from learning to be part of a cohesive team and having to balance the time demands of athletics and other commitments. Athletic teams often foster life-long friendships with teammates and relationships with coaches that can act as a support network for the rest of the athlete’s life. There are few other activities that can boast all of the benefits that participation in athletics can, including providing students with opportunities to earn both full and partial college scholarships. Athletic programs, when they are student-centered, can have a profoundly positive impact on student-athletes.

At the high school level, athletics can be a recruiting tool for both private and public institutions. Collegiate athletics, in America in particular, has adopted a business model and that business model is owned and managed by the National Association of Collegiate Athletics (NCAA) and its member institutions, which are universities. At its inception, it was often operating at the expense of student athletes, who are overwhelmingly Black males (Price, 2017). Student athletes are often recruited or
accepted into the institution for their academic ability but fail to make academic progress. The unwritten agreement is that the athlete is there for the athletic program and is secondarily a student. To remedy that, the NCAA added policies aimed at supporting academic performance. Students and teams in general must meet an annual progress rate (APR) that works to hold institutions accountable for the academic progress of their student-athletes. To do this, the NCAA uses a team-based metric that accounts for the eligibility and retention of each student-athlete for each term. The APR first emerged to address the failure rates of student-athletes. At the time, the only measure of academic success was graduation rate, but it did not offer enough of a holistic picture of academic achievement (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). The APR system works as a framework to help college programs gauge academic successes and include supports for their athletes as needed.

As high schools are direct feeders for the collegiate athletic programs, they have their own academic qualifications that students must meet in order to remain eligible to participate in athletics (Hawkins, 2017). There have been many efforts geared at avoiding what Hawkins (2017) referred to as “academic exploitation” (p. 33).

Academic exploitation occurs because there is an unspoken agreement between institutions and athletes that “promise[s] educational opportunities to these athletes in exchange for their athletic services, but the structural arrangement within these institutions are not...conducive to holding up their end of the bargain” (Hawkins, 2017, p. 33). Institutions that are participating in academic exploitation are failing to truly educate their athletes, meaning that they are failing to uphold their agreement. Athletics intersects with academics, as there is the idea that athletic talent can be exchanged for educational opportunities and support. The issue is that at times institutions seem to benefit from the
athletic talent of the student without ensuring that they are afforded academic opportunities and the support promised in the original agreement.

Academic exploitation becomes even more problematic because it “exacerbates centuries-old inequities among Black and White students in higher education” (Price, 2017, p. 1). High schools are first and foremost educational institutions that are designed with the goal of educating students. Strong athletic programs, which benefit these institutions, are not problematic on their face, but issues arise when these institutions fail to educate learners who have been accepted or recruited to play athletics. Many institutions are actively working to avoid academic exploitation and account for the success of its student-athletes, but it is not an easy feat, especially considering that Black males who are coming into high school programs are more likely to be academically behind than their White peers (Williams, 2020).

Problem of Practice

Collegiate Academy (pseudonym) in South Carolina is an independent school experiencing growth of both academic and athletic programs. The school’s annual enrollment has grown significantly for the past 10 years. Currently, the school serves 407 students in grades 6-12 with 16% of the population being Black students. With increasing enrollment, the competitiveness of the school’s athletic programs has also increased. The school recently moved from a 2A classification to 4A, which were determined by the number of students enrolled. This jump up in division has meant there is an increased focus on building skilled athletic teams to compete at the 4A level, as the school has a tradition of strong athletic teams.

As the school grows, there is a rising concern, which is quickly becoming a reality, that students are not performing at their academic grade level. Being a collegiate
school with a 100% acceptance rate to four year universities for its students accepting students who are below grade level presents a challenge to the school’s structure and model. Accepting students who are below grade level presents a challenge for this school because these students have to make significant academic progress in order to be accepted into a four year university or college, which is a graduation requirement. However, in order for athletics to remain competitive in line with the school’s growth, more students are accepted that are academically lower achieving than in previous years. When considering new students, the applications are considered holistically, while the students are required to have passed their core classes, academic requirements are not the only factor that determines if a student is accepted into the school. The school is working to make sure that they are offering opportunities to as many students as possible, while attempting to maintain high academic standards.

Coinciding with the increase in enrollment, the school administration noticed a dip in standardized testing scores, and upon closer examination, Black male students were the lowest performing group. In 2020, 80% of the Black males in 9th-11th grade who took the PSAT did not meet benchmarks in math or evidence-based reading and writing, which contrasts the schoolwide 46% of students who did not meet benchmarks. Of the Black male students that did not meet benchmarks, 100% of them were involved in varsity athletic programs, football and basketball being the most popular, accounting for 96% of student athletes. In the same year, the White male students playing varsity athletics had an average GPA that was 12.5% higher than their Black counterparts. Academic performance is often determined by the intersection of several factors that often occur outside the school’s grounds (Muhammad, 2020). However, the majority of responsibility of working to get students to meet benchmarks lies with the schools. As a
result, schools are working to implement systems or services that help students to achieve academic success.

Table 1.1 Percentage of Students Not Meeting 2020 PSAT Benchmarks in Math or Evidence-Based Reading and Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent of Black Male Athletes</th>
<th>Percent of Black Male Non-Athletes</th>
<th>Percent of White Male Athletes</th>
<th>Percent of White Male Non-Athletes</th>
<th>Schoolwide Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In efforts to maintain the school’s high academic expectations and fulfill the mission of the school, I started the Academic Success Center (ASC), with the full support of the administrative team. The ASC was a direct reaction to the data that suggests that the students were not meeting benchmarks. The program is open to all students but is specifically set up with the student athlete’s schedule in mind. Due to school policy, athletes who are underperforming in classes are referred to the ASC, in hopes of improving their academic performance. Right away, I noticed that students who are required to attend ASC sessions were majority Black male varsity athletes. In 2020, 72% of the male varsity athletes referred to the ASC were Black. Many of these students were performing below grade level and had very low confidence levels in terms of their academic ability. Most of the students admitted to disliking their classes and believed that they were unable to achieve As or Bs in their classes. Some believed that it was because their teachers did not like them, however the majority believed that they were simply not good at school and classroom learning.

The ASC is open to all students, should they feel the need to attend or need support. However, athletes are referred to the ASC based on their academic performance. The ASC’s primary job is to determine if athletes are eligible to play in their sport.
Athletes are technically eligible to play with a passing grade in their classes of 60% or better, however are often referred if they are determined to be underperforming. I compile weekly academic reports that contain grades for every varsity athlete, which are sent directly to the coaching staff. Then, I determine, along with their teachers, if the student is underperforming, or needs additional academic support. If there is a need, students are referred to the ASC. Some coaches automatically refer their entire teams at the beginning of the season. For example, every player on the varsity boys’ basketball team works with the ASC throughout the duration of their season. In the off season they are referred on an as needed basis.

This study aims to examine the academic outcomes and self-efficacy of varsity student athletes at Collegiate Academy and the systems that support these learners. Prior to this study, I developed the ASC and became an Associate Athletic Director, as well as English Department Chair. I work with varsity athletes who need academic support, making sure they have the tools that they need to be successful, including the services provided by the ASC. This work includes (a) tutoring, (b) academic interventions, (c) administering assessments, (d) helping students synthesize new concepts, (e) resolving issues concerning equity and access, (f) communicating with parents, and (g) sending weekly academic reports to other members of the athletic administration staff and other student support services. Through my work with the ASC, it became clear that the athletes, particularly the male athletes, who were also more likely to be minority students, were in the greatest need of support.

Through the work with the ASC and an examination of the standardized test data for Collegiate Academy, the disparity in academic outcomes for Black male athletes becomes apparent. Keeping these observations in mind, the problem of practice for this
study is that Black male varsity athletes have lower academic outcomes than their peers and exhibit low levels of self-efficacy in terms of academic ability. This study works to investigate how Collegiate Academy is working to support the learning and success of its Black male athletes and how they are working to overcome barriers to success to support the academic achievement of their student athletes.

**Research Question**

To what extent do the supports offered in the Academic Success Center (ASC) work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the support that the ASC offers for students and its impact on their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. For this study, academic outcome is used as the concrete version of academic achievement, including information related to grades. In a more refined sense, academic outcomes are assessments such as tests, quizzes, homework and classwork. The term academic outcome in this study does not include standardized testing due to the duration of the study. Additionally, for this study, self-efficacy is defined as the students' beliefs in their own ability to master or perform new skills and tasks related to academics (Eissa, 2012). More simply, self-efficacy refers to the student’s beliefs in their own capabilities to achieve in specific academic domains (Bandura, 2006).

This study examines the extent (if any) to which the supports offered by the ASC help to improve students’ academic outcomes, and/or their self-efficacy. The ASC offers a myriad of services that are accessible to all students that attend Collegiate Academy. However, student-athletes are required to pass their classes in order to remain eligible to play, so they are often referred, or at times, mandated to attend the ASC, with the
majority being Black male student-athletes. The ASC is designed with the goal of supporting students both with their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. It focuses on offering support for student-athletes both during and after the school day. The supports that are offered include, but are not limited to: individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, socioemotional and academic check ins, and collaboration with parents and teachers. Each student that comes into the ASC receives services that are specifically tailored to their needs. This study seeks to examine the extent of the effectiveness of supports offered by the ASC.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is culturally responsive and abolitionist teaching in conjunction with constructivism.

In order to help reach minority and historically marginalized students, teachers have begun to employ abolitionist and culturally responsive teaching methods. These methods are pivotal when interacting with students who are from historically marginalized communities like the Black males in this study. Both pedagogies are deeply concerned with equity, highlighting the differences between equity and equality suggesting that “equity is not equality. These are closely related paradigms, but they represent different commitments to the notions of fairness and opportunity” (Stembridge, 2020, p. 6). Culturally responsive teaching is useful for identifying ways and tools that aim to close equity or opportunity gaps. It provides a framework for practices and larger policies that focus on equity without marginalizing some students over others (Stembridge, 2020).

Abolitionist teaching works in conjunction with culturally responsive teaching, as they are both centered on equity. Abolitionist teaching is the practice of working
alongside and in minority communities using creativity, determination, and the visionary thinking of educators to work to “eradicate injustice in and outside of schools” (Love, 2019, p. 2). Both frameworks are used in determining the most effective way to support the minority student athletes in their pursuit of academic success, as they must contend with the barriers of systemic and institutionalized racism as a part of their educational journey. Abolitionist teaching and culturally responsive teaching offer insight into wrap-around methods of supporting students as they work to overcome the barriers to their success that are so often rooted in widely accepted and deeply ingrained racism and racist notions about the propensity for academic achievement. The ASC center and its teachers employ both abolitionist teaching and culturally responsive teaching in hopes of improving students’ academic outcomes and self-efficacy.

Abolitionist teaching and culturally responsive teaching theories alone are insufficient in understanding how students learn. Vygotsky’s constructivism provides insight into the learner's interaction with others and the learning environment. The theory argues that “learners are believed to be enculturated into their learning community and appropriate knowledge, based on their existent understanding, through their interaction with the immediate learning environment” (Liu & Roberts, 2005, p. 388). This theory underscores the importance of creating an environment that is conducive to learning for the Black male athlete, which is why the ASC relies on both abolitionist and culturally responsive teaching. Knowledge is actively constructed, which is why student participation in learning is so vital to both academic success and self-efficacy.

The ASC is set up with smaller groups than a traditional classroom and more one-on-one opportunities. This structure allows students to take a more active role in their learning with the hope of increasing mastery and self-efficacy. The belief that knowledge
is “actively constructed within the constraints and offerings of the learning environment” guides the set up and execution of the services that the ASC offers, especially for the Black male athletes in this study (Liu & Roberts, 2005, p. 387). The ASC operates chiefly with the goal of supporting student learning and efficacy employing a constructivist approach that is guided by abolitionist and culturally responsive teaching.

**Brief Overview of Methodology**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach with the aim of understanding the extent to which the supports offered by the ASC increase academic outputs and self-efficacy of Black male athletes. Qualitative data will be collected from written responses and pre and post interviews where the participants will have the opportunity to voice their opinions and thoughts in their own words related to self-efficacy and academic outcomes. Quantitative data will be collected among this same group with written surveys using a Likert scale and academic reports that include grade data.

The interaction using qualitative research methods allows me, as the researcher-practitioner, to listen and learn from students as they collaborate in the research process. The qualitative data collection of this study allows a collaborative approach where I will gain invaluable insight into students’ views on their own academic outcomes and self-efficacy.

Over the course of this study, quantitative data collection helps to round out the picture of students’ academic outcomes. For the quantitative element of this study, data is centered on classroom assessment scores such as tests and quizzes, the amount of missing/incomplete work and overall grades in academic classes. Data is comparative in that it is sampled before the learner is enrolled in the ASC and throughout their time working with the ASC. The data is compared pre, during and post exposure to the ASC to
help determine the extent to which the supports that the ASC employs are improving academic outcomes. This data helps to inform the ASC’s practices and guides the creation and implementation of individualized academic support with the hope of maximizing academic outcomes. The benefit of the mixed-method approach is that it supplies the researcher with an extensive picture of students’ academic outcomes and self-efficacy related to the support they receive from the ASC.

**Significance of the Study**

This study examines the effectiveness of the ASC’s supports to determine if they are helping athletes in a way that improves their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. The ASC relies on the collaboration between teachers, administration and coaches who all have the student’s best interest in mind and are working to improve their academic performance. While the structural arrangement of institutions and the subsequent support that they offer may only offer one piece to work towards a more equitable educational experience, it is a localized approach that pushes back against what Love (2019) calls the “educational survival complex.” This complex, where minority students are focused on surviving in the educational system and not thriving, has become so normalized that pushing back against it must come from the immediate and local level. The ASC and those who are affiliated are working to bridge the gap of academic achievement for student athletes at Collegiate Academy.

Academic outputs are historically gatekeepers and this study seeks to examine to what extent specific academic supports work to increase academic outputs, in hopes of providing students access to greater opportunities. Historically, “Black needs and wants have typically not been given serious consideration by White decision makers in major economic, political and social institutions” (Feagin, 2006, p. 20). The work of the ASC
and this study is focused on understanding the needs of Black male athletes to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy. From this understanding, it is possible to build systems that can give Black male athletes the opportunity to excel in school, which can lay the foundation for success later in life.

Currently, despite all of the positive outcomes of participation in athletics, there is a “failure of the current system to truly educate athletes particularly Black football and basketball players” (Hawkings et al., 2017, p. 18). This study, therefore, examines supports that are geared towards specifically supporting this population of learners. This study seeks to understand which of the supports offered by the ASC are most effective and thus can be implemented to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy creating a more equitable school experience for Black male athletes.

**Positionality**

In my roles as an administrator, teacher, and practitioner-researcher, my positionality is multi-dimensional. As an administrator and teacher, this research requires that I am keenly aware of academic outcomes and how students are feeling about their ability to achieve or their self-efficacy. As a researcher, it is particularly important to keep positionality in mind considering that I will be conducting research across racial and gender lines, which will make me an outsider on both accounts. However, I am an integral part of the student’s daily school experience being involved in both athletics and academics, making me an insider in terms of the shared experience at Collegiate Academy. There is a conscious effort to foster a culture of open communication and collaboration throughout this study, which provides the foundations for an effective
relationship with the learners in this study despite researching across race and gender lines and traditional administrator/student power hierarchy.

This study is rooted in social justice and the desire to help foster a more equitable school experience for students. I started the ASC in order to help my students succeed and feel that they could be successful. I continue to make it a priority because I was recently reminded of the cost of what happens when there is no access to opportunities. One of my students, who was the MVP on the state championship winning football team, captain of the basketball team and the most decorated track athlete in the school’s history, was arrested on a murder charge. He was a desperate young man put in a desperate situation after he did not have the skills to stay academically eligible to play college football. It is now likely that this young man, who I know and love, as teachers do, will spend the rest of his life in prison. It is my mission as an educator to help each student to reach their full potential and to work to create systems that support students so they have options and opportunities.

**Dissertation Overview**

Chapter One provides an overview and introduction to this study, which is followed by chapter two that is a thorough review of the relevant literature. The topics for the literature review include the following: (a) systemic racism, (b) intersectionality, (c) equity in education, (d) opportunity gap, (e) teacher expectations, (f) the student athlete’s identity, (g) teaching interventions, (h) culturally responsive teaching, (i) historical context of racism in schools, and (j) historical context of athletics in education and related research.

Chapter Three presents an overview of the methodology for this study, which employs a mixed-method approach to examine the extent that the ASC’s supports
increase academic outcomes and self-efficacy. This chapter will relay how the participants were selected and will include the process of collecting data and analysis.

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. It will include a discussion of the results and an in-depth analysis of the ASC’s supports and their impact on academic outcomes and self-efficacy. Chapter five will follow with a discussion of the implications and findings of this study.

**Definition of Terms**

**academic outcomes:** a concrete version of academic achievement. Academic outcomes include information related to grades. In a more refined sense, academic outcomes are assessments such as tests, quizzes, homework and classwork and include additional factors (e.g., missing work.) The term academic outcome in this study does not include standardized testing due to the duration of the study.

**Academic Success Center (ASC):** a program that focuses on offering support for learners both during and after the school day. The supports that are offered include but are not limited to the following: (a) individualized conferences, (b) subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, (c) socioemotional and academic check ins, and (d) collaboration with parents and teachers.

**self-efficacy:** in terms of this study, students' beliefs in their own ability to master or perform new skills and tasks related to academics (Eissa, 2012). More simply, self-efficacy refers to the student’s beliefs in their own capabilities to achieve in specific academic domains (Bandura, 2006).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Athletics can offer a profoundly positive impact on the development of student athletes. Athletics demands discipline, focus, meeting and setting goals, facing and overcoming adversity, and meeting challenges aggressively and assertively with integrity (Hamilton, 2004). Successful student athletes approach their sport in this manner and must have the tools and support to approach their studies in the same way (Hamilton, 2004). There are several examples of institutions who have invested and are reinvesting in academic support for student athletes (Hamilton, 2004).

Despite the renewed push for academic success for student athletes, there is serious concern at all levels, local, state and national, about the number of Black student athletes, especially males, who are unable to be successful in school settings (Gerdy, 2002). The academic underachievement of Black athletes has been the catalyst for research to determine the factors impeding their academic success. The trend of Black student athletes underachieving has drawn much attention and criticism of both students and institutions (Reynolds et al., 2012). The issues that continue to confront student athletes are relevant and urgent, as they are living, learning and performing in an intense spotlight created by systems of power that are not suited to supporting these athletes (Harmon, 2010).

Black student athletes face a unique set of challenges that can impact academic success, including demands of athletic schedules, gaps in equity and impacts of systemic
racism (Hawkings et al., 2017). Adding to the list of issues facing these Black student athletes is the fact that their stories are largely being told by White educational professionals who do not work to fully understand the Black athletes’ stories and complex identities. These students have been forced to face constant negative stereotyping that follows them based on their race and is supported by negative views of student athletes as unintelligent (Reynolds et al., 2017).

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of the challenges facing student athletes, particularly the Black athlete, and is broken down into several sections including the following: (a) systemic racism, (b) intersectionality, (c) equity in education, (d) the opportunity gap, (e) academic exploitation, (f) the student athlete identity, (g) teaching interventions, (f) culturally responsive teaching, and (g) historical context. When these concepts overlap they paint a picture of the academic exploitation of Black male athletes supported by systemic racism.

**Historical Context of Athletics and Education**

The driving force behind the integration of athletics and academics is the National Collegiate Athletic Association or the NCAA. For roughly 20 years, the NCAA has been making decisions about the eligibility of student-athletes, as it serves as the reigning governing body for collegiate athletics. Currently, the requirements are that high school freshmen student athletes have to achieve a minimum of 10 of 16 required courses before they begin their senior year, seven of which include English, math or science. Athletes attempting to play at the Division I level must have a high school GPA of their core courses of 2.3 and must qualify on a sliding scale that is a combination of the GPA and test scores (Hosick & Sproull, 2012). The NCAA has also implemented penalties for those who participate in academic fraud (Hawkings et al., 2017). All of these academic
requirements have been put in place in efforts to help support student athlete’s academic achievement. There has been significant progress to protect student-athletes.

Earlier NCAA decisions that impacted academics and athletics included the passing of Proposition 48 in 1983, which set a minimum GPA and standardized test scores for incoming college athletes. While the NCAA argued that the goal of Proposition 48 was to improve the educational outcomes for athletes, many objected because they contended that it would put minority students at a disadvantage. The NCAA did not have data to answer the concerns at the time, so they launched their own study and “educational access for low-income and minority populations quickly became an important part of any examination of NCAA academic policy” (Hosick & Sproull, 2012, p. 32).

In 2003, the NCAA established the Academic Progress Rate, or APR to measure academic performance for all collegiate sports teams and student athletes on a term-by-term basis. The APR is a points based system centered around retention and eligibility, which were determined as the strongest indicators if a student-athlete will graduate, meaning there are benchmarks that student athletes must meet in order to satisfy academic progression requirements. The requirements passed in 2003 are more rigorous than previously and are geared toward ensuring that student athletes are receiving an education (Hamilton, 2004; Hosick & Sproull, 2012).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the teams who fail to meet APR benchmarks most often are football and men’s basketball, which also have the highest percentages of Black athletes. 30% of football teams and 20% of men’s basketball teams do not meet the APR benchmarks (Hamilton, 2005). In order to combat this failure, institutions resort to
academic clustering. The clustering of athletes in lower level classes helps students maintain their GPAs so that their team can meet the APR (Hawkings et al., 2017).

High schools use the same models to keep their players eligible to qualify to play according to the NCAA guidelines, including clustering. Every decision made by the NCAA impacts high school athletics, especially the revenue generating sports, which rely on sending their athletes to college to increase the prestige of their program. Coaches must understand the rules, and athletes must follow the rules in order to have the opportunity to play at the college level, which often, because of the intersectional nature of race and socioeconomic status, for many Black student athletes is the only opportunity they have to attend college (Denhart, 2009; Hawkings et al., 2017; Reynolds et al., 2012).

**Systemic Racism**

While perhaps an uncomfortable truth, America is clearly a race-driven society. Race and race relations are at the foundation of the nation, including schooling, despite the argument that America is moving into a so-called post-racial period. Racism is more than a collection of negative stereotypes or notions about a particular race of people. In the United States, the socially constructed racial hierarchy controls lawmaking, institutions like schools, and the everyday life of citizens. Currently, as indicated by the racial tensions in the United States, racial discrimination still confronts Black people in several facets of life including education and educational opportunities and supports (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Faegin, 2006; Williams, 2020).

Most of the systems of power are created and viewed through the White racial frame, which was established with the founding of the nation (Smith, 2021). White racial frame functions as the default world view and, as it is monocultural, by definition it excludes racial minorities, which works to further support systemic racism in the United
States (Faegin, 2006). Interestingly, despite electing Barack Obama, America’s first Black president, the White racial frame persists (Coates, 2017).

While some argue that President Obama’s selection points to a post-racial America, the United States still has a racial caste system that is designed to prevent the social mobility of people who are minorities. Despite serious pushback from minority groups like Black Lives Matter, this White racial framing continues to dominate institutions, including schools, in the United States. Systemic racial oppression was not developed accidently, rather was implemented and sustained purposefully to maintain the power of White Americans and this system is reflected in the American school system (Alexander, 2010; Chang, 2016; Williams, 2020).

**Historical Context of Racism in Schools**

Systemic racism in education has a long history in the United States from as early as the 1700s, as the White dependence on slavery was both economically and socially ingrained in the founding documents of the nation. From 1703-1711, it was illegal to teach enslaved Africans to read; only about 5% of people who were enslaved learned to read and write. America suffered from conflicting ideas and ideals. In the 1860s Horace Mann claimed that education should be available and accessible to all citizens regardless of race and economic status, but from 1860 to 1960, lynchings of Black Americans were commonplace with over 4,000 Black Americans lynched in that time period. The lynching of Black people in America was a stark contrast to Mann’s vision, which reveals the dualistic and conflicting vision for race relations in America (Coates, 2017; DuFresne, 2018).

To continue the disenfranchisement of Black male students, in 1848 the first reform school opened, which combined education and the juvenile justice system for the
first time. This combination is considered to be the beginning of the school to prison pipeline, which disproportionately impacts Black boys (DuFresne, 2018). Black Americans, while only making up 13% of the population, account for 41% of the prison population (Coates, 2017). Schools became punitive places for young Black men (Williams, 2020).

While schools remain largely segregated, schools were officially and legally segregated in 1896 when the Supreme Court ruled that schools could be separate facilities and not inherently unequal in the landmark Plessy v Ferguson case, which became known as separate but equal. It was not until 1933 that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began its efforts to desegregate schools, but experienced backlash like the 1935 law that required South Carolina bus drivers to be the same race as students (DuFresne, 2018; Tatum, 2003).

Despite the backlash, in 1954, the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision was overturned by the Supreme Court’s decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. This case ruled that segregated schools were inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional and schools needed to be integrated. However, there was considerable pushback like the 1974 riots in Boston over the integration of schools and the bombing of 10 school buses that were working to integrate schools in 1971, which was led by the Klu Klux Klan (DuFresne, 2018; Williams, 2020).

Legislation has long played a role in the American educational system. In 1983, the report “A Nation at Risk” was published suggesting that the American education system was failing its students, which was the birth of the accountability movement that eventually transformed into the heightened implementation of standardized testing and increasing educational legislation. This movement gave birth to state based standards
measured by decontextualized testing of the acquisition of knowledge reflected in modern educational legislation including the following: No Child Left Behind in 2001, Race to the Top in 2005, and Every Child (DuFresne, 2018; Schiro, 2013). All of the mentioned educational legislation focuses on standardized testing as the measure of student progress, which are inherently racist and biased (Williams, 2020). Standardized tests like the SAT “have become the most effective racist weapon to ever objectively degrade Black minds” (DuFresne, 2018, p. 112).

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is not strictly about a person being able to name the different parts of their identities, it is a crucial analytical tool that is useful in explaining the complexities of discrimination and power structures and how they interact with identities. As identities are multi-layered and shaped by cultural environments, it makes sense that these different layers interact with systems of power differently, but when considered cumulatively they account for people’s everyday experiences and their relationship with the culture in power (Love, 2019; Muhammad, 2020).

It is important to remember that races are divided among several factors including religion, gender, sexuality, politics and national origin, which creates unique identities despite the illusion that all members of one race share identical experiences and characteristics. However, due to systemic racism, race and socio-economic status are often related. It is more likely, because of the intersectional nature of the factors of race and socioeconomics, that people below the poverty line are also minorities. Indeed, it is impossible to separate racism and economic class, as the economic system, from its foundation, has excluded minorities from reaping its full benefits (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Love, 2019).
Addressing issues of racism while ignoring issues of intersectionality is an incomplete and impermanent approach that will leave major groups of people dissatisfied (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Intersectionality, therefore, is a key concept to understanding the challenges that Black student athletes face in the classroom, suggesting that Black students are starting further behind the metaphorical starting line than their White classmates, which has a lasting impact on their academic performance.

**Equity in Education**

The goal of education is no longer merely equality, but has moved towards equity. To state it differently, equality means that every student has access to the same resources, but does not account for context or other situational factors like systemic racism and intersectionality. It is important to remember that equality is not equity. In other words, equality focuses on outcomes at the end of schooling as a measure of the fairness of the educational experience, whereas equity focuses on inputs at the beginning of the schooling with the goal of working to give all students a fair chance to achieve during their educational experience. Equity is best understood as a performative approach to education, meaning it must act to close the opportunity gap (Love, 2019; Stembridge, 2020).

In addition, equity for Black students is more than the opportunity to attend top notch institutions; true equity moves to restore Black people to positions of power and empowerment. Eurocentric curriculum has a negative impact on Black students, and the achievement of Black males in particular. These learners look for validation from the curriculum to help form and shape their identity, but are unable to find it in a traditional or Eurocentric curriculum. Yet, the goal of any curriculum should be to give students an opportunity to thrive (Love, 2019; Williams, 2020). That is a curriculum that is focused
on equity for Black students focuses on giving these students the tools and space needed to empower them and encourage them to exercise their voices (Chavez, 2021). When curriculums disenfranchise Black male students, they are more likely to stop participating in academics as a whole. Many attribute this as apathy or a lack of investment or ability in these Black male students. However, contrary to popular belief, research indicates that there is not a gap in Black male intellectual ability, and that they are actually responding to disenfranchisement created by schools and their curricula (Williams, 2020).

In a misguided attempt to be more equitable, some teachers and institutions as a whole claim to be colorblind, meaning that they treat people the same regardless of race. However, this ideology is problematic at best. Colorblindness has a clear negative impact on Black students and works to maintain the power structures that are oppressing these students. This ideology allows teachers to treat Black children as if they were White, as White is the default option, as it is the culture in power. This default Whiteness does not account for the unique identity and history of Black students (Love, 2019; Williams, 2020).

As a result of default Whiteness and dilution of racial identities, many Black students choose to self-segregate in order to find some commonalities with others who share the same experiences. This self-segregation is an attempt to protect their identities and offers a sense of safety and security in a learning environment that is not built for them. A truly equitable education includes the learner’s full identity and realizes that honoring that identity is crucial to academic success, which is especially important for Black male students who are at high risk of academic failure (Tatum, 2003; Williams, 2020).
Opportunity Gap

Gaps or lapses in equity and factors like systemic racism and intersectionality mean that minority students, especially Black male students, are being outperformed by their White classmates. However, the opportunity gap is about more than minority students being outperformed, it is about a history of injustice (Love, 2019). In America, 85% of students graduate high school annually; however, only 78% of Black children graduate high school annually (Williams, 2020). Black students who also are from low socioeconomic areas are less likely to finish high school than both their White peers and those who come from higher socioeconomic areas, who are more likely to be White. The difference in graduation rates speaks to the failure of institutions to educate Black children. The data regarding graduation rates reflects the disenfranchisement of Black students in America’s schools and society as a whole (Kaylor & Flores, 2007; Williams, 2020).

High stakes tests, such as the SAT, are academic gatekeepers for many students that work to further widen the opportunity gap. This is especially true for Black students, as these tests are coachable and tend to reward people from high socioeconomic groups who can afford specialized tutors, which tend to be majority White (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These tests serve to further marginalize students who are already being underserved, especially Black male students.

These tests create labels that group students together, effectively segregating schools, which is reinforced by the tendency to cluster athletes, who are more likely to be Black students, into the same academic classes and levels. Some of these clusters occur because of scheduling demands, but others are reliant on biased testing like the SAT or other various placement tests. These academic clusters for athletes, who are more likely
to be Black, are generally less rigorous and further reinforce the student’s underperformance (Hawkings et al., 2017; Muhammad, 2020).

It is rare for these student athletes to break away from these clusters even if they feel like they can perform at a higher level. They are going to seek out the company of people with similar experiences and races (Tatum, 2003). In fact, on a neurological level, the brain seeks to minimize or avoid social threats that create discomfort or are perceived as dangerous and work to maximize opportunities that allow the person to connect with others in their community. Therefore, even if an athlete knows they are underperforming, or placed below their ability, they are going to stay in the cluster for their own protection, safety and comfort. Structural inequities in schools and a history of systemic racism tracing back to the founding of the American school system has taught Black learners that the least traumatic learning experience will be among other Black students (Hammond, 2015; Williams, 2020). While creating a community centered around culture can be beneficial, it becomes problematic when it is overlapped by biases that group Black students in lower-level classes. These clusters prevent students from having opportunities to take classes that are more advanced and that will prepare them for college.

Factors like poverty work to further the opportunity gap for all students including Black learners. It is estimated that 28.7% of Black children below the age of 18 are living in poverty. With poverty comes challenges like food and housing insecurity, which impacts the student’s ability to learn while at school. Going to school in poorer areas has its own set of challenges. Many schools rely on funding that is generated by property taxes, which is problematic, as schools in wealthier areas are more likely to receive more funding (Williams, 2020).
States like Texas have taken steps to mitigate this gap in funding with legislative efforts, but this does little to close the gap that was created by a history of unequal funding practices (Villanueva, 2021). Because of intersectionality and systemic racism, these poorer areas are generally populated by Black people. A study conducted in 2020 found that high poverty schools are about 13% White, whereas low poverty schools are 78% White. In these high poverty schools, students, who are more likely to be Black, are less likely to have access to quality educators, a positive school climate, and access to curricula that prepares them for college, which are common indicators for access to a quality education (Fontana et al., 2020).

There are “stark inequities in access to high schools that provide high quality educational opportunities” (Fontana et al., 2020, p 12). It is no surprise that many Black students, especially males, turn to athletics as a way to create an opportunity to access a quality education. Systemic inequities and gaps in opportunities leave Black students with little option, but to leverage their physical talents, which has an unintended negative consequence of impacting academic performance and perceptions of academic ability. For Black athletes, often it is athletics that makes the difference between being able to go to college or not (Hawkings et al., 2017; Horton, 2015).

**Teacher Expectations**

Teachers believing in their student’s ability to achieve at a high level is one of the key factors of student success. On the whole, teachers are committed to helping students and are committed to the success of their students. However, not all teachers actually inherently believe that all their students can achieve, despite wishing for their students’ success. In other words, some educators are often quick to default to the negative stereotypes of Black students, especially Black student-athletes, which influences their
perceptions of these students and undermines their ability to offer support to an already marginalized community of learners (Harmon, 2010; Williams, 2020).

Some teachers think they are helping their students by lowering expectations for minority students because they believe they are leveling the playing field. These teachers lower their expectations for minority students without exploring the consequences, and at times are doing what they believe is in the students’ best interest. (Love, 2019; Williams, 2020). The students feel differently and, despite preconceived and popular notions, students want teachers that will hold them accountable but will also provide support for learning. In fact, students who are academically successful reported that their teachers held them to high expectations and they felt like they had a strong relationship with their teacher. Students, as a whole, value education and realize that educational success is a key step to life’s success (Kaylor & Flores, 2007; Wilson et al., 2001).

For some teachers, the lowering of expectations is less altruistic and comes from a place of bias or prejudice. The implication here is that White people must examine their own assumptions and biases about race and the stereotype they may hold when it comes to intelligence particularly when working with Black students (Faegin, 2006).

As a result of low expectations and biases, minority students are left attempting to survive their educational experience. Moreover, because of intersectionality, many athletes who struggle academically are also Black males, which means they are often victims of low academic expectations and have to deal with the stigma of being an uninvested athlete. In short, common misconceptions of student-athletes as stereotypical dumb jocks, or as undermotivated students has led to a serious lack of understanding and support of an especially vulnerable population (Harmon, 2010; Love, 2019).
Considering the demands on student-athletes’ time, often they are simply tired, which is not the assumptions that teachers and educational professionals make. Instead, educators may choose the negative stereotype of the uninterested or apathetic athlete or incapable Black student. Black student athletes have to combine juggling both stereotypes that are connected to their race and athleticism. Teachers tend to approach their Black students, especially Black males, from a deficit perspective, without realizing the harm it causes, and the full context of knowledge that their students bring to the classroom, further fostering disenfranchisement (Harmon, 2010; Wiliams, 2020).

**Academic Exploitation**

The academic exploitation of Black athletes has been studied extensively at the collegiate level, and many of the findings apply to the high school level, as high schools must follow National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) eligibility rules for their athletes to be able to play at the collegiate level. The NCAA is aware of the issue and in 2003, moved to institute regulations to help counteract academic exploitation. In addition, many schools hired academic coaches and advisors with the goal of helping student athletes achieve academic success (Hamilton, 2004). There have been substantial steps forward in trying to solve the problem of academic exploitation on every level of education. However, institutions and trends can be slow to change, which does not mean that there have not been significant and meaningful efforts to stop academic exploitation.

Focusing on athletics specifically, the level of and volume of Black talent, especially in football and basketball, sets the stage for academic exploitation, especially considering that athletic programs and departments are often relied on to generate revenue that helps subsidize other parts of the school’s budget. Mens’ football and basketball programs are generally the most profitable programs in the athletic
department, making them at the top of the list of revenue generating sports. A high percentage of student athletes who are participating in what are traditionally considered to be revenue generating sports are Black males, who are most often labeled as at risk of academic failure because they are academically underprepared (Denhart, 2009; Harmon, 2010).

However, it is worth noting that Black student athletes who are not in revenue generating sports struggle academically as well, especially if they are the only Black athlete on the team. Academic exploitation happens when educational institutions promise athletes an education, but do not or are unable to hold up their end of the deal, meaning athletes are expected to perform athletically, but are not receiving the benefits of the deal, which in this case is an education (Harmon, 2010; Hawkings et al., 2017).

Many athletic programs and schools focus on the development of the school or program over the academic development of the athletes, especially when programs generate revenue, like football and basketball programs. As the athletes in these major sports tend to be Black males, there is a clear intersection with race. The racialized academic exploitation of these athletes mirrors the hierarchical social structure of society itself (Feagin, 2006). As a result, academic exploitation relegates Black athletes to the lower rungs of the social order and gives them little chance to escape it academically, forcing them to rely on athletic prowess. While the NCAA has moved to institute regulations and safeguards that are geared towards stopping academic exploitation, the progress is slow, but is steady (Hamilton, 2004; Hawkings et al., 2017).

Because of the intersectional nature of race and socioeconomic status, Black athletes are more likely to have a disproportionate number of obstacles to academic achievement. Often, many coaches, teachers and administrators see these learners as
athletes first and students incidentally. As a result, the schools take a path of least resistance, including clustering and lowering academic expectations (Eitzen, 2000; Horton, 2015). The schools are motivated by athletic success, which often generates revenue, leading to an emphasis on encouraging and supporting students’ athletic commitments and a de-emphasis on academic achievement. Despite the NCAA’s regulations, Black athletes are still undereducated as they are being pushed into “easier” degrees and clustered into classes where they can be passed along (Hawkings et al., 2017; Johnson & Jackson, 2017).

There is a clear “failure of the current system to truly educate athletes particularly Black football and basketball players” (Hawkings et al., 2017, p. 18). Athletes in revenue sports like basketball and football, who are more likely to be Black, are, on average, outperformed in the classroom as their nonathlete peers (Maloney & McCormick, 1993). Bowen and Levin (2003) found that athletes as a whole, especially athletes who have been recruited, perform lower academically than their non-athlete peers. In fact, student athletes overall earn lower grades than their SAT scores would indicate (Bowen & Levin, 2003). Black student athletes earned 72% of credit hours attempted, which is less than their White peers, and those Black student athletes who are from low socioeconomic areas only complete 62% of attempted credit hours (Horton, 2015). This gap in academic performance is largely due to the repeated academic exploitation of Black male athletes.

It is a common practice to pass along, or even discard athletes after they have performed athletically with little or no regard to academic success or progress, this further reinforces the stereotype that Black males are physically superior while being deemed intellectually inferior. Educational institutions often recruit Black athletes for their physical fitness and strong athletic abilities, but fail to have the academic support
required for these learners to be successful. At the high school level, when there is a de-emphasis on academics, it does not set the athlete up for sustained collegiate success, as a strong academic background is vital to collegiate success. This failure to equip athletes for collegiate success is yet another example of academic exploitation of Black male athletes. (Hawkins et al., 2017; Johnson & Jackson, 2017; Maloney & McCormick, 1993).

**Student Athlete’s Identities and Challenges**

The student athlete has a unique identity that impacts their ability to succeed in school. For many student athletes, carrying the roles of student and athlete result in conflicting responsibilities, pressures, demands and expectations. Continued support and attention from teaching staff and educational professionals is crucial to the development of the students’ identity. Student athletes, both in and out of season have the challenge of prioritizing their academic and athletic roles (Harmon, 2010; Mahoney, 2011).

During the season, student athletes face intense practice and game schedules that cut into time devoted to academics, and, even in the off season, athletes have athletic expectations and responsibilities. The challenge for these student athletes is both finding and maintaining the balance between the demands, expectations and responsibilities of academics and athletics. For a number of athletes, they experience a conflict between their athletic and academic identities, which can impact motivation, confidence and success. However, despite the conflict between the two identities, they are connected, and one impacts the other. Student-athletes are struggling with reconciling their identities and exploring who they are as learners, athletes and people (Harmon, 2010; Mahoney, 2011).

Student success in the classroom often creates confidence that translates into athletics, and the reverse is also true. However, academic successes can be hard to come
by, as many student athletes see themselves as athletes first, which often results in student
athletes neglecting academic responsibilities (Hobneck et al., 2003). Often it is the case
that athletic programs “serve as the primary motivation for many individuals to pursue
higher education, especially prospective students from low-income and ethnic minority
backgrounds” (Mendoza, 2012, p. 202). As a result, students often do not have the skills
needed to be successful academically resulting in lower GPAs than other students
(Mahoney, 2011).

Academic underachievement is more common for Black student athletes, however
Black athletes are actually high achieving individuals, as demonstrated by their
dedication to athletics and athletic achievements, but they can struggle to translate that
into academic achievement. These athletes have both leadership and decision making
skills, they have the ability to work collectively in moments of intense stress and
pressure. These athletes are not unintelligent, but can encounter obstacles when
translating their skills into academics. This struggle to translate abilities is more prevalent
among Black student athletes who have lower levels of academic success as compared to
their White peers. In fact, the total direct and indirect effect of being a Student-Athlete of
Color was a reduction of academic success scores of approximately 0.16 standard
deviations from the average (Rankin et al., 2016; Reynolds et al., 2012).

One of the major hurdles for student athletes is demands on their time. Their
structure of their schedule is demanding and lacks flexibility, having classes followed by
practices and or games, which leaves little time for homework or other academic
exercises (Hobneck et al., 2003). In general, student athletes perform better academically
when they are out of season and their schedules are less demanding. Coaches have high

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expectations of their student athletes that demand a serious amount of time, including practices, team meetings, film review and actual games (Scott et al., 2008; Hewitt, 2002).

As many student athletes count on athletics for college opportunities, they feel that they owe their coach and athletics in general their time and attention. Athletes feel that when the coach schedules athletic exercises and practice, academics must take a back seat. As a result of these demands, student athletes experience fatigue and often this prevents them from being actively involved in their academics (Coakley, 2011; Hobneck et al., 2003). During a typical week in season, 82% of student athletes report spending over 10 hours per week practicing their sport, and an additional 40% of athletes report that they are spending over 10 hours per week playing their respective sport (Potuto & O’Hanlon, 2006). The demand on time and the pressure to live up to expectations from coaches can have a serious impact on academic skills and performance.

For Black athletes, who are more likely to be living in poverty, they have the added pressure of helping to contribute to the household. For some, this can be a part time job, and for others, it is dedicating themselves by any means necessary to secure a college scholarship, and considering this subset of learners, the scholarship is likely going to be related to athletics. Athletic success often provides the only opportunity for Black student athletes to attend college, as they would be unable to afford it otherwise. If they are unable to achieve athletically, they will have to find other ways to afford college, which is not always feasible, which suggests that athletics opens the doors to college, especially for Black males (Reynolds et al., 2012). Athletics plays a profound and important role in the lives of student athletes and its importance should not be minimized.

The conflict between the two identities and the unique demands on student athletes often results in poor academic performances. There is an uneasy relationship
between athletics and academics that can cause these student athletes to underperform academically. When students view themselves as athletes first they are less likely to graduate, whereas students who view themselves as students first have higher graduation rates (Lederman, 1998; Rankin et al., 2016). However, when both parts of their identity are celebrated and supported, student athletes are most likely to succeed.

An effective balance between athletics and academics for student athletes remains hard to define and maintain. The interconnectedness of the identities offers another complexity that student athletes must tackle. Their failure to succeed academically threatens their eligibility to compete in athletics and qualify to be recruited on the college level (Harrison et al., 2015; Mahoney, 2011). These academic shortcomings can follow students into college as research shows that scholarship athletes were less prepared overall than their peers (Hobneck et al., 2003). The unique demands on student athletes requires the need for creative supports that fit within the parameters of an already tight schedule, demanding efficiency to best serve the academic growth of student athletes, especially Black student athletes who are most at risk of exploitation and disenfranchisement.

**Self-Efficacy**

Rates of high self-efficacy are instrumental in academic achievement (DeFreitas, 2012). According to Bandura (1993), academic self-efficacy is an individual's confidence in their ability to succeed in the academic realm. Due to its impact on academic achievement, academic self-efficacy has been the focus for research. Some of this research has been related to the opportunity gap that plagues Black students. Lack of access and resources, described as the opportunity gap, are suggested to be major
contributors to the disparity in achievement between the races, which directly impacts the
development and the impact of high self-efficacy (Holzman, 2006; Uwah, 2008).

National media have focused on the disparity in school outcomes between
African American males and other student populations, but have largely ignored self-
efficacy as both an outcome of the opportunity gap and fostering self-efficacy as a way to help close this gap (Uwah, 2008). Direct relations between levels of self-efficacy and academic performance have been illustrated with higher self-efficacy linking directly to better grades for students (Chemers et al. 2001; Choi, 2005).

Uwah (2008) argued that “African American male students' academic success is likely influenced by their perceptions of themselves within the school context” (p. 296). Their perception of themselves and their confidence in their own ability to succeed has become one of the key indicators for academic success, especially among Black students (Holzman, 2006). When examining more specific self-efficacy, DeFreitas (2012) found that undergraduate European Americans were reported to have higher academic self-efficacy than ethnic minorities. This is both unsurprising and problematic for the academic achievement of Black students. One of the key components to promoting self-efficacy is fostering a sense of inclusion or belonging in the school community. Recently, researchers have begun focusing on self-efficacy as a result of a sense of community (Pajares & Miller, 1994). Overall, Uwah (2008) found that feelings of belonging and academic self-efficacy were both associated with higher final and semester grades for Black students.

Another key component to academic success that is an indicator of self-efficacy is the student’s educational aspirations (DeFreitas, 2012). Educational aspirations are the early impressions of a student’s own academic abilities combined with the highest level
of education that student plans to achieve (Furlong & Cartmel, 1995). Educational aspirations have a lasting impact on the student’s educational path and experience (Uwah, 2008). These educational aspirations, which are developed early in a student’s academic career, affect academic achievement by enhancing the likelihood that students will participate in or pursue educational opportunities (Arbona, 2000).

Students who have higher academic aspirations are more likely to take advantage of educational opportunities and these opportunities may lead to prolonged academic success (Uwah, 2008). The converse is also true, as students with lower academic aspirations are distinctly “less likely to take advantage of these opportunities, thus limiting their future educational opportunities” (Uwah, 2008 p. 298). Johnson (2000) identified a relationship between academic self-efficacy and educational aspirations among a diverse group of ninth-grade students. When students have higher educational aspirations they are likely to experience higher levels of self-efficacy (Johnson, 2000).

There are several barriers to self-efficacy, especially for Black students. The opportunity gap is one, but it is not the only barrier to self-efficacy for Black students (Holzman, 2006). Self-efficacy has a profound effect on academic development including “choice of activities, persistence, and goal development and is believed to influence academic achievement through a variety of direct and indirect mechanisms” (DeFreitas, 2012, p. 110). In order to foster self-efficacy, Uwah (2008) argues that students require “more than casual or passing acknowledgments from members of the school community” or surface level reminders that they are well liked in order to believe that they can succeed in school and foster a sense of self-efficacy (p. 302). These interactions and fostering self-efficacy can be a challenge for Black students because “African American males are keenly aware of the negative perceptions based on their race and gender
(Uwah, 2008, p. 302). Emotional factors such as a student’s enjoyment of school and feelings of connection to school are key indicators of their sense of school belonging, which leads to self-efficacy (Uwah, 2008).

Black male students need positive interactions, but are less open and less likely to assume these interactions are genuine because self-efficacy seems to be unstable for Black students who are more likely to perceive racial discrimination in ambiguous situations, which can be a barrier to relationship building and thus fostering self-efficacy (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004). A sense of “belonging or connectedness is important for all students, but it may be particularly important for African American males” (Uwah, 2008, p. 297). Generally speaking, it is not easy to foster relationships that help to build self-efficacy. However, working to build self-efficacy is of paramount importance, as higher levels of self-efficacy are directly related to better academic performance (DeFreitas, 2012).

**Teaching Interventions**

When comparing the student’s athletic identity to their academic identity, it is important to realize that both identities need time to practice, and the academic identities require meaningful practice during classes and study halls (Tovani, 2011). Just like the athletic part of the identity, which needs specialized practice to refine skills, academic identities need specialized practice to excel in the classroom (Tovani, 2011). Often, when looking to improve athletic programs, the recommendations included improving academic support provided to the student athletes (Hobneck et al., 2003).

There are several key supports that were recommended such as creating an alert system that identifies student athletes who are not performing well academically early in the term and advising and counseling specifically for academics that are designed to help
students improve their GPAs (Hobneck et al., 2003). However, there is little research on the impact of such interventions (Kaylor & Flores, 2007). The limited research conducted found students showed an increase in academic effort (Hobneck et al., 2003), and were more likely to clearly articulate and set goals for their academic future selves (Kaylor & Flores, 2007).

Athletes, who have intense time demands, tend to perform better outside the competition season, which can be counterintuitive as they have more structured time during the athletic season that includes academic study halls (Scott et al., 2008). The students’ academic performance that struggled the most during the season were participating in sports with high time demands, with basketball and football topping the list (Scott et al., 2008). Another issue with basketball and football in particular is that those sports as a whole tend to have athletes who are less prepared academically, according to their test scores, and are more likely to have a higher percentage of athletes who are Black (Scott et al., 2008). In order to avoid academic exploitation, student athletes need academic support to make sure they are achieving their full potential athletically and academically (Hawkings et al., 2017).

Providing academic supports will work to increase student confidence that expands outside the realm of academic identities into the other parts of the students’ lives (Muhammad, 2020). Students who are more confident in their academic ability are more likely to be invested and involved in the school community and more likely to have academic success post high school (Kaylor & Flores, 2007).

Some of the strongest teaching interventions come from building relationships with students that fosters an open dialogue (Muhammad, 2020). Through these conversations, teachers can hold students accountable and have the opportunity to assess
the students’ needs, while giving the students the opportunity to be metacognitive (Tovani, 2011). These conversations give teachers the opportunity to build relationships and help students to cultivate the identities that they want for themselves, that include academic accomplishments (Muhammad, 2020). Conferencing centered on academic skills and academic identities helps teachers give real-time feedback and works to build relationships and students’ confidence, which helps to combat the rampant disenfranchisement of Black male students (Tovani, 2011). In this case, assessment becomes instructive rather than evaluative and is specific, feasible and delivered in a supportive environment where the feedback is actionable (Hammond, 2015). In addition, real-time feedback mirrors the students’ athletic experiences, as coaching is all about real-time feedback and immediate correction. (Tovani, 2011). As these students tend to place more emphasis on their athletic identities, it is helpful to build on a framework that they already know and to tie it to their athletic identities (Hobneck et al., 2003).

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The foundations of academic support need to be rooted in a way that will drive student engagement, as emotional engagement drives cognitive development (Tovani, 2011). When studying Black student athletes, it is important to take into account their specific needs, considering that “Black needs and wants have typically not been given serious consideration by White decision makers in major economic, political and social institutions,” including schools (Feagin, 2006, p. 20). As schools represent the nation’s political economy, teachers hoping to provide academic support for Black children will need to employ culturally responsive teaching (Love, 2019). When employed properly, culturally responsive teaching is a set of tools and models that actively engages with and honors students’ complex identities, including race and culture. There is a need for
culturally relevant teaching that originates from the number of ways that Black children are, and continue to be, marginalized and disenfranchised by schools (Muhammad, 2020; Stembridge, 2020).

Culturally responsive teaching works to hold students to high standards and to continue to offer their students new intellectual and academic challenges while establishing a true and authentic connection with their students that is based on mutual trust and respect (Hammond, 2015). In order to be able to reach students, teachers need to build relationships with them and truly know and understand the complex nature of their identities (Tovani, 2011). In 2007, 90,000 students who were enrolled in grades 7 through 12 participated in a longitudinal study focused on determining the impact of strong relationships with teachers. The study indicated that there was a clear link between strong relationships between students and teachers and increased academic achievement. In this context, strong relationships were defined as the presence of an educational professional who cared for and understood the student, which aligns with culturally responsive teaching (Kaylor & Flores, 2007).

For culturally responsive teaching to be effective, teachers have to be comfortable with themselves and have interrogated their own world views with the goal of understanding their own complex identities in order to understand their students (Hammond, 2015). The 2007 study found that when teachers are able to see past their own experiences and biases, they are able to foster supportive relationships, which have a clear positive impact on students’ academic performance and overall confidence (Kaylor & Flores, 2007).

Black students face a unique set of challenges in schools that are tied to systemic racism and other intersectional factors (Feagin, 2006). One of these challenges that can
be overcome with culturally responsive teaching is a monocultural curriculum, which is
the standard curriculum in most schools, and “is at best ethnocentric and racist at worst,
and by definition, not rigorous” (De Novais, 2019, p. 216). Black students have to deal
with systemic racism on a daily basis in their school experiences, including a variety of
microaggressions, which are overt or covert racist remarks or actions (Williams, 2020).
These microaggressions are broken down into several categories including microassaults,
microinsults, and microinvalidations (Hammond 2015). This type of racism is
commonplace for Black students, so much so that it is often left undefined and unnoticed
by people who are not Black (Ture & Hamilton, 1967). Black students deal with
microassaults that involve the misuse of power or privilege that works to marginalize or
impacts outcomes based on race. They also must contend with microinsults, which
involve intentional or unintentional racially insensitive comments and actions, along with
microinvalidations that negate or dismiss their specific racial experience (Hammond,
2015).

Student athletes contend with these same microaggressions that center around
being only concerned with athletics or tied to stereotypes of the dumb athlete, these are
compounded when the student also deals with the microaggressions tied to race, which
are usually subtle or covert acts of racism (Love, 2019). Students absorb these negative
messages and hold on to them, resulting in internalized oppression, which undermines
student confidence (Hammond, 2015). In fact, student-athletes, especially Black student-
athletes, are conditioned to believe that educational professionals actually believe the
stereotypes about them, which further internalizes the oppression (Harmon, 2010).

In the classroom, the anxiety created by internalized oppression interferes with
academic performance because the stress reaction releases cortisol that interferes with the
amount of working memory available to students, which students need to do complex academic tasks, ultimately limiting students' intellectual capacity (Hammond, 2015). Culturally responsive teaching works to minimize student anxiety, combat disenfranchisement and to close the opportunity gap facing Black students (Love, 2019).

**Related Research**

Black male students have to contend with factors that hinder academic success, like opportunity gap and its interaction with systemic racism, resulting in the marginalization of this subgroup of learners. Dyce (2013) argued that factors that include low test scores, inadequate school resources and schools, poverty and widespread disenfranchisement have combined to marginalize Black male students. Black males are entering classrooms that were not built to serve them and are further disappearing into the margins of the classroom and society (Dyce, 2013).

Dyce (2013) contended that the first step to truly educating Black males is realizing and admitting that there is a problem with the system and not with the learner. Policies to correct this issue must start at the local level, but should extend to the state and federal levels, as well. That is, advocating for the creation of schools that are specialized in educating Black males, so they have the opportunity to learn in schools that are created for them (Dyce, 2013).

Mickelson et al. (2006) found that Black students as a whole are outperformed academically by their White and Asian peers, are disproportionately placed in special education classes, and have higher dropout rates. However, these academic differences were not present until after second grade. Yet, by the time the students entered middle school, females of all races reading scores and GPAs were significantly higher than Black males and by the end of eighth grade, test scores, grades, and performance patterns put
Michelson’s (2016) goal was to examine the academic underachievement of Black males in the eighth grade, which sets the stage for performance in high school. The analysis revealed that several factors that include school structures and procedures, parental involvement and attitudes of teachers and learners impact the academic outcomes for Black male students (Michelson et al., 2016).

Teacher bias can be a factor when it comes to the success of Black males. For example, Cullinan and Kauffman (2005) examined the fact that Black students are disproportionately likely to be identified with an emotional disturbance educational disability. The study found that there are several intersectional factors that contribute to the increased likelihood that Black students are labeled with an emotional disturbance educational disability that includes race, finding that teachers considered Black students “more problematic” than their White peers (Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005, p. 398).

Interestingly, there was little difference between White and Black teachers when it came to identifying Black students with an emotional disturbance educational disability. If Black students are labeled with an educational disability, it can be hard for them to escape the cluster often resulting in lower academic leveling (Cullinan & Kauffman, 2005). This clustering is another example of ways that schools are marginalizing and under-serving Black students.

One way to counteract the disenfranchisement and marginalization of Black students is to engage Black male students in extracurricular activities. While not studying athletes specifically, Dukes (2018) studied the impact of being involved in an after school club for Black males during the liminal stage of development. The study found that participation in an after school or extracurricular activity increased the student’s
connection to the school and had a positive impact overall on academic performance. These students reported having an increased sense of belonging and stronger sense of identity; however, they did report a disconnect from the rest of the student body outside the club (Dukes, 2018). The findings of this study can be applied to athletics, as it is an extracurricular activity that connects students to their schools, but does isolate them from the rest of the student body. When considering the studies related to academic achievement, it may be possible for athletics, or as Dukes (2018) suggested, extracurriculars, to work to close the gap in academic achievement.

Summary

Black male athletes face a unique set of challenges that can create significant barriers for their academic achievement. These barriers include contending with systemic racism that have permeated the school systems, problems with equity, access and opportunity that disenfranchise them, teachers who lower expectations, academic exploitation, and the conflicting pulls between their academic and athletic identities. Schooling has proved to be a great challenge in order for Black male athletes to thrive, despite the significant efforts taken by the NCAA and their partner schools. Schools continue to be a reflection of the society that creates them, and thus mirrors attitudes of racism and biases.

There are several interventions and supports, however, that can help Black male athletes contend with barriers that impact academic achievement, many of which are already in place in schools across the country. These interventions include culturally responsive teaching, conferencing and relationship building, and academic monitoring and advising. These supports have shown to increase student confidence and academic achievement, which improves the likelihood that they will be able to attend and graduate.
from both high school and college. These supports are most necessary for Black male athletes, who are more likely to rely on their athletic ability for access to a quality education, but struggle to meet the academic demands, which results in a widening opportunity gap.

Laws and regulations passed by the NCAA are slowly moving to close the opportunity gap for Black student athletes, but these regulations are insufficient on their own. There is an urgent need to address the academic underachievement of Black males in American schooling, as the current education system is failing these learners at alarming rates. This need becomes even more pressing for Black student athletes, as many rely on athletics as their only avenue to attending college.
CHAPTER 3

ACTION RESEARCH DESIGN

Collegiate Academy’s administration investigated standardized testing results and noted that Black male students were the lowest performing group and found that that 100% of the Black male students who did not meet benchmarks were involved in varsity athletic programs. In efforts to maintain the school’s high academic expectations, I started the Academic Success Center (ASC), along with the school’s administrative team. The program is open to all students but is specifically set up to work with the student athlete’s schedule. The administration decided that athletes who are underperforming in classes are referred to the ASC, in hopes of increasing their academic performance.

Research Question

To what extent do the supports offered in the ASC work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the support that the ASC offers for students and its impact on their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. This study will examine the impacts of the supports ASC offers for students (e.g., individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, socioemotional and academic check ins, and collaboration with parents and teachers) and its impact on their academic outcomes (e.g., tests, quizzes, homework, classwork, which include missing or incomplete work) and self-efficacy. The supports that are offered...
include, but are not limited to: individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, socioemotional and academic check ins, and collaboration with parents and teachers. Each student that comes into the ASC receives services that are specifically tailored to their needs. This study seeks to examine the extent of the effectiveness of supports offered by the ASC.

**Action Research Design**

Action research, which is focused on problem solving, involves a teacher conducting investigations in their classroom (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Herr and Anderson (2015) asserted that action research is when practitioners “want to study their own contexts because they want the research to make a difference in their own setting” (p. 2). This method of research is appropriate given my position as Head of the English Department and founder of the ASC. The ASC uses supports for students that come directly from the theoretical framework of this study: culturally responsive teaching (Stembridge, 2020), abolitionist teaching (Love, 2019), and constructivism (Vygotsky, 1962).

The question guiding the research is to what extent, if any, do the supports offered in the ASC work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes. For the purposes of this study, academic outcomes were measured by grade reports that included the students’ grades on summative assessments in their English, math and science classes. Summative assessments are those that are checking for mastery such as tests, essays and quizzes. Additionally, grade reports include missing assignments for English, math, and science on both formative (homework and classwork) and summative assessments. Self-efficacy was measured using four-question surveys with a
1-5 Likert scale (1 being not confident to 5 being extremely confident), formal interviews, journal entries and observations that were recorded in the form of field notes.

**Setting and Timeframe**

This study will take place at Collegiate Academy in South Carolina. This is considered to be a rural school, but is growing in enrollment annually. Currently, the school serves 407 students in grades 6-12 with 16% of the population being Black students. The school boasts a strong athletic program, recently making the jump from 2A to 4A athletics due to the increase in enrollment. Between 85% and 90% of the student body participates in athletics in some capacity across all levels, including middle school, junior varsity and varsity.

This study will take place over the course of six weeks, during the basketball season. Basketball will practice six days per week with one game per week. The students will be required to attend the ASC twice per week either during the school day or after school hours before their respective practice/workout begins.

**Participants in the Study**

The participants in this study are all students at Collegiate Academy. This study uses purposeful sampling, as participants must meet all of the following criteria to be eligible:

- be a full-time student at Collegiate Academy;
- be a member of the varsity level men’s basketball team;
- identify as Black male; and
- be enrolled in the ASC.

The participants are a mix of students who have transferred during their high school career and those who began high school at Collegiate Academy. Participants may be
students who were accepted conditionally and must show satisfactory academic progress in order to continue at Collegiate Academy for the second semester. All students will be actively participating in their sport during the course of this study. The participants are as follows:

Student 1 is an 11th grader who was referred to the ASC for being in danger of failing math, English, and science. He was also referred for issues with lashing out in class and being noncompliant with teachers and refusing to collaborate with peers.

Student 2 is a 9th grader who was referred to the ASC for problems with English, science, and history. He was reported to be disengaged in his classes and refusing to participate in class.

Student 3 is a 9th grader who was referred to the ASC for being in danger of failing science, and his coaches were concerned that he was struggling to transition to the demands of an independent school.

Student is an 11th grader who was referred to the ASC for inconsistent academic performance in math and for help with organizational skills.

Student 5 is an 11th grader who elected to come to the ASC for help with his stress levels related to academic performance and balancing his academics and athletics.

Student 6 is an 11th grader who was referred to the ASC for English and science. He elects to come for support in math and organizational skills.

Student 7 is an 11th grader who was referred to the ASC after returning from an extended medical leave to help get caught up in his classes and in danger of failing English.

Student 8 is a 10th grader referred to the ASC for actively failing Spanish and being in danger of failing English and science.
Research Methods

Herr and Anderson (2015) suggested researchers “develop a plan of action to improve what is already happening,” and then “act to implement the plan” (p. 5). The purpose of the study is to assess the effectiveness of a program in place, so to do so this study uses a pre- and post- design in which qualitative data collected at the outset of the study will be compared to qualitative and quantitative data collected throughout the observation period. The primary method of collection for the qualitative data will be formal interviews, observations with field notes and journal entries. The primary objective of the qualitative data is discovering to what extent the supports offered by the ASC were effective in improving the student’s self-efficacy but will also be used to help understand what students see as barriers to their academic success and increasing their academic outcomes. This self-reflective characteristic will allow for future implementations to improve upon the supports provided in this initial study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that observations are conducted to triangulate findings especially when they are synthesized with other sources like interviewing and document analysis, which can help to substantiate findings. Triangulation was critical to my study to ensure validity and reliability.

Although the qualitative data will be central to addressing the research question, I will also use quantitative data to measure specific academic outcomes. Quantitative data is used to determine the extent of the effectiveness of the supports offered by the ASC in improving students’ academic outcomes. The quantitative data will be focused on student scores on assessments including tests, quizzes, projects, homework and classwork, and surveys using Likert scale. It will also document the amount of missing work that students are submitting over the course of the study as one of their academic outputs.
Research Procedure

The students meet in the ASC once per week minimum, but many choose to come more often. Students may come during their study hall or during the break period built into the school day every Wednesday and Friday. The supports that the students receive include tutoring, academic interventions, administering assessments, helping students synthesize new concepts, resolving issues concerning equity and access, communicating with parents, and sending weekly academic reports to other members of the athletic administration staff and other student support services. Each student has a personalized schedule based on their academic needs, but every student must attend once per week minimum. For example, a student may need to attend math tutoring twice per week and Spanish tutoring once per week, while a different student may need to attend Spanish tutoring once per week, math tutoring once per week, and science tutoring once per week. Grade conferences happen on a one-on-one basis and are conducted during the student’s study hall, lunch period, break, or after school.

Upon enrollment in the ASC students pre-assessments will be taken in the form of an intake survey and interview that will serve as a baseline for data analysis. Their current grades will also be recorded to determine to what extent the academic outcomes improve, if at all.

Surveys

The first source of quantitative data will be surveys comprising four questions on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not confident and 5 being very confident). The surveys will be administered pre and post study and are designed to be short and targeted on self-efficacy.
Academic Reports

The second source of quantitative data will be class grades. Class grades will be collected via electronic gradebooks and academic reports, which are available to the ASC and shared weekly with the head coach basketball program. The electronic gradebooks will include summative assessment scores across all categories (quizzes, tests, projects, essays) and formative assessments (classwork and homework).

Interviews

The first source of qualitative data will be interviews embedded in formal grade conferences. The grade conferences are conducted with students pre and post study. The interviews are open-ended, but structured, allowing for the student to expand and voice their understandings. The questions will remain the same in the pre and post interview. The questions will focus on efficacy and are as follows: “How are you feeling about your ability to be successful in your classes?” and “Is there anything that stops you from being successful?”

Journals

The second source of qualitative data will be student journal entries. Students will write in journals once per week for 15 minutes. They may write longer if they choose. The topic is related to school, but otherwise is of their choosing. The journals will take the form of an unstructured free write where the students are free to write without concern about grammar or responding to a specific prompt. They are only asked to keep their responses related to school.

Observations and Field Notes

The third source of qualitative data will be observations and field notes. As a research practitioner and the person running the ASC, I will be interacting with the
students and observing them while they are in the ASC and working in their study groups. I will be keeping field notes with the goal of observing skills, attitudes and habits that are related to students’ self-efficacy and overall academic performance.

**Limitations**

The limitations of this study are linked to time. Self-efficacy is often slow to improve and often six weeks is not enough time for students to realize the full growth of their self-efficacy. This study is focused on assessing any growth in this category, even if that growth is small, with the understanding that self-efficacy takes an extended amount of time to grow. This study will take place in a small, rural school with minority students who mostly identify as Black. The supports evaluated in this study may not be applicable for other learners that are from different demographics, or feasible at a larger school.

**Data Analysis**

All participants in the study are given pseudonyms, and data is cataloged using the pseudonyms. As a researcher, it is my responsibility to ensure the protection of the participants. The ASC’s goal is to support student learners and grow their self-efficacy, which helps to protect the best interests of the participants over the course of this study. The data collected for this study is valid as it is collected from more than one source. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that “Using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives” is key to a valid research project (p. 245). According to Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) framework, this study meets the criteria for valid data collection.

This data collected falls into two main categories: academic outcomes and self-efficacy. Within each category, the observation period data will be measured against the
student’s intake data to determine the extent to which the academic outcomes and/or self-efficacy improved, if at all, over the course of the study. The analysis of academic outcome will primarily use quantitative data to assess whether course grades have improved and rates (durations) of missing work have declined over the observation period. The analysis of self-efficacy will examine both qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis of the qualitative data will look for changes in the students’ responses about their belief in their ability to achieve in academic classes (e.g., vocabulary used to describe their self-efficacy), while the quantitative data will look for shifts in Likert scale responses or orders of ranking questions.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS FROM THE DATA ANALYSIS

Collegiate Academy, an independent school in rural South Carolina, noticed an issue with academic outcomes for their Black male athletes. These students were not meeting benchmarks on PSAT tests and were falling behind in their classes. As a result, they were referred to the Academic Success Center (ASC). The ASC offers several different supports including individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, socioemotional and academic check-ins. This study is six weeks long, is mixed methods with an action research design, and has eight student participants. All students were participating actively in their sport at the varsity level and identify as Black and male.

Research Question

To what extent do the supports offered in the ASC work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the support that the ASC offers for students and its impact on their academic outcomes and self-efficacy.

For this study, academic outcome is used as the concrete version of academic achievement, including information related to grades. In a more refined sense, academic outcomes are assessments such as tests, quizzes, homework and classwork. Additionally, for this study, self-efficacy is defined as the students' beliefs in their own ability to master
or perform new skills and tasks related to academics (Eissa, 2012). More simply, self-efficacy refers to the student’s beliefs in their own capabilities to achieve in specific academic domains (Bandura, 2006).

This study examines the extent (if any) to which the supports offered by the ASC help to improve students’ academic outcomes, and/or their self-efficacy. The ASC offers many services that are accessible to all students that attend Collegiate Academy. However, student-athletes are required to pass their classes in order to remain eligible to play, so they are often referred, or at times, mandated to attend the ASC. The ASC is designed with the goal of supporting students both with their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. It focuses on offering support for student-athletes both during and after the school day. The supports that are offered include, but are not limited to: individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, and socioemotional and academic check ins. Each student that comes into the ASC receives services that are specifically tailored to their needs. This study seeks to examine the extent of the effectiveness of supports offered by the ASC.

**Findings of the Study**

Over the six-week period of the study, I collected data several different ways: surveys, interviews, academic reports, student journals and observations.

I began collecting data at the beginning of the study with a pre-survey, an enrollment academic report and introductory interviews. These artifacts became the baseline from which I could determine growth. At the end of the six-week-long study, students were given the same survey and the results were compared to determine if there was a change in self-efficacy. In addition, students were asked the same interview questions every other week during the study, another tool used to compare responses
related to self-efficacy. During the study, I kept field notes and the students kept journals as additional artifacts. The data was categorized into self-efficacy and academic outcomes and from there it was kept organized by student. I used a color coding system for the data with green noting improvement, blue noting no change, yellow noting decline. As I was coding a third category emerged, the students feeling frustrated with how they were perceived by the school community, which was noted with pink. As a result of the analysis, the following three main themes emerged:

1. Positive impact on academic outcomes,
2. Positive impact on self-efficacy, and
3. Student frustration with perception.

**Theme One: Positive Impact on Academic Outcomes**

Over the six-week period in study, there was a noticeable increase in the students’ scores on summative assessments in their classes (quizzes, tests, essays, labs or other assignments that are assessing mastery). Most students are referred to the ASC because they are in academic jeopardy and are below the class average; however, within the six-week period they were able to improve significantly in their core classes, including math, English, and science.

In math, students came to the ASC with a wide variety of pre-existing mastery, but still managed to improve overall. The average scores of the participants at the end of the six-week period was a 90.5 and the class average was an 82. Each week the class average was between 78 and 82, however the students in the ASC surpassed the class average as a group. Student 8 struggled to surpass the class average, but showed significant improvement; moving up from an average summative score of 56 to 76.
Figure 4.1 Student Scores on Summative Math Assessments

During week 3, Student 2 reported that he had a positive interaction in his math class that helped him to demonstrate his mastery of the skills. After working in the ASC on his homework, the student volunteered to demonstrate one of the problems on the board. According to Student 2, “I knew what I was doing. I knew it was a hard problem, but we had practiced it so I was able to do it like boom, simple. I knew it was right, too. [The teacher] even said it was.” The student was able to demonstrate his mastery in his math class as well as on his assessments.

In English, there was a similar positive trend. The students started with a wide level of mastery, like math, but seemed to end a bit closer together after the six-week period. The improvement in English on average was more pronounced than math. Math improved on average 13 points where English improved 20 points. Student 1 improved significantly going from a 38 average in week one to a 76 in week six. Even students coming in with higher levels of mastery like Students 4 and 5 who both started with 80s in week one ended with 88 and 87 in week six. Of all the subjects, there was the largest
improvement in English and at the end of the six weeks students managed on average to
meet class averages, which across the six weeks ranged from 76 to 80.

Figure 4.2 Student Scores on Summative English Assessments

Similar to math and English, science scores improved over the six-week period.
Science scores saw a 16-point improvement on average across the six-week period,
however, did end with the lowest average score. The students on average were able to
meet the class average by the end of the six weeks, which ranged from 74 to a 76, but not
many students were able to exceed it. Science had the lowest overall academic outcomes
of the three subjects, but fell in the middle for rate of improvement.
Figure 4.3 Student Scores on Summative Science Assessments

Another marker used to measure academic success is the amount of work that students are missing. Each week teachers update gradebooks on Thursday and each Friday the ASC runs a missing assignment report to check how many assignments each student is missing. Over the six-week period, there was a significant decrease in missing assignments for several students. Student 1 went from 12 missing assignments in week one to zero in week six and Student 2 went from 16 missing assignments in week one to five in week six. Not all students referred to the ASC struggle that extensively with missing assignments. Student 5 only had two missing assignments in week one and zero missing assignments from weeks three to six. However, on average there was an overall decrease of the amount of missing work during the six-week period.
Figure 4.4 Number of Students’ Missing Assignments

Overall, Students improved the most in their English classes and the least in their math classes with science falling in the middle of the two. However, the scores were highest in their Math classes on average and lowest in science with English falling in the middle. Students across the board showed significant improvements in their academic outcomes both in their summative assessment scores and by decreasing the amount of work that they are missing, or failing to submit.

**Theme Two: Positive Impact on Self Efficacy**

Student participants answered survey questions that were related to their self-efficacy. This survey consisted of four questions measured on a Likert scale of one to five with one being not confident and five being extremely confident. Students took the same survey in week one and week six and overall showed growth in their belief in their ability to accomplish tasks.
The first question of the survey focused on the student’s belief in their ability to accomplish their goals. Every student showed growth in their belief that they would be able to accomplish their goals. Most notable was the growth in Student 5 who went from a two in week one to a five in week six. Over the course of the study, this student was one of the strongest academically, but was low scoring on efficacy in the beginning of the study. However, by the end of the six weeks, he was very confident that he was able to accomplish his goals.

**I will be able to achieve the goals that I have set for myself**

![Bar chart showing the confidence level of students in achieving their goals](image)

Figure 4.5 Question 1: Ability to Achieve Goals

The second question centered on the students’ belief in their ability to be successful. Again, the students showed growth in this category. Student 1, who struggled academically and was referred because of academics, had significant growth in this category going from a two to a five. Also, Student 5 remained consistent with question one (goal achievement) and had significant growth in their belief of their ability to be successful as well.
Figure 4.6 Question 2: Ability to be Successful

The third question focused on the students’ ability to overcome challenges or adversity. Most students showed growth in this category. Student 7, who was referred for subject specific academic help, came in with a high score in this category and remained high over the course of the six weeks. The majority of the students in the study saw growth in their belief that they would be able to overcome challenges. Most notable was Student 5, again a strong academic student, who showed significant growth from two to a five over the course of the study.
Figure 4.7 Question 3: Ability to Overcome Adversity

The final question focused on the students’ ability to perform effectively on many different tasks and not one single task. This question had the lowest answers on week one for the pre-survey with the average score being two and a half. However, by week six it was in line with the other categories with the average score of four and a half. Again, Student 5 exhibited significant growth in this category over the six weeks moving from a two to a five. Student 7 also showed significant growth, moving from a two to a five.
Students were also interviewed at the beginning and at the end of the study. They were asked “How are you feeling about your ability to be successful in your classes?” and “Is there anything that stops you from being successful?” These questions remained the same across the pre and post interviews. Students were also asked to journal once per week and were not given any prompt. These were free writes and lasted for 15 minutes, but students were allowed to write for longer if they desired.

Student 5, whose academic achievements grew significantly, was able to further explain his feelings of self-efficacy in the interviews. During his first interview, he remarked:

Sometimes I feel like I have to work twice as hard and they won’t ever let me get a break like if I have to miss for a game. It makes it hard to be successful and I want to be. I want to stay on the honor roll and in [National Honor Society], but I just don’t know if I can. It's important to me. I want cords at graduation and opportunity. It gets me down because I feel like I am just working and can’t get it done. It really gets me down.
During his exit interview that occurred in week six, he explained his growth in his own self-efficacy:

I feel good. I feel good that I can be successful in my classes. I learned that I need to stand up for my goals and communicate them. I learned that I need to tell people what my goals are and expect my teachers to help me with them. I also learned that if I am having a problem, like I did with my English teacher, I have support. I have help. I don’t have to do it all on my own. For some reason, that helps me feel like I can do it. Before, I was just trying to do it on my own. I felt like I was in the dark. I feel like I can be successful now, even if it is something hard.

In his journal during week five of the study, Student 5 wrote,

I got my essay back for English and I got an 86. Usually I would be mad about and 86 but I realized that 86 was good. It was the best I could do so I am proud of it. I am more proud of it because I worked at it. I got a 100 on my math test, but I didn’t have to work that hard on that. I am more proud of my 86 because it was hard work and I think that I am going to keep getting better because I am understanding how to write the papers.

In both the interviews and the journal, Student 5 showed growth from the beginning where he was unsure and “down” about his ability to be successful despite being an honor roll student. However, by the end of the study, he was feeling more confident in his ability to be successful even in his challenging courses.

Student 1, who was referred for both academic issues and behavior issues, also showed growth in his self-efficacy over the course of the study. In his first interview, when asked about his ability to be successful, he said,

I feel bad. These teachers don't like me and they won’t leave me alone. I am gonna snap and I can’t even figure out what they are even asking me. I need them
to leave me alone. I can’t do any of it anyway. Sometimes, I get mad and my emotions are too much and then I just feel like I want to leave here because I just can’t do it—Like in chemistry and English. They really be pissing me off in there.

In his interview in during week six, when asked about his ability to be successful, Student 1 remarked,

I didn’t think I was gonna make it through my junior year, but I am. I think I can have a good senior year too. I can control my anger better like with the stress ball and stuff. I still don’t be liking that English teacher now, but my grades are better and I don’t have to leave class anymore. I think that I can do it.

Over the course of the study, Student 1 went from wanting to leave the school to feeling like he was able to handle challenges or “do it.” There was a noticeable shift from using “can’t” to “can” between the two interviews, which is indicative of his growth.

Student 6 was referred to the ASC for subject specific help in math and English. During his first interview, he said,

I get behind on my work and it feels like it is too much especially if I am absent. Then I just don’t know what I am supposed to be doing. This work is hard and I don’t get it and I can’t do it and my grades go down. I don’t even know what is happening at all in English because he is just talking.”

In contrast, during his last interview he said:

I have an essay for English coming up and I feel good because I have an outline and a plan. My grades are better and I am feeling good. I feel like I can keep doing good in my classes.

For this student, he worked in the ASC on learning to plan, which helped him feel confident. He too shifted from “can’t” to “can” in his two interviews, which showed his growth over the course of his time in the study.

Overall, there was a positive impact on self-efficacy during the course of the study on all of the participants that was indicated by their Likert survey results, interview and journal responses.
Theme Three: Student Frustration with Perception

Over the course of the study, the third theme that emerged was the student’s frustration that they were perceived as poor students despite the improvement in their academic performance. Their frustration was most notable in their journal entries and observed and noted in field notes when the students interacted with each other in the ASC.

Student 2 wrote in his week four journal:

I did like all of my work this week and it don’t matter because they still ask me for my work like it is missing anyway. They think I didn’t turn it in. I tell them I did it and they think I just cheated or whatever. When I do my work they don’t believe me. It makes me so mad and it makes me not want to do it sometimes but I know I gotta do it.

In this journal entry, he noted his frustration with his teachers assuming that he had not done his work. During week 4, he had a dramatic decrease in the amount of missing work; he only had 3 missing assignments, whereas he had 16 in week 1. However, he was frustrated that his teachers had not changed their perceptions of him. He later echoed this in a conversation with another student.

Student 3: “[Art Teacher] assigned a critique when I was gone?”

Student 2: “Yeah, it was only a paragraph. She told me I didn’t do it, but I turned it in.”

Student 3: “Did you do it?”

Student 2: “Yeah, I showed her my Google classroom in front of the whole class.”

Student 8: “I saw that [Student 2]. She did make you pull it up and show her. She was trippin for real on you”

Student 2: “She hates me.”
Student 2 was retelling an interaction he had with his art teacher that he immediately internalized as his teacher disliking him as a person. He was angry during the retelling and seemed to feel validated by Student 8. The teacher seemed slow to adapt to his shift in work habits. This interaction would have gone differently had the teacher celebrated Student 2’s growth in this moment, but instead she reinforced the impression that he was not to be trusted and was delinquent with his work.

Students 1, 7 and 8 were all frustrated with how they were perceived by their teachers over the course of the study. The all expressed this frustration in their journals:

Student 1 wrote,

[English Teacher] is really pissing me off. I swear he thinks I am some kind of an idiot. I am not an idiot I just get tired of listening to him and I hate when he gets too close to me. The other day he asked me a question like I wasn’t paying attention and I got it right and he didn’t say anything and just kept going and I know he thought I was going to get it wrong. He is always waiting to get it wrong. He is always waiting to get it. Like he is trying to catch me lackin.

Student 7 said,

[Science Teacher] told me I didn’t do my work and that I was not doing it right, but I was. I always turn in my work in his class. He got me confused for someone else or something but he don’t know me and he been teaching me for a whole year. He thinks I don’t do my work and I always do my work. He thinks I am dumb but I am on the honor roll.

Student 8 expressed,

[Science Teacher] hates me. She lost my lab report and she just told me I didn’t do it. I turned it in. She even emailed my mom and said that I turned it in so she is going to have to find it or whatever. It is just because it is me that she is saying I didn’t turn it in but I have been doing all my work in her class and she still hates me. She even said I cheated on my homework the other day. I have to sit by her when I take quizzes because she thinks I cheat. Why do I even try?

All three students expressed frustration with their teachers’ perception of who they are as students. Students 1 and 7 believe that their teachers believe that they are unintelligent or
not strong students and Student 8 believes that his teacher “hates” him and assumes that he has not done the work.

**Interpretation of Results of the Study**

From the data gathered in this study, three main themes emerged. The themes suggest that the supports offered by the ASC are effective in increasing the academic outcomes for the students enrolled in the program. The students on average were able to meet and surpass the class averages on summative assessments in English, math and their science classes. In addition, by the end of the six weeks, they were missing significantly fewer assignments. The improvement on summative assessments and the decrease in missing work indicates an improvement in academic outcomes, which is the goal of the ASC.

The students’ self-efficacy also improved over the course of the study. The participants noted that they felt more confident in their ability to accomplish tasks and overcome challenges. They felt more able to be successful on a variety of different tasks and many of them were able to articulate their belief in their ability to be successful. These results suggest that the supports offered by the ASC are effective in increasing student’s self-efficacy.

One of the themes that emerged was the students’ frustration with the way they were perceived by their teachers even after they had worked hard to change their academic habits. Several students noted that their teachers seemed to assume that they were not strong academic students, or had not done the work even if they had. The students expressed their frustration with their teachers and talked about how it worked against their motivation. Oftentimes teachers missed key moments to motivate or help grow self-efficacy. Students seemed to be very aware of their teachers’ perceptions of
them. Teachers have the ability to support the work happening in the ASC academically and with self-efficacy.

Conclusion

The ASC has been successful in improving the academic outcomes and self-efficacy for the participants in the study. There was a clear growth in English, math and science along with improvement in self-efficacy for each student. Despite this success, the students expressed their frustration with the way they felt that their teachers perceived them. They felt that they were seen as poor students despite their academic progress. The supports offered by the ASC were successful in their aims, but ideally would be more strongly supported by classroom teachers.
Athletics can have a profoundly positive impact on student athletes, teaching invaluable life lessons like teamwork, perseverance, and goal setting. Athletic programs, however, Black male athletes are being outperformed by their White peers. Understanding the importance of closing these gaps, schools have moved to institute different supports to improve academic performance and self-efficacy. The Academic Success Center (ASC) at Collegiate Academy has a variety of different supports that work to help students improve their academic outcomes and self-efficacy. These supports are rooted in culturally relevant teaching methods and designed with the goal of working to help close the opportunity gap.

Research Question

To what extent do the supports offered in the ASC work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes?
(if any) to which the supports offered by the ASC help to improve students’ academic outcomes and/or their self-efficacy.

**Overview of the Study**

This study focuses on the impact of the support offered by the Academic Success Center (ASC) at Collegiate Academy. The study specifically focuses on the academic outcomes and self-efficacy of Black male athletes. The supports that are offered include, but are not limited to: individualized conferences, subject specific tutoring, scheduling and facilitating make up work, socioemotional and academic check ins, and collaboration with parents and teachers.

The study focuses on Black male athletes because the administrative team noticed that they were being outperformed by their peers and less likely to meet benchmarks on standardized tests like the PSAT. The school created the ASC in hopes of helping all students reach benchmarks and improve self-efficacy, but it soon became clear that it was most frequented by Black male athletes.

There were eight participants in the study who all identify as Black males and play varsity basketball. They range from 9th-11th grade and are all full time students at Collegiate Academy. This study used a pre and post design in which data collected at the outset and of the study compared to data collected throughout the observation period. The primary method of collection for the qualitative data was formal interviews, observations with field notes and journal entries.

While the qualitative data was key to addressing the research question, I also used quantitative data to measure specific academic outcomes. Quantitative data is used to determine the extent of the effectiveness of the supports offered by the ASC in improving students’ academic outcomes. The quantitative data is focused on student
scores on assessments including tests, quizzes, projects, homework and classwork, and surveys using Likert scale. It also documents the amount of missing work that students submitted over the course of the study.

The findings are broken down into 3 themes: positive impact on academic outcomes, positive impact on self-efficacy, and student frustration with perception. The themes suggest that the supports offered by the ASC are effective in increasing the academic outcomes and self-efficacy for the students enrolled in the program. One additional theme that emerged, however, was that the students were frustrated with the way they were perceived by their teachers even after they had worked hard to change their academic habits.

**Implication of the Findings**

The findings suggest that the supports offered by the Academic Success Center (ASC) are effective in improving the academic outcomes and self-efficacy for Black male athletes. The research indicates that there was a noticeable positive impact on the students’ academic outcomes. Overall averages on summative math assessments improved 13.2%, English improved 19.4%, and Science improved 17%. Summative assessments make up the largest percentage of the students’ grades and are the comprehensive measurement tool at the end of the unit to measure skill, so this improvement suggests that students are not only improving grades, but also their mastery.

Additionally, students showed an improvement in their self-efficacy. Every student showed growth in some aspect of their self-efficacy during the study. Student 5 even remarked, “I can be successful in my classes.” One of the ultimate goals of the ASC is to help the students to feel confident in their abilities to be successful in their classes.
The research indicates that the support offered by the ASC has been effective in helping students to improve their self-efficacy.

Despite the improvements, the students remained frustrated with the perceptions they were not smart or not achieving. Students expressed their frustration with teachers assuming their success is a result of cheating or teachers calling them out in front of the whole of the class despite their improved effort. Unfortunately, without the constant assessment of bias, teachers are reinforcing inherent biases. Students remarked repeatedly in both in their journals and in conversations with each other that several of their teachers seem to refuse to see their improvement. Some students even felt that their teachers were in disbelief of the improvement and looked for reasons to discredit the students. Remarkably, this did not seem to impact the students’ self-efficacy, because they have a strong community of peers to validate their concerns and share their experiences. They were able to seek a safe space where they can share commonalities and seek reassurance that they are not getting from the school community as a whole (Tatum, 2003).

Some teachers, because of this inherent bias, may not actually believe their students can be successful (Love, 2019; Williams, 2020). The students are left to grapple with their teachers’ biases as they work to maintain their self-efficacy and academic outcomes. It seems that several of the students in this study were struggling with overcoming their teachers’ biases along with having to work to improve academic outcomes and self-efficacy.

For Black students, this is a unique burden as they are more likely to have to contend with their teachers’ biases, and have been historically marginalized by school systems, which makes it likely that they are coming to the classroom feeling less confident and possibly behind academically. Athletes, especially males, have an
additional burden of the stereotype of being less intelligent and have increased demands on their time. Black male athletes have an exceptionally difficult space to occupy because they must contend with so many preconceived stereotypes about their ability to achieve that are rooted in systemic racism.

Systemic racism and its effects can prove to be an obstacle when trying to improve self-efficacy. However, working to build self-efficacy is extremely important because higher levels of self-efficacy are directly related to better academic performance (DeFreitas, 2012). In order to foster self-efficacy, students require surface level reminders or passing acknowledgments from teachers and the school community that they belong and are supported (Uwah, 2008). Supports like those offered in the ASC work on a deeper level with students to actually build their self-efficacy. They work to forge connections with the students and empower them. This approach helps push past surface level engagement to see real improvement in self-efficacy that goes hand in hand with the improvement in academic outcomes.

Spaces like the ASC give historically marginalized students, like Black male athletes, are designed to help students improve their self-efficacy and academic outcomes. However, what perhaps is more important is that it gives students a place where they feel safe to be themselves. They learn to ask questions and learn to engage in the school setting in a way that works for them as learners and people. It seems that when students have access to a space like the ASC they are able to improve their self-efficacy and academic outcomes even if their classroom teachers do not support, or in the worst case, are detrimental to their growth. Therefore, the major implication of the finding seems to be that spaces like the ASC in this study work to improve academic outcomes
and self-efficacy in significant ways, however there is considerable work to be done to help students who have to grapple with systemic racism inside their classrooms.

**Action Plan**

In response to this research, it is clear that schools and students would benefit from setting up ASCs. Setting up an ASC for students has benefits that can serve the entire student body and not just for athletes alone. Each school’s needs will be different, but the general framework, or action plan, would be as follows:

1. Determine who will serve on the leadership team and the size of the team, including athletic staff and teachers. The team will share in the tasks of running the ASC. These should be both educators and administrators who can effect immediate change in the school and have the authority to make scheduling changes as needed and can liaise with teachers. They should be experienced and excited about the opportunity to work with the population of students that the center will serve.

2. Find an appropriate space and time. At Collegiate Academy, the ASC is located in my classroom and is open during homeroom, break, and after school. I also take appointments during study halls, but each school will need a space that will accommodate its population.

3. Identify students who the center can serve and build relationships with them. Look at the student population holistically. Not every student who is passing has high self-efficacy. Teachers will be helpful resources and will be able to make suggestions. Reach out to coaches and work with them especially to see if they will send their teams for mandated study halls weekly or biweekly.
4. Monitor and adjust. Keep talking to the students, teachers, coaches and other staff members to see if needs have changed and to see what progress has been made. It will help to anticipate issues for students that may arise based on previous trends.

5. Look for support from the school and wider community. Starting and maintaining an ASC may require resources that are not readily available. Building positive relationships in the school and the community may be key to helping secure much needed resources for your ASC.

6. Celebrate the successes. Even small successes can be huge for a student who has never felt an academic victory before. At times, this work can feel overwhelming for educators so it is as important for the educators to stop and celebrate the successes as it is for the students. Remembering to include and cultivate joy is foundational to the long term success of the work.

   It is important to remember that every school’s needs will be different and each student’s needs will be different, so the key is going to be flexibility and adaptability. Assess the needs of the community and then move to implement supports that meet those needs that are accessible to the communities who need them. Then, make those supports available in a safe place where the students feel that they can be themselves and trust the people that are there to help them. Building strong relationships with students will be the key to the success of the ASC.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

This research project has been conducted completely at the high school level and there is a plethora of studies about academic progress at the college level. However, a suggestion for further research is to follow the participants in the ASC to see if they are
able to continue their success and make use of the skills learned once they graduate. The research may follow students to a typical college or university, to a trade school or into the workforce. The research would be geared towards understanding if there were long-term impacts of the time that the students spent in the ASC and if the skills learned like time management, planning, communication and organization have extended past high school.

This research would help to understand how to help students longer term and the data could be used to improve the running and the support offered by the academic success centers. Ideally, the skills that the students are learning and the improvement in their self-efficacy is something that would last throughout their high school years and into their future academic careers, however the research would be key to understanding if it is and how it is.

Another possibility for further research would be ASC supports specifically tied to standardized testing. Standardized testing can be significant gatekeepers for historically marginalized students and due to the time frame of this study, standardized testing was not a component of this research. However, standardized tests play a pivotal role in college acceptances, scholarships and often determine what track students are placed in for their high school classes. Therefore, research that is dedicated to supports that can help to improve standard test scores and how the opportunity gap is rendered through those scores is certainly meaningful, urgent and necessary.

**Conclusion**

As educators, we have a fundamental responsibility to our students to try to help our students succeed and to believe that they can be successful. Teachers and educators in general have a profound impact on students and when they are able to leverage their
expertise to create spaces like the ASC, their students benefit in multiple ways and in ways that are hard to measure. Clearly, according to the research in this study the students’ academic outcomes improved along with their self-efficacy. However, what is hard to measure is the joy we felt in our time together and how for many of us, it was some of the best moments of our day. We were able to share candidly about the experiences of the day and the students were able to seek help and reassurance from their peers and from educators that genuinely cared about them as people.

So many of the students that attended the ASC have had their lives positively impacted by athletics, but have come to rely on the ASC so that they do not fall short academically. Without the support of the ASC, the athletes would likely fall behind academically and be passed along in order to be eligible to play. This was the practice before the ASC was established and was only really questioned when the results started to show up on standardized test scores. This failure to effectively educate athletes would fall under the umbrella of academic exploitation (Hawkings et al., 2017).

Because I believe that educators have a responsibility to their students, I started the ASC and decided that it would rely on culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching holds students to high standards and offers students new challenges while establishing authentic connections based on mutual trust and respect (Hammond, 2015). I knew how important it was going to be to honor the complex nature of the student athlete’s identity, especially if I was hoping to build self-efficacy. Ultimately, culturally responsive teaching methods proved an effective tool to help improve both self-efficacy and academic outcomes.

This study revealed three major themes: academic outcomes were improved, self-efficacy was improved, and students were frustrated with how they were perceived by
their teachers. I noticed strong improvement in academic outcomes and self-efficacy, which was encouraging for both students and educators alike. However, the frustration with how the students felt they were being perceived by their teachers and the school community suggests that there is still equity work to be done.
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### APPENDIX A

#### INTERVIEW NOTES TEMPLATE

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<td><strong>How are you feeling about your ability to be successful in your classes?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Is there anything that stops you from being successful?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Other Student Comments</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Observations</strong></td>
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APPENDIX B

STUDENT SURVEYS

Note: These will be sent as Google Forms:

1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself
   a. Not confident
   b. Slightly confident
   c. Somewhat confident
   d. Fairly confident
   e. Extremely confident

2. When facing difficult tasks, I can accomplish them
   a. Not confident
   b. Slightly confident
   c. Somewhat confident
   d. Fairly confident
   e. Extremely confident

3. I believe I can succeed when I set my mind to it
   a. Not confident
   b. Slightly confident
   c. Somewhat confident
   d. Fairly confident
   e. Extremely confident

4. I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges
   a. Not confident
   b. Slightly confident
   c. Somewhat confident
   d. Fairly confident
   e. Extremely confident

5. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks
   a. Not confident
   b. Slightly confident
   c. Somewhat confident
   d. Fairly confident
   e. Extremely confident