"LITTLE BRIDGES"
CITY SCHOOL CASE STUDY: A LITERACY OUTREACH WORKER'S ROLE IN A CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM

Erika Dabner

School of Education

Thompson Rivers University

Kamloops, BC

[November, 2012]

A thesis submitted to Thompson Rivers University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education

DEDICATION

To 'Bella', in appreciation for her support in this research, and to the many students at City School and in corrections whose journeys she has supported.

"You know, there's so many little bridges between the life that we have as that marginalized person and anything like school…if you don't have the little bridges in there, that she makes *so many* of those little bridges, people aren't going to cross it, it's just not going to happen".

- James, City School graduate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the following individuals and agencies connected to 'City School' and to this research:

Dr. Diane Purvey, for being my thesis supervisor, guiding me through many challenges, and answering many, many questions.

City School staff and administration (past and present)

Student interview participants: James, Robert, Tony and Tyson

Sukhbinder 'Bindy' Sidhu, Doctoral candidate, McGill University, for providing inter-rater reliability feedback

Sara Wolfe, TRU Writing Centre, for editing support

For recognizing the value of the Literacy Outreach Worker and financially supporting the position:

    Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP)
    Thompson Nicola Cariboo United Way
    Interior Community Services
    Literacy in Kamloops
    City of Kamloops Social Planning Committee
    Rotary Clubs of Kamloops
    Kamloops/Thompson School District

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker at 'City School', an adult/continuing Education program located in a school district in the British Columbia interior. The primary research question is "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker (LOW) facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?" Two sub-questions are: "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" and "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" Data were collected through stakeholder interviews, document review and participant observation, and analyzed to derive conceptual categories. Results are presented and discussed in each of the six categories: support, attributes, reentry, liaison, workload and funding. Interpretation of results includes actionable recommendations, calls for a commitment to stable outreach funding and suggests directions for future research.

Key words:

outreach, adult education, case study, literacy, reentry, corrections, support, funding

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

1 Introduction

From: [Program Coordinator]

To: [a Literacy contact in BC]

Subject: RE:CALP Grant [Community Adult Literacy Program]

Hi [   ], just finished listening to your voice message about the delayed funding for the
CALP grant - it sounds really scary! You already know that City School would cease to
exist in its present form without the CALP grant...As for the money part, we are currently
operating on the extra funding that we have been able to secure from... other fundraising
efforts. When that money dries up we will obviously be in big trouble.

From: [a Literacy contact in BC]

To: [Program Coordinator]

Subject: RE: Other Funding opportunities?

I think you will see good news on the horizon. We just learned yesterday that the
Minister signed off on the CALP letters, so those who were successful will be finding out
in the next day or two. I don't see any reason why your program would not be funded
again by CALP.

In spite of that, I always think it is a good idea to find ways to more stable funding. What
I have learned in my practice is the more you can link up to solid institutions, the more
likely you are to have continuous funding...

So, it seems that you are safe for this year, but unless you want to go through this
uncertainty every year, and who does, it would be good to find other sources for [the
Literacy Outreach Worker] position.

1.1 Origin and Background to City School

City School is an adult/continuing education program in an Interior British Columbia School District. The program was envisioned by a Thompson Rivers University faculty member and brought to life by a school administrator who realized the need for an alternate adult education school in the district. City School was originally conceived and designed to fill a gap, to be an option for any adult learners who were, for a multitude of reasons, unlikely or unwilling to attend school in structured or traditional academic settings. City School's mission is to provide opportunities for meaningful learning by supporting students within the classroom and in the community.

The school is located in a large room in a church basement, and it is one of several user groups of the facility. As a satellite school, it operates without on-site administrative, secretarial, learning assistance, counseling or custodial support. The City School program uses a drop-in model, where students may come and go as needed to pick up and drop off assignments, and receive tutorial assistance from qualified teachers and volunteers. Students work at their own paces, with as much or as little teacher assistance as they desire. City School provides opportunities for students to learn basic literacy skills, earn a B.C. Adult Dogwood Diploma, or take upgrading courses. The City School program opened in the church in January, 2007, with nine students, and in its first year, one student achieved graduation. As of 2012, approximately 50 students graduate per year, and almost 200 students are enrolled at any given time.

City School is deliberately located in a North Shore community, where one-third of the city's population of approximately 86,000 resides (Statistics Canada, 2012). This area experiences greater social challenges than any other city area: "statistically, the North Shore has lower than average property values, incomes and education levels which tend to manifest as a negative image or perception of the neighborhood" (Kamloops North Shore Neighborhood Plan, p. 17). The area is "disproportionately represented in [incidence of low income] when compared against other regions of Kamloops" (Kamloops North Shore Background Report, p. 39). There is a "particular concentration around the McDonald Park neighbourhood and the south end of the Tranquille Road

Commercial Area" where City School is located (Ibid., p. 38). One researcher
encapsulated the feel of the North Shore by describing

> Smaller, older bungalows and duplexes, interspersed with
> mobile home parks, and concentrations of subsidized,
> multifamily housing...Property is less well maintained and
> sidewalks and curbs almost nonexistent. Crime rates are
> higher. Several schools have closed. Second-hand stores,
> social service agencies, automobile repair shops, and empty
> lots are common along Tranquille Road. (Nelson, 1998, p.
> 51) Residential areas are interrupted by major
> thoroughfares, and public beliefs about the safety of North
> Shore neighborhoods is, for the most part, negative and
> entrenched. (Nelson, 1998, p. 53)

Locating the City School program in this particular community serves two main
purposes: it establishes a community connection in a multiple-use facility and offers
services closest to its target population. More importantly, it recognizes that "adults who
participate in literacy education often choose a community-based program as a deliberate
alternative to more formal educational settings because of past negative school
experiences" (Decoda, 2007).

City School adult students constitute a complex and diverse population; they come
from a broad spectrum in terms of socio-economic status, with approximately half
receiving some form of social assistance (school administrator, personal communication,
September 4, 2012). Their levels of previous education also vary widely. Although some
students have already graduated and others are working on basic 'Literacy Foundations'
curriculum, most are working towards attaining a BC Adult Dogwood Diploma. A large
number of community groups refer clients to the program, including the John Howard
Society; SHOP (Social and Health Options for Persons in the Sex Trade); ASK (Aids
Society of Kamloops) Wellness Centre; the BC Ministry of Social Services; and Mental
Health Services.

1.2 The Literacy Outreach Worker

The concept of a Literacy Outreach Worker (LOW) was built into the original vision
for City School, and a LOW has been with the program since its earliest days of

operation. In this context, outreach refers to non-teaching supports which aim to meet student needs both in and outside the classroom. The outreach worker's primary focus is building supportive relationships with each student, in accordance with City School's guiding philosophy that "meaningful learning and significant advances in literacy are more likely to occur when students are coping better with the challenges of daily living" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2011). These challenges are well-known to adult educators, especially those who work with marginalized and low-literacy learners. Before beginning to participate in programs, students face such barriers as socioeconomic-circumstantial factors, childcare conflicts, personal histories of trauma and abuse, disability and other concerns (ABC Canada, 2002; Decoda, 2007). For these reasons, "emotional safety, fears about failure and being judged, and getting along with others are issues that often need to be addressed as part of the learning program" (Decoda, 2007).

Illeris (as cited in Adult Literacy: A Synthesis of Evidence, 2006) advocates for adult student supports, including "the availability of counselling and/or other supporting services ...that can help address the many barriers faced by low-skilled/low-literacy learners in getting and remaining involved in programs". The Literacy Outreach Worker's role is to focus on these needs and supports. Since the program's inception, the LOW has worked with local and community agencies to develop and maintain support structures for students requiring housing, addictions treatment and mental health services. The LOW also identifies student needs during the intake process; provides students with social/emotional support in and out of the classroom; offers home and hospital visits; links students to community agencies; assists students in accessing post-secondary education, employment, and housing; provides outreach services to students at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre (KRCC); and mentors practicum students in Human Service Work and Social Work Programs. In terms of qualifications, the current outreach worker possesses a Diploma in Human Services and a Diploma in Systemic Family Therapy; the latter was attained after she was hired for the LOW position.

The continued growth of City School, and the achievements and challenges of its students, academic and otherwise, has become interconnected with the supports offered by the LOW. At the same time, the Literacy Outreach Worker's responsibilities have increased and diversified:

> When I first started it was more so providing tutor support, building positive relationships with students and doing some follow-up, not spending very much time in the classroom environment per se, being out in the community with students...and working with guys [at KRCC] who are getting released and then connecting with them in the community within 24 hours of their release date. So all of those things are still happening; however, with the growth of the program now, I'm doing all the intakes...[and] doing follow-up with 200 students is very very time-consuming...(LOW interview)

The LOW acknowledged that, at times, these changes have placed strains on the programs' abilities to support students:

> ...because our numbers have grown so much I've been doing more things in the last two years than I did the first, for instance going to court with students, home visits with students, taking students to Income Assistance, spending numerous hours at ASK Wellness helping students go through the intake process for housing, taking students to look at housing, going up to Thompson Rivers University with students and just doing a walk-about. So all of that, which I think is what my job was supposed to be, has grown, but...more of the admin things and the organizational things, I don't have enough time to do that. (LOW interview)

In addition to the pressures imposed by a growing student body, the LOW position is subject to annual uncertainty as to whether external, grant-based funding for the position will continue. The bulk of this funding is provided by an annual grant from the BC Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development through its Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP). In the early days of City School, the position was part-time,

did not include the summer months and involved a student roster of 60-80. However, the need for services has for some time surpassed the grant allocation:

> Last year [2010-2011] we worked with well over 400 students; [the LOW] worked 35 hours per week and City School was open 47 weeks of the calendar year; not to mention the fact that [the LOW] is spending 4-6 hours per week working directly with KRCC student/inmates and connecting with them upon release. (LB, program coordinator, personal communication, Oct. 10, 2011)

When a projected shortfall was identified, the program coordinator initiated meetings with the School District and BC Corrections, with a goal of securing funding to cover this shortfall and ensuring the Literacy Outreach Worker could continue to operate at established levels of service. However, at that time, both organizations declined to fund the LOW position, and without their direct financial support, other funding sources were investigated. A new partnership with the United Way provided much-needed funding; efforts to gain permanent, secure funding are ongoing. Such efforts are crucial to the continuity of the position, since by February of 2011, the grant covered only 80% of the outreach worker's salar The Outreach Worker, who is employed through a community agency, would be guaranteed permanent, full-time work elsewhere if the LOW position were cut; City School's concern is that the *position* continue to be funded.

1.3   Key Functions of the LOW

This case study involves an examination of the components of the LOW role. Prior to data collection and analysis, four components were predicted as key factors in the role: providing social-emotional support to students, conducting new student intakes, reentry from corrections and liaison with community agencies.

1.3.1   Supporting students

In the social work literature, care theory describes that "in a caring relation, the carer ... tries to understand the expressed needs of the cared-for [and] act either to satisfy the expressed need or to suggest an alternative goal" (Noddings, p. 391).

The LOW role incorporates aspects of care theory, borrowed from the health care field, and a nurturing perspective, borrowed from education:

> Because many adults come to further education and training
> with wounds from previous schooling, the working
> metaphor of the learner here is the vulnerable self. This
> metaphor is based on the belief that when a learner's self-
> concept is under threat or diminished in any way, learning
> will be blocked, diverted, or halted altogether...Typical
> nurturing strategies include such simple things as getting to
> know people, consistently listening and responding to
> emotional as well as intellectual needs. (Pratt, 2002, p.11)

The LOW employs nurturing strategies on a daily basis. When students speak with the LOW about personal matters, her role is most closely aligned to that of a counselor. At other times, when she visits community agencies, the LOW acts as a liaison for the City School program. When advocating for students who are trying to navigate reentry from corrections or dealing with government social services, the court system or mental health, her role is most akin to that of a social worker. In short, in order to examine the LOW's role, it is necessary to recognize the position actually represents an amalgamation of several roles.

1.3.2 Intakes

The intake process, whereby new students are introduced to and enrolled in school, is an important first point of contact between a program and students, one in which "the student should [come away with] a sense of the types of support available to him through the program" (Vaughn, 2000, p. 10).

Gartner (2005) investigated the costs and benefits that Adult Basic Education (ABE) students perceived both before and after they began a program, and how these perceptions differed between students who persisted and those who withdrew within the first six weeks. Interviews revealed that while adults pursuing basic education typically returned to school with long-term expectations, they sustained participation in accordance with finding specific kinds of short-term benefits. Gartner's suggestions for further study include "finding if an intervention at intake, when a student first approaches a program, can promote earlier recognition of the potential for personal and social short-term benefits. This study suggests that just having someone to talk to who respects educational

goals and acknowledges personal struggles may prolong attendance long enough that short-term rewards might begin to flower" (p. 192).

Hubble (2000) contends that the questions asked and the information gathered during intake procedures could be a means to increase student retention in adult education programs: "The role of the intake process could be the vital link between the needs of the students and countering barriers to attendance" (p. 20). In other words, the sooner staff members are aware of potential barriers, the sooner they can attempt interventions designed to minimize the risk of attrition.

1.3.3   Connecting to corrections

Along with City School, the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre classroom comprises the Continuing Education Department of the School District's Alternate Education Program. The correctional centre itself is a remand (awaiting trial) and sentenced facility housing approximately 300-350 male inmates. Inmate transfers between KRCC and other centres are a common occurrence as 'bed space' permits; the next nearest correctional facilities are located over 500 km north, in Prince George, or 350 km south, in the Lower Mainland.

The KRCC program serves approximately 45-55 students at any given time. These students have access to the LOW before and during their transition between KRCC and the classroom at City School. Teachers at KRCC identify students who plan to stay in Kamloops after they are released. The LOW visits them prior to their release dates to discuss their needs and goals, offer links to community resources and make preliminary arrangements on their behalf. Once released, the LOW establishes contact within 24-48 hours, sometimes literally picking them up where BC Corrections leaves off: the Greyhound bus station. An ex-inmate therefore has immediate support, transportation and an advocate as he addresses his most urgent needs, such as treatment, social services and housing. Housing in particular is an immediate concern for released inmates; the Kamloops Homelessness Action Plan recognizes that "homelessness is a common feature of those who go through the correctional system. In particular, release from a correctional facility may launch a person back onto the City without adequate supports" (p. 16). In

addition, because he is already a student in the District's Continuing Education program, he is brought to City School to meet staff and to continue his education. In this way, the transition between classrooms is seamless, as a student picks up courses where he left off in the KRCC classroom, and he has ongoing support during his reentry from corrections to life 'on the outs'.

At this point, it is important to discuss corrections' role in pre-release planning. Prior to his release date, a sentenced inmate has an opportunity to utilize a conditional release coordinator who may assist with pre-release planning. However, prison overcrowding results in a norm whereby in many cases, especially for remanded inmates (those awaiting trial), no such services are provided. With over 13,000 remanded inmates in the province at any given time, and a median length of stay of 12 days (Calverley, 2010), the volume of individuals returning to life on the outs with little preparation is significant.

When a remanded inmate is released, BC Corrections provides him with a Greyhound bus ticket and a ride to the bus station. He may also obtain prison-issued government identification, especially important to those who need to prove their identity in order to seek assistance from social services. Finally, he may qualify for emergency welfare funding of approximately $60. Anecdotally, inmates have reported that the time between drop-off at the station and the departure of their bus is risky in that criminal associates may be waiting for them at the bus station, tempting them to fall back into old behaviors.

The LOW has connected with over 100 inmates since KRCC outreach was added to the position description; in addition, the LOW has provided ongoing support for five students over a two-year span, none of whom have returned to custody. It is worth noting that according to *Juristat*, the cost of incarcerating a provincial prisoner, as of 2008-2009, was $161.80 per person per day (a figure which includes operating expenditures only), or approximately $59,000 per year (Calverley, 2010). This cost-saving aspect of the LOW's role has earned recognition from BC Corrections and been presented at Prison Health and Education and BC Adult Education Conferences. Again, to date, the elevation of the LOW's position profile has not resulted in financial support from BC Corrections.

Not all offenders are subject to community supervision once released from a correctional facility; in the cases of remanded inmates, for example, a sentence of 'time served' is often followed by unconditional release into the community (H. Helens, personal communication, November 25, 2011). For those offenders who are given community supervision, the risk assessments made in their first 60 days of incarceration follow them into the community.

Offender risk assessments are based on static and dynamic factors. Static factors, such as age of first conviction and previous history of offending, cannot be changed (Howell, 2007, p. 110). Dynamic factors, also termed criminogenic needs, are those which can be changed through intervention. The seven dynamic factor domains are: employment, marital/family ties, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude (Motiuk, 2007).

Recent research on best practices in community corrections, however, identifies the "Big Four" risk factors (history of antisocial behavior, antisocial personality pattern, antisocial attitudes/cognition and antisocial associates) and the "Central Eight" risk factors, which add family/marital status, school/work, leisure/recreation and substance abuse (Revealing Research and Evaluation, p. 3). School is therefore recognized as having the potential to improve outcomes and lower recidivism, which is one of the factors discussed in offenders' sessions with parole officers. These are the reasons why the LOW, in addition to spending a portion of time at KRCC, connects with community corrections, and officers refer clients to City School on a regular basis.

1.3.4 Liaison with Community Agencies

Although there is a lack of research on the formation of networks and working alliances amongst social service agencies, such collaborations are formed regularly (Boutillier et. al., n.d.). Probably one of the most common forms of inter-agency collaboration is informal information-sharing. For the LOW, this means connecting personally with numerous social service agencies in the city, with two objectives in mind. The first is to promote the City School program to potential students, and the second is to maintain a comprehensive and dynamic understanding of available resources. This

knowledge translates directly into the LOW's ability to make effective referrals, and connect a student directly to a person in another organization.

1.4   Statement of Research Problem

Because the Literacy Outreach Worker position is funded by grants, which come up for renewal every year, the City School program can never be certain that the position will continue and current levels of student support will be maintained. Furthermore, as student numbers rise, the LOW position is subject to a number of real and potential stresses due to constantly increasing demands on time, energy and resources. This bounded case study aims to examine the Literacy Outreach Worker position to determine the extent to which the position represents best practices in an Adult/Continuing Education program.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker at City School. The primary research question is "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?" The two sub-questions are "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" and "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?"

This research meets the definition of a bounded case study (Smith, as cited in Merriam, 1998). Merriam states "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (p. 27). Here, the case is the LOW, delimited by the boundaries of one Adult/Continuing Education program. This research employs three components: interviews with program stakeholders, observations of the Literacy Outreach Worker and review of documents pertaining to the City School Program and the Literacy Outreach Worker position.

1.5   Rationale and Potential Benefits

The potential benefits of a critical evaluation of the Literacy Outreach Worker position include increased understanding of the role of outreach in adult education. It is

hoped that this study will prompt decision makers to recognize the role of outreach in Adult/Continuing education, and to evaluate whether such a position merits funding.

The LOW position at City School, and the wraparound support it offers students, makes the program unique among adult education programs in British Columbia. This makes an exploratory case study potentially valuable to other locations that may wish to adopt similar positions. In addition, an investigation of the program may benefit the program itself, in that it allows an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the LOW role and how changes may be incorporated to better demonstrate best practices in adult education programs.

1.6 Summary

This case study focuses on the role of a Literacy Outreach Worker in one adult/continuing education program. At the outset, four components are predicted to be key functions of the role: student support, new student intakes, reentry from corrections and liaison with community agencies.

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2 Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

A review of the adult education literature reveals a significant body of work around such terms as attrition, retention and persistence, in both Adult Basic Education (ABE) in the United States and higher (post-secondary) education. Adult Secondary Education (ASE), the United States' closest corollary to the BC Adult Dogwood Diploma Program, is less prevalent in the literature. In addition, there is relatively little literature connecting the role of outreach, or counseling, to adult education programs, and a general dearth of Canadian studies. To draw together the literature on adult education and roles representing the closest corollaries to the Literacy Outreach Worker's role, it is necessary to begin with a broad scope, teasing out relevance from dissimilar works and creating a descriptive collage of the Literacy Outreach Worker. This scope begins with the field of adult literacy and narrows to the commonly-discussed concerns around barriers, student persistence and program retention within the field.

Following an identification of the need for outreach in adult education programs, I will compile a working description that resembles the current role of the Literacy Outreach Worker (LOW) at City School. Four components of the LOW role (student support, intake, reentry from corrections, and liaison) – will be discussed in light of relevant literature, identifying the gaps in roles similar to that of the LOW, and therefore a need to examine, in depth, the ways in which a LOW contributes to one adult education program.

2.2 Adult Literacy

The inclusion of the word 'literacy' in 'Literacy Outreach Worker' reflects an intention when the position description was first crafted to explicitly align the LOW role with addressing the low literacy of marginalized adults, City School's original target population. It is therefore important to articulate the connections among literacy, City School and the LOW position.

Merriam (1989) describes the term *literacy* as a moving target, albeit with "general agreement... that literacy should be defined as the ability of individuals to function within a specific social, economic, or cultural context" (p. 467). The BC Ministry of Advanced Education concurs, defining literacy, as per Quigley et. al (as cited in Adult Literacy: A Synthesis of Evidence, 2006), as "the ability to understand and use printed information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (p. 7). The Ministry's Adult Opportunities Action Plan describes five levels of literacy; the third, which is equivalent to high school graduation, is the "desired level to cope with the increasing demands of the knowledge and information economy" (British Columbia, 2007, p.2). This Action Plan identifies people in prison as a key population, citing that 79% do not have a high school diploma and are thus considered to have low levels of literacy. One of the Ministry's goals is to improve literacy rates for this "select population" (p. 1) by exploring "options to expand service delivery to people in prison" (p. 6). However, once inmates enroll in prison education programs, any gains made in these programs are vulnerable when an inmate is released and other, more urgent needs (such as housing and employment) take precedence.

In the research literature, the term 'literacy' has varying meanings, depending on who is using it, resulting in "instructional practices that can be difficult to compare, and conflicting expectations regarding both the outcomes of literacy instruction programs, and the indicators that are most likely to reflect effective instruction and growth in overall literate competency" (Adult Literacy: A Synthesis of Evidence, 2006, p. 8). There is, however, a consensus that literacy, however defined, is important to economic development at the individual and national level. To illustrate, a recent study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and Statistics Canada found that a one percent increase in Canadians' literacy skills would increase the country's gross domestic product by $18.4 billion (British Columbia, 2007). This reinforces Merriam and Cunningham's (1989) claim that "it is a social and economic imperative to reduce significantly the pool of adults who have not completed high school" (p. 481).

Mikulecky et al. (2009), who conducted a literature review of 74 adult literacy studies, echo another recurring theme in the research: the importance of positive and caring relationships between learners and staff. The authors suggest further research on "program approaches sensitive to individual learner needs" (p. 74). These needs can be varied, multiple and pressing, having an impact on program success:

> What emerges as significant from both qualitative investigations and large-scale studies is a portrait of adult literacy learners as a highly varied and ill-defined group, one whose members have a diverse and complex set of needs and personal experiences that influence their ability to enrol, and remain in literacy training and/or educational upgrading programs. The broad spectrum of characteristics…can significantly affect the outcome of participation in literacy and/or educational programs. (p. 17)

If a program can address these needs, it incorporates a best practice as identified by Mikulecky et al., in that "learner-centered, caring programs are more likely to retain students long enough to make gains" (p. 74).

Literacy is perhaps best viewed as an overarching goal embedded in the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker. Accordingly, while situating this role within the larger framework of adult literacy it is also important to note that when themes such as reentry, intake, student support and liaison are factored into the LOW role description, the relevant literature dwindles considerably. This indicates, again, a need to stitch together aspects of different disciplines to both illustrate and establish the LOW's unique place in the City School program.

2.3 Untangling Adult Basic Education in the literature

The terms Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and Adult Basic Education (ABE), used in literature originating in the United States, can be subsumed into the definition used in British Columbia. In the United States, ASE programs, aimed at students with at least nine but fewer than twelve years of school, "provide the credentials most in demand for entering employment or for furthering educational opportunities" (Merriam and Cunningham, 1989, p. 478). ABE refers to "the fundamental areas of reading, writing,

listening, speaking, and mathematics" (Taylor, p. 2). In BC, the Ministry of Advanced Education describes Adult Basic Education as including adults who "have basic literacy needs, did not complete high school, or are upgrading so they can go on to post-secondary training" (http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/abe). The City School program delivers Adult Basic Education as defined by the Ministry, offering basic literacy courses, an adult graduation program and upgrading courses for students who have already graduated.

2.4 Barriers, Persistence and Retention

Discussions of barriers in the literature frequently reference Cross' (1981) categorization of barriers as situational, institutional and dispositional. The first refers generally to external factors, such as child care, transportation, cost or lack of time; the second to "all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage working adults from participating in educational activities" (p. 98) and the third to internal factors, that is, adults' perceptions of themselves as learners.

Long (2001) updated Cross' (1981) description of situational, institutional and dispositional barriers, creating factor groupings (socioeconomic-circumstantial, program/policy-related and cognitive-emotive) that are "broader in scope [and] more effectively account for the varied, overlapping and detailed factors influencing participation" (p. 20). Long's *Patterns of Participation* study found that "when people did manage to enroll in programs, they ran an obstacle-course of socioeconomic and circumstantial barriers that ultimately led more than a third to drop out" (p. 9). The study summarizes: "Once in programs it is clear that many learners are dealing with multiple issues and concerns that make their involvement precarious in the absence of additional supports" (p. 77).

Quigley (1997) defines situational barriers as "those that exist in the objective 'lived situations' of our learners outside the program environment" (p. 171). He claims "…there is little we can do about situational barriers, although every program should be aware of available community resources, and each teacher should have the phone numbers of local agencies for referral purposes" (p. 187). This is because "every practitioner and

administrator has a professional if not moral responsibility to try to connect learners with the community agencies that can help them" (p. 172). On the other hand, he asserts that "both situational and institutional barriers *obviously* had to be overcome before the student arrived at the program" (p. 175, ital. added). However, dismissing barriers simply because a student has 'arrived' does little to recognize the stresses that these factors impose on the student, nor how they may impact the student's decision to continue with a program. Factors such as ongoing struggles with addictions, the experience of re-entering society after incarceration, the effects of abuse, and mental health issues could also be deemed situational barriers, but students do not leave these barriers at the door when they come to school. They have not necessarily been overcome merely because a student is attending. On the contrary, students bring situational barriers with them; they cannot be ignored if a program intends to effectively connect with and support adult students.

Nevertheless, if, according to Quigley (1997), program staff cannot effect change to situational barriers, and institutional barriers are similarly unlikely to change, then we are left to focus on dispositional barriers. Quigley asserts "the ability to identify those who may exit in the first weeks because of the influences of dispositional barriers is part of the key to turning our high attrition rates around" (p. 176). In one study, he found that students deciding to quit approached not their teachers, but their intake counselor, leading Quigley (1998) to speculate that "the 'immediacy' role of the intake counselor or intake person may be at least as important as the role of the teachers among the potential dropout population" (p. 6). If this is the case, then the Literacy Outreach Worker is in a key position to connect with these students and potentially has the best chance of retaining them.

In the literature, *persistence*, 'sticking with' a program, is generally described as a personal characteristic of the student; Comings et al. (2000) defined participants as persistent if they were "staying in programs for as long as they [could], engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to a program as soon as the demands of their lives allow[ed]" (p 1). *Retention* is defined as a program's

level of success in holding on to students until they achieve their goals; the antithetical term, *attrition*, describes the rate at which participants leave a program.

Belzer (1998), interested in the ways in which students decided to leave a program, and how they felt about leaving, interviewed students, tutors, teachers and program coordinators; her findings indicate that students largely did not view their decisions to leave in a negative light. Rather, they left due to other circumstances in their lives. They did not feel a sense of failure, because they planned to return at a later date. They focused on gains that they had made, and accepted temporary "stop outs" as a viable means to achieve their educational goals, reinforcing Kerka's (1995a) observation that "the phenomenon of stopping out – one or more cycles of attending, withdrawing, and returning – is typical of adults who must place the student role on the back burner temporarily" (p. 2). Comings et. al (2000) concurred, adding that if students decide not to continue, or become unable to persist at any point during a program, they "should be helped to make a plan to prepare to return and be successful later" (p. 3). However, Gopalakrishnan (2008) found that "few learners returned to adult education after a one-year absence" and that "the data require a new definition of retention within programs that is based on a longitudinal perspective" (p. 148). He advises that program retention should be tracked into the next fiscal year; otherwise, he cautions, programs can be deceived "into falsely thinking that [they] are retaining a large percentage of their learners" and local providers "may rely on the incorrect assumption that all nongraduate exiters are simply stopping out and will eventually return to adult education" (p. 148).

Quigley's (1998) recommendations, built upon interviews of 17 'reluctant learners' and 20 'persistent learners', included "building a sensitive interviewing process for new learners at initial contact…and [using] the same personnel to follow up with learners who need more attention" (p. 6) and a recognition on the part of staff that students who identify negative past experiences in school will need more attention. He concluded that "if we can understand dispositional barriers better…we can become more effective at our tutoring, teaching, counseling, and retention" (1998, p. 3). Once students begin a program, Quigley (1998) claims there is a need to understand what they experience in

their first three "drop-out weeks" (p. 5), emphasizing the importance of teachers' responding to student needs quickly and adding that "the 'immediacy' role of the intake counsellor…may be at least as important as the role of the teachers among the potential dropout population" (p. 6). Quigley is almost singular in acknowledging the importance of non-teaching staff, specifically, an intake counselor who identifies at-risk learners, offers them support and works in a team approach with teaching staff.

The body of literature on retention of adult learners in higher education (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Spellman, 2007; Wyatt, 2011), and, to a lesser extent, in GED programs (Gopalakrishnan, 2008) tends to focus on strategies to improve retention. For example, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning developed eight "Principles of Effectiveness for Serving Adult Learners", one of which is outreach, designed to assist higher education institutions in serving adult learners (Flint, 2005). However, beyond acknowledging its existence, the role of outreach is not investigated further. One exception is Spellman (2007), who claims "pre-enrollment counseling that involves taking the time to talk with students about their hopes, dreams, and reasons for considering enrollment gives students realistic expectations about the journey they are about to undertake" (p. 72).

Weidman (1985) connected an earlier model for retention in higher education (Tinto, 1975) to nontraditional settings and students (i.e. adults), finding that with the addition of two variables, the Tinto model could be used to examine retention among non-traditional adult students. Naretto (1995) examined the influences of internal and external community connectedness (analogous to factors identified by Weidman) upon adult student persistence in four post-secondary institutions, concluding that "membership in a supportive community is an important factor in explaining the persistence of adult students to degree completion" (p. 94). Although, as Long (2001) cautions, studies on post-secondary participation often make assumptions which cannot be extrapolated to other programs, it is nonetheless reasonable to expect that support is at least as important to adult students completing a high school diploma or improving their basic literacy levels as it is to adult students in higher education.

In any case, while student motivations and barriers may vary, a program's goal of retention is the same in both ABE and higher education (Tracy-Mumford et. al, as cited in Kerka, 1995a, p. 1). None of the studies mentioned in Kerka's (1995a) summary of retention research distinguish adult *secondary* education. All focus on ABE or post-secondary education. It might seem as though adults who are pursuing BC Adult Dogwood Diplomas occupy a kind of middle territory. However, as Kerka (1995a) notes:

> Adult learners in both ABE and higher education have
> certain similarities: both groups must cope with multiple
> roles and responsibilities while tackling education; both
> may have had negative past experiences of school or lack
> confidence in their ability to return to study; both may face
> financial difficulties, employment and child care conflicts,
> or opposition to their continuing education from significant
> others. (p. 4)

Though adult secondary students are not explicitly included, this description encompasses their characteristics as a group, and therefore, Kerka's (1995a) finding that "for both groups, early detection of those at risk of withdrawing and follow-up of those who have withdrawn are effective practices" (p. 5) is relevant to the City School program.

Bean & Metzner (1985), on the other hand, caution that nontraditional students – those over age 25 who attend part-time and commute to school - are a highly heterogeneous population. For this reason, it is by no means certain that studies focused on post-secondary students may be extrapolated to adult students working toward achieving high school graduation.

It is unclear whether any general conclusions about adult student persistence and retention can be made; whatever the commonalities of the adult life situation, adults themselves are a diverse group. The premise of this research is that a gap exists in the literature in that little to none exists on adult education programs in British Columbia, and what does exist has yet to explore the function or potential of outreach.

2.5 The need for outreach, and who should provide it

Malicky and Norman (1994, 1996), in reporting the results of a study on adult literacy programs in Alberta, identified the need for a 'bridge' between school and students' daily living needs. Addressing a lack of focus in the research on the voices of participants in adult literacy programs, the authors undertook a three-year project in which students in an Edmonton adult literacy program were interviewed at intake and every six months during program participation (and at dropout, if it occurred). Students were asked open-ended questions about how their lives had changed during their participation in the program. Researchers found that participants' initial positive outlooks faded as pressures mounted and they began to encounter difficulties:

> …the wide range of reasons individual gave for dropping out of programs, particularly those involving personal and family problems, indicates the need for a broad range of services to be available to adults entering literacy programs. This appears to be particularly crucial in the beginning stages of participation in literacy programs since that is when the highest rates of dropout occur…(154)

Malicky and Norman (1996) recognized that "counsellors and other support services are important components of literacy programs. The ideal would be development of comprehensive programs which go beyond the academic needs of learners…" A counselor could represent "opportunities for learners to critically examine the social organization of their lives so they can challenge the forces which lead to dropout" (p. 18). This Canadian research, aside from being a relatively rare exception to US-based studies on adult literacy and education, is notable because it gives some attention to the counseling role.

If we accept the premise that counseling is a valuable component of adult education programs, as the limited literature on the matter suggests, we must ask by whom it should be provided. Burns (1998), an adult education practitioner, remarks that "many educators feel…that addressing student's personal problems is outside their scope of practice" (p. 26), since they are generally not trained to counsel students. Nevertheless, he concurs, educators have a "responsibility to address student concerns that impact their ability to benefit from the educational experience" (p. 27).

Paydon (1996) agrees, claiming that although teachers' forays into counseling have traditionally been limited to academic matters, a need is emerging for educators to engage with their students in a more holistic type of counseling, since "in actual practice…there appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that meaningful learning relationships with adults brings [sic] with them situations that mirror if not duplicate counseling functions" (p. 6). Paydon envisions that this paradigm shift will require of educators "a sound philosophical base of counseling theory and practice" (p. 5).

However, Martin (1987), asking "whether it is reasonable for adult education tutors to provide [counseling] service and, if so, to what extent?", cautions "without doubt any counseling service offered by an adult education tutor should be restricted to matters concerning the student's educational development, rather than becoming heavily involved in other issues" (p. 48).

Malicky and Norman (1996) offer numerous examples of 'other' issues that a teacher might reasonably be unprepared to address, including violence, poverty, financial pressures and abusive relationships. Canaff (1995) agrees that "learners may disclose problems that the ABE instructor feels inadequate to address effectively" and "proper intervention in many of the crises learners bring to the classroom is best addressed by trained counseling professionals" (p. 2). Canaff advocates for educators to acquire basic skills, but emphasizes a professional responsibility to refer learners to trained counselors, as instructors "may get in over their heads and do more harm than good", adding "counseling is a profession and not something to 'dabble at'" (p. 3).

The recognition that counseling is warranted in adult education is not new; Rogers (1971) commented that "…counseling proper is now being seen more and more as an important aspect of teaching adults, because so frequently the academic anxieties and problems of students are inseparable from more personal ones" (p. 49). A Literacy Outreach Worker, one of whose functions is supporting students, is thus a desirable presence in adult education programs.

2.5.1 Outreach – a working definition

Recovering Outreach: Concepts, Issues and Practices (McGivney, 2000) discusses the origins and multiple meanings of the term 'outreach'. The report contends that while "there is no single and universally accepted definition of 'outreach'" (p. 11):

> …outreach has been defined variously as off-site provision; as a method of learning delivery; as support for the community; as a networking process; as targeted provision; as curriculum development; as marketing; as a way or style of working; as a set of particular aims or as a broad and multifaceted process involving numerous activities and stages. (p. 18)

In attempting to scale down this broad range of meanings to one with relevance to my research, it is worthwhile to recognize that City School, and its sister program at a regional correctional centre, can in and of themselves be defined as outreach programs by virtue of location and target population. However, the research in this study regards outreach as it pertains to one *position* within these two satellite locations.

Leonard (2002) adds that the outreach framework integrates counseling and social work, aiming for "more comprehensive student interventions". As Leonard states, "essentially, the outreach approach places students' needs and problems within a broad context where resources, both internal and external to the student, are constructed, enhanced, or sustained" (p. 64). What distinguishes the outreach approach, then, is a focus on connecting students to their communities through a process of "identifying and evaluating relevant community resources, linking clients to those existing resources, advocating, setting goals, monitoring, reassessing, and disengaging" (p. 64).

2.6 Stitching together a working description for the LOW

The apparent uniqueness of the LOW position is reflected in a lack of literature directly pertinent to this role, which is addressed by attempting to compile and categorize the literature into two related roles: those of a social worker and a counselor.

2.6.1 Social Worker

Merritt et. al (2002) describe the driving forces behind employing a social worker and the changes this decision effected in one literacy organization. Staff recognized that they were spending large amounts of time "listening to students' personal problems and

assisting them in finding resources…as professionals we were not educated to meet the social service needs of these students adequately" (p. 7). As a result, their program hired a social worker with a mandate to "assist students in removing barriers to their educational goals" (p. 8). This anecdotal documentation of one program's implementation of a social worker as an additional program support comes close to identifying a position similar to that of the Literacy Outreach Worker at City School, since both the social worker in question and the Literacy Outreach Worker engage in counseling, individual student visits, facilitating use of outside resources, and building and maintaining relationships with community agencies.

McDonald and Jones (2009), whose guiding research concern was "…whether the provision of a clinical social worker helped learners and staff to improve literacy-learning outcomes" (p. 79), found a positive impact on tutors, learners and the organization as a whole ("The key finding was that making provision for the psychosocial needs of adult literacy learners improved educational outcomes")(p. 85). The authors asserted "the literacy needs of learners were intertwined with their psychosocial needs; effective learning could only proceed when both kinds of needs were considered by the program" (p. 85).

Accordingly, the study challenged future researchers towards "encouraging and advocating for government initiative to meet the psychosocial needs of the literacy learners" (p. 86). Overall, this study focuses on a position very similar to that of the Literacy Outreach Worker, one in which the worker focuses on issues that are tangential to the classroom itself, yet related to students' chances of persisting and succeeding in a program.

2.6.2 Counselor

Among the small body of literature connecting counseling to Adult/Continuing Education, Coleman (2002) discusses some of the challenges inherent in the role of counselors, and ways in which counselors can be supported in Adult Basic Education programs. A key challenge is defining the role of the counselor within a program, and problems can arise when this role is not well articulated. There is often a disconnect

between the "ideal role" of a counselor and the on-the-ground reality, which is that "the counselor does everything" (p. 1). Another challenge is lack of time to perform all required duties.

Coleman references a 1994 counseling focus group report which identified the tasks which should be performed by a counselor in adult education: participating in intake, assessment, and class placement of learners; meeting with students and classes to explain program services; helping set individual goals, and listening to concerns or issues of students; checking attendance and working with staff to follow up on absences; meeting with teachers, staff, and students to identify problems and needs as they relate to academic performance and educational planning; assessing the need for outside services, researching these services, and making appropriate referrals; assisting in developing strategies to address waiting lists and/or recruitment of students. The Literacy Outreach Worker performs all of these tasks.

Hensley & Kinser (2001) claim "counselors' developmental focus makes them uniquely suited to assist adults facing multiple stressors as they cycle through educational programs" (p. 88); counselors need to understand both the motivations for and barriers preventing students from achieving their educational goals. Counselors also need to be able to match students with the community resources that they need in order to support their efforts.

Finally, the Literacy Outreach Worker at City School is directly responsible for several key features of the programs studied by Terry (2006b): 'dropouts' are welcome to return; "recognition of learners' personal problems and referrals to community services"; and providing academic and emotional support which continues after learners leave the program (p. 33).

Up to this point, the literature has been discussed as it pertains to issues and themes in adult learning and literacy, and to the concept of 'outreach' and similar roles to outreach. Next, tentative themes are presented as they pertain to the Literacy Outreach Worker's function in the City School program: supporting students, reentry from corrections, and

agency liaison. The guiding question in exploring the literature is 'what are 'best practices'?' within each of these themes.

2.7   A relationship-based perspective in social work

The Literacy Outreach Worker's role is predicated on the central importance of relationships in social work, a perspective described by Trevithick (2003) as "an attempt to enhance the *quality of the relationship* between the services on offer, those who deliver services, and the people who receive them" (p. 164, ital. in original). This perspective is commonly associated with a client-centered or psychosocial approach in social work. The psychosocial approach is "an attempt to mobilize the strengths of the personality and the resources of the environment at strategic points to improve the opportunities available to the individual and to develop more effective personal and interpersonal functioning" (Hollis as cited in Trevithick, 2003, p. 164). Ruch et. al (2010) clarify that although relationships between workers and clients have intrinsic value, "the relationship [is] the vehicle through which interventions are mediated" (Kindle Location 200-201).

A key feature of the psychosocial approach is the relationship between the client and the worker, one in which "the social worker shows human concern for clients but disciplines his or her use of the relationship in keeping with the assessment of the client's needs and interventive goals" (Goldstein, in Trevithick, 2012, Appendix 8), keeping in mind that

> …At its best, what social work can offer to people in need
> of help is a supportive and understanding relationship
> which will enable them to resolve their difficulties and to
> feel enhanced rather than undermined in the process (Ruch
> et. al, 2010, Kindle Locations 41-42).

Understandably, the personal and professional attributes of the social worker play a key role in developing and maintaining supportive relationships with clients:

> Much of what people value in a social worker relates to
> personal qualities and the worker's ability to communicate
> these qualities - to respond to feelings, to demonstrate care

and concern, and the like. Numerous studies which have
taken account of clients' views testify to the value attached
to sensitive, patient understanding - friendliness, reliability,
regularity of contact, attention to detail and openness - in
short to the significance of the presence of a caring person.
(Cheetham et al., in Trevithick, 2003, p. 166)

The relationship between worker and client "may also actively engage with the
client's real external life – their finance, housing, daily living, their care of children"
(Sudbery, 2002, p. 52). Ruch et. al (2010, Kindle Location 2534) suggest that service
users value a combination of hands-on practical help and emotional support; in other
words, a holistic approach that recognizes a need and demand for services that extend
beyond the classroom.

In terms of what this research refers to as 'liaison', Ruch et. al (2010, Kindle Location
2545-2547) point to a need for workers "to have a wide view of [clients'] lives and
opportunities and…help to create choices and help with decisions. They should also be
able to make links with the wider community, building networks and developing plans
together".

To this point in my literature review, I have provided a background on issues in adult
education and framed the Literacy Outreach Worker's role in terms of connecting
outreach to adult education. Next, I will explore the literature pertaining to four specific
roles of the Literacy Outreach Worker: student support, intake, reentry and liaison.

2.8 The LOW's role in supporting students

A drop-in, community adult learning center is a mosaic of different abilities,
personalities and levels of tolerance; many students are lacking in social graces and do
not always respond appropriately to verbal or non-verbal cues from others. Some are
motivated, hardworking students with work and family responsibilities; they want to
maximize the productiveness of their brief times in the classroom and do not suffer gladly
what they perceive as immaturity or lack of focus in others. At times, a skilled facilitator
is required to navigate these diverse interactions. In addition, the experience of returning
to school, and the struggles inherent in course work and in learning, can have effects on
students:

> Learners may also experience emotions arising from within or evoked by the learning environment itself, or they may be struggling with personal issues around family, relationships, or work. Learning-related emotional issues among individuals often reflect a history of emotional experiences or trauma, of which learners may be variably aware, such as being humiliated by certain teachers in certain subjects or experiencing physical, sexual or emotional abuse by persons in authority. (Dirkx, 2011, p. 351)

In a case study examining the effects of participation on adult learners' lives, Terry (2006a) asked "What are various stakeholders' experiences with community-based adult literacy programs?" Terry found that "the personal meanings that adult literacy students attach to their learning roles extend beyond the scope of the classroom alone" (p. 12).

Several of the six outcome categories discussed by Terry (2006a) suggest that the Literacy Outreach Worker position can be a factor affecting learner outcomes. Specifically, the LOW could be instrumental in fostering "interpersonal awareness" by acting as a buffer between "adults who have interpersonal skill deficits that impact on their classroom experiences" (p. 8) and their teachers, tutors and other learners. In addition, the author cites literature that "connects self-concept and self-esteem as inseparable partners in the adult learning process" (p. 9) and that demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between adult learning and self-esteem. Perhaps in addition to the Literacy Outreach Worker's influence on learner self-esteem, garnered by virtue of day-to-day support, the position may be an indirect factor in increasing learner retention until self-esteem is affected by success in the program.

2.9 The LOW's role in intake

In relationship-based social work practice, establishing an initial connection with a client lays the groundwork for any supports that follow. As such, conducting intake interviews with new students allows the LOW to establish a rapport, which "implies an interaction that is meaningful…it involves creating the favourable conditions necessary for people to be able to discuss and reveal problems or difficulties" (Trevithick, as cited in Ruch et. al, 2010, Kindle locations 756-758).

Quigley (1998) acknowledges the role of an intake counselor, especially in the first three weeks, which he identifies as critical for retention. Quigley's research on identifying students at risk for dropout informed his recommendation that programs should implement carefully-planned intake processes. Quigley adds "it is also advisable that [the intake] person, or persons, not be the same as those actually teaching the learner" (p. 6); this ensures "a second, less symbolically authoritative figure with whom the at-risk can consult" (p. 8).

Hubble's (2000) survey of intake procedures in 374 Texas Literacy, ABE and GED programs concluded that "the vast majority of program directors, administrators, and teachers are aware that intake data can help them to identify barriers to attendance" (p. 92) but that many of the questions that could be asked in order to help identify barriers to student participation are *not* being asked during intake. Hubble notes that "the critical time period for dropping out seems to be soon after a student's commitment to a program of study, and before significant gains in ability are achieved" and that "program staff may have difficulty in retaining students until they see the possibility of success, experience success, or realize the value of persistence which usually happens within the first three weeks of classes" (p. 15). Furthermore, "well-planned intake interactions can possibly enhance recognition of potential barriers and allow timely implementation of intervention strategies" (p. 23). If this first contact with students is so important to retention, then it follows that the intake should be done by the person with the greatest ability to identify and discuss barriers, since

> …[the] interviewer's judgment is paramount in deciding which program of study a student should begin, which type of curriculum delivery system is best for a student, if an assignment to an outside mentor is needed, and also if any referrals to outside agencies or collaborative partners are in order. (Hubble, 2000, p. 84)

Interestingly, none of these programs reported that a counselor or outreach worker conducted interviews. Thus, the person most able to discern student support needs is not utilized in that student's first acquaintance with a program. An outreach worker, skilled

and trained in developing connections with students, is the best person to conduct an intake interview, because

> …in the majority of cases questions are asked when a student first walks through the door when shyness, embarrassment or nervousness may be present. It is not unreasonable to assume that people are uncomfortable when talking to strangers about their personal level of academic ability. (Hubble, 2000, p. 85)

Loaded questions about past educational experiences, which were discussed at intake in a majority of cases, require students to disclose experiences or decisions for which they commonly express regret, such as quitting school or being expelled. In cases where a student's last experience was a residential school, painful memories may be brought to the surface. For these reasons, a person trained in counseling techniques is essential at intake interviews.

Hubble also found many programs lacked policies regarding stopout periods, which represents "a definite institutional barrier to attendance" (p. 93). Having immediately, on intake, established a presence as a support person, an outreach worker is in a key position to help students make an informed decision to temporarily withdraw and then keep in contact so that they remain connected to the program.

2.10   The Literacy Outreach Worker's role in Reentry from corrections

In order to frame this dimension of the Literacy Outreach Worker role, the purpose of this section of the literature review is to examine recent research around offender reentry, and specifically to determine the role of social supports, what those supports generally are, and what is not being included in the discussion.

2.10.1   Reentry and reoffending

One of BC Corrections' key measures of success is reduced reoffending rates; these are used "as a baseline to determine the effectiveness of our programs, case management, specialized training, and reintegration initiatives" (The Strategic Plan of B.C. Corrections: A Commitment to Public Safety (2010-2013)). Here, a clear definition of

what is meant by 'reoffending' is required, as there is no universal definition in the literature.

Kerka (1995b) noted that problems with 'recidivism' as an evaluation measure include this lack of a universal definition. While a similar problem exists with the term 'reoffending' in the literature, the definition given by BC Corrections is the most relevant to this study. A 2012 Auditor General Report on *Effectiveness of BC Community Corrections* indicates "the rate of reoffending is based on the number of offenders who are found guilty of another offence committed within a two-year period. However, this rate is a dynamic measure. Data is only available once the reoffender is sentenced" (Gaston, 2012).

In BC, the definition and measures of reoffending are complicated somewhat by a relatively recent change in how rates of reoffending are calculated:

> …we recently just changed this rate…it is now based on
> offence rate. It used to be based on sentencing date, which
> is much more common across Canada and the States,
> because it's harder to input offence date accurately. We
> have approximately 15 or 20 years' worth of recidivism
> information based on sentencing date, but we switched four
> years ago to offence date to allow a more accurate picture
> of recidivism. (Gress, 2012)

Whereas corrections is primarily concerned with reoffending, "[outreach] programs and services typically aim to achieve multiple goals, of which a reduction in risk of reoffending is just one" (Day et. al, 2011, p. 68). This research focuses on how outreach supports reentry in general, and how it supports continuity of an offender's education after release in particular.

Reentry is a term used to describe the transition from incarceration to the community. Hochstetler (2010) refers to "the reentry paradigm...a multifaceted look at the relationship between offenders and society and the processes that both enable successful rehabilitation and desistance from crime and facilitate continued involvement in antisocial behavior" (p. 591). Interest in the process of reentry has increased over the past decade, especially in the United States, where reentry populations are large and growing. While much of this

body of work might be applicable to Canada, owing to a certain universality in prison culture and the prison experience, it is nonetheless important to note that very little of the literature specifically examines reentry in a Canadian context.

One exception is Munn (2009), who conducted an ethnomethodological study comprised of semi-structured interviews with 20 Canadian men who describe "their experiences preparing to exit the prison, their time on parole and the challenges and strategies that they employ to succeed in their post-carceral lives" (p. ii). In terms of social supports other than family or peers,

> ...the men spoke of a correctional services employee (or someone under contract to the government) who treated them as individuals and who provided them with hope...Sometimes this support came in the form of counseling or education and other times it was the employee's willingness to assist the individual with their gradual release or provide support in the community. (p. 296)

Munn noted a need for "future longitudinal research which begins while an individual is still incarcerated and which engages with him for several years after his release" (p. 298). Munn focuses on the years post-release, and on men who were imprisoned for long periods; this work, while relevant in its Canadian focus, is not concerned with the *immediate* reentry concerns of offenders, especially those who are not sentenced and therefore receive fewer pre-release services from corrections.

2.10.2 Reentry vs. Desistance

Rosenfeld et al. (2008) define *desistance* as "sustained abstinence from offending and the reintroduction of former criminals into productive society", noting it is "a process - not an event – in which criminal activity decreases, and reintegration into the community increases, over time", culminating in "an eventual permanent abstention from criminal behavior" (p. 86). Although desistance is a long-term process, Rosenfeld notes "the likelihood that an ex-offender will commit a new crime is highest a few months, weeks or even days after he or she is released...the initial period after release is thus the riskiest time for both the public and former inmates themselves" (p. 87).

Maruna (2011) notes that "although overlooked in criminal justice (where our attention is typically on front-door practices of arrest, conviction, and sentencing), 'endings' can be a rich area to explore" (p. 5). Recently-released offenders are in what Maruna refers to as a period of liminality; "between two distinct stages where old configurations of certainty and identity are no longer present but where there is as yet no new configuration...they stand outside the normal structures of society in a liminal state characterized by jeopardy and promise" (p. 8). Desistance, then, can be taken to refer to a long-term goal; reentry, in this study, is considered to mean a shorter-term process encompassing this liminal period between incarceration and life 'on the outs'.

2.10.3   Reentry Challenges

Wilkinson (2001) argues that reentry planning should be integrated into prison *intake* procedures, though noting this is not yet the norm ("preparations for offender release have often times been fragmented within institutions and between various sections of an agency or have simply been relegated to the paroling authority" (p. 46)) and that "reentry [prerelease] training is typically offered toward the latter phases of an inmate's sentence" (p. 48). Though Wilkinson does not focus on community involvement in reentry, he sees a need "to cultivate the necessary partnerships with community agencies" (p. 47).

Reentry challenges also exist around finding employment. Brown (2011) notes "ex-offenders' ability to secure and maintain employment is regarded as crucial to successful reintegration and avoidance of reoffending" (p. 335), but lists barriers to employment such as a lack of job-related skills, lack of recent job experiences, few job connections, limited education, transportation difficulties, substance use/abuse history and other mental and physical health problems, not to mention employer attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders, legal prohibitions against some forms of employment, the stigma of incarceration. In addition, the (often repeated) experiences of conviction and incarceration themselves can contribute to a "cumulative disadvantage" (LeBel, 2008, p. 134) that further compounds reentry challenges.

2.10.4   Gaps in the reentry literature

Petersilia (2004) identifies a number of problems related to the 'what works?' body of literature on reentry, including definitions that are either too broad or too narrow, as well as two distinct bodies of literature (criminology vs. psychology) and two countries with different foci ("instead of focusing on the individual offender, treatment provider, and program characteristics [the "Canadian contribution"], US scholars have primarily assessed correctional programs using recidivism outcome studies" (p. 6). In addition, Petersilia identifies an absence of "rigorous evaluations upon which to base any generalizable knowledge", evaluations which use recidivism "as the sole outcome criteria...it is insufficient as a sole measure of the effectiveness of reentry programs". Rather, "if we wish to truly measure reintegration, we need to build into our evaluations measures of attachment to a variety of social institutions". Petersilia envisions an ideal in which "every program begun in a jail or prison would have an intensive and mandatory aftercare component" (p. 7).

In reviewing the literature surrounding the phenomenon of reentry (leaving prison and returning to society 'on the outs') and reintegration ("an individual's reconnection with the institutions of society" (p. 90)), Visher & Travis (2003) identify a number of gaps in the research, including studies that focus on reentry failures/recidivism or successes/desistance, but not both; studies that focus on recidivism, at the expense of a more complex understanding of the milestones in the reintegration process; lack of attention to prison itself as a social institution and a transforming experience; and little research on the period following imprisonment. In short, "moving from prison, an institution of total control, to the often chaotic environment of modern life is a powerful transition poorly understood by the research community" (p. 107).

Visher & Travis (2003) considered ways in which individual characteristics, circumstances, family, peers and state policies affected four periods in the prison experience: pre-, during-, and immediate and long-term post-prison. 'Immediate post-prison experiences' addresses

> …the complexities of reestablishing life after prison in the
> days and weeks after release are many and include the
> following: finding a place to live; securing formal

identification; reestablishing ties with family; returning to high-risk places and situations; and the daunting challenge of finding a job, often with a poor work history and now, a criminal record... (p. 96)

Visher and Travis remarked that "most prison systems do little to facilitate a smooth transition from prison to community" (p. 96).

However, after reentry was mentioned in the 1994 State of the Union address, the matter began to receive policy-makers' increased attention. In the United States, federal programs such as SVORI (Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative) focus entirely on reentry supervision and services, and the Second Chance Act of 2008 provides federal funding for services that can help reduce recidivism.

A major source of policy recommendations is *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Reentry*, a longitudinal, multi-state study conducted from 2001-2006. Visher (2007) discusses some emerging broad policy lessons intended to inform uses of this federal funding. Foremost among these is the recognition that "the most effective interventions for returning prisoners appear to be those that develop service plans or initiate treatment in prison and link released prisoners to immediate treatment or services after release" (p. 96). Visher emphasizes:

The first few days and weeks after release are likely to be a stressful period for most former prisoners. The sudden change in environment coupled with the challenges individuals face to be successful can be overwhelming. (p. 97)

One reentry model (Lattimore et al., 2004) recognizes that although corrections educators begin work with offenders while they are incarcerated, "the intense demands of the release phase usually preclude offenders' involvement in educational programming" and that "in the ideal situation, during this phase offenders would be provided with information on available community resources" In the model's final phase, termed "sustained support", "ex-offenders should be connected with community-based educational programs" (p. 10).

Such large-scale, multi-year initiatives are not to be found in Canada, however, and the Canadian literature on reentry is comparatively scant. Research on reentry largely originates in the United States, where some 700,000 inmates re-enter society annually (Travis, 2009).

2.10.5 Connecting reentry challenges to social supports

To conclude, the literature on 'what works' largely addresses correctional programming rather than other, non-correctional programs in offenders' communities. In short, reentry challenges are often numerous and pressing; in order to address them, an ex-offender will likely need positive social supports. The next section of this review looks at literature relating to the roles of 'social supports' in offender reentry.

Hochstetler (2010) defines social support as "the perceived and actual amount of instrumental and expressive/emotional supports that one receives from primary relationships, social networks, and communities" (p. 590). Cullen's (1994) social support theory postulates that "whether social support is delivered through government social programs, communities, social networks, families, interpersonal relations or agents of the criminal justice system, it reduces criminal involvement" (p. 527) by means of providing both instrumental (practical) and expressive (emotional) assistance. Attachment to "social institutions, such as family, school, work, and various social service and civic organizations" (Hochstetler, 2010, p. 592) is connected to reduced criminal behavior after reentry. The idea is that social supports provide resources that allow individuals to cope with life's adversities without resorting to criminal activity (Colvin et al., 2002, p. 24).

Social supports have been investigated as they pertain to inmates' feelings of hostility upon release from prison (Hochstetler et al., 2010), reductions in violent offending (Ullrich et al., 2011) and workforce reentry (Shivy et al., 2007). Shivy et al.'s work found that supportive social networks "may go hand-in-hand with finding and keeping a job" (p. 472). Supports are also essential to the substance abuse treatment and recovery process

(Lewandowski & Hill, 2009) faced by many inmates, especially those who have 'cleaned up' while incarcerated and face the challenge of continuing their recovery post-release.

In terms of who provides social supports, families are commonly identified as a significant support after prisoners are released (Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Shollenberger, 2009). Naser & La Vigne (2006) found that "released prisoners rely very heavily on their families for support in navigating virtually every aspect of the reentry experience" (p. 102). As a result, "reintegrating into a family can be stressful for both the released prisoner and his or her family" and "such stress may make family members less inclined to provide emotional and tangible support over time" (p. 95). Moreover, the authors point to the importance of

> Identify[ing] those returning prisoners without positive family ties, who therefore may require additional reentry support and assistance. Programs that develop alternative methods of providing tangible and emotional support for released prisoners who do not have a positive family support network could hold promise for achieving more successful reentry outcomes. (p. 103)

Another key support is peers. Visher & Travis (2003) found that because peer relationships influence the immediate post-release period, they are "undoubtedly an important component of the identity transformation that must occur for former prisoners to avoid returning to the lifestyle that resulted in their incarceration" (p. 98).

Comparatively little has been examined in terms of non-peer, non-family supports. These other supports may be important, however, especially in cases where

> [m]any offenders are extremely isolated [from social supports]. As a consequence of their criminal behavior, they may have alienated their families. As a consequence of their desire to stay out of trouble, they may have isolated themselves from former associates. This kind of reentry can be a lonely process, devoid of support systems and detached from social connections. (Clear et al., 2005, p. 190)

Perhaps especially for those ex-inmates who do not have supportive, positive family or peer relationships, or those who are trying to escape negative influences, the presence of an alternate such as the LOW could be a positive support.

2.10.6 Reentry Summary

Though reentry continues to gain attention among policy-makers, particularly in the United States, Day et al. (2011) point out that there are

> …relatively few published evaluations of the outcomes achieved by post release services on managing the risk of reoffending and, as such, it is difficult for service providers to meet these multiple and complex levels of need in ways that might be considered to be evidence-based. (2011, p. 66)

In connecting outreach with reentry, Day et al. (2011) is relevant to the City School program. However, a gap still exists in connecting outreach, reentry and adult education. Since so many inmates are not incarcerated long enough to finish school, they need to be able to continue their education after they leave. Outreach can address this need. Students who register with the KRCC program commonly ask if they can continue 'on the outs'; if they are staying in the community, then they have access to the LOW and thus a promise that they can indeed carry on.

2.11 The LOW's role in agency liaison

Agency liaison is a necessary addition to a discussion of the Literacy Outreach Worker's role, since "the establishment of inter-agency partnerships and co-operative networks is a strong theme in current social and educational policy. They are a crucial plank of any outreach work and vital to its effectiveness" (McGivney, 2000, p. 56). As such,

> …for educational outreach purposes, the functions and purposes of networking and collaboration arrangements between providers should be: to share information, experience and resources in order to avoid duplication and competition; to recognize the contribution that can be made by different agencies; to identify gaps in provision and unmet and developing needs; to identify available provision and progression routes and to establish mechanisms for

guidance and referral. Unless all relevant agencies work
together to achieve these aims, outreach efforts may result
in unnecessary duplication or failure. (Kinneavy, in
McGivney, 2000, p. 56).

In terms of best practices, integrated delivery of services means that "organizations
and agencies that operate for the public good can use their limited resources, meet their
own goals, and better serve the public by establishing close working relationships with
other organizations and agencies with related purposes" (Community Education
Principles, n.d.).

The LOW connects with numerous local agencies and supports, meeting with
representatives and offering informational presentations, in order to achieve two goals.
The first is to promote the City School program to potential students. According to one
non-profit national literacy provider, "it is estimated that only 5 to 10 per cent of eligible
adults have ever enrolled in literacy or upgrading programs" (ABC Canada, 2002). If
only a fraction of adults who identify a need for literacy services ever actually contact a
literacy provider, then networking through other agencies allows the LOW to reach a
broader audience of potential students.

The LOW's second objective in connecting with other service providers is to maintain
a comprehensive understanding of available resources. This aspect of the LOW role
represents an alliance, a connection which involves "sharing knowledge, expertise, and
innovation between organizations in the areas of services and solutions to social
problems. [It is] oriented toward common social goals, alliances involve shared/common
strategic objectives..." (Roberts & O'Connor, n.d., p. 219). The LOW's alliance with
other agencies is best described as cooperative, meaning it is built on informal and
personal relationships; low intensity, involving inter-agency information sharing; and
client-centered (Selden et al., 2006). Such alliances allow "improvements in the
accessibility of services to users", including "earlier interventions through a quicker
response from service providers" (Dowling et al., 2004, p. 313-314).

An outreach worker is best placed to conduct referrals, which have been shown to
positively influence retention (Quigley, 1993). Hubble (2000) theorizes that "students do

not often expect a program to solve their problems, but getting referral information and empathy might promote retention at crucial times" (p. 21).

2.12 Summary

It seems clear that there are gaps in the literature. Much of the research in Adult Education is concentrated on post-secondary education rather than on adults who have not yet achieved grade 12 graduation. Moreover, little of the literature originates in Canada, and almost none in British Columbia. Long (2001) points to a general shortage of Canadian studies, and finds that "the current demand for [literacy] services is not being met, to say nothing of the potential demand" (p. 9); in the decade since, this shortage has not noticeably been remedied.

The literature on reentry, the phenomenon whereby ex-inmates return to their communities, is primarily located in the United States, and relatively little work addresses reentry in a Canadian context. Furthermore, there is a lack of attention in the literature to social supports other than family and peer groups. Overall, the potential of a support such as the LOW remains largely unexamined in the literature.

While there is a body of work investigating such aspects as persistence and retention in adult education programs, only a small fraction considers the role of a counselor; there seems to be almost no attention given to any role similar to that of City School's Literacy Outreach Worker. Furthermore, while some of the issues faced by many City School students, including unemployment, may be common to adult programs, there is much less focus on how addictions, criminal activity and mental health impact on and interact with participation and success in adult education programs.

For example, one meta-review gathered over 2,500 articles from eleven databases, dating back to 1985 and focusing on practices in delivering adult literacy programs. The report cautions that "in the field of adult literacy, existing research is heterogeneous and of relatively low quality... Moreover, there are no accepted standards for what constitutes program success…" (Adult Literacy, 2006, p. 3, 64).

This case study explores one adult education program, City School, with respect to the unique position of the Literacy Outreach Worker, and examines conceptual categories

emerging from stakeholder interviews, participant observation and document review. At the outset, it is predicted that these categories will pertain to four major components of the role: intake, reentry, student support and agency liaison. The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker at City School. The primary research question is "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?"

3   Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the design and implementation of a case study that aims to explore the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker at City School, an adult education program. The primary research question is "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?" Two sub-questions are: "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" and "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" In this chapter, I will describe how I collected data through stakeholder interviews, participant observation and document review. I will also discuss the process of data analysis, including measures I took to address credibility, dependability and transferability.

The central phenomenon, that is, the central concept being explored or examined in this research study, is the role of the LOW in one adult education program. The Literacy Outreach Worker's role, while unique, merges with some of the traditional roles of a counselor, intake worker and support worker. For the purposes of this study, the role is described as supporting students in their daily living needs both in and outside the classroom. The guiding rationale behind the role is that students who are able to meet these needs are better able to make progress and experience success in meeting their educational goals. This research is best undertaken using a qualitative perspective, which offers "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Creswell describes several hallmarks of qualitative research, all of which apply to this study:

> The process of research involves emerging questions and
> procedures, data typically collected in the participant's
> setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars

to general themes, and the researcher making
interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 4)

In addition, the researcher serves as a key instrument of data collection: Merriam (1998) notes that "data are mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer" (p. 7). A qualitative approach enabled me to collect stakeholder perspectives, and to inductively develop and interpret conceptual categories to explore the data.

The term *stakeholder* merits clarification, as its most common usage is in economic or business language, yet it is pliable enough to warrant inclusion in the education and social work literature. One traditional definition of stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, as cited in Fontaine et. al, 2006). I chose to use this term because it implies not only belonging and activity, but a potential for some sort of gain, whether it be experience, employment or credentials. Stakeholders are subdivided into students or staff according to whether they receive or provide service within the City School program. Students are any individuals who are or have been enrolled in the City School program or the KRCC classroom. Staff refers to current School District employees, including teachers, support workers and administrators, as well as unpaid contributors, such as practicum students and volunteers.

3.1.1 Why a Case Study?

According to Merriam (1998), "the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case" (p. 27). Yin (as cited in Merriam, 1998) describes case study as a process, "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 27). Merriam (1998) sees case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). Both definitions fit my conceptualization of the phenomenon as the LOW role and the boundary, or context, as the City School program.

This research is intended to be interpretive, in order to allow for analysis of the separate components of the LOW role. A case study design allows "educational processes, problems, and programs [to] be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practices" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Finally, a case study, which is descriptive in nature, can "illustrate the complexities of a situation...have the advantage of hindsight yet can be relevant in the present...show the influence of personalities [and the passage of time] on the issue" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Descriptive studies are also appropriate when a phenomenon has not been extensively discussed in the literature, as is the case with outreach in adult education programs.

In short, I chose to conduct a case study because it offers the best opportunity to explore the unique role of the Literacy Outreach Worker, and to address my primary research question: "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?" This research fits Creswell's (2007) description of a single, within-site study designed to explore a bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reporting a case description and case-based themes.

The uniqueness of the LOW role lends itself to a description of this as an intrinsic case study, one of Creswell's (2007) three variations in case study intent, in which "the focus is on the case itself...because the case presents and unusual or unique situation" (p. 74). Day et. al (2011) concurs that "a case study design is especially appropriate when relatively little is known about a phenomenon" (p. 70). Because the case is the unique LOW role, this study is defined as intrinsic.

3.1.2 Delimitations

This study is delimited to volunteer student and selected staff perceptions of one adult education program in one school district, with respect to one role – that of the Literacy Outreach Worker.

3.1.3 Locating myself as the researcher

Creswell (2007) points out that "researchers' interpretation cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (p. 39). Merriam

(1998) claims "because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observation and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective" (p. 22). It is therefore imperative that the researcher attempt to clarify her bias from the outset of the study so that the reader understands the researcher's position and any assumptions that impact the inquiry (Merriam, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 208). This is accomplished through the researcher's commentary on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 208).

My interest in the Literacy Outreach Worker's role is the result of my five years of experience in teaching at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre, where I tutored incarcerated adult males who were working toward achieving BC Adult Dogwood Diplomas. During this time, my school's Continuing Education coordinator implemented the City School program in response to an identified need for marginalized adult students to earn their Grade 12 graduation. As this new program grew, I began spending time between the two locations, eventually migrating completely to City School. In both locations, I have observed the LOW's interactions with students. In particular, I have seen the difficulties faced by ex-offenders released into the community, very often with little support. This, combined with my own experience working in a correctional centre, led to the inclusion of reentry as a key research interest.

Prior to conducting this research, I perceived that the LOW position represented an important un component of City School. I also felt that if the program was to sustain its original mandate to provide education to marginalized adults, the LOW position had to secure reliable funding sources.

One assumption I made was that any stakeholder would be able to give insight into, and discuss the role of, the Literacy Outreach Worker. Soliciting volunteers makes it more likely that only those who felt they could speak to the role would participate. However, a larger sample or another method of soliciting participants may have revealed that the LOW is actually not a common thread in stakeholder experiences. From an ethics perspective, the importance of utilizing volunteer participants outweighed this

consideration, but future research that gathers input from a larger sample may reveal different outcomes than the ones discussed here.

3.1.4. Conducting research in my workplace

Conducting research in my own workplace has clear benefits, the most important of which is that I have an opportunity for in-depth exploration of some of the issues that directly affect my classroom environment on a daily basis. In addition, because I am already familiar to the environment, my presence is unlikely to cause disruption or engender suspicion amongst students and staff, and the barriers I might otherwise experience in gaining access and collecting data are reduced.

However, in choosing to conduct a study "within [my] own institution or agency, or among friends or colleagues" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 21), I must acknowledge that with this choice comes the risks of familiarity and duality of roles. First, as a participant observer, I already have "an established identity and roles in the field and while there are benefits to such insider knowledge, the challenge exists in seeing the familiar site through new eyes" (Pressick-Kilborn & Sainsbury, 2001, p. 2). Second, conducting research in one's own workplace foregrounds "potential dilemmas resulting from the contrasting (and occasionally conflicting) goals of the two roles, and of the fact that maintaining integrity in both is a balancing act" (Pressick-Kilborn & Sainsbury, 2001, p. 3). In this study, I needed to recognize the distinction that as a position, the LOW is the case under study; as an individual, the LOW is a colleague. The techniques I employed to address these risks are detailed later in this chapter.

3.2 Methods and Procedures of data collection

Three types of data were collected: semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, participant observation and documents. In total, 11 stakeholder interviews were conducted, a participant observer research journal was maintained, and over 45 documents were collected.

3.2.1 Interview sampling strategy

Purposeful sampling, rather than probability or random sampling, is used when the researcher "wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a

sample from which the most can be learned"; such a sample also represents, ideally, "information-rich cases" from which the researcher can "learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

One goal of this research was to collect a variety of perspectives about the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker. In order to address the research sub-question "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" I sought the input of both staff and students. I predicted the LOW role would be experienced differently by coworkers than by students who access her services to varying degrees.

This study employs convenience sampling in that City School is a site, and the LOW is an individual, from which I could access and collect data over an extended time frame. However, convenience and the search for information-rich participant data are not mutually exclusive. Though some students work intensively with the LOW, and others may not interact with her very much at all, I assumed that all students were aware of her role, even if only during their initial intake process. Thus, I assumed that any stakeholder would be able to offer commentary, and because students at City School are diverse, their contributions could also be expected to vary. In this way, I hoped to gain a range of stakeholder perspectives about the LOW role.

At the outset of this study, it was estimated that a minimum of five staff interviews and five student interviews would be conducted. Staff size is small (seven current or past staff members) and roles are varied (including practicum students, program coordinator, Literacy Outreach Worker, teachers and support worker). To provide a holistic picture of the program, it was desirable to record as many of these staff members' different associations, experiences and perceptions as possible, and staff members were asked in person to participate. While it was also desirable to widely sample student perspectives, this was a less straightforward task, since ethical considerations precluded direct solicitation for participation. Instead, students enrolled in the City School program were recruited via notices posted in the classroom.

3.2.2 Description of subjects

For student interviews, criteria were current or past enrollment in the City School

program, over the age of 19 and capable of giving free and informed consent to participate. The criteria for staff members' involvement in the research was that interviewees were or had been involved in the City School Program in teaching and/or administrative roles at the time of the study. Staff members were recruited via in-person interview requests.

Interviews were conducted outside the classroom, either in a separate room or off-site altogether. Participant consent forms included a disclaimer assuring students who participated that they would not be approached to discuss their participation or the content of their interviews by any other City School staff member.

Several exclusions from the student body were deemed necessary for the purposes of this study. First, to address the risk of perceived coercion, the researcher excluded from participation any students actively working on courses for which the researcher was also the only teacher. Next, because the program being studied actually operates in two locations, students attending the second site (a regional correctional centre) were excluded. Research conducted in provincial correctional centres requires separate consent from Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General; this was not feasible given the timeline anticipated for this research. However, students released from the correctional centre who continued their education at City School were eligible to participate, as these students were in a unique position to illuminate the nature of their involvement with the Literacy Outreach Worker as part of their reentry experiences. Third, from time to time, students under the age of 19 are enrolled in the City School program, but as they were not, during the period of data collected, considered adult students by the BC Ministry of Education, they were excluded from participation in the study. Finally, any students who would be deemed vulnerable according to university ethics guidelines were excluded from the study.

To help ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all interviews. Students are described only by gender and age range, and previous incarceration is not disclosed unless volunteered by the student. Interviews were, under separate consent, audiotaped for transcription purposes only. Participants gave consent to be quoted directly but are

identified only by pseudonym. Participants were offered the opportunity to review transcription of their interviews in order to correct errors or remove any material they did not wish to have included. Finally, no data which identifies individuals was made available by the researcher to any outside persons or agencies.

3.2.3 Collecting data

Originally, I intended to distribute surveys to adult education programs in other British Columbia school districts. The purpose of these surveys was to ascertain whether other districts provided outreach services, and to what extent these services resembled the Literacy Outreach Worker's role. Four school district administrators were contacted for participation in surveys, and two districts responded. However, during this time, teachers' provincial job action impeded communications between teachers and administrators. In addition, as my research developed, observations and documents played a larger than anticipated role in data collection, and in the process of narrowing the focus of data collection, my initially-perceived need to investigate what other districts may be doing in terms of outreach diminished. Through discussion with staff members and others involved in community literacy, it became evident that the LOW role is unique. Accordingly, I chose to direct my research towards an in-depth, focused examination of this unique role within the City School adult education program.

Data were collected in three ways: from semi-structured, open-ended interviews with stakeholders; from participant observation, recorded in an ongoing research journal which chronicled daily activities, observations of the LOW in the classroom, and notes from personal communications; and from collection of a variety of documents. These are summarized in Table 3-1, below:

Table 3.1 Data collection matrix

Source	Interviews	Observations	Documents
Students	X (4)	X	
LOW	X (3)	X	X
Staff members	X (4)	X	X

Stakeholder interviews are an inherently valuable way to gather multiple perspectives on the LOW role, since participants themselves are best able to comment on the LOW role as part of their experiences at City School. As Merriam (1998) notes, "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 72). The voices of staff and students, collectively, also offer a form of insurance against researcher bias. As a teacher and, by the definition used in this research, a stakeholder, I acknowledge that my own perspectives will unavoidably serve as a filter; in this sense, providing a number of other perspectives, in participants' own words, may help to create a more balanced overall picture.

Merriam (1998) describes an "interview structure continuum" in which semi-structured interviews fall in the mid-range between standardized questions and exploratory conversations:

> ...the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact working nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p. 74)

Stakeholder interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim for all but two staff interviews, during which I took notes. In one case, the decision not to transcribe was based on interviewee preference; in the other, because a set date and time could not be arranged in advance, a recording device had not been obtained by the time the opportunity presented itself. Transcripts and notes were reviewed and analyzed to discern themes and patterns that pertain to the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker.

Though considerable overlap exists, and seems to make observation and participation inseparable, my role as a teacher dictates that most of my time is spent as a participant in the classroom. I observed the LOW's activities and her interactions with students as much as possible during the course of our daily duties. Thus, I am a participant in the program and, simultaneously, an observer of the LOW (the phenomenon being studied).

As the study unfolded, it became clear that job shadowing, accompanying the Literacy Outreach Worker off-site, would not be feasible, partly due to time constraints, but also because job shadowing could make me privy to sensitive personal information. This, in turn, had the potential to impede the LOW's ability to serve students. Instead, the LOW provided verbal feedback and notes about her activities outside the classroom.

Among the advantages of observation as a form of data is that "the participant observer sees things firsthand and uses his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviews" (Merriam, 1998, p. 96). In addition, in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis, observations can be used to triangulate findings and can "allow for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 111). Observations in this study were conducted during my regularly-scheduled teaching days in the classroom.

Documents used in this research include the LOW's logbook, which chronicles her work with inmates at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre since 2007, and represents a valuable objective measure of services provided. Grant applications and other documents pertaining to funding for the LOW position were also included because one of the goals of this research was to examine the feasibility of entrenched funding for the position, rather than year-to-year stopgap measures and multiple small grants, all of which are subject to cessation for a number of reasons beyond the program's control.

3.3 Data analysis procedures

I began the process of analysis by reviewing all the data I collected and creating a document summary form to organize data sources. Using a template approach, four *a priori* conceptual categories were applied to interview transcripts, and six tentative categories were added as they emerged from the transcripts. In a second round of coding, all data was revisited and coded using the ten tentative codes. Concurrently, I prepared a data summary chart, using check marks to correlate data sources and codes. At this point, two categories were collapsed. Data summary tables were prepared for interview transcripts, tallying the number of times each code was designated. Next, after meeting with my supervisor to discuss the nine remaining categories, I removed two categories.

Finally, after the coding process was complete, when it became clear that overlap existed between three categories, these were collapsed into two. Ultimately, three *a priori* conceptual categories were kept and another three added during the process of data analysis, so that the final coding scheme contains six conceptual categories. A more thorough discussion of the process of analyzing the data is provided in Chapter 4.

3.4   Ensuring quality and rigor in qualitative research

Gall & Gall (2007) point out that in qualitative research, traditional notions of reliability and validity are replaced by those of credibility, dependability and transferability (p. 473). Credibility, defined by Bloomberg & Volpe (2012) as "whether the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (p. 112), has been considered in this research in several ways. First, by articulating the perceptions I bring to the research process, and by keeping a research journal throughout the data collection process, I have used self-reflection to mediate the influences of my biases. Second, my involvement in the field was both prolonged and substantial; as a teacher-researcher I immersed myself in the data collection process over a period of several months that spanned two school years. Creswell (2009) explains that this level of engagement promotes credibility, since "the more experience that a researcher has with participants in their actual setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings" (p. 192). Third, by using three different data collection methods, I have been able to triangulate, comparing the evidence I collected to "check on whether [my] interpretation of the processes and interactions in the setting is valid" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 112). Fourth, I conducted member checking, which involves "taking data and tentative interpretation back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Creswell (2009) reiterates the value of member checking in which the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations. Throughout the City School study, I provided data and tentative interpretation to the LOW and program coordinator; I also employed member-

checking by offering each interviewee an opportunity to review his or her transcribed interview (two staff members did review their transcripts, but made no changes).

Finally, additional strategies such as peer review, which provides an external check of the research process, and external audits "to examine both the process and the product of the account, assessing their accuracy…examines whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208-209), are built-in to the M.Ed. research process and were therefore a part of the process of ensuring credibility in this research.

As Merriam (1998) contends, in qualitative research:

> Because what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes *a priori* controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible. (p. 206)

Instead of reliability, Lincoln & Guba (as cited in Merriam, 1998) use the term dependability, whereby a study's findings can be seen as reasonable given the data collected. Dependability can be addressed by describing "… how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 207). In this research, I addressed dependability by incorporating inter-rater reliability and a detailed explanation, in the following chapter, of how the data were analyzed.

Generalizability, or "applying results to new settings, people, or samples" (Creswell, 2009, p. 190), is a notion seemingly at odds with qualitative case study research, in which "a single case… is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). Merriam (1998) and Creswell (2009) agree that the intent of qualitative inquiry is not to generalize findings. Rather, generalizability can be reconceptualized in terms of user or reader generalizability, in which "the extent to which a study's findings apply to other situations [is left] up to the people in those situations", and the onus for the

researcher becomes to "provide enough detailed description of the study's context to enable readers to compare the 'fit' with their own situations" (Merriam, 1998, p. 211). This is also termed transferability, or "how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings and communities… the fit…between the research context and other contexts as judged by the reader" (Bloomberg & Volpe, p. 113).

The results of this study may not be directly transferable to other adult education programs, because those programs do not have a Literacy Outreach Worker. However, other programs may be able to apply this research towards judging the applicability of a LOW position in their own sites, and may see ways in which a LOW can help address adult students' needs. As such, I have provided what is generally termed a "thick description", one in which "the richness of the descriptions included in the study give the discussion and element of shared or vicarious experience" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). Here, the shared experience is that of teaching adult students, and of trying to address their needs so that learning becomes possible.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has described my rationale for choosing a qualitative, case study research design to investigate the role of a Literacy Outreach Worker, bounded by one adult education program, City School. I have outlined the methods I used to collect data through stakeholder interviews, participant observation and documents pertaining to the City School program. Finally, I introduced the methods I incorporated in order to analyze the data, focusing on the measures I took to address reliability and credibility, dependability and transferability. In the next chapter, the data analysis procedure is discussed in greater detail, and six main research findings are presented.

4 Presentation of Data

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this bounded case study is to illuminate the role(s) of the Literacy Outreach Worker (LOW) within the City School adult/continuing education program. An examination of this unique position could facilitate greater understanding of the role of outreach in adult education. The uniqueness of the LOW role makes this exploratory case study potentially valuable to other programs considering formalized, funded outreach services. In addition, an investigation of the role could benefit the program itself, allowing for reflection on the LOW's function and charting a course for future outreach services.

The primary research question is "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?" Two sub-questions were identified: "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" and "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?"

This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 11 stakeholder interviews, a participant observer research journal and over 45 documents including funding applications, staff meeting minutes and the Literacy Outreach Worker's own written records. An overview of the data collection process is followed by discussion of *a priori* categories initially assigned to interview transcripts. Next, the data analysis process is detailed, including the development of conceptual categories and the steps followed in coding the data. Finally, this chapter will describe the findings for each of six conceptual categories.

4.2   Overview of data collection

Three types of data were collected: documents, participant observation records and semi-structured interviews with students and staff/stakeholders. These data were collected between May and November of 2011, with the exception of one document, the LOW record of KRCC contacts, from which data were tabulated from 2007 up to and including April 2012, two interviews, conducted in June and July of 2012, and some documents (e.g. staff meeting minutes, collected from March 2011 through June 2012). One of these was a third and final interview in which the LOW offered some examples she felt illustrate her role in supporting students; the interview also served to clarify points raised in earlier discussions. The other interview, with the City School program coordinator, entailed a discussion of funding data, mainly from past grant applications he had written, and was conducted in order to confirm the accuracy of this data.

4.2.1   Documents

A variety of documents were collected, including minutes of staff meetings; applications for grant funding; interim reports and grant renewal applications; records of communications amongst staff members, administration and corrections staff; policy documents; and a logbook provided by the LOW. Documents were organized into five distinct types – local level, funding, meeting minutes, KRCC record of contacts and miscellaneous.

a.   Local Level

At the local level, the Community Literacy Plan for Kamloops' long term goal is "to build a community committed to the importance and benefits of supporting literacy" (2008, p. 15). The result of a grassroots initiative started in 2006, the same year that City School opened, the plan identifies challenges to adult literacy including employer support, sustained funding and meeting adults' basic needs; recommendations to ensure "adults have the essential literacy skills to function in life" including developing a tutoring program for City School and "building links with agencies and groups to identify adults with literacy needs" (p. 16).

The Kamloops Thompson School District/Community Literacy Plan, while also developed in conjunction with communities, is district-wide in scope. The District Plan's Spring 2011 update remarks "it is difficult for those trying to provide literacy programming and schooling to adults to be successful, when their learners cannot get the social service assistance and addiction support they need...there are still gaps in service which impact the delivery of effective literacy programming" (p. 35).

This District Plan's adult literacy action items include "advocate for funding for Literacy Outreach Worker for City School" (p. 39):

> LinK's role is to be a strong advocate for City School and in particular the Literacy Outreach Worker…outreach work is integral to the continued success of City School…currently the position is underfunded. Our goal now is to support City School in advocating for adequate funding for the LOW position, and to continue to build awareness of this program and improve access to it. (p. 40)

b. City School program funding

Documents pertaining to LOW funding, including Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP) funding applications, CALP interim reports, Ministry of Education 1701 reports, budget documents and emails were examined. The data derived from these documents was converted to summary tables, identifying School District 73 enrollment and funding data, grant monies generated by and for the City School program and program growth over six years of operation. The data were reviewed and verified by a City School administrator and the program's coordinator, who between them have been responsible for all fund-raising efforts.

c. City School staff meeting minutes

A review of the minutes of 11 City School staff meetings, conducted between March 2011 and June 2012, provides insight into the day-to-day functioning of the LOW. Discussions pertaining to the LOW role were coded and grouped into conceptual categories in the same manner as interview transcripts.

d. LOW Record of KRCC contacts

When the LOW began KRCC outreach in October 2007, she began a logbook in order to document every student contact she made in the correctional centre. This research examined the logbook raw data to create a data summary document, yielding information including inmate names, dates, frequencies, purposes and locations of all contacts made. A column was later added to track whether the inmate students who made contact with the LOW went on to connect with the City School program and, if so, what progress they made in course work. The LOW reviewed the data table and was asked to indicate whether or not each student ever connected with City School. Following this review, student files were reviewed to glean further data about the duration of students' involvement with City School and to confirm whether any progress was made.

e. Miscellaneous

Some documents were not easily classifiable into any of the previous categories; however, these were deemed important to include in document analysis. These include community letters of support for City School, a student's graduation speech, City School's Mission Statement, a list of agencies visited by the LOW and records of LOW time expenditure.

4.2.2 Observations

In-class participant observation of the Literacy Outreach Worker was conducted from January through December 2011 during my regular classroom teaching times. This scenario best fits the description of "participant as observer" in which "the researcher's observer activities, which are known to the group, are subordinate to the researcher's role as a participant" (Gold, as cited in Merriam, 1989, p. 101).

The purpose of observation was to generate a realistic picture of how the Literacy Outreach Worker's time is actually being spent, and to gain an understanding of the diversity of duties inherent in this role. Merriam (1998) advises that "observation is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand" and that "the participant observer sees things firsthand and uses his or her own knowledge and expertise in interpreting what is observed rather than relying upon once-removed accounts from interviews" (p. 96).

To this end, observations were recorded via an ongoing research journal. The journal also included notes, questions and comments from phone calls, meetings and informal staff and student conversations. In addition, I accompanied the LOW to a meeting with a Probation officer (Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Corrections Branch, Community Corrections Division), a meeting of LinK (Literacy in Kamloops) representatives and a Decoda Regional Literacy Outreach Coordinator training meeting.

4.2.3 Interviews

Interviewing was chosen as a data collection method because it "permits…open-ended exploration of topics and elicits responses that are couched in the unique works of the respondents" (Gall & Gall, 2007, p. 229). Interviews were conducted using a general interview guide approach, which involves preparing an outline of topics to be discussed during the interview:

> The use of an interview guide is based on the assumption
> that there is common information to be obtained from each
> respondent, but no set of standardized questions is written
> in advance. The order in which the topics are explored and
> the wording of the questions are not predetermined.
> (Patton, as cited in Gall & Gall, 2007, p. 247)

A total of nine semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted between May and November of 2011, spanning two school years (this represents eight participants; the LOW was interviewed twice). These interviews were digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the first round of coding, codes were applied to transcripts based on four *a priori* themes. A file review was conducted for interviewees in order to provide additional details such as student age, number of registrations and course progress. A third interview with the LOW discussed in detail specific aspects of the role, and a meeting with the City School program coordinator helped clarify specifics about program funding and fundraising efforts. This represents 11 interviews in total.

Four students were interviewed; all were male, ranging in age from 35-54 years. At the time they were interviewed, two had already graduated (one was attending City

School for upgrading and the other had left the program). The other two were working toward completing an Adult Dogwood Diploma; one has since graduated and left the program. Subjects were involved with the program for a minimum of three months and a maximum of 4.5 years, with an average length of over two years, from the time they first enrolled. Their numbers of registrations, indicating that a student left, then returned at a later date, were between one and three. One student was involved in both the City School and KRCC programs.

Five stakeholders were interviewed, including past and present staff and others associated with the City School program and familiar with the roles and day to day activities of the LOW. The LOW herself was interviewed on three occasions, once near the end of the 2010/2011 school year and again in November and June of the 2011/2012 year.

Interview questions focused on one of the research sub-questions: "How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" Students were asked to describe what they thought was the role of the LOW; in some interviews this was rephrased as "what do you see her doing in the classroom?" They were invited to share ways in which they had connected with or worked with the LOW, and to imagine how the program might look without the LOW:

1. What do you see as the role of the LOW? What do you see her doing in the classroom?

2. Have you 'connected' with the LOW?

3. Please describe ways in which you have interacted with the LOW. Has she been able to help you with any needs outside the classroom?

4. Approximately how often do you connect with the LOW?

5. What, if anything, would change for you if this program did not have a LOW?

6. Is there anything else you would like to say?

During the interviewing process, questions 2 and 4 were subsumed into question 3; in particular, the second yes/no question did not yield any information that was not already included in the third question.

Stakeholder interview guide questions differed slightly; in addition to describing their understanding of the LOW role and commenting on ways in which they see students interacting with the LOW, stakeholders were asked about any concerns they had with the LOW role:

1.   What do you see as the role of the LOW?
2.   Please describe ways in which you know the LOW interacts with students.
3.   How do you think this program would be different if it did not have a LOW?
4.   Do you have any concerns with the LOW position as it is currently being performed? This could include things you would like to see done, or done differently.
5.   Is there anything else you would like to say?

The first LOW interview adhered to the above guide; two subsequent interviews centered on role-specific questions, clarifying and building upon the initial interview discussion. The second LOW interview, conducted in November, 2011, focused on a debriefing-style discussion of a mass intake process conducted as a trial at the beginning of the 2011/2012 school year, as well as visits to specific agencies for liaison purposes. The third and final LOW interview addressed upcoming meetings, student vignettes and LOW recommendations for the City School program.

My interview with the program's coordinator focused on specific questions about program funding. This was for two reasons: first, the coordinator has overseen the City School program since its inception, but unlike other staff, he is not on-site on a day to day basis; second, he was solely responsible for completing grant applications for the first four years of the program. For these reasons, interview questions were tailor-made to take advantage of the coordinator's experience; other stakeholders would not have been able to offer reflections on past and present fundraising successes and challenges.

4.3 Beginning to code the data

To begin the task of coding the data, I chose to use a template approach, in which "key codes are determined on an *a priori* basis…these codes serve as a template or 'bins', remaining flexible as the data analysis process proceeds" (Crabtree & Miller, as cited in Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p.138). The template approach proved a useful framework, or starting point, from which to approach analysis of the data; however, the initial codes I derived from a preliminary reading of the data had to remain flexible and open to modification as the analysis proceeded. As Bloomberg and Volpe stress, "not all your data will fit into your predetermined categories. Rather than trying to force data into categories, you will most likely have to create some new, emergent descriptors and/or collapse and /or eliminate some of them" (2012, p. 143).

Based on my own observations and informal conversations with the Literacy Outreach Worker, I chose to identify four initial potential categories: KRCC, liaison, support and intake. The first, 'KRCC', encompasses the Literacy Outreach Worker's involvement in meeting with students in the KRCC adult education program, assisting them in locating resources and pre-release planning, and then offering supports during the reentry process, with an aim to facilitating continuation of their education at City School. 'Liaison' refers to the LOW's work in communicating with community agencies, coordinating supports and making referrals for City School students, and in promoting City School. The 'support' code subsumes the social-emotional supports the LOW provides to City School students both in and outside of the classroom. The 'intake' code identifies those aspects of the LOW role that involve scheduling and meeting with prospective students to complete the City School enrollment process. This process involves explaining the LOW's supportive role, identifying students who may require support, discussing services students are already accessing in the community, and determining the need for release of information forms.

4.4 Analyzing the data

Because it contained the largest volume of raw data, the LOW record of KRCC contacts served as a starting point for the data analysis process; this written record was

converted to a table illustrating several components of the LOW's work with student inmates prior to and after their release from incarceration. All data were then thoroughly reviewed and a document summary form was created to organize documents, which were numbered sequentially and color-coded according to document type (staff meeting minutes, communications, etc.). Using the template approach, four *a priori* conceptual categories were applied to sections of interview transcripts.

Next, categories were added to identify data pertaining to other aspects of the LOW role, tentatively titled attributes, workload, communication, safety, clerical and funding, and codes were created for each category descriptive phrase. These tentative codes emerged from the data, identifying aspects of the LOW role that seemed distinct from the *a priori* codes. This process resulted in a total of ten categories, which were connected to the primary research question and sub-questions using a web-style graphic organizer to establish the relevance of codes to research questions.

In a second round of coding, all data were revisited and coded using the ten tentative codes. Separate Word documents, each bearing a category name, code and descriptor, served as bins for the deposition of data for each conceptual category. During this coding and sorting process, a data summary chart was prepared (Appendix A). At this point, the conceptual category titled clerical', a tentative code based on LOW time expenditure, was combined with the 'workload' category, leaving nine conceptual categories.

While the data summary table provided a useful organizational summary of the content of data sources, a more detailed reduction of data was needed. As such, data summary tables were prepared for interview transcripts, tallying the number of times each code was designated. This provided a consistent record of findings regarding participants' responses across all categories (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 144). Finally, I returned to the interview transcripts, focusing on four leading questions I had initially identified during transcription. The codes attached to these leading questions were removed from the data summary table tallies.

Next, I met with my supervisor to discuss the nine categories. As a result of the feedback I received, the 'KR' code was renamed 'reentry' to better describe the

conceptual category that addresses the LOW's role in supporting students through the transition phase between corrections and community. In addition, two categories, 'communication' and 'safety', were removed, based on a lack of strong connection to my primary research question.

In the 'communication' category, of the five initial tallies, one was discounted because it resulted from a leading question in a staff interview. The remaining four tallies came from one staff member who worked in the program in its years of rapid growth. While communication emerged as a major issue at that time, as evidenced from the interview and my own recollections, it is possible that the low incidence of mention in other interviews indicates this is no longer such a prevalent concern. A change of staffing and administration has occurred since then, we now hold regular staff meetings, and current staff who operate the program on a day to day level are mindful of the need to communicate on a more or less constant basis. In any case, when the data pertaining to communication were examined it became clear that little of it was directly connected to the LOW role or to my primary research question; rather, it indicated a past concern in the program. For these reasons, the 'communication' category was removed, and one chunk of data was moved to the 'intake' category.

Next, due to the low prevalence of mention of safety concerns during interviews, and because some data originally coded as safety-related was found to fit better elsewhere, the 'safety' category was removed. One of the four incidences of 'safety' coding represented a lengthy discussion during one staff interview; however, again, this pertains to concerns that arose during the two years the program experienced its greatest growth, before measures were implemented:

> When you're dealing with a clientele that are recovering
> addicts, may still be actively using, a number of people
> who are mentally ill and not dealing with it, who are not
> taking medication, there was a lot of really dangerous
> situations. And I think that that's one of my biggest
> concerns…we're just waiting for somebody to get seriously
> injured and then it will be dealt with. (Anna)

Since that time, one staff member became an on-site first aid attendant and another joined the TREC Safety Committee, largely because any concerns brought to the committee are documented and forwarded to the District level, and thus the likelihood that they will be addressed is much higher than at a regular staff meeting. The District Health and Safety representative has visited City School twice; her support has resulted in the installation of a camera and monitor, allowing staff to see who is entering the basement from outside. Two panic buttons and a response protocol have also been implemented (research journal). When the LOW is off-site, she uses a 'Four Star' check-in system. The LOW indicated in an interview that she is now "completely 100% comfortable with the safety procedures in place". Thus, this category was determined to represent a past, rather than a present concern.

After the coding process was complete, when conceptual categories were examined separately, it became clear that overlap existed between 'intake', 'workload' and 'support'. The intake process is time-consuming and contributes significantly to the LOW's workload, accounting for almost a fifth of her time. It also represents her first opportunity to connect with incoming students, explain her supportive role and identify the students who may require her services. For these reasons, data initially placed in the 'intake' category were reallocated to 'support' or 'workload'.

Revised data summary tables are provided below. The final coding scheme contained six conceptual categories, summarized as follows:

Att   Personal and professional attributes of the LOW

Reent   Supports offered during the transition period from corrections to community, including pre-release (visits during incarceration) and post-release (e.g. transportation)

Lia   Liaison with community agencies to communicate and promote City School, cross-refer clients, maintain communication, network and share information

Sup   Social, emotional and practical daily living supports offered to City School students

WL LOW workload, including how it has/has not changed over time, added responsibilities, pressures and strategies for management

Fund Financial/budgetary information, including fundraising efforts, successes, challenges and funding sources

Table 4.1 Data Summary (Interviews) - Primary Research Question

How does a LOW facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/CE program?						
	Name	Att	Sup	Reent	Int	Lia
Student	Tony	IIIIII	IIIIIII	n/a		
	Tyson	III	IIII	n/a		
	James	I	IIIIIII	II		I
	Robert	I	IIIIII	n/a		II
Student totals (40)		11 27.5%	24 60%	2 5%		3 7.5%
Staff	Anna	III	IIIIIII	II		
	Risa	IIIIIII	IIIIII	III		III
	Valerie		III	II		I
	LOW 1	I	II	IIIIII		II
	LOW 2				✓	✓
	LOW 3		✓			
	LB			✓		✓
Staff totals (48)		11 23%	18 37.5%	13 27%		6 12.5%
Totals (88)		22 25%	42 48%	15 17%		9 10%

✓ Interview was not transcribed.

Table 4.2   Data Summary Table (Interviews) – Research Sub-Question 1

How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?								
	Name	Att	Sup	Reent	Int	Lia	WL *	Fund *
Student	Tony	IIIIII	IIIIIII	n/a				
	Tyson	III	IIII	n/a				
	James	I	IIIIIII	II		I		
	Robert	I	IIIIII	n/a		II		
Student totals (40)		11 27.5%	24 60%	2 5%		3 7.5%		
Staff	Anna	III	IIIIIII	II			IIIIIIIIIII III	I
	Risa	IIIIIII	IIIIII	III		III	III	III
	Valerie		III	II		I	II	
	LOW 1	I	II	IIIIII		II	IIIIIII	I
	LOW 2				✓	✓		
	LOW 3		✓					✓
	LB			✓		✓		✓
Staff Totals (80)		11 14%	18 22.5%	13 16%		6 7.5%	27 34%	5 6%
All stakeholders (120)		22 18%	42 35%	15 12.5%		9 7.5%	27 22.5%	5 4%

 *Because only staff identified and discussed 'workload' and 'funding', these categories are discussed
 separately under Sub-Question 2.

Table 4.3   Data Summary Table (Interviews) – Research Sub-Question 2

How can an Adult/CE program's structure/staff promote conditions that enable a LOW to perform the role effectively?			
	Name	WL	Fun
Staff	Anna	IIIIIIIIIIIIII	I

	Risa	III	III
	Valerie	II	
	LOW 1	IIIIIII	I
	LOW 2		
	LOW 3		✓
	LB		✓
Totals		28 85%	5 15%

Inter-rater reliability was incorporated to validate the dependability of the conceptual categories developed during the data analysis process. After I provided an introduction and background to the research, a reader independently reviewed all coded interview transcripts to determine whether codes were logically and appropriately assigned. The reader's written and verbal feedback was used in a final review of the conceptual categories and codes assigned to the data. All six conceptual categories were agreed upon, and the reader's coding agreement was above the 80% recommended by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 191). The reader suggested 14 additional data segments which she felt could be coded. I revisited these suggestions in the coded transcripts, and determined that some segments did warrant inclusion. Ultimately, the inter-rater reliability measure resulted in a 92% agreement between my coding and that of the reader.

4.5 Findings

Findings emerged for each of the six conceptual categories developed in this study: stakeholders recognize that a key element of the LOW role is providing student supports; the LOW's professional and personal attributes contribute to establishing trust with stakeholders; a demand exists for the LOW's outreach services in corrections, and these services provide a means for incarcerated students to connect with City School upon their release; the LOW liaises with community agencies to maintain communication, network, share information and cross-refer clients; the LOW's workload has increased with City School program growth, resulting in a need to monitor workload pressures and be cognizant of time expenditure; and funding for the LOW position is contingent upon annual grant provisions.

Following is a discussion of the findings with details that support and explain each finding. Illustrative quotations taken from interview transcripts are used to paint a fuller picture of the diversity of roles performed by the Literacy Outreach Worker.

4.5.1 Finding 1: Stakeholders recognize that a key element of the LOW role is providing student supports.

The conceptual category of 'support' captured the social, emotional and practical daily living assistance the LOW offers to City School students. Data pertaining to support were collected from stakeholder interviews and supplemented by staff meeting minutes, the researcher's journal and discussions with the LOW.

Support was coded for 60% of student interview responses (24/40 codes); overall, for all stakeholders, support accounted for 48% of responses, the highest total for a conceptual category and the only category mentioned by all interviewees.

Staff meeting minutes suggest a wide variety of supports are offered, in keeping with what one staff member described as "meeting people where they're at" (Risa, staff member). These include following up with a student who relapsed after 2 ½ years; following up with an incarcerated student who is legally blind; contacting a student undergoing surgery for breast cancer; advocating for extra in-class supports for low-literacy students; and advocating for reduced bus pass rates for adult students.

One staff member described outreach as a multi-step process of "being able to connect with [existing] supports, and seeing what the gaps are too in services…fill in the gaps and offer resources and physically take people to different agencies in the community for them to get what they needed" (Risa). The outreach process begins when the LOW conducts an intake appointment to register a student:

> …that was her first place to make a connection with the
> student so that they realized she is asking about those
> needs, that puts it in their mind that she's the one to go to
> …and just the first chance for her to get to know what those
> needs might be. (Anna, staff member)

The students interviewed understood that support began at intake; one recalls "I came in, made an appointment and then…you know, sometimes you just get the rigmarole, you just get that feeling, but it wasn't like that, it was very straightforward, something I could understand" (Tony). Another added:

> She looked after finding out what courses I needed in order to fulfill my Dogwood requirements, so she went, did all that work and a lot of it was unbeknownst to me as to what she was doing behind the scenes for me but I know she did all that and as a result I only have to take two classes…so I thank her for that. (Tyson)

Returning students credit the LOW with welcoming them back to the program. Robert, who suffered a mental health breakdown, recalled "I came back after three years away and she was very supportive, she wrote down what we're going to do and how we were going to do it", and for James, whose schooling was interrupted several times, "…the outreach worker was always my first contact and she was always the one that made me feel like I could come back".

One student mentioned receiving tutorial assistance with course work; others noticed the LOW does much of her work outside the classroom. Tyson reported "from what I've seen personally…she actually travels to some of their homes, and does what I would call not just tutoring but probably mentoring"; Tyson also described the LOW's role in following up with students who need encouragement to continue:

> Some students…they come and they go, so seems like they sign up to start classes...and then don't finish, or break away and then that's where I think she does her outreach work with calling and trying to get them back into the class, and keep their studies going.

When asked "what, if anything, would change for you if this program did not have a LOW?" Tony indicated that he would still attend and make progress in school; Tyson felt that while he did not himself need support:

> I can imagine how hard it is for…people maybe with some of their personal problems that they have, which kind of conflicts with their education, maybe that's one of the reasons they haven't graduated…

One such student is James, who emphasized:

> I can guarantee I wouldn't have graduated without [the LOW]. I would not have gone back 'cause I didn't have a fan, I didn't have a supporter. That was the one thing out of everything involved in my graduation that if you took it away it wouldn't have happened.

James, who has been homeless on several occasions, felt that without the LOW

> I think I would've been able to slip away a lot easier. There were times when I had no connection to City School but City School still had a connection to me. And that make it possible for me to always re-establish my connection.

Anna, a staff member, explains that the LOW "makes emotional connections with students and learns about their lives outside the classroom, and what kinds of needs they have, and helps them fill those needs so that they can attend school", adding "that isn't a role teachers are comfortable with".

Robert, a student, described the LOW's role as "…helping people. Calling people up. For examples she told me if you were ever away she would call see what was going on. She cares". He remarked that "I need my Grade 12, that's my goal and [the LOW] helped me open the door so I can get back in and do my goal". In his case, the LOW conducts ongoing observations of his mental health status, and encourages him to focus on realistic goals. For his part, Robert knows that "if I need her help, I believe she'll give it to me".

The LOW identified several other students on whom she has invested considerable time and effort over the past school year:

Marty

Marty had completed three years of post-secondary schooling before becoming addicted to drugs, which led to his incarceration. He is currently in recovery, though he

has struggled to stay clean, and he is again enrolled in university. During the period when he needed intensive support, Marty contacted the LOW on a daily basis for several months. She has accompanied him to the university and advocated for him to receive funding for his education.

Liz

Liz fled an abusive marriage over the past year, and with no family nearby, she utilized the LOW on multiple occasions for both emotional support and practical assistance. She has now graduated, been given full custody of her young child, and is pursuing a career in interior design.

Eileen

A long-term City School student, Eileen has come and gone as family commitments have allowed; she has been in an unhealthy relationship marked by trauma and poverty. Her only goal for herself has been to graduate. She came in in tears one day, and spoke at length to the LOW about a plan to continue and succeed in school. Once she started attending again, Eileen formed a support group with a few other students, completed her courses and graduated in 2012. She has spoken on behalf of City School at several literacy events and at her graduation and she is now pursuing her career goal.

Sean

Sean is blind; he enrolled in City School to complete an English course, but when he expressed an interest in attending university, the LOW connected him to the local university, owing to its well-developed supports for students with disabilities. She attended TRU with Sean on four occasions, meeting with academic advising, financial aid, and disability services. In addition to financial assistance for tuition and technology expenses, Sean will have access to housing on campus, allowing him to live independently for the first time.

Kate

The LOW met Kate through another student, both of whom were clients at the Phoenix Centre. She had been clean for over six months and attended City School regularly for over three months before standing trial on old charges. Every week for a

month, the LOW attended court with Kate, who was ultimately given a conditional sentence, largely due to the supports she had in the community.

A week into the sentence, Kate shoplifted a food item worth less than a dollar, constituting a breach, for which she was re-incarcerated. The LOW kept in touch with her by phone and letter during this time. However, Kate was re-traumatized by prison, subjected to bullying and unable to receive spiritual support. Six months later, she was released and started using again. The LOW has lost contact with her, but remains hopeful Kate will seek her out again one day, as she had acknowledged that her education was important.

Jordan

Jordan, with no supports in place other than the LOW, has completed a year of probation without breaching or reoffending, and has been in the community and connected to the LOW for two years. He is nearly completely illiterate. At one point, he admitted to the LOW that he was considering committing a crime because he needed money and saw no other way to get it. The LOW has assisted him in recovering his identification, securing housing and connecting him to a work search program. Jordan has completed several sessions with the program, developing a resume and finding work that accommodates his cognitive disabilities. He has now been assessed by a Social Worker and received one-to-one support for his job search as well as counseling for anger management, job interview skills and job readiness. His goal is to make some money and be independent; though he has worked with a tutor in the past, Jordan is not yet ready to work on literacy. Because he is making progress in other areas of his life, the LOW supports him, believing he will become ready.

4.5.2 Finding 2: The LOW's professional and personal attributes contribute to establishing trust with stakeholders.

The 'attributes' category captures data from interview discussions about the personal and, more commonly, professional qualities of the LOW. 'Attributes' is considered to be different from 'support'; for example, *encouraging* would be a 'support' designation, while *creative* and *patient* would be 'attribute' designations.

Staff and students discussed attributes in equal measure, accounting for 25% of overall coded responses, and focused on the LOW's ability to engender trust and demonstrate acceptance. Stakeholder responses pointed to the importance of trust in establishing relationships with students. In one interview, a staff member and I discussed a student she felt was "typical…one, he's been to jails, two, he's a prolific offender, three, [he] has that motivation but he…at this time isn't able to make changes in his life that he wants to see". For him, the LOW has been

> …somebody that he could always turn to and trust…he has a long history, I know, and it includes abuse, and trust isn't made that easily…usually clients are really guarded and vulnerable, very vulnerable, but they don't want to make themselves extra vulnerable but putting that trust in other people and he's been able to do that with [the LOW] and I think it's been a huge part of the many successes that he has had. (Risa)

Staff members trust the LOW as well, in part because she understands and establishes boundaries "…so we could trust [her] to go alone to have a conversation with a student and that it would be therapeutic and it would help the student move ahead" (Anna, staff member). Risa pointed out that it was the LOW *role* that enabled these attributes to be utilized:

> I don't think that relationship can just happen if [the LOW] wasn't who she is as a person, but even if she was in a different role, she wouldn't be able to support him the way she can doing literacy outreach.

Sometimes, because they are able to place trust in the LOW, students remain connected to City School despite upheaval in their lives:

> …she was really good at drawing out that part of me that wanted to be there and wanted to be involved, active, present. She made sure that that was the part of me she dealt with and, you know, was recognized. And that was a huge thing, going into there is that person, that part of me was always recognized when I got in there. There's nowhere else in this city, or this world that that person was

> recognized at the time. You know, I had absolutely no
> redeeming qualities or value to society, yet I'd walk into
> City School and there was a part of me that was accepted as
> a member of that community… (James)

Staff and students also commented upon the LOW's ability to make students feel at ease. Anna noted that "…because her personality is approachable, [students] were comfortable approaching her in the classroom at breaks and just whenever they felt they needed something". Tony, a student, described the LOW as "warm and welcoming", adding "she has some sort of inner understanding of society, very friendly that way". Several times during his interview, he referred to the LOW as "consistent", a quality he credited with maintaining a stable classroom environment:

> I find her consistent…with her role there so that makes it a
> lot easier environment for me…I have schizophrenia and a
> lot of times that's a big issue why stuff doesn't get done
> because the environment…you want a safe place…that's
> very important right, because change, anything out of
> routine is almost a trigger.

Tyson felt that "without [the LOW] being there and being as accessible and as easygoing and as helpful as she is, like I said, you know I don't think a lot of these people would make it", adding "she's probably one of the best fits for that role; because of her personality…she genuinely seems to care. And she's patient, too…that's something, an attribute you really have to have in that job".

4.5.3 Finding 3: A demand exists for the LOW's outreach services in corrections, and these services provide a means for incarcerated students to connect with City School upon their release.

Reentry was discussed by five of eight interview participants, including all staff members and the only student who had attended the KRCC classroom program and was thus able to speak to this LOW role. 17% of coded responses pertained to this theme; other data sources were the LOW's record of KRCC contacts and my research journal.

For the last five years, the LOW has been providing outreach services at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre (KRCC), meeting students in the facility's classroom

program who intend to remain in the community and continue their education once they are released. The purpose of these connections is to support students during and after their incarceration so that they are able to meet their goal of continuing school. In this research, the conceptual category of 'reentry' examines the LOW's role during a student inmate's transition from corrections to 'the outs', including pre-release planning and post-release supports.

When the LOW began KRCC outreach in October 2007, a logbook was started with the intention of documenting all contacts made at KRCC. These handwritten notations were used to create a summary document including inmate names, dates, frequencies, purposes and locations of all contacts made, both initially at KRCC and subsequently, either at KRCC or in other locations. A column was added to track whether the inmate students who made contact with the LOW went on to connect with the City School program and, if so, what progress they made in course work. A sample of the summary document is provided in Appendix B. These data are enriched by narratives from staff and student interviews, and by inmate student vignettes which illustrate individual stories of reentry back into the community.

Following is a breakdown of several important findings that emerged from analysis of the LOW's record of KRCC contacts:

a. **There is a demonstrated demand for the LOW's outreach services in corrections.**

The LOW recorded 503 contacts over the period of October 2007 to April 2012; since no records were kept over parts of this period (July-August 2008, July-August 2009, August-Nov. 2011, plus an additional three months where no contacts were recorded), the LOW logbook contains records for 44 of the 55 months included in this time frame. In each calendar year, a client was recorded as 'new' when initial contact was made and 'continuing' when contact was made in any subsequent years. The contacts represent a total of 103 clients.

b. **Many clients utilize the LOW's services across more than one year.**

In the four years (2008-2011) for which contacts were recorded across a full calendar year, an average of 29% of clients were 'continuing', meaning they accessed the LOW's outreach services across two or more years. Figure 4.1 summarizes proportions of new and continuing clients:

Figure 4.1   Summary of LOW outreach contacts at KRCC
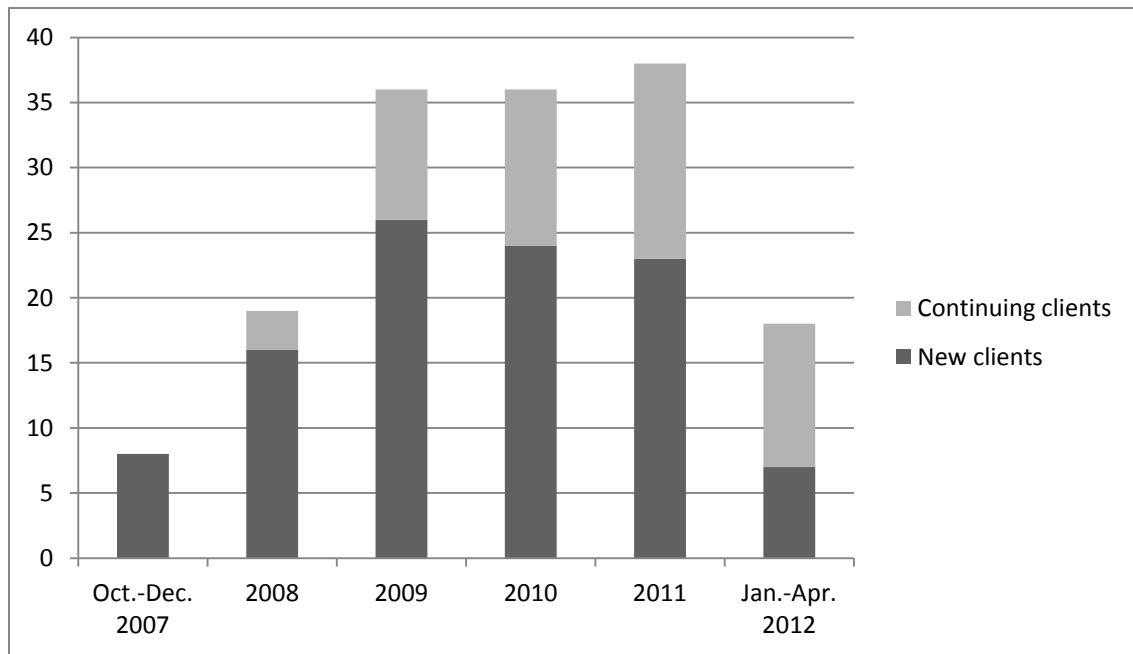
c.   A majority of clients (66%) connect with the LOW on two or more occasions.

The average number of contacts per month, for the 44 months in which outreach occurred, is approximately 11.43. The number of contacts per client varies, from one-time contacts to over forty contacts for one client across several years (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2   KRCC outreach – total number of contacts per client
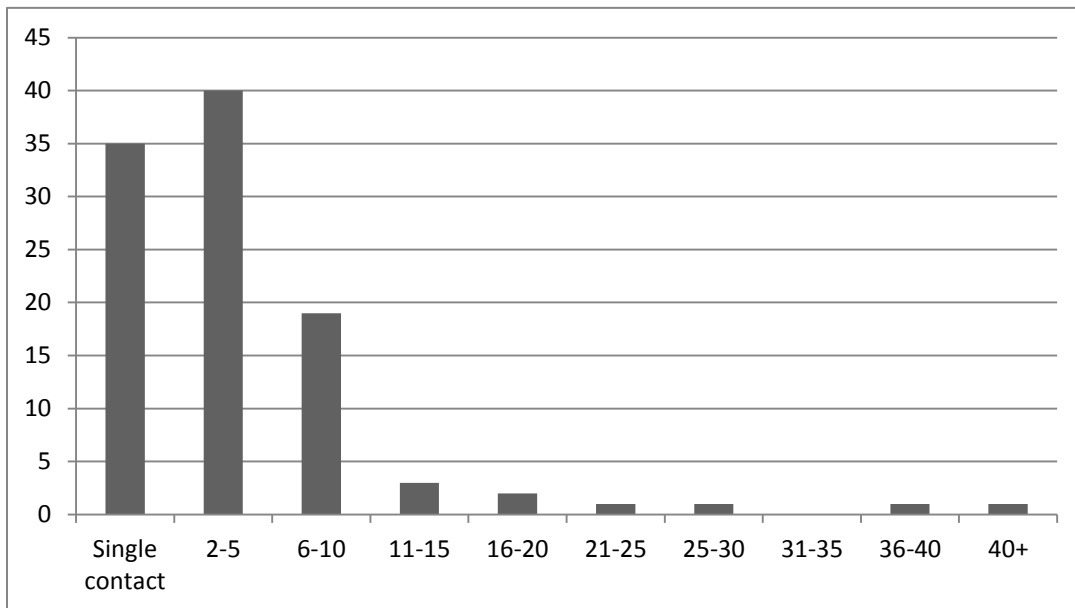
Approximately 34% (33.98) of clients make contact once; a further 39% (38.8%) connect with the LOW 2-5 times while incarcerated at KRCC; 18.44% make 6-10 contacts. 8.7% of clients connect with the LOW 11 or more times.

Many connections arise simply as a result of the LOW's presence in the KRCC classroom and on the living units; others come from classroom teachers' referrals. The LOW's role in assisting with reentry begins when an inmate is nearing release:

> It starts even before they come out; it starts with them when they're still in. [The LOW] would go up and meet with guys on their unit,… really start talking about a plan…a week to two weeks before they were released. So that looks like, the areas of your life; where are you living? Where are you going to? For example guys would be coming out and staying at the [New Life] Mission, so we'll start liaising that connection…to smooth it out because I think clients who are navigating the system, it's really, really difficult and these clients…come out of jail in an institutional setting, they are marginalized already just coming out of there, so to have [someone] who can, one support them, and two, advocate for them with community agencies, I think that was a strong part of what an outreach worker can do. (Risa, staff interview)

Staff member Valerie has also observed a lack of outside support during reentry:

> Prior to guys being released I've heard on more than one occasion guys saying I really don't want to come out because, you know, I have no support out there, I have nowhere to go, I have nobody. So in that way we can say we have a LOW and it's her job to do those types of things for you…help you succeed in getting yourself set up. Because they can't succeed in the program unless they have all those basic needs met and I think that's key to…people being successful in our program.

Having the outreach worker waiting for them upon release provides ex-inmates with a safety net during a time of great vulnerability:

> The difficulty I find is once guys are released, there's usually individuals hovering from the groups that they're wanting or hoping to detach from, in that area, waiting for them to get dropped off. (LOW interview)
>
> I've seen people get dropped off at the Greyhound and sitting outside at the bus stop, rather than having already somebody to rally around them and figure things out...the day of their release, you know what, they just need that extra support so they don't maybe fall back into what...pretty much what brought them to jail in the first place. (Risa, staff interview)

Often, the first thing a newly-released inmate requires is transportation:

> Probably the biggest thing for most guys is they don't have the transportation opportunities to go and get all these things set in place as soon as they're out. So getting on an intake form with ASK [AIDS Society of Kamloops], going down to Income Assistance and filling out paperwork, going to the New Life Mission and doing an intake to start a treatment or recovery process there, they don't have the actual means to get to these places. (LOW interview)

One case in point is that of TK:

> I picked him up, we talked about where he was going, what his goals are, what his plans were. We talked about, in great length, what he thought was missing in terms of support the last time he was released, and how we could get some of those supports in place this time. I brought him to City School, where we continued conversation and where he had lunch. We then went to ASK Wellness Centre where he had a housing intake…the general feedback I had from him was just the appreciation of having somebody to be with him during those eight hours, because if he didn't have somewhere positive to go or start doing productive things, he would have seen anybody on the street and veered…
> (LOW interview)

One of the key things TK identified was missing last time he was released was "someone to listen, and somewhere to go. Somewhere positive to go, and someone who would listen, and not judge him" (LOW interview).

The reentry period can be relatively short in duration, yet intensive and time-consuming, as illustrated by WS, with whom the LOW had over 17 contacts, seven of which took place in his first two months:

> …she met him at the bus station, she spent a full morning taking him here and there, income assistance, St. Vincent De Paul, what have you and then later in the week he's at City School and she's filing up bags of food for him because the food bank hours have changed…it's hours and hours in one week with one student because that seems to be the level at which…people need support. (Risa, staff interview)

d. **The majority of contacts (approximately 61%) occur at either KRCC or City School.**

To determine the locations and types of contacts made by the LOW during KRCC outreach, using the notations made in the LOW record of contacts, eight initial categories were defined as follows:

KRCC   Contact occurring at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre

SS   Contact occurring at City School

NLM	New Life Mission (temporary housing/recovery beds)
Phone	Includes phone calls to or on behalf of clients
Grad	Contact occurring at annual graduation ceremonies
Std. cont.	Client contacted the LOW, either by phone or in person
Community	Contact in the community
Unknown	Contact location was not recorded or is unclear

'Community', meaning contact occurring outside the other specified locations; it includes LOW outreach with clients at Thompson Rivers University, places of employment, home visits and support group or agency meetings including Mental Health, Probations and Forensics.

The 'grad' category was later subsumed into the 'community' category since in some logbook entries there was some uncertainty as to whether a particular contact should be tallied as the former or latter. Each contact was placed in one of the eight categories; categories were tallied on each page of the LOW Record of KRCC contacts document and cross-checked with the total contact tally for each page:

Category	Total contacts
KRCC	144
SS	161
NLM	33
Phone	58
Std. cont.	17
Community	69
Unknown	21
Total	**503**

28.6% of all contacts occur at KRCC, 32% occurs at City School, 13.7% of contacts take place in the community and 11.5% occurs by phone. Contact initiated by a student accounts for approximately 3% of all contacts. Where contact could not be determined from the information provided, or where contact location was not recorded, contacts were considered to be 'unknown'. Unknown contact locations and types accounted for 4.17% of all contacts. When New Life Mission contacts are reassigned as 'community' contacts

rather than separated for analysis purposes, contact in the community accounts for 20.28% of all contacts, as shown in Figure 4.3:

Figure 4.3   Contact locations/types; NLM data collapsed into 'Community'
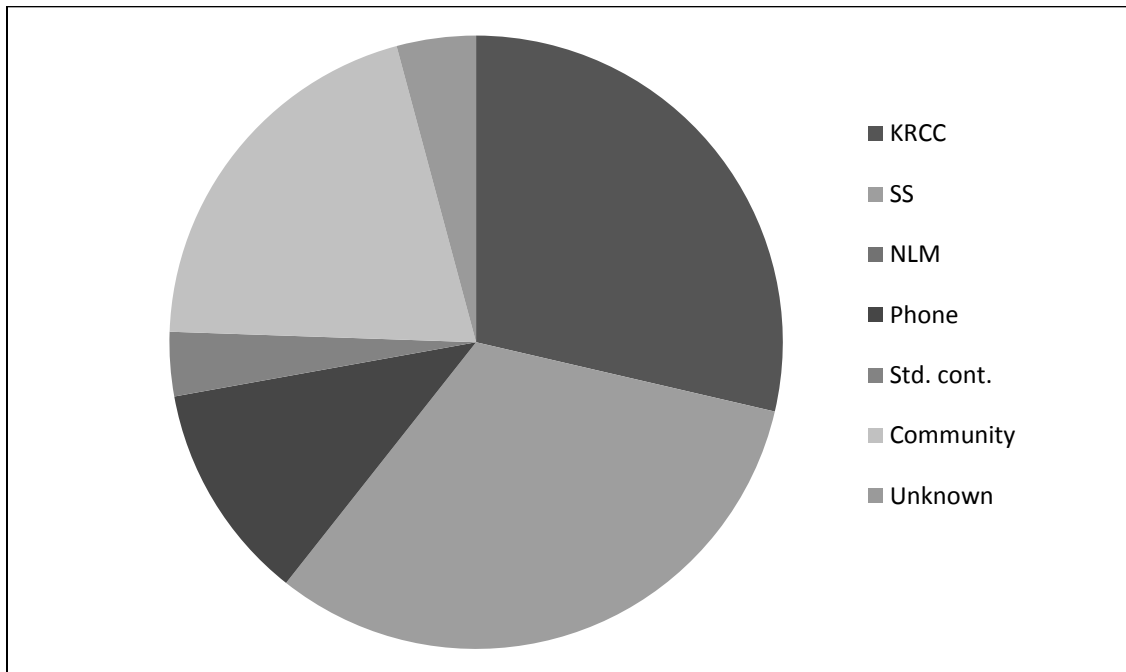
e. **Almost 41% of contacts are directly related to clients continuing their education at City School upon release. 38% relate to needs for treatment/recovery, housing, pre-release, employment and other immediate needs upon release or in the short-term transitional period.**

The purpose of examining the "purposes of contact" subsection of the LOW Record of KRCC contacts is to develop an understanding of why clients accessed outreach services,

or why they were likely referred. The LOW summarized the content of outreach activities at KRCC for each client, each time contact was made. Purposes of contact were initially organized into 14 categories. If contacts occurred in different periods (calendar years, or periods separated by months), contact purposes were recorded for each period. Recordings of purposes do not equate to number of clients, since when more than one purpose/topic was recorded in the LOW record of contacts, each purpose was included.

Where 'pre-release' was followed by bracketed details (e.g. housing), the bracketed details were used as the tally category rather than 'pre-release'. Recordings of purposes do not equate to total number of contacts since the frequency of contact was not included. For example, if six contacts were made with one client, and the recorded purpose of each was 'school-related' then 'school-related' was tallied once only. Where the stated purpose of contact was 'continuing school', the client's name was cross-checked against location of contact and against the file review information; if contact occurred at City School and the file indicated the student registered and made progress, this purpose was tallied as 'attending school'.

Tallies were done for each page of the LOW record of KRCC contacts summary document to allow for easier referral and revisiting of the designations made. Tallies were conducted multiple times, compared to ensure consistency, and then totaled for the entire LOW record:

Purpose of contact	Occurrence	Purpose of contact	Occurrence
Forensics	2	Continuing school	29
Treatment/recovery	14	Pre-release	19
Housing	20	Other	16
Follow-up	31	Unknown/unrecorded	13
Graduation	10	Attending school	15
Post-secondary	17	Employment	6
School related	28	Transition	4

Total occurrence: 224

Subsequent to the initial categorization of contact purposes, 'forensics' was subsumed into 'other' as the latter category included a variety of supports including reference letters, support in court and counseling referrals. 'Forensics' refers to case conferences

attended by the LOW on a client's behalf and do not therefore represent a client-driven purpose for contact. 'Graduation' refers to clients requesting information about annual graduation ceremonies; these occurrences were therefore added to the 'school-related' tally. Similarly, 'follow-up' refers to contact initiated by the outreach worker, and while it is usually pre-arranged, or permission for further contact is given verbally by a client, 'follow-up' is not client-driven and has therefore been removed as a purpose of contact. Because the purpose of contact could not be determined or was not recorded, the 'unknown' category was removed. Finally, the 'attending school' category represents contacts which occurred at City School after a client was already enrolled; as these are not client-driven and can be regarded as another, on-site form of follow-up, this category was also removed.

Purpose of contact	Occurrence
Treatment/recovery	14
Housing	20
Post-secondary	17
School related	38
Continuing school	29
Pre-release	19
Other	18
Employment	6
Transition	4
Total occurrence:	**165**

Of the 165 occurrences of the remaining 10 purpose categories, 67 (40.6%) are directly related to clients seeking information and support in continuing their education at City School, enrollment in the program and school-related supports while enrolled. Treatment/recovery, housing, pre-release, employment and transition categories include those immediate needs upon release or in the short-term transitional period; these account for 63 occurrences (38.2%). Post-secondary (10.3%) and 'other' (10.9%) account for the remaining occurrences.

f. Over half (53%) of clients who accessed the LOW's outreach services during

incarceration connected with City School upon their release.

The summary table of KRCC contacts, derived from the LOW Record of KRCC contacts, was reviewed by the program coordinator, the LOW and a City School teacher in order to determine which clients attended the City School program. Their collective recollection served as a starting point for gathering data intended to examine the extent to which KRCC students accessed City School to continue their education. Ultimately, files were reviewed for all 103 clients, allowing a fuller picture to emerge about the progress made by students who did enroll.

Student progress in course work is reported by staff upon program exit; for each course in which the student was active, a percentage of course completion is reported. A report of 3% completion indicates that introductory course work was completed by a remanded inmate student; 5% indicates introductory course work completed by a sentenced student; and for a City School student, introductory work represents 10% of a course. Students were designated as making 'some progress' if they completed this introductory work at a minimum. Students who completed one or more courses were later removed from the 'some progress' designation, even if they had other courses uncompleted.

55 of the 103 clients (53.4%) who accessed the LOW's outreach services at KRCC did connect with City School; of those who did, 9 earned a BC Adult Dogwood Diploma (16.4%), 26 made some progress (47.3%), 8 completed at least one course (14.5%) and 12 made no progress (21.8%)(Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4   Progress outcomes of KRCC outreach clients at City School
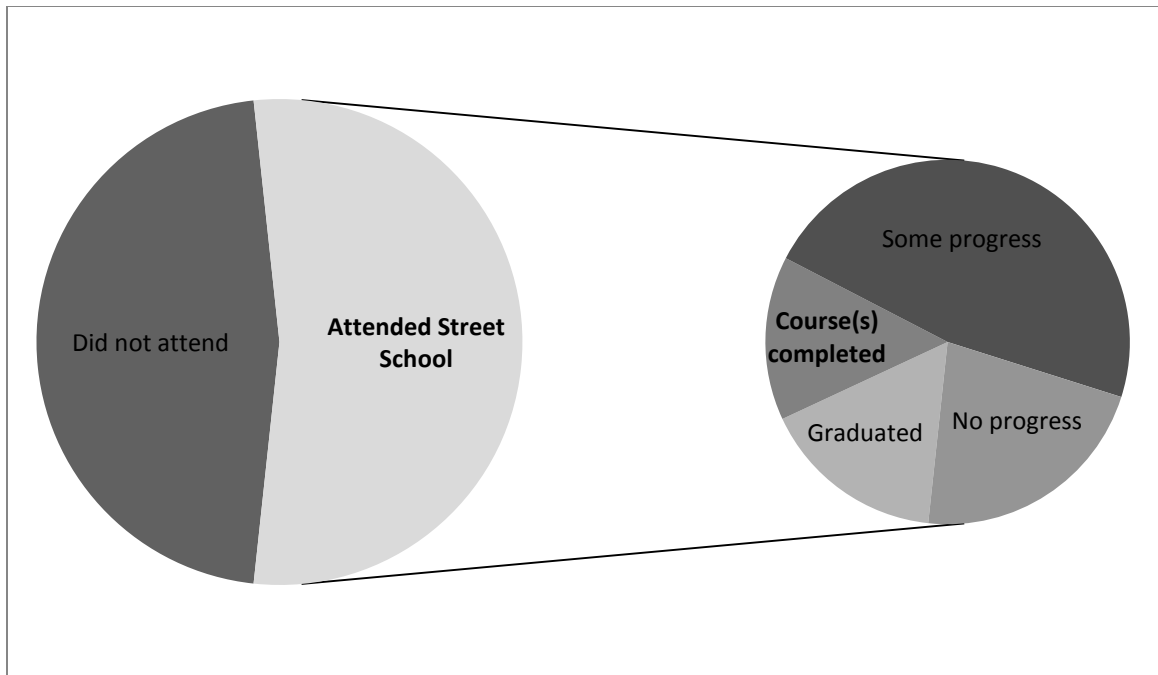
Of the 48 clients who did not attend City School, records indicate that 9 received an Adult Dogwood Diploma through the KRCC school program; in all, 17.5% of all clients who utilized the LOW's outreach services are known to have graduated.

A typical student trajectory is described by James, who completed his Adult Dogwood Diploma over a period of four years, all the while oscillating between homelessness, multiple remand incarcerations and periods of relative stability, enrolling, withdrawing and re-enrolling at City School on several occasions. James spoke of his releases from KRCC:

> …you won't know you're being released until a guard shows up at your door, says 'we're goin'…there's no preparation given, no advance notice…there's not even any contact information afterwards if you don't have something set up with community corrections, probation, they you're…dropped off at the Greyhound with whatever you went to jail with…

The LOW concurs;

> As far as I know, they're dropped off at the Greyhound with what they came in with. If they're going to be on Income Assistance they're given a paper from Corrections, saying

> that they've been officially released, they can go to Income Assistance and get their file going and get a check…sometimes they can qualify for emergency funding, so I think it's something like $60 or $80. They're given a check when they leave KRCC from Income Assistance. That's it.

Overall, the LOW's record of contacts was examined in several ways, yielding information about the need for outreach services in corrections, and the potential for outreach to facilitate a relatively seamless transition to City School. It also suggests that the LOW is helping to address other immediate reentry needs such as drug and alcohol recovery, housing and employment.

4.5.4 Finding 4: The LOW liaises with community agencies to maintain communication, network, share information and cross-refer clients.

Data pertaining to liaison were primarily gathered from documents and observations, and supplemented by an interview with the LOW that included a focused conversation about liaison, providing the bulk of interview data about this conceptual category. In addition, five of eight stakeholder interviews contained mention of the LOW's liaison role. Liaison was coded for 7.5% of student interview responses (3/40 codes) and 12.5% of staff responses (6/48).

City School's 2011 United Way grant application speaks to the extent of liaison:

> In 2009 our LOW made approximately 190 contacts with outside agencies on behalf of approximately 60 students. In 2010 this number rose to over 250 contacts for an estimated 70 students…the contacts were in relation to housing, employment, health and other fundamental services.

In addition to growth in numbers of contacts with other agencies, those agencies are also referring clients to the school program; thus, liaison facilitates program growth and improves students' access to services:

> Another indicator of our success in meeting the needs of the community is reflected in the growing diversity of our student population. For example, the number of aboriginal students enrolling in courses, completing courses and

graduating has risen steadily over the past five years. It seems that because work spreads quickly, and because we continue to improve communication with local First Nations bands, the First Nations Education Council, the School District First Nations District Principal, the Aboriginal Training and Employment Center (ATEC) and the BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association, this demographic has risen from less than 20 students in 2007 to over 150 in 2011.

…we are attracting more students who have already obtained a Dogwood but are seeking upgrading for the purposes of transitioning to post institutions or improving their employment opportunities, so that this group now represents about 10% of our student population…all of these diverse students have very different needs, and again are assisted by our LOW to connect with the service agencies which can best assist them.

The LOW corroborates the grant's assertions that liaison is intertwined with program growth and ability to support students; offering another example relating to liaison with corrections:

I would say though the numbers have probably doubled in the last two years, with referrals we get from Probations and from John Howard. We're getting more federal parolees now than we did four years ago...because of awareness about the program…and being able to support programming, and other obligations, drug and alcohol programming that they have to do during the day, to fit school into that.

At the LOW's invitation, I attended a meeting with a probation officer, who verified that a gap exists in programs, such as drug and alcohol counseling for remanded offenders, many of whom are given 'time served' and released into the community without supports, conditions or a parole period. One such client contacted the LOW upon his release from custody earlier in the year. He wanted to enter treatment, which required a referral from a drug and alcohol counselor. However, as a remanded inmate he did not have access to a counselor during his incarceration at KRCC. This meant he experienced

a delay in accessing treatment, as the referral wait time through other avenues was 3-4 weeks.

During one interview, the LOW recognized that the time she spends on liaison has increased markedly over the years. She remarked, "...the first year I had ten agencies that I did once a year. And now there's [42] that I do twice a year..." The LOW provided an example of one day spent connecting with nine local agencies, including a youth center, a youth addictions counselor, a volunteer organization that supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and an employment agency for persons with disabilities and barriers to employment.

Of students, only Robert alludes to liaison as part of the LOW's role, observing "she can help you get some support…I'm sure she knows how to get a hold of people and say this is so-and-so and this person needs help in this area". James refers to this role tangentially, as he mentions connecting at the Canadian Mental Health Association clubhouse.

4.5.5 Finding 5: The LOW's workload has increased with City School program growth, resulting in a need to monitor workload pressures and be cognizant of time expenditure.

This conceptual category addresses the LOW's workload, including how it has changed over time, and her strategies for managing workload pressures. Workload accounts for 22.5% of coded responses across all six categories, although only staff interviewees commented on it. Because it is one of two categories that directly addresses the research sub-question "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" this category is separated out from the overall data. Once separated, workload accounts for 85% of coded responses. Workload is analyzed below in terms of the City School intake process, additions and subtractions from workload over time and a representative sample of LOW time expenditure.

4.5.5.1 Intakes

Intakes are interviews the LOW conducts with new students; they consist of an introduction to the City School program, registration paperwork and discussion about various supports the student may require. The intake process was designed to allow the LOW to form meaningful connections with new students, and this original intent has not changed, despite the growth of the program.

During 2011, intakes became an indicator of ongoing tension between the City School program's rate of growth and its philosophy of making personal connections with students. This is reflected in a research journal entry remarking "in June we talk about quality; in September we talk about numbers".

Early in the 2011-2012 school year, instead of scheduling six intakes over two mornings per week, the LOW was booking intakes five days per week and 'double-booking' (scheduling two intakes for the same time slot). In one week during February, 2011, 28 intake appointments were scheduled. The LOW had just closed 27 inactive student files, dropping the attendance list to 170; nine days later it was back to a high of 202 (research journal). This trend continued: in September, 2011, the beginning of a new school year, the LOW was scheduled to conduct 38 intake appointments. The program coordinator advised her that no prospective student should have to wait more than two weeks for an intake appointment (LOW interview). As a result, the LOW was unable to conduct any liaison or visits to KRCC, because from the beginning of August until October, she did not have a single day in which no intakes were scheduled (research journal).

In an October staff meeting, the LOW expressed frustration with the pressure from other staff to increase intake appointments whenever the program had a slow day. She reiterated a desire for follow-through on the decisions staff makes collectively about wait times and the pace of enrollment (research journal). By then, staff had agreed to return to the earlier practice of conducting intake appointments on two mornings per week; however, eight intakes were immediately booked for the next day alone. The coordinator remained insistent that prospective students not be made to wait more than two to three weeks. However, at another staff meeting later that month, he acknowledged that the

'mechanism of intakes' was taking up a lot of time and that it was not the best use of the LOW, who continued to struggle with the pressure to take on students as quickly as possible.

4.5.5.2 Workload pressures

The LOW recounted her original role description when she joined City School in 2007, during a school year that saw a total of approximately 35-40 students enrolled:

> When I first started it was providing tutor support, building positive relationships with students and doing some follow up, not spending very much time in the classroom environment, being out the community with students…and doing that up at [KRCC] as well and working with guys up there who are getting released and then connecting with them in the community within 24 hours of their release date…all of those things are still happening. (LOW interview)

The LOW also pointed out that she conducts the majority of intakes, which was not in the original job description, and that "doing follow-up with 200 students is very, very time-consuming". Over time, responsibilities have continued to be added to the LOW's list:

> Lots of little things…usually the grad has kind of fallen on my lap [contacting graduated students, keeping an attendance list, dinner seating arrangements, meetings with Alliance Church, phone calls, ticket sales], the Mother Goose, the food share, the volunteers, I've kind of had that going over the last three years. Probably more so, because our numbers have grown so much I've been doing more things in the last two years than I did the first, for instance going to court with students, home visits with students, taking students to Income Assistance, spending numerous hours at ASK Wellness helping students go through the intake process for housing, taking students to look at housing, going up to Thompson Rivers University with students. So all of that, which I think is what my job was supposed to be, has grown, but…more of the admin things and the organizational things, I don't have enough time to do that. (LOW interview)

In addition, the LOW is involved in fundraising efforts:

> …another thing that has taken up I'd say a good chunk of
> time…is putting together information for presentations for
> funding my role, for my job [for example] writing down
> job descriptions for letters going to corrections. I had to do
> a letter for ICS [Interior Community Services]… Raise a
> Reader, looking over the CALP grant every year…a
> presentation for the Rotary Club…and then we have a big
> presentation for the United Way. (LOW interview)

The LOW usually also mentors social work practicum students twice a year, a
commitment of two days per week for three months each time.

When asked about how much more growth the current City School program could
reasonably manage, the LOW replied "for this position to be run effectively I don't think
we can handle more than we have right now. In terms of job performance and being able
to connect and have quality relationships with the students we have". She acknowledges
it is not realistic to know the needs of 200 students and connect them to supports in the
community, and manages by

> …being able to identify a handful of students who have
> high risk and high needs, and focusing the majority of my
> time in working with that group of students. And touching
> base with, and providing support in smaller pieces to
> students who may not have as high of a need. (LOW
> interview)

Anna, however, considered who was being left behind:

> There were students coming in, particularly well-adapted
> young women who had children and needed their high-
> school diploma to change career paths…one was really a
> high-functioning woman, she worked for Canada Post, but
> knew that she would be laid off in the next year. And [the
> LOW] had *no* time to help her explore how to get another
> career, what courses she could take at TRU, who to talk to
> at TRU, pretty intimidating for somebody just still working
> on their high school diploma.

Anna attempted to fill this gap, but felt "it was work that [the LOW] could have done to help this person quickly become successful in her life. But instead...her time was taken with only the most extreme cases". She continues

> …it just seems like there's other people that really need help and could more quickly and easily overcome their challenges and become successful but she doesn't have time to deal with those. She only has time to deal with…the highest level of risk.

Valerie observed that

> …a lot of time she's having to be at ten places at the same time…I don't know for her sake if there is any better way of having her job being more structured or somehow, or maybe some things need to be released from other types of jobs to be able to focus more on just the needs of the student.

Valerie felt the LOW's increasing workload was only partly a result of program growth, saying "it's things that she's probably felt she's needed to take on to better meet the needs of the clients and… the program has grown and she just needs to do more. So where's the happy medium? I don't know". When asked if she had any concerns about the LOW role, Risa identified a connection between workload and self-care, commenting that while teaching staff has increased, "there's only ever been one LOW":

> …so when your population increases but your [outreach] staff don't increase, that leaves you really vulnerable to burnout, taking on too much, not having enough time to practice self-care or your own coping strategies because you're just on to the next, on to the next, and especially when you're in a…chaotic or high-risk area such as the jail, and those clients are multiplying too, I think that person has to be really careful.

Moreover, Risa observes that workload can be difficult to manage, because "the nature of this field [social work] is crisis-driven and circumstance-motivated so you can't predict what your day's going to be like"; instead

…you have to leave yourself flexible to deal with whatever situation comes up…who knows who walks through that door with whatever crisis they have going on, and you take that on and you need to deal with the crisis, but when you have so many other things that are going on and somebody else has a crisis, you almost…have to triage your clients because there's only one of you…the people who are having a bit of a rough day, but could use some support probably won't get it anymore.

While much has been added to the LOW's workload over time, some responsibilities have been reallocated. Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, the City School hot lunch program had been run by through a community work experience program, but due to hygiene and food safety concerns, the LOW needed to provide hours of supervision in the kitchen. Before that, the LOW herself was responsible for the lunch program two days per week, which took up a significant amount of time in preparation and cleanup. As of 2011-2012, however, the lunch program was contracted out as a paid position, releasing the LOW from her involvement and allowing her to spend her time elsewhere.

In addition, in the second and third years of City School's operation, the program grew quickly and staffing did not keep pace, meaning the LOW spent a great deal of time in the classroom, assisting students and the teacher. By the fourth year, increased staffing freed her up to return to conducting outreach and allowed her to leave the classroom as needed.

Finally, citing workload pressures, the LOW did not mentor any practicum students in the 2011-2012 school year.

4.5.5.3 LOW time expenditure

In order to develop a picture of how the LOW's time is apportioned to her various responsibilities, the LOW was asked to keep track of her time expenditure over a three month period between April and June, 2011. These data were provided for a total of 27 days, representing a total of 156.5 working hours. Time expenditures are considered to be representative of the LOW's normal, day to day activities; activities which were not representative were excluded. For example, the LOW spent 2.5 days in June attending an

annual conference, which was not a common occurrence. Similarly, the last three days of the school year in June were excluded as not being representative of LOW time expenditure; these included a staff and student barbeque, an extended staff meeting and an administrative day.   The LOW's time expenditures were initially grouped into six categories (intake, agency liaison, reentry, student support, meetings, clerical and follow-up) based on detailed information from the LOW and supported by the researcher's journal and observations. LOW recordings labeled 'classroom' are counted as 'support' unless otherwise reported (e.g. phone calls, a common type of follow-up). The LOW's time spent at KRCC and in a client's immediate transition from KRCC is categorized as 'reentry'. Meetings held on behalf or in support of a student were included as 'support'; thus, 'meetings' refers to all meetings not directly related to students. 'Clerical'' indicates activities such as updating brochures and registration forms, filing and updating attendance lists.   In some cases, where two activities are reported during the same time period, the time is split evenly between themes. Figure 4.5 illustrates LOW time expenditure by percentage of total documented hours:

Figure 4.5   LOW time expenditure (%)
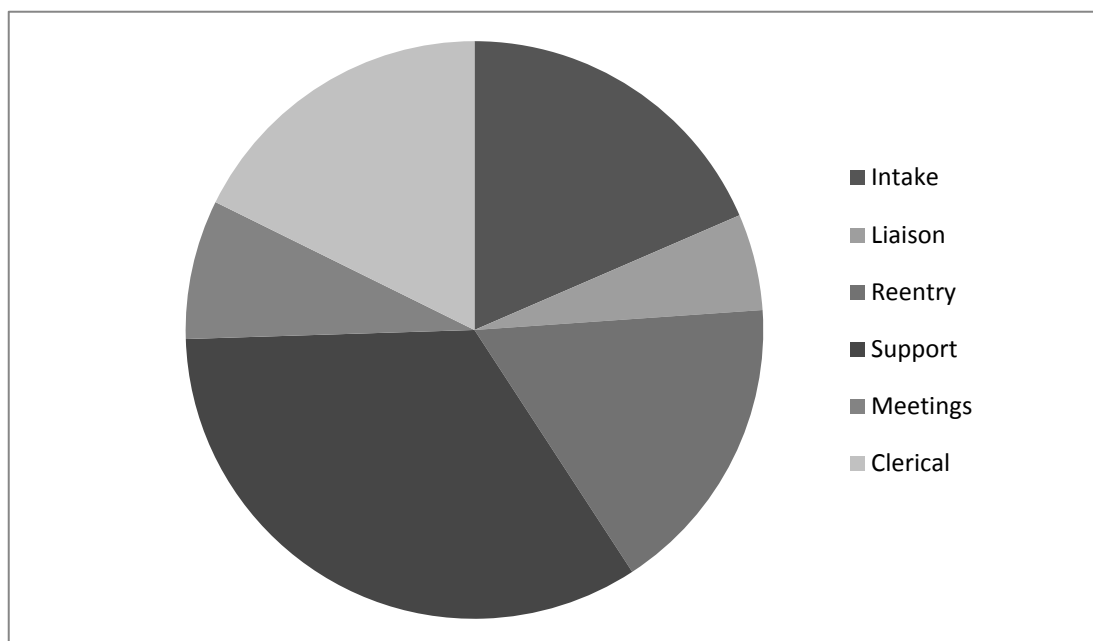
Based on revisions to conceptual categories conducted during the data analysis process, 'follow-up' was combined with 'support', increasing the latter to 33.7%. The outreach worker spent approximately 18.5% of her time on intakes and almost 18% on clerical duties. During the 27 days for which time expenditure was recorded, 26.25 hours (16.9%) was spent at KRCC ('reentry') and 8.5 hours (5.4%) on agency liaison. Ten meetings accounted for 12.25 hours (7.8%) and follow-up with students accounted for the remaining 19.25 hours (12.3%).

The LOW, when asked to indicate the relative importance she places on different aspects of her role, identified student support as ranking first in importance, followed by reentry and intakes. Agency liaison ranks fourth, because as the LOW explained, she has already spent five years establishing connections with other service providers in the community. Time expenditure (Fig. 4.7) correlates somewhat with this ranking, as the LOW spends approximately 50% of her time on her two most important functions. Similarly, the relatively low percentage of time spent on agency liaison is likely a result both of workload pressures and the initial groundwork having been laid with community agencies, so that in the 2011-2012 school year, the LOW added only two new agencies to her roster. However, a time expenditure of 18% on clerical duties seems anomalous, representing a disconnect between what stakeholders identify as important in the LOW role and how her time is actually being apportioned.

4.5.6 Finding 6: Funding for the LOW position is contingent upon annual grant provisions.

As a conceptual category, 'funding' captures financial and budgetary data, including fundraising efforts, successes,challenges and funding sources. Funding is the second of two conceptual categories addressing the research sub-question "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" The main source of data relating to funding is documents such as grant applications, funding requests and reports, primarily '1701' reports. Funding is also discussed in three of seven staff interviews, accounting for 15% of coding when separated by research sub-question and 4% over all six categories for all stakeholders.

Form 1701 is an electronic data report, generated by schools and uploaded by the Ministry of Education throughout the school year. The information collected on these forms is used in the calculation of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students for public schools, which are in turn used to determine funding levels for these schools (British Columbia Ministry of Education). As such, a review of past 1701 records serves to illustrate the growth of the Continuing Education (City School and KRCC classroom) program over time.

For Continuing Education programs, funding from the Ministry of Education is allocated after an adult student has completed a 'course start' (defined as 3% of course completion for remanded inmates, 5% for sentenced inmates and 10% for all other students). Both the City School and KRCC programs keep running tallies of course starts and submit monthly reports to their school; school administration is responsible for providing data to the Ministry of Education three times per year. Since the last data snapshot of the school year occurs in May and the first snapshot of the following year in September, May reports were used in this research to determine total numbers of course starts for the preceding school year (e.g. May 2011 captures all course starts in the 2010-2011 school year). These may vary slightly from official Ministry Reports, but they are considered accurate since a running tally is kept throughout each school year and monthly totals are submitted to administration, giving staff the chance to catch and correct errors.

An overview of program growth is provided in Table 4.4, below:

Table 4.4   Funding numbers for TREC Continuing Education, 2006-2012

School year	Number of course starts reported (SS + KR)	Number of FTE students (source: 1701 verification reports)	Staff (SS + KR)	Number of courses required to break even (240 = 1 FTE)	+/- 'break even' (courses)	Surplus Funding generated (rounded to nearest $1,000)
2006-07	942.6	117.825	1.8	432	+ 510.6	262,000

2007-08	730	91.25	2.8	672	+ 58	30,000
2008-09	1035	129.375	1.9	792	+ 243	124,000
2009-10	1312	113.75	3.3	792	+ 520	266,000
2011-12	788	98.5	3.5	840	- 52	- 29,000

2006-2010 funding based on per-course funding of $512.25; in 2010-2012 increased to $553.75, or $4,430 per FTE for adult students, up from $4,098.

2010-2011 data not included; errors in BCESIS system led to unreliable data for this year, as per school's vice-principal.

Source for 'Number of courses reported' and 'Number of FTE students': 1701 documents provided by school administration.

Table 4.4 represents a conservative picture of program growth for two reasons. First, in cases where a discrepancy existed, (e.g. in 2011-12, City School staff-generated 1701 running tallies totaled 376 and Ministry of Education 1701 verification reports totaled 459), the lower numbers are reported. Second, the 'break-even' course numbers, determined by multiplying staffing allocation by 'FTE' (equivalent to 30 students x 8 courses = 240 courses), represents in itself a conservative estimate according to district administration.

In four of five years, the Continuing Education program generated district revenue over and above that which was required to maintain staffing levels. While some costs, such as building rental, are not factored in, it seems reasonable to suggest that the program has the potential to continue to generate revenue, and that a portion of surplus could be used to support the LOW role.

At present, the continued existence of the LOW position is dependent upon monies provided through a variety of grants and partnerships, summarized in Table 4.5, below:

Table 4.5   Grant monies generated for LOW/Continuing Education, 2007-2012

Funding source	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
CALP	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000
United Way				10,000	15,000
Raise a Reader	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Rotary Clubs				2,000	
City of Kamloops					2,500
Total funding generated	45,000	45,000	45,000	57,000	62,500
Total funding for LOW position	38,000	41,000	41,000	51,500	58,500
Total funding for other allocation	7,000	4,000	4,000	5,500	4,000
Expenditures for LOW position (hours/week)	30	30	35 *	35	35

* In 2009-2010 the LOW position became permanent, full-time, representing an increase in cost for the position due to increased hours, salary and benefits.

Total funding generated has increased by approximately 43% over five years, from an initial investment of $45,000 from two sources to $64,500 from four sources. For the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years, grant funding has covered the entire expense of the LOW position.

The bulk of funding for the LOW position comes via the Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP), administered by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, which in 2011-2012 distributed $2.4 million in funding to 72 community adult literacy programs in British Columbia (British Columbia Newsroom, Jan. 10, 2012). City School received its first CALP grant in the 2007-2008 school year. The grant of $40,000 was applied to the LOW's salary, program supports such as bus tickets, and a 10% administration fee paid to City School's post-secondary partner, Thompson Rivers University (this partnership is a requirement for the CALP grant); in subsequent years, this administration fee was reduced to 1%. The CALP grant represents a five year-long commitment by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology, summarized in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6   Summary of CALP funding commitment, 2006-2012

Year	Instructional time (hours/week)	Est. total students (CALP)	CALP grant (LOW)	CALP grant (other)
2006-2007	8	35-40	n/a	n/a
2007-2008	15	80-100	33,000	7,000
2008-2009	20+ *	80-100	36,000	4,000
2009-2010	23	225-250	36,000	4,000
2010-2011	26	-	36,000	4,000
2011-2012	29	400-450	36,000	4,000

* 2nd digit unreadable in original document.

While the funding that enables the LOW's role seems robust, it is important to note that dependence on government and non-profit revenue sources leaves the program vulnerable should any of these supports be removed. Grants are awarded annually and require interim and final reports as well as re-application for continuing funds; there is no guarantee from year to year that funding will remain stable. This concern was summarized by the program coordinator, who pointed out that "City School would cease to exist in its present form without the CALP grant" (personal communication, Oct. 2011).

4.6 Summary

This chapter has chronicled the data analysis process and identified key findings in six conceptual categories relating to the role of City School's Literacy outreach worker. These categories were derived using data obtained from stakeholder interviews, a participant observer research journal and a variety of documents. Findings indicated that a majority of stakeholders realize that the LOW supports students both in and out of both the City School and KRCC classrooms. This role is tied, in part, to the professional and personal attributes that allow the LOW to earn the trust of stakeholders. Offering outreach entails having a thorough knowledge and positive working relationship with other services providers in the community; accordingly, the LOW liaises with a wide range of agencies.

Two conceptual categories, workload and funding, pertain to the research sub-question "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" Workload, while discussed only by staff members, offers an avenue to address this question, one that will be examined further in the following chapter. Finally, the issue of funding for the LOW role is integral to the City School program's continued ability to offer the level of student support for which it has become known.

This chapter has dealt with organizing and managing large amounts of data, in part by applying a template approach, which encourages flexibility in order to accommodate the process of formulating conceptual categories. The development of these categories

requires the researcher to apply thoughtful deliberation throughout the analysis process, reducing the data into a comprehensive narrative. The next chapter will consider the potential meanings underlying the data and offer recommendations as well as suggest future research directions.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this bounded case study is to illuminate the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker (LOW) within a BC interior school district's City School adult/continuing education program. An examination of this unique position could facilitate greater recognition of the role of outreach in adult education, and add weight to an evidence-based rationale for a decision to entrench outreach funding in an adult education program structure. The uniqueness of the LOW role makes this exploratory case study potentially valuable to other programs considering formalized, funded outreach services. In addition, an investigation of the role could benefit the program itself, allowing for reflection on the LOW's function and charting a course for future outreach services.

A case study methodology was chosen and data were collected from document review, participant observation and stakeholder interviews. Data were analyzed and coded according to *a priori* and emergent conceptual categories. This research centered around three key inquiries: "How does a Literacy Outreach Worker facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/Continuing Education program?", "How do stakeholders perceive

the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?" and "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?"

This chapter will consider potential meanings underlying the data. First, the major findings and methods for their synthesis are introduced, followed by discussion of each key finding. The chapter concludes with a discussion of limitations of the study, offers "actionable recommendations" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 203) and suggests future directions for research.

Six key findings were derived using data obtained from stakeholder interviews, a participant observer research journal and a variety of documents. Findings indicated that a majority of stakeholders recognize that a main function of the LOW is supporting students both in and out of the City School and KRCC classrooms. This role is tied, in part, to the professional and personal attributes that allow the LOW to earn the trust of stakeholders. Offering outreach entails having a thorough knowledge and positive working relationship with other services providers in the community; accordingly, the LOW liaises with a wide range of agencies. Two conceptual categories, workload and funding, pertain to the research sub-question "How can an adult education program's structure and personnel cultivate conditions that empower a LOW to perform the role effectively?" In particular, the issue of funding for the LOW role is integral to the City School program's continued ability to offer the level of student support for which it has become known.

In this chapter, I will discuss each finding separately, offering connections to the literature and, for some, recommending specific steps that could be taken to address areas for change that emerged during this study.

5.2 Interpretation of Findings

5.2.1 Finding 1: Stakeholders recognize that a key element of the LOW role is providing student supports.

When student interviewee James claimed "the people that City School is trying to meet, which is anywhere from marginalized to semi-marginalized to various difficulties

and whatnot, they're exactly the people that need [the LOW]", he encapsulated what stakeholders perceive most strongly about the role of outreach – its provision of student support.

The primacy of the LOW's supportive role is suggested by its frequency of reference in stakeholder interviews and in data depicting the percentage of time the LOW spends in supporting students. Support can be seen as a central, integral theme in the LOW's work; indeed, several other conceptual categories are closely related to it. For example, the reentry process requires specific types of support offered at a certain point in a student's life, when he is preparing for release from incarceration and reintegrating to life 'on the outs'. Liaison is conducted because a comprehensive awareness of and connection to other service providers in the community is essential to the LOW's effectiveness in referring students to the services they require; this form of support is bolstered when the LOW accompanies students to appointments and advocates alongside them.

The LOW offers supports in keeping with a relationship-based perspective in social work, one that focuses on creating a rapport with students at intake, establishing trust and developing and maintaining a relationship that supports students' self-identified needs and goals. Supports extend beyond the classroom, because adult students' lives are comprised of multiple and often conflicting factors.

Stakeholder interview data largely reinforced the importance of the LOW role in supporting students. While Anna pointed out that "there's other cities that run adult education without a literacy outreach worker and they do manage to offer social emotional support by bringing social workers in", she acknowledged that without the LOW, City School

> …would go to being like any other adult ed. program in the country. Which is fine. It offers adult graduation, it teaches people how to read, it helps some people graduate…would it be like it is now? No, it wouldn't be as good. It really wouldn't. I think that [the LOW] manages to find supports that are needed for people so that they can continue in school. Probably you'd lose 30 or 40% of your clientele without her, because they wouldn't be able to meet those needs themselves.

Staff member Valerie agreed:

> I don't think this program would be as successful as it is
> without somebody in her position. I think the personal
> absolutely hands-on care that we give to people is really
> vital to a lot of the people that come…I think without that
> it would be like any other program. (Valerie)

Similarly, even though Tyler (a student) did not himself utilize the LOW, he observed that her role was fundamental to supporting other students in the program.

That the LOW conducts a majority of intake interviews for new students is an example of a best practice as identified by Hubble, one in which barriers can be identified and "intervention strategies" (Hubble, 2000, p. 23) put in place to increase students' chances of achieving their goals. However, very few of the programs Hubble surveyed used an outreach worker to conduct these important first meetings with new students; in contrast, City School is utilizing the person most equipped to identify, explain and offer supports.

Having the LOW conduct intakes also aligns with Quigley's recommendation (1997) that intakes should be conducted not by teachers, but by a "less symbolically authoritative figure" (p. 8), because students are more likely to seek support from the latter.

Therefore, while, as discussed in a later section, intake represents a significant proportion of LOW time, this expenditure is warranted by the opportunity to identify and connect with incoming students who will require supports and by the opportunity to begin to develop supportive relationships.

5.2.2 Finding 2: The LOW's professional and personal attributes contribute to establishing trust with stakeholders.

That a conceptual category encompassing 'attributes' emerged in this research was somewhat surprising. At the outset, my assumption was that Literacy Outreach was central to providing education to marginalized adults, those the City School program has sought to serve since its inception. It was therefore unexpected that the personal and professional attributes of the worker herself would feature prominently in the findings.

The 'attributes' category captured data from interviews in which staff and students discussed these qualities in equal measure, accounting for approximately one-quarter of overall coded responses, and focusing on the LOW's ability to engender trust and build supportive relationships.

Risa, a staff member, and I discussed a particular student who found himself able to trust the LOW despite his long history of abuse and broken trust. The LOW's work with this student demonstrates a strength of a relationship-based approach in social work, that it helps "… to restore trust in other human beings where this has been lost…this work is likely to be more effective in the context of a sustained relationship and can often take a long time" (Trevithick, 2003, p. 168).

Sometimes, a student can trust that City School will always welcome him back, as in the case of James, a student who felt he could always return to City School despite circumstances that often kept him away for long periods. Although he felt he had "absolutely no redeeming qualities or value to society", he would reconnect with City School, where "there was a part of me that was accepted as a member of that community".

James personifies Kerka's (1995a) and Belzer's (1998) depictions of stopping out as a student's temporary program exit due to circumstances in his or her life. Each time he joined the program, James made gains, and he ultimately graduated despite several stopouts. The LOW's role in this case demonstrates best practice as described by Comings (2000), who described a program's responsibility to help students make plans to "return and be successful later" (p. 3).

Staff members also spoke of trusting the LOW, in part because she is able to maintain healthy boundaries in her client relationships. Based on staff commentary and my own observations over several years, the LOW demonstrates balanced boundaries as defined by Davidson (2005):

> Workers with 'balanced' boundaries are authentic and
> caring…they use their authority appropriately: remaining
> aware of their position of power, they take care to neither

exploit their clients' vulnerabilities nor infringe on their rights… [they] attend to the clients' unique needs while maintaining the key distinctions of their professional role in the relationship". (p. 519)

This conceptualization of balanced boundaries fits with a relational model, one which contrasts the traditional distance model governing interactions between social workers and clients. While the distance model is characterized by neutrality, emotional distance and an emphasis on the worker as expert, in the relational model or approach:

> Rather than experts, social workers are seen as collaborators… that assist clients in working toward self-identified goals… assessment becomes collaborative, privileging clients' meaning and understanding of their experiences, needs and strengths. (Graybeal, in Dietz & Thompson, 2004, p. 14)

Thus, the LOW is empowered to encourage clients to take the lead in articulating their needs, then offer support toward the client's self-identified goals while continuing to respect boundaries, both the client's and her own.

In retrospect, personal and professional attributes were a factor in the decision to hire the LOW. The LOW recalled that the job description for the position sought a candidate who had "experience with mental health, addictions, corrections, [who] would be comfortable providing academic tutor support, working up at the jail and at the New Life Mission, and they required someone to have either a Diploma or a Social Work Degree." While the LOW did possess the required education (a Diploma in Human Services), she did not have the requisite experience . However, it seems that personal characteristics were a primary determining factor in her successful application:

> … I was out of school for five months, so I didn't have a whole lot of experience in those areas, but was asked to apply anyways and, basically was offered the position based on my interview due to my…outlook and philosophy on working with at-risk people even though I didn't have a whole lot of experience under my belt yet. They were looking for more of a personal fit, someone who could easily make connections with people on a relationship

level. Which I could do, very easily, but I didn't have a lot
of experience with adults in terms of corrections, mental
health and addictions. My experience at that point had
mostly been with youth. (LOW interview)

This demonstrated consideration of personal characteristics as at least equally
important as academic qualifications is supported by the literature. For example, Seipel et
al. (2011) found "minimal importance attributed to academic records…by both educators
and administrators" (p.457), who looked instead for ethical, honest, respectful and
empathetic candidates.

While it is reasonable to assume that personal and professional qualities contribute to
a good fit between an outreach worker and a program that utilizes outreach, further
research may yield more detailed information about the importance of certain attributes,
such as the ability to establish and maintain boundaries, demonstrate acceptance and earn
clients' trust, to the function of outreach in adult education programs. In particular, a
larger study, or one able to employ random sampling, could capture a broader range of
student perceptions across genders, ages, and intensities and frequencies of outreach
contact.

5.2.3 Finding 3: A demand exists for the LOW's outreach services in corrections, and these services provide a means for incarcerated students to connect with City School upon their release.

This research project aimed to examine the ways in which a Literacy Outreach Worker
could act as a support person for offenders re-entering the local community, enabling
them to continue their schooling in as uninterrupted a manner as possible. As such, the
LOW role is an important supplement to supports offered by corrections; for remanded
offenders especially, such supports are few. Although sentenced offenders are more
likely to have some access to pre-release planning, BC Corrections does not provide any
post-release supports similar to the LOW.

Prior to beginning, my assumption was that BC Corrections' support is necessary for
the LOW to offer outreach at KRCC and that that support should include provision of
some funding toward the LOW's work at KRCC. While these assumptions have held, the

scope and extent of the LOW's involvement at KRCC exceeded what I had assumed at the outset of this research. While I had seen the LOW at work inside KRCC, converting logbook records into analyzable data was valuable in that it illustrated the degree of benefit corrections receives, in exchange for little support beyond allowing the practice to continue. It should be noted that the security clearance granted to the LOW is, from a logistical standpoint, very valuable as it increases the number of inmates she is able to contact. If she were restricted to visiting areas and hours only, her impact would be a fraction of what it is. In this way, corrections' willingness to allow her into the restricted area, which is not accessible to the public, is indicative of Corrections' recognition of the value of her work.

A key question driving this research was that of how, and to what extent, the LOW's work demonstrates best practices in one continuing education program. Here, this question pertains specifically to reentry, and as such, what follows is my identification of three ways in which the LOW's role seems most closely aligned with what the literature suggests are important components of supporting reentry. These are: offering support immediately upon release, providing social supports and developing a formal partnership between corrections and the community.

While it is important to note there is a lack of "robust evidence base from which to make definitive statements about what might be considered to be 'good practice'" (Day et. al, 2011, p. 68), the LOW's provision of short-term supports, which are planned in advance and carried out as soon as an offender is released, suggests an example of best practice because it recognizes the precarious nature of the reentry process, one in which "the initial period after release is thus the riskiest time for both the public and former inmates themselves" (Rosenfeld, 2008, p. 87), and provides the "aftercare component" (Petersilia, 2004) to educational programs started in a correctional centre. Travis' (2005) principles of effective reentry include "seizing the moment of release":

> The criminal justice system is like an assembly line. Police
> hand off arrests to prosecutors who in turn bring cases to
> court; in court, judges impose sentences on the guilty who
> in turn are sometimes sent off to prison. At the back end of
> this assembly, line, prisoners are released from prison.

Ironically, this critical step in the assembly line receives the least attention in the world of criminal justice practice. (p. 333)

The LOW role supports "seizing the moment of release" (Travis, 2005) by connecting with students within 24 hours of release, to offer support and to facilitate the student's transition into the community. Here, the LOW relies on the student himself for information; communication with community supervision (parole) is conducted on an ad hoc basis. This appears to be in contrast to Travis' (2005) identification of social service agencies (including education) as one of several "concentric circles of support" that "must be aligned to provide services to every member of this unique clientele, particularly at the time of greatest need – the moment of release" (p. 337). However, the LOW's activities here are consistent with Goebel (2005), who states that "reentry efforts should begin while offenders are still in correctional facilities and preparing for release, continue through their immediate transition back into the community, and then help to sustain them with support services such as job search assistance, substance abuse counseling, and mental health treatment" (p. 9). They also closely echo the *Returning Home* project's call for "continuity of services from prison to the community, with community services providers linking to prisoners before release" (Visher, 2007).

The LOW's role as a social support during offender reentry aligns with research demonstrating the importance of such supports (Cullen, 1994; Visher &Travis, 2003; Hochstetler, 2010) and may be especially important for those clients who do not have family or peer supports (Clear et. al, 2005). These supports are largely practical, addressing immediate needs such as clothing, food and housing.

The supports offered by the LOW, both before and after release, are aligned with best practices as described in the literature around offender reentry; that these benefits are disproportionate to the costs to BC Corrections of providing them suggests the time has come for Corrections to extend its financial support.

BC Corrections' unwillingness, to date, to provide this support may be due to its reticence to fund a program over which it may have less than full control. Corrections must demonstrate that its programming efforts merit taxpayer dollars, and it is held

accountable to the public for its mandate to "protect communities and reduce reoffending" (The Strategic Plan of BC Corrections, 2010-2013). However, although this study is limited to one outreach worker and one correctional centre, the City School program has collected preliminary evidence suggesting a demand and need for outreach services in correctional centres.

Similarly, while it may be understandable that budgets are stretched in provincial corrections, a small investment in literacy outreach, perhaps a corrections-driven pilot project in one BC regional correctional centre, would be in keeping with the values described in BC Corrections' 2010-2013 Strategic Plan. These include courage ("trying something new"; "leading by example") and curiosity ("listening to new ideas"; "challenging the way we do business, be willing to try new ideas"). Hopefully, this and other research efforts will elevate the profile of outreach such that corrections begins to see its value in supporting reentry.

While it is a clear benefit to the City School program that over half of the LOW's outreach clients at KRCC connect with the school upon release, it is also important to note that 38% of client contacts pertained to non-educational matters such as drug and alcohol treatment, recovery, housing, employment and other immediate and short-term reentry needs. This suggests that not all inmates' pre-release needs can be met by corrections. However, as discussed in relation to the 'workload' category, demands on the LOW's time and energy continue unabated, and as the position exists solely because of grant funding, it seems reasonable that corrections provide some monies toward the LOW's outreach work.

BC Corrections seeks evidence-based rationales for its decision-making, and, anecdotally, lauds the efforts and successes of the KRCC school program, largely due to its outreach component. An increased commitment to outreach would represent a direction both innovative and evidence-based, enabling corrections to demonstrate support for a grassroots strategy.

In 2008/2009, the average cost of provincial and territorial custody per inmate was $161.80 per day (Calverley, Juristat, 2010). However, in 2012, the Assistant Deputy

Minister, Corrections branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, reported that "our more revised number for the custody side is about $188 a day" (B. Merchant, Hansard, April 24, 2012). Put differently, using the latter rate, the cost of incarcerating a single offender for one year is approximately $68,000. The current annual cost of the LOW position, entirely grant-funded, is therefore roughly the equivalent of keeping one offender in custody for one year, meaning that in *under* one year, if the LOW could be factored into just one offender's staying out of custody, the position will have cost-recovered. In fact, every day an ex-offender remains out of custody represents a savings to BC Corrections; a more modest investment of $5,000, for example, is the approximate equivalent of incarcerating an inmate for one month in a provincial correctional facility. Risa commented that

> …part of the [LOW] position is preventative in the sense
> that the more she can help and find stable housing, or
> helping people succeed with their education and therefore
> make it maybe less likely that guys will return to
> jail…prevention with less guys rotating through the system.
> (Risa)

This observation is borne out by Literacy BC's assertion that "studies show that prisoners who participate in prison-based education are less likely to re-offend. Every dollar allocated to vocational and basic education programs for offenders yields a 200-300% return on investment" (Literacy BC, n.d.).

Risa did acknowledge, however, that corrections and outreach are built around different core values. She made an interesting point; that corrections cannot offer what the LOW offers, but that the roles are both necessary:

> …coming from a correctional background where your
> motivation is safety of inmates and stuff
> versus…holistically looking at people's lives and seeing
> what they need. I think those are two very important things
> but very different things and I don't know how the same
> people doing health and safety can, can shift that into really
> looking at what people need.

The power differential between inmates and corrections officers is a part of prison culture, as is a general dislike and distrust of corrections officers. Given these dynamics, it is possible that corrections officers may be unable to meaningfully help because they cannot establish trust while maintaining power. However, notwithstanding the potential incongruity of corrections' provision of supports similar to those offered by the LOW, such supports are for the most part restricted to those inmates who are sentenced, and whose sentence involves community corrections. If not, they are unlikely to be able to access release planning through corrections. In fact, remanded inmates are generally not informed of their release at all until it is imminent.

Even if an inmate does know his release date, his ability to make preparations on his own can be hampered by frequent transfers between correctional centers on the basis of bed space, difficulties in accessing his personal effects, his ability to pay for a phone card and even by the phone message which prefaces and identifies calls originating inside a correctional centre, which can preclude making contacts, (e.g. with employers). Similarly, the LOW's ability to breach the trust divide and to conduct outreach in corrections can be compromised by frequent inmate transfers between correctional centres; in this way, a connection with the LOW can be easily disrupted.

It is not surprising, then, that this research revealed a demand for the LOW's services; as a person able to enter the corrections environment and offer help, a valuable component of the LOW's role is "meeting people where they're at and offering support and having that time to spend with people where they're in an environment where that doesn't happen" (Risa, interview). It is clear that this need will continue to exist, and that the pattern of outreach services established over a period of five years places the LOW in a position to strengthen and enhance reentry supports. However, it is not reasonable to suppose that these supports should be offered without some financial support and community partnership with BC Corrections.

Literacy BC recommends supporting and funding prison-based education programs "to ensure incarcerated individuals are able to attain a grade 12 equivalent" and "provide assessment and referral to literacy programs especially for the 50% of inmates who serve

short prison sentences …ensure that follow-up and support are available so that they can continue literacy training". The latter recommendation aligns with the LOW's role in supporting reentry and continuity of schooling started in KRCC, and echoes Visher's (2007) discussion of policy applications of the Returning Home longitudinal study of reentry:

> In the community, possible operational changes include the continuity of services from prison to the community, with community services providers linking to prisoners before release…and, importantly, formal organizational partnerships between corrections and community organizations. (p. 98)

This section has offered three ways in which the LOW's provision of outreach services in a correctional centre demonstrates best practices: by offering support immediately upon release, by providing social supports and by developing a formal partnership with corrections. The latter is perhaps the most challenging of these practices, because such a partnership should involve a financial commitment on the part of corrections toward funding the LOW position.

5.2.3.1 Recommendation: reentry

Advocating for continued funding for LOW outreach at KRCC is a priority, and this advocacy should involve school and district administration. It may be that corrections, itself hierarchical, will be more likely to consider requests made by higher-level administrators than it has thus far proven to be in conversations with the program coordinator.

Although this research suggests that BC Corrections contribute financially to outreach at KRCC, there are also logistical ways in which corrections can facilitate the LOW's work. First, corrections can give greater credence to requests from the KRCC classroom that inmates who are developing pre-release supports with the LOW not be transferred to another correctional centre. Inmates need to be able to make concrete plans for reentry, but it is difficult to make these plans on their own. Second, corrections should continue to

allow the LOW access to inmates in the KRCC classroom and on living units where possible.

5.2.4 Finding 4: The LOW liaises with community agencies to maintain communication, network, share information and cross-refer clients.

The low prevalence of mention of liaison in interviews was not surprising, since liaison occurs behind the scenes. Liaison may function to determine which resources may be available to a particular student; it also allows the LOW to gain a general understanding of what each program offers. It is important to note that there is overlap between liaison and support, in that the LOW's awareness of community program offerings often directly benefits individual students. For example, each year, the LOW connects with a local senior's complex whose members provide Christmas hampers for needy City School students. In 2011, the LOW worked with seniors to ensure that a generous hamper was delivered to a mature female student whose husband, six children and one grandchild all live in the home. The LOW connected another two students, a young couple expecting their first child, with a program that provides a nutritionist, support workers and parenting programs.

Liaison plays a particularly important role in serving students in corrections; as staff member Risa noted, the LOW is "trying to gather resources in a community, in a society that doesn't always want to offer things to guys coming out of jail". For students who are on parole or probation, liaison provides a venue to ensure that their needs and the needs of the program are given due consideration.

However, this was not always the case. In 2011, the LOW and two other staff members signed a court document agreeing to supervise a particular student - a sex offender who was in the community under a number of probation conditions - while he attended class. Probations had strongly advocated for the individual, yet by the time staff were made aware of this student's conditions, he had already been in the program for a year. Given that City School operates in a multiple-use facility, this raises some obvious

concerns for the safety of other users, including children, and also for the risk to students that they will breach their conditions.

In June 2012 another, similar case presented itself when a student, at intake, declined to sign the School District's Internet use agreement. The LOW ascertained that the student was on parole and received permission to discuss that student. In this instance, due to a number of safety concerns, the student was not accepted at the school. This was a direct result of the LOW's proactive efforts to improve lines of communication with parole and probations staff, and it is important that these lines remain open since, as the LOW observed, referrals from Probations and the John Howard Society had "probably doubled in the last two years" and that "we're getting more federal parolees now than we did four years ago".

These concerns reinforce Day et. al.'s (2011) outreach program review findings that "communication with community corrections officers is ad hoc and often based on the relationship with the particular individual who is responsible for managing the client; and the service receives no information… about risk of reoffense (or identified risk factors)" (p. 76). In July, 2012, in an effort to continue to improve liaison, the LOW attended a staff meeting with community corrections. This was a chance for the LOW to describe the City School program in detail and to articulate the need for the school to be informed of probation conditions.

Liaison activities conducted by the LOW represent best practices as described by Kinneavy in that they "identify gaps in provision and unmet and developing needs…and to establish mechanisms for guidance and referral" (Kinneavy, as cited in McGivney, 2000, p. 56). The LOW connects with local agencies in order cast the net wider to attract potential students. Liaison also allows the LOW to maintain a comprehensive understanding of available resources, which in turn empowers her to refer students to the services from which they would most benefit. The time spent in establishing connections with local agencies over the past five years has paid off in this respect; liaison presently takes relatively little of the LOW's time in return for the benefits to students of maintaining these connections.

116

5.2.5 Finding 5: The LOW's workload has increased with City School program growth, resulting in a need to monitor workload pressures and be cognizant of time expenditure.

Following a brief illustration of changes to the LOW workload over time, three particular components of the LOW's workload are discussed in this section. Collectively, these three components represent over half of the LOW's time. Clerical duties, which emerged from an in-depth examination of the LOW's time expenditure, are discussed first, followed by intakes and reentry. Each contributes significantly to the LOW's workload; as such, it is worthwhile to reflect upon whether each warrants a continued investment of time and energy.

The LOW's original job posting in 2007 identified key responsibilities for the role, including intakes; tutoring in basic reading and math; advocacy for disadvantaged adults struggling with poverty, health issues, and addictions; liaison between adult learners and social service agencies; outreach in corrections; promoting the program and extending connections to the aboriginal community.

The scope of these duties was broad from the outset, and the role was subjected to pressures as the program began to grow. One staff member recalled "we were short-staffed":

> Her role got a little bit distorted during that time and she had to stay [in the classroom]. And she might be doing tutoring as well as jumping up and assisting with social-emotional needs and a lot of times there was conflict between what she should be doing, when we would see somebody was needing that social-emotional support and what she had to do to help the classroom run efficiently. So there was conflict there.

Eventually, this conflict was addressed, allowing the LOW to refocus:

> …we grew to balance that…so that I could manage the students that needed academic help who were capable of graduating and…then she did shift and start to spend more time outside of the school doing more face to face time with the students in the social-emotional capacity. (Anna)

Anna observed that

> …literally, [the LOW] job could be taken with ten students.
> She could spend all her time with the top ten. And we
> almost need two of her…she's capable of handling the
> highest-risk students and then somebody else to handle just
> the lower needs ones, just the ones that need help with
> finding the right job or area to go to at TRU.

An examination of LOW time expenditure found that clerical duties take almost one-fifth of the LOW's time. If, as the literature suggests, intake is an essential component of adult student program retention, these clerical duties should be examined more critically to determine whether they are the most appropriate use of the LOW's time or whether that time could be reallocated to intakes. This begs the question, if the LOW does not perform a given clerical activity, who will? However, it seems a number of duties fall to the LOW by default; the somewhat vague nature of the term 'support' lends itself to having almost anything fit. For example, there does not seem to be any reason for the organization of annual graduation ceremonies to fall to the LOW. Both the LOW and I were surprised by how much time is actually being spent on clerical duties, which, while helpful to staff, are not directly related to the LOW's primary role of supporting students.

One stakeholder expresses a different perspective, however, when asked about any conflict that existed between time spent with students and administrative matters:

> There is a considerable amount of time spent [by the LOW]
> on that more administrative stuff, organizing grad,
> organizing special lunches, but I think that it balances. I
> think that those are things that need to happen for the
> social-emotional health of our students. To have the grad
> and have that chance to be celebrated that's important for
> them emotionally, so in that way I think it balances. (Anna)

This demonstrates, again, the overarching LOW function of 'support'; although not directly related to student support, some 'clerical' functions can be seen to contribute to what Anna refers to as social-emotional health.

The LOW time spent on intakes illustrates a constant tension in the program between the need for course claims, which are used by the Ministry of Education to determine

funding levels, and the need to provide the support services that are promised. While having the LOW conduct intake interviews is a demonstration of best practice, the logistics of conducting these meetings proved highly problematic as the program grew. At the time of this research it seems a balance has been achieved through program organization: adhering to an appointment schedule; implementing a registration package pickup prior to appointments to ensure those students who return for an interview are indeed ready to register; and placing a limit on the number of students enrolled at any given time. Intakes do represent a great deal of LOW time, but this investiture is, as discussed earlier, warranted by the delivery of best practice.

From a social work perspective, intake "involves assessing whether the service users can use the help that is on offer and if so, what kind of help best fits the individual in question and their situation". A worker conducting intakes will find that "not all service users need or desire a relationship…this fact should emerge during the assessment" (Trevithick, 2003, p. 168). This is an example of why, despite the amount of time it takes, the LOW should, ideally, continue to conduct all program intakes. Intake is crucial to identifying those students who will need the LOW's supports, and to determining what those needs are and how best to match them with what is available in the community.

As discussed in the next section on 'funding', it is important to point out that the LOW spends as much time on reentry as on intakes; however, from a funding perspective the latter garners far more in adult student funding from the Ministry of Education. While this research suggests that reentry supports offered by the LOW may be related to half of incarcerated clients connecting with the City School program upon release, the reality of adult education funding is that these students will already have been claimed for funding while attending the program's sister school in a correctional facility, and thus they do not represent a significant source of additional funding that can be correlated to these supports. Again, without some sense of commitment from corrections, the LOW's provision of reentry supports does not make sense in terms of funding. Furthermore, it detracts from time spent in supporting City School students.

5.2.5.1 Recommendation: Workload

The LOW needs to be able to continue to determine the most effective allocation of her time and energies, and to balance these resources against the needs of a program serving up to 200 students, many of whom are marginalized, at any given time. This includes continuing the current practice of identifying and supporting a group of high-risk, high-needs students, as well as transitioning students to other supports both while they are in the program and after they leave.

Staff pointed out that as a satellite location, City School serves a greater number of students than its home school, and that it operates without the same levels of administrative, clerical and counseling support. Because the Ministry of Education funds adult students per course, City School must serve a larger volume of students in order to generate similar funding as its home school, which is funded on a per student basis. Staff has estimated that an attendance list of approximately 200 students at any given time is required in order to meet funding projections. However, despite the large number of adult students the program serves, it is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect one outreach worker to administer to the student support and outreach service needs of an attendance list of this size. As stakeholder Risa emphasized, in the early days of City School the LOW was "working with 15 to 20 people and figuring out their social situations…but when you multiply that by ten…there's no way that you can invest yourself in 200 people's social issues". The current size of the program virtually demands that the LOW select a core group of students for whom she can offer intensive supports, and that others with less urgent needs be served as thoroughly as her remaining resources allow.

Second, in the continued absence of funding from corrections, the LOW role should refocus time and energy from pre-release reentry supports towards supporting current and incoming City school students. Students who are incarcerated can continue to be made aware of the LOW's role through classroom teachers, and they can continue to connect with her upon release. However, the time spent in pre-release planning is, at best, a patchwork effort that cannot compensate for corrections' lack of pre-release planning, especially for remanded inmates. As staff member Anna concluded,

> …people need support coming out of [corrections] but that's not her
> responsibility if they won't fund it…there's a definite need there but

maybe it needs to be looked at through a different channel. Could the John Howard Society do more? Could a different branch of social services do more? It doesn't have to just be on City School.

Ultimately, the LOW and the program will need to take a hard look at how LOW time and effort is being spent, in order to determine whether the pre-release needs of students should continue to be offered.

5.2.6 Finding 6: Funding for the LOW position is contingent upon annual grant provisions.

Grant funding has increased over time to the point where it can fully support the LOW position and provide a small reserve. However, the position's vulnerability to any revocation of funding was demonstrated when, in the 2012-2013 school year, a large the CALP grant, which had been awarded in previous years, was not received. A second funding pressure emerged when the LOW's employer voiced its concern that, as a permanent full-time employee, the LOW should not need to take on-call shifts to augment the hours she works at City School. In past school years, the LOW worked between 30 and 35 hours per week, a shortfall in full-time hours that was filled by a weekend shift at another location; thus the LOW has had to work six days per week to ensure full-time pay. These concerns, and the threat of funding cuts in particular, makes it imperative to consider how best to counter funding pressures. Two organizations, the School District and BC Corrections, are discussed below in terms of their levels of support.

It is important to note that the School District supports the LOW position in several ways. First, the Kamloops Thompson School District/Community Literacy Plan acknowledges that the district "provides much needed resources and an infrastructure of support, including administrative support, office and meeting space, access to printing facilities, and input from specialized personnel" (p. 37) to the Literacy in Kamloops (LinK) group. Second, the District plan's adult literacy action items include "advocate for funding for Literacy Outreach Worker for City School" (p. 39):

> LinK's role is to be a strong advocate for City School and
> in particular the Literacy Outreach Worker…outreach work

121

is integral to the continued success of City School…our goal now is to support City School in advocating for adequate funding for the LOW position, and to continue to build awareness of this program and improve access to it. (p. 40)

Third, at a crucial time when a large grant was not received, the School District agreed to provide funding that would allow the LOW position to continue for one school year (2012-2013), with the proviso that other sources be secured beyond that year. Finally, the School District has made it possible for City School to have one day per week of administrative support, during which an administrator dedicates time and resources to exploring and securing the grants that will be necessary for outreach to continue.

Because it receives a tangible benefit from the LOW's outreach work inside a regional correctional facility, BC Corrections represents one logical avenue to secure funding. However, the City School program coordinator indicated that he has approached BC Corrections formally at least once a year since the 2007/08 school year; conservatively, he estimates he has met a total of seven times with the two Assistant Deputy Wardens who have served in the past five years. He commented that in this time, he has not felt any sense of progress toward securing funding from corrections.

Moreover, at a 2012 Corrections Education Conference, when a provincial corrections program director announced a need for a grassroots strategy, City School's program coordinator proposed, given that the City School outreach model has worked with corrections for five years, that corrections conduct a pilot test of the efficacy of outreach, implementing a similar model in another correctional centre. However, this suggestion was all but ignored. This unwillingness to acknowledge initiative and advocate for a grassroots-level effort with some proven success does not auger well for a continued partnership; it seems unreasonable to continue providing outreach support provided to inmates during reentry in the absence of commitment on the part of corrections. While BC Corrections' 2010-2013 Strategic Plan contains a pledge "to develop and implement new programs and services to prepare individuals for cognitive-behavioural, educational and vocational programs to assist their reintegration into the community" (p. 4), in the

case of outreach, this goal does not seem to extend to exploring partnerships with outside agencies.

This contrasts research such as that by Vacca (2004); citing a project which found vocational education programs were successful in part because they provided follow-up services for inmates when they are released (p. 299), Vacca points to the recommendations of a Department of Corrections Education Task Force that "the significant savings gained from reduced recidivism could usually offset…modest increases in spending" (p. 301). Travis (2009) adds that investments in "effective programming…for all returning inmates, with all the resources needed" would be cost-effective because they would pay for themselves by reducing future criminal justice and corrections costs". Travis testified that "successful reentry is more than an individual act of will. Successful reentry requires strong community support networks and comprehensive services" (p. 40).

In contrast: on one occasion, when the City School program coordinator approached BC Corrections for funding, the response was 'who asked you to [provide outreach]?' Perhaps this meant that since corrections itself did not conceive of outreach, the initiative did not merit consideration. This is a difficult position to understand, given that a ready-made program is being offered, and in fact has been conducted for five years, with measurable results, at no cost to corrections thus far.

5.2.6.1 Recommendation: Funding

BC Corrections should contribute funding to support the LOW position; without financial support, the LOW should discontinue outreach efforts aimed at assisting with reentry. Given that the program coordinator's efforts have been unsuccessful, despite his excellent working relationship with corrections, any further requests should be made by higher-level administrators, such as School Board officials. Perhaps if District-level advocacy for the LOW was presented, corrections would be more willing to consider supporting outreach.

In addition, other potential sources of funding should be explored. For example, two administrators with Decoda, a provincial literacy organization (formerly Literacy BC),

suggested the possibility of approaching other government ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Development or Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation, for literacy funding. Decoda, itself a provincial government initiative, identifies literacy as being connected to social justice and employment; if the LOW's role can be explicitly shown to affect these outcomes, new funding opportunities may emerge.

5.3   Limitations of this study

One drawback of one-on-one interviewing is that the researcher may not elicit much information from an inarticulate or shy individual; soliciting volunteers means only interviewing students who are willing to share in the first place. In addition, the nature of the LOW's role is such that students may come to trust her and share information with her that it is not reasonable to expect them to share with the researcher. Finally, interview responses are drawn from a low sample size; this, and the heterogeneity of adult students in general means the described experiences of this study's student participants may not be representative of all City School learners. Further, since no female students volunteered to participate, the voices of women are not represented except through 'vignettes' rather than personal accounts.

Finally, I cannot rule out the possibility that staff participant responses may be influenced by the history of our working relationship and our degree of familiarity with each other as colleagues; while this may provide rich detail to which an outsider would not be privy, it may also reinforce biases I hold.

My role as a participant observer gave the advantage of minimizing disruption that would have occurred had an outsider conducted this research; perhaps its main encumbrance was that data could only be collected as time permitted amongst daily teaching and classroom duties.

5.4   Suggestions for further research

A future research direction would be to track the rate of reoffending, as defined by BC Corrections, for students who begin an educational program inside a correctional centre and reconnect with it after release. In this study, over half of clients who accessed the LOW's outreach services during incarceration connected with City School upon their

release, but it is not known how many of these clients reoffended. Determining these reoffending rates would be a logical next step and may add to the evidence that outreach does indeed align with reducing reoffending.

A second future research direction could involve investigating the feasibility of implementing a LOW to focus on outreach services for aboriginal students. This LOW could develop existing connections with aboriginal student services at the local university, friendship centre, health and employment services as well as drug and alcohol treatment options tailored to aboriginal healing and spiritual principles. It is well-documented that aboriginal offenders are over-represented in correctional facilities, and a need also exists for aboriginal outreach in corrections; targeting outreach efforts to this population merits further investigation.

Similarly, the perspectives of students who suffered negative experiences in previous schooling, including former residential school students, would be valuable in illuminating ways in which an adult education program could best support these students.

It is reasonable to assume that the students who participated in this research did so because they had utilized the LOW's supports; a random sampling of students would garner larger numbers of participants and a broader range of perspectives about the role of outreach. As such, a future research direction would be to gather data from a greater number of students, both at intake and at intervals; while such a design was not appropriate for this study, it could shed further light on the role of outreach in adult education. Furthermore, in order to expand the scope of stakeholder perspectives represented, future research could focus on agencies with which an outreach worker liases. Such a study could yield information about 'best practices' in inter-agency collaboration.

Transferability can be enhanced in case study research by employing what Merriam (1998) refers to as typicality, which involves "describing how typical the program, event, or individual is compared with others in the same class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations" (p. 211). Future research could look beyond one program and investigate the larger picture, e.g. by comparing different adult programs in

different school districts to compare supports offered to students. Specifically, the City School program could be compared to a similar-sized program in another BC School District, ideally one that works with another regional correctional centre, in order to contrast a program with outreach to one that does not have an outreach worker.

Finally, future research could include an objective review of the Literacy Outreach Worker position at City School; such a review is warranted, based on the value of the position that I have seen through this study.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has offered interpretation of each of the six key findings derived from three data sources: stakeholder interviews, participant observation and document review. Analysis of these data revealed that stakeholders identify the LOW's role as primarily one of supporting students. Though it was not predicted at the outset, the personal and professional attributes of the LOW were recognized as central to her ability to engender trust and gain the confidence of students with whom she works. Only one interviewee was able to speak directly to the LOW's outreach activities at the Kamloops Regional Correctional Centre; however, the LOW's logbook chronicling student contacts over a period of five years proved a rich source of data demonstrating that outreach services in corrections are in demand. While the initial objective behind the LOW's presence in corrections was to facilitate students' transition to the City School program, in reality a significant proportion of outreach time and effort is directed toward other urgent post-release needs such as housing and drug and alcohol treatment. This, in turn, demands that the LOW conduct liaison with community services, in order to refer students to appropriate forms of assistance. Because the LOW role encompasses many time-consuming duties, workload will likely continue to be a challenge, one the LOW currently manages by identifying high-needs students during the intake process. Finally, the issue of funding for the LOW role is integral to the City School programs' continued ability to offer the level of student support for which it has become known. As such,

efforts to entrench funding into the City School program are of great importance to the continuation of outreach services.

As of the conclusion of this study, the instability of grant funding for the Literacy Outreach Worker position was demonstrated when, recently, City School's CALP grant was not renewed. While it is encouraging that the School District provided crucial stopgap financial support, as of the completion of this research, this turn of events serves to emphasize the precarious nature of outreach in one adult education program. It remains to be seen whether the position can continue; if not, is seems that a promising and innovative approach to supporting adult students, especially marginalized students, will end.

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		Att	Sup	KR	Int	Lia	WL	Com	Safe	Fund

How do stakeholders perceive the role of the Literacy Outreach Worker?										
How does a LOW facilitate best practices in supporting an Adult/CE program?						How can an Adult/CE program's structure/staff promote conditions that enable a LOW to perform the role effectively?				
		Att	Sup	KR	Int	Lia	WL	Com	Safe	Fund
S	Tony	✓	✓		✓					

Appendix A   Initial Data Summary Chart

		# of contacts	Dates	Purpose of Contact		Location/Type of contact		Did he attend SS? Progress?	
Staff	Tyson	✓	✓		✓				
	James		✓	✓	✓	⊙		⊙	
	Robert	✓	✓		✓	⊙		⊙	
	Anna	⊙	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	⊙
	Risa		✓	✓	✓	⊙	✓	⊙	⊙
	Valerie						✓	Transferred Feb. 09	⊙
Name	LOW 1	4	Jan. 09	Post-secondary options, living arrangements ⊙		KRCC		No	Graduated from KRCC
	LOW 2		Feb. 09	Pre-release; Father arranged SS ✓		Student contacted LOW (phone 2x), community (ASK, TRU 2x)		⊙	✓
	LOW 3		Apr. 09						
	LB		June 09	Post-secondary options ✓				Released Apr. 09	
	1		June 11	Follow-up		Phone call			
Documents			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	⊙	✓
Research Journal			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ Topics relating to this conceptual category were discussed.

⊙ Some/brief mention of topics relating to the category.

Appendix B   Sample of KRCC Record of Contacts Summary Document

			Follow-up	KRCC	
	9	Feb. 09 – June 09	Post-secondary options; FN support at TRU, grad information, PO appt.	KRCC (7), grad (1), student contacted LOW (1)	No Graduated from KRCC Post-secondary funding approved by band
	1	Feb. 09	Pre-release (post-secondary)	KRCC	No
	27	Mar. 09 – June 09	NLM intake support, continuing school at SS, housing	KRCC (2), phone call (1), student contacted LOW (3), SS (17), NLM (3), grad	Yes Graduated
	5	Sept. 09 – Nov. 09	Follow-up, attending school	NLM (2), CS (3)	Enrolled in MECA program Sept. 09
	2		Re-registered at SS		
	1	Sept. 10	Reference letter	CS (1), community (1)	LOW attended 1-year cake (NA)
	1	Jan. 11	Reference letter	Unknown	
		May 11		Phone call	
	17	Apr. 09 – June 09	Continuing school at SS	Student contacted LOW (2), CS (10), NLM (3), grad (1)	Yes Graduated Liaison with bail supervisor to have CS added to conditions; LOW took student to optometrist, NA mtg.
	13	Sept. 09 – Nov. 09	Attending school	CS (11), NLM (2)	
	1	Mar. 10	Housing	Community	
	2	Nov. 10	Police station, hospital	Community	Police station, hospital (baby)
	5	Jan. 11 – Mar. 11	Family court/criminal court (5)	Community	ICS emergency hamper, child tax credit, subsidy forms
	2	May 11 – June 11	Completing course	Home visit (1), unknown (1)	
	1	Apr. 2012		Community	LOW attended 1 yr. cake (NA), LOW attended 3 yr. cake