

QUALITY EDUCATIONAL FACTORS AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS AND  
ADMINISTRATORS IN EMERGING AND MENTORING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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By

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QUALITY EDUCATIONAL FACTORS AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS AND  
ADMINISTRATORS IN EMERGING AND MENTORING COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS

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## **Abstract**

School districts with a growing number of students living in severe poverty are implementing full-service community schools to meet the specific needs of students living in poverty. Community schools provide supports to students and families that are unique to the needs of the students and families served by the school. With community agency help, full-service community schools can provide supports for mental health, physical health, extra tutoring, parent education classes and workshops, mentoring, and often evening meals all within the walls of the school. Very little literature has been published on the effectiveness of community schools. This study focuses on the perceptions of teachers and administrators working within 16 community schools on the importance of 7 quality educational factors (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent influence and involvement, and curriculum rigor). The design of this study was a mixed methods using a cross-sectional survey to meet the needs of the quantitative and qualitative research questions. In the results of the study, teachers and administrators working at 16 community schools within a large Midwestern district valued student motivation, student attendance, parent involvement, parent educational classes, and professional development in curriculum rigor and working with challenging student behaviors.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

In an address to the South African Parliament, Nelson Mandela stated, “There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children” (Mandela, 1995, p. 1). Though he addressed a nation far from America, his words should resonate with every human in any country. Education in America should be examined frequently to ensure each child is supported from birth to graduation. In this study, the community school concept is examined as a means to provide the support children need during their educational careers.

Understanding why some students do not graduate from school is imperative for educators and for society and requires investigation into homes, communities, neighborhoods, and the practices and resources of schools from birth to graduation. Middle and high school experiences build upon the experiences in early learning and in elementary school (Silver, Saunders, & Zarate, 2008) and an investigation must focus on those experiences. Students successful in the primary grades often demonstrate success in the middle and high school years and overall school success impacts later life and development (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010). Over the last two decades, educators have dedicated much time and research on ways to improve educational success rates for students at both the elementary and secondary levels. Many parents, educators, and politicians have grappled with avenues on improving the success rate for students and on the role of schools in the lives of children and families (Fusarelli & Lindle, 2011). Though most educators understand a variety of environments in and out of the school impact a student’s success rate, particularly in the social and emotional realms; educators

are unclear who should shoulder the responsibility for social and emotional areas (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006). While the public and school board members question the cost of additional social and emotional supports and debate the role public schools should play in delivery of those supports (Barton, 2003), children in the growing area of poverty continue to fail in school at an alarming rate (Harris & Hoover, 2003).

Educators, school board members, parents, and community members all have opinions of who should pay for the services in health and wellness for at-risk students (Dryfoos, 2003; Harris & Hoover, 2003). The opinions range from supporting the whole child, even within the home environment, to strictly defining a schools' role to teaching reading, math, and writing (Barton, 2003). Those differing opinions have been hotly debated over the years across the nation. An individual's philosophical view and understanding of children often determines which side of the debate the individual will support. Epstein (1995) noted when individuals consider students as children; the entire make-up of the child is included, including the family and the circumstances surrounding the child. When individuals consider students as only students, often a common hidden meaning is the school is responsible for the education portion of raising students, not as a shared task with families (Epstein, 1995).

While it seems oversimplified to reduce a philosophical debate of the role schools play to vocabulary words such as children versus students, the impact on schools often follow suit with those vocabulary words and philosophies (Epstein, 1995). Examining a community's beliefs on this debate and exploring each philosophy along with the needs of children within each unique community could lead to a greater understanding from leaders and community members on how to meet those needs in the education world.

Achievement and learning has changed since the era of one-roomed schools and must continue to change in the future to meet the needs of changing economies and needs in the workforce. As the economy and world evolves, schools also must evolve. Research has noted multiple factors contributing to achievement in schools (Barton, 2003; Bulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995; Kirby, 2009; Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Of those factors, living in poverty is not only a factor of achievement, but has far reaching implications prior to and beyond school (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Research has noted living in poverty increases the likelihood children will have poor attendance, impeding health issues, increased mobility rates, lower parental involvement, increased social disorder, and increased academic failure at school (Barton, 2003; Harkavy & Blank, 2003; Natriello et al., 1990; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). One design gaining notice from the education world to address many of those concerns is a full-service, community school.

Full-service community schools are evolving as an educational entity designed to help provide support for students and families living in poverty. The role of full-service or community school differs from the typical school role in the type and availability of services and supports offered, yet remains committed to educating students just as traditional schools (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003).

Though community or full-service schools are unique to the culture and locale it serves, all community schools offer support in the areas of academic instruction and tutoring (Dryfoos, 2003). Differences in community schools come from the type and intensity of partnerships with community entities focusing on preventative medical, social services, mental health, crisis management, and family support (Dryfoos, 2003). In

some community schools, clinical or social services provide full- or part-time staff housed within the school to work with families but are not directly employed by the district (Peebles-Wilkins, 2004).

Community schools have also been described as the hub of the community for parents and families (Harris & Hoover, 2003). Not only do students attend during the day for traditional learning experiences, but also in the evenings and on weekends with families for crucial tutoring, social services, and health services. Parents are also eligible to attend a community school for trainings and skill classes on a variety of areas. The services offered in community schools are unique to the location, depending on what is needed and available in the community (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004).

### **Problem Statement**

The community school concept in theory combines schools, families, neighborhoods, and community resources in one convenient area. Easily accessible to families, schools logically would be a valuable source for communities to offer services for families with limited transportation. Though the theory and logic support using the school as a hub for community services, beginning or sustaining a full-service community school is more complicated than posting flyers of the services now offered in the evenings. Districts looking to sustain an elementary community school environment find themselves in a lengthy, confusing, drawn-out process with very few clear answers on how to begin, engage community members, sustain partnerships, provide support to teachers and administrators, and maintain costs and financial concerns with little guidance from research.

Though the community school concept is not a new or recent practice, many within the education field or community do not have much knowledge about the practice, success, or sustained needs. Because empirical research takes time to collect, review, and produce, many community schools do not pursue or publish validated and reliable studies. Though information exists online from schools and partnerships on suggestions for community schools, no validated research was evident. Empirical research on the tenets needed to sustain a full-service elementary community school is missing from literature. One area missing are the perceptions of teachers and administrators on the effective factors of an emerging and mentoring elementary community school.

### **Rationale for the Study**

Non-community schools, while offering some support or resource advice to parents and families, are not equipped to support, educate, develop, or offer skill-training to parents and families. Community schools offer on-going support in varying degrees for families depending on the needs of families, communities, and the community school. Some community schools offer more or less support depending on the needs of the clientele. Teachers often are the front lines to notice strengths and concerns in any educational program, including in a full-service community school. The intended purpose for this study is to recognize the essential factors of an emerging and mentoring community school including examining the types of beginning and sustainable supports necessary to create a successful elementary full-service community school as perceived by teachers and administrators.

## **Conceptual Framework**

This study is based on the concept a full-service school will improve student school success in communities with families in poverty through supports offered in a full-service community school (Blank & Berg, 2006). Full-service community schools have gained popularity around the nation in recent years to address educational concerns impacting children from urban areas and children from poverty (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). The school becomes the core of the small community offering more than just reading and writing instruction. Students attending a community school can access the academic portion from the traditional school curriculum, but at the same time access social, emotional, and physical supports provided by community agency partnerships within the school environment to nurture the entire well-being of the child (Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, Pearson, & Coalition for Community Schools, 2010; Dryfoos, 2002, 2003, 2005). Community schools take a holistic approach in their roles (Harris & Hoover, 2003). The school and community work together to provide education and supports to students (Epstein, 1995). Full-service community schools could be viewed as following the African proverb: It takes a village to raise a child.

Using the framework of community participation, schools and families can come together at the school (Epstein, 1995). The school building no longer is simply the place kids go to learn ten months out of a year or individuals go to cast a ballot during elections, but instead the building becomes a hub for children, families, and individuals, with or without children, to access community partnerships and possibly take adult improvement classes. As such, the school building becomes vital to the community

experience in the neighborhood (Berg, Melaville, Blank, Coalition for Community Schools, National Association of Secondary School Principals, & National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2006).

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of this study the term quality educational factors shall refer to the following group: Student attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent influence and involvement, and curriculum rigor.

1. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators employed in emerging and mentoring community schools perceive as the most important for student success in a community school?
  - a. What quality educational factors are most evident in an emerging and mentoring community school as perceived by teachers and administrators?
  - b. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in emerging and mentoring community schools allocate the most time per week?
2. What professional development within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most important in a community school?
3. What community school activities within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most effective in a community school?

## **Limitations**

In any study, the researcher cannot control all factors related to the participants or variables. The limitations for this study include:

1. Honesty and clarity from participants while completing the survey.
2. The data accuracy is dependent upon the number of teachers and administrators completing the researcher created survey.

## **Delimitations**

Delimiting factors are factors a researcher can control. In the study, delimiting factors include:

1. Each teacher and administrator employed in an elementary community school in a large urban public school district in the midwest was invited to participate.

## **Design Controls**

The design of this study is a mixed methods QUAN-QUAL method, also known as a triangulation mixed methods design. The instrument will be a cross-sectional sample survey. This method is commonly used to collect data from selected samples representative of the population (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Research from this method is conducted in one setting. In this study the research is collected using a questionnaire with both quantitative and qualitative questions.

One common problem with this type of research is the short-term length of the study. Since the research is gathered in one short time-frame, it is considered a “snapshot” of the current trends, feelings, and beliefs of the individuals completing the questionnaire (Gay et al., 2009). Though the study has disadvantages, the mixed method allows for the generalizability strengths of the quantitative method and the data context strengths of the

qualitative method to emerge. The cross-sectional study sample is spaced geographically with representation from subgroups (i.e., gender, experience in teaching, teachers from various grade levels, administrators, etc.) which also allows for generalized results.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

Clearly defined key terms are essential when conducting a study. A list of key terms, along with definitions, is provided to give a better understanding of the information and terms within the study. For the purpose of this study, building levels will be defined as follows:

Full-Service Community School – A school providing community support with medical check-ups, mental health assistance, hygiene concerns, and parenting support and skills. The community school also provides workshops and training for parents, along with childcare and tutoring after school hours, including on weekends (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.; McMahon, Ward, Pruett, Davidson, & Griffith, 2000).

Emerging Community School – An emerging community school is beginning stages toward developing the climate and culture conducive to a community school and beginning to offer supports along the community school continuum (Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative, 2015).

Mentoring Community School – A mentoring community school is moving along the community school continuum toward becoming a sustaining community school by demonstrating a school climate and culture conducive to partnerships and employs a community school coordinator (Tulsa Area Community School Initiative, 2015).

Communities in Schools Community School – A community in schools (CIS) community school also moves along the continuum toward becoming a sustaining

community school by demonstrating a school climate and culture conducive to partnerships and employs a school-based coordinator. The CIS community school is guided by a nation-wide communities in schools organization and the focus of the school is for one-to-one student mentoring with a caring adult focused on providing the student a marketable job skill by graduation (Communities in Schools of Mid-America, 2016).

Operational Sustaining Community School – An operational sustaining community school has institutionalized a climate and culture conducive to sustaining a successful community school (Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative, 2015).

Community-Led Full-Service Community School – A community-led full-service community school is controlled by a community board consisting of community members, business leaders, and school officials. Some school district resources and school buildings may be utilized (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.).

Board-Led Full-Service Community School – A board-led full-service community school is controlled by the local school board, held in a school building, with community programs managed and funded by community partnerships.

Regional or Traditional School – A local elementary, middle, or high school providing no extra community support or training for parents unless the service or support is available to all parents in all schools located in the district.

Traditional School Calendar – Students attending school from the early fall through late spring (typically beginning in late August or early September and ending in late May or early June). Students do not attend school from late June until early August.

Balanced Calendar – Students attending school year-around. Balanced calendar includes short breaks after each quarter and a short break in winter and summer, but not the typical long summer break from school.

At-Risk – Students noted as at-risk meet criteria indicating a high-risk to drop-out of high school before graduation.

Discipline – An incident violating the student conduct handbook involving a formal written document entered into the student’s file.

### **Summary**

Students do not learn in isolation and the unmet needs of students impact the learning and success of children within the school and community (Barton, 2003; Blank, et al., 2010). Community schools offer support typical regional or local schools are unable to offer to students struggling to succeed in and out of school. In this chapter, the researcher introduced the full-service community school concept along with key definitions, rationale for the study, and research questions. This study will address the factors of an emerging and mentoring community school as perceived by teachers and administrators employed in emerging and mentoring community schools.

In the next chapter, the researcher will investigate and present a detailed review of themes in literature on the community school concept. The themes center around community school as a full-service school, differences between community schools and partnership schools, possible concerns with a community school, neighborhood and community demographics best served by a community school, factors important for quality education in a community school, implementing change to support a community school, and professional development needs within a community school. The third

chapter details the methodology and instrumentation for the study. Chapter four includes the data collected during the study and analysis of the data. The last chapter states the conclusions of the research questions and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Literature**

Full-service community schools provide a common area to address the needs of the whole child in a comprehensive manner (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Shah et al., 2009). Like a traditional school, full-service community schools provide educational opportunities in core and specialty subject areas. Unlike traditional schools, full-service community schools go much farther in providing social, emotional, and physical care than the traditional school nurse and school counselor can provide (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013). In a community school, the community resources, such as dental hygiene, medical care, and on-going intensive individual or family therapy, could be accessed within the confines of the school walls that may otherwise be unreachable for some families and students.

This comprehensive literature review provides current relevant knowledge and information related to the concept and application of full-service community schools. Within the literature, several themes appeared: Community school as full-service school, neighborhood characteristics best served by a community school, factors important for ensuring quality education for community school students, implementing a community school requires effective change strategies, and professional development needs within a community school. Each of those themes will be reviewed in this chapter.

#### **Community School as a Full-Service School**

Teachers, leaders in the education world, and parents all understand learning does not happen in isolation (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank, Johnson, & Shah, 2003). Similarly, providers in the medical and mental health professions do not treat isolated

symptoms, but instead seek to understand the context, situation, and create focus on the entire being. In a very basic definition, community schools do the same. The community school, also called the full-service school, is a team approach toward education focusing on the whole child (Dryfoos, 2000, 2003; Kronick, 2003). Since most children spend a majority of childhood years in elementary and secondary school buildings, the school becomes the focal point for the team approach (Blank Melaville, et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2000; Swerdlik, Reeder, & Bucy, 1995). The community school offers the academic piece from the traditional school curriculum, but also connects agency provided social, emotional, and physical supports for students all within the school setting (Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank, et al., 2010; Dryfoos, 2002, 2003, 2005; Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013; Shah et al., 2009).

Educators all over the nation can understand the needs addressed in a community school (Fusarelli & Lindle, 2011; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). Teachers are often overheard discussing the social concerns or physical and emotional well-being of a student and the impact those concerns have on the learning in the classroom. Issues such as mental health, hunger, physical health, dentistry, and family concerns all impact the learning in the classroom and the well-being of the child regardless of the child's age or demographics of the school (Barton, 2003; Blank et al., 2010; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011; Swerdlik et al., 1995) and often create roadblocks to learning many students are not able to overcome on their own.

Aside from educators, other community members and resource partners understand the value of working with or within schools to provide services. Mental health service providers have long understood the unique nexus their work with children has to the

school environment. Providing children and families easier access to services allows for a fluid comprehensive treatment plan many families might not continue on their own (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Fusarelli & Lindle, 2011). Though nearly every public school now has a school nurse and a school counselor, the needs of many students go beyond the one individual provided by the school. Often the one school nurse in traditional schools is expected to serve hundreds of students each day with a variety of items, such as distributing medication, tending to fevers, cleaning and bandaging small scrapes, monitoring and assisting students with diabetic or allergic needs and many other needs necessary to the functioning of the school. There is little time, availability, or resources to provide on-going physical care some students from poverty require.

The school counselor faces a similar situation with time management and training (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). Most school counselors are required to providing scheduling advice, course information, and career information for hundreds of students each year and find little preparation, training, resources, or time to offer mental health services needed by students (Kaffenberger, 2013). In a community school, those needs can be met with intensive support from outside agencies (Dryfoos, 2003).

A full-service community school can have many variations within the community school concept resulting in different characteristics within community schools (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, & Center for American Progress, 2012; Calfee, Meredith, Wittwer, & Florida State Department of Education, 1995; Dryfoos, 2002). Community schools may be different from one another, in part, because of the very nature of the community school concept (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2002; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). A true community school concept is based on the needs from the particular community it is

serving (Calfee et al., 1995). For example, some community schools may offer evening language classes for parents and families in communities with high need, and in one community school several washers and dryers were installed in the basement because no laundromat existed in the near neighborhood (Dryfoos, 2002). Community schools can also differ in titles as districts place their own names and emphasis on the title or classification of the school. For example, districts with multiple community schools may classify beginning stages of a community school as an Emerging Community School and a more established community school as a Mentoring Community School depending on the level of support within the school for students and staff. Though the titles and services may vary from school to school or district to district, community schools all have the basic design to intensely support students and families within the school through needed services found in the community (Blank et al., 2010; Dryfoos, 2002).

Community schools can also differ in how they are governed. Most community schools are part of the local public school district and operate under the same federal and state rules as public schools. Like traditional public schools, those community schools are governed by an elected school board. Other community schools are not district-led schools and are instead governed by a coalition of community agency boards (Blank, Berg, Melaville et al., 2006). In non-district led community schools, the governing community agency board is responsible to offer students the same free and appropriate education offered in a traditional school.

Though there are differences in governing boards, the number, types, titles, and resources offered in community schools, most community schools have similar characteristics in common with one another (Blank et al., 2010; Dryfoos, 2002). One

overriding characteristic in a community school emphasizes true active partnerships with community-based agencies interacting within the school on a daily or weekly basis (Blank & Berg, 2006; Calfee et al., 1995). Another prevailing characteristic is the significance that all entities working together across domains through academics, mental and physical health initiatives, social needs, and parenting and family supports are providing supports for students and for families to be successful (Blank & Berg, 2006; Calfee et al., 1995). The amount and type of support from outside agencies is a defining characteristic which delineates differences in the community school concept.

The next section examines specifics related to schools with agency partnerships and provides an overview of the differences between a community, partnership or school-linked school. These agency partnership tenets are essential in gaining a clear understanding of the concept of what constitutes a community school.

#### **Differences between community schools and partnership schools.**

For years educators have realized the need for creating partnerships with agencies and began working with community organizations on ways to engage schools and communities (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein, 2010). Several types of interactions developed between the school and outside agencies, one type of interaction is the partnership school model (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein, 1995, 2010; Nathan, 2015).

In a traditional school with partnerships, the school staff has some interaction with the agency or agencies, mostly through donations of limited time, money, or resources (Blank & Berg, 2006). Those interactions with a partnership may not always be evident to visitors or parents. Some school partnerships may consist of supports such as a vaccine shot clinic on a yearly basis, limited tooth truck services, and after school programs to

provide wrap-around services for working parents. While agency interactions and support are worthwhile and necessary, often those supports do not provide the on-going intensive support some neighborhoods may need (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2005).

The community school, though similar initially to the school partnership model, is different in the number of services, responsibilities of the services, types of partnerships offered, placement of the partnerships, and intensity (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2005). The community school concept engages the community partners in on-going, long-term daily interactions evident to the community surrounding the school. Partnerships go hand-in-hand with a community school (Blank & Berg, 2006) to provide training and development for parents, teachers, and students on opportunities to better utilize resources offered (Melaville & Blank, 2000). Researchers noted partnerships emphasizing community services created civic-minded students (Cole, 2010) and allowed students to see the community as an integral part of the system instead of separated from the school (Blank & Berg, 2006). The community school concept could be designed to incorporate learning through community service, service learning, and place-based learning with a flexibility that can go well beyond the hours and setting of a traditional school (Dryfoos, 2002; Blank, Johnson, et al., 2003; Melaville & Blank, 2000).

Through community service, students volunteer in the community in a variety of places with little or no ties to academics, often done to give back to the community (Service Learning Texas, 2010). In service learning, students volunteer in the community but the activity must relate to curriculum and meet academic requirements and goals (Clark, 2012; Service Learning Texas, 2010). Unlike community service, the service learning experience is part of the learning curriculum and set learning goals are made for

the learning experience (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). In place-based learning, students are placed within a community setting for a specific time frame to learn about the community and often address a community concern along with focusing on academic standards (Clark, 2012; Sobel, 2005). Place-based learning relocates students to areas in the community, such as woodland public area, to learn about the area and work toward creating solutions to enhance or transform the area in the community (Smith, 2002).

### **Differences between community schools and school-linked schools.**

Another type of school defined in literature with agency collaboration is a school-linked services school. The school-linked services school (Swerdlik et al., 1999) is very similar to the community school in desires about working with the whole child, but are different in the avenue, duration, and method the services are offered (Dentel, 2001). In schools with school-linked services, the school provides the family a link to service or agency but services are not offered or accessed within the school, and notably, do not work collaboratively with the educational professionals to deliver a comprehensive approach (Swerdlik et al., 1999). School is still viewed as the typical traditional learning with the responsibility to obtain and transport to agency services placed on the parent or guardian.

An important difference in community schools compared to non-community schools is the utilized level and approach of collaboration with agencies within the schools (Reeder, Maccow, & Shaw, 1997). A community school concept demonstrates a collaborative approach when working with agencies to implement services affecting the whole child across all the environments the child experiences (Melaville & Blank, 2000). In a non-community school, services for social and emotional concerns are typically

isolated with little or no communication between the agency and the teacher or school personnel. At times, the lack of communication and collaboration within agencies and schools frustrates involved parties and the public and can lead to misuse, abuse, mistrust in the systems meant to help families (Chaskin & Richman, 1992; Reeder et al., 1997). While any agency resources provided to children are typically more beneficial than no services, the collaborative piece allows agencies to address needs and implement services seamlessly with schools and families, especially in the area of mental and behavioral health (Melaville & Blank, 2000; Reeder et al., 1997; Swerdlik et al., 1999). In essence, the community school concept requires an intensive level of outside agency support, involvement with families, parents, siblings and students to positively impact the well-being and education of students, families, and to strengthen the community (Dryfoos, 2003; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). These supports are offered within the school building, throughout the school day, and into the evenings and weekends depending on the needs of the community, families, and students (Dryfoos, 2003; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). Because the community school concept requires such differences in the levels and support of outside agencies, many differences arise from one community school to another (Dryfoos, 2002). In part because of those significances and differences within the community school concept, a variety of concerns and disadvantages emerge (Chaskin & Richman, 1992). The next section outlines possible disadvantages with the community school concept.

### **Concerns voiced of the community school concept.**

One concern voiced by researchers is the difficulty in assessing and comparing successes with community schools and the non-community school counterparts. The

unique nature of community schools means not all schools have the same components and are difficult to compare (Houser, 2010; Mergen, 2004). It is also difficult to compare successes in community schools since non-community schools do not have the availability of the same social, behavioral, and emotional programs. Though achievement and state mandated testing could be compared, that comparison and assessment often also falls short of the desired measurements (Mergen, 2004.)

Another concern involves the control a community school possibly could have over other organizations and over so many facets of a student's and family's lives. Chaskin and Richman (1992) wrote they were opposed to an institution having a governing organization overseeing so many potential aspects of the child's situation and listed several reasons. First, Chaskin and Richman (1992) noted agencies should always have a wider access point than schools because many students needing services may not attend public schools and may be enrolled in private or home schools. The authors also noted the governing intuition, namely the school, could become over empowered and begin controlling the priorities and oversight of the agency. Additionally, community members and parents may feel they have been overpowered if students at the secondary level can make decisions with a health provider and possibly bypass beliefs held in the home, such as birth control, (Seright, 2007). Parents and community members disagreeing with the services may become disenfranchised and frustrated with public schools and refuse to seek services (Chaskin & Richman, 1992). Further, school systems should not take on more responsibilities when many are struggling to even provide an adequate education. And last, the authors noted, though a school may attempt to meet needs of the community, often times communities are so diverse in ethnicity, race, and religion,

offering the appropriate cultural needs would be impossible to meet (Chaskin & Richman, 1992).

While it seems inevitable some struggling families may not feel comfortable opening up to schools or authorities, even for the benefit of the child or the family, schools offer the most comprehensive approach for the majority of children in the community. Through use of extensive communication with the community and open-door policies to involve parents, many of those arguments about a community school concept can be discovered and solved (Calfée et al., 1995; Seright, 2007). While no one program can address all situations and concerns, community schools should work diligently to assess the demographics and needs of the community it serves in order to tailor services offered to meet the needs and concerns of the neighborhood and family and build trust (Kronick, 2003). Despite the arguments, the community school concept, in theory, alleviates roadblocks for many families to seek and continue help by centralizing numerous services into one area close to home (Blank & Berg, 2006; McMahon et al., 2000).

For students and families struggling with roadblocks often associated with poverty, community schools can address many of those roadblocks that impede learning in an easy-to-reach, familiar location of the school by providing intensive comprehensive services designed specifically for the community it serves (Dryfoos, 2003; Harris-Hoover; 2003; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). Because the community school is based on the needs of the community and families it serves, the community school concept may differ from a community school in a different state or region (Dryfoos, 2003; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). In order to best serve the needs of students and families, community neighborhood characteristics and demographics should be considered (Harris-Hoover, 2004). The next

section discusses the need for community schools to address neighborhood characteristics and demographics.

### **Neighborhood Characteristics Best Served by a Community School**

One avenue to building a thriving community school supported by community business leaders, educators, parents, and students is to thoroughly assess the community and neighborhood needs and demographics (Harris-Hoover, 2004; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). Children begin learning before they reach the school doors (Blank, Johnson et al., 2003). Students entering school already have learned many social, personal, and academic skills from parents, siblings, relatives, peers, and the neighborhood where they live (Barton, 2003; Blank, Johnson et al., 2003). Young children's skill sets are drastically different depending on the amount and type of guidance prior to reaching school age. For some children, access to academic stimuli is greatly reduced depending on the demographics of the community and neighborhood they reside (Calfee et al., 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1996) and impacts a student's educational achievement and high school graduation rate (Owens, 2010). In research conducted in 2010, students from high poverty had lower rates of achievement and graduation than students from lower poverty neighborhoods (Owens, 2010), were exposed to higher rates of violence in the neighborhood, and reported more fear in walking to and from school (Milam, Furr-Holden, & Leaf, 2010). A community school could benefit neighborhoods by identifying and addressing concerns, such as early access to academic stimuli in the home and the fear of neighborhood violence as students walk to and from school, to increase the opportunity for students as they begin and proceed through school to graduation.

A community's demographics are significant to many attitudes and realities of the social and financial circumstances of the people living within the boundaries of neighborhoods (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008; Riley, 2008; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Though not exclusive to every household in the boundary, many neighborhoods have common beliefs, behaviors, financial circumstances, and social situations (Payne, 1996). Though culture in families can be very unique, often neighborhoods within close proximity are generally perceived with similar customs, norms, and culture traditions (Smrekar & Bentley, 2011) even though many of those families may never interact within the neighborhood boundaries (Riley, 2008). These perceptions can become established in the community and surrounding communities as the practices within those neighborhoods whether they are accurate for everyone or not.

Neighborhoods can often be described by long-time residents by culture or financial circumstances. Although residents may not have actual statistics or research, the descriptions are often based on the perceptions, observations, or an understanding of believed characteristics in the neighborhood (Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Those descriptions can often impact the perceptions of neighborhood schools, families living within and nearby the communities, and the value of real estate within close proximity (Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Addressing the customs, culture needs, valid neighborhood perceptions, and financial concerns is imperative for successful neighborhood schools (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Rada, & Lucas, 2011; Payne, 1996). Personnel in a community school could use the information about culture and customs when designing parent involvement activities and use the information about financial concerns to offer classes, such as a class on completing tax forms.

Families living in perceived poorer neighborhoods may struggle with poverty, high number of rental properties, nuisance properties, increase in eviction notices, food shortage concerns, frequent disconnected utilities, poor employment rates, poor attendance at school, poor achievement in school, and the presence of gang-related activities (Barton, 2003; Blank et al., 2012) and may feel less connected to schools (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Thompson, Iachan, Overpeck, Ross & Gross, 2006). Parents and children living in poverty may not be able to provide or understand the importance of providing academic guidance (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Payne, 2001), be able to or understand the importance of reading to young children (Barton, 2003), nor may be able to demand better schools equipped to promote and motivate children from poverty (Kronick, 2003). Lower socioeconomic status is attributed to lower success in schools, poorer prenatal health, and poorer health as teenagers (Kronick, 2003). Research has noted schools serving poor inner city children often have on-grade level reading rate of less than 40 percent (Fusarelli & Lindle, 2011) and struggle in other academic areas (Kennedy, Jung, & Orland, 1986). The community school concept addresses many of the issues associated with poverty by working, not only with students but with families, on how to promote and motivate reading in the home, connect with schools, and obtain health services (Blank et al, 2012).

In 2009, an estimated 6.5 million children lived in poverty (Rada & Lucas, 2011). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2013, the number of children living in poverty had increased to 14.7 million. The National Center for Children in Poverty noted 8.9 million of those school-aged children live in single parent homes and 87 percent of school-aged children living in low-income or poor homes have parents with less than a

high school degree (Jiang, Ekono, Skinner, 2015). School-aged children from African-American homes ranked the highest with 66 percent living in low-income and poor homes (Jiang et al., 2015) and are two times more likely to have insecure food issues (Barton, 2003).

Careful investigation of the community demographics should be a necessity for school leaders when discussing school changes, reform, and hiring practices to ensure each component complements the needs found in the community demographics (Riley, 2008; Voyles, 2012). The community demographics and needs investigation should be collaboratively completed by school leaders, community agencies, community leaders, and families, and should be completed at regular intervals to ensure the neighborhood demographics and needs are effectively addressed (Riley, 2008) in the community school setting. As administrators consider a community school concept, they must understand the development and implementation process will continue to evolve to meet the community needs. Each community school will be unique as it collaborates with partners to determine services to be offered that are centered on the needs of the whole child and which address family situations that will encourage lifelong learning for students (Dryfoos, 2005). In understanding the needs of a community and engaging members as partners in schools, neighborhoods will continue to be revitalized and strengthened (Michael, Dittus, & Epstein, 2007; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011). Additionally, these processes will help create a safe and secure neighborhood for students (Dryfoos, 2002; Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Milam, Furr-Holden, & Leaf, 2010). As recent research indicated, a strong community environment can positively impact the mental and physical health of individuals and provide a sense of connectedness (Sayer, Beaven,

Stringer, & Hermena, 2013). Students and families can utilize a community school to connect with community organizations with easy access and to help create a strong community environment in the neighborhood (Michael et al., 2007).

Though poverty, hunger, and mental health concerns are not new concerns for families and children, the statistics continue to grow each decade of a documented rise in homelessness and mental health concerns (Fusarelli & Lindle, 2011) and the effects family life has on student behavior and learning (Dryfoos, 2002; Harkavy & Blank, 2003; Michael et al., 2007; Rada & Lucas, 2011). With the rising concerns of economy and growing number of homeless children, the spill-over of concerns into the classrooms has become evident in nearly all school districts and crippling in districts or schools serving high-poverty neighborhoods (Dryfoos, 2003; Harkavy & Blank, 2003; Rada & Lucas, 2011).

The increasing number of children living in poverty identifies a sense of urgency for schools to reach children. A community school concept is a possible solution by focusing on the whole child (Blank, Johnson et al., 2003). In community schools, student academic needs are addressed through curriculum, and physical and emotional needs are met through place-based agency support without the need to leave campus (Blank et al., 2012; Dryfoos, 2002; Melaville & Blank, 2000). Community schools can also provide a student access to community members dedicated to improving the lives of children. Overcoming the cycle of poverty is a challenge many families and children are unable to accomplish on their own (Payne, 1996, 2001). Children successfully overcoming the cycle of poverty reported the determination and inspiration came from one relationship with a trusted encouraging adult (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008).

Understandably, it is important for students at every grade level, but especially at the high school level, to have access to teachers and community members that encourage lifelong learning through college (King, 2012) and can offer the support to nurture the determination to defeat the generational poverty cycle (Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008).

In a community school, the needs of students are met without missing critical learning time, and places the students in the position to access and respond to quality education and needed agency supports (Blank & Berg, 2006; Seright, 2007). To move communities and neighborhoods toward honest engagement to create strong, resilient schools, trust must be established between families, community members, and school staff. Community schools are a bridge to establishing the needed engagement (Dryfoos, 2002) and trust. Positive parent and community engagement is strongly correlated with trust and the community belief that school staff are targeting academic excellence (Kirby, 2009). In community schools, all children, regardless of neighborhood or socioeconomic background, are supported and have an opportunity to develop and succeed (Blank et al., 2010).

### **Factors Important for Ensuring Quality Education for Community School Students**

Quality education is a constant focus for educators at every age and grade level. When loosely defined within the community school concept, quality education is the factors a student needs, internally and externally, to achieve in academics, social, emotional, and into adulthood. Educators at all levels, regardless of type of school, understand many factors impact the quality of education, especially student attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent influence and involvement, and curriculum rigor (Barton, 2003).

### **Student attendance.**

Educators and business owners understand attendance is important to the well-being of any organization. Most educators, even in the state and federal level, will agree attendance at school is a key factor in learning and is an indicator for graduation. Frequent absences from school are detrimental to achievement (Bryk, 2010) and often underscore a motivational issue or concern. In a study in 2003, teachers recognized attendance as one of the factors predicting student learning (Harris & Hoover, 2003). In a study published in 2012 reviewing attendance and reading level data for 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 1992, 1994, 2009, and 2011 noted students missing more than five days of school per month the previous month scored lower in reading in each grade level in each year reviewed (Aud et al., 2012). Additionally, the student absent on a regular basis will often make little effort to obtain or understand the learning missed during absences and will continue to fall farther behind in achievement and learning.

There are exceptions for frequent absences, for example, because of serious illness. Though for students with chronic or serious illnesses, there may be attempts at continuing learning through homebound or online learning. As the digital world evolves, it may be easier and easier to complement learning and stay connected to school with online learning to meet the needs of students with attendance issues. However, for most students with poor attendance, achievement and engagement are often synonymous.

Another concern for increasing absenteeism is the mobility rate of students and families. Research indicates there is a high mobility rate for students classified as poor (Silver, Weitzman, Mijanovich, & Holleman, 2012). Students and families that move often do not form bonds or connections to schools or a community. Research also noted a

significant relationship to the mother's education level and race to school attendance levels of students (Silver, Weitzman et al., 2012). Staff in a community school can reach out to those families with poverty and mobility issues to offer support.

Students who do not understand the benefits of good attendance or do not see progress in learning may continue the pattern of absenteeism and fall further behind. A welcoming school feeling is important in promoting good attendance (Johnson, 2012). Student attendance may also improve when educators demonstrate appreciation for attendance and engagement on a daily basis (Wormeli, 2007). Creating a welcoming inviting space for parents is also noted in other research. Promoting positive parent contact and involvement in the classroom learning positively impacts attendance and student classroom engagement (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012).

One way to welcome all types of students and improve attendance is through a community school concept. Community schools seem to become magnets for the children in disadvantaged neighborhoods leading some adults to label it as the "schools children never want to leave" (Dryfoos, 2002). In 2002, nineteen community school programs reported improvements in attendance and lower dropout rates (Dryfoos, 2002). Researchers and practitioners in the field emphasize improvement in student attendance and graduation rates occur when community members, parents, and educators work together (Epstein, 2010; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

### **Student motivation.**

Motivation plays another vital part in quality education. Students who are motivated to learn are a teacher's dream in the classroom. Unfortunately, not all students come to school motivated to embrace challenging learning tasks (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). In

fact, student academic apathy is a concern many educators hold (Blank & Berg, 2006; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012) and have long realized some students come to school, especially in middle and high schools, with concerns about the level of motivation displayed on a daily basis (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). Though there is some debate whether motivation is a predictor for academic achievement or whether it is an outcome of academic achievement, researchers have measured motivation by attendance, perceptions from students, the amount of time students spent completing school work and homework, and the level and intensity of student engagement on an academic task (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Hattie (2012) noted the effect size of student motivation as 0.48 and ranked 56<sup>th</sup> on a list of influences on student achievement. Researchers have classified student motivation in two categories: Intrinsic and extrinsic. With intrinsic motivation, students have an internal desire to complete challenging activities. In extrinsic motivation, students have an external impact, such as rewards, for completing activities. Regardless of the debate or the type of motivation, motivation continues to be a risk factor for students who drop out of school prior to graduation (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013).

The teaching styles and learning activities of traditional schools adds to the apathy of some students (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). Many at-risk students contend they do not see the need or relevance of traditional academic tasks (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012) and often become drop-outs when the desire, motivation, and determination to continue learning dissolves. School environments also contribute to the apathy of students based on the climate inside the school. An unhealthy school climate becomes victim to obstacles and perceptions that hinder achievement instead of actively

promoting achievement and learning (Bulach et al., 1995). In order to promote positive engagement and motivation, students must clearly have input and understand why curriculum and learning tasks are relevant. Students and parents must also be surrounded with a healthy school climate that believes in high expectations and achievement despite any obstacles (Bulach et al., 1995).

An important aspect of a healthy school climate involves respectful relationships with teachers and students (Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008). Positive teacher-student relationships have an effect size on achievement of 0.72 (Hattie, 2012). Teachers must focus on building relationships with students that provide trust and motivation to continue learning despite difficult tasks and sometimes roadblocks (Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008). Struggling students often attribute persistence to learning to the connection with one trusted individual or teacher (Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008). In building the relationship with students, teachers must clearly outline the obvious and hidden rules of the class and learning, use vocabulary to promote language skills, and directly link sequencing, cause and effect, and consequences through a wide variety of academic and social situations (Payne, 1996, 2001). Teachers must also dedicate time to build capacity in students to persist and offer support and celebrations with students (Payne, 1996, 2001).

Building respectful relationships with students is often supplemented with teacher use of appropriate effective verbal praise and feedback. Verbal praise, feedback, and the use of tangible rewards must be purposefully and strategically used by the teacher to promote the effort exhibited by the student and to promote positive effects on intrinsic motivation (Marzano et al., 2001). Verbally recognizing individual student gains in academic success, whether publically or privately, is another aspect that provides motivation for

students (Marzano, 2012). Hattie noted the effect size of teacher feedback is 0.75 and is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> on a list of influences on achievement (Hattie, 2012). The purpose of effective teacher feedback is to help demonstrate disparity with what a student currently knows and what a student needs to know (Hattie, 2012). In order to utilize feedback and praise to effectively motivate students, teachers must build trusting relationships with students and actively engage students in reflective thinking beyond the praise and feedback (Hattie, 2012).

Involvement between school staff and parents is another documented aspect of student motivation. In a perception scale given to students in grades fourth through sixth, students reported parent interactions and support provided the self-confidence and motivation to persist in difficult tasks (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005). Parents who encouraged reading, critical thinking, and determination in students impacted learning and self-confidence in children at school. Understanding the connection between student achievement, student motivation, and parent support and involvement in schools is valuable for creating a successful educational environment regardless of the socioeconomic level of students (Epstein, 1996). For students living in poverty, the interaction and support of parents early on in the elementary years is a necessity (Blank, Johnson et al., 2003). Research clearly supports the positive impact parents have on student achievement and motivation (Barton, 2003). The community school concept is designed to promote positive interactions and greater parent involvement (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.; McMahon et al., 2000).

For those students unmotivated by typical school settings, a community school provides many opportunities to positively impact motivation (Blank, Johnson et al., 2003)

through relevant learning tasks, projects focusing on community needs, student-teacher relationships, discussions and input from community members, input from students and parents, actively promoting parent involvement, and providing engaging, meaningful curriculum with many opportunities in the evenings for tutoring (Cole, 2010; Dryfoos, 2003). A community school personnel seeks to create relationships with schools, families, students, and community members to provide an environment with high expectations for learning and achieving (Blank, Melaville et al., 2003). Understanding why students display a lack of motivation is a worthwhile investigation as an educator. Keeping students, and their parents, invested in schools and academic programs are key attributes in a successful education program (Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank, Johnson et al., 2003).

### **Student mental health.**

Mental health and physical health have long been known to affect learning and achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 2012; Mills, Stephan, Moore, Weist, Daly, & Edwards, 2006; Nemeth, 2005). A mental health diagnosis can affect a child in a variety of ways at school through lowered achievement, poor attendance, increased discipline incidents, higher levels of aggression, depression, loss of relationships, and poor engagement in projects and homework (Capella, Jackson, Bilal, Hamre, & Soule, 2011; Dryfoos, 2003; Swerdlik, Reeder et al., 1999). An estimated 20 percent of children in schools have a diagnosed mental illness (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Kaffenberger, 2013) and an estimated 70 percent of those students do not receive adequate treatment (Kaffenberger, 2013). In a study conducted on urban schools, the percent increased to 50 percent of students demonstrating some type of diagnosable behavior or mental health concern

(Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Research conducted in 2006 noted of the students diagnosed with mental illness, 46 percent did not graduate from high school (Mills et al., 2006). Many of the students with mental illnesses live in homes with low to very low socioeconomic status (Capella et al., 2011). For years researchers have noted a startling concern that many students diagnosed with internal mental illnesses could have improved with proactive behavior treatment plans early on in their school lives (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Calfee et al., 1995).

Though nearly every school in the nation employs or has access to a school counselor, school counselors are frequently unable to provide the continuous treatment to students with mental illnesses required for success (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). School counselors are employed with an already demanding job description and high student-to-counselor ratio (Kaffenberger, 2013) and are not available for individual counseling many students with mental illnesses or social concerns require. In addition to the inability of counselors to provide consistent on-going treatment, classroom and teacher reports indicated most teachers are also overwhelmingly unable and ill-equipped to academically engage and manage behavior concerns with students with mental health illnesses (Adelman & Taylor, 2012; Capella et al., 2011) without substantial support and training. Students with mental illnesses and major social concerns are not able to get the treatment needed within the traditional school environment and often are left untreated (Kaffenberger, 2013).

Mental illness can also impact children through parents. Some school-aged children reside with a parent with mental illness (Kronick, 2003). A report from *USA Today* noted approximately 500,000 adults suffer from serious mental illnesses and 40 percent of those adults do not seek professional treatment (Szabo, 2014). Parents with mental illnesses

may not know how to offer the necessary support children need, and thus continue to create a vicious pattern of illnesses and non-treatment passed along to children (Kronick, 2006). Many parents with mental illnesses are often incarcerated and further impact the pattern for children (Kronick, 2006).

As the population of students living in poverty continues to increase, more students will need services for mental health (Dryfoos, 2003; Kaffenberger, 2013; Mills et al., 2006). Programs within a community school can provide avenues to successfully treat each mental health concern for students within the school and to work with teachers to provide the supports needed to assist students within the classroom environment (Dryfoos, 2003; Cappella et al., 2011; Kronick, 2006; Melaville & Blank, 2000).

Programs within a community school can also address the social and behavioral concerns of students and offer supports for students with families suffering with mental illnesses.

### **Student behavior.**

Another area contributing to a quality education for students is discipline and student behavior. Teachers across the nation speak often of the concern disruptive behaviors have on academic success (Harris & Hoover, 2003). Student disorderly behavior, student disrespect for teachers in the classroom, fighting, and repeated discipline interruptions affects student engagement and participation in activities (Barton, 2003). According to research from 1992, 56 percent of the minority fourth graders polled strongly agreed that student disruptions negatively impacted everyone's learning, even the learning of students not engaging in the discipline infraction (Barton, 2003; see also National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1992). A report on the indicators of school crime issued from National Center for Educational Statistics (2007) noted discipline was higher

in every discipline infraction area in schools with student population 50 percent or higher qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch program (Dinks, Forrest-Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007). In schools with a high poverty rate, disruptive behavioral concerns were common and often led to further behavior concerns as the child aged (Cappella et al., 2011).

The causes of repeated student disorderly disruptions and discipline incidents have been attributed to many concerns outside school (Harris & Hoover, 2003) and also inside schools. Parents and educators may not always understand the reasons for the disruptive behaviors displayed by a student. Students with on-going chronic disruptive behaviors, both inside and outside the school environment, often require behavioral and medical interventions, as well as supportive practices to improve the behaviors displayed at home and in the school environment (Cappella et al., 2011). In many cases, teachers provide critical influence on students experiencing dysfunctional environments and issues and often are the forefront to realizing and referring students with disruptive behaviors for mental health services (Cappella et al., 2011).

One type of discipline frequently found in elementary, middle, and high schools is bullying (Coloroso, 2008). The aggressive verbal and physical behaviors of bullying impact the school drop-out rate, influence criminal activity and distort short- and long-term social adjustments whether a student is the victim or the bully (Cohn & Canter, 2003). A study on bullying and school climate conducted in 2009 with over 22,000 students noted several factors were significantly present with higher rates of bullying such as condensed concentration of poverty, high student mobility, and high suspension rate (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009). In a study in 2013, parents reported school climate, or the welcoming, respectful feeling within the school, was a critical role

impacting the amount of parent involvement and the amount of discipline within a school (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013). Programs to address bullying must incorporate students, parents, and school staff members early in student's lives and address concerns associated with bullying (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Coloroso, 2008).

The community school concept is designed to accommodate a wide variety of behavioral needs of students through agency supports for students on a continuous basis (Blank & Berg, 2006) and also offer those supports and training for parents and families to continue successful interactions at home. The community school concept enthusiastically promotes an active partnership involvement with families and the community it serves. Research notes student behavior and discipline are positively impacted when families are involved in schools (Michael et al., 2007), along with an increased perception of school safety (Bryk, 2010).

### **Student physical health.**

Poor physical health of students has long been known to affect learning through attendance and engagement (Adelman & Taylor, 2012; Harris & Hoover, 2003) and impacts the drop-out rate of many students (Dunkle, 1992; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). For some students, health reasons impacts ability to attend and focus on school through a variety of health concerns and issues, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and responsibilities caring for another family member with an illness (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007). Other factors, such as hunger insecurities, violence in the home, and chronic illnesses, impact a student's ability to engage and achieve at school (Center for Disease Control, 2015; Dunkle, 1992). In order to provide quality education, student's health needs and concerns must be addressed (Dunkle, 1992).

To address the concern of physical health, school nurses were added in schools across the nation to assist and care for students while at school (Dunkle, 1992; McMahon et al., 2000). School nurses also began implementing and conducting health screenings, ranging from vision, hearing, head lice, scoliosis and others, to further impact the future health of children at school (Michael et al., 2007). Physical education and health classes were also added as mandatory curriculum courses in nearly every school to further impact the physical health of children.

Though student learning about health in classes and accessing a school nurse has impacted the health of children, schools must go further and involve parents and families in the discussion about health (Dunkle, 1992; Michael et al., 2007), reduce food insecurities, hunger, and nutrition concerns (Barton, 2003), and offer more comprehensive health services and supports for students and families (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). The Carnegie Task Force on Education report asserted the needs of a child that impact learning must be addressed by the school regardless of the type of concern or need (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989).

Traditional schools are often not equipped to offer the comprehensive services children from poverty need and will continue to need (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Since most children attend school, the school building is the logical place to offer comprehensive services (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). A community school is designed to provide comprehensive services for students and for families to meet the needs of the local community it serves (Barton, 2003; Epstein, 2010; Federation for Community Schools, n.d.; Harris & Hoover, 2003). Nutrition and hunger concerns can also be addressed through a community school with evening nutrition and cooking

classes for families and free breakfast, lunch, and dinner for students most days of the week (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.). Many community schools also offer dental health services, vision and hearing screenings and services, along with vaccine and general pediatric services for students without requiring missing time from school for travel to and from doctor appointments (Melaville & Blank, 2000).

### **Parent involvement and influence.**

Research has noted parents and community input create and strengthen schools (Bryk, 2010). Regardless of socioeconomic status, students with parents involved with daily homework, day-to-day school conversations, and school functions create positive engagement with students in homework and at school, as well as parents involved in educational committees and reform (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012) Parent involvement in learning positively impacts student performance with higher scores in academic performance (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Bulach et al., 1995; Epstein, 1996; Goldkind & Farmer, 2013; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Micheal et al., 2007).

Unfortunately, although research supports the idea that parents and communities working together strengthen schools, many parents are not involved in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Bryk, 2010). Research indicates the level of education of parents, poverty level of parents, parent marital status, and beliefs about school impact the involvement parents have with schools (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Parents with more education are more often involved in school and have greater confidence and value in education (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Sadly, many parents living in poverty have reported negative experiences at school for children and themselves, do not feel educators want

parent involvement, and only communicate to report poor behavior or attendance issues (Eccles & Harold, 1996). This lack of trust, or miscommunication of ideas, often goes both ways as many educators frequently have preconceived ideas about parenting styles of the parents living within high poverty neighborhood boundaries (Voyles, 2012). Often educators may feel many parents living in those boundaries do not value education and are not beneficial partners to the school (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Over time, these concerns have translated into a decayed sense of trust between schools and parents (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Eroded trust can happen even over a short time with poor communication, lack of respect for parent input, and a lack of confidence in the system from students and parents (Riley, 2008).

Trust is further impacted with poor communication between schools and parents. Many school officials report parents from a lower socioeconomic level interact in the building on an isolated basis rather than as a meaningful stakeholder (Voyles, 2012). Research noted the size of the school also impacted the level of engagement from parents, especially parents with lower socioeconomic status (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Goldkind & Farmer, 2013). Though many districts have attempted to improve and incorporate parent communication on a regular basis, most school staff are not doing enough to promote positive parent involvement (Michael et al., 2007). An effective parent involvement program must evaluate the quality, progress, and type of parent interactions frequently and make adjustments regularly to involve those meaningful interactions (Epstein, 2010; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011).

While some parents living in poverty may be apathetic about parenting or may lack effective parenting skills, some parents living in high poverty neighborhoods react restrict

the freedom of their children hoping to keep them on the right path (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Smrekar & Bentley, 2011) or lavishly spend money on entertainment. Many single mothers living in poverty will quickly spend valuable financial resources on family entertainment items as a way to demonstrate and strengthen family relationships (Payne, 2001). The ineffective and effective parenting skills of families living in poverty may often frustrate adults not living in poverty (Payne, 2001) and may cause tension with other families with different parenting belief systems. The community school can be an avenue to address effective parenting skills and ease tensions with families.

The influence parents have on their children's education cannot be understated (Epstein, 1996; Blank & Berg, 2006; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Michael et al., 2007; Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). With every interaction with the learning process and eventually with schools, parents are subtly and overtly influencing their children, either positively or negatively (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). A goal of community schools is to promote positive interactions with families on the learning process and for parents to consider schools a positive resource throughout a child's early years and school career. Educators and community members must understand curriculum and leadership are not the only factors impacting a quality education and begin to involve parents in strengthening schools (Bryk, 2010). Teachers and school leaders must address how to promote parent and community interaction within the school (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Michael et al., 2007; Voyles, 2012) and incorporate activities that build trust with parents (Bryk, 2010; Voyles, 2012). A community school is specifically designed to address parent and community needs, trust,

and communication styles as the foundations of the school (Dryfoos, 2002, 2003; Federation for Community Schools, n.d.; Harris & Hoover, 2003).

### **Curriculum rigor.**

A community school is designed to focus on the whole child. With the landmark 1983 report, *Nation at Risk*, educators, politicians, and families became concerned with the rigor of American schools (Borek, 2008; Good, 2010; see also National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). As many educators understand now, one focus for quality education must be a rigorous curriculum with high expectations for learning (Blank & Berg, 2006; Edwards & Allred, 1993). Rigorous curriculum should be the engine that drives every school (Borek, 2008), including schools in poor communities and community schools (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Harkavy & Blank, 2003; Tierney, Colyar, & Corwin, 2003). Unfortunately, agreeing on what makes a rigorous curriculum is often difficult for educators from district to district and state to state (Barton, 2003; Hattie, 2012). Regardless of the economic background of the students, educators often disagree on course and difficulty of curriculum, and the order, progress, and goals of targeted learning (Hattie, 2012). Though many educators debate the order, beginning, and desired results involved in course curriculum, most educators can agree overall curriculum cannot be rigorous without the presence of challenging material (Lemov, 2010) and engaged and committed learning from students (Bryk, 2010). Students must also have a thorough understanding of concepts presented (Hattie, 2012), and have access to global theories (Lemov, 2010; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012).

In a community school concept, the attributes of rigorous curriculum must be present to move students forward in achievement (Blank & Berg, 2006). Though students in a

community school are receiving supports from a multitude of services agencies and sometimes participating in extended learning programs after school, the focus and rigor of the curriculum should be held to the same or greater standard as a typical school (Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank, Johnson et al., 2003). A study reviewing academic achievement in a community “full-service” high school in Florida, serving roughly 1300 students, and academic achievement from a traditional non-community high school in Oklahoma, serving roughly 1300 students, in 2007 noted the traditional non-community high school outperformed the community high school in reading in all subgroups of American Indian, African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian populations (Seright, 2007). The study further noted no information was available on the rigor or focus of the instruction provided in the community school and suggested emphasis must be placed on a rigorous curriculum, in additions to the other supports offered, to successfully meet the academic needs of the students enrolled (Seright, 2007).

In 2002, 36 community schools out of 49 screened in California, New Jersey, Kentucky, and Iowa, reported academic gains in reading and math (Dryfoos, 2002), but no information was available on the type or rigor of the curriculum. In 2009 and 2010, a study investigating student academic growth from first and second year community schools reported a twelve percent academic growth in advanced levels in math and literacy, and a nine percent improvement in partial proficiency in math and literacy (Barker, 2013). The study further noted eighteen of twenty-three teachers agreed or strongly agreed students displayed academic growth after participating in the community school programs on academics and services offered (Barker, 2013); however, no information was provided from the study indicating the type or emphasis of the

curriculum rigor. Regardless of a traditional or community school, an emphasis on a rigorous curriculum is imperative to academic growth (Lemov, 2010; Seright, 2007).

Much research has been devoted to factors which impact curriculum and learning, such as class size, vertical aligned curriculum, teacher education and training, professional development, and learning styles (Hattie, 2012; Marzano, 2012; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Whether in a community school or traditional school, influential avenues to engage in rigorous learning can be accomplished through high expectations, providing effective feedback, and having critical understanding of how students think and learn (Hattie, 2012). Student achievement is promoted when students are able assess their own learning, set their own expectations, and are confident with making mistakes to engage in challenging tasks (Hattie, 2012). A community school should strive to offer a comprehensive rigorous curriculum to complement the implementation of other services offered (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2002).

Often many of these factors affecting quality education are outside the typical school's control and leave a gap in learning for children from poverty (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dunkle, 1992). Research demonstrates addressing these factors can result in healthy productive gains (Blank & Berg, 2006; Blank et al., 2010) for parents, the school, the community, and especially children. Addressing these factors effectively requires that school leaders must consider non-traditional options for schooling. These factors may be the catalyst for an educational change for communities, parents, students, and school staff (Dunkle, 1992).

## **Implementing a Community School Requires Effective Change Strategies**

Any school reform is often viewed as difficult (Sparks, 2001) and frightening by many school educators (Reeves, 2009) regardless of the type or level of the school. The changes in beginning and maintaining a community school have not often been grouped in research with other school reform initiatives (Dryfoos, 2002) though many of the changes a community school encounters are often complex reform initiatives (Swerdlik et al., 1999).

Many historical changes have occurred and evolved in the delivery of education, but not all of the changes over history have been sound ideas (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Many of the changes in education originated from the need to provide better experiences for students and staff, and typically came from familiar places or replicated successful schools (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The exponential growth of students from poverty and the need to provide those students comprehensive supports and services indicated a change was necessary from a traditional school concept to a full-service community school concept (Melaville & Blank, 2000; Natriello et al., 1990).

Even when faced with the reasons for the change, many educators have often faltered with the change initiative, unmotivated to make the changes or implement practices for the change to succeed (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Often leaders bring change from one organization to another without investigating the climate, demographic needs, or culture of the new organization causing even more difficulties with change (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Senge, 2006). Just as with any educational reform, a community school is susceptible to those critical issues also and must rely on many factors, from leaders to

teachers to agencies, to work together to overcome change issues to create a sustainable effective community school.

Much research (Fullan, 2001, 2002; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Reeves, 2009; Senge, 2006) has been published on avenues to overcome change fears, cynicism, and toxic actions of employees and leaders so the needed changes can be successful. Just as a traditional school, the community school effort is often faced with challenges and barriers visible with any new change initiative (Swerdlik et al., 1999). With any change, especially in a community school, creating the urgency for change with staff, community, and families is paramount (Kotter, 1996).

For families living in poverty, many students come to school without the ability to set long-term goals, understand and effectively follow-through on plans, or adjust to social and system expectations (Payne, 2001). To effect change with families living in poverty, a school staff must create a sense of urgency for change (Kotter, 1996), and consistently focus on communicating and engaging parents in meaningful conversations about those types of structures and expectations offered routinely at home (Kotter, 1996; Payne, 2001).

Sustainable programs often do not materialize quickly and must be examined thoroughly to ensure successful implementation (Natriello et al., 1990). Whether in a traditional or community school setting, change is difficult and time-consuming (Senge, 2006) even when stakeholders agree that changes are essential. Even though most educators realize mental health services for children in schools has been under realized for decades (Cappella et al., 2011) students in poverty in traditional schools have still been unable to easily access mental health services within the school. Even in a

community school with an emphasis on meeting the needs of students, change can still fall prey to the long and arduous change journey dependent on the climate and the starting point (Sparks, 2001; Natriello et al., 1990).

**Necessary change in implementing a community school requires effective evaluations of supports and services.**

Creating the understanding and necessity for the change is not the only change concern for a community school. A community school must also address how to sustain effective programs by frequently addressing change barriers with staff, neighborhoods, and outside agencies providing integrated services (Swerdlik et al., 1999). When working toward sustaining successful change at a community school, agencies and school staff must be able to coordinate services with each other, provide an abundance of accessible resources, and offer a variety of appropriate levels of resource for individuals requiring more intensive services (Swerdlik et al., 1999; Natriello et al., 1990) while managing the financial and administrative aspects of each area. Without real dedication to sustain the changes, agencies and community schools could become inundated with paperwork drawbacks, boundary disputes, and criticism (Berg et al., 2006; Swerdlik et al., 1999).

Coordination between entities and implementation of needed services takes time to build and foster in a community school (Berg et al., 2006). Because each community does not have the same needs, it is critical for the future success of the community school to spend time communicating and assessing the needs of the community, and then engage agencies on resources and possibilities to meet those needs within the school (Calfee et al., 1995; Dryfoos, 2002, 2005; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). Since the needs and availability of community resources can differ drastically from community to community, this

progression must allow time to communicate and explore concerns and solutions (Berg et al., 2006). Though the processes in communicating and developing community schools can be duplicated from school to school, some processes engaging agency partnerships and accessing community resources cannot be replicated from other successful community schools and takes careful planning for success (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2002; McMahon et al., 2000; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004; Riley, 2008). Once needs and agencies are identified, overall short and long-term goals should be created and frequently monitored to ensure sustainability, growth (Dryfoos, 2005) and accountability of those services.

Accountability in public school sector is a complex and difficult topic. Often accountability comes with legislative mandates which allow a short period of implementation before beginning the evaluation processes (Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015; McMahon et al., 2000). In a community school, accountability takes on new meaning as community schools work toward integrating families, neighborhoods, and communities to strengthen the school system, improve the graduation rate of students, improve the health and living of students and families, and promote life-long learning in at-risk students and families (Blank, Melaville et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2002). Accountability measures will need to adapt in how and when programs in the community school are measured to accurately evaluate the impact a community school has on student success (Blank, Melaville et al., 2003; McMahon et al., 2000).

**Necessary change in implementing a community school requires effective collaboration and engagement.**

One premise within the literature on implementing change in a community school is recurrent collaborative communication (Dentel, 2001; Dryfoos, 2005; Harris & Hoover, 2003; Swerdlik et al., 1999). Effective communication must happen frequently between community agency partners, parents, staff, students, and the neighborhood groups on an ongoing basis (Berg et al., 2006; Harris & Hoover, 2003). Collaborative communication allows for input from each of those stakeholder groups at the beginning and as the year progresses. Communication begins by engaging members of the community on the needs, traditions, successes, and concerns for families, children, and schools, and should be equally as engaging throughout the year (Berg et al., 2006). In a traditional school, parent and community input into the school often dwindles as the year progresses. In a community school, the amount of collaborative communication and input from parents and community partners should be a driving force in resources and services throughout the year (Blank, Berg et al., 2006).

Community schools should be presented as an available and welcoming community center for neighborhood meetings and events, especially in a community not steeped in tradition of involvement in public schools (Natriello et al., 1990). Neighborhood residents should understand the community school is a welcoming partner to the community that opens doors early and stays open until late (Blank, Berg et al., 2006; Record, 2012; Kronick, 2003) allowing students and adults access to learning, training, and recreation (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Melaville & Blank, 2000; Natriello et al., 1990). Creating

this change in how schools are utilized from a traditional school setting to a community school concept is imperative to sustaining real success in a community school.

Another change in the community school from a traditional school setting is the position of a community school coordinator. A community school coordinator works with school staff, families, students, and agencies to openly engage, communicate, and coordinate with each area (Ruffin, 2013). Engaging community leaders, agency providers, and parents is time-consuming and complex work (Blank, Berg, et al., 2006; Ruffin, 2013), especially for already overburdened principals. Principals in community schools are often leery about taking on an additional workload required to successfully promote, develop, implement, and sustain a community school (Blank, Berg et al., 2006). Often community schools will employ a coordinator to fulfill the duties required to create and sustain a community school concept (Blank et al, 2006; Dryfoos, 2002; Ruffin, 2013). A community school coordinator engages those entities to allow the principal of the school to remain focused on staff, student achievement, and curriculum rigor (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.). Having more than one person responsible for implementing the programs at the community school ensures the continued success of the programs during a change in leadership (Epstein, 2010; Federation for Community Schools, n.d.)

**Necessary change in implementing a community school requires restructuring of financial operations.**

Another change from traditional school setting to a community school concept is in financing the many aspects of a community school. Community schools are typically financed through public school funding along with outside agency funding sources

(Dryfoos, 2002), though if necessary a community school can be initiated and sustained with no additional funding (Partnerships for Children and Youth, 2013). Community schools with no additional outside funding will need to focus each critical resource on sustaining efficient and effective changes.

Implementing sustainable effective change in a community school is imperative for the success of the students, programs, and school and creates a mutual benefit for agencies, community schools, and ultimately families and students. When agencies work within the community school, the agency can provide fluid services for students and families in close range to the neighborhood where the student lives reducing the chance families will quit or disrupt needed services and provide suggestions to teachers and staff for working with students and families. The outside agency benefits with reduced cost of housing the agency allowing for better resources and services offered (Calfee et al., 1995).

Another aspect of implementing effective sustainable change in a community school is in financial planning and spending (Calfee et al., 1995). Community school partners should have access to limited funds to meet the urgent needs of the community school and have a plan for sustaining any growth (Blank, Melaville et al., 2003). Often the concern is not financial in a community school, but in gathering the commitment from agencies to work together in one building following guidelines set by the collective group (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). As with any school, a successful community school must plan for the immediate future and to sustain the resources for years to come (Blank, Melaville et al., 2003; Calfee et al., 1995).

Sustainable change in schools can only be accomplished by creating a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1996), changing the manner schools engage colleagues (Fullan, 2002), students, communities, and partnerships, and developing a purpose (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009) to provide supports and services for families and the community. As the number of families and students living in poverty continues to increase, schools must transform to provide the supports and structures needed for students to become successful at school. A change from traditional to a community school concept allows school staff to provide the type and intensity of supports and services needed in for students. Initiating and sustaining any change is difficult and time-consuming (Senge, 2006). In a community school, numerous changes must occur within and outside the school with staff, students, neighborhoods, and partnerships. In order to facilitate the change initiative within the school, effective professional development must be addressed with staff (Marzano, Water, & McNulty, 2005). In the next section, professional development needs within the community school is addressed.

### **Professional Development Needs within a Community School**

Professional development is a vital component in managing change (Fullan, 2002) and to the continued educational growth for teachers and leaders (Marzano et al., 2005) regardless of the type of school. In any school and especially a community school, professional development should be a crucial component to promote staff growth in content and to emphasize the need for collaborative sharing (Fullan, 2002). In a community school undergoing change, professional development should also change to meet the needs the staff encounter in a community school. The quality and presentation of teacher professional development has transformed and evolved throughout the course

of education (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Not all of the transformation in professional development has been beneficial and many educators have sat through professional development workshops with dread and haphazard listening (National Staff Development Council, 2008; Reeves, 2009).

During the last several decades, professional development turned to accountability and began focusing on data collection and student achievement to meet the demands created by educational policy (Blank & Berg, 2006; Fullan et al., 2015). Recently even as most schools emphasized implementing differentiated instruction with students, professional development has not followed suit. Very little professional development has been differentiated and is still conducted in a similar manner for all teachers regardless of the teacher's level of mastery (McNulty, 2011; Reeves, 2009). For the community school, professional development becomes more complex with the addition of other non-teaching professionals (Kronick, 2003) and should be centered on working together with families (Michael et al., 2007), should address the current culture of the school as well as the future culture of the school, and emphasize the need for collaborative sharing (Fullan, 2002).

### **Effective professional development for teachers and leaders.**

Effective professional development is not easy and can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Traditional and community schools must have a clear and consistent vision (Senge, 2006) along with an intentional culture for teacher learning for effective professional learning to occur (Fullan et al., 2015; National Staff Development Council, 2008; McNulty, 2011). The professional learning must promote teacher learning goals

which support the district and school's mission and vision and allocate resources and time for adults to collaborate (National Staff Development Council, 2008).

For districts seeking to improve student achievement and engagement, teacher learning must be carefully designed and strategically timed to promote powerful changes with teaching (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; National Staff Development Council, 2008; White, 2011). In a community school, teachers will need differentiated professional learning based on the needs of the community school and the needs of teachers.

Regardless of a traditional or community school setting, teachers and administrators should use common language to discuss relevant data in an on-going collaborative learning process (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; National Staff Development Council, 2008). The relevant data should always include looking at learning strategies used in classrooms, learning targets, and learning activities (National Staff Development Council, 2008; Reeves, 2009) along with anecdotal data on student behaviors, student mental and physical health development, and parent involvement.

Within traditional and community school environments, teachers must become lifelong learners and continue to reflect and grow on their own teaching practices through focus and collaboration with colleagues, mentoring, and coaching (Fullan et al., 2015; National Staff Development Council, 2008; Reeves, 2009). In a community school, the needs of teachers are similar to the needs of teachers in traditional settings but also must have professional learning components to address the differences in vision and mission of the community school. A successful professional development program should have a clearly outlined vision and collaborative learning culture focused on looking at teacher practices, teacher conceptual thinking about the community school programs, anecdotal

notes, and data in meaningful ways. Within a community school, those aspects should be addressed in professional development along with other needs unique to a community school.

**Evolving professional development needs for a community school.**

In addition to the needs all classroom teachers have for professional development, teachers within a community school also must have effective collaborative skills to work with adults within the building and within the multitude of agencies working with the community school. Teachers within a community school also provide care and instruction with many students and families living in poverty and have a need to understanding how to work effectively within those demographics. Teacher efficacy is the confidence a teacher demonstrates in his or her own ability to impact the achievement of children (Coladarci, 1992; McCoach & Colbert, 2010) and to work cohesively with others to provide the engagement and resources each student and family needs.

The confidence and effectiveness a teacher within a community school must develop to work with families, agencies, and students, underscores a professional need many teachers within the community school will need to address regularly. When designing and implementing quality professional development, administrators must assess the level of teacher efficacy and the needs of teachers (Protheroe, 2008) within the community school. A valuable teaching efficacy can be achieved through successful experiences in the classroom (Protheroe, 2008) working with students and families. Some beginning teachers may struggle finding successful experiences and efficacy early on and will benefit with positive encouraging support system (Bryk, 2010; Protheroe, 2008) and professional development aimed at improving efficacy (Bryk, 2010; Fullan et al., 2015;

Hattie, 2012) and collaboration between teachers, families, agencies, and administrators (Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, & Albritton, 2013; White, 2011). A teacher's ability to competently and wholeheartedly lead students, especially students from poverty, to become critical-thinkers and productive citizens is imperative in the learning process (Barton, 2003; Fisher & Frey, 2007) and impacts the quality education found in a community school (Blank & Berg, 2006; Bryk, 2010). Recruiting and retaining teachers with high efficacy and pedagogy is imperative for schools with high percentage of students from poverty (Caboni & Adisu, 2004).

Limited literature and research has been dedicated to the professional development needs for principals or teachers working in a community school (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013) though it is well understood that professional development is imperative in every school (Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The same professional development for a traditional school may not meet the complex and unique needs of a community school (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). Principals, teachers, and agency workers should have differentiated training opportunities for each of their professions, but also have guidance and training on how to work together in the unique setting of a community school (Kronick, 2003; Swerdlik et al., 1999). Because of the lack of real professional development research, staff at community schools have engaged in online forum discussions that offer support and development ideas (Dryfoos, 2003). Many principals have also been encouraged to develop joint trainings with agencies and staff to demonstrate how each agency and activity can contribute to learning in the classroom (Melaville & Blank, 2000).

## **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented an overview of community schools along with a detailed review of literature on the topic of full-service community school concept and community support. Literature and research suggests a community school concept addresses student attendance issues, student motivation concerns, student mental and physical issues, impacts student behaviors, creates meaningful parent involvement, provides rigorous curriculum, increases community support, and strengthens neighborhoods (Dryfoos, 2002; Peebles-Wilkins, 2004; Shah et al., 2009). Community schools are open to everyone in the neighborhood and work together with outside agencies to provide resources and services for students and families (Blank, Berg et al., 2006; Dryfoos, 2000).

In the third chapter, the researcher will detail the methodology for the study to determine the tenets common in successful full-service community schools. Chapter four includes the data collected during the study. The last chapter states the finding, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

Educators, legislators, and community members understand the need for schools to grow and improve (Goldkind & Farmer, 2013) and to be accountable to the students it serves as well as the public. One avenue being currently implemented to meet the needs of students and families in poverty is the community school (Blank & Berg, 2006; Dryfoos, 2003). Community and school partnerships have long been recognized as beneficial for students, community, and schools (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012) but little research is known on the perceptions of teachers and administrators on the supports and services offered within a community school. The purpose of this QUAN-QUAL study is to determine the perceptions of teachers and administrators from emerging or mentoring community school on the factors important in a community school. There are three primary research questions regarding the perceived importance of quality educational factors, perceived importance of professional development on the quality educational factors, and the activities most effective on the quality educational factors. There are two subset questions. The primary research questions will be tied to survey questions on a cross-sectional sample survey the researcher and advisors created and field tested.

In this chapter, a description of methodology will be discussed, including selection of participants, sampling procedures, research setting, research design, instrumentation, data treatment, and a review of the research questions.

## **Participants**

Participants in the study were selected based on the definition for a full-service community school. The researcher employed a purposive sampling selection for inclusion in the study. A purposive sampling allows for a representation of a given population based on particular criteria (Gay et al., 2009). Based on the criteria of an emerging and mentoring community school, teachers and administrators from 16 emerging and mentoring community schools were identified in a large urban public school district in the Midwest to meet to be participants. The teachers and administrators from those 16 schools were invited to participate in the study via letter, phone call, and emails. Of the 16 schools available, there are approximately 583 possible participants according to the district website. Ninety-five of the teachers and administrators from the possible participants agreed to participate and were determined acceptable for study.

## **Sampling Procedures**

The participants were selected based on employment in a community school. A community school is defined as a school offering support to students and families from poverty with medical check-ups, mental health assistance, hygiene concerns, and parenting support and skills located within the nearby neighborhood elementary school. The community school also offers classes and training for parents, and tutoring for students after school hours, including on weekends (Federation for Community Schools, n.d.; McMahon, Ward, Pruett, Davidson, & Griffith, 2000). Teachers and administrators from sixteen schools were invited to participate. Each of the sixteen schools met the definition of emerging or mentoring community school as defined by the large urban school district in the Midwest. Eight of the schools were classified as emerging

community schools and were in the beginning stages toward developing a climate and culture conducive to a community school and beginning to offer supports along the community school continuum (Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative, 2015). Eight of the schools were classified as mentoring community schools and were demonstrating a school climate and culture conducive to partnerships and employed a community school coordinator (Tulsa Area Community School Initiative, 2015). All schools meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study had an equal opportunity to participate in the study therefore researcher bias is not a factor. Ninety-five of the teachers and administrators in the 16 schools participated. The sample size was determined to be appropriate. Using 95 participants as a sample size is sufficient because the sample size was random and anonymous. The survey return response return rate was 16.2% of the total participants eligible.

### **Research Setting**

The participating schools are part of a large urban public school district in the Midwest. Total student enrollment in the entire district is approximately 41,000 students with approximately 31 percent Hispanic, 27 percent Caucasian, 26 percent African-American, and 6 percent Native American. Within the 41,000 students enrolled, 76 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. In the surveyed district, there are 53 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, and 9 high schools located within the district boundaries. Sixteen of those 53 elementary schools are labeled community schools. The attributes of the community schools ranged from 81 percent African-American to 6 percent African-American, 66 percent Caucasian to 3 percent Caucasian, and 65 percent Hispanic to 6 percent Hispanic. Each community school in the study ranges from 224 to 958 students

enrolled and houses grades kindergarten through fifth grades. The free and reduced demographics ranged from 85 percent to 100 percent. Schools in the study have ranges of 11 students to each staff member to 17 students to each staff member. All of the teachers and administrators from the community schools within the district boundaries were invited to participate for a total of 583 possible participants.

The overall achievement data from state testing reported 10 of the 16 participating schools placed 50 percent or more of the students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at proficient or advanced categories in reading. The ranges for all 16 schools in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading were from 91 percent proficient and advanced to 30 percent proficient and advanced with an average of 55 percent proficient and advanced.

The overall achievement data from state testing in math placed 7 of the 16 community schools with 50 percent or more of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade population proficient or advanced in math. The ranges for all 16 schools in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math were from 67 percent proficient and advanced to 11 percent proficient and advanced with an average of 45 percent proficient and advanced. The state grades each school based on achievement data and attendance. For the participating schools, 15 of the 16 were ranked a grade of “F,” with one school ranked a “D-” grade.

### **Research Questions**

For the purpose of this study the term quality educational factors shall refer to the following group: Student attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent influence and involvement, and curriculum rigor.

1. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators employed in emerging and mentoring community schools perceive as the most important for student success in a community school?
  - a. What quality educational factors are most evident in an emerging and mentoring community school as perceived by teachers and administrators?
  - b. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in emerging and mentoring community schools allocate the most time per week?
2. What professional development within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most important in a community school?
3. What community school activities within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most effective in a community school?

### **Research Design**

The focus of this study was to survey teachers and administrators from community schools meeting a pre-determined definition. The schools were distributed geographically and contained a sample of subgroups for generalized results. The sample was determined appropriate based on the number of surveys returned from subgroups. Surveys were distributed electronically to teachers and administrators at pre-selected schools after subjects agreed to participate. There was no potential risk to the participants. At the beginning of the electronic survey was a letter of ethics of the study and researcher, along

with consent. Completion of the survey indicated consent to participate. Participation was electronic through the survey. All results were anonymous. As suggested by Southwest Baptist University guidelines to protect human participants, an ethics review request was submitted to the Research Review Board for approval to survey on March 15, 2016, for approximately 583 participants for the study. After receiving approval, participant recruitment and data collection began.

To ensure sufficient number of responses, the researcher sent a personal letter of request to building leaders including the timeline prior to submitting the surveys. Included in the emailed survey link was a brief letter of explanation and timeline for the completion of the survey and paper. Following the emailed survey link, a reminder email was sent to recipients not yet completing the survey. Throughout the process of creating a survey, and collecting and analyzing data, the researcher recognized personal bias on the topic and worked to create an unbiased instrument.

### **Instrumentation**

To meet the requirements of the study, the instrument used was designed by the researcher and advisors and revised several times to respond to each research question. The instrument was designed as a cross-sectional survey (see Appendix A) to meet the needs of the quantitative and qualitative research questions. The study was written with multi-dimensional scales using four definitions for each scale. Each research question corresponded to a survey question.

The instrument contained questions on demographics (i.e., role within the school and classification of emerging or mentoring community school), perceptions from teachers and administrators on the importance of factors in a community school, the importance of

community school activities within the community school as it relates to factors, and the importance of professional development within the community school as it relates to factors. There were three survey questions covering 21 factors using the same four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, highly agree). These three survey questions corresponded to research question one, subset question a, and research question two. Another survey question covered seven factors using a four-part scale (i.e., 0-25 percent, 26-50 percent, 51-75 percent, 76-100 percent). This survey question corresponded to subset question b. A seven-part scale (i.e., Most important = 1, Least important = 7) was used to answer a seven-part ranking survey question that corresponded to research question one. The last three survey questions were open-ended to answer research question three in a qualitative method.

To determine validity, the researcher conducted a pilot field test with two groups. The first pre-pilot group consisted of 12 individuals familiar with surveys and teaching to review each survey question. During the pre-pilot, individuals were allowed to ask questions during the field testing to clarify scales, definitions, and directions. After reviewing the pre-pilot field testing, the pilot field testing consisted of 26 individuals familiar with the content of the questions to determine if the questions measured what each question intended to determine construct validity.

To determine reliability and test if the results were consistent with similar populations, Cronbach's Alpha was utilized for each scale at a reliability rate of .858 to .938 during pilot testing. Cronbach's Alpha is a common way to determine internal consistency for each construct (Pelham, 2013).

## **Data Analysis**

The quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a survey with QuestionPro software. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using the survey with the software program QuestionPro because of the ease of collection, and the need of both types of data to draw conclusions for the research questions. Using only one type of method would not adequately answer the needs identified by the researcher in chapter 1.

The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis of the quantitative data collected will be inferential statistics. QuestionPro was used because of the program ability to create and organize survey data electronically. SPSS was used because of the ability to statistically analyze survey data using a variety of statistical tests. Computerized checks were completed to determine suspicious data. The data from survey questions four and six correspond to research questions one and were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This type of statistical test was used to examine if a statistically significant difference exists between the unrelated groups. The data from survey question 3 corresponded to research question subset a and were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine significance between the groups. The data from survey question 5 corresponded to research question subset b and were analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The data from survey question 7 corresponded to research question two and were analyzed with a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to examine if a statistically significant difference exists between the means in the unrelated groups.

The qualitative data for survey questions eight through ten corresponded to research question three and were analyzed using the Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis (Simon, 2011). This type of analysis was used to organize data into recurring themes and patterns to allow for interpretation. Throughout the process of analyzing the data, constant checks were made for relevance to the research questions. Checks were also made throughout the analysis to ensure the data met the assumptions of analytic procedures.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the methodology for the study. Participants were selected based on employment in full-service community school in a large urban district in the Midwest. All teachers and administrators within those schools were invited to participate. Of the possible 583 participants, 95 teachers and administrators completed the survey with a return rate of 16.2%.

The survey was developed by the researcher and advisors and administered via email using an electronic survey link from the software, QuestionPro. The instrument was validated with field tests and determined to be valid. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS to ensure the data met the assumption of analytic procedures. The statistics were validated using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The qualitative data were analyzed for recurring themes using Bogden-Bicklen comparative methods.

The fourth chapter includes the data collected during the study. The last chapter states the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Analysis of Data**

#### **Introduction**

Community schools offer support to students and families from poverty that typical public schools do not offer (Blank & Berg, 2006). Very little perception data from the perspective of teachers and administrators in community schools have been gathered and published. The purpose of this study was to present perceptions from teachers and administrators within a community school setting on the quality educational factors of community schools.

The data were collected in a QUAN-QUAL study using an electronic survey from 583 possible participants working in 16 community schools in a large urban school district in the Midwest. From the possible participants, 95 teachers and administrators completed the study. This is a return rate of 16.2 percent of the possible participants. While a larger return rate is desired, several principals indicated changes within the structure of the programing may have limited participation. One principal indicated the program changes were new to the staff, therefore the staff did not participate.

At the time field testing and piloting of the study was conducted, schools were only identified as emerging or mentoring school buildings in the large urban district. Soon after piloting ended and during distribution of the survey to participants, the researcher became aware a third definition for community schools had recently been added to the district participating in the study. The participating district added communities in schools as another definition of community schools. Communities in schools (CIS) was defined similar to mentoring community school buildings as demonstrating a school climate and

culture of working with outside agencies and engaging a community school coordinator. The CIS definition differed from mentoring community school buildings because the program was guided by a nation-wide organization and offered students individual mentoring while providing training to each student on a marketable job skill to obtain by graduation (Communities in Schools of Mid-America, 2016).

Soon after the study was first electronically distributed, the researcher became aware that six of the community schools were now considered CIS schools and were guided by the nation-wide organization. Of the remaining ten community schools identified for the study, four were still considered mentoring community schools, and six were still considered emerging community schools. Changing the definition and title of six community schools from mentoring and emerging community schools to communities in schools did not alter the criteria, eligibility, or number of any of the participants.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators employed in emerging and mentoring community schools perceive as the most important for student success in a community school?
  - a. What quality educational factors are most evident in an emerging and mentoring community school as perceived by teachers and administrators?
  - b. What quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in emerging and mentoring community schools allocate the most time per week?

2. What professional development within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most important in a community school?
3. What community school activities within the quality educational factors do teachers and administrators in an emerging and mentoring community school perceive to be most effective in a community school?

The quantitative data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA), descriptive statistics, and reliability tests. Using a multivariate analysis allowed for the multiple independent variables to be manipulated to see an effect of the dependent variables represented in *p*-values. This type of statistical test was used to examine if a statistically significant difference exists between the unrelated groups. The *p*-value is commonly accepted at ( $p < .05$ ) (Pellham, 2013) and represents the probability random chance occurred within the data. Any value lower than .05 was considered statistically significant and should not be considered as having occurred by chance. Using a descriptive statistics to analyze data allows the researcher to present the data in an organized manageable method.

The qualitative data were analyzed using Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis to look for recurring themes and patterns. Themes were discovered after reviewing and comparing open-ended raw answers from 95 participants in each qualitative survey question. The qualitative data are presented following the quantitative data.

## Results of Quantitative Data

### Research question 1.

Research Question 1 was answered by Survey Questions 4 and 6 (see Appendix A). For survey question 4, participants were asked their perception of the importance of seven dependent variables (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health support, student behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, curriculum rigor) using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, highly agree). The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) and descriptive statistical test. In the MANOVA on survey question four, the  $p$ -values (.416, .410, .404, and .101) on each of the four multivariate tests (i.e., Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, Roy's Largest Root) demonstrated overall, as a group, there were no significant differences of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Of the multivariate tests, Roy's Largest Root had the lowest probability with ( $p = .101$ ), but the  $p$ -value was too high for the researcher to make any real statistical assumptions.

On the univariate statistical test for each of the dependent variables, the  $p$ -values (.839, .789, .834, .877, .313, .363, .120) demonstrated non-significant statistical differences on each of the factors (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health support, student behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, curriculum rigor) between teachers and administrators from emerging, mentoring, or communities in schools community schools. Of those data, curriculum rigor ( $p = .120$ ) had the lowest probability of occurring by chance, but the  $p$ -value was too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. These data

indicate the community school type (i.e., emerging, mentoring, or communities in schools) did not impact the perception of teachers on the importance of each factor. The descriptive statistical data for survey question four are displayed as shown below in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on the Importance of Educational Factors on Student Success in Community School*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Attendance	95	2	4	3.83	.404
Student Motivation	95	2	4	3.87	.364
Student Mental Health Supports	95	2	4	3.76	.477
Student Behavior Supports	95	2	4	3.83	.404
Student Physical Health	95	2	4	3.67	.493
Parent Involvement and Influence	95	2	4	3.86	.375
Curriculum Rigor	95	1	4	3.75	.545

In Table 1, the participants were asked their perceptions on the importance of seven dependent variables using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, and highly agree). Curriculum rigor had the largest standard deviation ( $SD = .545$ ) within the participants. Student motivation had the smallest standard deviation ( $SD = .364$ ). The differences in standard deviations indicated there were small variances of opinions within the factors. Reliability scores for survey question four indicated an internal consistency score of ( $\alpha = .891$ ) ( $n = 7$ ) using Cronbach's Alpha.

For survey question four, there were no differences between participants from emerging community schools and participants from mentoring community schools on the importance of each factor (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental

health support, student behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, and curriculum rigor). Each participant from those groups perceived all seven factors as highly agree or agree on the importance within the community school.

Participants from communities in schools community schools indicated highly agree to disagree on the importance for six of the seven factors. For curriculum rigor, participants from communities in schools indicated highly agree to highly disagree on the importance of curriculum rigor in community schools.

Overall for survey question four, 98.95 percent of participants highly agreed or agreed student attendance, student motivation, student behavior supports, physical health supports, and parent involvement and influence were important for student success within community schools. When considering student mental health, participants indicated a frequency of 97.89 percent for highly agree and agree, with two participants indicating disagree (2.11 percent). When considering curriculum rigor, participants indicated a frequency of 96.84 percent for highly agree and agree. Three participants indicated disagree (2.11 percent) and highly disagree (1.05 percent) on curriculum rigor being important for student success in a community school.

Survey question six asked participants to rank the seven educational factors in order of most important within their community school. The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA) and descriptive statistical test. The *p*-values (.371, .380, .389, and .264) on each of the four multivariate tests for survey question six demonstrated no significant differences of the independent variables on the dependent variables as an overall group. The *p*-values were too high for the researcher to make any real statistical assumptions. On the univariate statistical test for each of the

dependent variables, the  $p$ -values (.338, .160, .317, .978, .048, .702, .150) demonstrated one statistical difference between teachers and administrators from emerging, mentoring, and community in schools community schools on one of the dependent variables. Student physical health displayed a statistical significant difference of ( $p = .048$ ). These data indicated there was a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and administrators about the importance of student physical health within a community school setting. This difference in perceptions between teachers and administrators could be related to the focus within each of the community schools, the years associated with community schools, or other factors within the school types. The remaining data concerning student motivation ( $p = .160$ ) and curriculum rigor ( $p = .150$ ) had the next lowest probability of occurring by chance, but the  $p$ -values were too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. The descriptive statistical data for survey question six are displayed as shown below in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on Ranking Importance of Educational Factors on Student Success in Community School*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Attendance	95	1	7	3.23	1.938
Student Motivation	95	1	7	3.33	1.716
Student Mental Health Supports	95	1	7	3.95	1.672
Student Behavior Supports	95	1	7	3.66	1.796
Student Physical Health	95	1	7	5.35	1.923
Parent Involvement and Influence	95	1	7	4.61	1.776
Curriculum Rigor	95	1	7	3.87	2.307

In Table 2, the participants were asked their perceptions on the importance of seven dependent variables by ranking the importance from 1 – 7 scale with one being the highest importance ranking and 7 being the lowest importance ranking. The ranges of standard deviation indicated all areas had a small variance with curriculum rigor at the largest standard deviation ( $SD = 2.307$ ) and student mental health supports at the smallest standard deviation ( $SD = 1.672$ ).

For survey question six, participants ranked the top three factors as student attendance (26 percent), student motivation (23 percent), and curriculum rigor (15 percent) as most important within the community school setting.

#### **Research question subset a.**

Research question subset a was answered by survey question three. Survey question three asked participants if the seven dependent variables (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health support, student behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, curriculum rigor) were a focus in the community school. Participants answered using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, highly agree) for each factor. The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA), descriptive statistical test, and reliability tests.

In the multivariate test, Wilks' Lambda demonstrated no overall significant differences with a value of the ( $p = .233$ ), but the  $p$ -values were too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. On the univariate tests, the  $p$ -values (.972, .246, .262, .665, .597, .548, .277) demonstrated no statistical differences on each of the factors (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health support, student

behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, curriculum rigor). Student motivation ( $p = .246$ ), student mental health ( $p = .262$ ), and curriculum rigor ( $p = .277$ ) had the lowest probability of occurring by chance, but the  $p$ -value was too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. This data could indicate the community school types were not a factor on teacher perceptions about the focus of each school. The descriptive statistical data for survey question three are displayed as shown below in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on the Focus within the Community School of the Educational Factors*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Attendance	95	1	4	3.59	.610
Student Motivation	95	1	4	3.44	.695
Student Mental Health Supports	95	1	4	3.41	.751
Student Behavior Supports	95	2	4	3.42	.629
Student Physical Health	95	2	4	3.08	.739
Parent Involvement and Influence	95	1	4	3.21	.728
Curriculum Rigor	95	2	4	3.51	.666

In Table 3, the participants were asked their perceptions on the focus within the community school of the seven dependent variables using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, and highly agree). The ranges of standard deviation indicated all areas had a small variance with student mental health supports at the largest standard deviation ( $SD = .751$ ) and student attendance at the smallest standard deviation ( $SD = .610$ ). Reliability scores for survey question three indicated an internal consistency score of ( $\alpha = .860$ ) ( $n = 7$ ) using Cronbach's Alpha.

Survey question three revealed four differences in how the factors were ranked between participants from emerging community schools and participants from mentoring community schools on the focus within the community schools. In the areas of student attendance, student mental health supports, parent involvement and influence, and curriculum rigor, participants from emerging community schools perceived the community school focused on those factors from highly agree to disagree. Participants from CIS community schools answered highly agree to highly disagree on four factors (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health supports, and parent involvement and influence).

Overall for survey question three, participants indicated highly agree and agree for student attendance (95.7 percent), student motivation (90.4 percent), student mental health (90.4 percent), student behavior supports (92.5 percent), student physical health supports (76.7 percent), parent involvement (84.1 percent), and curriculum rigor (90.5 percent). Participants indicated highly disagree and disagree on student attendance (4.1 percent), student motivation (9.4 percent), student mental health (9.4 percent), student behaviors (7.3 percent), student physical supports (23.1 percent), parent involvement and influence (15.7 percent), and curriculum rigor (9.4 percent).

#### **Research question subset b.**

Research question subset b was answered by survey question five. Survey question five asked participants the amount of time per week spent discussing the seven factors with other teachers. Participants answered using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., 0 – 25%, 26 – 50%, 51 – 75%, 76 – 100%) for each factor. The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA), descriptive statistical test, and reliability tests. Wilks’

Lambda demonstrated significant differences with a value of the ( $p = .011$ ). These data indicated there was a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers that could be related to community school types. On the statistical test for each of the dependent variables, the  $p$ -values (.596, .255, .403, .512, .089, .421, .028) demonstrated a statistical difference between teachers and administrators from emerging, mentoring, and community in schools community schools on one of the factors. Curriculum rigor demonstrated a significant statistical difference with a value of ( $p = .028$ ). These data indicated a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and administrators from the three different types of community schools on the amount of time spent discussing curriculum rigor. Student physical health had the next lowest probability of occurring by chance ( $p = .089$ ), but the  $p$ -value was too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. The descriptive statistical data for survey question three are displayed as shown below in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on the Percentage of Time Discussing the Educational Factors with Other Teachers per Week*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Attendance	95	1	4	2.33	1.036
Student Motivation	95	1	4	2.98	1.082
Student Mental Health Supports	95	1	4	2.63	1.001
Student Behavior Supports	95	1	4	3.04	.999
Student Physical Health	95	1	4	2.04	1.041
Parent Involvement and Influence	95	1	4	2.66	.996
Curriculum Rigor	95	1	4	3.02	1.062

In Table 4, the participants were asked the percentage of time they discussed the seven dependent variables with other teachers per week. Participants used a Likert four-part scale (i.e., 0 – 25%, 26 – 50%, 51 – 75%, 76 – 100%). The ranges of standard deviation indicated all areas had a small variance with student motivation at the largest standard deviation ( $SD = 1.082$ ) and parent involvement and influence at the smallest standard deviation ( $SD = .996$ ). Reliability scores for survey question five indicated an internal consistency score of ( $\alpha = .839$ ) ( $n = 7$ ) using Cronbach's Alpha.

For survey question five, participants from emerging community schools, mentoring community schools, and communities in schools community schools rated five factors (i.e., student attendance, student behavior, student mental health, student physical health, and parent involvement and influence) from 0 – 25 percent to 76 – 100 percent of time spent per week discussing the factor with other colleagues. Student motivation and curriculum rigor were both rated higher with participants rating each at 26 – 50 percent to 76 – 100 percent of time per week.

Overall for survey question five, 71.5, 70.5, and 68.3 percent of teachers and administrators indicated they spent 51 – 100 percent of time per week discussing student behavior supports, curriculum rigor, and student motivation. When considering student mental health and parent involvement and influence, 58.8 and 55.7 percent of teachers and administrators indicated they spent 51 – 100 percent of time per week discussing student mental health concerns and parent involvement and influence with colleagues. When rating student attendance, 47.2 percent of teachers indicated they spent 51 – 100 percent of time per week discussing student attendance with colleagues. Only 32 percent

of teachers and administrators reported they spent 51 – 100 percent of time per week discussing student physical health with colleagues.

### **Research question 2.**

Research question 2 was answered by survey question seven. For survey question seven, participants were asked their perception of the importance of professional development on the seven dependent variables (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health support, student behavior support, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, curriculum rigor) using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, highly agree). The data were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA), descriptive statistical test, and reliability tests. Wilks' Lambda demonstrated no significant differences with a value of ( $p = .153$ ), but the  $p$ -value was too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. On the statistical test for each of the dependent variables, the  $p$ -values (.407, .069, .607, .517, .161, .037, .777) demonstrated a statistical difference on one of the factors. Parent involvement and influence demonstrated a statistical difference with a value of ( $p = .037$ ). These data indicated there was a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and administrators from emerging, mentoring, and community in schools community schools on professional development that could be related to the community school type. Student motivation had the next lowest probability of occurring by chance with a value of ( $p = .069$ ), but the  $p$ -value was too high for any real statistical assumption by the researcher. The descriptive statistical data for survey question three are displayed as shown below in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on the Importance of Professional Development on the Factors*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Student Attendance	95	1	4	3.04	.910
Student Motivation	95	1	4	3.62	.605
Student Mental Health Supports	95	1	4	3.51	.634
Student Behavior Supports	95	1	4	3.73	.515
Student Physical Health	95	1	4	3.25	.729
Parent Involvement and Influence	95	1	4	3.52	.697
Curriculum Rigor	95	1	4	3.62	.568

In Table 5, the participants were asked the perceptions on the importance of professional development in the seven areas using a Likert four-part scale (i.e., highly disagree, disagree, agree, and highly agree). The ranges of standard deviation indicated all areas had a small variance with student attendance at the largest standard deviation ( $SD = .910$ ) and student behavior at the smallest standard deviation ( $SD = .515$ ).

Reliability scores for survey question seven indicated an internal consistency score of ( $\alpha = .868$ ) ( $n = 7$ ) using Cronbach's Alpha.

For survey question seven about professional development needs, participants from emerging, mentoring, and communities in schools community schools perceived professional development differently for each of the seven factors with all factors ranking highly agree to highly disagree.

Overall for survey question seven, participants indicated highly agree and agree for student attendance (73.6 percent), student motivation (98.9 percent), student mental health (96.8 percent), student behavior supports (92.5 percent), student physical health

supports (89.4 percent), parent involvement (92.5 percent), and curriculum rigor (97.8 percent). Participants indicated highly disagree and disagree on student attendance (4.1 percent), student motivation (9.4 percent), student mental health (9.4 percent), student behaviors (7.3 percent), student physical supports (23.1 percent), parent involvement and influence (15.7 percent), and curriculum rigor (9.4 percent).

## **Results of Qualitative Data**

### **Overview of qualitative data.**

The results of the qualitative data were analyzed using a Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis to look for recurring themes over three survey questions. Themes were discovered after reviewing and comparing open-ended raw answers from 95 participants in each survey question. After reviewing the open-ended answers, the researcher grouped answers by themes and looked for patterns. In two of the survey questions, eleven themes were discovered. In the third survey question, nine of the eleven recurring themes were present. The overall recurring themes and patterns are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Recurring Themes from the perspective of Teachers and Administrators on Services and Supports in a Community School*

Overall Themes Overview	Activities, Services, or Supports Most Effective for Student Success	Activities, Services, Supports Provided to Promote Student Success	Additional Services Suggested for Community School Setting
Student Attendance	X		±
Student Motivation	X	X	±
Student Mental Health Support	X	X	X
Student Behavior Support	X	X	X
Student Physical Health	X	X	X
Parent Involvement	X	X	X
Curriculum Rigor/Academics	X	X	X
Community Involvement	X	X	X
School/District Staff Support	X	±	±
Professional Development	X		±
Student Opportunities/Activities	X	X	X

± = Theme present in data one to five times.  
X = Theme present in data six or more times.

In Table 6, recurring themes present in each question six or more times were noted with an “X.” Themes recurring one to five times were noted on the table with a “±.” The three survey questions asked participants to list activities, supports, or services in the community school perceived to be effective, supportive, or suggested within the community school setting. In Table 6, the trends were evident in two of the three open-ended responses. On the other question, two trend areas were not noted. The recurring themes and sub-themes will be examined in details below.

**Research question 3.**

Research Question 3 was answered by survey question 8. For survey question 8, participants were asked to list activities, services, or supports found in the community school perceived to be most effective in promoting student success in the areas of student

attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, or curriculum rigor. From the open-ended responses, eleven recurring themes developed. The data are noted below in Table 7.

Table 7  
*Recurring Themes from Teachers and Administrators Perceived to be Most Effective in Promoting Student Success in the Community School*

	Number of Participants	Number of Times Theme Appeared in Data
Student Attendance	95	16
Student Motivation	95	16
Student Mental Health Support	95	34
Student Behavior Support	95	23
Student Physical Health	95	7
Parent Involvement	95	64
Curriculum Rigor/Academics	95	34
Community Involvement	95	32
District/School Staff Support	95	11
Professional Development	95	16
Student Opportunities/Clubs	95	22

In Table 7, there were eleven recurring themes. The recurring themes included the seven quality education factors noted in Chapter II research and four other themes focused around community involvement, school staff support, professional development opportunities, and opportunities for students in clubs and extracurricular activities. From the eleven themes, parent involvement was noted 64 times within the responses for survey question 8. Sub-themes within the parent involvement theme are noted in Table 8.

Table 8  
*Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on Most Effective Activities, Services, Supports to Promote Student Success within the Theme of Parent Involvement*

	Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data	
Parent Involvement		
Communication between Teacher and Parents	17	
- Parents Feel Valued/Build Rapport		
- Parent Meetings		
Family Nights	14	
- Literacy and Math Nights		
- College and Career Nights		
- Family Dinner Nights		
- Family Fun Activity Nights		
Parents Included in Class	11	
- Volunteer in Classrooms/Field trips		
- Invited to Speak to Class		
- Invited to Plan Fun Activities in Class		
Parent Classes/Workshops Offered	9	
- Financial Planning, Nutrition, Cooking		
- English as Second Language		
- Indian Education Tutoring		
- GED/Literacy Classes		
Resources offered to Families	6	
- Transportation to and from School		
- Food Pantry/Dinners		
- Clothing Swaps		
Home Visits From Teachers	3	en
PTA	2	
Educating Parents on How to Promote Learning	2	

As noted in Table 8, participants found parent involvement to be a recurring theme for student success in the community school. Of parent involvement, communication between home and teacher was perceived to be the most effective activity, service, or support by teachers and administrators in promoting student success with 17 references. Another sub-theme within parent involvement indicated structured family nights were effective. The structured, planned family evening activities at the school were referenced

14 times as perceived effective services in promoting student success. Other recurring sub-themes in parent involvement included inviting parents into the classroom and offering day and evening workshops or classes specifically designed for parents.

Two other recurring themes for survey question 8 had 34 references in the data. Student mental health and curriculum rigor were perceived by teachers and administrators to be effective in promoting student success at the community school. The break-down of those sub-themes is listed below in Tables 9 and 10.

Table 9  
*Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on Most Effective Activities, Services, Supports to Promote Student Success within the Theme of Student Mental Health*

	Student Mental Health	Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data
Sub-Theme	On-site Mental Health Provider/Counseling	23
	Counseling Always Available	4
	Teachers Understand Mental Health and Crisis Supports	4
	Outside Mental Health Provider	2
	Family and Children’s Services Resource/Personnel	1

In Table 9, teachers and administrators perceived having on-site mental health providers and counselors at the school was the most effective support for promoting student success in the community school setting with 23 references. Allowing frequent access to counseling throughout the day and helping teachers understand mental health and crisis supports were also reported as effective in promoting success in the educational setting. Table 10 displays the sub-themes for curriculum rigor.

Table 10  
*Perceptions of Teachers and Administrators on Most Effective Activities, Services, Supports to Promote Student Success within the Theme of Curriculum Rigor*

Curriculum Rigor		Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data
Sub-Theme	Focusing on Curriculum Rigor	10
	Reading Interventions and Programs	7
	Engaging/Exploration Activities	5
	Tutoring and Saturday Learning School	5
	Student Academic Data Tracking/Posting	3
	Instructional Coach	2
	High Expectations for Learning	2

In Table 10, sub-themes for curriculum rigor referenced focusing on rigorous lessons ten times. The use of reading interventions and on-line programs were referenced seven times as effective at promoting student success. Providing engaging activities to allow exploration of the curriculum, and offering tutoring after school or on Saturdays were noted five times as effective in promoting student success.

Table 11 displays the activities, services, or supports within a community school as most effective at promoting students' successes as perceived by teachers and administrators.

Table 11

*Recurring Sub-Themes Perceived by Teachers and Administrators within a community school setting as Most Effective Activities, Services, or Supports to Promote Student Success*

	Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data
Sub-Themes Perceived Most Effective	
On-site Mental Health Provider/Counseling	23
Student Extracurricular Activities/Clubs	18
Sub-Theme Communication between Teacher and Parents	17
Family Nights (Parent Involvement)	14
Parents Included in Class (Parent Involvement)	11
Curriculum Rigor	10
Parent Classes/Workshops Offered	9
Incentives for Attendance	8
Consistent Student Behavior Supports	7
Reading Interventions and Programs	7

In Table 11, the qualitative data for survey question eight demonstrated teachers and administrators perceived on-site mental health services to be the most effective at promoting student success within the community school with 23 references. However, student mental health was not the most referenced theme overall. Patterns discovered throughout the qualitative data noted the overall parent involvement theme was referenced 64 times. Four parent involvement sub-themes, with the numbers referenced, are noted in Table 11.

**Survey question 9.**

Survey question nine asked participants to list activities, services, or supports provided in the community school they perceived to promote student success. The qualitative data were then analyzed for patterns and themes using Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis. The overall theme results from the analysis are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12  
*Recurring Themes from Activities, Services, or Supports Perceived by Teachers and Administrators in Promoting Student Success in the Community School*

	Number of Participants	Number of Times Theme Appeared in Data
Curriculum Rigor/Academic Support	95	43
Community Involvement	95	43
Student Opportunities/Activities	95	29
Student Mental Health Support	95	26
Parent Involvement	95	25
Student Physical Health	95	17
Student Motivation	95	13
School/District Staff Support	95	8
Student Behavior Support	95	6

In Table 12, participants referenced nine recurring themes as supportive to student success within the community school. These nine themes were also referenced in the previous qualitative question as perceived as most effective for student success. The recurring themes included six of the quality education factors noted in Chapter II research and three other themes focused around community involvement, school staff support, and opportunities for students in clubs and extracurricular activities. From the nine themes, curriculum rigor/academic support was noted 43 times as promoting student success. Community involvement was also referenced 43 times by participants as promoting student success in the community school. A break-down of the top sub-themes as perceived by teachers and administrators as promoting student success is displayed in Table 13.

Table 13  
*Recurring Sub-Themes Perceived by Teachers and Administrators within a Community School Setting as Promoting Student Success*

	Sub-Themes Perceived As Promoting Student Success	Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data
	Counseling	26
Sub-Theme	Community Agency Involvement	21
	Student Extracurricular Activities/Clubs	19
	Tutoring	15
	Family Nights/Family Involvement	12
	Healthy Free Food/Food Pantry	10
	Community Volunteers (Reading Buddy)	10
	Incentives for Attendance/Achievement/Work Effort	9
	Home Visits from School Staff	8
	Student Physical Health (Dental/Glasses/Medical)	7

In Table 13, the qualitative data demonstrated teachers and administrators perceived mental health services as promoting student success within the community school with 26 references. Teachers and administrators perceived involvement from community agencies and student extracurricular clubs also promoted student success at the community school setting. Curriculum rigor/academic support received 43 references as a theme though tutoring was the only sub-theme present in Table 13.

**Survey question 10.**

Survey question ten asked participants to list additional activities, services, or needed to promote student success in the community school. The qualitative data were then analyzed for patterns and themes using Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis. The overall theme results from the analysis are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

*Recurring Themes from Additional Activities, Services, or Supports Needed as Perceived by Teachers and Administrators in Promoting Student Success in the Community School*

	Number of Participants	Number of Times Theme Appeared in Data
Student Attendance	95	2
Student Motivation	95	2
Student Mental Health Support	95	10
Student Behavior Support	95	6
Student Physical Health	95	9
Parent Involvement	95	33
Curriculum Rigor/Academics	95	11
Community Involvement	95	8
District/School Staff Support	95	1
Professional Development	95	4
Student Opportunities/Activities	95	6

In Table 14, participants perceived additional activities, services, or supports were needed in eleven recurring themes. These eleven areas were also referenced in the earlier qualitative question as perceived as most effective for student success. The recurring themes included the seven of the quality education factors noted in Chapter II research and four other themes focused around community involvement, school staff support, professional development, and opportunities for students in clubs and extracurricular activities. From the eleven themes, parent involvement was noted 33 times as needing additional activities, services, or support to promote student success. Curriculum rigor was referenced 11 times as needing additional activities, services, or support within the community school setting. A break-down of the most referenced sub-themes perceived by

teachers and administrators as needing additional activities, services, or supports within the community school are displayed in Table 15.

Table 15  
*Recurring Sub-Themes Perceived by Teachers and Administrators as Needing Additional Supports within a Community School Setting*

	Sub-Themes Perceived As Needed for Student Success	Number of Times Sub-Theme Appeared in Data
Sub-Themes	Education Classes for Parents	16
	Parent Involvement	6
	Community Volunteers/Mentors	4
	More Frequent Counseling	4
	Training for Teachers on Trauma/Childhood Crisis	4
	Required School-Wide Home Visits	3

In Table 15, the qualitative data revealed teachers and administrators suggested more parent education classes were needed within the community school settings. One participant noted a frequent request from parents for parent literacy classes and for parent help reading information from the school. Teachers and administrators suggested more or continued interactions and involvement from parents were needed within the community school.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to present perceptions from teachers and administrators within a community school setting on the quality educational factors of community school. The data were collected in a QUAN-QUAL study using an electronic survey. The survey was distributed to eligible participants from 16 community schools in a large urban school district in the midwest. The quantitative data were analyzed and presented using multivariate analysis of variances (MANOVA), descriptive statistics, and reliability

tests using QuestionPro and SPSS software. The qualitative data were analyzed and presented using Bogden-Bicklen Constant Comparative Analysis to search for recurring themes and patterns.

The researcher will present conclusions drawn from the data and statistical analysis of the data in chapter five. Recommendations will also be provided from the researcher for a future study of community schools.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

A full-service community school can meet many of the educational concerns impacting children and families from poverty (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). A community school is designed to bring resources to families in poverty within the neighborhood, while also providing a rigorous academic education for the students it serves (Blank & Berg, 2006). The community school becomes a hub of interactions for students and families with resources and learning for the entire family (Dryfoos, 2002, 2005).

Community schools are evolving and growing each school year (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013). Because of the emerging and unique nature of community schools, validated research is limited in literature, especially in the area of teacher and administrator perceptions. This study was designed to recognize the quality educational factors of beginning and sustaining an elementary full-service community school.

#### **Summary of Methods**

Teachers and administrators from sixteen community schools in a large Midwestern urban public school district were invited to participate. Each of the sixteen schools met the definition of emerging, mentoring, or communities in schools (CIS) community school with a total of 583 participants possible. All schools meeting the criteria for inclusion in the study had an equal opportunity to participate, therefore researcher bias was diminished. Ninety-five teachers and administrators in the 16 schools participated.

The survey response rate was 16.2% of the total participants eligible. Though a larger return rate was ideal, using 95 participants as a sample size is sufficient because the sample size was random and anonymous.

The instrument was designed by the researcher and advisors as a cross-sectional survey (see Appendix A) to meet the needs of the quantitative and qualitative research questions. The study was written with multi-dimensional scales using four definitions for each scale. Each research question corresponded to a survey question. The survey was revised after feedback from field testing and pilot testing. Field testing was conducted with eleven individuals familiar with surveys. Pilot testing was conducted with 26 individuals familiar with community schools. After obtaining permission to conduct a study from both institutions, the researcher sent a personal letter of request, including the timeline. The emailed survey link also included a brief letter of explanation and timeline for the completion of the survey and paper.

The quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a survey with QuestionPro software because of the ease of collection, and the need of both types of data to draw conclusions for the research questions. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis of the quantitative data collected will be inferential statistics. Throughout the process of creating a survey, collecting, and analyzing the data, the researcher recognized personal bias on the topic and worked to create an unbiased instrument and analysis.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusions were drawn based on the data provided by the 95 participants. This was a return rate of 16.2 percent. The low return rate created concerns for the researcher in

regards to having a small sample size. A small sample size can decrease the chance to detect real effects and can lead to Type I and Type II errors with changes to the alpha and *p*-values. A sample size of 20 – 25 percent of the possible participants is typically considered a large enough sample size. Though the sample size was approximately 21 or more participants short of the preferred sample size, the study still allowed for pertinent information to be identified from community school staff for those interested in implementing and improving a current community school.

Overall in examining the findings related to the research questions, there were no significant differences between perceptions from teachers and administrators on the importance of quality educational factors within a community school from emerging, mentoring, and communities in schools (CIS) community schools. Teachers and administrators from all 16 community schools felt all seven quality educational factors (i.e., student attendance, student motivation, student mental health, student behavior, student physical health, parent involvement and influence, and curriculum rigor) were important components of their community schools.

There were significant differences from the perceptions of teachers and administrators on three quality educational factors within three research questions. Teachers and administrators in emerging, mentoring, and CIS community schools felt significantly different on ranking the importance of student physical health, on the amount of time spent discussing curriculum rigor, and on the importance of professional development to involve parents. This difference could be related to the focus of individuals or level of supports offered in emerging, mentoring, or CIS community schools. Although there

were few significant differences within the study, other pertinent information was identified from the study as noted below in the numbered conclusions:

1. Teachers and administrators indicated they valued student motivation as the most important quality educational factor that impacts student success at the elementary school level in an emerging, mentoring, and communities in school (CIS) community school setting. Information from survey question four demonstrated 94 of 95 participants highly agreed or agreed student motivation was the most important quality educational factor. Survey question 6 noted teachers and administrators ranked student motivation and student attendance as the top two quality educational factors in promoting student success. This finding indicates that as community schools are being considered for implementation, school leaders must focus programming to incorporate key motivation strategies. Research indicated improving student motivation lowers the risk factor for students who drop out of school prior to graduation (Doll, Eslami, & Walters, 2013). Community schools should consider incorporating motivational strategies, such as building positive relationships (Hattie, 2012), establishing a respectful environment (Payne, 1996, 2001, 2008), and using effective praise and feedback (Marzano et al., 2001). Hattie (2012) noted positive teacher-student relationships have an effect size on achievement of 0.72.
2. Most teachers and administrators indicated student attendance was the key focus in their community schools. Data from survey question three demonstrated 91 of 95 participants highly agreed or agreed student attendance was a focus. This finding indicates school leaders must consider the impact student attendance has

on student success when developing and sustaining a community school environment, and should include programming to support student attendance. Researchers indicated poor student attendance impacted reading scores negatively (Aud et al., 2012) and was detrimental to achievement (Bryk, 2010). Focusing on creating a welcoming school (Johnson, 2012), demonstrating appreciation to the student (Wormeli, 2007), and promoting positive family communication can positively impact student attendance (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012). Researchers noted when schools and families work on building collaboratively together, student attendance and graduation rates improve (Epstein, 2010; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

3. Teachers and administrators indicated they used weekly collaborative discussion time to discuss curriculum rigor more than any other topic in the emerging, mentoring, and CIS community schools. On survey question five, data revealed 41 of the 95 individuals spent the highest amount of collaboration time discussing curriculum rigor with colleagues. This finding indicates school leaders must consider providing common collaborative time for teachers to discuss curriculum rigor and student engagement when developing and implementing a community school environment. Researchers noted discussing curriculum rigor with colleagues allows teachers to plan collaboratively and results in highly engaging critical lessons (Bryk, 2010; Lemov, 2010). Researchers also noted without a rigorous challenging curriculum students may not advance in critical thinking and achievement (Blank & Berg, 2006; Lemov, 2010).

4. Teachers and administrators felt professional development was important to student success, specifically in the areas of student behavior supports and curriculum rigor. Data from survey question seven noted 94 participants highly agreed or agreed professional development was important for student success in the area of student behavior supports, and 93 participants highly agreed or agreed professional development was also important in the area of curriculum rigor. These findings indicate that as community schools are being considered for implementation, school leaders must provide quality professional development for teachers, especially in the areas on how to support challenging student behaviors and on implementing challenging curriculum. Researchers noted professional development should be used to support and promote the growth of staff in needed areas (Bryk, 2010; Fullan, 2002; Fullan et al., 2015) and must be intentional about what learning is important (Fullan, et al., 2015; National Staff Development Council, 2008; McNulty, 2011).
5. Teachers and administrators indicated that encouraging parental involvement was the most important overall support offered by emerging, mentoring, and CIS community schools. In open-ended responses for survey question eight, teachers and administrators mentioned parent involvement 64 times indicating involving parents was valued within their community schools. Within the parent theme, participants identified communication with parents, building rapport with families, parent meetings, and literacy and math family nights as the services that promoted student success the most. This finding indicates school leaders must consider the impact families and parental involvement have on student success

when developing and implementing community school programming and provide multiple avenues to involve parents. As researchers noted, seeking parent input strengthens schools (Bryk, 2010), addresses student needs while creating positive relationships with families (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2012), and positively impacts student performance with higher scores in academic performance (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Bulach et al., 1995; Epstein, 1996; Goldkind & Farmer, 2013; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Micheal et al., 2007).

6. Teachers and administrators indicated on-site mental health counseling benefited student success more than any other isolated service within the school. Qualitative data collected in survey question nine identified on-site mental health counseling was mentioned 26 times within the data on the service benefiting student success. These data indicates school leaders should find avenues for providing students with easy access to mental health counseling. School leaders, school staff, and community agencies must work collaboratively to assist students and families as the student seeks initial and follow-up treatments for mental health issues. Studies have noted an estimated 20 percent of children in schools have a diagnosed mental illness, but up to 70 percent do not seek treatment (Adelman& Taylor, 2006; Kaffenberger, 2013). Research notes addressing mental health issues with students can positively impact achievement, attendance, discipline incidents, aggression levels, depression, and foster engagement in projects and homework (Capella, Jackson, Bilal, Hamre, & Soule, 2011; Dryfoos, 2003; Swerdlik, Reeder et al., 1999).

7. Teachers and administrators suggested parent involvement was the area of their community schools most needing additional support. Qualitative data from survey question ten suggested participants indicated more parent education classes were needed within the community school settings. This finding indicates school leaders must consider the impact families and parental involvement have on student success and provide avenues for involving parents. School leaders should work with community agencies to develop more community school programming encouraging and offering avenues for parents to become lifelong learners. Researchers noted parents with more education are more involved in school and have greater confidence and value in education (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Further research noted the level of parent involvement in schools and support for homework and schools impacted student learning and self-confidence in children at school (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

### **Recommendations**

Validated research concerning the many aspects of a community school is absent from literature. This study focused on the perceptions of teachers and administrators working in a community school setting. The findings from the study indicated teachers and administrators valued student motivation and student attendance as the most effective quality educational factors within a community school setting. Research noted children living in poor neighborhoods struggle with poor attendance at school, poor achievement, and feel less connected to school (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Thompson et al., 2006). Educators within a community school, working with community agencies, should identify, provide, and strengthen supports and services needed by children and families in

the neighborhoods they serve to encourage and motivate students to come to school each day ready to learn (Blank et al, 2012).

Teachers and administrators within the community school setting indicated the amount of time spent discussing curriculum rigor with colleagues was important. Teachers and administrators also indicated professional development in the area of curriculum rigor and student behavior supports was important for student success. Teachers and administrators within the study, along with many researchers in literature, concluded that curriculum rigor with high expectations must be a focus for a quality education (Barton, 2003; Blank & Berg, 2006; Borek, 2008; Byrk, 2010; Hattie, 2012; Lemov, 2010). School leaders working to sustain a community school should establish scheduled frequent meetings allowing teachers an opportunity to discuss curriculum rigor and to participate in professional development opportunities on curriculum rigor and successful student behavior supports.

Teachers and administrators working within the community setting suggested offering parents opportunities to be involved or learn needed literacy skills within the school, along with offering on-site mental health services for students were critical to the successes of students living in poverty. The unique ability of a community school setting to connect with outside agencies to provide students and families living in poverty with those needed services and supports should be a characteristic of community schools (Blank, Johnson et al., 2003; Dryfoos, 2003; Payne, 2001, 2008). Supporting students with on-site mental health counseling and supporting parents with literacy classes, family literacy and math nights, and clear consistent communication to build rapport between

teachers and families should be a continued focus to encourage student success and persistence to graduation.

### **Further Research**

The researcher recommends further study in the area of community schools. Research into community schools can offer information and analysis of programs effectiveness and need for change or growth. The researcher recommends this study be replicated to include a larger sample size of teachers and administrators working within community school settings in large urban districts. With a larger sample size, Type I or Type II errors could be diminished.

The researcher further recommends future studies involving the perceptions of teachers and administrators working within community schools as a way to continue assessing the effectiveness of supports as viewed by those working closest to the programs. Gathering perceptions from a variety of teachers and administrators working in similar community schools could provide school leaders looking to implement or sustain a community school with valuable information.

Because community schools are unique to the needs of the families within the neighborhood and the agency supports within the communities nearby, this study could be simulated by asking the perceptions of families, students, and members of the community agencies involved within community schools. Continuing to ask the perceptions of those involved with community schools can provide valuable information to school districts, community agencies, and can expand literature on effective practices within a community school setting.

## **Summary**

This study focused on the perceptions of teachers and administrators from emerging, mentoring, and communities in schools community schools on seven quality educational factors. The design of this study was a mixed methods QUAN-QUAL method. The researcher and advisors created a cross-sectional survey to meet the needs of the quantitative and qualitative research questions.

In the results of the study, teachers and administrators working at community schools within a large midwestern district valued student motivation and student attendance as most important to student success within the community school. Teachers and administrators spent the most time per week discussing curriculum rigor with colleagues and felt they needed more professional development in the areas of curriculum rigor and in working with challenging student behaviors. Teachers and concluded that parent involvement was necessary for student success and supported offering more parent education classes, more family involvement nights, and opportunities to build rapport and communicate with parents. While this study concentrated on teachers and administrator perceptions, other studies could provide needed information about the effectiveness of the programs within the community school.

As the rate of children and families living in poverty continues to climb, this study may be of value to educators and school and community leaders as they seek to find avenues to meet the educational needs of students living in poverty.

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**Appendix A:**

**Survey**

- 1. Current role in community school: Teacher, administrator, other
- 2. Current classification of community school: Emerging, mentoring, other

Use the following scale to answer questions #3 – 4:

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Highly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Highly Agree

- 3. I believe (factor listed below) is a focus in my community school.
  - a. Student attendance 1 2 3 4
  - b. Student motivation 1 2 3 4
  - c. Student mental health support 1 2 3 4
  - d. Student behavior support 1 2 3 4
  - e. Student physical health support 1 2 3 4
  - f. Parent influence and involvement 1 2 3 4
  - g. Curriculum rigor 1 2 3 4
  
- 4. I believe (factor listed below) is important for student success in my community school.
  - a. Student attendance 1 2 3 4
  - b. Student motivation 1 2 3 4
  - c. Student mental health support 1 2 3 4
  - d. Student behavior support 1 2 3 4
  - e. Student physical health 1 2 3 4





## Appendix B:

### Informed Consent

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Dana Powers. I am an administrator at a public middle school located in Springfield, Missouri. As a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University, I am conducting a research study to gather perceptions of teachers and administrators working in community schools on factors of a community school. In this study, I am surveying teachers and administrators from emerging and mentoring community schools. Since you are a teacher or administrator in a community school, I would like to ask for your participation in the study. I understand how busy you are in your role at a community school and the survey should only take 5 - 8 minutes of your valuable time. The survey will ask two basic demographic questions and eight other questions on your perceptions about factors in a community school.

The survey is completely anonymous and voluntary. Your privacy is very important. No information identifying you individually will be collected. Your answers will be combined with other participants and compiled in aggregate results for the study. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and there is no penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all of the questions. Your completion of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information you have provided in the study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Review Board of Southwest Baptist University (417-328-1909) involving human subjects. The committee believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights.

For questions about your participation or to receive a copy of the results of the study, please contact me at [drpowers@spsmail.org](mailto:drpowers@spsmail.org) or 417-523-6300.

Thank you for your consideration and time.

Dana Powers