

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School

Morehead State University

April 8, 2019

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PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE NEXT LEVEL: USING 3:1 SUPPORTS TO  
ELIMINATE THE TRANSITION GAP

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Abstract of Capstone

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the  
College of Education  
At Morehead State University

By

Ryan Winders

Hopkinsville, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Daryl R. Privott, Ph.D.

Morehead, Kentucky

April 8, 2019

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## ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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ELIMINATE THE TRANSITION GAP

The current high school schedule is more of an advanced version of middle school than it is a preparation for college/university life. The general structure of the high school day is introduced by the time a student reaches sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) grade. The continued pattern of dipping back into previous levels of school leaves high school students with limited opportunities to learn self-regulation – including the skills of time management and self-advocacy. The 3:1 Supports program used in collaboration between Frankfort Independent Schools and Kentucky State University addresses these issues by pointing students forward and challenging them to face issues they will experience after high school, whether that be in postsecondary institutions or the workforce.

**KEYWORDS:** Competency-based education, personalized learning, profile/portrait of graduate (POG), transition gap, P-16

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Candidate Signature

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ELIMINATE THE TRANSITION GAP

By

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CAPSTONE

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this document, and my degree, to Betty Winders. Mom, you mean the world to me and I wouldn't be here without you. I began this program as a means of completing an education that you were able to provide for me. Thank you for constantly sacrificing so much just to make sure I had everything I needed or wanted. You always put me first and I appreciate that. This degree is my permanent way of saying "thank you". I love you.

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## **Executive Summary**

### **What is the Core of the Capstone?**

#### **Introduction.**

The current high school schedule is more of an advanced version of middle school than it is a preparation for college/university life. The general structure of the high school day is introduced by the time a student reaches sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) grade. For example, pre-specified class changes, grading scales, class periods, and subjects with different teachers are standard cornerstones by the time a student reaches ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) grade. However, high school does not create those same opportunities for life at the next level – whether that be college or the workforce. Students are not allowed to choose how many classes they can take, make choices in creating their own daily schedule, move at their own pace, or even build in time for work that may be needed to support their family or enhance learning interests. The continued pattern of dipping back into previous levels of school leaves high school students with limited opportunities to learn self-regulation – including the skills of time management and self-advocacy. Smith et al, supports this concept when looking at how many high schools have created “freshmen academies” that reach backwards instead of reaching forwards (2008).

Rigid bell schedules restrict student responsibility while traditional grading policies help enforce a lack of preparedness by measuring student success on assignment completion (Moore et al, 2010). The traditional school schedule restricts student independence by micro-managing every minute of their day. Students are not

afforded the opportunity to make either proper or poor academic decisions because they are tracked, monitored, and assigned locations from 8:00am-3:30pm. At the high school level this is problematic, as schools essentially deprive teenagers from the independence they are searching for developmentally (Pickhardt, 2011).

For years, grading has relied on assignment completion and not necessarily content mastery (Miller, 2013). The traditional grading system allows students to turn in copious amounts of daily work without deadlines, which can overcompensate for the lack of knowledge displayed on assessments. Still, as of 2009, 91% of schools continued to use the traditional grading scale and did not plan to change (O'Connor, 2009). With the current situation in most schools of rigid bell schedules and grading policies that do not support the growth of student knowledge, why do educators continue to rely on traditional methods of education created for a bygone age instead of creating opportunities that prepare students to be productive citizens in society today?

The 3:1 Supports program used in collaboration between Frankfort Independent Schools and Kentucky State University addresses these issues by pointing students forward and challenging them to face issues they will experience after high school. They address the grading issue by using competency-based learning approaches, including individualized and online course settings. This includes an increased level of accountability for students at all ends of the academic spectrum. Students are pushed at their ability level and desire in each course individually. By using these course options, the schools work together to create opportunities for

students to take college courses or explore the workforce, based on their individual desires. Doing so unlocks the school day, allowing students to test drive what daily life is like as an adult, while also maintaining a robust level of supports should a student begin to struggle.

**Problem statement.**

Today's colleges find themselves in a much different climate than in previous decades. According to Selingo (2018), undergraduate enrollment is up over 5 million students as compared to 1970. This corresponds with an increased enrollment from low-income families and a higher need in remedial coursework (*Time*, 2012). This data indicates a major issue for college Freshmen – preparedness.

Preparedness has two factors: academic and non-academic. Academic factors include rigor of high school coursework, level of classes taken, and GPA. Non-academic factors include areas such as social integration, psychological stability, time management, and independence. An increasing difference in expectation combined with a lack of congruence between secondary and postsecondary institutions have contributed to this gap and a lack of preparedness in students transitioning from one level to the next. In response, Frankfort Independent Schools (FIS) and Kentucky State University (KSU), in Frankfort, KY have partnered to implement an embedded, community-based approach to education that addresses student preparedness.

Frankfort, KY provides a unique situation as a once high-achieving school district has recently changed (Table 1). Frankfort schools now struggle with higher-

than-most substance abuse issues and an increasing free/reduced lunch population. (Bowman, 2017; Kentucky Department of Education, 2017).

Table 1

*Frankfort Independent Schools Demographics*

	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
White	73.30%	73.50%	71.20%	70.10%
African-American	14.80%	16.40%	16.30%	17.30%
Other	11.90%	10.10%	12.50%	12.50%
Free/Reduced Lunch	42.90%	42.50%	51.00%	53.20%

*Note.* Kentucky Department of Education, 2017

With the hiring of Dr. Houston Barber, the school shifted to a 3:1 Supports Program, which yielded immediate results. The program, created by Dr. Barber, initially gained widespread support among employees who felt it was common sense to support students in this manner. The program calls for each student to receive increased academic supports (including some individualized/online instruction), increased social/emotional supports (including individual mental health counseling from local professionals), and access to opportunity (including a broader span of programs, courses, and internships).

The academic supports strive to give students more options academically. The shift to a more student-centered learning approach shifts the responsibility to the student by giving them choice in delivery method, choice in daily schedule, and choice in number of courses/internships. This amount of freedom is created by the shift to competency-based grading. Students can move through courses with flexibility and have the opportunity to reach out for assistance as needed. FIS, KSU,

and the local community reaches back to students, providing resources the student may need, making success more accessible and obtainable.

The Frankfort Independent School District believes traditional education has enabled student issues instead of empowering the students to reach beyond their circumstances. For the purposes of this document, traditional education is defined as widely-used, commonly accepted educational practices. This includes the use of the Carnegie Unit to normally distribute class periods and grading based on assignment completion (Howard, 1965). The goal of the school district is to empower students to create their own learning space – making the high school experience an incubator for growth and allowing students to test drive their ability to learn, grow, and expand. By partnering with Kentucky State University and the local community, Frankfort Independent Schools have created a symbiotic relationship where each part relies on the other, all the while focusing their collective resources back on the student.

The 3:1 Supports program strives to create a community of learners that provides enough resources for students to succeed while expediting and enhancing the learning process through real-world applications. Using the real-world as a foundation for all courses allows students to reach for opportunities in many fields of interest, where they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to learn. This motivation can be in the direction of further education or an on-the-job experience.

**Purpose.**

The purpose of the capstone is to provide a manual to high schools who are looking to educate and prepare their students for life after high school through an

embedded, community-based approach. Some school districts have taken matters into their own hands, such as the Salt Lake City School District, who developed Innovations Early College High School to provide blended learning opportunities and remove constraints of the traditional school day (Innovations Early College High School, 2018). Still, other school districts have struggled to provide needed supports for their students or even adapt programs to fit their needs. This manual can provide an additional resource for school districts to use alongside their local communities to support their students within their current situations.

As schools continue to follow traditional means of education, they continue to fall further out-of-touch with the needs of the modern student, which include individualization, flexibility, increased responsibility, and interactive online-based delivery methods. Grace Hopper said it this way, “These are days of fast change, if we do not change with them, we can get hurt or lost” (Schieber, 1987, p. 9). The current classroom setting is much different than that of 80 years ago. Gone are the days of single “schoolhouses” and one-dimensional student bodies. The modern classroom is composed of a melting pot of cultures, filled with interactive, individualized educational practices. Digital Promise (2016) puts it this way:

An educator in the 1970s or 1980s with a classroom of 24 students might have had five or six students (20 to 34 percent) requiring specialized interventions. In a classroom of 24 students today, between 10 and 12 students (40 to 50 percent) are living in poverty, have learning disabilities, are English language learners, are gifted and talented, are experiencing challenges at home or in

their communities that result in trauma, or some combination of the above – each of whom research shows needs personalized approaches to learning (p. 3).

The 3:1 program creates an incubator where students can test drive experiences with the comfort of a safety net when they make mistakes. This is accomplished by creating space for students to make educational decisions. Should they be unsuccessful in completing assignments or staying on-task, the social/emotional supports offered by faculty/staff, outside agencies, and community members will assist students in getting back on track. Those in charge of the program want to challenge students in all areas of life. In doing so, the community of Frankfort is eliminating obstacles standing in the way of students and providing them a way through the circumstances that may prevent future success.

**Fundamental principle.**

The fundamental principle of this project is to establish a community of learners where students transform from a simple learner to an active participant in the educational process. The guide created through this capstone will provide school districts with a blueprint to support its students.

This model seeks to shift the focus of education from enablement to empowerment by making the high school experience “life preparation”. Life preparation extends past current college or career readiness applications into areas that most students will use, no matter what their life path may be. This preparation includes self-regulation skills in the areas of time management, choices,

consequences, and independence. The 3:1 Supports program seeks to help students transition to adulthood. If high school is a students' "first steps", then 3:1 Supports seeks to "baby proof" experiences, give students the opportunity to fall, and more importantly, teach them how to get back up.

### **Review of literature.**

#### ***The Carnegie Unit.***

One of the early reforms in education was the student credit hour (SCH). It was created on the belief that one hour per week in class for 16 weeks equaled one SCH (Wellman, 2005). From the SCH came the Carnegie Unit, which gave the school system a means to measure student learning and track accountability. The Carnegie Unit calls for 120 hours of contact time with an instructor for the student to earn a credit. That comes out to roughly a one-hour class period per day, five days per week, for thirty-six weeks (Howard, 1965).

The Carnegie Unit has become the gateway for most of the K-12 educational universe. The odd thing about the Carnegie Unit though, is that it was never intended to measure student achievement or award credit. The unit was first created as a measure for teacher retirement (Besvinick, 1961). The concept of tracking student seat time was created to ensure teachers had met their requisite amount of experience. From there, colleges and universities re-structured their admission requirements, forcing high schools to conform by changing their diploma requirements (Silva, Toch & White, 2015). Before long, high schools used the unit as a form of "common

currency” for transactions between all levels of education from coast to coast (Silva, Toch & White, 2015).

The Grace Hopper saying, “because we have always done it this way” seems to ring true when referring to the Carnegie Unit (Schieber, 1987). Advocates have noted universal acceptance and convenience since the 1960s as a major reason for continued use (Besvinick, 1961; Howard, 1965; Kutz, 1966). Having a standardized system is extremely useful when needing to transfer credits. Similarly, teachers can stay aligned in their yearly planning, making it easier for students to fit into the system. It also reduces daily work completed by bookkeepers, administrators, and counselors (Scriffiny, 2008; Wellman, 2005). Even so, continued reliance on this obsolete tool for its unintended purposes may not be in the best interest of the student. Competency-based approaches offer a way to address issues, such as increased flexibility and individualization.

Benefits seem to abound for faculty and staff. The benefits, though, seem administrative and not educational. Administratively, the Carnegie Unit has been the standard across the country for over 50 years (Howard, 1965); but, it is an inadequate and inaccurate measure of scholastic attainment (Besvinick, 1961). The Carnegie Unit may be able to measure the number of credits earned but does so only by obtaining the required amount of seat time. Having this prerequisite is problematic because the actual amount of material learned becomes secondary. Under the traditional system, students can complete A-level work but be denied a credit should a class not meet the 120-hour rule (Seiler, et al., 2013).

The unit also controls time distribution of the daily schedule (Howard, 1965; Wellman, 2005). Every minute of the school day is planned for the student. Students have little ability to make either good or bad decisions about their own education, such as how many courses to take, when to take them, and how long to spend on them. It is difficult for students to learn to make choices unless they are given opportunities to build responsibility. The lack of these learning opportunities has created a system where students have rarely been forced to make tough choices, learn from their mistakes, or take full responsibility for their actions. For example, it is difficult for a student to learn the consequences of missing a class unless they are allowed to choose to miss. Likewise, it is difficult for a student to choose which learning environment is right for them unless they are given the freedom to experience a variety of options.

Creating room for student responsibility is much needed in education today. Under the Carnegie Unit, that cannot happen. The constriction it creates, along with requirements such as compulsory attendance, has been likened to “jail...and concentration camps” (Kleinberger, 1975, p. 219). The modern student, who desires individual attention, cannot receive it mainly due to the Carnegie Unit’s inability to allow for flexibility. Developmentally, teenagers desire to be treated like adults; yet we are constantly treating them like pre-teens (Pickhardt, 2011). Modifying, changing, or replacing the unit altogether will create opportunities to open doors which can benefit the student holistically by placing the burden of responsibility on the student, directly teaching academic content and indirectly teaching life skills.

***Scheduling.***

School schedules are bound by student enrollment. Enrollment dictates teacher allotment, which in turn dictates schedule creation. Consequently, students are affected educationally by the courses that are offered to them. Instead of being a by-product of these factors, the master schedule should be viewed as the main tool for improving instruction, remediating students, and increasing professional development (Creeden, 2012). The traditional schedule has always been tied to the Carnegie Unit, with the number of courses offered being forced to have equal time distribution. In the last thirty years, several modifications to the traditional schedule have been created (Hanover Research, 2014).

Alternative scheduling is not a new concept (Friedman, 1947; Hughes & Herron, 1937; Saville, 1974). Even the traditional 6-8 period day was not always standardized by time distribution. Schools have explored several variations of the traditional period day over the years including: two-period days (Table 2), length of the school day, and more recently, modular scheduling (Cloyd, 1969). Each of these innovations became predecessors to the block schedule.

Table 2

*Two-Period Schedule*

PUPIL'S SCHEDULE					
	<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thur.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>
8:30 to 11:30 A.M.	American History Section I	Plane Geometry Section VII	11th-Grade English Section IV	Physics Section II	
Lunch					
12:00 to 2:00 P.M.	11th-Grade English Section IV	Physics Section II		American History Section I	Plane Geometry Section VII

TEACHER'S SCHEDULE					
	<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Tues.</i>	<i>Wed.</i>	<i>Thur.</i>	<i>Fri.</i>
8:30 to 11:30 A.M.	American History Section I	World History Section VI	American History Section II	World History Section VII	World History Section VIII
Lunch					
12:00 to 2:00 P.M.	American History Section II	World History Section VII	World History Section VIII	American History Section I	World History Section VI

*Note.* Reprinted from Friedman, 1947, p. 111

Block scheduling was first seen in the early 1990s as an alternative to the traditional 6-8 period schedule (Dexter, Tai, & Sadler, 2006; O'Brien, 2006). The 4x4 block, A/B (alternate) block, trimester block, and 75-75-30 block schedule can each provide several opportunities and advantages to students. Students can balance fewer classes per day and second earn more credits per year (Canady & Rettig, 1993; Deuel 1999). On top of increased opportunity for credits, block scheduling increases time in classes – allowing room for more lab work in science classes and projects for increased depth of knowledge.

According to Hanover Research (2014), two commonly used block schedules today are the 4x4 block (Table 3) and the A/B (alternate) block (Table 4). The 4x4 block allows students to take four classes each for a semester at a time while the A/B block divides classes between two alternating days. These two schedules provide between 85 and 100 minutes per class as opposed to 50-60 minutes per class on a period schedule, which creates more time for lab-based courses and gives students fewer courses to balance at once.

Table 3

*Comparing the 4x4 Block and Traditional Period Schedules*

TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE (DAILY SCHEDULE, YEAR-LONG)	4x4 SCHEDULE (SEMESTER 1)	4x4 SCHEDULE (SEMESTER 2)
<b>Period 1</b>	Course 1	Course 5
<b>Period 2</b>		
<b>Period 3</b>	Course 2	Course 6
<b>Period 4</b>		
<b>Period 5</b>	Course 3	Course 7
<b>Period 6</b>		
<b>Period 7 (optional)</b>	Course 4	Course 8
<b>Period 8 (optional)</b>		

*Note.* Reprinted from Hanover Research, 2014, p. 5

Table 4

*Comparing the A/B (Alternate) Block and Traditional Period Schedules*

TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE (DAILY SCHEDULE, YEAR-LONG)	A/B SCHEDULE ("A" DAY, YEAR-LONG)	A/B SCHEDULE ("B" DAY, YEAR-LONG)
<b>Period 1</b>	Course 1	Course 5
<b>Period 2</b>		
<b>Period 3</b>	Course 2	Course 6
<b>Period 4</b>		
<b>Period 5</b>	Course 3	Course 7
<b>Period 6</b>		
<b>Period 7 (optional)</b>	Course 4 (optional)	Course 8 (optional)
<b>Period 8 (optional)</b>		

*Note.* Reprinted from Hanover Research, 2014, p.5

Two other schedule types used are the trimester block (Table 5) and the 75-75-30 block (Table 6). Trimester schedules divide the school year into three terms, each with 5 periods. Students spend 70 minutes in each class and earn ½ credit per course, per term. The 75-75-30 block divides the school year into two 75-day terms and one 30-day term. Each term consists of 3-4 blocks each. The two 75-day terms consist of three classes per day, giving students more freedom between classes and a longer lunch period (O’Brien, 2006). The 30-day term is used for remediation, summer school, or more intensive study in specific courses – similar to a January or May term at the college level (Hanover Research, 2014).

Table 5

*Comparing the Trimester Block and Traditional Period Schedules*

TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE (DAILY SCHEDULE, YEAR-LONG)	3X5 SCHEDULE (1 <sup>ST</sup> TERM)	3X5 SCHEDULE (2 <sup>ND</sup> TERM)	3X5 SCHEDULE (3 <sup>RD</sup> TERM)
<b>Period 1</b>	Course 1	Course 6	Course 11
<b>Period 2</b>			
<b>Period 3</b>	Course 2	Course 7	Course 12
<b>Period 4</b>			
<b>Period 5</b>			
<b>Period 6</b>	Course 3	Course 8	Course 13
<b>Period 7 (optional)</b>	Course 4	Course 9	Course 14
<b>Period 8 (optional)</b>	Course 5	Course 10	Course 15

*Note.* Reprinted from Hanover Research, 2014, p. 6

Table 6

*Comparing the 75-75-30 Block and Traditional Period Schedules*

TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE (SEMESTERS 1 AND 2)	75-75-30 SCHEDULE (1 <sup>ST</sup> TERM – 1 <sup>ST</sup> 75 DAYS)	75-75-30 SCHEDULE (2 <sup>ND</sup> TERM – 2 <sup>ND</sup> 75 DAYS)	75-75-30 SCHEDULE (3 <sup>RD</sup> TERM – LAST 30 DAYS)
<b>Period 1</b>	Course 1	Course 4	Course 7
<b>Period 2</b>			
<b>Period 3</b>			
<b>Period 4</b>	Course 2	Course 5	Course 8
<b>Period 5</b>			
<b>Period 6</b>			
<b>Period 7 (optional)</b>	Course 3	Course 6	
<b>Period 8 (optional)</b>			

*Note.* Reprinted from Hanover Research, 2014, p. 7

Changing the school schedule will not alone solve student academic issues or improve preparedness at the next level. Research indicates that schedule type is not an indicator of student performance or behavior (Bateson, 1990; Deuel, 1999; Dexter, Tai, & Sadler, 2006; McCaffery & Turner, 1970). Schools must properly train professionals to take advantage of the additional time afforded to them in block

formats (Dexter, Tai, & Sadler, 2006; Hanover Research, 2014). Teachers continually use the same methodologies for instruction in 100-minute class periods as they do 50-minute class periods. Teachers must be able to regularly engage in developing rich content aimed at standards (Dolan, 1994). Depending on the content, having longer class periods can be both beneficial and problematic. Some teachers may prefer to have 90-minutes of instructional time while others prefer 45-minutes. Both lengths cannot happen at the same time due to the 120-hour restriction of the Carnegie Unit.

Even though block scheduling has many advantages, it maintains the same disadvantage as its predecessors because it can only redistribute time during the school day. While it can give students the ability to focus on fewer courses, it alone does not help prepare students for the next level more than a traditional schedule. Other than the 4x4 block, which mimics the collegiate semester schedule, no advantages are shown to benefit student preparedness (Canady & Rettig, 1995). Block scheduling does not offer more flexibility or choice for student learning, mainly due to continued reliance on the Carnegie Unit which restricts flexibility with its time requirements. Additionally, block scheduling does not offer much time for remediation or interventions, limits opportunities for students to earn credits, and can be restrictive on teachers due to a lack of professional development funds.

### ***Competency-based education.***

Schools have begun to look at alternatives to the SCH through grading options. Minimum grading scales (Carey & Carifo, 2012) and competency-based education (CBE) (Au, 2013; Ferguson, 2014) are modern alternatives to the SCH.

Minimum grading is a system where students are graded on a 50-point scale with A = 100-90, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, and F = 50-59. Opponents of minimum grading scales see it as grade inflation. However, in a seven-year study, Carey and Carifo (2012) found that changing the grading scale only had a minimal effect on student grades and pass/fail rates. While the traditional 0-100 scale is typically preferred, it can lead to irregularities due to category weights, number of assignments, and teacher subjectivity.

A student's final grade should be a summary of their knowledge in a course – not simply a reflection of the amount of work they turned in. Competency-based education is founded on the idea “that grades are not based on what students earn, but rather what students learn” (Brookhart, 2011, p. 10). Placing emphasis on content mastery instead of assignment completion has the ability to teach the student that learning is a choice – there are clear rewards for good decisions, such as choosing to study, and clear consequences for poor decisions, such as failing. Multiple researchers (Guskey, 2006; Guskey & Muñoz, 2015; Scriffiny, 2008; Tyack & Tobin, 1994) point to this fact, calling for reform to modernize educational practices.

Patrick & Sturgis (2013) mention five principles of CBE: (A) Students advance upon mastery, (B) Explicit and measurable learning objectives that empower students, (C) Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students, (D) Rapid, differentiated support for students who fall behind or become disengaged, (E) Learning outcomes emphasize application and creation of knowledge (p. 6). This kind of reform forces higher student achievement. Unintentionally,

student responsibility is increased, as more is asked of them to pass each lesson, and eventually the course. Achieving the minimum passing score could be more difficult, meaning more effort is required from the student both inside and outside of the classroom. To pass, some students must improve study skills and take more ownership in the learning process. Assignment completion moves from being a task done mindlessly to a requirement that helps some students fully understand content. The result is higher student accountability.

The reporting of grades becomes more straight-forward as well. Every assignment is scored the same—with grades coming from demonstrated mastery on each lesson. It is easy for students and parents to see where specific gaps in knowledge are. This, in turn, allows teachers to focus instruction for each student individually, give timely feedback, and remediate as needed.

An important benefit in changing to CBE, besides increased student accountability, is the discontinuation of the Carnegie Unit. Students would earn grades solely on performance and knowledge, instead of sitting in a room for a required amount of time. Guskey (2009) argues that, “we persist in using these antiquated practices not because they have proven effective, but because they are steeped in long-held traditions” (p. 2). Research clearly shows that using competency-based grading is more beneficial for the student (Marzano, 2006; Reeves, 2004, 2008), yet schools choose not to implement the practice.

*Transition gap.*

The transition gap refers to what a student is prepared to do at the high school level and is expected to do at the college level (Hirsch, 2010). Both ends of that gap (high schools and universities) have struggled with ways to bridge it. Many states have implemented College and Career Readiness (CCR) plans to prepare students. For example, the state of Kentucky's CCR plan calls for students to take 3 courses in a pre-defined pathway and pass an occupational skills certification test either Junior or Senior Year. Schools emphasize this program to students and make it a point of emphasis during the scheduling process Freshman Year (Timmel, et al., 2014).

CCR has become a key part of the School Report Card in Kentucky, which is how the Commonwealth evaluates its schools. Schools who schedule students into pathways with intention are doing so with a split focus. One eye is on the student and their interests, while the other is on earning points (up to 1.5 per student) for their score (Timmel, et al., 2014). Schools inevitably place focus on the incorrect area. Towards the end of a student's high school career, emphasis seems to shift more towards earning points than preparing the student based on their interests.

Colleges and universities have different expectations than high schools in terms of preparation (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). A main factor is communication (Fowler & Luna, 2009; Helfgot, 2001). Based on the researcher's experience as a guidance counselor, little communication exists between the two levels. This creates a situation where one hand does not know what the other is doing, resulting in two

institutions diverging on separate paths educationally. It stands to reason, then, that schools are doing more harm than good in terms of transition preparation.

High schools address student preparation by offering advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, etc.) or on-the-job-training (Information Technology, Nursing, etc.). Some schools even bill themselves as college preparatory while others implement Early/Middle College programs where students are almost forced to begin a college curriculum Junior Year. These programs have been around since the 1970s, but have done little in the way of bridging the transition gap (LaGuardia Community College, 2017).

Community colleges and 4-year universities have made some attempts at bridging the gap by offering limited partnerships with local schools. These dual credit programs release some financial burden off students while also exposing them to new opportunities that may not have originally been available. As nice as they are, these programs have also done little to influence academic achievement at the next level. According to Venezia & Jaeger (2013), “these programs augment and support what schools do, but do not fundamentally change the way schools interact with students” (p. 129).

The changes must go beyond instructional practices. They must reach out into non-cognitive areas of motivation, encouragement, and belief. To accomplish this, both levels of education must communicate at a deeper level. Institutions must communicate with the families. Smith and Zhang (2009) conducted a study on perceived positive influences of students and found that those closest to the student

on an individual level have the greatest impact in shaping their future. This includes family, close friends, and even high school teachers. This fact is supported by several others (Epstein et al, 2009; Iver, Epstein, Sheldon, & Fonseca, 2015; Simon, 2004; Spera, 2005).

Support and encouragement have been consistently linked to positive perceptions, increased motivation, and increased achievement (Jeynes, 2007). The time students spend having deep, meaningful conversations with their friends and family matter. Having just one person involved at a real level can set the path of a high school student's future. Some high school students may be more difficult to reach than others, but that task is achievable with a focused, collaborative approach (Helfgot, 2001).

#### *College and career readiness.*

The idea of College and Career Readiness (CCR) has taken over the high school landscape in recent years. Kentucky, in particular, has made CCR a part of schools' annual reporting on the School Report Card. Under this system, Kentucky high school students can become "college ready" by meeting statewide benchmarks on the ACT exam (or an equivalent exam). Students can become "career ready" by passing three courses in a pre-determined pathway and then passing a certification exam. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers have worked together for the benefit of students.

This plan, as simple as it may seem, may not be the definitive answer (Ivey, 2011). Students today have a myriad of options, including: 4-year, 2-year,

community college, technical college, and online programs (Ahearn, Rosenbaum, & Rosenbaum, 2016). If this is the case, then what should the term “College and Career Readiness” mean? Most of those in education would probably define it as, “A person who can immediately jump into the next phase of life with no remediation”. If true, CCR should look differently for each individual student – based on their needs, goals, and desires.

Schools looking to prepare students for life at the next level should do everything in their power to prepare students for the tasks that lay ahead of them. These tasks come in the form of two distinct factors: academic and non-academic. Non-academic factors take priority almost immediately (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). In Kentucky’s case, it is not clear that the CCR system tackles this issue. Ferguson, (2014) writes, “The contrast between how students engage and interact in the world outside versus what they are allowed to do in high school is too enormous to rationalize” (p. 69).

This contrast has been described as a “transition gap” between levels; and while districts do a decent job focusing on academic needs of students, the non-academic needs are almost completely ignored. Studies on first year college students found that major issues come in the form of anxiety, dislocations, cultural issues, and other social problems (London, 1989; Weis, 1992, 2017). Schools must counteract these issues with a pre-emptive strike. Understanding why the gap exists is the first step in eliminating its creation. It has been shown that motivation is inversely proportional to age at the K-12 level (Ferguson, 2014). It is recommended that

educators at the high school level take a more active, personal role in the lives of their students. “The need for older students to feel connected to adults who care about them is important, especially in lower-SES populations (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008). Building that connection can lead to increased motivation levels while also creating an informal accountability system.

While this explanation may seem like an easy fix, the traditional secondary school system struggles to support student needs in this manner. For starters, growing class sizes make building personal relationships very difficult (Ferguson, 2014). Teachers and counselors are responsible for over 400 students yearly. Second, schools are obsessed with test scores (Ferguson, 2014). The increased focus on state-mandated achievement tests and reporting, as well as the rigidity placed on curriculum by the Carnegie Unit, create little flexibility for true student-teacher interaction.

The focus of high school should be placed on its ultimate goal. “If high school is the home stretch in preparing students for life in the real world, then we need to take a hard look at the policies and practices that currently define most American high schools” (Ferguson, 2014, p. 69). Plans have been put in place, but in most cases those plans do not address all the issues facing students today and the transition ahead of them. CCR, in its current state, is not clearly defined or set-up for individual student success at the next level. This is especially true in a world where districts expect every student to be “college or career ready” without remediation.

### **3:1 Supports Overview**

The 3:1 Supports system (3:1) was created by Dr. Houston Barber as a collaborative, holistic approach to high school education and is currently being implemented in a collaborative effort by Frankfort Independent Schools (FIS) and Kentucky State University (KSU). The purpose of this document is to outline the 3:1 supports approach used at Frankfort High School (FHS), review recent results, detail a plan of implementation for future districts, and identify areas of growth and/or improvement.

3:1 Supports originated in Louisville, Kentucky as a partnership between the University of Louisville, The Academy at Shawnee High School, and the West Louisville Community. The University of Louisville (UofL) provided resources to Shawnee in the form of graduate students in education and counseling programs who were completing clinicals, practicums, and internships under the guidance of full-time faculty members (Black, 2017; University of Louisville, 2014; Vision Russell, 2015). This clinical training model provided graduate students with an “immersive, on-site experience” while expanding services available to high school students at Shawnee (University of Louisville, 2014).

Dr. Barber’s program, called “Cardinal Success” in Louisville, allowed Shawnee High School (and Jefferson County Public Schools) to partner with the West Louisville community and UofL to further extend resources to Shawnee student families in the areas of counseling and adult education. As Dr. Barber built relationships in the community, he found specific needs in the areas of non-traditional

family services, youth violence, substance abuse, unstable housing, and domestic abuse (Vision Russell, 2015). Specific services were developed for these particular areas through individual counseling, group counseling, family counseling, psychological assessments, wellness, mental health education, and financial literacy (Black, 2017; University of Louisville, 2014; Vision Russell, 2015).

The West Louisville Community extended opportunities for both Shawnee students and families beyond what the high school could directly provide. The Louisville Urban League provided after school youth programs, the Kentucky Recovery Resource Center provides assessments for any student or family member beginning recovery, local churches offered pastoral care if it is desired or deemed necessary, and local banks assisted families with free financial planning, offering workshops on building credit, and setting up micro-loans (Vision Russell, 2015).

The goal of 3:1 Supports is student preparation. As Dr. Shirley Willinghamz, former Provost at the University of Louisville, said at 3:1's introductory press conference:

Schools do not spend enough time talking about if you are going to get a college degree, then you not only need to be academically prepared, but you also need to be emotionally ready to do that. Being ready for college means the student is mentally and emotionally ready to cope with college life and to take on the challenges that presents. If a student is truly ready, it increases the likelihood they will wear a cap and gown in 4 years.

(Jefferson County Public Schools, 2014)

**School description.**

Frankfort High School (FHS) is part of Frankfort Independent Schools (FIS) and is the only high school in the district. FHS is comprised of 231 students from grades 8-12, with 54.5% being male and 44.5% being female (Kentucky Department of Education, 2018). Of those students, 70.1% are White, 17.3% are African American, 2.6% are Hispanic, 0.4% are Asian, and 9.5% are Multiracial (Kentucky Department of Education, 2018). The initial cohort of 31 Frankfort High School students were treated as a separate entity called Rosenwald Empowerment Preparatory Academy (REP). This afforded the school district and university to complete a Beta study. Based on the FHS student body, the initial cohort represented 10-15% of the population. For purposes of this paper, this initial cohort will be referred to as FHS students.

**3:1 system organization.**

The approach of 3:1 Supports is personalized and customizable learning, where each student can receive a specific set of supports tailored to their individual needs. With all pieces in place, no two students could receive the exact same assistance. Some students may only receive support in academics, while others may just receive family counseling. The idea is to holistically address immediate needs of the student, including their family structure, in supporting the student as they take steps to graduate high school.

3:1 Supports was funded mainly by the Kenan Charitable Trust, which seeks to provide opportunities to boys of color from grades 6-16 (Kenan Charitable Trust,

2017). The \$400,000 grant was awarded to FIS and KSU because of their partnership, which targeted underrepresented populations and promoted access into STEM fields. Grant monies funded the development of REP Academy, which housed and supported the program. This allowed FIS to intentionally create space for program development and maximize research, while providing FHS students access to mental health mentoring and creating opportunities for community projects without the hindrance of resources.

To achieve this holistic approach, three adults are assigned to every child/student: one with the role of a content connector, one with the role of a wellness connector, and one with the role of an opportunity connector. These adults provide support in the following areas:

- 1) Academic / Behavioral – Content Connector
- 2) Social / Emotional – Wellness Connector
- 3) Access to opportunity – Opportunity Connector

It is here where the customizable experiences can be seen in full force. There are not necessarily any defined roles for which an adult may take. For example, a teacher could be the wellness connector for a student because of the relationship between the two. Likewise an employer could serve as the content connector for a student because they are able to make content come alive and connect content to a relevant purpose. It is possible for any adult to take on any role.

Academic/Behavioral supports include the use of technology at a 1:1 ratio. While at school, each student has an assigned Chromebook to use during the school

day. They are also given access to G-Suite for Education, which provides students a school email address through Google Gmail as well as access to Google Drive – which includes access to a word processor (Google Docs), spreadsheet software (Google Sheets), presentation software (Google Slides), and an online classroom (Google Classroom). With this in place, students have 24-hour access to course material, can create documents, complete assignments, communicate with teachers and classmates, and submit homework virtually at their own discretion.

Additionally, FHS switched to the Summit Learning Platform during the 2016-17 school year. Summit Learning is a free learning management system that gives teachers an adjustable, pre-determined curriculum that can be personalized for each student (Summit Learning, 2018d). The switch to Summit Learning occurred to ensure a consistent philosophy of personalized learning for all staff, provided immediate access for professional development for teachers, and provided flexibility for teachers to deliver instruction. This switch to self-directed learning has shifted the power and responsibility of learning into the hands of the student. Grading shifted to a more competency-based approach instead of completion-based. Ultimately, this allowed students to move through material at a pace that is appropriate for them individually, instead of a pace pre-planned by the district.

Behavioral supports are embedded within the academic supports. Taking note of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2018), FIS believes that basic physiological needs should be met before any real education can take place. As such, behavior interventions are designed to meet basic needs and not as a means to punish.

A highlight of behavior interventions is the emphasis on keeping students in the classroom. Teachers and administrators at FHS believe in addressing the root problems classroom behavior issues stem from. As such, example behavior corrections can be spending time with on-campus counselors, after school detentions, and in-house or community service projects. In extreme cases, administrators used “deferred suspensions” where students could choose to put off a suspension if they instead chose to get assistance with more serious issues – such as drug or alcohol abuse.

The use of these behavior corrections is twofold: first, missing class/suspensions are a last resort. FHS will exhaust all options and available resources in order to keep the student engaged in the learning process. Second, they are creating a system that makes learning a favorable option. From the researcher’s experience, some students use poor behavior as a means to get out of class and go anywhere else. It is more painful for students to stay in class and learn than be suspended.

Social/Emotional supports at FHS include two main areas. First, through the use of Summit Learning, each school professional is required to mentor a small group of students for 40 minutes per day assisting students, and their families, through the learning process. These mentors help connect the school and home, complete goal setting activities, ensure adequate progress in coursework, and eventually completion of courses at that student’s acceptable pace. To accomplish this, Summit Learning requires school personnel to attend a free on-board training week during the summer before the school year begins (Summit Learning, 2018a). During this training,

employees participate in sessions such as “Intro to Summit Learning”, “Intro to Projects”, “Effective 1:1 Mentoring”, and “Effective Feedback”. One additional professional development is provided each semester during the school year as well as videoconferences throughout the school year (Summit Learning, 2018a). Students have the opportunity to work with each other on assessments, projects, and learning activities. Doing so helps to engage students in deeper learning activities while building a community of self-directed learners (Smith & Stamper, 2017).

Second, FIS has partnered with local mental health agencies and religious organizations to provide students with a wide-array of resources. Some of these resources, such as the Kentucky Counseling Center, is housed inside the the school building and holds weekly individual and group counseling sessions with students based on student need an issues. For example, these counselors may work individually with a student after the death of a family member or classmate, or create group meetings to work through issues stemming from divorce. Religious organizations are available to provide support to students and families based on request from the family. Depending on student need, any of these resources may be activated by school personnel or the families to provide students additional support.

Access to opportunity highlights the partnership between Frankfort Independent Schools (FIS) and Kentucky State University (KSU) as well as FIS and local businesses. KSU has shared resources with FIS to allow students to take college courses on campus, beginning with the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade. FHS houses college professors on campus, which has increased the amount and variety of for-credit courses students

can take, while also providing them with a glimpse of future possibilities. Students can currently complete as many as 60 hours of college course work by the time they graduate high school.

Should the college path not be in the plans of the student or their family, opportunity is also given for students to work and learn in the community. FIS realizes that education happens everywhere – not just inside the walls of the school. To meet the needs of these students, internships and work-for-credit opportunities are provided. Students in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades can participate in “Capital City Prep”, a program that allows students to “develop employability skills and gain work experience while receiving exposure to a variety of technical and administrative career fields...and assist high school students with the school-to-work transition” (Frankfort Independent Schools, 2016, para. 1).

**Definition of terms.**

**3:1** – Short for 3:1 Supports or 3:1 Supports Approach to education.

**Building Administrator** – person who leads 3:1 implementation at the school level. This person serves under the District Administrator.

**Cardinal Success** – partnership between University of Louisville, the Academy at Shawneed and West Louisville community and was a previous version of 3:1 Supports.

**CCR** – College and Career Readiness

**College Liasion** – leadership position in 3:1 Supports that connects the P-12 school system to the university level and provides students access to university resources.

**Connector** – adult who is in charge of supporting a student in a particular area. There are three kinds of connectors: content, wellness, and opportunity.

**Data Collector** – leadership position in 3:1 Supports that is in charge of creating data instruments and collecting data that can improve the 3:1 Supports Program.

**District Administrator** – the person leading 3:1 implementation for a school district.

**FIS** – Frankfort Independent School District. FIS is used when the topic applies to the entire school system/entity as a whole.

**FHS** – Frankfort High School. Also, the initial cohort that was studied. The initial cohort of Frankfort High School students were treated as a separate entity called REP Academy. This afforded the school district and university to complete a Beta study. Based on the Frankfort High School student body, the initial cohort represented 10-15% of the population.

**Internship Coordinator** – leadership position in 3:1 Supports that acts as a liaison between students/families and business partners on appropriate placement for Senior Year internship. This person may also track CCR data.

**KSU** – Kentucky State University

**Learning Management System (LMS)** – a program or application, usually web-based, that delivers educational courses and resources to students.

**Outreach Director** – leadership position in 3:1 Supports tasked with locating and establishing potential partnerships specific to student needs. This person also coordinates and facilitates 3:1 support meetings for students.

**Soft Skills** – non-academic attributes that allow students to interact with others and become self-sufficient.

**STEM** – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**Summit Learning** – free learning management system sponsored by Facebook. This LMS uses personalized learning and real-world projects to facilitate instruction. It also requires adults to individually mentor and assist students as they progress throughout the school year.

**Traditional methods/practices/means** – refers to standard means of education, including, but not limited to, use of the Carnegie Unit, grading based on assignment completion, attendance tracking, and behavior interventions such as in-school suspensions.

### **Summary.**

Using traditional methods, secondary school systems do an ordinary job preparing students for life at the next level academically. The National Student Clearinghouse (2018) reported a decline in college admissions over the past three years, showing colleges want more from high school students academically and socially. While academics takes center-stage, social preparation should not be forgotten. Students still struggle adapting to the demands life places on them – specifically in the areas of personal responsibility and consequences of choice. While several alternatives to both school scheduling and grading practices have been made, neither have made a long-lasting impact. Considering high school students' desire to take on more responsibilities and be more independent, schools should afford students

the opportunity to grow in these non-academic areas to prepare them for what lies ahead.

Re-examining scheduling and grading practices places learning at the center of the school system. General education programs should emphasize common standards everyone **MUST** learn (Adler-Kassner, 2014) and tailor specific plans for each student. Schools can then build off a base degree and individualize the student experience with electives and/or programs specific to his/her goals and desires, much like “expansion packs” in common video games. Doing so shifts the core of the current school system from time (students **MUST** graduate in four years) to achievement (students graduate when they **COMPLETE** their required amount of credits).

The federal government has not limited states from using these practices. Each state has begun exploring the possibilities—even creating opportunities for use by the public-school system. Using the Commonwealth of Kentucky as an example, the researcher has found support for the use of both concepts: replacing the Carnegie Unit with CBE and creating an alternative to the traditional schedule simultaneously. Kentucky has had a law permitting competency-based learning, graded on standards/performance, since 2006. In the same report, Seiler, et al. (2013) mentions:

In 2012, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) received a grant from the National Governors Association to explore competency-based learning while Kentucky’s Green River Regional Educational Cooperative was one of 16 winners of a federal Race to the Top grant that required accelerated and

personalized learning. Both require grantees to move towards more competency-based instruction (p. 6).

The Kentucky Legislative Research Commission (LRC) defines competency-based learning as:

A framework for the awarding of credit to students upon mastery of Kentucky's Core Academic Standards in 704 KAR 3:303 or upon mastery of any additional competencies which shall also include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions (2013).

Kentucky law explains that students legally can earn credit based upon their knowledge in a subject instead of time spent in a classroom. As mentioned earlier, this is the point of standards-based grading. Wellman (2005) writes that education needs to, "break the link between time and credits" (p. 23). Doing so creates opportunities for more flexible scheduling and empowers students to choose their own educational setting. The result would be true student ownership in education filled with decisions based on needs, personal choices in class setting, and an increased focus on learning rather than time requirements.

Federal legislation supports these state requirements as well. In a March 2013 letter, David Bergeron, the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the US Department of Education (2013) wrote:

Direct assessment is an indication of learning under federal regulation.

Competency-based approaches to education have the potential for assuring the quality and extent of learning, shortening the time to degree, developing stackable credentials that ease student transitions between work and school, and reducing the overall cost of education. (para. 18)

As 3:1 evolves and expands, eliminating the Carnegie Unit will become essential. Likewise, having more open school schedules and individualizing instruction enhances the student experience by creating opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom. By providing supports and partnering with outside agencies, schools are giving students all the resources they need to learn, fail, and eventually succeed in both education and the workforce.

### **Who is the capstone meant to impact?**

The capstone will primarily impact students transitioning from high school to both postsecondary education and the workforce. Secondly, the capstone can impact how secondary and postsecondary institutions work together to prepare students. This capstone is designed to study preparedness of first-year incoming college students. In most cases, first-year post-secondary students have been prepared well-enough academically but fall short of the non-academic demands' college lays before them. Students face challenges in the areas of personal responsibility, time management, and freedom of choice. If these areas can be built into secondary education, then students would arrive at post-secondary institutions with a wealth of

tools at their disposal – including skills in time management, self-regulation and self-advocacy.

### **How was the capstone project implemented?**

#### **Data collection.**

Qualitative research (in the form of interviews and surveys) was collected from the 3:1 Program Director, Frankfort High School Assistant Principal, Rosenwald Empowerment and Presentation (REP) Academy Principal, and NAVIGO Research. Quantitative data (in the areas of student academic data, attendance, and behavior) was collected from the Frankfort High School Superintendent, Frankfort High School Principal and the Chief Academic/Innovation Officer at Kentucky State University. The data provided was also collected for the Kenan Grant and displays the usefulness and effectiveness of the grant on the students at Frankfort High School.

The qualitative and quantitative data collected from these parties became the basis for the implementation guide. By obtaining this data, the researcher was able to answer the following questions:

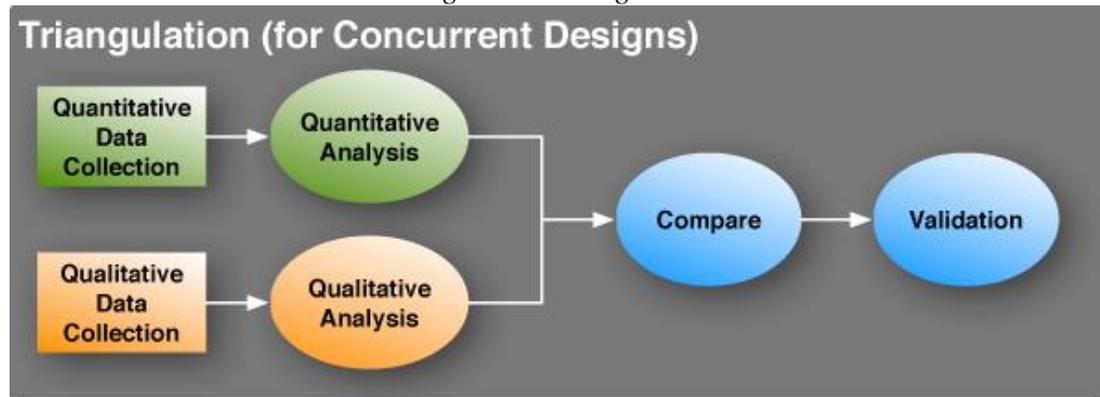
- 1) How does the 3:1 Supports program affect student academic performance?
- 2) How does the 3:1 Supports program prepare students to pursue their life goals after high school?
- 3) What are areas of improvement/extension for the 3:1 supports program?

### Methodology.

The 3:1 Supports program will be reviewed using a mixed-methods triangulation approach (Figure 1). Quantitative and qualitative data will be reviewed separately, then compared together. Quantitative data is numerical information. For purposes of this study, Qualitative Analysis will consist of GPA, attendance rates, and number of behavior violations. Qualitative data is words and narratives. For this study, the researcher coded (grouped) responses to surveys and interview questions using Likert scales to find common themes as well as strengths and weaknesses.

Figure 1

#### *Mixed-Methods Concurrent Triangulation Design*



*Note.* Reprinted from Google Images, 2019

### Data analysis.

The data collected from FIS and KSU was analyzed separately, then compared for results. First, qualitative data was collected and analyzed. To assist in comparisons, qualitative data was transcribed and coded using Likert scales that corresponded to themes which help answer research questions. Quantitative data was then analyzed by calculating the absolute value of improvement percentage. Doing so

allowed the researcher to compare data before and after implementation and gauge the area of greatest benefit.

Each set of results were recorded separately, then compared and analyzed together, creating a triangulation of data which ultimately answered the research questions. The comparison of the Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis allowed the researcher to gain a holistic perspective of the program's strengths and weaknesses.

### **Quantitative data.**

Quantitative data on the 3:1 Supports program was initially collected by Frankfort Independent Schools administration. Data has been de-identified by FIS, so the researcher has no access to personal information related to individual students. These data sets highlight improvements in the academic/behavioral and social/emotional components of the 3:1 program. Initial data was collected during the 2015-2016 school year on a group of 31 Sophomores who made up the initial cohort/pilot group of students. Of these 31 students, eight students did not complete the program due to attrition. The data for these eight students is not reflected in tables 7-9, leaving a total of 23 students with complete data sets.

The first data set examines student GPA's before and after the 3:1 program. The initial data set was collected at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year and reflects cumulative GPA at the end of Freshman Year. The final data set was collected at the end of 2017-2018 and reflects the cumulative GPA at graduation. The improvement percentage was calculated by using the percentage increase formula.

$[(\text{new GPA} - \text{old GPA})/\text{old GPA}] * 100$ . The last row of table 7 shows the average improvement percentage of the 23 student cohort.

From examining the data, only one student (student 11) demonstrated regression while participating in the 3:1 program. Of the remaining 22 students, the level of improvement ranges from 10.66% (student 19) to 660% (student 13). The cohort's average improvement was 109.51%, which resulted in students raising their GPA's by over a full point (1.16) after three years in the 3:1 Supports program. This equates to a 1-letter grade improvement.

Table 7

<i>FHS Student GPA's Before &amp; After 3:1 Supports</i>			
Student	2015-16 GPA	2017-18 GPA	Improvement (%)
1	0.91	2.5	174.73%
2	1.22	2.8	129.51%
3	2.24	3.4	51.79%
4	1.5	2	33.33%
5	0.7	2.5	257.14%
6	2.1	3.2	52.38%
7	1.56	2.1	34.62%
8	1.2	2.2	83.33%
9	0.8	1.8	125.00%
10	3.1	3.5	12.90%
11	2.12	1.8	-15.09%
12	1.3	2.4	84.62%
13	0.5	3.8	660.00%
14	1.4	2.65	89.29%
15	1.67	3.4	103.59%
16	1	2	100.00%
17	2.1	3.4	61.90%
18	1.4	2.25	60.71%
19	2.44	2.7	10.66%
20	1.52	3	97.37%

21	2.1	3.75	78.57%
22	0.75	1.8	140.00%
23	1.3	2.5	92.31%
AVERAGE	1.518695652	2.67173913	109.51%

The second set of data examines student behavioral data during their time in the 3:1 supports program. Table 8 lists violations recorded by the school at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year and at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. It should be noted that “violation” is a general term and can include a general write-up from a teacher, in-school suspension, or out-of-school suspension. As such, this data does not reflect a total number of days a student was reprimanded based on their behavior. Instead, the behavioral data reflected focuses on the number of incidents each student had.

The final column of data displays the improvement each student made by the time of graduation. The data for every student showed a decreased number of incidents over the course of three years. As such, the improvement calculation should show a negative result. Instead of allowing this negative result to occur, the researcher subtracted the 2017-18 violations from the 2015-16 violations in order to obtain a positive result. This result is numerically the same as the original calculation (as described for Table 7), but is positive instead of negative. Another way to view this calculation is as the absolute value. The intent of the research is to show positive effects as positive numbers. Absolute value displays numbers as a distance from zero. Since distance can only be positive, the result of the calculations will also be positive.

The initial data shows a total of 135 incidents from the cohort by the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. Four students (students 1, 5, 9, and 13) had over 10 incidents each. Three students had no incidents before 3:1 Supports began, which increased to eleven students by the time of graduation. The three students who had no incidents either before or after the program skews the data negatively. When looking at the group as a whole, there was a 72.46% improvement in behavior incidents, represented by a total of 32 at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. If the three students were not taken into account, this total number would remain the same, but the average improvement would raise to 83.32%. The effect of 3:1 Supports on behavior is a drop of over 100 incidents over a three year period.

Table 8

*FHS Behavior Violations Before & After 3:1 Supports*

Student	2015-16 Violations	2017-18 Violations	Improvement (%)
1	11	5	54.55%
2	3	0	100.00%
3	5	0	100.00%
4	6	1	83.33%
5	12	5	58.33%
6	5	1	80.00%
7	7	2	71.43%
8	6	2	66.67%
9	14	8	42.86%
10	3	0	100.00%
11	4	0	100.00%
12	7	1	85.71%
13	12	2	83.33%
14	4	0	100.00%
15	9	2	77.78%
16	8	2	75.00%

17	5	0	100.00%
18	2	0	100.00%
19	4	0	100.00%
20	8	1	87.50%
21	0	0	0.00%
22	0	0	0.00%
23	0	0	0.00%
<b>TOTAL/AVERAGE</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>72.46%</b>

The final set of data reviews student attendance data. Table 9 details each student’s number of days missed before and after 3:1 Supports. The data in table 9 includes excused absences, non-excused absences, and days missed for behavior reasons. The calculation for improvement percentage in table 9 was exactly the same as table 8. By repeating this calculation, the researcher again obtains a positive percentage result even though the intended calculation would yield a negative result.

Going into the the 2015-2016 school year, the students participating in 3:1 Supports missed a total of 616 days, which is equivalent to 3.5 years of school in FHS’s 175-day school year (Frankfort Independent Schools, 2018). By the end of the program these same students totaled 465 days missed, which is equivalent to 2.6 years of school. The improvement percentage of 13.51% reflects students being in the building for 151 more days.

Of the 23 students in the initial cohort, three students showed no improvement because they had no missed days before or after the program. Two other students (students 6 and 12) increased the number of days missed, roughly doubling their initial amounts. These five scores greatly affect the improvement percentage. If these

scores were not calculated, the final improvement would be 31.60%, a change of over 18%.

Table 9

*FHS Student Attendance Before & After 3:1 Supports*

Student #	2015/16 Days Missed	2017/18 Days Missed	Improvement (%)
1	44	23	47.73%
2	17	11	35.29%
3	12	7	41.67%
4	17	14	17.65%
5	132	94	28.79%
6	8	17	-112.50%
7	14	11	21.43%
8	18	13	27.78%
9	28	18	35.71%
10	16	9	43.75%
11	22	15	31.82%
12	11	27	-145.45%
13	134	97	27.61%
14	13	9	30.77%
15	9	7	22.22%
16	81	66	18.52%
17	11	8	27.27%
18	10	7	30.00%
19	6	3	50.00%
20	13	9	30.77%
21	0	0	0.00%
22	0	0	0.00%
23	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL/AVERAGE	616	465	13.51%

**Qualitative data.**

Qualitative data was collected by Frankfort High School from students at the end of the 2017-2018 school via a 1:1 interview/conversation. Each student was

assigned a random letter to create anonymity and each conversation was recorded. Responses were coded to create general themes and conclusions, when necessary. Responses were coded using Likert scales using the following codes: 1=no/strongly disagree, 2=not really/disagree, 3=neutral/indifferent, 4=a little bit/agree, 5=yes/strongly agree. Yes/no question were coded as 1=no, 2=yes.

The qualitative data obtained from FIS showed a completion rate of 91.8%. Below are the questions/statements and major themes from each question based on coding:

- 1) At the beginning of the program, did you have a plan for life after high school?

Students were split as to their answers for this question. The majority (69%) of answers were either a 1 or a 5. Students claimed they either had no plan for life after high school, or they absolutely had a plan for life after high school. While these bookend scores may be high, the third highest response (23%) was 2. Considering this set of responses, 54% of student responses for question 1 were either a 1 or a 2, showing that little to no thought had been given toward future plans for a majority of FHS students before 3:1 Supports were used.

- 2) How did you feel now about your plans after high school before 3:1?

After the program, 100% of students answered this question positively. 31% of answers were a 4 and the remaining 69% were a 5.

- 3) The 3:1 Program is helping you plan for your future.

The largest section of data is focused around responses of 3 and 4. 70% of answers fall into these two categories, showing a slight positive response when addressing the help 3:1 offers in planning for life after high school. By comparing the next highest responses, 13% responded with a 5 while 11% responded with a 2. This gave a very slight edge (52% to 42%) in favor of positive responses to this question.

- 4) The 3:1 Program is helping you explore possible careers.

57% of responses were either a 4 or 5 for this question, with another 29% responding as a 3 (indifferent). The 86% of answers falling in these categories highlight the continuing theme that 3:1 supports helps connect students with their future.

- 5) The 3:1 Program is helping you explore possible post-secondary opportunities.

58% of responses were either a 4 or 5 for this question, with another 29% responding as a 3 (indifferent). These scores directly reflect the previous question and displays equality placed on both career and academic opportunities after high school.

- 6) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of verbal communication.

53% of responses were either a 4 or 5 compared to 21% as a 1 or 2. The positive responses outweigh the negative responses at more than a 2:1 ratio, showing a high strength in the area of verbal communication.

- 7) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of teamwork.

55% of students responded with either a 4 or 5 compared to 14% at a 1 or 2. The responses reflect a high strength in the area of teamwork. These responses are similar to those in question 6.

- 8) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of creative thinking.

57% of students responded with either a 4 or 5 compared to 17% at a 1 or 2. These responses are similar to those in questions 6 and 7.

- 9) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of leadership.

55% of students responded with either a 4 or compared to 21% at a 1 or 2. These responses are similar to questions 6-8 and closely resemble question 6.

- 10) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of managing project timelines..

40% of students responded with a 4 or 5, 29% responded with a 3, and 31% responded with a 1 or 2. The even spread of responses leads to inconclusive results in the area of project management.

- 11) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of time management.

49% of students responded with a 4 or 5, while 25% responded with a 1 or 2. This almost 2:1 response rate shows a strength in the area of time management. These responses resemble that of question 6.

- 12) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of motivation & initiative.

60% of responses were either a 4 or 5 to this question, compared to 19% as 1 or 2. This displays a high strength in the areas of motivation and initiative.

13) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of dressing appropriately for work.

43% of students responded with either a 4 or 5, 23% of students responded with a 3, and 34% responded with a 1 or 2. The even spread of responses leads to inconclusive results in the area of dressing appropriately for work.

14) The 3:1 Program is helping you in the area of overcoming barriers.

57% of students responded with a 4 or 5, while 16% responded with a 1 or 2. The positive responses outweigh the negative responses by almost 3.5 times, which displays a high strength in the area of overcoming barriers.

The following questions are yes/no questions.

15) Do you have a better idea of what you want to do after high school?

100% of students responded with a yes.

16) Do you know more about the cost of college?

92% of students responded with a yes.

17) Do you know more about career options?

100% of students responded with a yes.

18) Do you know more about college options?

92% of students responded with a yes.

19) Are you better at working as a member of a team?

100% of students responded with a yes.

20) Are you better at problem solving?

100% of students responded with a yes.

21) Are your verbal communication skills better?

85% of students responded with a yes.

22) Are your listening skills better?

92% of students responded with a yes.

23) Are your leadership skills better?

92% of students responded with a yes.

The following question was not coded, but broken down into main themes of responses.

24) What are the top 3 things you learned during your time in the 3:1 Program?

The top three responses from students were: connected with future plans (46%), communication (31%), and teamwork (31%)

### **Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

Students should have the opportunity to be prepared for success in all areas of life. This includes both academic and non-academic areas through direct and indirect instructional practices. In some cases, the indirect instructional practices leave longer-lasting impact on students. Additionally, the practices and strategies selected should impact all students – not just those bound for college.

The changes suggested in the 3:1 Supports program create opportunity for development of lifelong skills. Teaching personal responsibility through mastery learning (competency-based grading), freedom of choice through consequences, and time management through flexible scheduling give all students a fighting chance after

their secondary education is completed. No matter what direction the student chooses, they will be provided an opportunity to be well-equipped for success.

### **When was the capstone be implemented?**

This capstone was written during the 2018-2019 school year, based on research from 2015-2018. Implementation of the capstone may occur as soon as the 2019-2020 school year. Several school visits have already been made by interested parties working on their integration/implementation of the program and interest has already been expressed to use this capstone as a reference for future documents and reports. This guide is meant to help streamline the implementation process for districts and increase efficiency of future implementation.

### **Impact of the Capstone**

#### **Results and findings.**

#### ***Conclusions on quantitative data.***

Quantitative data displays improvement in the areas of GPA, behavior incidents, and attendance. The results suggest a significant increase in academic performance. The cohort's total improvement percentage was 109%, with most students showing gains in the 70%-174% range. Student 13 demonstrated a complete academic turnaround, with a 3 (almost 4) letter grade improvement.

Attendance data showed a 13.51% improvement. Research completed by Ginsberg, Jordan, & Chang (2014) details that “students who miss 3 or more days of school the month prior to an assessment score (on average) 12 points lower” as compared to students with higher attendance (p. 3). Likewise, “students who qualify

for free and reduced lunch are 30% more likely to miss school” (Ginsberg, Jordan, & Chang, 2014, p.4). This research suggests a relationship between attendance and academic performance. The same can be said of social/emotional skills. Poor attendance can be pointed to as a reason why children do not develop much-needed reading and math skills, learn social skills, develop attention spans, adapt to change, or be engaged in the learning process (Gottfried, 2014).

How can 3:1 Supports be so effective in raising grades and lowering behavior incidents, but not improve student attendance? One answer could come via the instructional delivery method. As Frankfort High School has ushered in Summit Learning and use of internships for credit, they have moved away from traditional education practices, such as completion-based grading and Carnegie Unit-based scheduling practices. This change has allowed school personnel to extend learning past the walls of the school building and engage resources throughout the city. Students are now free to learn whenever and wherever they choose, based on convenience of the student. This poses an issue when attempting to collect attendance data via traditional means. It is possible for students to be on-pace instructionally, but chronically be absent from the classroom. It is possible for students to be in the building and engaged in learning, but absent from the classroom. In other words, attendance data is accurate based on the reporting method used by the school system, but may not accurately reflect the time spent by students educationally in the online environment provided.

Finally, it should be noted the effect of students whose before and after data did not change. Most programs like 3:1 are targeted, meaning that the school finds students that would benefit from the program and enrolls them. FHS did not take this approach directly. Targeted groups of students were offered the opportunity to participate in the program directly, but were not forced into participation. Students from the entire school population could choose to participate as well. A few students, such as students 21-23 in tables 7-9, had below 2.5 GPA's, no behavior problems, and no absences. These students simply wanted assistance and were willing to try something different. While their data only impacts results for GPA and behavior, they also demonstrate the ability for 3:1 to be tailored for all students, regardless of need or background.

*Conclusions on qualitative data.*

Qualitative data focused on student perceptions of the 3:1 program. From their perspective, 3:1 Supports has strengthened many skills. These skills are not solely used in the academic arena, but in daily life as well. The responses given to this instrument show how well 3:1 Supports builds qualities used in transition experiences from high school to life after high school.

Based on student responses, the most common theme of 3:1 Supports is the access to opportunity. Repeatedly students reported that 3:1 Supports assisted them in exploring future opportunities, whether that be postsecondary options or career opportunities. Scores on these questions were very high, but lowered slightly when the questions moved from “knowing about” to “exploring”. While the “exploring”

questions were still positive, the majority of responses were 4 (agree) instead of 5 (strongly agree).

FIS and its partners have exposed students to future opportunities in many areas, allowing the students to have a holistic vision of their potential futures. This balance is displayed by responses to both the career and postsecondary questions. The responses to these questions were essentially identical.

A second theme is soft skills. Students were questioned about communication, leadership, teamwork, listening, motivation, and time management. The responses to these questions were clear in the helpfulness 3:1 Supports provides. While the program has shown to increase student skills in each of these areas, the two most helpful were teamwork and motivation. Both of these areas were supported with over 60% positive responses. The other soft skill areas had positive responses, but in the mid-50% range. Each of these areas, interestingly, received almost identical responses across the board.

A third theme is overcoming barriers. While only one question involved this particular topic, the results were undeniable. The focus of 3:1 Supports at FHS is entrepreneurship, while a major strength is connecting students to future plans and opportunities. It is likely that most, if not all, of these students experienced some sort of hindrance along their path to graduation. Realizing that barriers occur and there is a path through those barriers highlight the effectiveness of the mentoring pieces connecting the academic/behavioral and social/emotional supports that 3:1 Supports provides.

*Comparison.*

The two data sets complement each other and give the researcher a holistic view of where/how 3:1 Supports works best. The increased amount of focus on student needs creates a system where students have no choice but to become invested in their education. The supports offered by FHS become more meaningful because students are connected with their potential future.

Academically, students receive individualized and customized instruction. Meanwhile, their high school experience can be further tailored based on personal need and future plans. This approach to education has clearly worked. Student GPAs have risen over 1 full point/letter grade, with extreme cases of turning Fs into Bs. At the same time, students are building valuable life skills such as communication, teamwork, motivation, and perseverance. Doing so builds skills students will need to interact with others after graduation. The soft skills provided benefit students as they transition to life after high school, regardless of the path they choose.

Students also benefit from their entire community, as Frankfort has partnered with almost every possible resource to ensure individual student success. Any possible need is able to be met. Frankfort High School has developed a network of businesses, schools, companies, and people that can assist them with both student and family needs. The level of care given to FHS students ensures that most basic needs are easily met. Students can then begin to see a path to their future.

FHS's focus on entrepreneurship and connection with both local businesses and postsecondary institutions on a systems level furthers student opportunity.

Whether it is through dual credit courses at the high school, college courses on KSU's campus, or Senior Year internships, students are given no option but to interact and engage with their future. Even if that interaction is minimal or basic, such as simply creating a plan for their future, students that graduate from FHS have a direction after high school has ended.

The role that Kentucky State University (KSU) plays in this process has been understated throughout this entire research. Their involvement is crucial to the success of 3:1 Supports. KSU has essentially opened its doors to all students at FHS, not just high-achieving students with excellent GPA's. They have also provided practicum students and placed professors on campus, and have even held some college classes on the FHS campus. This level of interaction has subtly given students a glimpse into what life could be like after high school and given some students a reason to connect with their future.

From KSU's perspective, they are helping themselves by helping younger students. First, they are bridging the transition gap between the two levels by assisting high schools in academic and non-academic preparation. Second, they are recruiting future students who now have first-hand experience with their particular institution, campuses, faculty, and programming. Too many times, education is viewed as P-12 and Adult/Higher Education. By connecting the two levels to create a P-16 environment, the higher education institution has the ability to create a consistent pipeline for future enrollment.

***Improvements.***

With all of these positives, there could be room for improvement. According to the data, 3:1 struggles with attendance. The improvement of attendance was minimal, when compared to academic/behavioral data. Much of FHS's current academic system is online, meaning it is possible for students to keep up, or be ahead, in class but not be physically present inside the building. If the school instead tracked attendance through time spent in the online classroom and physical classroom, then that data might change and reflect the leaps made in both GPA and behavior. This type of reporting is currently available within most learning management systems. For example, learning management systems such as Pearson Online and IXL make the tracking of time spent on lessons and assessments easily available to students, teachers, and parents. Administration at the high school level can use this data to account for student attendance with one class period being equal to 1 hour of time spent in class online, or similar ratios.

A second improvement could be efficacy. Implied within 3:1 Supports is the increased belief in oneself. However, no explicit data exists showing how student confidence increases. This includes student empowerment. The entire purpose of 3:1 Supports is to prepare students for life at the next level. The intentional changes to academics and increased emphasis in accountability should empower students to make mistakes and learn through failure. However, no data currently exists to illustrate this fact. FHS will need to explicitly show that 3:1 Supports empowers students to grow and make their own connections in order to support themselves.

A simple way to track this growth is to track failure rates between first year students and final year students. Assuming there is no attrition and academic expectations do not change, a decrease in the total number of failures would be explained by an increase in student preparation/empowerment. In addition, the Internship Coordinator could require students to find their own internships Senior Year, which would then be approved by all of the student's connectors.

A third area of improvement is in the area of social/emotional supports. Currently, no data exists for which issues students received assistance with. Having data for this support area could be useful in understanding the psychological needs of today's student while also giving the school more detailed data to compare year-over-year results.

### **Limitations of the Study**

#### **Limitations.**

This study is limited by the research conducted by Frankfort Independent Schools. This included which instruments were used or the questions posed to students. The researcher also had no control over quantitative data. This included which data was collected, the interval in which data was collected, or to what specificity. These limitations caused the researcher to draw conclusions using these confines.

The data provided does not display information in a year-over-year capacity and does not track the rate students made-up through Edgenuity and Study Island or repeated credits, which could give additional insights into student progress, especially

at the beginning of the program, where students begin the process of getting back on track academically.

Targeted groups of students were offered the opportunity to participate in the program directly, but were not forced into participation. This decision by the school limited the research to only those who actually participated in the program. Data from students not participating at the school was not shared with the researcher or used for comparison purposes.

#### **Delimitations.**

The researcher chose to use previously collected data to study the 3:1 Supports program. This choice did not allow the researcher to complete the study at the originally intended specificity. However, it did afford the researcher the opportunity to gain a complete view of the program's strengths and weaknesses.

#### **Assumptions & Biases.**

A few biases should be noted as this implementation guide is completed. First is the belief that individualized, self-paced educational practices is the most applicable way to educate today's students. The school system should keep pace with the changes of society and technology. The access students have to information today is unprecedented, as is the formats students can receive that information (Peck, 2012).

Second is the belief that competency-based learning is the most appropriate way to assess student learning and increase student accountability (Guskey, 2006; Scriffiny, 2008). Completion-based grading assigns grades based on the total number of assignments completed and recorded by the teacher, allowing for instances where

students can simply turn in extra assignments to pull grades higher and assist in passing courses without actually demonstrating mastery of content (Brookhart, 2011; Patrick & Sturgis, 2013). Competency-based learning only measures what students know and assesses accordingly, with teachers setting acceptable passing rates for students to obtain in order to move from lesson-to-lesson. This, in turn, forces students to learn material continually to complete courses. Failure to do so results in students repeating courses as needed to show competency/mastery.

Third is the belief that the Carnegie unit is outdated and can be replaced with the modern practices noted above. The Carnegie Unit calls for 120 hours of contact time with an instructor for the student to earn a credit. That comes out to roughly a one-hour class period per day, five days per week, for thirty-six weeks (Howard, 1965). If students are allowed to move at their individual pace, then they can accomplish their individual educational goals taking as few or as many courses concurrently as they wish. The Carnegie Unit restricts this practice to an extent, by distributing time evenly throughout the school day and requiring students to be enrolled in courses each period (Howard, 1965; Wellman 2005). Using internships and field experience as substitutes for electives not only can increase depth of learning, but also prepares students for life after high school by providing students real-world experiences directly applicable to the individual student (Ferguson, 2014)

To avoid these research biases, the researcher reported both qualitative and quantitative data using a mixed methods, concurrent triangulation design. To avoid selection bias, the researcher used data from all students at REP, not any particular

sample. Reporting bias will then be avoided by reporting results that endorse and oppose the null hypothesis. This guide, and review of the program, will answer the following questions:

- 1) How does the 3:1 Supports program affect student academic performance?
- 2) How does the 3:1 Supports program prepare students to pursue their life goals after high school?
- 3) What are the areas of improvement/extension of the 3:1 Supports program?

### **Reflections**

Many times, new educational ideas or structures or programs are targeted at a specific group of students. 3:1 Supports is viable for any student attending school today. Today's students are forced to deal with a growing array of issues and problems, sometimes on their own. FIS believes they can assist students through many of these problems by connecting them to proper resources. By giving students a glimpse of what possibilities lie ahead, and more importantly giving students a path to those possibilities, FIS has given students an understanding of why education is so important.

From a postsecondary perspective, this study highlights the importance of reaching backwards to create a P-16 environment. Colleges/universities can meet its own needs by providing resources to assist high school students in the transition process. On one hand, partnering with high schools on a systems level provides the university with a resource for practicum/clinical placements in multiple fields. On the

other, universities can open and extend their own research, providing opportunities to young learners interested in various fields. Both options allow the college/university to create a P-16 environment that is more accessible and obtainable to all learners, which also creates a direct pipeline for future enrollment.

The 3:1 Supports program is completely different from what the researcher first expected. When beginning this project, the researcher expected a page one rewrite of the educational system. While this rewrite did occur in some areas, 3:1 Supports mostly reshaped the current educational system by fitting their ideas within the current confines. A clear, positive result was obtained, including mass improvement in GPA and behavior. At the same time, students confirm that they are more prepared for their future and have begun making plans after high school. For many, high school is no longer the final step, and some students have begun to take ownership of their lives.

It should be noted that educating this way takes more work than traditional methods. Faculty and staff will need to have an increased focus to be attentive to student needs, while also putting preparation time in on non-school days to free up classtime during the school year. The entire school system must be on the same page and each adult involved has to be diligent throughout the process. Even though non-academic skills such as accountability are inherent in the program, anything having to do with transition opportunities is not. Those transition pieces took daily work, as it was the focus area for FHS. Other schools may not experience the same results, if student transition is not a focus. The researcher had a misconception that once 3:1

was implemented, academics magically improved, along with behavior, and student preparation. Even though these did improve, the researcher did not consider the means needed for improvement.

### **Implications on future research.**

Future research can extend the current review of the 3:1 Supports program by providing additional information and data points that enhance or support the current study. Another study could be completed on a school using 3:1 Supports outside of the state of Kentucky. This information would allow the researcher to draw conclusions about the program, see difficulties other schools have with implementation, find room for improvement based on location-specific decisions, and compare and contrast differences between programs to learn best practices for students.

Additional data points should be obtained from students at FHS. Data showing which support was most beneficial to students would afford the researcher additional insight into the perceptions between implementers and implementees. For example, academics (GPA) was the most affected area quantitatively, but did students feel the same way. The qualitative data received from the school system was directed more towards the access to opportunity support. Further qualitative research could assist in gaining insight on how the program actually aids students versus how it is perceived from the participants.

Future research will focus on the use of Summit Learning as an academic resource. The researcher would like to explore time as a constant within the school

system. Currently, schools require students to be enrolled for four years – no more, no less. Is it possible with the help of Summit Learning for students to graduate early? Is it possible for students to graduate late? Much of what 3:1 Supports does is connect students to the future and prepare them to transition to life as smoothly as possible. Academically, life at the next level is completed at individual student rates. Can this not occur at the high school level? Or is continued use of the Carnegie Unit preventing students from learning as freely or as individually as possible?

A second area of future research surrounds graduation requirement. FIS has done a terrific job providing students with performance-based credit opportunities. Could this lead to a new structure within education? Could schools create a minimum set of degree requirements that guarantees graduation, but simply prepares students to go into the workforce? If so, could schools then choose “expansion packs” that customize the high school experience based on student needs and desires?

A third area of future research could look at time as a constant at the high school level. Currently, students are mostly forced to stay in high school for 4 (four) years. Graduating early is possible, but not often encouraged; while graduating late is not allowed at all. Why is this the case? Moving the constant from time to course completion could yield more quality graduates.

### **Summary**

Education today is in desperate need of change. As the world continues to grow and expand on what seems to be an exponential basis, the American education system has progressed at a much slower rate. This, coupled with a lack of congruency

between the secondary and postsecondary levels of education, have created a gap that high school students must navigate after earning their Diploma. FIS and KSU have noticed this issue and has taken a radical, community-embed approach to education and student preparation on a systems level. By using the 3:1 Supports program to individualize instruction, both FIS and KSU are taking an unconventional, modern approach to education that could end up being revolutionary in closing the transition gap.

As a response to this need for change, FIS has extended 3:1 Supports to measure student success more holistically. In what they call “PC5”, FIS has mined specific competencies to both identify giftedness and prepare students. These skill areas are: Personal Responsibility, Communication, Creativity, Citizenship, Critical Thinking, and Collaboration. These six areas compose the “Profile of a Graduate” and are the basis for student preparation to life after high school. FIS believes using 3:1 Supports to achieve this profile prepares students to be the most successful versions of themselves in all areas of life. Consequently, this decision shifts the view of everyday education to constantly focus on each individual student’s future, instead of graduation rates or test scores. It is believed that continual extension and evolution of 3:1 Supports will eliminate the transition gap altogether by freeing the high school to truly prepare students in both academic and non-academic areas.

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APPENDIX

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR 3:1 SUPPORTS

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### **3:1 Supports Implementation Guide**

#### **Background**

The capstone was written and developed under the supervision of Dr. Ron Chi, Chief Academic/Innovation Officer at Kentucky State University and Dr. Houston Barber, Superintendent of Frankfort Independent Schools. To ensure quality of the guide, meetings with the researcher and Dr. Chi were held. This provided all parties with a shared, unified language as well as up-to-date information on data collection and data analysis from various sources. Dr. Barber and Dr. Chi reviewed the guide and made revisions on language and terminology. Also scheduled were meetings with key personnel at KSU and FIS. This included both web conferences and in-person meetings.

#### **Implementation overview**

The implementation of 3:1 Supports is linear, with room to customize on a school-by-school basis. As a school district looks to offer 3:1, the first step is to determine whether any of the three supports (academic/behavioral, social/emotional, access to opportunity) are already in place. It is possible for a school district to have any single support or combination of supports fully in place, but lack the holistic concept 3:1 offers. Should one or more of the supports currently exist, the district should follow the procedure in the following sections.

As mentioned earlier, these supports are offered to students and families based on individual needs. These tailored supports are present to influence the success of each child. Likewise, it is important to note that in the initial phases of

implementation, schools should address any immediate needs of the student – whether certain supports are fully in place or not. There has to be flexibility during the initial stages, as the eventual well-being of the student is of utmost importance.

**Establish the end result.**

Any good instructional designer will tell you that in order to build a quality lesson, a teacher must begin with the summative assessment. The same can be said for 3:1 Supports. This program relies on supports in three areas, eventually leading to a symbiotic relationship. In this relationship, behavioral supports may actually be accomplished by a community organization. Likewise, part of a family counseling session may eventually include time with the student’s content connector.

The person leading the implementation for a district is called the 3:1 District Administrator. This person’s first job is to frame the vision for a school or district, giving all school personnel a lens to view the program. For example, Frankfort High School chose to use entrepreneurship as their lens. Everything with 3:1 is set-up to make student transition from high school to life after high school as smooth as possible. Once the program is framed, then comes the creation of common terminology – which includes a shared understanding of the program’s purpose, vision, student expectations, teacher expectations, and common behaviors. This terminology should be convenient for each school, and does not have to be the same as any other school using 3:1 Supports.

The relationship between supports and ultimately their reliance on each other must be well thought out and considered. Schools may need to offer several resources

to their students/families, but only have the ability to offer a smaller subset. Having an understanding of which supports the school and local community need to offer and have the ability to offer will eventually drive how the program is built and executed. The discrepancy between the two is critical when building partnerships, especially on the systems level. In an earlier section it was discussed how FIS has chosen to use “Summit Learning” to accomplish academic goals. This was not in place for the Academy at Shawnee in Louisville. Similarly, the University of Louisville provided resources, such as extensive use of practicum students from education and counseling programs, to Cardinal Success that have not been fully setup between FIS and NKU.

It is the responsibility of the 3:1 District Administrator to discern which resources should be added while supplementing successful programs already in place. The 3:1 District Administrator is the ignitor of the program and should be a strong leader. This person thoughtfully reviews other potential leaders within the district or building and takes a look at the positive systems a school district may have in place academically, athletically, socio-emotionally, behaviorally, or in regards to access to opportunity.

The goal of 3:1 Supports is to holistically support students and families and ensure the well-being of all parties. 3:1 Supports does not seek to replace programs that already exist and work for a school system. In order for 3:1 to be successful, programs that yield positive results need to be enhanced, not removed or kept in isolation. The natural infrastructure of the school should be built upon. It is the role of

the 3:1 District Administrator to understand which direction the school should go, make decisions right for their community, then begin the building process.

**Establish academic/behavioral supports.**

Assuming none of the supports are fully in place, the 3:1 District Administrator, assisted by each school's Building Administrator, should begin with academic support on an individual level. These administrators should choose which current academic/behavioral programs should be supplemented and which should be eliminated. This includes making decisions on 1:1 technology and learning management systems.

A shift to personalized education is critical to the success of 3:1 Supports. Summit Learning, specifically, is not required for a school district to be successful, but having a learning management system in place does allow for a quicker transition from high school by developing and assessing higher-ordered cognitive thinking skills (Summit Learning, 2018b). Similarly, the use of 1:1 technology may not be the ideal move for every school, but using technology is advantageous and can provide additional opportunities for students to learn outside of the school building.

From a teacher perspective, learning management systems help remove the burden of repetitive tasks such as grading, statistical reporting, and lesson creation. Instead, teachers are free to facilitate students in the learning process, increase differentiation techniques, and connect students to multiple resources. Learning management systems still require teachers to teach, but does so where their content knowledge is used in a different, more efficient, way (Summit Learning, 2018c).

Meanwhile, students are equipping themselves to learn how they learn best (Summit Learning, 2018c). Assignment completion is no longer the focus with a learning management system. It may be the case that a student stays on the same lesson for a week and is taught by the teacher, fellow students, and/or group work. For 3:1 Supports to be effective academically, students need time to develop the skill of learning and connect with material on a deeper, more personal level.

Behavioral supports will also need to be modified. The 3:1 District Administrator and Building Administrator must work together to establish any behavior procedures that align with the chosen lens 3:1 Supports is being viewed. Much like the chosen academic supports, behavioral supports are flexible to what works best for the school. While some procedures are supplemented/augmented, others will need to be eliminated. The most important things to remember when constructing behavioral supports are that they align with the academic supports, fit within the lens 3:1 Supports is viewed, and that the school has the resources/partnerships needed to provide them.

**Establish community.**

Once a school district has their academic supports in place, the next step is to establish a community. In other words, determine who is in the journey with the school or not. More importantly, what depth are these community partners in for? Is it for the long haul, or is the interest simply superficial? Do community partners bring relevant resources to the table that benefit students and their families? These questions are important because it is impossible for a school system to offer 3:1

Supports if they do not know which resources are at their disposal. It would be wise at this point for the 3:1 District Administrator to compile a list of desired resources. Examples of these resources are listed on pages 21-22 and 25-26.

The 3:1 District Administrator begins by finding a leader to serve as Outreach Director. It is this person's responsibility to create relationships with community programs, mental health organizations, Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC's), religious organizations, and local higher education institutions based on the school's needs. While this section outlines community partnerships first, each school implementing 3:1 has the freedom to begin with the path that most convenient for them. In Frankfort's case, they began with access to opportunity because of several connections previously in place between FIS and KSU. It is advisable to build partnerships in the most accessible manner for the implementing school.

Partnerships may be initiated on an individual or personal level before being followed up on a system level. For example, a science teacher may have a friendship with a doctor from the local university medical hospital. The doctor agrees to open up their science lab to the school's biology department. It then becomes the job of the 3:1 District Administrator to follow up with the hospital to form a larger, long-lasting partnership. The partnership then becomes more sustainable and creates opportunity for future growth.

When understanding partnerships for 3:1, it is essential to understand that all partnerships should strive to be on this systems level. Doing so prevents temporary partnerships created in isolation. The goal of building partnerships of any kind in 3:1

Supports is to create a long-lasting interdependent relationship on the organizational level.

*Community partnerships.*

The level of interaction between school and community is critical and should be greater than 1:1, meaning that schools should seek to find multiple sources for each type of resource. FIS understands there is more to education than what happens inside the walls of the school building. By involving these community partners, the school is providing resources for students and their families. Doing so helps to meet the most basic needs for families and extends the supportive learning environment both inside and outside of the classroom. The goal during this phase of implementation is to establish community, a group of people, organizations, and companies that the district deems appropriate to work with children and has the same shared vision of supporting students to minimize the transition gap.

The term “deems appropriate” does not mean be selective, or biased, against any agency. If anything, it means the opposite. This part of implementation is about gathering as many resources as possible. This means different ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, perspectives, and puposes. It is no surprise that students today come from a potpourri of backgrounds and cultures. The traditional 4-person family has been replaced by a grab-bag of family assortments (Luscombe, 2014). Current FIS administration believes the school cannot meet such needs on their own and should reach out for help in all areas. As a general rule, districts should strive to have resources that match the demographics of the population they serve. Having an

ecclectic set of resources ensures almost any problem or issue a student encounters can be resolved with any one support, or combination of supports.

What “deems appropriate” refers to is credibility. Are these sources trustworthy? Are they certified through a national-board? How is their standing with the Better Business Bureau? Remember, any company that is brought in to work with students must meet state and federal guidelines, and may have to pass federal background checks.

Some examples of community partners could be:

- Boys and Girls Clubs
- YMCA / YWCA
- Churches / Religious Organizations / Salvation Army
- Banks / Financial Institutions
- Employability Centers
- Mental Abuse Counselors
- Substance Abuse Counselors
- Rehabilitation Centers
- Transportation Services
- Disability Services
- Adult Education Centers
- Red Cross

While this is not an exhaustive list, it is a place to start and to generate further ideas and partnerships. Again, the most important thing to remember in this phase of implementation is to choose resources that are of need by the school system, students and their families. The more diverse the student population, the more diverse these resources should be.

***Transition partnerships.***

FIS believes expanding educational opportunities outside the walls of the school building is critical to the education and development of the teenager (ages 15-17). Not only do these partnerships enrich academic experiences, but they provide opportunities to build much needed non-academic soft skills in a real-world, on-the-job training setting. Receiving information from a source other than a teacher creates opportunities for high impact, immersive student learning.

FIS supports the use practical, real-world experiences in education. Through the use of internships and apprenticeships, students can earn elective credit while also receiving on the job training and financial support via a paycheck. Students at FHS are given personalized paths to and through their diploma. These options include basic graduation requirements, work-force certifications, and advanced work on college degrees. The idea is a true College and Career Readiness program where students learn soft skills based on areas of interest, receive applicable training and experience, and challenge themselves academically.

While the school system is in the mindset of building relationships, two very important relationships are with local colleges/universities and businesses. The

availability of this resource is mainly determined based on location. It is possible that higher education institutions may not be readily available. Likewise, smaller cities or towns may not have the variety of businesses present in larger cities. Regardless of the circumstances, a school should still reach out to local providers.

Both Cardinal Success and 3:1 Supports have universities in their city to initiate partnerships. Even if there is not a local college or university, many Kentucky schools offer opportunities via online classes, virtual classes, and/or classes taught in-house by either college or high school faculty (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2015). The options for partnerships between high school and higher education institutions are growing, creating opportunities for students to bridge the gap between the two levels of education earlier.

When beginning partnerships with universities, look for traditional opportunities that can expand into larger roles. For example, look for opportunities to get students in college classes or bring practicum students / student teachers into the building. As this develops, extend the opportunities for students to take classes on a college campus, or take online courses with current college students. Some high school/university partnerships have created opportunities for students to earn an Associate's Degree by the time they graduate high school (Tatman, 2018).

Another way to expand the partnership with universities is to extend invitations to multiple college departments. The purpose of 3:1 Supports is to offer holistic supports, inside and outside of education. By connecting with college departments other than education, high schools can look to bring in graduate students

and graduate school professors. This offers first-hand training, modeling, and additional connections for high school students from trained experts as they seek to earn college degrees.

Remember the word partnership. What does the school district have to offer the college? How does the college benefit by providing the high school with additional resources and supports? The partnership should be symbiotic. High school students need to experience life after graduation, while college students need real-world field experience and training. When building a true partnership, both levels of education should set up long-term goals, start small, and create a plan to expand resources that benefit students in the future.

Local businesses should be treated the same way. The high school student who does not plan on attending college has different dual-credit needs. On one hand, they need to earn credit in fields that interest them. On the other, they need on-the-job training while learning applicable soft-skills. Businesses then have the ability to recruit workers, teach skills and techniques, and market their company.

Several states, like Kentucky, have laws allowing students to earn credit through project-based/competency-based learning opportunities (Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, 2013). This is typically used in experience-based credit opportunities for a few hours per day during a students' senior year. As these partnerships grow, so could these experience-based credit opportunities. High schools essentially could assist families financially by helping students obtain, and maintain

jobs during the school day. These employment opportunities have a dual purpose for the student, earning academic credit while also earning money.

By partnering with local businesses, FIS has created an opportunity for students to go through training programs, gain work experience, and earn full-time jobs in desired fields before graduation. Transition partnerships in this direction is vitally important for all students, which is part of the reason every FHS student is required to have an internship Senior Year. The final year of high school can be filled with college deadlines, standardized testing, and graduation. Placing an additional focus on workplace transitions helps students discover passions, test-drive potential career paths, and reinforce much-needed life skills such as personal responsibility and accountability to others.

Some examples of business partners are:

- Banks
- Auto Body / Mechanic Shops
- Construction Companies
- Restaurants
- Local Start-Ups
- Medical / Veterinarian Clinics
- Law Firms
- Insurance Agencies
- Dental / Orthodontist Clinics

- Local Non-Profits
- Religious Organizations
- City Government / City Council
- Web-based / Technology Companies
- Agricultural Businesses / Equine Organizations

**Personnel**

**Examples of leadership positions.**

Table 1

*Examples of 3:1 Supports Leadership Positions*

Contact	Organization	Role	Responsibility
3:1 District Administrator	School System	Lead Organizer	Identifies internal and external program providers and builds upon established partnerships at a systems level for sustainability.
3: 1 Outreach Director	School System	Community Liaison	Locate and establish potential partnerships specific to student needs. Coordinates and facilitates 3:1 support meetings.
Building Administrator (Internal Operations)	School System / Community	In-House Director (by building)	Operationalizes and manages 3:1 at a building level.
Teachers, Professors, Business Partners, etc.	School System / College	Content Connectors	Communicates with parents, tracks student progress, ensures student success.

LPC's, Guidance Counselors, Community Members, etc.	School/Community	Wellness Connectors	Works with students/families on life issues, problems, or concerns. Liaison between students/families and business partners on appropriate placement for Senior Year internship. May also track CCR data.
Internship Coordinator	School System	Opportunity Connector	Works with the high school on dual credit courses, access to college/university buildings, resources, and professors.
College Liaison	Local Postsecondary Institution	Opportunity Connector	Uses data to improve program elements, determine fidelity, and accountability.
Data Collector	School System	Data Collection	

**Major tasks**

The implementation table below is a schedule of activities to be accomplished, chronologically.

Table 2

*Implementation Schedule*

Task Description	Task Order	Key Person(s) Responsible	Tasks
Establish the end result	1	3:1 District Administrator	Frame 3:1 Set Common Language Build Leadership Team

Establish academic/ behavioral supports	2	3:1 District Administrator, Building Administrator, Outreach Director, Teachers	Determine supports to enhance Determine supports to create Find community partners to assist in this process
Establish community	3	3:1 District Administrator, Building Administrator, Outreach Director, Internship Coordinator, College Liasion	Build a network of community organizations, local businesses, and postsecondary resources.

**Risks**

It is the researcher’s contention that the major risk with 3:1 Supports can be summed up in three words: fear of failure. A major reason the status-quo of education has been maintained for over 100 years is fear of failure. The “because it has always been done that way” thought-process has kept American schools essentially unchanged since the mid-1900’s (Digital Promise, 2016; Schieber, 1987).

Changing the academic delivery process creates room for mass failure and/or mass success. Some students are not used to being held accountable for their decisions academically. The use of internet-based courses and contemporary learning management systems creates additional space for students to not complete work. Simply changing the delivery of coursework, without considering how students will adopt, use, integrate, and accept the technology creates space for courses to not be completed and credit not to be earned (Park, 2009, p. 150).

Changing the academic setting to competency-based learning places a structure in school that has never before been experienced. Students are not able to complete make-up work or complete a two-week summer school to earn credit. This makes falling behind much easier. Teachers need to provide context to students, not simply content, which places higher-ordered processing skills at a premium. Learning in this manner may be more difficult, but these areas should be addressed and developed if the goal is holistic student preparation (Latief, Pabbajah, & Karim, 2018; Neem, 2013).

Changing the funding model to one more largely based on grants or donations creates space for uncertainty. These funding sources are not constantly renewable or could fluctuate from year to year. In some cases, grants are offered one-time only. Programs or jobs created by funds from temporary sources could be viewed as unstable, which may also be seen as unsafe.

Some failure will occur. Students may fail. Parents may complain. Funding sources may not be available. Coaches may have academically ineligible athletes. School statistics will drop. The school district should prepare for these issues ahead of time and accept them as temporary stumbling blocks. In other words, school administrators must be willing to accept initial failure for potential long-term success.

The fear of failure, as bad as it could be, should not act as a barrier to potential growth. This includes school statistics, such as graduation rate. Many times, high schools do all they can to maintain state-measured statistics and prevent consequences, such as removal of administrators, SBDM, or even complete takeover

(Seiler et al, 2010, p. 67). Districts want immediate results, but that is not how this program works. 3:1 Supports is a process that takes time and it should be understood that large-scale, immediate results most likely will not be realized. School districts wishing to implement 3:1 Supports at their school should review results in 3-5 year cycles, which allows for 1 cohort to complete all high school graduation requirements.

It is important to remember that this program is designed to holistically teach and support students, along with their families. It is designed to increase student accountability, student learning, and aid students in preparation for life after high school graduation. The academic changes required by the program pose an issue to some students, but the non-academic skills are where the real issues exist. Still, success can be found in these failures as the other supports are in place to teach, re-teach, and close the transition gap.

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