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Community Schools in St. Louis Then and Now:
Exploring the Influence of Family, School, and Community Engagement on
Student and Community Outcomes

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ABSTRACT

All children should have access to the American Dream by receiving a meaningful and equitable educational opportunity that prepares them to be successful in school and life thereafter. Today, many children are denied this dream over and over again. Minority and low-income children often face multiple barriers that stagnate their growth; resulting in equity and achievement gaps. Schools that implement the community schools strategy integrate resources and services from family, school, and community partners to prepare students for success in meeting the demands of the twenty-first century. Community schools are hubs with evening and weekend hours that bring together a collection of supports and services for students and their families and the community at large.

A qualitative case study of an urban school in the St. Louis region with a student population comprised of 99.3% African American was used to understand the role of family, school, and community engagement and its effects on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. This study also looked at historical data for St. Louis Community School components and used an historical school as a suggested community school model. Archival research and in-depth interview

were the primary data sources used in this study. Twenty participants engaged in in-depth, face-to-face interviews to seek a deeper understanding of the role of administrators, teachers, families, and community organizations in a community partnership program and their influence on student and community outcomes.

This study highlighted the importance of the following elements of a community school system: (1) collaborative leadership and family engagement, (2) integrated student support services and high-quality educational resources, and (3) expanded learning time and support for the whole child. These elements are important for family, school, and community partners to understand so they can better meet the needs of a diverse student population whose needs extend beyond the walls of the school.

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Community Schools in St. Louis Then and Now

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... iv

LIST OF FIGURES..... ix

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION..... 1

 Problem Statement..... 4

 Purpose Statement 6

 Research Questions 7

 Significance of the Study 7

 Chapter 1 Summary..... 8

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... 10

 School-Community Partnerships 11

 Outcomes of School-Community Partnerships 13

 Gap in School-Community Partnerships 13

 School-Family Partnerships..... 13

 Outcomes of School-Family Partnerships..... 16

 Gap in School-Family Partnerships 16

Historical Development and Evolution of Community Schools	17
Historical Core Components of Community Schools	18
The St. Louis Model	20
Disparities in Urban Education	22
Reimagining the Community School Strategy	26
Conceptual Framework	28
CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	30
Research Design.....	31
Community School Selection.....	33
Sampling Design	34
Access	36
Data Collection.....	36
Data Analysis.....	41
Ethical Considerations	43
Limitations	44
Delimitations.....	44
CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS.....	45
Issa Northway Community School Theme One: Collaborative Leadership and Family Engagement.....	46

Issa Northway Community School Theme Two: Integrated Student Support Services and High-Quality Educational Resources	57
Issa Northway Community School Theme Three: Expanded Learning Time and Support for the Whole Child	63
Chapter 4 Summary.....	66
CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS....	68
Observation One: Sustained Community Partnership Program.....	69
Observation Two: Empowering Families to Increase Participation in Their Child’s Learning	74
Observation Three: Building Relationships and Trust	78
Revised Conceptual Framework.....	81
Implications and Conclusion	81
REFERENCES.....	85
APPENDICES	97
Appendix A. Interview Protocol.....	98
Appendix B. Informed Consent Form	100
Appendix C. Definitions of Key Terms.....	101

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Community Schools 29

Figure 2. Revised Conceptual Framework82

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

School districts across the United States are transforming their educational system into one that adopts a whole-child approach to improve student's education where not only academic competencies are embraced, but student's social, emotional, and physical development remain on top of their agenda (ASCD, 2012; Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006; Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, & Schellinger, 2011; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017; Jacobson & Blank, 2015; Maier, Daniel, Oakes, & Lam, 2017; Pizmony-Levy, Pallas, & Streim, 2018). According to the Institute for Educational Leadership (2017), the whole-child approach refers to "Meaningful teaching and learning [that] embraces but goes beyond mastery of core academic subjects to include youth development principles; holding high expectations for children, youth, and adults; and developing their social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills" (p. 4). Finn-Stevenson (2014) confirmed that, "Today, a substantial body of research exists that shows how health and social and emotional skills form the vital underpinnings for success in school and in life" (p. 92). Putting students at the center and offering powerful learning is a moral imperative that must be fulfilled through collaborative practices of connecting schools, families, and communities.

This educational transformation came at a time when the new Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) (P.L. 114-95) replaced the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (P.L. 107-110) and state and local school districts were empowered to

rethink strategies that would promote children’s academic success and how families and communities could engage to share ownership in the student’s success (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). School leaders needed to respond with sustainably transformational practices that would promote student’s growth and achievement, and community schools offer such a strategy (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017; Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018).

Although the link between families, schools, and communities is not a new phenomenon, today’s school districts are reimagining the community school strategy and weaving together various aspects of it as a promising reform strategy to promote schools, families, and communities to achieve school excellence and student success. The *Community Schools Playbook*, a research project conducted by Partnership for the Future of Learning (2018) declared that “Every student should have access to schools with resources, opportunities, and supports that make academic success possible and create strong ties among families, students, schools, and communities” (p. 3).

Community Schools have a long history of promising evidence that supports its practices to improve academic outcomes. The Partnership for the Future of Learning (2018) pointed out in the *Community Schools Playbook* that community schools do not represent a fad. They suggest, “What is new is the focus on this approach as a proven school improvement strategy” (p. 75). The roots of community schools are from John Dewey and Jane Adam’s aspirations that schools should serve as social centers for neighborhood communities (Krysiak, 2001). Jacobson and associates at the Coalition for Community Schools defined a community school and said what makes it effective:

A place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone –all day, every day, evenings and weekends. (Jacobson, Jamal, Jacobson, & Blank, 2013, p. 6)

Many schools districts within the United States are undergoing significant demographic changes with an influx of minorities being enrolled in classrooms. As ethnic and cultural diversity increases in classrooms, school officials realize that schools cannot do it alone: “A key challenge for 21st-century schools involves serving culturally diverse students with varied abilities and motivations for learning. Many students lack social-emotional competencies and become less connected to school” (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 405), resulting in an impediment in their learning. Today’s educators and school leaders across the country continue to develop a renewed interest in implementing community schools and are joining forces with families and communities to achieve positive outcomes in meeting the needs of a diverse student population. Community schools are a powerful and comprehensive response to public school efforts to serve economically disenfranchised communities and communities of color who are frequently denied a quality education due to poverty and racial isolation; that act as a barrier to their learning (Maier et al., 2017). The same opportunities and services that are normally only presented to affluent communities, could also be made available for low-income communities at the same time through the use of community schools. The Partnership for the Future of Learning points out that:

Community Schools are a vital component of an equity strategy. They create the conditions necessary for students to thrive by focusing attention, time, and resources on a shared vision for student and school success. They also help make society fairer by investing in communities that have been marginalized by historical disinvestment. (p. 75)

The community school intervention has a positive impact on preparing all children for greater learning to lead productive and successful lives. Research findings reveal the efficacy of the community schools approach and how school districts across the nation are leveraging this approach for improving student outcomes in creating good schools, advancing educational equity, increasing attendance, academic achievement, high graduation rates, and reducing racial and economic achievement gaps (Maier et al., 2017). As a high quality approach to K-12 education, The United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (2014) suggested, "That community school outcomes could exceed those of traditional schools. High quality schools can make a dramatic difference in children's lives, closing achievement gaps and providing students with the opportunity to succeed in college and their chosen careers" (p. 2).

Problem Statement

Research indicates that community schools are good schools that make a difference in the lives of all children by providing them with meaningful and well-rounded learning (Oakes, Maier, Daniel, 2017; Maier et al., 2017). It is the school's responsibility to educate all children to their fullest potential with high standards in order to prepare them to live productive and fulfilling lives. These are the schools that "Americans want, need, and deserve" (Maier et al., 2017, p. 1). Although community

schools can serve all backgrounds, the at-risk and poor students of color living in disenfranchised communities who struggle with poverty and racial isolation are the ones who receive the biggest benefit. These too are the children, whose learning is obstructed with these outside-of-school barriers, causing them to be locked out of good schools (Maier et al., 2017).

Public schools are facing a significant increase in ethnic, racial, and cultural distribution. Twenty-first century demands are calling for schools to create a positive school climate that supports student's social, emotional, and physical needs for an effective learning experience. The community school model uses a holistic approach to educate the whole child linking family, school, and community engagement, while also exploring the effects on these efforts on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. The challenge is for schools to use the community school approach to address student's social, emotional, and physical needs.

Darling-Hammond and Cook-Harvey (2018) argued that today's education reform strategies must look at creating a positive school climate that not only fosters student's cognitive development but also looks at critical indicators of learning and development, including social, emotional, physical, and civic. If schools fail to move beyond only teaching academics and not educating the whole child, then they are going to be held responsible for not adequately preparing children for the future Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2012). In preface to Jehl, Blank, and McCloud (2001), Usdan pointed out that "too many children come to school with social, health and economic problems that detract from their ability to achieve academically" (p.

5). Unless these conditions are reversed and schools do not refocus their reforming efforts on adopting a holistic teaching approach, students' academic performance will be negatively impacted and jeopardize their potential for life success. The literature acknowledges that the missing piece in the reform puzzle is obtaining collaborative partnerships that link families, schools, and community-based organizations to foster student achievement, transform schools, and revitalize neighborhood communities. However, there is little known about how this process plays out in urban contexts. More attention is needed in research in deepening educators' knowledge of urban communities and how they can be better supported with the obstacles they have faced as a minority and the experiences of being underserved in the educational system, which are identifiable impediments to academic success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine how community school practices link family, school, and community engagement, while also exploring the effects of these efforts on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. The St. Louis Community Schools model will be explored to understand and evaluate its successes and failures and how it can serve as a guide for today's educators to rethink how their current practices can be enhanced.

Research Questions

To examine the factors that influence the effectiveness of community schools, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How do family, school, and community interact to support student educational outcomes in the community school context?
2. What are the characteristics of effective community school programs?
3. How could past and present initiatives in St. Louis inform the development of community schools nationwide?

Significance of the Study

Today's school leaders across the country are working towards the common goal of implementing community schools. They understand that student success is based on engaging in working relationships with families, schools, and communities in mutually agreed upon roles, scope, and resource sharing.

This study will inform educators, parents, community partners, and policymakers who want to advance the community schools strategy in reforming their public education system in supporting their students with equitable high quality education. The findings in this research provides tangible evidence for policymakers on the community schools approach being a better way to learn, creating positive student and school outcomes and meeting the challenges that today's public school's face. Educators and local school leaders are able to examine the vision and promising evidence presented in this study and think through and understand how community schools can enhance their present practices to improve their schools, promote greater learning and strengthening families and neighborhood communities.

While this study also looks at the St. Louis community schools model implemented by Dr. Everette E. Nance in partnership with the St. Louis Public Schools

(SLPS), its community education practices will add to the rich history of Flint, Michigan where Flint was best recognized as a national model of their community education programs. Evidence will show how the Flint model made a tremendous impact on the St. Louis community schools. This study will add enriching and in-depth knowledge to the existing historical records of the St. Louis Public Schools system (SLPS). To date, there has been no inclusive reporting and documentation of Dr. Everette Nance's work. The narrative in this study addresses the literature gap that excludes Nance's work and highlights the successes and failures in light of the historical writers and philosophers who have conceptualized the principles of community schools for many years.

Chapter 1 Summary

As we continue to advance further into the 21st century, major shifts in demographics have resulted in changes in the educational landscape. Schools are being held responsible for creating a positive school climate that supports student's social, emotional, physical, and civic needs for an effective learning experience. Although cognitive development still remains an important piece in children's learning, the demands of the 21st century is calling for educators to engage their students in culturally relevant curricula that fosters critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills in helping prepare them for the future in living productive and fulfilling lives.

All children should be presented with equitable opportunities to improve themselves and live a better life regardless of their race and socioeconomic status. For a democracy to thrive, it must have citizens who are educated and well informed about

issues that concern them and have a direct impact on their lives. Education plays a key role in how people live and function within society. When people are educated, they become empowered. Empowered individuals contribute to society in positive ways.

What is needed to educate the whole child is the community schools approach that links school, family, and community partnerships to share in student success. Maier and associates (2017) confirmed that:

Americans want, need, and deserve schools for all children that make meaningful learning and well-rounded development their first priority; that provide the resources, opportunities, and support that make such learning and development a reality for every student; that are staffed by educators who have knowledge and skills to teach all children well; that build trusting relationships between teachers and students; and that create strong ties among parents, students, schools and communities. (p. 1)

Chapter 2 of this study will highlight the literature on schools and their resources including family and community engagement and how they form partnerships to create effective community schools that foster academic success and transform schools.

Chapter 3 will present the methodology and research design procedures that is used to gather data for the study. In Chapter 4, I will examine the results obtained through archival and interview research. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I examine the themes that emerge from the data analysis relative to the existing literature and my conceptual framework. I will also discuss implications for practice and areas for action that aim to guide future research.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is a substantial body of research that documents the need for public schools to rethink their structure and role in student's learning, to shifting to programs that not only addresses academic needs, but emphasizes a community school approach that uses family and community resources to create a positive school climate that supports student achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Maier et al., 2017; Sanders, 2001, 2008).

Today's urban students are coming to school with many social, emotional, and psychological needs. To address those needs, which can impede students' learning, schools should strategically build and strengthen family, school, and community partnerships.

The notion of schools focusing much of their attention over the past years in increasing test scores has now become insufficient. (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2014; Biag & Castrechini, 2016; Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018; Frankl, 2016). Research emphasizes the need for schools to create education programs that educate the whole child and engage families and community members to provide comprehensive supports ranging from counseling, medical and dental healthcare, mentoring, tutoring, career preparation and developing their social and emotional competencies. (Maier et al., 2017; Moore & Emig, 2014; Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018). Schools cannot work alone in isolation to enhance student achievement, but rather in cooperation with community agencies and parent involvement.

In order for students to be successful in school and life, schools must reach beyond the walls of the schools to parents and community organizations to establish sustain partnerships to foster student achievement (Maier et al., 2017; Moore & Emig, 2014; Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018).

The literature shows how the community school approach is seen as a way of gaining the public's confidence in public institutions in helping them to meet their primary mission of academic success (Frankl, 2016; Jacobson & Blank, 2015; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017; Maier et al., 2017). This is because community school efforts are focused on building relationships with families and communities. "The community school approach recognizes that learning happens not only inside school, but also in the home and in communities" (Jacobson & Blank, 2015, p. 14). "Partnership is the key to community schools; schools do not go it alone. They engage other stakeholders and strategically partner with families and community organizations to provide students with a full range of opportunities and supports" (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017, p. 1).

School-Community Partnerships

The literature documents community engagement as being important to student success and the need for it to be made an integral strategy in school reform efforts. Berg, Melaville, & Blank (2006) describes community engagement as being "a two-way street where the school, families, and the community actively work together, creating networks of shared responsibility for student success. Community engagement is the hallmark of a

community school” (p. 1). School-community partnerships that share in ownership of student success can include connections between schools, community individuals, organizations, and businesses with activities in educational programs that vary from being student centered, family centered, school centered, or community centered.

Although school-community partnerships are not anything new and has long been recognized for improving public education, research indicates it has not received much attention in past reform efforts. Past school-community initiatives have resulted in schools using community resources and communities benefiting from school resources, but the school alone guided much of the community engagement process and focused the engagement efforts on volunteering, fundraising, and supporting school activities. Research clearly shows that there has been a lack of the broader community empowered to participate in decision-making and school governance. The literature highlights how schools today are developing a renewed interest in reshaping its practices in engaging their communities to help leverage improvements in student’s learning (National Education Association, 2011; Sanders, 2006).

School-community partnerships are developed to “enhance school’s curricula, identify and disseminate information about community resources, and support community development efforts” (Sanders, 2006, p. 16). Sanders goes on to emphasize that student success is best achieved through partnerships and schools need community engagement “for effective school functioning, economic competitiveness, student well-being, and community health and development” (p. 15).

Outcomes of School-Community Partnerships

When community-based organizations partners with the school and integrates their services and supports in the school's community partnership program, the literature claims that school-community collaboration can provide a positive impact on both students and families. Integrated resources aim to ameliorate out-of-school barriers that the students may experience; as a result to enhance attendance and behavior. "School-community partnerships are a key strategy to help schools meet the learning and developmental needs of all students" (Sanders, 2019, p. 4).

Gap in School-Community Partnerships

Although today's educators and administrators understand the idea that public schools function best when collaborating with the larger community, there is still a lack of knowledge and skills that schools need to create a strong educational program that link to a cooperative relationship with the community. There continue to be gaps in the knowledge and skill sets of educators and school administrators who work with diverse student groups. Epstein (2011) says, "Statistics reflect the poor quality of teacher education programs to help future teachers gain the skills they need to work with all students and their families on students' attitudes, efforts, achievements, and progress" (p.4).

School-Family Partnerships

Decades of established research confirm that family engagement influences student success (Bogenschneider & Johnson, 2004; Catone, Friedman, Potochnik, &

Thompson, 2014; Epstein and Associates, 2019; Harpin, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey, 1997; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Howard & Reynold, 2008; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; National Education Association, 2011; Pekel, Roehlkepartain, Syvertsen, & Scales, 2015; Sanders, 2008; Stefanski, Valli, & Jacobson, 2016; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).

The literature documents positive outcomes when family members are actively engaged in the educational lives of their children. Family engagement refers to “the beliefs, attitudes, and activities of parents and other family members to support children’s learning” (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez, & Chatman, 2005, p. xvii). Although family engagement would normally just focus on parents being involved, it includes the collaborative efforts of any family members who participate in the child’s upbringing. A host of terms is used interchangeably in the literature to describe the term *family engagement* such as *parental involvement*, *parent engagement*, and *family involvement*; all which remain synonymous to the meaning of family engagement. These terms describe the joint venture between families and schools that share responsibility of student learning and achievement from cradle to grave.

The commitment of family engagement is nothing new and has been around for decades. However, as society changed and became more complex in the past years, low-performing schools began working in isolation to educate students; without effectively engaging minority families. Historically, low-performing schools limited family engagement activities to volunteering at school, sponsoring fundraising, and attending parent-teacher conferences; while ignoring input from marginalized families. According to Weiss and associates (2005), “Teachers’ and school administrators’ perceptions of

parents' socioeconomic backgrounds influence how they interact with parents, and whether or not they support or reject parent strategies of involvement. School personnel treat poor parents from a deficit perspective, which becomes a barrier to family involvement" (p. xvii). A large body of research has demonstrated that schools have always overlooked low-income families of color and identify family engagement activities being a privilege for the white, middle-class domain; all while assuming a myth that minority families do not value education (Auerbach, 2007; Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Despite previous challenges of past reform efforts with families of color being disengaged and underdeveloped from their child's education, today's twenty-first century public schools are reorganizing their family engagement practices and shifting to a new paradigm that builds college and career-readiness and integrate the goals and priorities of minority families providing them with partnership opportunities to participate in decision making that profoundly impacts the child's development. Weiss and associates (2010) assert:

Family engagement needs to be aligned with this new direction, which involves disrupting the current state of practice. Educators tend to treat parents and families as bystanders rather than as partners, and often overlook their strengths and their capacity to transform public education. Family and community engagement is siloed into disparate programs that are disconnected from instructional practice and school turnaround strategies. This state of random acts of family involvement has to give way to systemic and sustained approaches. (p. 1)

It was not until the passing of the NCLB Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-110) that legislation required schools to advocate and implement strategies to engage parents to become involved in the schools (Harpin, 2011). NCLB's aim was to bridge the achievement gap for students in rural and urban communities that serve low

socioeconomic populations with diversity issues and non-English speaking families. In the past years and up to present time, much attention has been focused on educating the disadvantaged and how the present educational system has not contributed to making responsible and effective citizens for creating a better society. “Black people in our country have historically been deprived of educational and cultural opportunities” (Kerensky & Melby, 1975, p. 3). NCLB legislation focused on four principles that Harpin (2011) identified as “stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and emphasis on proven teaching methods” (p. 1).

Outcomes of School-Family Partnerships

Research shows that when families are highly engaged in their children’s education, schools and families develop positive partnerships. This relationship fosters positive learning outcomes for students; resulting in academic achievement being positively impacted, improved behavior, increased attendance, positive school climates, and developed social emotional skills.

Gap in School-Family Partnerships

Reforming public education through the use of family engagement is nothing new. School-family partnership has been used many decades for restructuring the role of education. However, what has not happened in the past years is that family engagement has not been made an integral piece of the reform puzzle. It is critical that family

engagement be reframed into “systemic, integrated, and sustainable efforts” (Weiss et al., 2010, p. 7) rather than “random acts of family involvement” (Weiss et al., 2010, p. 1).

Research literature on school-family partnerships demonstrates that family engagement is instrumental to student success. In order to bridge the gap for positive change, schools will need to rethink their school-family partnership practices and create programs that align with the goals and voices of the families.

Historical Development and Evolution of Community Schools

“Preparing children and youth to live productive and fulfilling lives, both now and in the future, is the most important responsibility we face today” (Pekel et al., 2015, p. 3). However, education reform efforts in recent years have focused mainly on the idea of school standards and raising test scores, while disregarding non-school factors such as poverty, racism, violence, high dropout rates, health, and cultural differences which all erect barriers to learning and influences the achievement gap. The Coalition for Community Schools (n.d.) emphasized, “The impact of poverty, changing demographics, chronic absence, health and many other factors cannot be ignored if students are to succeed” (p. 1).

“Many schools and other educational institutions, out-of-school programs, community coalitions, and others are undertaking innovative approaches to prepare young people to be part of the solutions at the local, state, and federal levels” (Pekel et al., 2015, p. 6). Community Education is seen as playing a vital role in education reform. “Community schools, with their emphasis on intentional partnerships, represent the most

effective approach to addressing both the in-school and non-school factors that influence student achievement” (The Coalition for Community Schools, n.d., p. 1).

The terms “community education” and “community schools” are not synonymous. They are by no means new ideas. Community education is the overall philosophy and concept that has been around for a long time and continues to evolve over the years. It is a process that concerns itself with everything that affects the well being of all citizens within a given community. The Community School is a place-based strategy that carries out the community education concept. Early community education ideas can be traced back to the historic works of social reformer Jane Addams, who in the 19th and early 20th century designed settlement houses that provided services and programs to the urban and immigrant population. These early community school models also drew on the works of John Dewey, pioneer in educational philosophy that expressed concepts of social responsibility is to improve the community and educate the whole child. Jacobson, Villarreal, Munoz, and Mahaffey (2018) confirmed concepts expressed by Dewey that “schools should be centers of community life, and learning should be relevant helping young people address real-world problems that face them, their families, and their neighbors” (p. 2).

Historical Core Components of Community Schools

“Community schools implement evidence-based strategy to bring together the resources of school, family, and community in order to make schools stronger and help people thrive” (Frankl, 2016, p. 3). Schools are effective when they employ a well-

implemented community school approach where family and community partners provide comprehensive services and supports to address learning barriers and advance student success in low-income families. The role of the community school extends well beyond responsibilities that have not been recognized as being part of the K–12 role of public education. Minzey (1994, pp. 76–87), a community education pioneer, identified six components that aim to create effective community schools:

1. **An educational program for school age children.** The K–12 (kindergarten through 12th grade) curriculum is the formal education offered through public schools for school age children and is recognized as the vital part of the school’s educational program. K–12 academic instructions will be provided linked with community resources to enhance curriculum. Public education is recognized as a total community enterprise, linking home, school, and the community to shape student’s learning experiences.
2. **Maximum use of school facilities.** School buildings will function as a community center with expanded the school year and increasing school hours to reflect the needs of the total community.
3. **Additional educational opportunities for school age children and youth.** With the increasingly changes that Americans are facing in an ever changing and complex society there is a continuous need for additional education and learning activities that will continue to enrich and shape children to grow to be productive citizens. Schools can create expanded

learning opportunities for students beyond the typical school season that include before and after traditional school hours, weekends, and summers.

4. **Educational program for adults.** Community education programs offer courses for adults that include basic literacy education, GED courses, vocational, cultural and recreational.
5. **Delivery and coordination of community services.** A collection of student support and services are integrated into the fabric of the school to meet the needs of low-income communities.
6. **Community involvement.** Schools will engage with a wide range of community partners to meet the needs of students and families.

The community school strategy “is not a prescriptive model with a set of predetermined activities and services” (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2018, p. 6) and will vary in the program features and the way it operates based on the needs of the local context; however, research shows that implementing the six historic components into the community schools framework will create conditions for learning that will support and make a difference for families, school, and community.

The St. Louis Model

The St. Louis model supported the efficacy of an educational program for school age children, maximum use of school facilities, additional educational opportunities for

school age children and youth, educational program for adults, delivery and coordination of community services, and community involvement as positive intervention strategies.

Dr. Everette E. Nance, a pioneer of community building who lived and breathed both the power of education and community agreed with the importance of a holistic educational framework. His dream was to link academic achievement with neighborhood stabilization in establishing an educational system that helped developed all citizens with learning opportunities for better-valued lives regardless of race, age, or socioeconomic circumstance; achieving balance and happiness in individual's lives. Nance maintained an active role advocating for revitalization and creating diverse St. Louis neighborhoods. He received his community education training from the degree training programs offered in Flint and decided to implement the community education programs in 22 community education centers in St. Louis in partnership with the St. Louis Public School system. These community schools provided lifelong learning opportunities to not only school age children, but also attracted adult members within the communities. The program offerings were to fill academic learning outcomes and accelerate healthy self-actualization. Nance (1992) confirmed his view on the value of education and how change can be implemented to the disadvantage in educational institutions:

An education of value maintains that education in a democracy must aim for both excellence and equality; equality to give all citizens the skills necessary for thoughtful and active citizenship, and excellence ranging from basic skills of literacy and problem solving, to creative and critical thinking, to the desire to further expand one's knowledge and skills. (p. 26)

For over 30 years and through several administrative changes, St. Louis Public Schools has always wanted to improve their educational system. Developing the whole

student was their top priority. Nance (1996) pointed out “this cannot be achieved if educators continue to work in isolation from the community. The entire community must become the educational community and all resources at our disposal must be used to deal with our problems” (pp. 7-8).

Nance believed that changing the structure of schools and understanding the value of education would bring positive changes in public education for African Americans. “Old patterns of thinking about curriculum, standards of behavior, teacher expectations, resource allocations, administrative policy, and educational environments must be overcome if we are to succeed. It seems that community education offers the best opportunity for this endeavor” (Nance, 1992, p. 27). He also held beliefs that community education was a solution to “improving race relations and inter-cultural understandings” (Nance & Dixon II, 1991, p. 22). Nance valued equality for minorities and confirmed that education was key in helping black American overcome racism and poverty. He stated that without education it “results in unproductive lives for many and a loss for a society as a whole and that community education holds the best promise for African Americans” (Nance, 1992, p. 27). He agreed that “the many opportunities provided through community education programming and processes not only can help African Americans defeat the vagaries of poverty, they can also enhance their psychological health through positive community involvement” (Nance, 1992, p. 27).

Disparities in Urban Education

African Americans in the United States continue to be plagued by profound inequalities in domains such as education, housing, employment, and health. “Education

is key in the formation of a well-educated society where dreams are met, goals are achieved and the economic systems of our country flourish as students' graduate college and enter the workforce" (Bassetti, 2018, p. 1). Although education is the cornerstone for all American to gain access to a quality and flawless life, it is still treated as a privilege rather than as a right to low-income and ethnic minority groups. American people have always held a strong value for education and believed that every individual should be presented with equitable opportunities where they can develop their full potentialities regardless of race or economic circumstance. "Access to education has been frequently hailed as one of the most valued commodities in a free and egalitarian society" (Howard, 2010, p. 9). It focuses on the belief that "education offers its recipients better prospects for economic and social mobility, and an improved quality of life" (Howard, 2010, p. 9). Numerous scholars confirm that every student regardless of their racial or socioeconomic group, income level, or zip code in which they live should have access to equitable educational opportunities that prepare them to be successful citizens and lead productive lives. A notable scholar, Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, egalitarian, and civil rights advocate noted the disparate experiences African Americans encounter and continued to advocate for greater educational equity and access for all students.

Today, the power of education is seen as developing humans personally, socially, and economically and empowering them with the knowledge needed to eradicate barriers to social progress. These barriers include violence, crime, and drugs. Students from impoverished backgrounds experience these barriers causing social, emotional, and psychological challenges.

Despite a plethora of school reform legislations to eradicate achievement disparities that fall along racial, ethnic, and social class lines, evidence confirms that underachievement still persists between various groups. (Howard, 2010). The ongoing struggles that minority groups faced many centuries ago in trying to accomplish educational equity are the same challenges they face today of being denied educational access, causing them to underperform academically relative to their white counterparts. These disparate levels of achievement reflect gaps in test scores, grades, graduation rates, special education placements, and suspension and expulsion rates. The achievement gap is known as the discrepancy in academic outcomes with African Americans, Native Americans, certain Asian Americans, and Latino students performing at the low end of the performance scale while White and various Asian American students perform at the higher end of the academic scale. The National Center for Educational Statistics describes the 2018 U.S. population data with African Americans making up 14% of the U.S. student population, Whites 51%, Hispanic 25%, Asian 5%, American Indians/Alaska Natives 1%, Pacific Islanders 1%. During the last decades, America's public education institutions have endured a great deal of upheaval and strife. As U.S. public schools experience a shift in its education system, so too does the landscape in its demographics. Schools are witnessing an immense growth along racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic lines; with increases in student populations from African American, Latinos, Asian American, and an influx of immigrants. As disturbing as it seems, research suggests that African American and Latino students still lag behind Asian and White counterparts. These differences are tied to different levels of socioeconomic status

between minorities and whites. Student groups enrolled in urban school districts face many issues that affect their educational performance such as adequate resources, experienced teachers, low parental involvement, old school buildings, poor test scores, and high levels of poverty compared to white students enrolled in suburban districts. A growing body of the literature documents that students from impoverished backgrounds may lack “access to medical care and attention, which can allow vision, dental, hearing, asthmatic, and other ailments to go undertreated, undoubtedly influencing school performance” (Howard, 2010, p. 3). Students from low-income families have parents who earn less, live in homes that are surrounded by other poor families, or lacking permanent living conditions; resulting in the likelihood of moving from place to place and compromising the quality and stability of student’s education.

These inequalities are also tied to the funding gap. For example, Bassetti (2018) compared a neighboring New Jersey suburban school and an urban school. She looked at the suburban school Collingswood High School, comprised of a mixed student population of blacks and Hispanics and the urban school Camden High School with an enrollment of predominately black students, located in the poorest city of New Jersey, approximately three miles from Collingswood High School. The findings revealed a 100% graduation rate at the suburban school (Collingswood), which was much higher than the New Jersey state average of 94%. The urban school (Camden) data showed only a 48% graduation rate, indicating almost half of the New Jersey state average. The data paint a clear picture that academic inequalities do and continue to exist between suburban and urban school districts. Racial disparities will continue to persist as long as large amounts of funding are

poured into the wealthier white districts and not distributed equally in the poor districts. Local funding is generated from property taxes. As the property value is of higher value in suburban areas where whites live; resulting in local funding spent on per pupil in wealthy schools that is greater than urban districts. Insufficient funding is given to the poorer district; creating a gap in achievement between minorities and their white counterparts.

Although we know that poor school districts with predominately black student population suffer from inequities, race is another factor that is rarely acknowledged that plays a significant role in the equation of academic achievement gap.

Reimagining the Community School Strategy

Over the course of the 21st century, the landscape of public education has evolved and shifted in many ways. School leaders and educators are facing immense pressure in the call for action to develop new and innovative approaches to help improve student learning. Today's educators are empowered to rethink their practices and refocus their efforts on developing a holistic framework that educates the whole child. Long gone are the days of achieving high-test scores for student success; as today's schools experience an influx of changing demographics and are being blamed for not being able to effectively serve diverse student groups.

Schools today have begun to develop a renewed interest in the community schools strategy. The community schools approach is an idea whose time has come back once again as school districts think of systemic solutions that promote student success,

transform schools, and strengthen neighborhood communities (Teachers College, 2018). Harkavy, Villarreal, and Blank (2003) suggested that “it is time to recognize the power that communities, working with educators in community schools, bring to the challenge of educating all of our young people to high standards” (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003, Preface section, para 1).

Families, schools, and communities are working together to create comprehensive programs that provide meaningful learning that goes beyond the core academic curriculum to embrace the social, emotional and physical development of students. Traditional schooling alone cannot succeed in developing the whole child without the relationships of family, school, and community engagement. Blank and associates (2003) emphasized that “Schools cannot ignore the needs of the whole child – social, emotional, and physical – as they provide academic opportunities that address the full range of learning needs and styles” (p. 7). “It has been long-since proven that children cannot be successful in school if they have mental, emotional or health problems” (Krajewski & Osowski, 1997, p. 3). When students lack social-emotional competencies, they are likely to become disengaged from school, high-risk behavior increases, and learning is negatively impacted.

“Unlike traditional public schools, community schools have the ability to develop partnerships and link with outside community partners that will support and enhance teaching and learning. Community schools have three major advantages that schools acting alone do not” (Blank et al., 2003, p. 7). Community schools can:

1. Garner additional resources and reduce the demands on school staff.

2. Provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and nonacademic competencies.
3. Build social capital – the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunity for young people while strengthening their communities (Blank et al., 2003, p. 7).

Conceptual Framework

Community schools are viewed as being good schools that are implemented for children of all backgrounds (Maier et al., 2017). Although these community schools are developed in struggling communities to provide meaningful and quality learning for all children, children at-risk and low-income families receive the most benefit. “Community schools bring educators and community partners together to create a high-quality schools with an integrated approach to academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement” (Maier et al., 2017, p. 1).

My community school framework was designed from the literature to depict how families, schools, and community engagement aim to influence student and community outcomes (Figure 1). Community schools create programs that engage families and communities to embrace the whole child to develop their social, emotional, and academic competencies. Family, school, and community partnerships support and improve student’s learning by listening to their needs, provide meaningful learning opportunities, integrate student supports to help address outside of school barriers, and create sustained family and community partnerships. Research documents that meaningful partnerships improve attendance, close achievement gaps, and build college and career readiness (Maier et al., 2017). The Institute for Educational Leadership (2017) suggested that the

community schools framework is associated with “college, career, and civic-ready students; strong families; and healthy communities” (p. 5).

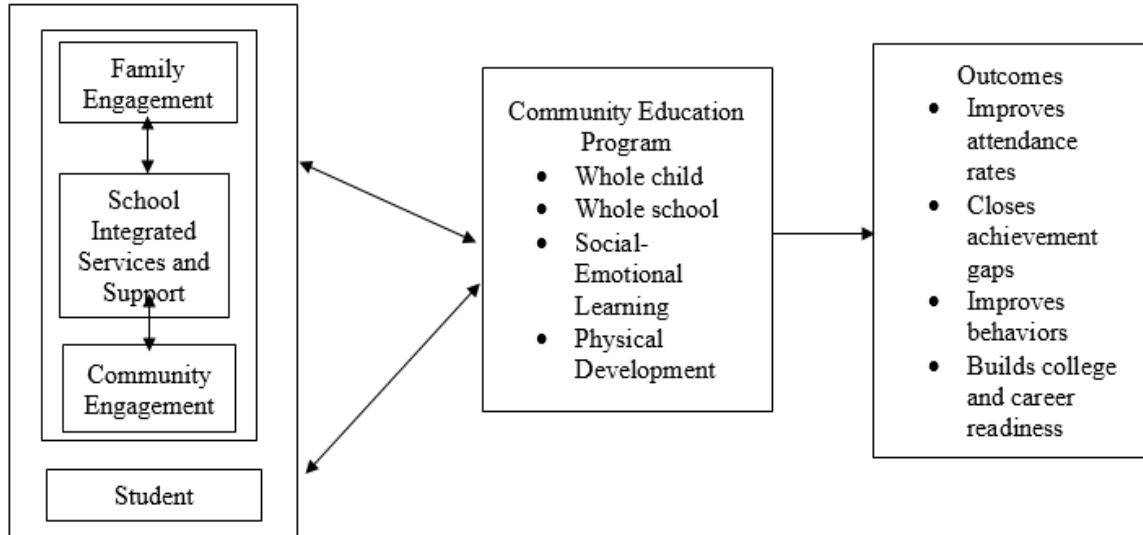


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Community Schools (Maier, Daniel, Oakes, Lam, 2017; Decker 2003; Epstein, 2018; Finn-Stevenson, 2014; Sanders, 2018; Weiss, 2010).

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Public schools today are not providing minority and low-income students with equitable educational opportunities required to live fulfilling, higher quality lives. As schools experience major shifts in demographics, class enrollments increase with poor and nonwhite students who lack social-emotional competencies. These students become disengaged from school and find themselves engaging in high-risk behaviors that impede their academic performance, behavior, and health.

This chapter outlines the chosen research design, sampling strategies, data collection, and analysis. The purpose of this study is to examine how community school practices link family, school, and community engagement, while also exploring the effects of these efforts on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. The St. Louis community school model will also be explored to understand and evaluate its successes and failures and how it can serve as a guide for today's educators to rethink how their current practices can be enhanced. In order to examine the factors that influence the effectiveness of community schools, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How have family, school, and community interacted to support student educational outcomes in the community school context?
2. What are the characteristics of effective community school programs?

3. How could past and present initiatives in St. Louis inform the development of community schools nationwide?

Research Design

To gain an in-depth understanding of how families and community engagement influence the effectiveness of community schools, I will employ a qualitative case study methodology that incorporates archival research and in-depth interviewing. Creswell (2012) explains that qualitative research is best suited to instances where the researcher is seeking a deeper understanding of how the views of individual groups shape a process or concept. This study seeks to understand and explore the experiences of how school administrators, educators, families, and community-based organizations influence the effectiveness of community schools. Creswell (2012) indicates that to explore the viewpoints of participants in an event or experience, or gain a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon, one must examine all the outside forces that shape the process being explored. This research will explore how family, school, and community engagement through the proposed tenets mentioned in Chapter 3 foster positive student and community outcomes with the goal of advancing equity of the whole child.

Patton (2002) confirms that qualitative inquiry is powerful because it allows respondents to tell a story of their experiences in their own words. Patton states, “The story itself offers something of the flavor of qualitative data” (p. 47). Patton describes it as communication that “take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there” (p. 47).

This study will consist of an intrinsic case that illustrates a contemporary school focusing on their community partnership program and an opportunity to explore one historical case with opportunities for oral history interviews. Creswell (2012) states that cases are used to describe and compare with providing insights into an issue. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) confirm, “Multiple-case sampling adds confidence to findings. By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, and if possible, why it carries on as it does” (p. 33). This qualitative research approach presumes that by exploring multiple cases, research outcomes will be strengthened and valid and reliable data will be produced. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

The study will not only look at schools that are implementing a holistic approach now, but will also go back and explore the historical data of the St. Louis Community Schools developed by Dr. Everette E. Nance. Johnson and Christensen (2008) point out that conducting historical research is significant and allows for recording the accomplishments of an individual of merit. I will examine the components of the St. Louis Community Schools those community schools had then that made them successful and how the legacy of Nance’s work can transfer as a valuable model for teachers and peers in today’s school settings. Dr. Nance remarkable strides came about during a time when society was facing continued social upheaval in the St. Louis, Missouri area. It was through his approach with well-implemented community schools, that it remains as a solution to solve problems and creates optimism for students, families, and communities in today’s times.

Johnson and Christensen (2008) also confirm, “The past can give us a perspective for current decision making and help us avoid the phenomenon of trying to reinvent the wheel. It allows us to discover those things that have been tried and found wanting and those things that have been inadequately tried and still might work” (p. 424). Including a historical research design in this study is appropriate because it will improve individuals inter-cultural understanding of past and present, determine what has and has not work in the past, allow individuals to capitalize on the effectiveness of today’s full-service school interventions and if work remains to be done (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Community School Selection

The proposed schools purposefully selected for this study will include one contemporary case and one historical case that will represent a charter and public school. The schools will be purposefully selected to represent different types of schools (private, public, and charter). The cases selected will be based on the following criteria’s: (1) school recommendations from district leaders and affiliated school organizations and agencies, (2) collaborative leadership and strong governing body, (3) neighborhood school serving diverse families in low-income communities, (4) robust curriculum offering integrated student supports and services. The criteria used for selecting these information-rich schools in this study is important because it ensures that I will be able to learn a great deal about how the partnership of family, school, and community influences the effectiveness of community schools. In addition, I will be able to gain an in-depth understanding of the process and structure of collaborative efforts for public, private, and

charter schools and compare what is and is not working between the ranges of schools.

Patton (2015) argues how the power of purposeful sampling yields in-depth understanding. In addition to in-depth insights, Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood (2015) note the importance that “purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases” (p. 1).

A description of the contemporary and historical urban schools located in St. Louis, in the Midwestern United States is described below. Pseudonyms will be used for the school name.

Issa Northway Community School is a charter school serving approximately 480 low-income students from grades PK and K-8 with the majority of the student body being 98% black. African Americans make up 99.3% of the racial composition, 0.5% White, 0.3 Hispanic, and 32.8% being free and reduced meal recipients. This school is a full service community school that focuses on development of the whole child and has received awards for Charter School of the Year by the Montgomery County School Psychologist Association (MCSPA) and the 2016 Champion of Education Reform by the Children’s Education Alliance of Missouri (CEAM).

Fab Middle School, a historical community school developed through the St. Louis Public Schools serving low-income families of grades sixth – eighth with approximately 283 students with 96% being Black, 6% White, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1% Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander.

Sampling Design

“Sampling is the process of drawing a sample from a population” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 222). The sampling process in this study will consist of two phases. The first phase will consist of studying archival research. The second phase of the sampling design will involve studying the perspectives from the sample of up to 20 participants of administrators, educators, family, and community-based organizations that are selected for the in-depth interviews.

Phase I – Archival Research

The documentation collected for this study will be purposefully selected and will consist of a variety of data that includes include mission statements, annual reports, evaluation reports of the school’s program, announcements, memos, flyers, newsletters, website postings, calendar of school activities, website videos and other forms of communication that the school sends to families and community members. Documents will be purposefully selected based on the criteria of seeking any documentation that represents the school’s community education program that involves interaction and outreach in connecting the schools with families and communities.

Phase II – Select Key Informants

This study will employ a snowballing method to recruit a diverse group of up to 20 participants that will include school administrators, teachers, parents, and community-based organizations from the five case schools during June – August 2019. I will select

participants after the study begins by asking each participant at the end of each interview session to recommend other individuals with characteristics that represent a diverse racial and demographic population and have knowledge and experience about the partnership programs at the case schools.

Access

The research study should contain plans of how permission and approvals will be gained for access to the study settings and the participants who will be involved in the study (Creswell, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For this study, I will first begin with securing approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin data collection with human subjects. Next, I will contact by phone four potential contemporary case schools and one historical school to speak with school administrators on a research problem of how family, school, and community engagement influence the effectiveness of community schools. In order to investigate the research problem, I will speak with the school administrator on how I can gain access to the site and get approval to interview school administrators, teachers, parents, and community organizations.

Data Collection

The data collection procedure will first begin with securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and gaining participants consent in collecting information from them for the study. Document review and research interviews will be the only data sources used in the data collection process. This process will consist of two phases. The

first phase will consist of document review that will involve collecting documents that will give meaning and understanding to the effectiveness of the school's program through family and community engagement. The second phase will involve in-depth interviews with administrators, teacher educators, parents, and representatives from community-based organizations to gain their perspectives of how their experiences create meaning and attribute to the school's education program to shape student success.

Phase I – Archival Research

Creswell (2012) explains, “Documents consist of public and private records that qualitative researchers can obtain about a site or participants in a study, such as newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, or diaries” (p. 223). The type of documents that will be collected in this study is official public documents from the case school that includes mission statements, annual reports, evaluation reports of the school's program, announcements, memos, flyers newsletters, website postings, calendar of school's activities, website videos and other forms of communication that the school sends to families and community members. Creswell (2012) confirm that public documents are a valuable source that provides rich information in a qualitative study. Collecting documents provides the researcher with the ability to capture participants own the words and language by being in the worldview of participants. Another advantage for document review is that it does not require transcription and is ready for analysis after it has been organized and stored into a software program.

Phase II – In-Depth Interviews

Creswell (2012) explains, “Qualitative interviews occurs when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers” (p. 217). The three types of interviews used in qualitative studies include highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. This study will employ semi-structured interviews through informal conversations. Semi-structured interviews consist of a combination of structured and unstructured questions or open-ended questions that are worded to adapt to the participant. “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” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111).

Interview Procedure. The interview sessions will take place at the setting of the case schools and will average 30 – 45 minutes. Interview protocols will be developed prior to the interview to help guide the interview session. (See Appendix B). Creswell (2012) explains that the interview protocol “is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be asked, and space to take notes of responses from the interviewee” (p. 225). Creswell (2012) agrees that the interview protocol is a valuable tool to keep the interviewer on track with the interview questions and provides a means for recording important data. Each interview session will be recorded. All participants will acknowledge their consent to participate in the study by signing a consent form. They will be informed that the interview session is recorded and will only be used for data collection purposes. The interview guide approach will guide the interview session. At the start of each interview session, participants will be greeted and informed the purpose of the study and the timeframe of the interview process. All

interviewees will be asked the same eight specific open-ended questions to gain an in depth understanding of their shared role in student achievement and its impact in full service community schools. Some of the questions asked may be followed with probing questions to elicit for the participants to expand on their ideas in order to gain more rich information. The following is a description of the interview questions:

1. What is the scope of your role at the present school? In what ways have you been involved in resource sharing in your community school programs?

Probe: What responsibilities do you have at your school?

Probe: How much of your time is dedicated to community school programming?

Probe: How have you engaged parents or outside partners in providing wrap-around services or additional support for students?

2. What does “community school” mean to you?

Probe: How important are community school programs to you? Why?

Probe: Was there a specific experience that caused you to think that way? Please tell me about it...

3. What does educating the whole child mean to you?

Probe: How might a classroom dedicated to the whole child function?

Probe: What does teaching look like if a teacher emphasizes the whole child?

Probe: What is the role of social-emotional learning in a whole child educational context?

Probe: If a school prioritized the whole child, how would it differ from other schools?

4. What knowledge, skills and dispositions do you see as essential in educating the whole child?

Probe: What knowledge have you gained that's helped you focus on the whole child?

Probe: What skills do you regard as essential in a whole child approach?

Probe: What dispositions (or attitudes/awareness) are critical to effectively implement a whole child approach?

Probe: How do you use your knowledge and skills to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of your students?

5. How do you see your role in the collaborative practices that link school, family, and community?
 - Probe: Which collaborative practices are the most important?*
 - Probe: Which collaborative practices are the most challenging?*
 - Probe: How have you personally facilitated connections between school and family?*
 - Probe: What's the hardest part about engaging parents?*
 - Probe: How have you personally facilitated connections between school and community?*
 - Probe: Which community connections are the hardest to develop and maintain? (for school employees)*
 - Probe: Please tell me about your experiences collaborating with school teachers and administrators? (for family members and community partners)*

6. In what ways, and to what extent, have students benefited from the integrated support services that have been provided through the school?
 - Probe: Tell me about a student who was struggling or who experienced outside barriers to their success...*
 - Probe: How have you helped students overcome the barriers they faced?*
 - Probe: How have school, family and community partnerships helped to address student needs and/or overcome barriers?*
 - Probe: What integrated support services do you think are most essential to helping students overcome barriers? Why?*

7. Tell me about some challenges you've faced in your efforts to build or strengthen community school programs?
 - Probe: Tell me about an experience you've had in your efforts to engage families and community organizations... (for school employees)*
 - Probe: Tell me about an experience you've had in your efforts to engage teachers of school administrators... (for family members and community partners)*
 - Probe: Tell me about your approach to creating successful partnerships?*
 - Probe: How did you evaluate the success of the partnership?*
 - Probe: What things contributed to or hindered the success of the partnership?*

8. *One way to think about community school programs is that they are a collection of student support services that meet the needs of the whole child. In your opinion, which student support services are the easiest to deliver collaboratively? Which have been the hardest to provide? Why?*

Probe: What factors make it easier or harder to deliver needed student support services?

Probe: If you had a magic wand, what resources would you make available to your community school program?

Probe: If you had a magic wand, what kind of community school would you plop down in the middle of your community?

9. To what extent does your school serve as a community school model? Why?

Probe: Has your school been recognized as an effective community school program?

Probe: In what ways is your community school program exemplary?

Probe: One more magic wand question...if you could broadly publicize any aspect of your community school program, what would it be?

10. Is there any additional information that you would like to share regarding your partnership in the community school program?

Each interview session will conclude first with any additional comments or feedback participants may have regarding the study, Second, I will ensure that all participants understand the confidentiality of their interview responses, Third, I will offer participants a summary of the results from the study, Next, I will present to them a gift of appreciation and letter thanking them for their participation, and lastly I will ask participants to identify additional participants who are knowledgeable for the case.

Data Analysis

The data analyzed in this qualitative study will come from archival research and in-depth interviews. The data analysis will first begin with organizing and storing the data from the archival research and in-depth interviews into a qualitative data analysis computer program which will allow for organizing, coding, and searching the text data.

Phase I – Archival Research

Once the data have been organized into the data analysis computer program, I will look for themes, categories, or patterns from the collected archival research and then begin to assign coding to the documents that shows relationships and patterns.

Phase II – In-depth Interviews

The participant interview responses are recorded during the interview session and will be organized and transcribed into a software program that will be assigned a label by case school locations. Creswell (2012) states, “transcription is the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data” (p. 239). Interview data will be organized into computer files, transcribed and then coded. Creswell describes the coding process as a way of summarizing the data to be able to draw conclusions and inferences to make recommendations and implications for the future.

Ethical Considerations

Creswell (2012) notes the importance of all researchers engaging in ethical research by respecting the study settings and being sensitive to the treatment of the participants involved. All participants who participate in this study will be required to complete and sign a consent form that acknowledges their involvement. The consent form will address their rights and indicate that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, participants will be informed of how

their anonymity will be protected and their responses from the interview sessions will only be used for data collection purposes.

Limitations

In this study, I am limited to time constraints, which will not enable me to collect adequate data from the five case schools that was initially established. Because of the time constraints, it reduces my sample size that may restrict my conclusions. Further, if there were opportunities to gain access to the schools on a more frequent basis, the number of participants from the different categories could increase, which would result in my data collection having more richer findings. For this study, I initially had planned to examine five case schools. As a result of the schools not being accessible for research, it limited my data collection to only one historical and one contemporary community school. I was also restricted to only interviewing one parent, which limited my data collection.

Delimitations

This study is limited to studying one contemporary and one historical school located in St. Louis, in the Midwestern United States. The research will only explore schools within the St. Louis urban context and will not involve rural or suburban boundaries.

CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to examine how community school practices link family, school, and community engagement, while also exploring the effects of these efforts on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. The St. Louis community school model was also looked at to understand its successes and failures and how it can serve as a guide for today’s educators to rethink how their current practices can be enhanced.

To examine the factors that influence community schools, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. How have family, school, and community interacted to support student educational outcomes in the community school context?
2. What are the characteristics of effective community school programs?
3. How could past and present initiatives in St. Louis inform the development of community schools nationwide?

In this chapter, I will examine the results obtained through archival and interview research. To maintain confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used for the school name in this study. Issa Northway Community School serves approximately 480 low-income students from grades PK and K-8 with the majority of the student body being 98% black, 0.5% White, 0.3 Hispanic, and 32.8% being free and reduced meal recipients. Qualitative data analysis revealed three overarching themes. These themes fall under the following topic areas: (1) collaborative leadership and family engagement, (2) integrated student

support services and high-quality educational resources, and (3) expanded learning time and support for the whole child.

ISSA Northway Community School Theme One: Collaborative Leadership and Family Engagement

Collaborative leadership and family engagement help to establish trusting relationships, providing an environment where students can flourish.

Collaborative Leadership

The principal of this community school values student learning and recognizes that in order for student success and sustained school transformation to exist, leadership must be distributed to families, school staff, community partners, and students. The collective performance allows for value perspectives from stakeholders who understand the community they serve. The principal of this school believes that if all children are to succeed; it just makes sense to leverage the unique expertise and resources of the community to bring about change and student achievement. The principal understands that communities are facing complex challenges and the school alone cannot meet the needs of the whole child. It is no longer sufficient for principals to be the sole leader in schools.

So, my role is to be the lead instructional guide at our school to be somebody who is...let me start there. So, the lead instructor here at Issa Northway is somebody who is aware of what the best practices[are], aware of what is the best curriculum to meet our students needs, aware of culturally responsive practices. [They are aware of] the best curriculum, but more importantly, the best instructional practice in order to meet our students' needs. That's a very overarching lead person of instruction. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

The principal at this school generates their share of input, but also understands that schools are transformed when leadership responsibilities are dispersed to various stakeholders.

You have to have the administrators that buy in; that's what we're taught in schools where there was some administrative support. Here, in north city, where there's no administrative support, you 100% get burned out. It's tripled. Oh, I can imagine it's triple time. So, usually by about March, you can start to see the teachers think, 'Where is spring? My brain is starting to mount.' But if you have a school where there is no administrative support, it's always the teachers' fault. It's a 'What are you not doing to support the children? Why are they acting like this? And why are you not fixing it?' kind of attitude. Teachers burn out. You're not going to last long. Because you feel the burden. I feel the burden of my 16 students every single day. I feel the burden of their success. I feel the burden of their care. I feel the burden of their feelings, their comfort, all of those things. I feel that burden every day. I can carry that burden knowing that the second it becomes overwhelming, I have support. If I can go, 'Hey, I need some help here. I need some assistance, I need a counselor, I need administrators to step in and help here.' But when you don't have that—the burden [is too great]. (Teacher, personal communication, August 2019)

Principals are effective in their roles when they build and maintain strong relationship with families, community partners, teachers, and students. These stakeholders are identified as playing a significant role on the leadership team.

So, I have to be really good at that relationship piece, because to me relationships are everything. Relationships are what get our families in the door. It's what keeps our families here. It's what makes everybody feel at ease and on the same path to meeting the end goal. (Principal, personal communication, August 2019)

It is important that all stakeholders work together for the common goal of the school.

Well, you need to establish a relationship with the teachers so that you're kind of on the same level. Here's what I want to do, and I always say if you have ideas that you want to give me, or if there are particular themes

that you're involved with, let me know. I'll try to bring a book or books that address that issue or whatever topic you're working with that week with the kids. And the relationship with the kids is key. They have to, I mean, you want to...you're happy when their faces beam when you walk in the door, rather than, "Oh he's here again, [and I have to] sit through another half hour of this." You don't want that. But I think the kids are very responsive. (Community Partner, personal communication, August 2019)

This principal also plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of integrated support services, valuing culturally relevant curriculum, improving teaching and learning practices, providing teachers the necessary support and resources, prioritizing teacher and student voices and hearing the voices as an integral contribution to transforming schools and influencing student outcomes.

I think that's it's there's a lot of collaboration, a lot of student voice. So, what I mean by that is, you can go into a classroom and you see that there were collective agreements by the teacher and child, not a set of rules that were already laid out, but creating a class constitution, creating expectations for when we talk, when we respond, creating lots of norms and procedures that allow for students to have a voice in that classroom ,with one another, and with the teacher. And I think it's a place where you're creating the students of the future, students who are ready to be highly functioning individuals in society. You're giving them the skills so that they know how to go and work together, how to disagree politely, how to make good decisions, even if your back is completely turned. And I really believe that a classroom should look like there's a place for them to go calm down. There's a place for them to work on the carpet. There's a place for them to work collaboratively at a table. But there's also a space for them to work independently. And then there's children knowing when to access those different locations based on what they're needing—and a teacher who completely supports that. The teachers should be the facilitator. And about 35% of the time [you hear] his or her voice, and the rest of the time should be student talk. (Principal, personal communication, August 2019)

Maintaining open and two-way communication with stakeholders is key to sustaining relationships with stakeholders.

I think it's like any relationship. To be quite honest, if you don't feel like you're needed and supported, then you're going to fizzle out. So, I think that it's important that we keep our social worker, and that she is a key part in this. (Principal, personal communication, August 2019).

Leaders understand that it is their leadership that determines the success of mobilizing resources for the school.

I think top leadership has to be on board with bringing in community partnerships, and valuing those partnerships, and prioritizing those partnerships, because if you don't, it doesn't happen. There are too many other needs. There are too many other fires to put out. So, if the leadership isn't on board, the people that are doing the work in the trenches—the social worker or the development director or the principal—they aren't going to do it, because they're focusing on the kids and they're focusing on their donors. (Director of Development, personal communication, August 2019)

Family Engagement

For hard-to-reach parents, it is important for the teachers to focus on developing strategic ways of building that trust factor to establish positive parent-school relationships.

So, I would say about 60-65% of our families are pretty involved. They're responsive if you need something. They will get back in touch with you. If we need them to be here, they'll be here. Doesn't mean they're going to come to every single, family event, but that's not really why they're intended to be here. We need them to work with us to make their child's education the best it can be. If we're having an issue with homework, they work with us. I think we have still about 30-35% of our families who've got so many things going on, or their priorities are just very different than ours. And so, we need to figure out how to get them in, how to make it palatable, how to make it feasible for them to be better partners for their child. So, I would say overall, it's very positive, but not perfect. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019).

At this school, the low-income parents are less likely to engage in their child's learning.

One is the phenomenon that many adults didn't have good experiences themselves in school. So, they're not looking to come back to school for

any reason. They don't see the school as a resource or a place where their needs have ever been met. (Community School Coordinator, August 2019)

This school serves minority students who come from low disadvantage families that face a number of obstacles such as poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, crime, and other adverse social issues that put them at risk for school failure. Teachers and principals at this school understand that strong family, school, and community partnerships are critical to student success. Teachers are culturally competent, understand and value diversity, and create welcoming learning environments that foster and build student's educational resilience to help overcome barriers that these students face. The teachers at this school are recognized as being a group of caring, dedicated teachers who take the time to really get to know each individual student. They first make sure that every student basic needs are met. Every child receives free meals, health resources, and extra support and resources as needed.

So, teaching kindergarten, obviously, my number one role is to educate my little sunshines. But for as far as the community role, it is my job to make those connections with the families. So, if I see a need in the classroom, for instance, if I see a student that maybe is wearing the same uniform every day and they're not getting clean, then I can say, 'Hey, we're able to provide some uniforms.' You kind of get them going on that. If I have a child that says, 'I'm hungry,' or they come to school hungry and I'm noticing that they're hungry—[maybe they're] trying to take little snacks, a lot of times I can ask, 'Did you eat dinner last night? What did you have? What was your food?' So, I'm really that liaison between the resources that we have, and assessing their needs to connect them to those resources since I'm with them every day. (Teacher, personal communication, August 2019)

Despite the adversity that these students may have faced in their life, the teachers at this school look past the negatives and realize that they have a talented group of students who can excel and have the potential to be successful in any endeavor they strive

for. A student may be struggling when they first enroll at this school; however, when teachers make one-on-one connections with the student and express care with positive messages of letting them know that they are there for them and they will excel, students become motivated and their learning is enhanced and successful.

I mean, our kids are growing up in a very rough neighborhood. So, it's our job to make it very clear that it's not just about coming to school and being here on time and getting good grades. It's about the fact that you've got a future that could be as bright as you invest in it. And there are real motivators out there, so by giving them access to these great experiences, there's no reason that they wouldn't think to come to school and be their best. There's actually great things happening in St. Louis. You know, you could be in sixth grade going to a WashU program that your school is now paying for you to go to. That's because you did work hard. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

An Issa Northway teacher emphasized the importance of being there for both kids and their parents, indicating that these are the elements that build community.

So, for me community school means that we're truly here for the community. It is hands down. I love that we're not just here about the students, we're here to make sure that the students are successful, but also that the parents have the tools to be a successful parent. Because when you build those relationships, and you begin to affect those types of things, it will begin to trickle out through the community. It's a community impact standard that begins to trickle out around us. Absolutely. And so, 'community school' to me is twofold. One, obviously, it's going to affect the community that there is a school here that really cares about the family, not just the students, but their families. But within our school, I feel like we live up to the community school part of it because coworkers, administration, we feel like a community—like we're here to fight for our babies at every cost, whatever it takes for them to be successful. I'm going to fight tooth and nail to get the things that they need so they find success. That's a community. (Teacher, personal communication, August 2019)

Engaging in meaningful two-way conversations creates opportunities for parents to exchange in dialogue to build trust. Building trust in a relationship does not happen

overnight. It takes multiple encounters to establish that bond. Successful partnerships between families and school will only work if it's a democratic collaboration rather than a dictatorship. This year Issa Northway Community School is refocusing their efforts on effective ways to engage parents. They have added more family engagement nights on the school calendar that include Curriculum Night, Math Night, Literacy Night, Movie Night, and Black History Celebration.

And so, I think that it's those kinds of opportunities where it's also a resource fair, and we tell everybody we need you, and then we sustain that relationship with them. We follow up with them, with our specific organizations. We send thank you cards to them. We invite them to our special events. I mean, we want it to feel like a two-way street, otherwise it's easy for that relationship to be lost. They need us and we need them. This year we will have monthly events where we ask the families to come and just participate with us. Some of it will be to share your voice, and some of it will be, "Come learn with us. Come to watch a movie with us. Let's have a family dinner together.' So, I think that's our way of saying we're trying to make it more everybody's hands coming together. Sure. But that's an area we know we need to continue to improve upon. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Issa Northway School use various traditional one-way communication methods such as phone calls, text messages, email lists, school website, and social media platforms when reaching out to families and parents to inform them of what's going on with their children's learning, how teachers are teaching their children in the classroom, the performance of their child, how the parent might support their child's learning, and any upcoming special events.

Issa Northway Community School realizes that in order for them to build and strengthen their family, school, and community partnership program, they are now focusing on using more two-way face-to-face communication methods that allow for a

deeper connection with families and parents. From looking at convincing evidence from other successful school models, they have recognized that home visits and parent teacher conferences will work for them and be the most effective and powerful two-way communication medium that bridge school and family.

It's so what's working at home. This year we are working with a group called HOME COUNTS. You've probably heard of HOME COUNTS. They do a home visit program. But I think that home visits, really, if you get at the true objective, it's to build that long-term positive relationship with the family and to make it a trusting relationship. And I think we have made it a relationship, but it hasn't been as deep as it needed to be.
(Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Home visits allow for establishing a deeper relationship where those parents and hard-to-reach parents have developed a sense of trust with the school.

Well first and foremost, I think most schools choose to partner with us because they recognize that their relationship, their parent and family engagement relationship, is not where they would like for it to be. And they also recognize that when they hear about that home visit component, that that's a missing link. Typically, school relationships with parents and families is based on the family coming to the school. And so, they recognize that [making a] home visit is a deeper connection. And so, that's what I think is the first and foremost reason. They want that deeper connection, and they recognize that going into the home will provide that.
(Community Partner, personal communication, August 2019)

Parents at the school feel respected and valued. When the need arises where teachers need to reach out and have a conversation about their child, parents are more receptive to listening, because of that trust having been established.

Most of my parents have been like really receptive and really kind. I think it started [a mindset that] our school likes to do home visits. This is the first year we're using HOME COUNTS to help us partner with that. But we had always done home visits in the past, or at least an initial meeting with parents, like when the school year [begins], during the first month or a little bit before school starts. We'll meet with parents just to like

introduce ourselves, get some time one on one, talk with them about their kid, and share some resources. And I think that kind of like really helped set up that partnership, so when I'm calling them later saying, 'Hey, you guys need books at home.' It's like they've heard me before. Not just like, 'Who's this lady calling me?' We've already developed the relationship when it comes time for conferences and you have to say, 'Hey, your kid's a little behind.' What we want them to be like is that they already know that you're there helping their kids. So instead of it being like, 'Well, why aren't you doing this in the classroom?' It becomes, 'Well, okay, I know you're doing this and that in the classroom. What else can I do at home to help?' And it's a much different conversation than blaming people back and forth. That's helpful. (Teacher, personal communication, September 2019)

During the 2019 school year, Issa Northway Community School has begun a new partnership with HOMECOUNTS. Issa Northway Community School has always done home visits in the past years; however, the number of home visits conducted was not always consistent to build and maintain that long-term parent-teacher relationship. Issa Northway Community School realized that they needed a deeper connection with parents and families. With HOMECOUNTS being a partner, teachers now incorporate home visits in as part of their academic schedule and home visits are being done twice a year. The teachers have the luxury of being compensated for each home visit they perform. They are trained through HOMECOUNTS on how to effectively conduct home visits. The training consists of understanding the HOMECOUNTS model and its framework, how to do a home visit in a culturally responsive manner, role play scenarios to act out lead teacher, support teacher, parents or caretaker, and the student. The training provides teachers with a visual presentation and hands-on experience of how home visits are conducted. The role-play scenarios are added into the training to increase teacher's cultural awareness so they can become comfortable and understand cultural differences.

Many parents want the best for their children. However, in order for them to succeed, it takes a collaborative effort of family, school, and community. At Issa Northway Community School, they understand that students never stop learning and that learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom. Kids at this school learn everywhere with family engagement at home being widely recognized to support student success. Teachers at Issa Northway Community encourage parents to take an active role in contributing to their child's learning. Parents can engage in teaching them knowledge and skills, reinforcing school learning, fostering respect for education, promoting cooperative behavior, sparking motivation, developing work habits and interest, and providing enrichment activities that underlie, extend, and supplement academic knowledge. (cite this) Teachers at Issa Northway Community School provide parents with resources that they can use at home to continue to develop their child at home.

The resource sharing that I think I do the most is trying to talk and communicate with parents, because a lot of our families want to help their kids, and they really care about their education, and they really want them to learn. I even had a parent the other day, when I was at a home visit, and I asked her what are your hopes and dreams for your child. And she said, 'I just want her to end up better than I ended up.' Those were the words that she said to me and I was like, 'Okay.' She's like, I just don't want her to make the same mistakes I made. And she'll tell me, 'Mommy, I want to be like you when I grow up.' And I tell her, 'No you don't, you want to be better than me.' And so, you know they have a lot of hopes for their kids, and they want them to be successful in life. They want them to read. They want them to do math. They want them to go to college. They want them to get a job. And so, I've spent a lot of time with parents because they don't really know how to help their kids. So, I send home a lot of materials that they can do at home—addition and subtraction flash cards, little games that they can play, questions they can ask when they're reading with their kids, books. I have kids that don't have books, so I try to send home some little cheap early readers that they can read at home with their parents, and practice work, sight word lists, sight word flashcards. So, I

spend a lot of time with parents. (Teacher, personal communication, September 2019)

Trusting Relationships

Teacher's goals at Issa Northway Community School is to connect with families and parents on a regular basis through phone calls, text messages, approaches that include communication platforms including "remind" that allow communication to exist between home, school and anywhere else in between and the "class dojo" communication platform that allows teachers to connect with families and students to build classroom communities. Teachers also build relationships with families through outreach efforts of parent teacher conferences, family events at the school, and social media. During the interviews, many teachers shared that their focus when first connecting with families and parents is to establish and build trusting and respectful relationships that support student learning. Teachers want parents to feel comfortable with them and the school and know that if they need anything at anytime, they know that they have an established partnership where they can come to the teacher and exchange in dialogue at anytime about anything.

I cannot stress relationship enough to anybody. Relationship, relationship, relationship—it's so important. But my job is to create a relationship with a parent to where they know that I am also a resource to help. I make sure they know that upon their child entering my classroom, this is a partnership. This is you and me. Here's my cell phone number. Whatever you need - if there's something you need. So, I've had parents come to me and say, 'I need I need to find a house.' I can connect them to Ms. B. Or, 'Hey, I'm in need of a job. Do you know of any jobs?' Yeah. Let me connect you to Ms. B. She may have some ideas. She is our school counselor. She has so many resources that we may not even be aware that she has. So, I'm constantly just trying to build relationships with the family as a whole so that they feel comfortable enough and trust me enough to come to me and say, 'Hey I need help.' And a lot of times if they don't necessarily come to me, the students will say things that will

perk your ears. And [then I realize] I need to check into this, because kids talk. Kids talk. OK. I'm going to check with you. Hey how are things going? You know, so-and-so was a little concerned about... They kind of had a concern today. Is everything going okay? It's those types of things: listening, watching, building a relationship. (Teacher, personal communication, August 2019)

Fostering supportive relationships among the school and community partners help teachers improve their teaching practices and increases opportunities for collaboration with community members.

Well, you need to establish a relationship with the teachers so that you're kind of on the same level. Here's what I want to do, and I always say that if you have ideas that you want, give me [a call]. Or, if there are particular themes that you're involved with, let me know, and I'll try to bring a book or books that address that issue or whatever topic you're working with that week with the kids. The relationship with the kids is key. I mean, you're happy when their faces beam when you walk in the door, rather than, 'Oh, he's here again [and we have to] sit through another half hour of this.' You don't want that. But I think the kids are very responsive. (Community Partner, personal communication, August 2019)

Issa Northway Community School Theme Two: Integrated Student Support Services and High-Quality Educational Resources

Integrated student support services and access to high-quality educational resources, made possible by family, school, and community partnerships, allow educators to address in-school and non-school factors that influence student success.

Integrated Student Support Services

Issa Northway takes a holistic approach to their educational program. They provide students and families with the necessary supports, helping families, school, and communities work together to fulfill a shared vision of student success. The school serves an underserved student population and families who face multiple barriers; therefore, the

school leverages a range of resources and services such as mental health services, trauma care, medical and dental services, tutoring, mentoring, and expanded learning opportunities to address barriers that extend beyond the academic walls. The student support services are integrated into the school's partnership programs to mitigate non-school factors such as poverty, homelessness, unsafe neighborhoods, food insecurity, trauma, and racism that impede student's ability to learn and thrive.

I think the school and the teacher's job is to connect the resources. So, it's about saying to the parents, 'Hey, the library's got this activity,' or 'Hey, you need food so go talk to these people.' [It's providing] help because they just don't know where to access it. There are so many things out there that you don't know about, and having a list and saying, 'Go access this, and go access that' helps families. (Teacher, personal communication, September 2019).

These student support services that are integrated into the fabric of the school are based upon the strengths and needs of the school and community. The principal of Issa Northway sits down with the teachers to grasp an understanding of each of their individual students and families in an effort to tailor the community partnership program with an array of supports that meets their needs. The support services provide opportunities to improve student learning, transform schools, and revitalize communities; while diminishing achievement and opportunity gaps. Their focus is for their students to thrive and perform at a level where their scores are the same as students from affluent communities.

Yes, we do the academic individual assessments extensively. We do benchmarking three times a year in math and reading and writing. And science as well. We get down to the nitty gritty on their phonics and how well they can decode and what letters sound like [and] all of that. So that's usually to be expected, at least for a good school. But what we do is three times a year we use it's called the SRSS, and that's the Student Risk Screening

Scale. It's led by our social worker. It asks each teacher to rate his or her students individually on intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges or behaviors that you're noticing. Based on that, then the administrative team sits down with our social work team and looks at which kids are we seeing come into the office because they're struggling with behaviors. What interventions are we putting in place? What interventions are we not putting in place? Then we connect with our teachers so that everybody is, at some level, providing responsiveness to meet those needs. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

The school was able to assess the needs of the students and families and implement a community partnership program that fosters student success.

There are two girls. They are from the same family. They were previously, three years ago, enrolled in a district that is very well known in St. Louis City. It's a good district. It was a good district, and they were not meeting the kid's needs. So the parents heard about us and they brought their children here. The older girl was three years behind, and over the course of a year and a half, we identified that she was really having a phonics decoding reading issue. That wasn't something they had detected. So, because we put in place a very strict regimented phonics intervention, she is now reading above grade level and over the course of a year and a half she grew three plus grade levels. So, her sister struggled in a very different way, she was very physically delayed. She was in special education. She was struggling to even get into the building and be comfortable. Because we have teachers who are very familiar with our community, and who we're servicing, and who really care about children, she has helped her become very comfortable and excited to learn. She speaks in class and shares her ideas and asks questions. She comes to the cafeteria. She doesn't hide. So, then, there's another student who comes to mind from a behavioral standpoint. We had a student who came to us who had been kicked out of her schools. Schools plural. She had pushed teachers down the stairs. She had broken her past principal's bone. [She was] extremely emotionally disturbed. This child came here, and it was a much stricter policy here. And [this student] has never laid a hand on [another] student. She has never laid a hand on an adult since she's been here. There have been incidents that were very inappropriate, and I mean she even tried bringing out a blade, and she didn't hurt the child, but she tried to entice... But this student has grown tremendously since she's been here. There have been none of those extreme behaviors that she experienced at the past school (Principal, personal communication, July 2019).

Despite the fact that Issa Northway Community School is an urban school located in one of the highest crime areas in the St. Louis region with many of the students and families facing poverty, the school fosters a safe and positive school climate that contributes to student success by addressing their basic needs of food, water, warmth, and rest. They accomplish this by developing meaningful community partnerships.

I really think it's tapping into the foundation of...the hierarchy of needs. You need to feel safe. So, are we speaking to safety? Physical and emotional [safety]? I don't need to talk to you about math and reading if you're coming to me, when you haven't slept, [when] you have gunshots happening around the neighborhood, and I mean this. I don't see that as trying to make it dramatic. This is just literally what happens. You turn on the news – it's always our kids. So, I feel like it's extremely important for us to say, 'Let's do what we can to support that basic safety need.' Once we do that, then we can get at the other layers. But safety really means emotional and physical. Do you have shelter? Do you have food? (Principal, personal communication, July 2019).

Issa Northway recognizes that many of the students who come and enroll in their school lag behind their white counterparts that live in more affluent communities. These achievement and opportunity gaps are a result of not having been provided with equal access to opportunities. Issa Northway belief is that every student should be presented with an excellent educational opportunity and can succeed when the right resources are in place.

I was drawn to that because to me, it's my job. It is my calling to provide a better education for the kids who don't necessarily have the equal access that they should. That's what my heart says, that's what I believe in. But I feel like if you just go into a school and you're here to just provide an 8:00 to 4:00 typical academic program, you might as well just say you're not going to meet about 50% of your kids' needs. Literally, I have a hard time understanding how you do that. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Issa Northway focus is to engage their students in a strong, quality instruction. The teachers focus on delivering curriculum that is culturally relevant and engages each student. The teachers at Issa Northway reported that they provide personalized support and suggest expanded learning interventions to ensure each and every student is given a positive learning experience. Although, there may be critical community partners that support, students and families understand that they need to also take an active role in their learning. Issa Northway is recognized as one of the top performing charter schools in St. Louis and the state.

Well one, it's the expectation. And then, it's how are we going to get there? So there's very strict discipline. There are very high expectations. There's intentionality about the curriculum, and also the instructional approach. We've looked into what are other high functioning inner city schools are doing in order to make the kind of impact we want to make with our students. High-quality professional development, low class size, tremendous support for our teachers who are doing the hardest work ever, and recognition that our families need to be supported—but also, high expectations for our families. We will hold you accountable. We will not make excuses, but if you work with us we will help you. (Principal, personal communication, August 2019)

Students are engaged in instruction that develops their social and emotional and academic learning. Issa Northway agrees that emotions matter and in order to function in life, schools need to prepare their students early on to be knowledgeable, responsible and caring so they can function as productive workers and citizens.

So, I have known students that are so academically high, but really, [they] don't know how to function in a society. And when you're academically so high, but you can't function in society, it's almost like the academics mean nothing. I mean, it just doesn't make you successful in life because you're smart. So, [you really have] to develop the whole child—you know, socially, behaviorally, and academically. All of those things are so important. I tell my friends all the time, 'You know what? You can know all your ABC's, and you can know your sounds, Sweetie, but if you can't

figure out how to sit in that seat, we've got a problem.' But it's knowing all of those things, and I use my own life. Listen. I'm a grown woman. You have to learn to listen to your authorities. I'm grown, and I still have to listen to my authorities. We can't be mad and stomp and throw a fit and do all these things, because I always tell them, 'What do you think Ms. G would do if Ms. T threw a tantrum? Oh, Ms. T would get fired.' They understand, but [the hard part is] to teach them how to control that [urge], to teach them to calm themselves, to teach them how to interact with each other the right way. (Teacher, personal communication, August 2019)

At this time, there is no structured social and emotional program at the school.

Teachers at Issa Northway reported that they embed social and emotional activities routinely within their curriculum. The families, school, and community understand the significance of these skills and how important it is to keep one's emotions within control, along with developing healthy and trusting relationships with a diverse group of people. It is important that children know how to act appropriately in socially skilled and respectful ways; express positive and safe behaviors, managing emotions, following directions, and positive relationships with peers and adults. When student's character, health, and civic engagement is enhanced, their academic performance is improved, increases emotional and mental health, and relationships with adults and peers are positive.

I think you need a really strong character education program. I think that's very important. I think it's something that's been lacking at Issa Northway. I think we're working on developing that in a very intentional way. But I also think it's a place where you're teaching kids those, you can call them 'soft skills.' But I'm big on cooperative learning, and the reason I'm big on cooperative learning is that it intentionally teaches social skills. And so many of our kids walk in the door and they don't know how to have social skills. And because of that, you see everything crumbling right before your eyes. And so, I think that is something we intentionally need to teach and practice and celebrate all throughout the day. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Access to High-quality Educational Resources

Issa Northway Community School, a charter school located in one of the lowest-income and highest violent crime area in the region, believes that all children regardless of their zip code and socioeconomic status, should be provided with the same equal educational opportunities as students from more affluent communities.

I was drawn to that because to me it's my job. It is my calling to provide a better education for kids who don't necessarily have the equal access than they should. That's what my heart says, that's what I believe in. But I feel like if you just go into a school and you're here to just provide an eight to four hour typical academic program, you might as well just say you're not going to meet about 50 percent of your kids needs. Literally, I have a hard time understanding how you do that. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Issa Northway Community School Theme Three: Expanded Learning Time and Support for the Whole Child

Expanded learning time strengthens academic outcomes while providing growth and development opportunities that nurture the whole child.

Expanded Learning Time

Issa Northway Community School operates an extended day enrichment program after school. The multi-faceted program emphasizes mentoring, yoga, chess, basketball, soccer, Girls on the Run, and a nature appreciation class. These programs provide students with opportunities to experience and learn new skills that they can apply to their everyday life through project-based learning.

Personally, I think we're making strides in that. We are beginning to expand what's called our extended day program, and our extended day is like an extracurricular program that all kids have access to. And so, instead of it just being some typical clubs, we're partnering with outside

organizations to bring in a lot of science and technology and engineering opportunities for our kids. [We're] working with partnerships like the chess club or Lego robotics. So, [there are] lots of different partnerships to give our kids access [to programs] and speak to their strengths and interests. The other thing that we've done a better job of, but again we need to work on, is differentiating within the classroom. This year our teachers are about to begin more project-based learning opportunities. And that will allow for kids to show what they know in a more critical thinking, enriching way. It's a way for them to say, 'Here's what I know, but I'm not going to take a paper and pencil test. I'm going to choose a topic of my interest and produce something.' And that is exactly where we need to be taking our kids. (Principal, personal communication, July 2019)

Issa Northway recognizes that kids learn all day, everyday and learning extends beyond the normal traditional school hour. They understand that low-income students need extended learning because they have been limited on educational opportunities.

I said, 'Look! This is such an opportunity to build our community partnerships and to give the children amazing experiences, life changing experiences.' So, we've got Mentors in Motion, it's brand new. And they are going to do like music, video production, song writing. They're going to do cooking [and learn] how to cook at home for yourself. We're talking about how to use microwave, how to know when food is rotten and about expiration dates. It's not like, oh, we're going to make gourmet food that you would never make it home. It's like, no, you're home alone. Mom's working the night shift. We're really excited about the offerings this year. I'm so excited about the trauma-informed yoga. I mean, now that we're having the middle school, I think with some behaviors, I've heard it does wonders and helps them focus. (Director of Development, personal communication, August 2019)

Whole Child Approach

Issa Northway Community School takes a holistic approach to education with a focus on the whole child. They seek to provide their students with an exceptional academic experience and set them up for a fulfilled life thereafter. Emphasis is placed on mastering the basic academic skills of reading, writing, and math. The school understands

that it is necessary to collaborate with community partners and families to meet the basic academic and daily life needs of each student. Resources that are provided by community partners and parents to support students and their families enhance the academic programs and instruction. Student success in career and life requires that teachers at Issa Northway Community School develop their students with 21st Century skills consisting of problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-management.

Yeah, if you go all the way to the end, what education is usually geared toward is employment. You know, the skills employers need that they now call 21st century skills. They say they're not getting [those skills] from schools. [It's also] what they call 'soft skills,' so teamwork or appreciation for diversity. They sometimes say things like good writing and good communication skills, which is more on the academic side, but a lot of it is getting along with people, knowing how to work together, and those kinds of things. (Community School Coordinator, personal communication, August 2019)

Issa Northway Community School understands that they cannot work in isolation in meeting student's needs. In order to promote student success, the school will need to engage the larger community and families. At this time, the school does not have a formal established SEL program. Social and emotional learning is intertwined daily throughout teaching practices.

So, that's another big push this year. We're doing round tables. It stems from the push we're doing with character education...they meet at a round table. So, every morning teachers are meeting with their class. And every kid gets to speak. I think there are several positives to it. The first positive is that a lot of our kids don't get enough opportunity to practice oral language skills. And so you hear a lot of one word answers because that's what they've been taught in their home. You hear a lot of improper grammar. And so, in my classroom especially, because it's early, I'm pushing full sentences and talking loudly enough that people can hear you.

So, we're practicing a lot of that oral vocabulary and oral speaking and presentation. But it also is helping form connections with the kids.
(Teacher, personal communication, September 2019)

Chapter 4 Summary

This qualitative study consisted of a focus school that used various components of the community school strategy within their community partnership program. The perspectives of family, school, and community-based organizations were explored through personal interviews to understand how their roles influence student and community outcomes. This study also examined a historical community school and looked at the components it utilized that led to its successes and failures. Each of the group of participants were able to identify the importance of stakeholders collaborating together and how their position, experience, and background contributes to the school's community partnership program. The data collected in this study suggests that a well-implemented community partnership program could be a way to break down barriers to student's learning and the constellation of conditions that were implemented for this school's intervention could prove useful in student success when addressing student's needs that extend beyond the walls of the classrooms.

The study participants also identified additional components that could be essential to the success of the school's community partnership program that leads to improving community connections to development of a comprehensive community partnership program; which involves increased family engagement and programming for parents.

In Chapter 5, I examine these themes relative to the existing literature and my conceptual framework for this study. I will also discuss implications for practice and areas for action that aim to guide future research.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study examined a contemporary community school's partnership program of how community school practices link family, school, and community engagement, while also exploring the effects of these efforts on school climate, academic success, and long-term sustainability. The St. Louis community school model was also looked at to understand and evaluate its successes and failures and how it can serve as a guide for today's educators to rethink how their current practices can be enhanced. The data collection consisted of two phases. The first phase consisted of document review that involved collecting documents that gave meaning and understanding to the effectiveness of the school's program through family and community engagement. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with administrators, teachers, parents, and community-based organizations.

The researcher chose to focus on family, school, and community engagement for marginalized populations in an urban community. Chapter 4 presented the themes that emerged from data analysis. These themes fall under three topic areas: (1) collaborative leadership and family engagement, (2) integrated student support and services and high-quality educational resources and (3) expanded learning time and support for the whole child. The findings are encouraging and supportive and identify that increasing active family engagement, implementing a comprehensive community partnership program, and promoting developmental relationships to build trust suggest quality family, school, and community partnership programs.

This chapter consists of a discussion of the findings in relation to the existing literature on family, school, and community engagement in community partnership programs and what it means to the field. Also included in this chapter are implications for practice and an agenda for future research.

Observation One: Sustained Community Partnership Program

Issa Northway Community School presents a holistic model for addressing the whole child by enhancing student's learning, transforming schools, and revitalizing neighborhoods through family, school, and community engagement.

Family, school, and community partnerships are viewed as being an integral part of student success. These components make up the community schools strategy.

Community schools create conditions for learning to help students be successful in school. Students are able to achieve success through the partnership efforts of school and community resources. These resources are tailored to meet the specific needs of a targeted student population in order to overcome barriers to learning. These partnerships focus not on academics alone but serves as a vehicle that promotes “youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development” (The Coalition for Community Schools, n.d. p.3).

Epstein (1995) emphasized that partnerships are established primarily to provide low-income children who experience academic and nonacademic barriers the necessary supports and services they need to flourish in school and life thereafter. Family, school, and community partners work together to align their resources to achieve a shared vision. Epstein (1995) also adds that partnerships “improve school programs and school climate,

provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work" (p. 1).

If children are to succeed, academic and non-academic barriers must not be ignored. Family, school, and community are seen as partners that integrate student supports and services into the school's partnership program to address student's needs. Integrated student supports and services are considered as vital ingredients of collective community efforts in closing achievement and opportunity gaps. When schools, families, and communities work together to take responsibility to create comprehensive programs containing resources that address student's in need, learning is improved and schools are transformed. By integrating student supports into schools, it creates opportunities for teachers to focus on delivering effective instruction; while implementing an intervention of personalized resources that break down barriers to student success.

The vast majority of students who attend Issa Northway are black and identified as at-risk students who come from low-income families facing challenges of poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, neighborhood violence, and other traumatic events. Student success extends beyond Issa Northway just focusing on academics. The school values a holistic approach to education and places priority on addressing the whole child with having the right customized resources to best serve students and their families.

Similar to the research conducted on the Oakland Unified School District Community Schools, the findings from that study revealed that Oakland community schools implemented a community partnership program that provided a wide range of

resources integrated into the fabric of the school that focused on academics, health and social services, expanded learning time, high-expectation and family and community engagement. The community school initiative was designed to ensure that students and families would have the necessary supports they needed to achieve positive student and community outcomes.

I found in this study that Issa Northway's approach to education is that they do recognize the benefit of implementing a community school model and when embracing a holistic strategy into the structure of their educational system, it is useful in improving student and community outcomes. Its educational approach emphasized providing high-quality education to underserve students in one of the most violent neighborhoods.

Issa Northway implemented a community partnership program that focused on engaging the larger community. These community partners offered a wealth of resources and supports to students and their families at no cost. Though Issa Northway has relationships with a wide collection of partners who cater to specific needs that address academics, literacy, and enrichment programs, Issa Northway recognizes one specific community organization called The Basic Needs Foundation as being a pinnacle partner of the school. Its philosophy is not on academics alone, but embraces the whole child. The partnership between the school and The Basic Needs Foundation is more than just providing stuff; both share in a mutual responsibility with the school to holistically address the child and their family needs. For example, in response to the basic need items that children lack in their lives such as nutrition, health, and wellness, The Basic Needs Foundation provides school supplies, books, uniforms, coats, and undergarments.

Through this partnership, The Basic Needs Foundation does outreach to other community partners to establish relationships and programs that service the whole child. This particular partner has set up a boutique-like space at Issa Northway that stores various food kits consisting of emergency meal kit that contain breakfast, lunch, and dinner and a full family meal kit that can feed a family of 5. These items are made available for students and families who would otherwise not have or have limited access to purchasing grocery items on a regular basis due to a lack of financial resources. When kids come to school hungry, it impedes their learning. When families don't have the finances to prepare their kids for the start of the school year, they can come to the school and get the necessary back to school supplies their child needs. Additionally, a laundry room has been set up on the early childhood campus of Issa Northway for families to use that are unable to afford laundry appliances of their own and are not able to make ends meet to pursue public laundry services. Today's schools are introducing this to low-income students and families. This revolutionary change has come about to improve student attendance. Getting families to come to the school building is the goal of the school.

The Basic Needs Foundation partner is not only committed to the needs of the whole child, they also direct their attention to the academic needs of students as well through the use of their academic enrichment program. The Books and Buddy program and the Book Fair are part of their academic enrichment program. With the books and buddy program, every PK-2 grade classroom receives packages of books and stuff animals that are coordinated to the content of the book. Every student has the opportunity

to read with a book buddy. Books and Buddies were inspired from research that shows when you read to someone, reading comprehension improves. Book fairs are held twice a year, usually on Fridays. The kids can pick out two or three books with age-appropriate content. The goal of the book fairs is for kids to build their own libraries at home.

Research shows that if kids have more books around the home, they perform better on tests and reading comprehension increases. Lastly, the Reading Tutor Program consists of reading tutors that visit Issa Northway twice a week for ½ hour of reading of sight words, reading comprehension, and gaining comfort ability with reading aloud.

Teachers in this study reported that their job is all about building relationships and taking time to gain a cultural awareness of whom their students and families were. They expressed that relationships are important and do matter. As a result of the strong relationships they had built with their students, they are able to serve as an intermediary in communicating the out-of-school barriers that students are facing to the larger community and draw conclusions on what resources to personalize to their needs. Teachers also reported that they create a safe and supportive classroom environment and their students know they care about their learning. The National School Climate (2007) confirms that “safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate tends to foster greater attachment belonging to school as well as provide the optimal foundation for social, emotional and academic learning” (p. 6).

Although the school had no real data on evaluation of the community partnership program, teachers at Issa Northway reported that as a result of the partnership program, they were able to see an improvement in student’s learning, more positive behavior, and

an increase in attendance. Research from Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012) shows that when family, school, and community partnerships work together and engage in sharing resources: (1) “children develop socially, emotionally, physically, and academically, (2) “students become motivated and engaged in learning,” (3) families and schools work effectively together, and (4) communities become safer and more economically vibrant” (p. 4). Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that the school could benefit from conducting survey evaluations. Surveys could be presented to the students to take home to their parents to complete to gain their perspectives on how they feel the community partnership program is working.

Observation Two: Empowering Families to Increase Participation in Their Child’s Learning

Engaging families in their child’s learning is a critical component to contributing to students learning both at school and home. Fostering family engagement facilitates a sense of connectedness between school and families.

Engaging parents in their child’s learning both at home and work is a critical strategy for achieving student success (Auerbach, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; O’Donnell, Kirkner, Meyer-Adams, 2008; Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Sanders, 2008; Shumow & Miller, 2001). Although family engagement aims to improve student’s learning for all children, research indicates that minority, at-risk student populations from low-income families benefit the most (Auerbach, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, Lieberman, 2007; Simon, 2004;). In response to achievement and opportunity disparities that still persist among minorities, urban school districts focus largely on empowering parents to increase

their participation in their child's learning (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012; Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006; Stefanski, Valli, Jacobson, 2016; Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014). However, research shows that marginalized families may not always be receptive to interacting and engaging with teachers and principals because they feel that their voices are not being heard (Ferrara, 2009; Howland, Anderson, Smiley, & Abbott, 2006; Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013; Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014). Many families often feel alienated and marginalized. When schools approach them regarding their child, its usually through one-way communication with the school telling the parents what they want them to do or become involved in; rather than sending positive two-way messages on a regular basis.

We know that many disadvantaged and marginalized families are suspicious of educational institutions, and often for good reason. They are more likely to have bad experiences in their interactions with schools and educational institutions. Research shows that minorities are more likely to have had adversarial interactions with schools. For example, they are more likely to have been invited to the school to deal with problems the school says its having with their children. Also, parents themselves could have had negative schooling experiences, which cause them to view schools suspiciously and not feel welcomed. The findings in this study show that engaging parents can be a complex task. Although many low-income parents face barriers to engagement, it is important for schools to make every effort to enhance relationships and bridge the home-school gap. Sanders (2008) highlighted the importance of creating a welcoming school environment that promotes student success. Successful partnerships between families and

school is critical, but they will only work if it's a democratic collaboration rather than a dictatorship. Incorporating strong family-school partnerships in the educational process is linked to developing academic, social and emotional learning, and building trusting relationships among families and schools.

When conducting this study, I found that when even the most hard-to-reach parents can become engaged when invited to attend school events that offer some type of freebie or incentive such as a free dinner or gift card. Then parents are more optimistic about taking an active role in their child's education.

While Issa Northway views families as a critical partner in positively influencing student and community outcomes, the principal reported family engagement efforts is an area that the school needs to improve on. In this partnership both the school and family take full responsibility to support students high academic and behavior expectations.

Issa Northway's approach to engaging with families is based on five beliefs that include:

(1) parents and families are the primary and most influential educators, (2) children need safe, supportive homes, (3) Schools need the support of parents. Without the support of parents and a home life that meets the basic needs of the child our job is much more difficult. Teachers, parents, and the school must support each other and work together to educate children and students, (4) parents, families and schools must have high expectations and standards for their children and students, and (5) the more often parents are in the school, the greater their involvement in the education of their children, the more effective our educational efforts, and the stronger the school (Attuned Education Partners, 2019, p. 9).

Parents of Issa Northway are empowered to engage in school events such as Open House Curriculum Night, Math Night, Literacy Night, Winter Musical, Movie Night, and Black History Celebration. While conducting this study, I was invited to participate in the

Open House Curriculum Night event at Issa Northway. Curriculum Night is an event that the school hosted at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of this event was for parents and families to meet their child's teacher, learn of the classroom expectations, and see what their child is learning in the classrooms. The Curriculum Night was segmented into three sections. The first part of the agenda consisted of grade level presentations where the parents and families were invited to their child's classroom to hear presentations and participate in an activity. Parent from different grade level were invited to participate in activities in designated classrooms. I had the opportunity to observe and participate in the kindergarten classroom. All of the kindergarten teachers met as a group in one classroom and presented to families and parents some of the things that their child learns in the classroom during regular school hours. Families, parents, and teachers engaged in an activity called knights at the roundtable. This is an activity that teachers engage with their students every morning where every kid gets to speak. Everyone gathers in a circle and is asked a question to get an idea of their emotions for the day. For example, the question asked the event night was: "Share something that frustrated you today and why did it make you feel that way? Give me thumbs up if you feel good. Thumbs down if you feel bad." Families, parents, and other kindergarten teachers in the room had permission to express how they were feeling. Teachers in this study reported that social and emotional activities of this nature create ways for kids to practice oral language skills and enhance oral speaking and presentation skills. Teachers feel that it creates room to build trusting relationships among students and families. I found that parents whom attended this event were curious, but emotionally receptive to

see some of the social and emotional learning that takes place in the classroom. This was a way to reinforce the kinds of activities that parents and families can do at home with their children. During the second section of the evening, families, parents, teachers, and administrators met in the gymnasium to hear presentations from the school principal, other teachers, and the Parent Teacher Organization. Lastly, the night ended with the school providing families with a family dinner. The goal of the school was to show families that they care about their child's learning and this is a partnership.

A strong family and school partnership both at school and home can be one of the most powerful indicators of student success. Based on the findings of this study, I recommend having more events that offer incentives to get parents to attend like the Curriculum Night as one way to increase family engagement. I also feel that having a Parent Community Resource Center would be another way to get parents to come to the school building and provide them with an array of resources such as computer classes, leadership programs, parent programming such as parenting 101, employment and housing information.

Observation Three: Building relationships and trust

Issa Northway builds trusting relationships through engaging with family, school, and community that cultivate a school culture of connectedness and a community of belonging to create positive student and community outcomes.

When positive and trusting relationships are established among family, school, and community partnerships, students and community outcomes are increased

(Roehlkepartain, Pekel, Syvertsen, Sethi, Sullivan, & Scales, 2017). High-quality relationships are an essential component for effective community partnership programs.

Building positive and trusting relationships through family, school, and community matters at Issa Northway. While it is important for the school to build trust through engaging with families and the community to promote positive student and community outcomes, the school also recognizes that gaining trust will not happen overnight and will take some time. By being patient and consistently sending positive meaningful messages to parents could be the strategy with the most impact to building relationships. I can recall while I was conducting this study, I was really trying to get many parents involved to understand their role in the school's community partnership program, but because they did not know me, it was very challenging to get them to contact me back to contribute. Studies show that social networks matter and are opportunities to develop connections that influence the participation of individuals ((Dani & McAdam, 2003). In other words, it is a mechanism to building relationships for participation.

The principal at Issa Northway reported that their approach to outreach for family engagement was positive, but not perfect. The principal expressed that figuring out how to recruit those hard-to-reach parents as partners, families who are not so responsive in coming to the school and contribute to their child's learning is a critical area the school wants to work on. The school reported that they could benefit by taking a holistic approach to increasing family engagement. Developing two-way communication practices through home visits has been one way that Issa Northway reports their

relationships has begun to deepen with families. Home visits act as a catalyst to building constructive, positive, and sustained relationships.

If family and school partnerships are to be effective, barriers that schools and families experience in relationship efforts will need to be addressed. Being looked at from a deficit perspective is one of the major concerns of parents of color. Parents from marginalized communities sometimes have preconceived assumptions about what schools think and feel about their level of participation in their child's learning. Teacher oftentimes experience challenges with valuing cultures that are different than their own; as a result lacking the cultural knowledge that is needed to serve a diverse student population. As a result of this cultural gap, educators find themselves interacting differently with families who are not from the same background than their own and treating them as a disadvantage (NEA, 2008). Being culturally competent is another means for schools to build trusting relationships with students, family and community.

Emerging research suggests that building-trusting relationships is an important part of the equation when implementing any education program, practice or intervention that support youths learning. When relationship development is not promoted, the intervention produces limited results. Evidence shows that when children encounter experiences with different people at home or school who support their learning, relationship development can prove powerful and stimulate their growth. Li and Julian (2012) points out that it is all about the relationships; when at-risk youths experience high-quality relationships with adults that express care and challenge their growth, students thrive and learning is enhanced.

Based on the findings from this study, it is suggested schools that serve low-income minorities integrate developmental relationships as the active ingredient when implementing community partnership programs. Developmental relationships play a major role in children

As a result of the findings from this study, I recommend that teachers and principals attend ongoing cultural awareness programs that develop on the whole child and provide development on how to able recognize students needs that are not easy to identify. The school could also benefit from conducting a counseling intervention of school community dialogues. As Cook, Shah, Brodsky, and Morizio (2017) suggest, conducting a counseling intervention focused on school-community dialogues could help increase intercultural understandings, improve race relations, and create equitable opportunities. This intervention is meaningful in strengthening family, school, and community partnership programs.

Future research is needed to explore how the strategies of relationship development and school community dialogues can enhance social and emotional learning, close achievement and opportunity gaps, and advance equity.

Revised Conceptual Framework

As a result of the findings presented in this study, I revisited the original conceptual model that was presented in Chapter 2. The original conceptual framework focused on the implementation of school partnership programs and how family, school, and community engagement aim to influence student and community outcomes. It was designed to illustrate the programs that community schools create to embrace the needs

of the whole child. The partnership of family, school, and community provide an array of meaningful student support and services to remove academic and nonacademic barriers that impede a student's learning. When implementing a community partnership program, it can produce meaningful outcomes that improve attendance, close achievement and opportunity gaps, and build college and career readiness.

In the revised conceptual model, shown below in Figure 2, I outline the roles of family and school engagement based on the information that was reported in the in-depth interviews. Within the family engagement component, it depicts the traditional ways of how parents engage in their child's learning: parenting, communicating, volunteering, and decision-making. Collaborative leadership and relationship development and trust was added to the framework as an essential component when implementing community school programs. When implementing a community school partnership program, having a principal or school leader that values student success. In order for a community

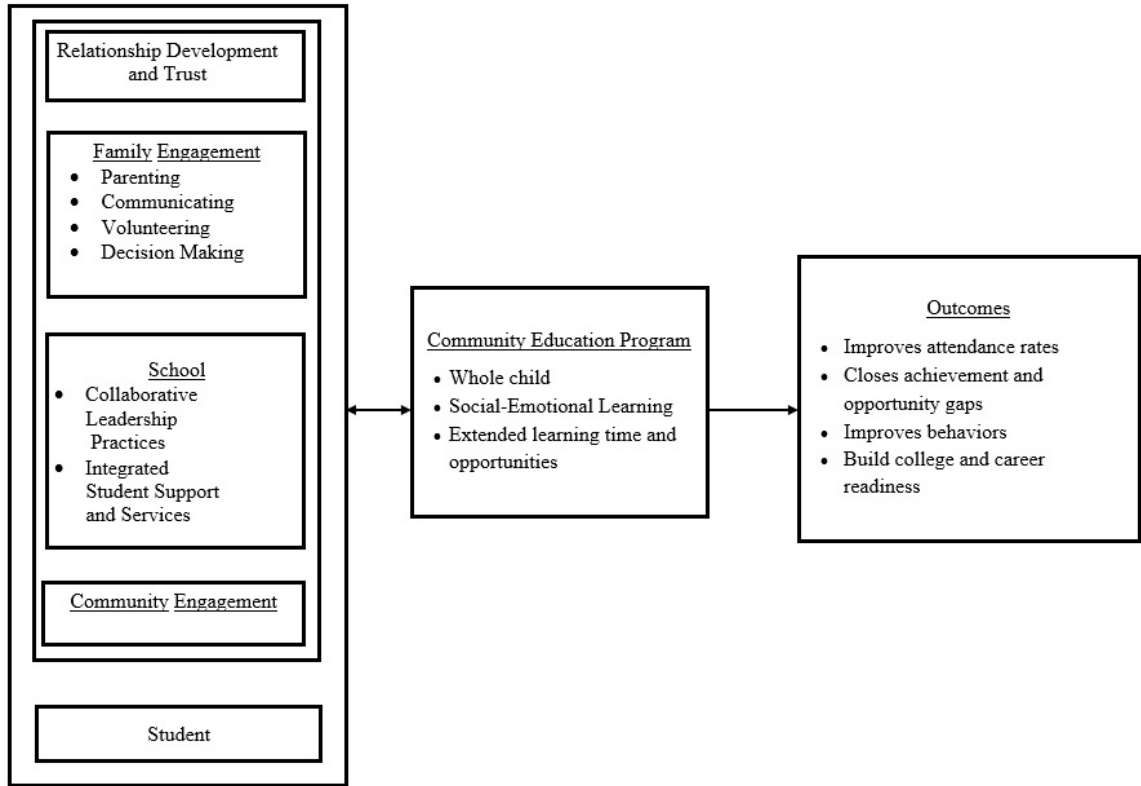


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Community Schools (Daniel, Lam, Maier, & Oakes, 2017; Decker, 2003; Epstein, 2018; Li, & Julian, 2012; Sanders, 2018; Finn-Stevenson, 2014; Weiss, 2010)

partnership program to be effective, having a strong leadership in place that understands relationships must be built and all decisions and responsibilities should be a collective effort with engaging family, school, and community. Schools that take a collaborative approach in sharing decisions and responsibilities with various stakeholders, have the greatest impact in sustained and systemic efforts.

Relationship development and trust is another addition to the conceptual framework. Relationship development is presented at the top of the framework. In order

for family, school, and community partnerships to be effective in promoting student success, it is critical that positive, trusting relationships be established. Relationships play an active role in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of students, while also improving a student's social and emotional competencies. My experiences during this study highlight that relationships matter. Relationships are the foundation if any program or intervention is to yield positive outcomes.

Implications and Conclusion

If all children are to be successful in school and life, it is significant that schools offer high-quality education and a full-spectrum of student support services to meet the needs of the whole child. As a result of living in a complex society, many minorities experience significant out of school barriers such as poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, violent neighborhoods, and traumatic events that extend beyond the school walls. As children face barriers that impede their learning, so too are there gaps in achievement and opportunity. Together, with family and community partners, schools bring together a partnership of family, school, and community to ensure student success. This study suggests community schools as an effective strategy to ensure all students are successful. Although community schools are not a new strategy, there is a renewed interest among many schools throughout the country to closing achievement and opportunity gaps.

The findings reveal that community partnership programs, a strategy of community schools, provides coordinated support and services to address the needs of the

whole child to drive student success. The contributions in this study could serve as a guide for future school districts, leaders, teachers, and policy makers interested in understanding the components of school programs that seek to break down out-of-school barriers and promote student success for schools in low-income communities. The study also makes contributions to the current knowledge on ways that could improve existing community school programs.

School administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to understand other significant implications that can deepen their knowledge on community school programs that serve disadvantaged students. First, schools should work on implementing a comprehensive community school program. School administrators should focus on increasing active family engagement and creating opportunities for parents to be active leaders within the school allowing for their voices to be heard. Possible examples could include engaging parents in well-implemented leadership programs, which might empower parents to serve in leadership roles, such as being a member on the board of directors. The study also suggests that offering parent programming could increase parent's skills and knowledge in knowing how to support the learning of their child, which is essential to student success.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A. Interview Protocol

Project: Community Schools in St. Louis Then and Now

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Kimberly Carothers

Interviewee:

Work Location/Position of Interviewee:

This purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of school administrators, teachers, family members, and community partners with community school programs in St. Louis. The St. Louis Community School model will be explored to understand and evaluate whether it can serve as a guide for today's educators to enhance current practices.

This study will employ semi-structured interviews that will average 45 minutes to 1 hour. Participants will include school administrators, teachers, family members, and community partners. Prior to the beginning of each interview session, participants will complete a consent form. They will be informed that the interview session will be recorded and transcribed. Responses will be kept confidential. Interview transcripts will be stored in password-protected computer files or locked storage. Participants will be informed of the purpose of the study and the length of the interview process. All interviewees will be asked a series of open-ended questions to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and perspectives of the community school programs in St. Louis. Probing questions will be used to gain additional information (as needed).

Questions:

1. What is the scope of your role at the present school? In what ways have you been involved in resource sharing in your community school programs?

Probe: What responsibilities do you have at your school?

Probe: How much of your time is dedicated to community school programming?

Probe: How have you engaged parents or outside partners in providing wrap-around services or additional support for students?

2. What does "community school" mean to you?

Probe: How important are community school programs to you? Why?

*Probe: Was there a specific experience that caused you to think that way?
Please tell me about it...*

3. What does educating the whole child mean to you?

Probe: How might a classroom dedicated to the whole child function?

Probe: What does teaching look like if a teacher emphasizes the whole child?

Probe: What is the role of social-emotional learning in a whole child educational context?

Probe: If a school prioritized the whole child, how would it differ from other schools?

4. What knowledge, skills and dispositions do you see as essential in educating the whole child?

Probe: What knowledge have you gained that's helped you focus on the whole child?

Probe: What skills do you regard as essential in a whole child approach?

Probe: What dispositions (or attitudes/awareness) are critical to effectively implement a whole child approach?

Probe: How do you use your knowledge and skills to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of your students?

5. How do you see your role in the collaborative practices that link school, family, and community?

Probe: Which collaborative practices are the most important?

Probe: Which collaborative practices are the most challenging?

Probe: How have you personally facilitated connections between school and family?

Probe: What's the hardest part about engaging parents?

Probe: How have you personally facilitated connections between school and community?

Probe: Which community connections are the hardest to develop and maintain? (for school employees)

Probe: Please tell me about your experiences collaborating with school teachers and administrators? (for family members and community partners)

6. In what ways, and to what extent, have students benefited from the integrated support services that have been provided through the school?

Probe: Tell me about a student who was struggling or who experienced outside barriers to their success...

Probe: How have you helped students overcome the barriers they faced?

Community Schools in St. Louis Then and Now

Probe: How have school, family and community partnerships helped to address student needs and/or overcome barriers?

Probe: What integrated support services do you think are most essential to helping students overcome barriers? Why?

7. Tell me about some challenges you've faced in your efforts to build or strengthen community school programs?

Probe: Tell me about an experience you've had in your efforts to engage families and community organizations... (for school employees)

Probe: Tell me about an experience you've had in your efforts to engage teachers of school administrators... (for family members and community partners)

Probe: Tell me about your approach to creating successful partnerships?

Probe: How did you evaluate the success of the partnership?

Probe: What things contributed to or hindered the success of the partnership?

8. One way to think about community school programs is that they are a collection of student support services that meet the needs of the whole child. In your opinion, which student support services are the easiest to deliver collaboratively? Which have been the hardest to provide? Why?

Probe: What factors make it easier or harder to deliver needed student support services?

Probe: If you had a magic wand, what resources would you make available to your community school program?

Probe: If you had a magic wand, what kind of community school would you plop down in the middle of your community?

9. To what extent does your school serve as a community school model? Why?

Probe: Has your school been recognized as an effective community school program?

Probe: In what ways is your community school program exemplary?

Probe: One more magic wand question...if you could broadly publicize any aspect of your community school program, what would it be?

10. Is there any additional information that you would like to share regarding your partnership in the community school program?

Appendix B. Informed Consent Form



Department of Education Sciences and Professional Programs

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St. Louis, Missouri 63121
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E-mail: kaccpb@mail.umsli.edu

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Community Schools in St. Louis Then and Now

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number _____

Principal Investigator Kimberly Carothers PI's Phone Number (314) 324-0132

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of school administrators, teachers, family members, and community partners with community school programs in St. Louis. Participation is voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks or benefits.

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kimberly Carothers under the supervision of Dr. Theresa Coble. Your participation involves answering questions during a face-to-face interview that will be recorded and transcribed.
2. a) This study will recruit school administrators, teachers, family members, and community partners from four contemporary schools and one historical school to explore their experiences with and perceptions of community school programs. As many as 35 participants may be involved in this research effort. Results will be summarized in a doctoral dissertation format.

b) Your participation will require 45 minutes to one hour of your time. Interviews will be conducted at a mutually agreed upon location. (There is no remuneration for your participation).
3. There are no known risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. In rare instances, studies undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (e.g., the Office for Human Research Protection). If so, your data and any other information collected by the researcher would be disclosed.
7. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, or if problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Kimberly Carothers at (314) 324-0132 or the Faculty Advisor, Theresa Coble at (817) 235-7842. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research, at (314) 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my records. I hereby consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator or Designee

Date

Appendix C. Definitions of Key Terms

Key Terms	Definition
Community	The community includes all of the physical, social, educational, civic, and political environmental factors pertaining to and affecting its human membership.
Community Education	A conceptual development that concerns itself with everything that affects the well-being of all of the citizens within a given community.
Community Schools	“The most effective delivery systems for achieving the concept” (Minzey & LeTarte, 1994, p. 40).
Education	- Dewey (1963) defines education as “that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (p. 26)
Equality	Suggests sameness.
Equity	Justness and fairness.
Program	“Used to describe specific activities” (Minzey & LeTarte, 1979, p. 37).
Process	“Used to deal with more extensive community involvement and interaction” (Minzey & LeTarte, 1979, p. 37).
Racial Realism	“Racism is permanent” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p.18).
Racism	“The larger, systemic, structural conventions and customs that uphold and sustain oppressive group relationships, status, income, and educational attainment” (Taylor, 2009, p. 4).

<p>Social and emotional Learning</p>	<p>“Involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2012, p. 4).</p>
<p>The American Dream</p>	<p>“By working together, each with full respect and regard for the rights of others, we can fulfill the American dream of the good society – a society in which acts of personal abuse of human rights will be eliminated and the barriers of communication will be broken down; a society in which acts of personal abuse of human rights will be eliminated and the barriers of communication will be broken down; a society where hunger will disappear and human requirements will be adequately fulfilled” (Totten & Manley, 1969, p. 248).</p>
<p>Traditional or Conventional School</p>	<p>An institution that focuses on learning and mastering academic subjects (Manley, Reed, & Burns, 1961, p. 3).</p>
<p>Whole child</p>	<p>Meaningful teaching and learning embraces but goes beyond mastery of core academic subjects to include youth development principles; holding high expectations for children, youth, and adults; and developing their social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem solving skills (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017, p. 4).</p>

