COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM DESIGN: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Collaborative curriculum design (CCD) as a model for homeschool instruction is introduced and described. Results of this innovative method of delivering instruction are grounded in the body of research in an effort to give homeschool practitioners a theoretical basis for making similar organizational choices for their own schooling efforts. Using collaboration between peers as a method to improve learning, engagement, and quality of work is well explored in the literature. Collaboration between adults and teens is not as well explored. Collaborative curriculum design sees collaboration between an adult and a teen for schooling purposes. Successes of the CCD project are described as well as significant lessons and recommendations that include ensuring that all participants are included in all stages of planning, establishing strong rapport between the teacher and student, using humor as a mechanism of rapport building, and ensuring that sufficient contact hours are built into the schedule. Both authors include recommendations to future practitioners in an effort to inform future practice of similarly situated teachers and students. The authors present a case description of the collaborative efforts of one adult teacher and one teen student during a single academic year as they explored together an English Language Arts curriculum. Despite the success experienced by all participants the project ended after a single academic year due to factors outside of the parameters of the project.

Keywords

Collaboration, Curriculum design, Scaffolding, Transfer of Skills

Introduction

Collaborative Curriculum Design (CCD) is a model of instructional design commonly found in higher education courses, particularly in tertiary educational settings. However, it is not commonly found in primary or secondary educational settings. Rather, most research on collaboration or collaborative learning examines activities between elementary- or secondary-level student peers (see Adams-Wiggins, K. R., & Haluska, C. M., 2025; Russell, F. A., 2012; Gilbert, F., 2018; Krishnan, J., Yim, S., Wolters, A., Cusimano, A., 2019; Moore, B., Smith, C., Boardman, A., Ferrell, A., 2020; Smith, B. E., 2019) or teacher peers (see Giles, A., Yazan, B., 2020; Giles, A., Yazan, B., 2021) rather than between adults and children (Gokhale, 1995). Limited research on the collaborative interactions between adults and children has been undertaken in the youth development area, outside of formal school settings (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Weybright, Hrncirik, White, Cummins, & Deen, 2016; Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010; Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, & Sulaiman, 2014).

The authors sought to describe the experiences of two participants, a teacher and student, in a homeschool environment that allowed them to collaboratively design the curriculum delivered in order to meet the requirements of a 9th-grade English Language Arts (ELA) course of study. While the subject matter studied, English Language Arts and argumentative writing, has been explored in prior research (Chen, Pi, Tan, Wang, Chai, & Lyu, 2025; Fitzgerald, 2021; Frankel, Fields, Kimball-Veeder, & Murphy, 2018; Gilbert, 2018; Krishnan, Yim, Wolters, &

Cusimano, 2019), that research was conducted in school-based settings. Collaborative work as demonstrated in other school subjects such as science (Adams-Wiggin & Haluska, 2025; Swenson & Strough, 2008) and mathematics (Giles & Yazan, 2020) and English language learning (Giles & Yazan, 2021; Woodrich & Fan, 2017) has also been carried out in school-based settings among peers, whether students or teachers. Experiences involving the collaboration between adults and children in school settings has not been as fully explored, making the opportunity to explore such a pairing inherently interesting. Case studies allow researchers to present in-depth analysis of bounded cases in order to provide specific, analytic, insight into the application of theories or philosophies in authentic situations (Priya, 2021). While there are different types of case study, the case at hand is intrinsic (Stake, 1994). An outside observer might describe the case of the instructional dyad at hand as ordinary, perhaps even unremarkable. It is that ordinariness that makes this case inherently interesting. As Stake (1994) says, this case does not "…[represent] other cases or [illustrate] a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest," (p. 237) particularly to teachers and parents involved in homeschooling efforts. Each of the authors had their own perspectives regarding what made this case interesting enough to share with others.

The student described the case as one that describes the thinking, experiences, and lessons learned from a specific collaborative relationship. The intrinsic uniqueness of the case rests in the unique set of goals, both overt and covert, that the student and teacher strove to attain. The teacher in this case used "apprentice adult" as a metaphor to explain collaborative relationships to the student. She explained that being an apprentice adult is learning how to maneuver time, life, and work ethic all at once. She related it to learning how to be an independent person. While the student was accustomed to absorbing information through lectures and worksheets, she found the collaborative environment to be more freeing. She said that she, "learns so much more" in one writing assignment. This case allowed the student to avoid the frustration of having to witness classmates be chastised due to misbehavior, thereby interrupting her educational progress. The student found the collaborative approach to be engaging and efficient.

The teacher experienced the interesting nature of the case through her lens of empowering students, her prior work with developing autonomy in students, and her prior work in developing the love of literature using structured methods of exploration with students. She found the prospect of providing secondary-level instruction outside of the traditional limitations of public-school classrooms to be compelling. The homeschooling partnership she had with the student allowed her to modify her instructional design practice from one of working on a team of adults to one of sharing the responsibility with a teen-aged child. Finally, the idea of implementing her own axiological perspective that collaboration is a critical aspect of effective teaching with a high school student rather than university students gave her the chance to probe the limits of the collaborative model.

Description of the Case

One school year, one grade-level, five books, and two people: at the most basic level, these are the components of the collaborative curriculum design case that is described in this article. During the academic school year (Fall 2024 – Spring 2025), the ninth grade English Language Arts curriculum served as the foundation for homeschool instruction. Five different books of varying themes and complexity were used to explore that curriculum by two people; a professor and a student. Class activities took place two times per week (Mondays & Wednesdays), for 90 minutes per session. Typical school holidays were followed, such as American Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break. Instruction began in mid-August, 2024 and concluded in early May, 2025.

The Teacher: Sara
The teacher, Sara, is a professor at a major southeastern public university in the United States of America. Her career spans 26 years in higher education with expertise in instructional design, technology, and school libraries. Her personal teaching philosophy emphasizes the importance of honoring student choice and voice in the delivery of her courses, while also recognizing the challenge of developing self-regulation skills in undergraduate students. As Sara's work with undergraduate and graduate students progressed, she began to shift the focus of her courses from being professor-centered to being more student-centered. Her course designs became more flexible than rigid. This increased flexibility culminated in the development of Scaffolded Autonomy (SA) as a way to "nurture democracy in the classroom, scaffold self-regulation in students, and apply universal design for learning to curriculum," (Andrzejewski, Wolf, Straub, & Parson, 2019, p. 79) as a course curriculum design model. By providing students with choices as well as structure, scaffolded autonomy provides students with an environment that incentivizes efficient learning choices, is a student-centered environment that permits students to exercise control over their own learning activities, is an environment that permits recovery from minor failures, especially those associated with early learning efforts. For the CCD project, Sara modified the scaffolded autonomy model to reflect a higher degree of structure in light of the younger age of the student to result in the collaborative curriculum design found in the current case study.

Leaning on her affinity for honoring student choice and amplifying student voices within a course, Sara felt it was important that the student be co-contributor not only to the course design but also the resulting

manuscript. The role of co-contributor rather than co-researcher is in line with recommendations by Willumsen, Hugaas, and Studsrød (2014) to more appropriately describe the limitations with regard to the natural power differential between adults and teens as controlling aspects of the project. She felt it was vital to demonstrate an ethical relationship with the student involved in the project in a manner that respected her rights during the project. The student was old enough to give assent had the project been an experimental study, therefore she was also old enough to participate in the exploration of the unique educational environment in the present case (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Bronström, 2012; Honaken, Poikolainen & Karlsson, 2018).

The Student: Lily

In many ways, Lily is a typical teenage student. She has friends and family with whom she socializes, she is on the swim team, the cheerleading squad, and is active in her church. Her schooling is quite eclectic, however. Lily was enrolled in public school for the beginning of her schooling, then transferred to a private classical academy for much of her elementary years. She reentered the public school system in late elementary and middle school. While in middle school she experienced bullying and difficulty having instructional accommodations met by the school system. As a result, Lily proposed to her parents that she leave public school and commence home schooling. She presented her argument using a PowerPoint™ presentation, demonstrating an ability to employ problem solving skills in order to reach a personal goal. Her parents agreed to the proposal for homeschooling and began Lily's eighth-grade year at home. During that year, Lily grew to like the established routines and practice she encountered in homeschool settings. Her classes were a combination of subscription-based online course work, parent-delivered coursework, and co-op formatted courses delivered in her local community. An added benefit of the homeschool structure for Lily was the ability to make her own decisions about scheduling her class and study periods so that they were best able to support her athletic practice and competition schedule.

The Curriculum

The goals. Sara and Lily had different goals for their collaboration. At the outset of the project Lily did not have enough experience or knowledge in order to have reasonable goals. In her words, "I didn't know what I was getting in to!" Sara did have articulable goals. First, she wanted to collaboratively create the curriculum with Lily. Second, she wanted to develop Lily's self-regulatory skills in order to lay the foundation for her to begin developing adult-level life skills. Last, she wanted to develop Lily's mastery of the 9th grade ELA course of study. As the project progressed, Lily was able to articulate goals for herself. It is important to note that those goals were typically aligned with activities taking place in class. Jointly, Sara and Lily had the goal to report on the nature of their experiences so that other educators and students could have a guide to use in implementing similarly structured educational settings.

The content. Broadly, the curriculum followed was collaboratively chosen using the state course of study for ninth grade English Language Arts. Each of the standards of the course of study were tracked to ensure breadth and depth of coverage. Throughout the year, several different texts were used as the literature base of exploration. Additionally, at the request of Lily's parents, a commercial vocabulary workbook was used to supplement her vocabulary instruction.

Several different types of assignments were used throughout the year for Lily to demonstrate her mastery of the course of study. Based on conversations during class with Lily, Sara realized that having the freedom to be imperfect was important to Lily. Consequently, Sara ensured that writing assignments would be revised and resubmitted until both she and Lily were satisfied with the results. While this tended to impact the timeline, the payoff of deeper learning and decreased anxiety in Lily made it a worthwhile decision. Sara also took care to explain the portions of the course of study that were critical for Lily's future school success. One of those standards involved the source of texts to be read in ninth grade. Texts written prior to 1599 were prioritized for the longer units of study during the year. Lily found that to be surprising. Sara recorded her reaction to that year as, "Do you have any idea how OLD that is??????" While contemporary literature was explored, the two longest units of study were structured around Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet, and Gilgamesh. Lily was given a set of choices for each unit and selected the final titles herself. Each of those choices yielded a submission for argumentative writing assignments. In addition to these writing assignments, Lily developed skills in reviewing literature using a systematic method of discussing literature. The use of this systematic method introduced literary terms that became entrenched in Lily's vocabulary. Beginning with simpler texts, Sara introduced the CAWPILE method (Zuromskaite, 2020), and gradually increased the difficulty of expectations in Lily's writing about texts. The following list of texts were used throughout the year. They range in complexity from the simple, *Henry, like always,* to the more complex, *Romeo & Juliet* and *Gilgamesh.*

- Bailey, J. (writer) and Song, M. (illustrator). (2025). *Henry, like always.* Chronicle Books.
- Lowe, M. (2023) *The dubious pranks of Shaindy Goodman,* Levine Querido.
- Shakespeare, W. (1596). *Romeo & Juliet.*
- Teer, S. (writer) and Julia, M. (illustrator). (2024). *Brownstone.* Versify.
- *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* Anonymous.

Sara designed and implemented metacognitive and procedural scaffolds (Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1998) with Lily to grow her independence in critical thinking as well as argumentative writing. Sara also aligned her instruction with the expectation from Lily's parents to develop Lily's skills in formulating reasoned arguments with appropriate support from texts or research. Sara also introduced Lily to citation and reference formatting using American Psychological Association (APA, 2020) format. Both Lily's mother and Sara were surprised at how well Lily retained the instruction in the reference formatting unit.

The structure. Each class session was conducted in a relatively informal manner. Sara quickly realized that having a predictable schedule within each session benefitted both her and Lily. Most class sessions began with a review of prior work, followed by new instruction, and wrapping up with the creation of the list of tasks that both Sara and Lily were to complete before the next session. By including her own tasks on the list, Sara was modeling the metacognitive skills for Lily that Sara wanted to develop in Lily. Not only did the inclusion of her own name on the task lists model desired behaviors, it also fulfilled three of the recommended factors for effective collaborative efforts, positive interdependence, individual accountability, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson 1994, 2002).

Hurdles the Projected Needed to Overcome

No goal is achieved without overcoming hurdles, the CCD setting was no different. Discussing the hurdles in this case serves the purpose of informing future implementers of a collaborative curriculum design about the solutions to the hurdles faced by Sara and Lily. In the spirit of collaboration, they wish to help others have a smoother beginning to their projects than they faced. Several of the hurdles that threatened the success of the project were bureaucratic and borne primarily by Sara. Hurdles that both teacher and student bore related to time management. Sara and Lily also faced challenges in the establishment of trust, especially at the beginning of the year. Finally, Lily faced her own set of hurdles with regard to managing her many obligations such as sports, work, and church.

Bureaucratic hurdles. Embarking on a homeschooling effort proved to be more complex than Sara anticipated. Due to her position as a faculty member at a university, her activities needed to comply with university policies. Because Lily is a minor, the project fell under the university's youth protection policy (YPP). The requirement having the biggest impact on preliminary planning was that according to university policy, the program needed to be registered with the youth protection office. Sara also needed to ensure that the location of class meetings would be both conducive to one-to-one teaching efforts and public enough to meet YPP standards. What was initially thought to be a one- or two-week endeavor of finding a place to meet on campus, turned into a multi-week slog through bureaucratic paperwork. Compounding the complexity of the registration efforts was the fact that the university's YPP registration process was created with underlying assumptions that programming would look more like a residential camp or summer program than a one-to-one program.

The next most impactful hurdle that needed to be overcome was the bias of Sara's supervisor. The supervisor repeatedly referred to the project as "tutoring", despite evidence of Sara's status as the instructor of record, the use of a state-approved course of study as the underlying structure for the curriculum, and the reporting requirements needed in order for Lily's parents to document her NCAA eligibility. To overcome this bias, Sara sought and received sponsorship from the university office of faculty outreach. This sponsorship was critical in establishing registration with the YPP office, as well as the finding and scheduling of meeting spaces.

The last hurdle that needed to be overcome was surmounted as a result of the sponsorship by the Office of Faculty Engagement office directed by (Dr. Smith – a pseudonym) and the generosity of the associate vice president for research (Dr. Jones – a pseudonym). Once official sponsorship was established, finding a meeting place that had appropriate wifi connection was the last hurdle that needed to be overcome. Due to licensing agreements, most of the common spaces on the campus were not appropriate to use as a meeting place. They were either too public or did not have wifi available that Lily could access. The final meeting place was finally found in a satellite building on campus, with Dr. Jones granting guest access to wifi for Lily. The meeting room met YPP requirements in that it had glass walls so all interaction between Sara and Lily was observable, and the door was kept ajar during all instructional activities so that interaction was interruptible (US Center for Safesport, 2025). Despite the seemingly non-public nature of the meeting space, the location of the room was in an area of the

building mostly containing working offices for university staff and administrators. Therefore, the ambient noise and distractions were at a minimum during the course of the project.

Trust hurdles. Both Sara and Lily had to establish trust with one another in order to lay a foundation that would support robust collaboration. Sara wrote in her teaching journal that, "Lily seems hesitant to speak up" after the first class session. Remarkably, Lily's behavior after only a few class sessions began to demonstrate higher levels of trust. Sara recorded, "Lily is willing to give her opinion more" and "some pushback" after the third class session. At the same time, however, Lily appeared to be hesitant to take academic risks. By the end of the first month of instruction Sara recorded, "Reasonable alternative for extended time on reading history [an assignment] and "true conversation" in her teaching journal. Observable behaviors indicating a growing trust level became more commonplace as the academic year progressed. It is important to note that Sara and Lily are not peers. The age difference between them saw to that. Adams-Wiggins & Haluska (2025) assert, "Friends [peers] make learning from mistakes less of an embarrassing experience, … can alleviate social anxieties…" (p. 915). Sara was able to ameliorate Lily's anxiety about making mistakes without being her peer. Specifically, Sara made a point of having tasks that she could work on while Lily engaged in thinking or writing during class as well as pointedly covering her own eyes so that she would not be seen as staring, at Lily's request.

Lily assessed her collaborative skills as a work in progress in her self-assessment at the beginning of the year. She wrote, "The areas I can improve in most are thinking on a deeper level, confidence, asking for help, analyzing, and reading for understanding." The insight she demonstrated in this assessment is laudable, considering her age and lack of prior experience in such activities. At this point in the semester, Lily was very hesitant to reach out for clarification about assignments or class activities. One logistical limitation that Sara and Lily faced was a prohibition of private one-to-one communication between the two of them. In order to adhere to campus YPP regulations, all communication between Sara and Lily outside of class had to be routed through the course management system or relayed by Lily's mother. That made timely messaging between the two a bit tricky. As the semester progressed, Lily began to describe her growing trust in statements such as, "There is no pressure to messing up, mistakes are normal in a human[s] life and I am not punished for them…"

One illustrative exchange between the two centered around the use of imagery in the first scene of Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet during which the prince is admonishing the two families for their public feuding. Sara was guiding Lily through the passage when the text, "That quench the fire of your pernicious rage With purple fountains issuing from your veins…" (Shakespeare, 1.1.83-87) was reached. During the exchange, Sara asked Lily whether she could imagine true purple fountains issuing from veins in order to probe Lily's understanding of figurative language. Lily responded, "yeah, I could see that." Sara was skeptical, "Really?? You could see *ACTUAL* purple fountains?" she queried. Lily's slightly sarcastic reply of, "It's called using your *IMAGINATION,* Sara!" demonstrated her growing trust that she would not be penalized for using a sarcastic tone. The lesson that figurative language is used to trigger one's imagination had hit home. By mid-January, Lily trusted Sara enough to share about conflict she'd had with her parents. Sara found it interesting that not only did Lily share her own perspective of the argument, she was also willing to explore alternative explanations for the source of the argument other than the common teenage "my parents are so awful" sentiment.

Time hurdles. When Sara initially met with Lily's parents to determine the schedule that they would follow during the school year, both parties agreed to a schedule that paralleled the one for the local university. Both Lily's father and Sara were professors on campus, and everyone agreed that that schedule seemed the most logical. That meant that Lily and Sara would meet for 30 weeks of instruction, twice each week for 90 minutes each session. That yielded a schedule equivalent to a three-credit hour university course. The resulting clock hours for this schedule were 45 total clock hours that Sara and Lily met together. Sara recorded in her teaching journal several instances of frustration relating to feeling "behind" and "not making good progress." Upon reflection, that frustration may be attributed to the difference between the clock hours that Sara and Lily met, and the recommended clock hours for a standard Carnegie unit, 120 (The Carnegie Foundation, 2025). In order to reach an equivalent number of hours required by a Carnegie unit, Sara and Lily would have had to meet an additional class session each week. Time as a challenge contributed to a significant amount of stress for both Lily and Sara.

Lily's hurdles. As described at the beginning of this article, Lily was an active teen. She participated in cheerleading as well as swimming. Those activities during the CCD project made it extremely difficult for her to finish her work with 100% effort that she was accustomed to giving her schoolwork. Lily was forced to overcome a hurdle that many teens faced, the conflicting benefits of a busy athletic schedule. Swimming allowed Lily freedom to think. Many athletes find themselves entering a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) during practice or competition. Lily was no different. She said, "A lot of the time if I had an important essay due, I would think about it during long sets and right when I got home, I put those thoughts onto a paper." However, the time and

concentration spent during swim workouts took a toll as well. Swimming kept her mentally heathy and physically grounded but the exhaustion made her struggle to stay motivated and keep up with her class work. Lily's participation on the cheerleading team yielded the same results. Her cheering obligations consumed nearly her entire weekend. Every Friday night during football season, she would not get home until after midnight, sometimes as late as 0300, which set the tone for the entire weekend. She tried recovering on weekends after these tough weeks, but it was hard to support a balance she needed as a student. In addition to her participation in sports, Lily also began work as a lifeguard in her first regular job. Her work as a lifeguard began after her cheerleading activities were complete, after the new year. In one writing assignment, Lily acknowledged the irony of adding another obligation on her time to her already very busy schedule:

> "As if being a student athlete was not already demanding enough, I had a job that consumed a massive part of my time, on days without classes, I often worked from 0800 to 1200, going from work, to cheer, and back to the pool to swim. Juggling a job, on top of cheerleading, swimming, and academics created a schedule that felt impossible to manage at times. All three of my responsibilities made it challenging to finish my schoolwork on time with the quality and quantity I knew I was capable of."

Scaffolded Autonomy And Collaborative Curriculum Design

Initial thoughts. The CCD project began as a result of Lily's parents asking Sara to be the English Language Arts teacher for their daughter. When Lily's parents first approached Sara she was intrigued. This unique request from the parents of a teenager caused her to think critically about how she would adapt her undergraduate children's literature course content and activities to be appropriate for a 14-year-old student. She decided that providing Lily's ELA instruction would be a way for her to use her instructional design and teaching skills to introduce Lily to a more structured version of scaffolded autonomy as a part of the ELA curriculum. Lily's parents expressed a desire for Sara not only to provide instruction in ELA but also to help Lily become more independent in her academic pursuits. During the initial conference between Sara and Lily's parents, they indicated that they wanted Lily not only to learn the typical ELA skills found in the 9th grade curriculum but also to establish a curiosity and love of learning. In other words, they wanted Lily to begin developing the life-long learning skills that would enable her to be successful not only in high school but also college. The homeschool structure Lily's parents had in place meant that Sara had immense freedom in how she structured the class. With that in mind, she decided that an important underpinning of the class structure would be a curriculum designed in collaboration between Lily and herself.

Contrasting scaffolded autonomy and collaborative curriculum design

The most obvious difference between scaffolded autonomy (Andrzejewski, Wolf, Straub, & Parson, 2019) is the age of the students. Scaffolded autonomy was designed to be used with university students, while collaborative curriculum design occurred between an adult and a teen-aged student. Consequently, the metacognitive and self-regulatory skills (Pintrich, 2003; Winne, 1996; Zimmerman, 1986) that were present in the students participating in scaffolded autonomy were not as developed in the student participating in collaborative curriculum design environment. The second significant difference between the two curriculum designs is the level of teacher control. While the teacher in both models relinquishes control to a degree, that control is maintained at a higher level in CCD than in SA. The higher level of control is necessary due to the lack of experience with choice-making and collaboration present in a teen-aged student. That means that the SA teacher needed only to explain the overarching structure of the course while the CCD teacher needed to model and scaffold the collaborative process. Lily was operating within her Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), supported by Sara, while the university students were able to operate in a more independent manner. The last significant difference between the two curriculum models is that CCD brings the student into the planning process where SA does not. The students participating in SA did not have input into the nature of the instructional objectives or the activities available to them to complete. They did get to choose their own path and make choices within each assignment as designed by the teacher, but the teacher chose the topics, readings, and materials available to the students. In contrast, Lily had direct input into the selection of readings and materials, as well as the criteria by which her assignments were evaluated.

Collaboration Challenges

Beyond the hurdles associated with the instructional project as a whole, challenges with collaboration also existed. In addition to challenges that Sara and Lily faced as individuals, the CCD project brought to light additional challenges found in research. The discussion of those challenges is framed around two types identified by Jarvela et

al. (2013) and Koivuniemi et al. (2017), motivational and social challenges. Sara and Lily had different motivations entering into the project, making consensus about collaborative goals tricky to parse. They both also had to navigate the interpersonal power differential between an adult and a teen.

Motivational challenges. Before Sara agreed to embark on the ELA project with Lily, she wanted to confirm that Lily agreed with the idea. At first, Lily's mother suggested that participating wasn't up to Lily, that she would do what her mother told her. Sara pushed back on that sentiment, believing that Lily had the capacity and the right to agree or decline to participate. When Sara and Lily met for the first time, Sara noticed that Lily's body language and demeanor suggested a lack of enthusiasm for the project. After Sara encouraged her to share her concerns, Lily said that she didn't want to have two English classes. She had misunderstood how the class would fit into her school schedule at large. Once Sara reassured her that there would only be a single English class and that it would be between the two of them, Lily was "all in," as she said. Sara was able to change the polarity of Lily's lack of motivation in a single conversation. Sara discovered that Lily was strongly motivated by food, like most teens. Therefore, she exploited Lily's love for ethnic food by using it as the promised reward if Lily were able to successfully complete an exercise, including engaging in independent research in order to identify a secret challenge within the exercise. It is important to note that while Lily was able to successfully complete the exercise, she did not identify the bonus secret challenge. However, her motivation to find it did not waver.

Social challenges. The social challenges that Sara and Lily faced were primarily associated with the power differential between the two of them as an adult and a teen. Since Lily did not have peers with whom to collaborate during the lessons, she did not face social anxiety, cohesive group work, or prematurely settling on solutions (Adams-Wiggins & Haluska 2025). She did face the challenge of speaking to an adult, typically someone who would be deferred to in other teaching situations. Sara worked diligently to create an environment where Lily would feel comfortable asserting her own opinion. She discovered that Lily's development as an agent of change for her own learning grew throughout the year (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010; Zeldin, Krauss, Collura, Lucchesi, & Sulaiman, 2014). The ELA project saw Lily have a voice in the decision-making process for the activities in class as well as Sara as a supportive adult during the year (Zeldin, Krauss, Kim, Collura, & Abdullah, 2016). Sara had to manage the social expectations of the growing friendship she was developing with Lily's mother as well as the mentoring relationship she developed with Lily. Both Lily and her mother shared things with Sara in confidence at times that Sara honored in order to foster a trusting relationship with them both. Challenges were not the only influence on the CCD project.

Lily. Lily did not have as much experience with deep collaboration as Sara did. She said, "I never liked talking to teachers or other adults about my schoolwork before this CCD project." Her lack of experience in working with adults contributed to her hesitancy in disagreeing with Sara during early lessons as well as her propensity to acquiesce to most things that Sara said or suggested. Prior to the CCD project, Lily usually made decent grades, but she felt that the teachers did not know her as well as they knew the other students. She said, "My teachers did not really know me beyond the fact that I had a 504 plan (an official document detailing educational accommodations to be delivered for a student). Lily's mother told Sara, "I think Lily had trouble self-monitoring and meeting class expectations in all of her classes. [Her skills in this area] improved tremendously as the year progressed. CONTROL IS HUGE for Lily." Lily confirms her mother's assessment of the importance of control. Sara made sure to scaffold Lily's efforts at independence. After the year concluded, Lily reflected,

> "Sometimes looking back, I wonder if it would have been easier to ask for help instead of figuring things out myself. Independence felt like a part of my identity, so when I was forced to rely on others, I felt weak. That mindset was challenged in this class [CCD] since active learning was much more important than completing a worksheet. As the class moved on, I practiced managing my learning while recognizing there were times I needed guidance. Independence means being responsible enough to seek help when material is not understood."

The CCD project was organized quite differently than Lily's other homeschooling classes. In those classes, She had a set syllabus listing page numbers to read in textbooks and worksheets that needed to be completed by a certain point. In order to manage her busy schedule, Lily would frequently take a day to work ahead, thereby completing that classes work for the next 3 weeks. Then, she would need only remember to submit the assignments rather than having to encumber time each day for the class. In contrast, in the CCD project she had to devote time each day, whether in class or out, so that she could fully participate and understand in class with Sara. Lily sometimes found that not knowing the details of each class session was difficult to navigate. She was accustomed to classes with high degrees of structure with predictable routines, so she didn't have any experience with big-picture planning. She had trouble thinking ahead in a meaningful way, CCD quickly exposed that weakness. She

found that she had to plan her time beyond a simple 'get it done early' mentality. Despite the difficulty she found in the beginning Lily learned as the year progressed to implement a more mature way to learn.

Sara. While Sara had extensive experience collaborating with colleagues and peers, she had never collaborated with someone with such an age difference and with whom there was such a great power differential. That meant that she needed to carefully navigate the collaborative relationship with Lily. Sara was careful to create an environment where Lily felt safe and empowered to engage in collaborative behaviors such as "social interdependence, communication, negotiation, reflection, and task management," (Evans, 2020, p. 5). Sara's teaching journal recorded progress in these areas. For instance, in early September, "Analysis skills: There, but no confidence." In mid-September, she recorded a comment from Lily, "I'm scared to ask for help." Yet, near the end of September Sara wrote, "…need to see more initiative in terms of contribution to class and conversations." These excerpts illustrate the uncertainty that Lily brought to the collaborative partnership. By the time November came, Sara was able to note that, "Lily made her first 'from scratch' suggestion!!" In this instance, Lily suggested an assignment be created for her to be able to demonstrate her mastery of a vocabulary lesson.

As the year progressed, however, Sara's skills at creating an environment ripe for collaboration started to emerge. One area in which she worked to collaborate with Lily was in the evaluation of Lily's work. Rather than establishing herself as the sole arbiter of quality work, Sara included Lily in the evaluation of assignments and overall progress within the course. At the outset, Sara noticed, "She [Lily] didn't believe the things I identified as strengths were." In other words, Lily didn't trust Sara's assessment of her demonstrated skills. In an effort to develop Lily's evaluative skills, Sara had Lily make a daily assessment of her mastery of the course of study objectives that were covered for each lesson. Evaluating the daily work as a separate activity from evaluating the quality of her assignments gave Lily the opportunity to practice those skills. Where her initial attempts were tentative and questioning, by the end of the year, Lily was able to confidently and accurately assess her mastery levels.

A second area that Sara found challenging was relinquishing her control over the micro-level decisions that she typically would make in a class environment. For instance, in early February, based on input from Lily, Sara purchased texts about Greek mythology to prepare for using them as class texts. However, soon after those purchases were made, Lily changed her mind. It is important to note that the unit of study had not yet begun. Sara noted this change in her journal, "…changed her mind about reading mythology. She says she wants to read Gilgamesh. AFTER I BOUGHT MYTHOLOGY???? My fault for jumping the gun." One expectation that Sara had from Lily when choosing texts to read was that Lily would support her decision in a "What do we read next?" essay. Argumentative writing is one of the skills that ninth graders are expected to master (Alabama State Department of Education, 2021). Sara made sure that Lily did not hear her frustration about the change, however. Smaller decisions were easier for Sara to relinquish to Lily. Things such as due dates, task lists, and incentives for success were made solely by Lily. One of the more advanced skills that Sara introduced Lily to as a part of the course of study regarding using a specific style guide was the use of American Psychological Association (APA) style for references and citations. Sara chose this style because she was most familiar with it, and the course of study does not specify any particular style (Alabama State Department of Education, 2021), even though most public-school districts use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style.

Last, Sara had to learn to balance her input within the collaborative partnership with her expertise and experience in designing coursework for students. Sara did this by establishing a global structure for the course, similar to the one illustrated in scaffolded autonomy (Andrzejewski, Wolf, Straub, & Parson, 2019). She created a structure through which Lily explored vocabulary as well as literature and established high level schedule expectations. The details of many weeks and class sessions, though, were collaboratively decided with Lily's input. Despite these challenges, supports were also in place that facilitated successful collaboration in the CCD project.

Collaboration Supports

The most significant support for collaboration that Sara and Lily experienced was the explicit support of Lily's parents. Logistical challenges relating to communication were overcome by Lily's mother acting as the conduit for information transfer between Sara and Lily. Lily's mother also purchased instructional materials such as the vocabulary curriculum and copies of the texts that were read. There were other supports as well. For instance, throughout the year, once Sara and Lily established a baseline level of rapport, Sara would utter, "You're killin' me, Lily!" at those times when Lily would fall back on learned helplessness. Usually, that statement would be followed by, "You're making me think too much." The use of humor during class sessions affirms what Gokhale (1995) found, "The participants commented that humor too played a vital role in reducing anxiety," (p. 29). Typically, after an exchange such as this, Lily would be able to redirect her energy and retrieve the needed

information, make a reasonable assertion, or otherwise demonstrate the content that Sara was eliciting from her. The rapport between Sara and Lily was grounded in their shared passion for swimming. Sara exploited the serendipity of their shared regard to scaffold Lily's work habits, to create metaphors, and to influence her own expectations about Lily's capacity for work outside of class.

Collaborative Curriculum Design Successes and Benefits
As a result of the design of the CCD project and the collaborative supports in place, Sara and Lily experienced a number of successes and benefits. These successes and benefits illustrate the advantage of collaboration on curriculum design as well as the development of life skills.

Heightened engagement and vested interest
Many teachers of teens struggle with apathy in their students. Whether this apathy is related to engagement during class or for the titles being read, overcoming it is a universal struggle for public school teachers. Lily demonstrated a vested interest in the course material explored during class. Because she and Sara collaborated to choose texts to read, Lily was able to have ownership of the curriculum. She owned not just the choice of books, but also the rejection of books to read. For instance, Lily's father asked Sara to consider a particular title for use in class that was written by a U.S. Olympic swimmer. The memoir described the Olympian's early years as an age-group swimmer as well as her college and Olympic training. When Sara suggested the book to Lily, Lily was noncommittal. Subsequently, Lily rejected the use of the book for class. In accordance with the writing assignments that Sara had Lily complete to justify her choice of texts to read, Sara asked Lily to justify the rejection of the title. Lily was able to use evidence from the text to explain her reasoning, "It seems to be a book you read for fun, rather than one you study for school." Sara accepted that reasoning. In doing so she demonstrated that Lily's opinion and stance on curricular decisions would be honored.

A second way that Lily demonstrated her heightened engagement with class content was her willingness not only to write on the whiteboards but also to implement her own coding scheme to make those notes memorable. As the semester progressed Sara writing on the whiteboards became less common than Lily doing so. Lily discovered that using colors as an indicator of different levels of importance and meaning aided her memory and recall of content. Her use of color became a source of humor between Sara and Lily (Gokhale, 1995). Lily would frequent strive to create whiteboard notes that used "all of the colors" of markers Sara had in her supply bag.

Flexibility
Engagement and interest were not the only successes that grew from the CCD project. Sara and Lily were also able to benefit from a level of flexibility not possible in traditional public school class settings. Because the collaboration was between two people rather than a group of students with a single teacher, Sara and Lily enjoyed a level of flexibility unique to the CCD organization. They had the flexibility to meet wherever it was necessary, not just in the meeting space they acquired for the project. They were not limited to bureaucracy associated with public schools when deciding to meet at the public library, meet via web conference, or at a local eatery. The only requirement for their meeting locations was that the interaction between the two of them be observable and interruptible (US Center for Safesport, 2025).

Sara also had the flexibility to not only permit but also to encourage Lily to move around the meeting space as one way to manage her educational accommodations. Typical school classrooms are not organized in a way that would permit students to walk and move about the classroom while instruction takes place. Several of Lily's 504 accommodations are typically implemented in an 'other' orientation. That is, the students in a class have particular deadlines or methods of completing activities, but students with accommodations are the 'other' arrangements. Within the CCD project, 'othering' was not a factor. Sara and Lily were able to take advantage of Lily's self-awareness about her needs and make appropriate decisions with regard to class norms as well as assignment requirements and due dates.

Last, the CCD project permitted flexibility with regard to class meeting time. From the outset, the choice of when to meet was collaboratively decided between Sara and Lily. While that meeting schedule was adhered to for most sessions, the two had the advantage of being able to time shift when needed to accommodate medical appointments, swimming competitions, and illness. Strong communication between Sara and Lily's mother enabled them to ensure that the limited number of contact hours were achieved even in situations that might otherwise see Lily miss class were she to be a part of a traditional school setting.

Growth and Transfer of Skills
Sara strove to implement metacognitive strategies with Lily that could be implemented outside of the collaborative curriculum design context. In order to increase the probability of those strategies being implemented beyond the CCD context, Sara would explicitly inform Lily about the how and why they were being used. Doing so created an expectation of transfer for those skills. Sara chose to situate the CCD project in the context of helping Lily develop her life skills typical of adults, she described it for Lily as being an apprentice adult. Thus, the likelihood of Lily using learning strategies in other contexts beyond CCD was positively influenced (Evans, 2020). One of the

strategies that Sara used during class activities was to set a timer for short periods of time, never more than 15 minutes, so that Lily could have a bounded period of time during which she would focus on a specific task. As the year progressed, Lily mentioned more than once that she used the same strategy when doing homework for her other classes. Lily's attention to and use of details in her writing improved throughout the year. Sara and Lily worked together to evaluate the quality of all of Lily's submitted assignments. Doing so allowed Lily to see the criteria from the grading rubrics that were fully addressed, partially addressed, or missing entirely from the assignment. Because Sara always had the rubrics available to Lily from the moment each assignment was given, Lily could choose to refer to them as she completed the work. At the beginning of the year, this cross-referencing rarely occurred. By the end of the year, Lily was structuring her writing assignments so that they were directly aligned with the criteria in the rubrics. As the year progressed, Lily also became more comfortable with advocating for herself when collaborating on the evaluation of her work. Sara usually had Lily make the first assessment for each criterion. Then, Sara would follow with her own assessment. When the two opinions differed, the two would discuss the differences and settle on a final decision. The first several times that they evaluated work; Lily would acquiesce to Sara's opinion more often than not. Then, she began to not only disagree with Sara but also be able to point out areas in her work that would support her opinion. Lily was applying the oft-repeated phrase from class of "assertion-evidence" in her advocacy.

In addition to becoming more adept at providing evidence for her conclusions and assertions, Lily also began to remove "I don't know" as a response to questioning from Sara. The CCD project created an environment where Lily felt safe to express indecision or a gap in her knowledge. As the year progressed, she would be more likely to describe the limits of her knowledge rather than simply relying on not knowing a final answer. For instance, during a lesson about plot mapping in *Romeo & Juliet* Lily was not able to recall the name of a particular character who instigated one of the many fights in the play. She was, however, able to remember the color in which the name was written, and on which board it appeared. With that information, Sara was able to coach Lily into remembering the proper character. Sara also noticed that Lily referred to skills and knowledge she learned in the CCD project when she discussed other class work for some of her other classes. She used the reference and citation skills learned with Sara in her geography research presentation. Lily also used the metacognitive strategy of rewriting notes to help her remember content from other courses.

Lessons Learned

Collaborative curriculum design was successful in many ways, as discussed above. Sara and Lily also learned lessons during the project that they intended to implement in subsequent years of the project. Learning these lessons throughout the year caused uncertainty at times, and necessitated the ability to pivot when the uncertainty impacted the quality of work. Being aware of these lessons at the outset of future iterations of CCD projects will enable participants to maximize their use of class time toward the goal of efficient and effective learning.

Establish Common Expectations

Both Sara and Lily had to learn how to be open with each other in regard to expectations. At one point in the middle of the year, Sara had to have a forthright conversation with Lily. Lily had been late with homework and did not always follow through with tasks that she had agreed to complete, especially over weekends. Sara openly shared how she felt, "I feel like I am doing all of the work, and you're coasting" as well as how that impacted her emotions, "I resent that." This honesty helped strengthen the rapport she and Lily were developing with each other (Pope, 2020) and resulted in stronger participation on Lily's part for the remainder of the year.

Include Everyone in all Levels of Decisions

Before any major decisions were made, Sara made sure to include both Lily and Lily's mother. Typically, she would discuss a schedule change, supplemental materials needing to be purchased, or concerns first with Lily, and then with Lily's mother. Lily's mother noted that, "I was apprised of all developmental stages of the project." By including everyone in all levels of decision-making Sara ensured that collaboration was happening with full transparency.

Provide Bounded Areas for Choice

As Andrzejewski, Wolf, Straub, and Parson (2019) found, university students were initially uncomfortable with the amount of flexibility they were given in the scaffolded autonomy environments. It would have been foolish for Sara to assume that Lily would feel any different in the CCD class. Therefore, Sara made sure to provide bounded areas in which Lily could exercise choice and control. Much like Summerlin (2006) found that children playing in a playground with a fence would explore up to the limit of that boundary, so Sara desired that Lily would have safe space in which to explore her new collaborative skills. Lily's mother noticed this effort, saying, "You provided a safe space for Lily to grow as a person and as a student." These safe spaces typically included a set of acceptable choices from which Lily could choose when making decisions about titles to read, criteria for assignments, and due dates for those assignments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

"Therefore, if the purpose of instruction is to enhance critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, then collaborative learning is … beneficial," (Gokhale, 1995, p. 30)

From Lily to other students

As part of the end-of-year reflection, Sara and Lily recorded recommendations that they wished to remember for the following year's class. Recall, that it was not until the middle of summer that the decision to forego CCD and send Lily to public school was made. The recommendations Lily made could easily be given to any teen enrolled in any sort of school setting. Lily gave these recommendations to her future self, anticipating that she would be working with Sara the following year.

Ask questions. One of the interpersonal skills that Sara helped Lily develop was that of questioning. At the beginning of the year, Lily would frequently report to class having not finished an assignment or only partially finishing the assignment. Sara prompted, encouraged, and cajoled Lily to reach out and ask for help rather than simply not attempting a task. Lily's mother noted that she's seen progress in asking for help in Lily's other classes.

Lily offers this advice to other students who may participate in a CCD-type project:
> "One of the best ways to succeed in this type of class is to ask questions, especially as soon as there is any type of confusion. Asking early prevents small misunderstandings from becoming big problems later. As you progress through high school, material builds on itself. Asking questions is a sign of responsibility and not weakness like I once thought it was."

Lily also identified the importance of learning, navigating, and consulting the learning management system (LMS) throughout the year. Depending on the organizational structure that teachers use for their courses, learners may find it more or less confusing to use as a source of information or resources for class. Lily adds, "Sara was incredibly good about organizing everything onto [the LMS] in a clear and concise way. Learning [the LMS] made me feel like I was in more control and less likely to miss essential information."

Take notes. Throughout the school year, Lily struggled with remembering content she was expected to apply to homework assignments as well as requirements for assignments. At first, Sara encouraged Lily to write down anything that Sara wrote on the whiteboards in an effort to teach Lily how to take notes. However, that strategy was not terribly successful. Part way through the year, Sara began having Lily write on the whiteboards, then take pictures with her phone to record what was written. Lily told her future self:

> "Writing on the whiteboards during class and rewriting notes after class is an essential way to organize and remember information. When physically writing down information in your own handwriting it becomes easier to understand. Adding color, drawing diagrams, or highlighting important ideas can make material more memorable because it is in a format you can understand and wording you know. Being actively involved helps you stay engaged and have a sense of ownership over the learning. Taking photos of whiteboards acts as a proof that the work was done and helps organize notes for later. Instead of potentially losing ideas, referring to pictures acts as a safety net. This habit contributes to accountability and helps your organization when the class is moving so quickly."

Make a schedule. Lily's final recommendation to her future self was to create a schedule. She realized that using a journal or calendar to plan how to manage her time helped wrangle her many obligations as well as keep up with responsibilities. Doing so made sure everything was finished without her feeling overwhelmed so often. Lily wasn't the only person to see the benefit of Lily setting a schedule for her daily work and activities. Lily's mother also noted improvements in Lily's time management skills. While improving time management was not an explicit goal of the project, Sara modeled the use of lists, calendars, and journaling to help Lily manage her work from class. Lily's mother noticed her using similar strategies for her other courses. In Lily's words:

> "Having a clear schedule is an important way to stay on top of everything. This helps you manage responsibilities without feeling overwhelmed. For me, I did the same thing every week at the same

time, and it helped me feel less overwhelmed since change can be a complex thing for me. Deciding when to work on assignments and following through with that plan avoids last minute stress. While this class was very flexible, this routine made it easier to focus and helped with accountability."

From Sara to other instructors

As a reflective practitioner who engaged in productive reflection (Davis, 2003), Sara also considered the lessons she learned from her work with Lily. She offers these lessons to other practitioners so that they might be able to avoid pitfalls that Lily and she encountered during their project.

Manage the power differential. Both Sara and Lily tended to fall back into traditional teacher/student roles, especially at the beginning of the year. Layering the ELA content with lessons on collaboration made the content more complex than that in a traditional classroom. That complexity, combined with the relatively low number of contact hours meant that Sara felt behind schedule most of the time. To combat that feeling, Sara recommends that future collaborative curriculum designers be sure to schedule the recommended 120 contact hours for a single academic year per subject. The additional time would allow the adult to provide more explicit guidance about effective collaboration, especially between an adult and a teen-aged student.

Create materials together. In order to encourage co-ownership of the outcomes in a collaborative curriculum design, Sara found it beneficial to have Lily create anchor charts, mnemonics, and other learning aids rather than providing them to Lily in a typical teacher-student relationship. For instance, when describing the difference between collaboration and cooperation to students, Sara typically uses a cake/salad analogy. The ingredients in a cake work together to create a seamless, integrated product. They cannot be separated from one another. Whereas the ingredients in a salad, while also working together to create an integrated product, *are* able to be separated from one another. The results of collaboration between two or more people are seamless, with the contributions of the individuals unable to be distinguished within the final product. The products of cooperation, on the other hand, may also be seamless, but the contributions of each person are easily separated from the final product. The cake/salad metaphor is in alignment with literature-based definitions of collaboration and cooperation (Dillenbourg, 1999). Lily preferred to use a friends/family relationship to help her distinguish between collaboration and cooperation. Sara used Lily's metaphor as a way to allow Lily ownership over the content, and to demonstrate the partnership between the two of them. Allowing the student in a collaborative curriculum design environment to create metaphors, anchor charts, and other instructional content empowers them to productively contribute to their own learning.

Set age appropriate expectations. Perhaps due to Sara's long tenure working with university students, her initial expectations of the depth of content that Lily could handle as well as the speed with which she could handle it were unreasonable. Sara recommends ensuring that the adult in a collaborative curriculum design environment be familiar with the developmental stage of the student(s) involved. This recommendation is particularly important in situations where the student may have identified academic difficulties that are managed in a traditional classroom environment through individualized educational plans (IEPs) or section 504 accommodations. Students are entitled to these specific types of accommodations once they have documented disabilities or learning difficulties in place and after appropriate testing. Collaborative curriculum design environments may not be delivered in a public-school environment, therefore would not necessarily be subject to U.S. Federal requirements. But, had Sara been aware of some of Lily's specific learning difficulties from the beginning of the school year, she might have made more appropriate pacing decisions during the first semester.

Sara's teaching journal has several entries that reflect her belated realization that her decisions regarding due dates and pacing, as well as the size of assignments that she assigned for homework were either too fast or too big for what Lily could handle. As the year went on, she made a point of including Lily in the determination of due dates as well as deciding the scope of assignments. Several larger assignments were broken into parts in order for Lily to be able to focus more clearly on that particular aspect before combining them at the end of the semester.

Planning & scheduling. One strategy that Sara found particularly helpful and would recommend that others adopt if undertaking similar projects was to have established times for planning. These regular planning sessions permitted both Lily and her to have predictable schedules with regard to assignment completion. Lily thrived under a predictable schedule. She was able to organize her homework as well as her out of school activities in such a way to ensure that she was able to know what was expected of her in each class session. Sara also recommends having

macro-level predictability in scheduling of class activities. She implemented this recommendation by setting aside one week each month for the classical vocabulary lessons. The other weeks of the month, vocabulary terms were used within the regular instructional activities in order to reinforce those lessons.

Final Comments and Observations

Lily, her mother, and Sara were very pleased with how the collaborative curriculum design project developed. All three were ready to continue the project for the next school year. Sara was excited to implement the lessons she learned during the 2024-25 academic year for the following year. She investigated options for a reading list as well as considered different authentic writing projects that she and Lily could complete together, including this manuscript. Lily was excited to continue working with Sara, even though the next year's schedule would have an additional class meeting day added to the mix. She committed to reading on a regular basis over the summer vacation. Lily's mother was also looking forward to having Sara and Lily work together for the next school year. All signs were pointing to a second successful year.

One of the more surprising results of the collaborative curriculum design project was how Lily's communication skills improved with her parents. According to her mother, Lily's improved communication skills eased their personal relationship with one another. Sara noted in her teaching journal when Lily's mother said, "I wonder if what you're doing in class is bleeding over into how Lily and I interact." Unfortunately, the second year of the project did not come to fruition. Due to a variety of factors not relating to the project, Lily's parents made the decision to enroll Lily into the local public school system beginning with her 10th grade year. The decision was not made lightly nor with an absence of some level of concern. In fact, Lily's mother told Sara that not being able to continue with collaborative curriculum design was her primary concern about returning Lily to public school. Lily also expressed concern, especially during the first month of school. Lily was experiencing common issues associated with being what was essentially the 'new kid' in school, despite many of her schoolmates also being her swim teammates. As of the writing of this manuscript, however, Lily has adjusted well to her return to public school. She's made new friends and is even seen as the expert in her friend group for the reference and citation process in writing assignments. Her grades are excellent, and she is successful in school. According to Lily:

> "All [of the skills I learned in the CCD project] helped me feel ready to go back to public school. Asking questions taught me how to get help when I needed it instead of staying silent. We do not use the same [LMS] at school as in CCD, so learning to navigate it was not [sic] necessary when I went back to public school. Now, I write all of my notes in colors, and it has helped me become a more active learner and track material in my own way. Sticking to a schedule has kept myself disciplined and showed that I can manage time without relying on friends, extra structure, or someone constantly keeping me on track. All together [my CCD class] has made me more independent, responsible, and organized. This growth has made me feel confident enough to succeed in a demanding environment."

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