

The Community School Concept:
An Exploration of
Organizational Models and Theoretical Potential

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this mixed methods research study, which applies a case study research strategy to six U.S. community schools, are to understand three community school models (national, local federation, and independent) and their potential to improve conditions for students, their parents, and other community members. The primary research questions being addressed are (1) what distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts, and (2) does the community school concept have the potential to strengthen individual settings, the links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986)? Collectively, practitioner-based and academic works, which have investigated community schools in the United States, England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland., conclude that community schools provide individuals with access to a variety of offerings, that the operations of community schools are complex, thus requiring the establishment of a community school director position, effective partnerships, and healthy communication, and that community schools typically achieve mixed academic performance results and consistently possess positive ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as high levels of student interest in school and high levels of family cohesion. To develop a greater understanding of community school operations and academic performance, my exploratory, descriptive research, which is closest to that of the former topic but touches upon the latter, takes on an interpretivist perspective that seeks to illuminate and understand three different community school models (the national, local federation, and independent models) and their environments. In terms of research question one, the data suggests that distinguishing characteristics, which can be described as ‘inherent’ and ‘potential,’ exist among the three community school models. For example, the national and local federation models possess the ‘inherent’ characteristic that individual schools have access to a headquarters, foundation, or a central office. Additionally, in terms of ‘potential’ characteristics, the data suggests that the national model displays the greatest strength amongst the three models in the areas of implementation strategies and achieved academic performance results; whereas, the independent model displays the greatest strength amongst the three models in the areas of aims and motivations and being perceived as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. It should be noted, though, that all three models were consistently viewed as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The findings, overall, provide new evidence on the role of a model. Essentially, the nature of the model adopted has consequences. As for research question two, the data drawn from across the six cases suggests that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen individual settings, such as schools and student peer groups, the links between such settings, and broad features, such as the state of poverty and the political culture, that reside in the ‘human ecological systems’ of students. I hope this study provides policymakers and practitioners with relevant evidence that helps them decide between the ‘traditional’ public school approach and the community school approach and amongst the three community school models. Additionally, this study seeks to provide a basis for future research on community school models and the theoretical potential of the community school concept that may help improve the lives and settings of disadvantaged students and other community members.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

School administrators and teachers who work in traditional public schools in the United States typically attempt to provide their students with a quality education by concentrating on academics and enrichment activities – offering a broad range of courses, supporting math and science clubs, and sponsoring trips to museums, for example. However, the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS), an internationally respected authority on community schools and the largest consortium of U.S. community schools (also referred to as ‘full-service schools’ and ‘extended day schools,’ among other names used in the literature), claims that providing students with a quality education, particularly students from socio-economically disadvantaged families and communities, requires that school administrators and teachers focus on more than academics and enrichment activities. The coalition claims that a ‘holistic’ approach, concentrating on the three primary areas of a community school, which include academics, the socio-economic challenges that students confront, and community engagement, must be implemented in order to meet the complex academic and social needs of students (Blank & Berg, 2006; Coalition for Community Schools, 2013; Dryfoos, 2002a, 2002b; Jacobson, Jacobson, & Blank, 2012). This organization, which largely consists of public community schools across the U.S., supports its position by citing research that identifies the favorable impacts this approach has had on students, their family members, community members, and communities. For example, the coalition states that community schools have improved the academic performance of students, enhanced the skills of parents and community members, and helped to make communities safer (Coalition for Community Schools, 2013). Reading about the range of

positive impacts that community schools have yielded for socio-economically disadvantaged and often ignored populations is what first drew me to this topic. Upon further investigation of the community school concept, though, it became clear that the topics of community school operations and impacts required additional research.

1.1.1 Defining a Community School

For this thesis, I adopted a definition for the term “community school” that is offered by the Coalition for Community Schools, because the organization is regarded by both respected practitioners and academics alike as being a ‘brain trust’ on the topic of community schools. Each of these two groups of individuals commonly draws upon the following definition:

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

This definition supports the view that community schools attempt to expand the scope of the traditional school by concentrating not only on addressing academics, but also on alleviating the socio-economic challenges that the students confront and promoting community engagement. Additionally, from an implementation perspective, the definition highlights the need for a more ‘joined up’ approach that may involve multiple agencies and organizations working together to address the integrated focus.

1.1.2 Community School Literature

There are noteworthy practitioner-based and academic works that identify the core principles and components of community schools, discuss operations, make claims about their advantages and limitations, and identify the impacts they have had on students, families, and communities (Coalition for Community Schools, 2013; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013; Mondschein, 2001). With all this literature, however, academic gaps still exist.

This thesis addresses four particular academic gaps. First, there has been no rigorous research that explicitly studies different community school models, nor any research that clearly and comprehensively proposes a minimum of three models, and then analyzes and discusses each of the three: the national, the local federation, and the independent. A **national model community school** is typically a member of a network of more than five community schools that are located in two or more states. A national headquarters, generally, is closely aligned with all the schools in each network and offers each school strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support. A **local federation model community school** is generally linked to a local network (i.e. federation) of more than two community schools that are located within a given area, such as a city or town, for example. These schools are normally overseen by a specific group within the local school board or a local organization (e.g. foundation or university) that controls the day-to-day upper management of the federation and provides each community school with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, and financial support. Additionally, a federation commonly partners with a local organization or a few local organizations that help it deliver strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support to the community schools. An **independent model community school**, uniquely, is autonomous, with no headquarters or network. The administrators and teachers of these schools have the greatest control over

their strategy. However, the autonomy comes at a cost. If the schools are to receive strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support, they must identify, apply, and secure them independently, without the assistance of a headquarters or a network. It should be acknowledged that the word ‘independent,’ from the term ‘independent community school,’ does not make the distinction between a school that is public or private. Rather, the word ‘independent’ articulates that a particular community school operates independently of an established community school model, such as a national community school model or a local federation community school model. The term was adopted because it has been commonly used by practitioners and has appeared in U.S. literature on the community school concept.

Secondly, there has been no research that compares similar community school models with one another (i.e. national vs. national; local federation vs. local federation; independent vs. independent).

Thirdly, there has been no research that compares different community school models with one another (i.e. national vs. local federation vs. independent).

And lastly, there has been no rigorous research that has adopted a theoretical perspective to investigate the potential of the community school concept to strengthen individual settings (e.g. the school and home), the links between such settings, and broad features (e.g. poverty) that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986). Furthermore, in regards to this void, the following questions that pertain to the concept of ecological systems have not been explored: Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen individual settings that are within the immediate environment of students, for example the home? Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen the link between two individual settings that are in the immediate environment of students, like the home and school? Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen the link between two individual settings that are in the immediate

and distant environments of students, where only one setting directly involves students, for example, the school and the employer of a parent? And do community schools possess the potential to address the influences of features of the social world that are in the immediate and distant environments of students, such as poverty and political culture? Findings connected to these questions are particularly valuable, because they promote broader conversations about the community school concept, rather than discussions solely associated with a specific community school. A lack of research on the three community school models and the absence of an evaluation of them through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory may be primarily due to the fact that previous studies on community schools typically adopted an overarching definition of "community school," unlike my research, which seeks to describe and better understand both the community school concept and the three models.

To address the gaps in the research literature, I conducted exploratory research that consists of six cases (two national, two local federation, and two independent model community schools) in the U.S. I gathered data by conducting interviews and focus groups with local actors, ranging from administrators to community members, conducting documentary analyses, holding on-site observations, and surveying parents and community members. In addition, I used a cross-case synthesis technique to identify main findings and draw conclusions.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Over the past two decades, there has been no academic work that compares and contrasts the aims and motivations, the implementation strategies, and the impacts of community schools that implement either the same (i.e. national vs. national; local federation vs. local federation; independent vs. independent) or different (i.e. national vs.

local federation vs. independent) community school models. Furthermore, there is no academic study, which has been informed by theory, that investigates the potential of the community school concept to strengthen individual settings, the links between these settings, and broad features that rest within the human ecological systems of students.

The lack of rigorous research on community school models and the potential of the community school concept means that more advanced research on the topic of community schools cannot be carried out. This research has the potential to address this issue by examining how far different community school models address aims, develop implementation strategies, and supply outcomes for students, community members, and the community itself. Furthermore, the research has the potential to offer insight on the possible capacity of the community school concept to strengthen immediate and distant settings that surround students. The research also seeks to contribute to the growing field of school improvement research.

The lack of research also prevents the policymakers, who fund federal and state departments of education and school districts, and the practitioners, who establish and manage public schools, from making well-informed decisions about the relative merits of ‘traditional’ public schools and public community schools and the likely benefits that might be associated with the three different community school models. Selecting the most appropriate community school model is vital, because if a model that is less appropriate is selected, the decision could place students at an academic and social disadvantage and communities at a developmental handicap, while potentially making less than optimal use of taxpayer money.

This research also has the potential to inform federal policies. Beginning in 2010, the U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the White House, began to invest explicitly in community schools by funding Promise Neighborhoods (PNs) (the term can be

used interchangeably with ‘community schools’ and ‘full-service schools’). To fund PNs, the Department of Education provides community-based organizations, which can range from a national to a local organization, with funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Thus, over time, it is possible that the Department will be funding national, local federation, and independent model community schools. However, as stated earlier, this might not be the most effective approach, since the similarities and differences between community schools implementing the same and different models have not been comprehensively and systematically reviewed. My research addresses this issue.

1.3 Aims and Research Questions

The overarching aims of this mixed methods study of six U.S. community school cases are exploratory and descriptive. The research seeks to create a better understanding of the three community school models and the community school concept and their potential to improve conditions for students, their parents, and other community members. Thus, the two primary research questions at the center of this work are as follows:

- (1) What distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts, and
- (2) does the community school concept have the potential to strengthen individual settings, the links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986)?

To address the first question, particular attention is placed on investigating three linked topics (the expressed aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) and three subtopics (academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement). To address the second question, the research explores four areas (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) from Bronfenbrenner’s

Ecological Systems theory. Table 1 summarizes the way the various topics and subtopics will be addressed in this research.

The three main topics of question one were selected because they address the primary organizational components of a school, and the three subtopics were chosen because, based upon a review of the literature, they concentrate on the three pillars that underline the concept of a community school: academics, well-being, and community (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003). As for question two, the four areas were selected because they are identified as four primary systems in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986, 1994).

Table 1. Components of the Two Research Questions

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE
1. Aims and Motivations <i>Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, and Counselors and Documentary Analyses</i> a. Academics • What are the goals of the curricula and academic tutoring services? • Why did the schools select these goals? b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront • What are the overall goals of the programs and services that seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront? • Why do the schools seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront? c. Community Engagement • What are the general goals of the opportunities that attempt to engage the community? • Why do the schools attempt to engage the community?

2. Implementation Strategies

Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, Counselors, Parents, and Community Members, Focus Groups with Parents and Community Members, Documentary Analyses, and On-Site Observations

a. Academics

- Do the schools adopt a standard curriculum or craft a unique one independently?
- How do the schools address academic tutoring?
- Who manages the academic tutoring services?
- How do the schools fund/sustain the academic tutoring services?
- Do the services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- How do the schools address physical health, mental health, and hunger?
- How do the schools fund/sustain the physical health services, mental health services, and programs targeting hunger?
- Who manages these socio-economic programs and services?
- Do the socio-economic programs and services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

c. Community Engagement

- What opportunities do the schools offer to engage the community at-large?
- How do the schools fund/sustain opportunities that engage the community at-large?
- Who manages the opportunities that engage the community at-large?
- Do the community engagement opportunities have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

3. Impacts

a. Academics

Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, and Counselors and Documentary Analyses

- What academic performance results and overall percentile ranks did the schools achieve over the past five academic years?
- Has academic performance improved year after year, over the past five academic years?

Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, Counselors, and Parents, Focus Groups with Parents, Surveys of Parents, and On-Site Observations

- Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ elements?
- How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the courses and tutoring programs had on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, such as confidence levels?

b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, Counselors, and Parents, Focus Groups with Parents, Surveys of Parents, and On-Site Observations

- Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements?
- How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements?

c. Community Engagement

Interviews with Directors of the National and Local Federation Model Schools, Administrators, Teachers, Counselors, Parents, and Community Members, Focus Groups with Parents and Community Members, Surveys of Parents and Community Members, and On-Site Observations

- Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements?
- How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the community engagement programs had on students and other community members?
- How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the adult community educational programs had on mature community members?

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

1. Microsystem: Includes settings in the immediate environment of the student, where he or she has direct, face-to-face relationships with significant people

Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen individual settings that are within the immediate environment of students?

The individual settings include the following:

- School
- Student Peer Groups
- Community Organizations
- Religious Organizations
- Home

2. Mesosystem: Consisting of lateral linkages between two or more settings in the microsystem

Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen the link between two individual settings that are in the immediate environment of students?

The linked individual settings include the following:

- School
- Student Peer Groups
- Community Organizations
- Religious Organizations
- Home

For Example:

- School ↔ Student Peer Groups
- Community Organizations ↔ Religious Organizations
- School ↔ Home

3. Exosystem: Consisting of linkages between two or more settings, where at least one does not directly contain the student, but involves his or her development (e.g. one microsystem and one exosystem)

Do community schools possess the potential to strengthen the link between two individual settings that are in the immediate and distant environments of students, where only one setting directly involves students?

The linked individual settings include the following:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| • School | ↔ | • Foundations and Universities |
| • Student Peer Groups | | • School Committee |
| • Community Organizations | | • Parents' Employers |
| • Religious Organizations Council | | • Neighborhood-Community |
| • Home | | • Extended Family |

4. Macrosystem: Consisting of the overarching pattern of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems of a student's culture, "with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p.40)

Do community schools possess the potential to positively impact broader features of the world that are in the immediate and distant environments of students?

These broader features of the social world include the following:

- Poverty
- Racism
- Political Culture

1.4 The Development of the Community School Model

Over the last two decades, community schools in the U.S. have established a collective identity and created a movement that has been driven and supported by a national coalition. The Coalition for Community Schools, established in 1997, is located within the Institute for Educational Leadership, which was established in 1964. The coalition is a prominent, internationally recognized nonprofit organization that supports community

schools and advocates for the expansion of this approach. To support these efforts from their Washington D.C. central office, the coalition receives funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the JP Morgan Chase Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. This funding has helped the coalition engender a broad collection of independent publications. A few of the most noteworthy contributions that can be found in these publications include an account of the historical development of community schools, a lucid definition of the term “community school” that is widely accepted by both practitioners and researchers, an enumerated list of the primary goals of community schools, an analysis of the rationale for community schools, and an estimation of the total number of community schools in the U.S. Additionally, other practitioner-focused and academic works on community schools in the U.S., England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland have expanded the knowledge base of this type of school. The development of Extended Schools in England and New Community Schools in Scotland are examples of education policy being influenced by the concept of community (or full-service) schools and multi-agency work.

Community schools have had a long history in the U.S. Campbell-Allen, Shah, Sullender, & Zazove (2009) date this type of school back to the Progressive Era and, particularly, Jane Addams (1860-1935), the second woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize. The authors state that Ms. Addams established Hull Houses, which, like community schools, sought to address social challenges in a holistic manner. Furthermore, Dryfoos (2002a, p. 394) argues, “Although these ideas are being marked as new, the concept of community schools can be traced back to the early 20th century, when John Dewey brought the school into the community and Jane Addams brought the community into the school”. These

works, along with others, contend that the community school concept has been in existence and evolving in the U.S. for roughly a century.

Although the term “community school” is often misused, both inadvertently and knowingly, it has a strikingly distinct definition that separates it from traditional public schools. The expansive definition offered by the coalition, which I discussed earlier and have adopted for this work, emphasizes the notion of partnerships between the schools and various community resources. It also stresses integrated, multiagency work addressing academics, health, and social services, as well as accessibility (e.g. open hours).

Furthermore, Bireda (2009, p. 1), a researcher with the Center for American Progress, highlights that community schools are distinct as they seek to:

Capitalize on the school’s physical space and access to students and families in order to deliver much-needed services in a central, accessible location. Community schools partner with nonprofits and local agencies to provide students with health care, academic enrichment, mental and behavioral health services, and other youth development activities without burdening school staff.

The nucleus of a community school is not a ‘standard’ partnership between administrators, teachers, students, and parents on academics; instead, the nub of this type of school is intended to be the close, collaborative relationships between administrators, teachers, students, families, community members, volunteers, and others citizens who are dedicated to the well-being of the students (from academic to social exigencies), the health of the community, and the needs of its members.

Although it is not often highlighted, the distinction between a full-service community school and a traditional school with value-added community school programs must be acknowledged (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009; The Federation for Community Schools, 2013a). Classically, the former type of school largely uses school funds to address the three areas cohesively and maintains a full-time community school director or coordinator on site, and the latter type of school, generally, does not focus on the

three topics in a fully-integrated manner or have a full-time community school director or coordinator on site, since it is commonly a nonprofit organization that is not funded by the school (Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006). However, there are exceptions to the characterization. For example, the nonprofit organization Communities in Schools offers traditional schools a fully-integrated, value-added community school program that addresses the three topic areas, while maintaining a full-time community school coordinator on site (Communities in Schools, 2013).

In addition to constructing a definition of a community school, which is widely agreed upon internationally, the coalition also makes explicit three primary goals that community schools are dedicated to accomplish. The goals include the following: (1) improving the academic achievement of students, (2) addressing a variety of common socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and (3) improving the health of communities (Coalition for Community Schools, 2013; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2013; Mondschein, 2001). Table 2 describes these goals and, additionally, highlights features of an ideal community school. In general, there is an international consensus on the definition and the primary goals that the coalition presents, and, thus, this thesis draws on both of them.

Table 2: Summary Description of the Goals and Features of an Ideal Community School

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL	
Three-Part, 'Holistic' Approach and Goals	• <u>Academics</u> Strong curriculum, prominent tutoring program, academic clubs and enrichment events, etc. • <u>The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront</u> Nutrition programs, physical and mental health services, dental services, guidance programs, social events, etc. • <u>Community Engagement</u> Language courses, general education and vocational programs, workshops, internet computer labs, cultural events, community gatherings, etc.
Members and Partners	• Administrators • Teachers • Social workers • Counselors • Students • Family members of students • Community members • Volunteers from outside the community • Politicians • State and federal agencies • For-profit & nonprofit organizations • Other organizations and individuals committed to the community • Etc.
The Need to Combat Academic and Socio-Economic Challenges	The CCS states that community schools are dedicated to meeting both the academic and the socio-economic needs of students, because the organization believes that both of these needs, if left unaddressed, have the ability to impede the academic progress of students (Coalition for Community Schools, 2013; McLaughlin & Blank, 2004). For example, a student could fail an exam due to not receiving additional academic support, or the student could fail the same exam as a result of an untreated, chronic health condition that prevents him or her from concentrating or leads to school absence. However, if the student were assigned a tutor, who is a community volunteer, or allowed to visit the on-site health center, this could improve his or her odds of achieving academic success.
The Need to Engage the Community	The CCS asserts that community schools seek to engage the community because engaging a community improves the health of the community, and thus improves the outlook of its community members, including students (Heifets & Blank, 2004). For instance, a student who is the daughter of non-English speaking parents may have to work thirty hours a week to support her family because her parents cannot find steady work due to their weak grasp of English. The long hours at work would prevent this student from completely dedicating herself to school – she is simply trying to survive. However, if the school offered ESL courses to her parents, this may help them secure steady employment, bolstering the local economy and allowing the student to quit her job and dedicate herself to her schoolwork.

There are subtle differences concerning the way in which federal governments have supported this type of school. Currently, through the funding of Promise Neighborhoods, community schools are beginning to receive substantial financial support from the U.S. government (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). As time has passed and more

practitioner-based and academic research on community schools has been engendered, this type of school has gone from being outside the political arena to being within it. Between roughly 1990 and 2010, after two decades of sporadic growth, community schools began to gain national attention for their claimed positive impacts and their ‘logical’ approach, which dictates that academic success can oftentimes depend on academic quality, the number of socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and the strength of the community. This led to the publishing of many of the works cited in this subsection. The positive findings, as Wolfe (2009) documents, encouraged some public figures, such as the then Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan, to support community schools. Furthermore, some argue, the emerging research base encouraged members of the U.S. Federal Government to support community schools. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, was established in 2003, and it served as the primary funding source until 2010. In recent years, research has driven policies to establish a larger, more comprehensive grant program (U.S. Department of Education 2012). Specifically, during these years, research on the Harlem Children’s Zone, a neighborhood-based system that includes community schools, has been the primary catalyst. The Department of Education asserts that the Harlem Children’s Zone is a primary example of why policies must support community schools, and thus, it planned to invest roughly \$200 million in Promise Neighborhoods, which are based upon the Harlem Children’s Zone concept, between 2010 and 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Such developments reveal the intertwined relationship of community schools, research, and politics. This new level of support for community schools in the U.S. is similar to the recent support that community schools in Australia – where the government recently established the Extended Service School Models Project – are beginning to receive from the federal government (Atelier Learning Solutions, 2012; Australian Council for Educational

Research, 2008; Lonsdale, 2011; Simons, 2010). The government of Scotland, through its support of the New Community Schools initiative, and the government of England, through its support of Extended Schools, have each had periods of time when they explicitly supported community schools for over a decade (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004; Sammons, Power, Elliot, Robertson, Campbell, & Whitty, 2002). However, a change in political direction in England led to the end of the Extended Schools program in 2010.

Far more contentious than federal support is the debate over whether or not community schools should exist. Supporters of community schools primarily argue and cite research on the following three points: (1) educating socio-economically disadvantaged students is complex and requires a holistic approach (Dryfoos, 2002b; Melaville, 1998), (2) concentrating on the three areas of academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement enhances the ability of schools to provide students with an education that will prepare them for the future and will improve communities (Axelroth, 2009; Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, 2012), and (3) applying this model has the potential to raise student achievement and improve other ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, like attendance and student satisfaction (Adams, 2010; Castrechini & London, 2012; Dryfoos, 2000). Conversely, some challengers argue and cite research that states that community schools attempt to do too much, are cost prohibitive, and do not have access to steady funding. Additionally, there is little robust evidence suggesting that such schools achieve academic performance results that radically exceed those of traditional schools (Sandoval, Prior, & Bookmyer, 2003).

Within the argument over the existence of community schools, no topic is more contentious and no conclusions are more contested than those associated with ‘impacts’. Findings on this topic, in general, can be divided between ‘access’ and ‘human’ impacts concerning academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and

community engagement (See Table 3). For further information, refer to the literature review in Chapter Two.

Table 3. Key Matters in the Literature Pertaining to Impacts

	‘Access’ Impacts	‘Human’ Impacts
Academics	• General view is that the curricula of community schools is equivalent to that of traditional public schools	• Unclear whether or not community schools achieve better academic performance results than traditional public schools • General consensus is that this type of school has improved ‘academic-related’ elements associated with youth development, such as level of participation, behavior, and attendance rates
The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront	• Agreement that community schools offer students – and sometimes also family members and other community members – access to a range of socio-economic programs and services	• General belief is that the socio-economic offerings have improved ‘academic-related’ elements • Unclear if community schools are able to address ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as low physical and mental health rates, in a meaningful manner
Community Engagement	• Students, family members, and other community members have access to a range of community-based programs and services	• General consensus is that the programs and services have engaged the students and improved elements of their youth development • General belief is that the programs and services have engaged community members and provide many with valuable skills • Questions remain over whether the programs and services offer adult community members advanced professional skills that lead to quality jobs

As the color coding of Table 3 suggests (green being positive, and red being negative) and conclusions in the literature review propose, the general consensus is that community schools are good at providing students, family members, and community members with ‘access’ to programs and services. The table and the literature review also suggest, however,

that the ‘human’ impacts of the offerings are inconsistent and sometimes unclear. Thus, there are doubts about the ability of community schools to yield academic results that surpass traditional public schools, concerns over the capability of community schools to comprehensively address physical and mental health needs, and questions over whether these schools can provide adult community members with advanced professional skills that will lead to quality employment opportunities.

Despite the contention over impacts, school administrators in the U.S. have continued to establish community schools by applying to the local school board for a new school site or by requesting that the board allow a traditional public school to be converted to a public community school. The CCS, among other organizations, has researched the number of community schools that are located in the United States and abroad. For the most part, this research has yielded inconclusive results since not all the schools that adopt the title “community school” show the features outlined in the definition of a community school (refer back to Table 2 for a description of an ideal community school) and not all the schools register with the CCS. However, conservative estimates conclude that there are over 100 community schools in the U.S., located throughout 44 states and the District of Columbia, and, internationally, there are over 200 community schools (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009, 2013).

Of all the literature on community schools, the works that informed my research the most pertain to community school program and service offerings, operations, and impacts. These publications helped design the research questions, construct the semi-structured interview and focus group frameworks, code data, and identify key findings. Furthermore, these works are particularly valuable because I hope to expand upon them by confirming or disputing their findings. I believe, for example, it would be valuable to further develop the knowledge base on community schools by gathering and analyzing more data on offerings,

management characteristics, and ‘access’ and ‘human’ impacts that pertain to both community schools in general and particular community school models.

1.5 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

A central component of the community school concept is the view that a school is closely connected to the community that surrounds it – for better or worse. In essence, the concept asserts that the environment surrounding a school can have a positive impact on the school and its students (e.g. encouraging students to attend college or trade school) as much as it has the potential to have a negative impact on both. Accordingly, in practice, community schools broadly focus on individual settings of students (e.g. school, home, student peer groups, etc.), the links between these settings, and broad features surrounding the settings and links (e.g. poverty, racism, and political culture), rather than narrowly concentrating on students and the school environment (e.g. curriculum). Interestingly, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory also focuses on the diverse elements that surround children. The theory asserts that human development occurs through processes in an expansive, complex ‘ecological system,’ which can be deconstructed into the following five systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
Source: Maggie, 2011

Bronfenbrenner's theory is particularly valuable because it proposes settings, links between the settings, and broad features that commonly reside within the environment of students. Consequently, this theory can be used as a lens to evaluate the potential the community school concept possesses to positively impact the 'human ecological systems' of students. Essentially, the theory and the community school concept align in terms of both focusing on elements that surround students.

1.6 Expanding Upon MPhil Thesis

As a graduate student at the University of Cambridge, I conducted an MPhil thesis titled “Curriculum Development, Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront, and Community Engagement: A Glimpse into Four Community Schools in the United States”. This work explores the similarities and differences regarding the way in which two U.S. national and two U.S. independent model community schools sought to address curriculum, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement by drawing upon data from interviews, focus groups, documentary analyses, and on-site observations. To analyze the data, a cross-case synthesis technique was implemented. The findings revealed some differences among the four community school cases and between the two community school models. However, none of the differences can be categorized as extreme.

This DPhil thesis strives to build and expand upon the MPhil work, rather than replicate it, by increasing the scope and depth of the inquiry and by examining six different community schools. This begins with more developed research questions and, accordingly, influences other areas. For example, in addition to examining the national and independent models, this work also reviews the local federation model and contrasts it with other models through the use of six new community school cases. Furthermore, this work closely examines the three key topics of ‘aims and motivations,’ ‘implementation strategies,’ and ‘impacts,’ which were not all addressed in the MPhil thesis. Additionally, this work includes a limited amount of quantitative data, applies findings from the six cases to literature on school improvement, and uses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory to guide an analysis of the potential of the community school concept to strengthen individual settings, the links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the human ecological systems of students.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The primary limitations of this study are the number of reviewed community schools and models, the location of these schools within one country, the lack of direct student opinions, and limited quantitative data.

The total number of community school cases was set at six and the total number of models was set at three. This allows for comprehensive data to be collected and an in-depth review to be conducted on each school during the allotted time. Furthermore, it allows for contributions to existing knowledge on community schools. As for location, concentrating exclusively on U.S. community schools allows U.S. policymakers and practitioners to gain a sound understanding of how the models are implemented in their country before they learn about how the models are applied in other countries. A particular concern, for example, was that the variances between the structures and policies of governments in different countries could impede the ability to draw clear conclusions.

The last two primary limitations were no student ‘voice’ and a limited quantitative component. These two confines were a result of circumstances. The school and nonprofit administrators that I spoke with were not supportive of my request to include interviews and/or surveys of students, because, in their eyes, it would be time-consuming and might be deemed to pose a security risk. Furthermore, in some instances, a district regulation, such as school administrators and teachers not being able to help the researcher recruit participants, made it improbable that I would be able to recruit enough participants for an appropriate data analysis.

Although this study contains limitations, the omissions do not prevent the research questions from being addressed effectively. It must be emphasized that one of my primary objectives was to conduct a study that could serve as a foundation for future research on community schools. This work is meant to uncover further avenues for exploration. Thus, I

hope future research will include more than six community schools, located in a range of countries, and it will evaluate a greater number of community school models, will capture the views and experiences of students through interviews, focus groups, and surveys, and will contain an expansive quantitative component that includes a rigorous statistical analysis of data on student outcomes.

1.8 Context

I chose to research community schools because, based upon my personal experiences and earlier MPhil, I believe this type of school has the potential to yield both positive academic results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements and address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, while, simultaneously, improving the health of communities and addressing the challenges that its residents face (Garcia, 2012). Having spent time in impoverished, destitute urban areas as a researcher, I am well versed on the common, and sometimes harrowing, challenges that can intimately affect socio-economically disadvantaged students – lack of academic resources, untreated physical and mental health issues, irrepressible hunger, teen pregnancy, gang violence, and despair. Tragically, many of the students confronting these challenges receive incomplete, diluted assistance that does not comprehensively and forcefully address three overarching elements, which are at the center of many of the challenges: academics, socio-economic issues, and community engagement. Although atypical for traditional schools, community schools seek to focus on these three central elements.

My experiences in socio-economically disadvantaged communities have taught me that challenges affecting students and other members of these communities are complex and, oftentimes, require efforts that are expansive in scope. For example, when I was younger I had friends from impoverished urban areas who did not complete homework

assignments, causing them to fail quizzes and tests, time and time again. Although the root causes were oftentimes ‘obscure’ to many individuals, it became clear to me that the majority of them did not complete the assignments primarily due to a fusion of academic, socio-economic, and community reasons. Frequently, academic reasons consisted of not having any additional academic support during or after school; socio-economic reasons typically consisted of having untreated health ailments that ranged from colds to toothaches and dwelling in unstable homes; and community reasons normally included working part-time jobs because their parents were unable to find steady work in a depressed local economy, idealizing gangs that promise treasure troves, thinking that college was out of reach, and believing that a person from their neighborhood would never get a ‘good’ job. Based upon this understanding of root causes, I believe that improving the academic performance of socio-economically disadvantaged students requires a comprehensive, holistic approach.

In addition to anecdotal evidence that supports community schools, I also chose to research this type of school because it aligns well with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory and is supported by empirical research. In my opinion, if typical students spend their days in-between school, home, and the neighborhood, all three environments must be safe, stable, and inspiring if children are going to succeed in school. For instance, how will children excel in school if they attend one that does not offer additional academic assistance, reside in a home where there is a shortage of food, but a surplus of eviction letters, and live in a neighborhood that is ridden with iconic gang members and does not offer its members many opportunities to enhance their skills? Emerging empirical evidence stating that community schools have yielded the same if not better academic results than traditional schools and a range of positive ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements is also a reason why I have dedicated myself to the study of community schools. I

hope to establish how far some of the claims made can be justified. Furthermore, I am passionate about my research because some works suggest that community schools can enhance the language and vocational skills of residents, making them more employable. And a greater number of skilled community members could lead to improvements in the local economy and the overall health of the community.

My understanding of the academics, implementation strategies, and impacts of community schools certainly influenced the approach I adopted for this study. I conducted many interviews and focus groups with a range of participants at each school, because I felt that it was vital to capture the voice of individuals within the schools and the communities. Community schools cannot be understood simply through surveys. There are too many rich stories behind the numbers that oftentimes derive from longstanding friendships and relationships and spring from harrowing pleas for help. Although I respect and value the work of community schools, I made every effort to guard against possible biases by not projecting my thoughts onto interviewees or survey-takers. The views behind the data are theirs, not mine.

1.9 Definitions of Key Terms

• **Academic Works**

Are publications, such as journal articles and conference papers, that are commonly written for a diverse audience, which may include academics, policymakers, and practitioners, and are more academically rigorous than practitioner-based works

• **Academics**

Refers to academic subjects, curricula, and members of academic faculties

Although in England the term solely refers to members of academic faculties, the inclusive, United States definition was adopted for this paper, because the definition the Coalition for Community Schools provides – which is widely accepted internationally by researchers and practitioners – includes the term, and its meaning is academic subjects (See Definition of “Community Schools/Full-Service Schools/Promise Neighborhood Schools”)

- **Community Schools/Full-Service Schools/Promise Neighborhood Schools**

Are public schools that address education in a holistic manner, primarily by concentrating on academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement

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

- **Community School Models**

- A **national model community school** is typically a member of a network of more than five community schools that are located in two or more states. A national headquarters commonly oversees all the schools in each network and offers each school strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support.
- A **local federation model community school** is generally linked to a local network of more than two community schools that are located within a city or town. These schools are normally overseen by a specific group within the local school board or a local organization (e.g. foundation or university) that controls the day-to-day upper management of the federation and provides each school with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, and financial support. Additionally, the federation commonly partners with a local organization or a few local organizations that help it deliver strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support to the schools.
- An **independent model community school**, uniquely, is autonomous, with no headquarters or network. The administrators and teachers of these schools have the greatest control over their strategy. However, the autonomy comes at a cost. If the schools are to receive strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support, they must identify, apply, and secure it independently, without the assistance of a headquarters or a network.

It should be recognized that the word ‘independent,’ from the term ‘independent community school,’ does not refer to whether a school is public or private. Instead, the word conveys that a particular community school operates independently of an established community school model, such as a national community school model or a local federation community school model.

- **Practitioner-Based Works**

Are publications, such as reports and essays, that are primarily written for a practitioner audience, which may include policymakers, school administrators, and teachers, and are less academically rigorous than academic works

• **Results and Impacts**

- **Academic performance results** concentrate on math and English proficiency rates of students and the percentile ranks of schools
- **Impacts pertaining to ‘academic-related’ elements** focus on interest levels, concentration levels, confidence levels, attendance rate, and disruptive incident rate of students
- **Impacts pertaining to ‘non-academic-related’ elements** concentrate on physical health treatment rates, mental health treatment rates, student and family hunger rates, and family cohesion levels

• **Value-Added Community School Programs**

Are programs, typically managed by nonprofit organizations that do not receive funding from a public school district, that serve to enhance the ability of a traditional public school to address academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement

These programs, oftentimes, do not have a full-time community school director or coordinator on site, unlike community schools

1.10 Organization of the Study

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Following Chapter One, Introduction, Chapter Two reviews relevant, systematically gathered literature on community schools, as well as works related to it. This review examines the definition of a community school and practitioner-based and academic works on community schools in the U.S., England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland. Additionally, this review analyzes topics that are not explicitly and/or comprehensively addressed by the literature on community schools. For example, literature on school improvement, urban regeneration, and community enhancement are linked to the study of community schools; literature on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory shows how this theory pertains to and expands upon the study of community schools; and, a section on ‘well-being’ defines the term, identifies domains and measures that can be applied to community schools, and examines the nexus between schools and well-being. Chapter Three, Methodology, details the exploratory, case study research strategy and embedded, multi-case design, outlines the

sampling approach, reviews the three-stage site location procedure, identifies the participants, and summarizes the data collection and analysis methods that were used. Furthermore, the chapter includes a description of the pilot study and my ethical considerations. The chapter also delineates how I used thematic coding to analyze qualitative data and statistical methods to analyze quantitative data, and then how I used the cross-case synthesis technique to review a compilation of both types of data. Chapters four, five, and six provide a national model community school case, local federation model community school case, and independent model community school case, respectively – with another set of three cases, one for each model, provided in the appendix. As for Chapter Seven, it includes findings related to research question one, and Chapter Eight covers findings pertaining to research question two, which is the most theoretical of the two questions. Lastly, Chapter Nine, Discussion and Conclusion, offer my reflection on the aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts of the six community schools and the three community school models and my views on how the findings link with the literature I reviewed. The chapter also presents the implications of the research on the study of community schools and beyond, addresses unanswered questions, revisits the concept of a community school, offers recommendations to practitioners and policymakers, and suggests topics and approaches for further study of community schools.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

No comprehensive, comparative research on the distinguishing characteristics that each of the three community school models – national, local federation, and independent – possesses in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts has been conducted. Nevertheless, the general topic of “community schools” has been studied in various ways in both the U.S. and elsewhere. As discussed in the previous chapter, my initial exploration of this topic yielded a definition, identified core principles underpinning the concept, compared the positions of proponents and opponents, and provided an overview of the political contexts surrounding the development of this type of school. This chapter offers greater depth on the community school concept by reviewing practitioner-based and academic work that focuses on the operations (i.e. funding and management) and impacts of community schools in the United States of America, England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland. Research on community schools outside the U.S. is particularly valuable, because it complements the work done on U.S. community schools and provides a broader perspective. Collectively, the work offers insight into the management style of community schools both inside and outside the U.S., and furthermore, the work provides access to qualitative and quantitative data on the academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of community schools, again, both inside and outside the U.S. In addition to research written directly on the community school concept, notable topics related to this concept are also reviewed, specifically the topics of well-being and human ecology. Research on well-being defines the term and identifies domains and measures of childhood well-being, and research on human ecology offers a prominent theory that largely conceptualizes the work of community

schools. In totality, the examined literature, both directly and indirectly related to the community school concept, offers a foundation of knowledge that I used to frame my study, and, in the end, I will contribute to this knowledge base.

2.2. The Search for Literature

I began the literature review with the view that I wanted to locate both practitioner-based and academic literature, along with empirical and non-empirical work, on the topics of community schools, school partnerships, well-being, school governance and administration, and human ecology. Next, based upon a cursory review of these topics, I decided that I would limit the search to works that had been published in the past forty years. Also, I decided to focus on literature written in English since I am fluent in English, a vast amount of diverse works were published in this language, and research on countries where the national language is not English, such as the Netherlands, was written in English. Then, after discussions with librarians, I decided to use the following databases to search for literature: Academic Source Premier (multidisciplinary), ERIC (scholarly and practice-based education literature), and Education Full Text (scholarly education literature). Additionally, it quickly became evident that I would also need to use internet search engines, such as Google, to search for practitioner-based literature that is located on websites and to locate newspaper articles. Each database and search tool was used for a particular purpose, favored certain search phrases, and, for the most part, offered a unique search term thesaurus, thus requiring a variety of terms to be used (See Table 4).

Table 4: Examples of Key Search Terms Used with Each Database and Search Tool

Example of Key Search Terms		
Academic Source Premier	• Community school • Extended community school England • New community school Scotland • Community school Australia • School partnerships	• Community school health care partnerships • Community school student well-being • U.S. education governance • Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory
ERIC	• Community school • Extended community school • New community school • School community partnerships • School health care community school	• Community school well-being • Well-being school debate • Ecological Systems theory • Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory community school
Education Full Text	• Community school • Community school principles • Community school [state] • Extended community school England • School community low socio-economic Australia	• School partnerships • Community school students family members • Community school well-being • School well-being health food • Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory
Internet Search Engines	• Community school • Coalition for Community Schools • Extended school England community • New community school Scotland • Community school Australia	• School socio-economic health partnerships student • Community schools well-being • Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory

After reading literature that I located during my initial search, information in the body of the works and citations from the works cited pages led me to other references. Furthermore, discussions with authors of some of the studies, practitioners named in them, and my advisors also led me to identify additional literature. The discovery of new works led to the identification of further material, indicating the iterative process adopted in identifying material for my review of the literature on community schools.

Throughout the search for literature, both empirical and non-empirical work was gathered and reviewed. Generally, the academic literature was empirical; whereas, the non-academic literature, which could include practitioner-based reports and newspaper articles, fluctuated between empirical and non-empirical. Both empirical and non-empirical work

received the same level of attention. However, it was acknowledged that these two groups of works often provided different levels of clarity. Commonly, the empirical work offered greater detail in terms of methodology, biases, and findings, while the non-empirical work either did not discuss these topics at all or covered them vaguely. Nevertheless, both empirical and non-empirical work was gathered and reviewed, but the level of detail related to methodology, biases, and findings was both recognized and considered.

2.3 Community School Definition: No clear, comprehensive discussion of models

Although many works address the definition of a community school and its guiding principles, there is no rigorous research, to my knowledge, other than my work, that attempts to clearly and comprehensively augment the definition by accounting for organizational differences that exist between the three main community school models that form the focus of this thesis. Practitioners, through websites and publications, have implied that not all community schools subscribe to one organizational model; however, neither practitioners nor academics appear to have published explicit, comprehensive work on this subject matter.

By visiting practitioner-based websites and reading practitioner-based publications on community schools, such as those of the Children's Aid Society and the Federation for Community Schools, three primary community school models can be identified – national, local federation, and independent. National model community schools are guided by headquarters that provide services and support, ranging from funded tutoring programs to advice on securing grants; local federation model community schools generally consist of a collection of community schools in one city or state that work in partnership with one another and, commonly, are linked to a central organization that manages the federation; and independent model community schools are autonomous of a headquarters and other

community schools (Coalition for community schools, 2013; Federation for Community Schools, 2013a & 2013b; “School of the 21st century,” 2012; “SUN Community Schools,” 2013; The Children's Aid Society, 2013). I am not stating that these are the only three community school models; instead, I am asserting that at least these three main models exist in the U.S.

Not acknowledging that a minimum of three community school models exists limits the extent to which future rigorous research on community schools can be conducted. Without a clear delineation of the three models, all community schools will be viewed, from an organizational perspective, as the same, thus ignoring explicit and potential model-specific characteristics. For example, it is crucial to recognize that national model community schools have formal relationships with national headquarters, which may yield financial and intellectual wealth, while independent model community schools do not. This thesis proposes that there are at least three primary community school models, each possessing explicit and potential model-specific characteristics.

2.4 Community Schools in the United States of America: Operations

A significant body of practitioner-based and academic work on U.S. community schools addresses the topic of community school operations. A review of this literature brings to light two predominant themes: ‘funding’ and ‘management’. The former theme, ‘funding,’ largely relates to advice on how community school leaders should use both financial and non-financial support to fund and maintain a community school and key topics that should be kept in mind during the process. The latter theme, ‘management,’ commonly involves principles surrounding the establishment and the day-to-day administration of a community school.

As a note, the next section, Section 2.5 Community Schools in the United States of America: Impacts, focuses on studies that explore the ‘impacts’ of community schools.

2.4.1 Practitioner-Based Works: Operations

Practitioner-based works include publications, such as reports and essays, that were written by a variety of types of authors primarily for a practitioner audience, which may include policymakers, school administrators, and teachers. In this section the practitioner-based works are separated into the following four groups, based upon the type of author and the topic: Works by the Coalition for Community Schools on Community Schools, Works by Nonprofit Organizations on Community Schools, Works by For-Profit Consultancy Groups on Community Schools, and Works by a Variety of Organizations on the Harlem Children’s Zone. Separating the works in this manner allows the reader to be aware of possible biases (e.g. works published by the Coalition for Community Schools may have an implicit bias) and, also, dividing the works in this fashion alerts the reader that some works broadly focus on the community school concept, while other works narrowly focus on the Harlem Children’s Zone – considered a local federation of community schools in New York City that has garnered significant attention in the U.S.

In general, all the practitioner-based works in this section offer similar views regarding the operations of a community school, and, arguably, the majority of these works possess the same two weaknesses as a result of being less rigorous than academic works. The two common weaknesses are offering limited information on methodology and being primarily descriptive and advisory – focusing on process rather than process and outcomes (e.g. not comprehensively and simultaneously reviewing both operation principles and impacts).

2.4.1.1 Works by the Coalition for Community Schools on Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools is a prolific publisher of works that guide policymakers and practitioners on the funding and management of community schools. Over the past fifteen years, the coalition has published seven noteworthy reports on these two topics. The earliest report, “Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools” by Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003), established a foundation of knowledge on the two topics, and subsequently, two waves of reports each expanded this knowledge base. These seven works have been cited by both practitioners and academics, and are an indispensable piece of the study of community schools.

Some argue that Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) established a foundation of knowledge on the funding and management of community schools when they published **“Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools”**. In this work, uniquely, the authors do not narrowly describe funding in financial terms – dollars and cents; rather, they assert that, in addition to financial support, a significant share of community school funding must take the form of social capital. Equally important, Blank, Melaville, and Shah also address the topic of community school management by outlining conditions for learning and organizational essentials. Before this essay, lucid information on the topics of community school funding and management was not accessible.

Blank, Melaville, and Shah clearly assert that community schools must garner both financial and non-financial resources in order to create effective learning environments. According to them, community schools should look at a range of funding streams, including district, state, federal, and private funding. Furthermore, the authors encourage community schools to cultivate joint financing arrangements for facilities. Expanding upon the concept of joint ventures and non-financial resources, the authors write:

Community schools, however, with their strategic use of linkages and partnerships, can reach outside their walls to leverage additional services, staff and programs to meet the essential needs of students and enhance the range and quality of their learning. Access to additional resources and the active involvement of community partners support and enhance school efforts to address the *facts of life* that affect both teaching and learning, such as changing demographics, too much unstructured time for children, transience, violence and unaddressed basic needs (Blank, Melaville, and Shah, 2003, p.7).

The authors recognize that cultivating and leveraging social capital can be challenging due to a variety of variables, including scarcity of quality partnerships. In spite of the obstacles, they encourage community schools to build as many quality partnerships in the community as possible.

Once the funding of the school has been addressed, elements pertaining to the management of the school must be handled. The authors place a high level of importance on establishing the following five “conditions for learning:”

1. The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students
2. Students are motivated and engaged in learning – both in school and in community settings, during and after school
3. The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed
4. There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff
5. Community engagement, together with school efforts, promote a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and connects students to a broader learning community (Blank et al., 2003, p.15)

These conditions show the need for community school leaders to maintain meaningful, quality relationships with students, parents, staff members, partners, and the community.

To help administrators realize the five conditions outlined, Blank, Melaville, and Shah propose organizational essentials. They recommend that administrators “create community school coordinator positions, identify the lead partner for a community school with great care, and create technical assistance capacity to support the development of

community schools” (Blank et al., 2003, p.63). Community schools that do not address these essential elements are, in essence, rejecting the view that this type of school requires a community school coordinator, quality partnerships, and a depth of support.

Before this report was published, policymakers and practitioners interested in establishing a community school did not have access to descriptive information on the process of funding and managing a community school. After the report was published, though, this was no longer an issue. By publishing this report, Blank, Melaville, and Shah established a knowledge base for policymakers and practitioners who wanted to learn about these two topics. Specifically, by reading the work, individuals could learn about the value of community school leaders securing financial and non-financial support, establishing quality relationships with individuals inside and outside the school, and hiring a community school coordinator. Even today, this is still an important report, because the information applies to current community schools.

In 2006, the coalition expanded the knowledge base it had established on the management of community schools by publishing the **first wave of three works**. This wave expands upon the 2003 report, “Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools,” by further developing “conditions for learning” and “organizational essentials,” and, additionally, introducing “cross-boundary leadership” and three main leadership groups. Furthermore, two works in this wave explicitly identify essential community school inputs and provide clear management advice to community school leaders and other staff members.

Collectively, the three works in this wave build upon the “conditions for learning” and the “organizational essentials” that were stated in the 2003 report, “Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools” (Blank, Ameyaw, Shah, and Jacobson, 2006; Blank, Berg, & Lindsay, 2006; Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006). These

three works reiterate many managerial suggestions from the 2003 report and offer new ones, which cover topics ranging from key inputs to lessons.

In addition to expanding upon previous topics, this wave of reports contributed novel information to the knowledge base on community schools by introducing the topic of “cross boundary leadership”. Blank, Berg, and Melaville (2006) describe “cross-boundary leadership” as the leadership style that community school leaders should embrace. Rather than simply defining this term in a static manner, the authors state how this type of leadership style promotes a holistic approach, celebrates the diversity of community members and partners, requires the cooperation of different service providers, and emphasizes accountability. The authors write:

Cross-boundary leadership lies at the heart of the community school. Because community schools develop students’ physical, social, emotional, moral and civic competencies as well as their academic abilities, leaders from many different organizations must work together... It also means welcoming the rich diversity in language, culture and outlook that changing student populations bring to schools, and refusing to evade the challenges posed by race, equity and poverty issues. And it means emphasizing academic quality and accountability for results (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p. 3).

The introduction and description of the term cross-boundary leadership provided community school administrators and their partners, for the first time, with information on the leadership style that they should adopt.

This wave of reports also contributed novel information to the knowledge base by identifying and describing three main leadership groups of community school leaders. Blank, Berg, and Melaville (2006) assert that the three groups are community leaders, leaders in the schools, and leaders in the middle (See Table 5).

Table 5: Community School Leaders

THREE GROUPS OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL LEADERS	
Community Leaders	
· Mayors and elected county officials · School board members · Superintendents	· Foundation leaders · Private-sector CEOs
Leaders in the Schools (Site-Level Leaders)	
· Principals · Teachers · Site-level coordinators · Community school coordinators	· Parent leaders · School-level planning groups · Community members
Leaders in the Middle	
· Midlevel managers	

The authors state that community leaders include “mayors and elected county officials, school board members and superintendents, foundation leaders and private-sector CEOs,” and in certain instances, some of these parties create legal partnerships, while in other instances informal partnerships are established (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p. 7-8). They also state that one of the most important determinants of school success is not the partnership structure; instead, the stability of the leadership and the level of turnover are two of the greatest determinants that impact the success of schools. The authors describe the second group, leaders in the schools, as “Leaders in schools and neighborhoods bring the community school vision to life. They work to create reciprocal relationships between schools and communities and to make community residents feel welcome in the schools” (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p. 9). Specifically, this group includes principals and teachers who share the leadership responsibility with a variety of parties, including site-level coordinators who often plan and lead community school activities, community school coordinators who manage the day-to-day operations, parent leaders who advocate for students and help support the schools, school level planning groups that are commonly

informal, and community members (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p.9-11). The authors define the third group, leaders in the middle, as “midlevel managers who have direct access to top-level leaders and their policy discussions, as well as connection to school and community programs. They connect the vision and authority of top-level leaders to community residents’ concerns, assets and energy. These leaders in the middle help build the organizational infrastructure – the personnel, policies, services and facilities – needed to implement and sustain community school initiatives” (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p.11). These leaders work for a range of organizations, from the school district to nonprofit organizations, and, commonly, they are very knowledgeable about the politics of communities. Identifying and describing the three leadership groups helps practitioners organize their community school and brings order and structure to the study of community schools for policymakers and researchers.

A work in this wave also contributed to the existing body of knowledge on community schools by explicitly identifying essential community school inputs. Blank, Ameyaw, Shah, and Jacobson (2006) demonstrate how the Community School Logic Model can be used to identify crucial inputs. These inputs include a community school coordinator, sufficient staff (expertise and availability), sufficient resources (funding and facilities), available/relevant partners, a leadership and initiative-level infrastructure, and support from schools and communities (Blank, Ameyaw, Shah, and Jacobson, 2006, p.9). Although the coalition previously discussed inputs, this is one of the first times where it presented a clear list of them. Equally important, this work draws continued attention to the position of community school coordinator and the need for adequate staff, resources, partnerships, leadership, and local support.

Lastly, two works from this wave offer advice on management to community school leaders and other staff members. Blank, Berg, and Lindsay (2006) identify and describe

seven specific steps that staff members should implement. These steps consist of (1) magnifying student voice, (2) building strategic alliances & partnerships, (3) strengthening professional development, (4) expanding the use of community-based learning in the curriculum, (5) strengthening policy, (6) establishing partnerships with institutions of higher education, and (7) conducting research (Blank, Berg, & Lindsay, 2006, p.27-31). This was a particularly valuable contribution, because it confirmed the need to listen to students, build partnerships, and invest in the staff, all while introducing the need to focus on policy, higher education partnerships, and research. Additionally, Blank, Berg, and Melaville (2006) also added to the subject of community school management. The authors offered the following seven lessons to leaders:

1. Step out and scale up. Provide bold, immediate leadership to meet community challenges.
2. Open doors. Nurture and expand networks of community responsibility.
3. Build multilevel leadership. Connect communitywide visionaries to practical leaders in the community and at school sites.
4. Build an infrastructure to support change within and across systems. Think systemically and embed the vision.
5. Fund for the long haul. It's a marathon, not a sprint.
6. Focus on results. Use data and stories.
7. Engage the community. Share, listen and respond (Blank, Berg, and Melaville, 2006, p.23-24).

The list of lessons confirms the need for leaders to concentrate on partnerships and research, and introduces the idea of continuously scaling up and being patient.

This wave of reports, all published in 2006, elaborates upon and adds to the “conditions for learning” and the “organizational essentials” that were published in the 2003 report. The 2006 reports accomplish this by reiterating the importance of a community school coordinator, knowledgeable staff members, adequate resources, quality partnerships, strong leadership, and local support. Furthermore, these reports made novel contributions to

the knowledgebase established by the 2003 report. For example, collectively, the three works introduced the need for community school leaders to focus on cross boundary leadership, higher education partnerships, research, continual scaling-up, and patience.

The **second wave of three reports**, published between 2010 and 2012, expanded upon the 2003 report and the 2006 reports by discussing both the funding and management of community schools. Although information on the former topic is limited, one of the reports offers valuable findings on the funding of community schools. Conversely, there is an ample amount of work on the latter topic that addresses a range of managerial themes. These themes include the establishment and maintenance of ‘successful partnerships,’ the identification of community school strategies, and the process of scaling-up.

Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson (2010) follow up the 2003 report with five findings regarding the funding of community schools. The authors summarize these five findings as follows:

1. Community schools use the bulk of their resources to directly assist schools in meeting their core instructional mission, while also strengthening the health and well-being of students, families and neighborhoods.
2. Diversified funding in community schools leverages district dollars 3:1.
3. Collaborative leadership structures support finance and other key functions at the site and system level.
4. A mix of public and private sector partners expands financial, as well as technical and political capacity.
5. Full-time site coordination contributes essential site level capacity at minimal cost (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson, 2010, p.7-18).

Collectively, the findings assert that community schools use a diverse pool of funds to support both academic and social programs, leverage district funding, are equipped to secure public and private support from the local to the national level, and are wise to invest in full-time site coordinators.

Shifting from the topic of funding to management, Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012), discuss the common phrase ‘successful partnerships’. Up until this work was published, the coalition never dedicated an entire work to explaining, in detail, how community schools should establish and maintain ‘successful partnerships’ and how local stakeholders can support these efforts. Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville address the former void, establishing and maintaining ‘successful partnerships,’ by suggesting the following six main strategies:

1. Ensuring a common vision among all partners
2. Establishing structured opportunities to engage stakeholders
3. Encouraging open dialogue about challenges and solutions
4. Engaging stakeholders in the use of data
5. Creating central-office capacity to sustain community school work
6. Leveraging community resources and braiding funding streams (Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville, 2012, p.13-22).

The authors also address the latter void, how local stakeholders can support community partnerships, by offering the following recommendations: reach out, look at the data, learn from other schools, review existing partnerships, and get started (Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville, 2012, p.23).

Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson (2010) also add to the knowledge base on the management of community schools by discussing community school strategies. The authors begin by broadly discussing how community schools can realize their vision by aligning local building blocks that will lead to interconnected programs and services that serve both students and community members. The authors develop this recommendation by offering less abstract information on how school staffs and community partners can establish community schools, stating:

Bring together educators, families, volunteers and a wide range of partners from public agencies and local government, non-profit agencies, community-based and faith-based organizations, philanthropies, businesses, and higher education. They share existing resources, leverage new ones, and contribute a wide range of expertise to achieve outcomes that neither schools nor any partner could achieve on their own (Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson, 2010, p.4).

In essence, the authors of this report expand upon the belief that linked groups and resources have the potential to achieve stronger outcomes than those that are independent.

Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank (2011) also contribute to the knowledge on community schools by offering a guideline to scaling-up. The authors assert that the following ‘pre-scaling-up’ elements must be in place and functioning soundly before community schools should engage in scaling-up: results-based vision, data and evaluation, finance and resource development, alignment and integration, supportive policy and practice, professional development and technical assistance, and broad community engagement (Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank, 2011). Once these elements are met, a school can begin scaling-up. The authors outline the following six stages to scaling-up:

1. Decision to scale up: Convene innovators, assess readiness, compile a convincing rationale for scale-up, broaden collaborative leadership, commit to a motivating shared vision, and increase visibility
2. Develop an operating framework: Define key functions, distribute leadership, and plan to plan
3. Plan for scale-up: Define desired results, create a results-based logic model, prepare for evaluation, and develop a rollout strategy
4. Plan for sustainability: Build financial capacity and build political capacity
5. Implement systematically: Align principles, practice, and policies and initiate professional development and technical assistance
6. Continue improvement and expansion: Collect data to assess progress, use data to strengthen the initiative, publicize progress, expand rollout, preparation and professional development, and system scan (Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank, 2011, p.20-77)

In 2011, this list was regarded as the most comprehensive guide to scaling-up for community schools.

Overall, there is a sense of continuity that begins with the 2003 report, continues through the 2006 reports, and reaches the 2010 – 2012 reports. There are no major aberrations or differences between the reports; rather, there is consistency. The 2003 report sets the foundation by identifying the need for community schools to secure both financial and non-financial support, and, also, the report discusses “conditions for learning” and “organizational essentials,” such as having a community school coordinator. The first wave of reports, published in 2006 and focused on community school management, expands upon this work by introducing the need for “cross-boundary leadership,” discussing three main leadership groups, and further developing the work on “conditions for learning” and “organizational essentials”. Additionally, advice geared towards community school leaders and staff members is provided. In particular, the works cite the importance of having a community school coordinator, knowledgeable staff members, adequate resources, supportive partnerships, strong leadership, and sufficient local support. Finally, the last wave of reports, published between 2010 and 2012, expands upon work on funding by confirming, in particular, that community schools possess the ability to secure diverse funding streams and the potential to leverage district funding. The reports in this wave also develop knowledge on the management of community schools by offering insight on ‘successful partnerships’ and scaling-up.

2.4.1.2 Works by Other Nonprofit Organizations on Community Schools

In addition to the Coalition for Community Schools, other nonprofit organizations, such as the Partnership for Children and Youth, the Federation for Community Schools, and Child Trends, have published works that discuss the funding and management of community schools. The works, in particular, discuss elements of funding and the implementation and sustainment of the community school concept.

The Partnership for Children and Youth, the author of “Community Schools: Aligning Local Resources for Student Success” (2013), makes a particularly valuable contribution to the body of knowledge on community schools by discussing a misconception revolving around community school funding. The group encourages community school leaders to concentrate on relationships, rather than simply focusing on securing as much money as possible. Accordingly, the Partnership for Children and Youth emphasizes the need for community school leaders to focus on coordination and collaboration with partners and, also, the quality of the partnerships, particularly during the early years. The group writes:

Through a coordinated delivery system, a community school offers more effective programs and services than any one of its partners could offer on its own... Community school partners achieve better outcomes as well as fiscal efficiencies through economies of scale and eliminating duplicative efforts. To this end, first establishing a cross-agency collaborative is a necessity to make substantial systemic efficiencies possible (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p.5).

To help community school leaders create coordinated, collaborative partnerships, which could prove more valuable than a monetary grant, the organization identifies characteristics that community schools should embody and principles they should practice. The characteristics include the following:

- Partners work as a team to design the collaborative infrastructure
- Coordination and teamwork occur at each level of decision-making
- Partners share resources for coordination and services
- School sites are key access points that reach clients more effectively
- Coordination is key
- Partners equally share responsibility for collectively achieving results (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p.5-6)

Additionally, the principles include aligning resources, ignoring the need for new and/or additional funding, going beyond the school districts, and coordinating (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013).

All of the characteristics and the majority of the principles parallel topics that appear in works published by the Coalition for Community Schools. Broadly speaking, they discuss staffing, resources, partnerships, and leadership. However, uniquely, one of the funding principles encourages leaders to ignore the need for new and/or additional funding, which contradicts conventional knowledge on community school funding. Furthermore, the organization assures community school leaders that “A community school effort can be started and sustained without new funding” (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p.7). This is in direct contrast with many works that address community school funding.

Nonprofit organizations, collectively, also have published noteworthy works on the management of community schools, particularly on the topics of implementation and sustainment. The Federation for Community Schools and Child Trends each has published work on the implementation of the community school concept, and, additionally, Child Trends has published work on the sustainment of the concept.

The Federation for Community Schools, author of “Community School Transformation: A Guide for Schools, Districts, Parents, and Community Members,” attempts to prepare school leaders who wish to establish a community school by identifying topics that should be considered prior to the implementation stage. These topics include district policies around operations, communication channels, the position of resource coordinator (selection of program types and providers, agreement structure, quality assurance, and evaluation), and frameworks for the development of programs (Federation for Community Schools, n.d., p.32-33). The list is insightful, because it advises leaders to consider both external topics, such as district policies, and internal topics, such as the position of resource coordinator. The need for leaders to balance both types of topics is a key point of this work.

From Child Trends, Collins, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo (2009), authors of “Implementing School-Based Services: Strategies from New Mexico’s School-Based Health and Extended Learning Services,” also focus on the topic of community school implementation. The authors of this work identify common challenges that community school administrators typically confront during the implementation stage, and, furthermore, they offer administrators strategies for implementing school-based services. The common challenges include securing sufficient funding, sustaining youth development, maintaining effective partnerships, recruiting program participants, recognizing family needs, serving minority populations successfully, coordinating efforts, and clarifying terminology (Collins, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo, 2009, p.2-3). The list establishes the importance of funding, program and partnership management, and community engagement. The appearance of these items in previous and future works confirms their significance. To provide actionable guidance, the authors offer strategies to address some of these common challenges that arise during the implementation phase, along with guidance on how to deal with other less common challenges. The strategies are as follows:

- Construct school-based programs to complement and meet school goals and academic standards.
- Enhance behavioral and mental health programs by implementing evidence-based, but non- traditional, methods of youth development.
- Ensure that program offerings attract students by being engaging and diverse.
- Diversify student recruitment and retention strategies.
- Provide on-going support for program staff.
- Establish and maintain positive relationships with students, school staff, service practitioners, and families.
- Share relevant research results with policy makers and funders to address their interests, constituents, and concerns (Collins, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo, 2009, p.3-5).

The list highlights topics that community school leaders should focus on. For instance, after reading the work, leaders may recognize the need to concentrate on synergy, data-driven

strategies, engagement, diversity, student retention, staff support, community relationships, and data distribution. Interestingly, this work supports some of the views of earlier works, such as forming strong relationships with the school staff and families and using data to support the efforts, while also contributing to the broader field of knowledge on community schools.

To create a pipeline of information on the implementation and sustainment of community schools, Collins, Carrier, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo (2010) from Child Trends supplement the work on community school implementation with a piece on community school sustainment. This work identifies common challenges that community school leaders may confront while trying to sustain their operations, and furthermore, the piece describes strategies for addressing these challenges. According to the authors, common challenges that can surface during the sustainment stage include managing additional staff responsibilities, establishing and maintaining strong partnerships, addressing high staff turnover, and allowing sufficient time to implement school-based services (Collins, Carrier, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo, 2010, p.3). It is true that the listed challenges are somewhat broad. However, the elements are both prudent and cogent, and moreover, they bring greater narrow attention to these four important topics, which other authors have only alluded to or mentioned. To address these common challenges the authors suggest that leaders share “success stories” for integrated school-based service implementation, identify and share best practices regarding service implementation, plan for student, school, and community differences, improve staff training, create a seamless bundling of services, and strengthen data collection and evaluation (Collins, Carrier, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo, 2010, p.3-4). This list is particularly valuable, because it encourages community school leaders to concentrate on the community, the staff, the services, and data collection in order to sustain the operation. Interestingly, these areas are also discussed in other works.

Although nonprofit organizations have not published extensively on community school operations, they have contributed to knowledge on both the funding and management of community schools. Specifically, the work by Partnership for Children and Youth (2013) supports many funding characteristics and principles that have been stated by previous works, while challenging the ubiquitous doctrine that new funding is necessary to establish and sustain community schools. This work contests this doctrine by showing how carefully establishing effective partnerships and realigning existing resources have the potential to lead to effective community schools. Furthermore, works by other nonprofit organizations on the implementation and sustainment of community schools support previously stated suggestions, such as community schools should possess a community school coordinator, develop staff members, cultivate partnerships, secure resources, address local needs, and engage politically.

2.4.1.3 Works by For-Profit Consultancy Group on Community Schools

A few for-profit management consultancy groups have evaluated the operations of U.S. community schools across the country. These groups typically assess empirical data from one or two local federation model community schools, and then offer findings and recommendations based on the assessment. Although the recommendations are intended to assist the subject of the report, the recommendations can also benefit non-related subjects, such as other community school leaders. LaFrance and Associates is often regarded as a leading publisher of this type of report. In 2005, the group engendered a collection of four reports that review full-service community schools in Maryland, Washington, Iowa, and Pennsylvania. Collectively, these four reports offer a range of recommendations that address the following nine topics: expansion, parent involvement, teacher involvement,

relationship development, patience, key individuals, community participation, community perception, and funding.

The report on the **Maryland** community school offers four managerial recommendations that highlight two of the nine topics. The topics of expansion and parent involvement, in particular, are evident in the following recommendations:

- Seek to expand after-school enrichment programming; so far there are very few enrichment courses as programming focuses on tutoring and homework help.
- Aim to raise participation rates in after-school programming.
- Build capacity in student services. Discipline and anger management are areas very important at General Smallwood...
- Expand capacity in the area of student and family programs and services; this will involve increased outreach to parents... (La France Associates, 2005b, p.80)

This report emphasizes only two of the nine topics; however, the topics of expansion and parent involvement are two of the most common topics that appear in the four reports.

Interestingly, together, works by the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations also encourage community schools to focus on these two topics.

The report on the **Washington** community school highlights three of the nine topics. The following recommendations emphasize the topics of expansion, teacher involvement, and parent involvement:

- Increase teacher involvement
 - More help with homework time from teachers
 - Recruit teachers to lead an enrichment activity of their choosing
 - Involve teacher allies
- Develop more programming
- Increase health services
- Increase parent involvement and interaction (La France Associates, 2005d, p.52-53)

Based upon this and the previous report, it is clear that the topics of expansion and involvement are important. This sentiment aligns with works by the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations.

The number of highlighted topics increased even more in the report on the two **Iowa** community schools. The managerial recommendations and insights associated with one of the two schools address the topics of expansion, parent involvement, relationship development, patience, and key individuals. The group offers the following conclusion:

The next steps for the FSCS [full-service community school] at Harding are to expand parent programming and continue to work on parent involvement and to continue to build on existing relationships in the community. Full implementation of the FSCS model will take time. Yet what makes the future so promising for Harding is the level of commitment and partnership between the FSCS Site Director, the school staff, and district leadership (La France Associates, 2005a, p.68).

Broadly, this conclusion shows that implementation is continuous, rather than occurring in a restricted period of time. Furthermore, it demonstrates that parents are vital resources and strong relationships between the community school director, school staff, and district leadership are essential. The managerial recommendations related to the second Iowa community school also address the topics of expansion, relationship development, and patience, in addition to teacher involvement. The group states:

The next steps for the FSCS at Moulton are to gain more support and involvement from teachers; increase FSCS staffing and take steps to expand programming and services for its students. Full implementation of the FSCS model will take time” (La France Associates, 2005a, p.113).

Overall, the recommendations in this report emphasize topics addressed in other reports, such as expansion and involvement, while introducing new topics, such as relationship development, patience, and key individuals. The recommendations, again, align with work published by the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations.

The fourth report reviews two **Pennsylvania** community schools, and the recommendations focus on a range of topics. In particular, the work addresses expansion,

parent and teacher involvement, patience, community perception, and funding. The group states:

Full implementation of the FSCS model, however, will take time. Lincoln faces a number of challenges including difficulty with outreach to parents; uncertainty about continued funding; and mixed feelings in the community about FSCS... The next steps for the FSCS Initiative at Lincoln are to increase teacher and parent involvement in after-school and parent programming; expand mental and behavioral health services; offer physical health services to students and families; and to continue to build on existing relationships in the community (La France Associates, 2005c, p.87).

This is the fourth report that addresses the topics of expansion and parent involvement, leading to the conclusion that the topics deserve substantial attention. This view aligns with other works published on community schools.

Although the four reports do not offer detailed implementation strategies, they do identify organizational areas that community school leaders should concentrate on. Furthermore, the works are valuable because they yield consistent findings, particularly the need to concentrate on expansion and parent involvement. Overall, the reports largely support views expressed in works by the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations.

2.4.1.4 Works by a Variety of Organizations on the Harlem Children's Zone

A range of works, spanning from insider exposés by news organizations to articles by research centers, have been published on the management of the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). The inquiry, typically, centers on the neighborhood- and community-based "pipeline" of the HCZ. In particular, the works generally concentrate on five principles that are central components of the HCZ: the neighborhood, the pipeline, the community, evaluations, and a culture of success. The works are particularly valuable because they assert the need for community school leaders to focus on both internal environments (i.e. inside the school) and external environments (i.e. the community).

The Harlem Children's Zone describes its organizational structure in terms of five principles (Harlem Children's Zone, 2015). Principle One, Neighborhood-Based, At-Scale Approach, references the need to establish a prevalent presence in the community that is associated with excellence; Principle Two, HCZ Pipeline, denotes the necessity to establish a continuum of services that provide both children and families with a seamless set of programs and services throughout the entire development of a child (See Figure 2); Principle Three, Building Community, asserts that schools must form meaningful, collaborative partnerships with local organizations that will support their efforts; Principle Four, Evaluation, stresses the importance of conducting evaluations that will identify weaknesses and possible solutions; and Principle Five, Culture of Success, emphasizes the need to hold the institution and individuals accountable to high standards (Harlem Children's Zone, n.d., p. 2-4).

Figure 2. Harlem Children's Zone Pipeline
Source: The Harlem Children's Zone Project Model

These five principles, despite being named HCZ principles, are, for the most part, commonly discussed by other works that focus on the community school concept. However, 'Principle Two: The HCZ Pipeline,' could be viewed as a novel contribution. Arguably, the

HCZ was the first organization to suggest that community schools should provide a ‘continuum’ of services.

Speaking to the uniqueness of ‘Principle Two: HCZ Pipeline,’ Danielle Hanson, a contributor to the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, presents a detailed list of the programs included in the pipeline. Hanson notes that the continuous support for a child begins with the Babe College, a nine-week parenting class for parents, and continues to the College Success Office, where current high school students are given help with college admissions and high school graduates are provided with support once they enroll in college (Hanson, 2013).

Works on the management of the HCZ commonly focus on describing the five principles at the center of the HCZ, thus evading the topic of day-to-day management. On a positive note, though, authors generally offer detailed descriptions of each principle, which could help community school leaders with the organizational design and management of their school. However, this positive characteristic comes at the expense of teaching community school leaders how to efficiently and effectively manage the daily operations of the programs.

2.4.1.5 Summary: Practitioner-Based Works – Operations

The range of practitioner-based works offers a largely consistent view on the operations of community schools. Works by the Coalition for Community Schools established a foundation, giving great importance to funding and management. These works describe how essential it is for community schools to secure both financial and non-financial support. Furthermore, the works describe the importance of creating ‘conditions for learning,’ such as establishing a culture of collaboration, and focusing on ‘organizational essentials,’ including having a community school coordinator position. Additionally, works

by the Coalition for Community Schools introduce ‘cross-boundary leadership’ and three main leadership groups. Works by nonprofit organizations largely support and further develop works published by the coalition. The Federation for Community Schools, for example, introduced detailed information on establishing a community school, discussing a ‘pre-implementation’ stage and an implementation stage. It should be noted, though, that one nonprofit organization contests a view held by the Coalition for Community Schools regarding funding. The Partnership for Children and Youth asserts that community schools need not focus on securing new and/or additional funding, as partnerships can prove more valuable. Works by for-profit organizations also largely support and contribute to the body of knowledge on community schools. A set of reports by LaFrance and Associates reveals the need for community schools to focus on expansion and parent involvement. Similarly, works on the Harlem Children’s Zone also support and augment the body of knowledge on community schools. Uniquely, some of these works introduce the concept of a community school constructing a continuous pipeline of programs and services for students and other community members. In the end, broadly speaking, practitioner-based works on community school operations largely complement one another, emphasizing the importance of financial and non-financial support, partnerships, collaboration, diverse offerings, and engagement.

2.4.2 Academic Works: Operations

Although the majority of the works on community school operations are not academic, some academic works on the topic exist. These academic works address both community school funding and management. Specifically, the works that discuss funding identify research findings that can help community school leaders design a funding strategy, and the works that discuss management can help leaders establish community school partnerships and address managerial topics that deserve particular attention.

The limited body of academic work on community school funding commonly offers well-researched findings, unlike practitioner-based works that generally offer advice or step-by-step guides on funding community schools. For example, Economic Modeling Specialist Inc., authors of “The Economic Impact of Communities in Schools” (2012), researched the impact of community school funding in lower- and upper- bound income communities. The group concluded that:

Some affiliates are operating in regions with very low wages, as can be seen by the lower bound of \$22,024 per year. Where CIS [Communities in Schools] has a presence in an impoverished area, such as this, the costs of serving students is very high... CIS affiliates operating in affluent areas where earnings often exceed \$71,000 per year have very high benefit-cost ratios since building the framework for success is less costly (Economic Modeling Specialist Inc., 2012, p.22).

This finding is particularly valuable to national and local federation model community school leaders who are funding operations in both lower- and upper- bound communities. These leaders are clearly informed that schools in lower-bound communities may require a greater investment than schools in upper-bound communities, even though both may be expected to yield similar results. This finding enhances the largely practitioner-driven knowledge base on community schools by proving a valuable conclusion that is drawn from quantitative research.

The authors of the work also discuss strategies that can help community school leaders increase the economic output of their schools. They state:

There are two fundamental ways an affiliate may improve their economic returns. One would be to increase the number of graduates (and promotions) without infusions of additional funds. This method would cause benefits to grow without incurring additional costs... The second approach would be to decrease funding while maintaining the number of graduates (and promotions) generated. This will cause the benefit-cost ratio to rise through the reduction of costs... These results should raise the question of how to make the dollars that are already there more productive (Economic Modeling Specialist Inc., 2012, p.22).

The topic of strategic funding is relevant to all community school leaders, given that community school leaders commonly confront difficult decisions concerning funding and are often challenged on the topic of cost to benefit. This finding also augments the mainly practitioner-driven community school knowledge base by offering insight on economic theories central to the community school concept.

In addition to academic works on community school funding, there are academic works on community school management. The works primarily discuss school partnerships and key organizational areas. Professor Mavis Sanders, author of “Community Involvement in Schools from Concept to Practice” (2003), asserts that there are four primary types of partnerships: business, university, service learning (i.e. student volunteer programs), and school-linked service integration (i.e. schools link with social service agencies and health providers). Two main points that Professor Sanders stresses are that “different rationales for community involvement can be realized through a variety of partnership activities” and that the success of partnerships largely depends on planning (Sanders, 2003, p.164). This leads to the view that it is important to understand each type of partnership, its motivations, its potential, and its key principles. Sanders (2003) also discusses professional preparation, partnership selection, and partnership reflection. She asserts that community school leaders should concentrate on these three key areas. In another work Sanders (2016) offers insight on key managerial areas, writing:

Principals of full-service community schools should possess a comprehensive understanding of leadership that includes each of Richardson’s (2009) four dimensions: structural [vital to effective school operations], relational [connections between individuals and groups], political [uses of power for advancement], and symbolic [core values]. Without such understanding, dimensions of leadership of particular importance for the administration of full-service community schools may be overlooked, limiting these schools’ overall effectiveness for students and families (Sanders, 2016, p.172).

Whalen (2008) adds to the topic of community school management by examining the leadership structure of community schools. Whalen argues that particular attention should be placed on identifying a capable and visionary principal (i.e. one who believes in “walking the walk,” promoting “instructional leadership,” and leveraging “political acumen”), implementing a dynamic leadership structure, developing a professional learning community, encouraging fiscal and administrative autonomy, and maintaining strong ties with the central office (Whalen, 2008, p.12-16). Dobbie and Fryer (2009) also add to the topic of community school management by discussing how, based on their research, successful community schools recruit high-quality teachers, employ value-added test measures that incentivize teachers, conduct an annual staff meeting focused on performance, and support teachers, which allows them to spend the majority of their time on teaching, rather than on administrative tasks. Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff (2015) also contribute to the body of knowledge on community school management by discussing organizational collaborations. The researchers warn that these types of collaboration, which are a central element of community schools, come with risks. They write:

[1] Individuals participating in a collaborative venture may find themselves juggling the separate and potentially conflicting identities of their home organization and the collaborative initiative, creating the risk of divided loyalties... [2] Sometimes organizations and individuals may use collaboration as an opportunity to gain advantages, including political and fiscal, which puts other participants at risk of losing their own positions... [3] A final risk is that while organizations often seek collaboration to acquire resources they cannot get on their own, collaboration itself generates costs that may make the scramble for resources even more worrisome (Henig, Riehl, Rebell, & Wolff, 2015, p.37).

Overall, these academic findings largely augment the practitioner-based findings that stress the importance of valuable partnerships, strong leadership, and a capable staff, while also bringing greater clarity to the topic.

Despite there being limited academic works on the operations of community schools, those that exist provide insight on the funding and management of community

schools. Without these works, leaders would not have access to academic research on the funding of lower- and upper-bound schools, strategic funding strategies, an explicit list of four types of community school partnerships, or key managerial areas that should be focused on. Overall, this literature provides, at the very least, policymakers and community school leaders with research evidence that can inform the planning, establishment, and management phases.

2.4.3 Summary: Operations

Together, the four sets of practitioner-based works – published by the Coalition for Community schools, nonprofit organizations, for-profit consultancy groups, and a variety of organizations on the HCZ – and the academic works form a knowledge base on community school operations. Collectively, these works identify and summarize key components pertaining to the funding and management of community schools. For example, regarding funding, the works make it clear that community school leaders should secure financial and non-financial resources, leverage funds, recognize the importance of financial diversity, acknowledge differences between funding lower- and upper-bound schools, and understand funding strategies. Furthermore, regarding management, the works encourage leaders to hire a community school coordinator, have local needs drive decisions, involve teachers, parents, and community members, recognize the four main types of partnerships, prudently select a diverse collection of partners, carefully grow these partnerships, collect data, engage politically, be aware of community perception, deliberately plan to scale-up, and be patient. The consistency of the insights and recommendations – with only one glistening contradiction pertaining to the funding of community schools – confirms their value.

It must be noted that even with all the discussions of community school operations, there was never any mention of how community school models can have an impact on the

funding and management of community schools. Thus, for instance, none of the works discusses if one model possesses the potential to secure funds easier than the others, or if one model has a history of poor staffing levels. This gap in the literature serves as the basis of my research, while the literature on the operations helps frame my research question.

2.5 Community Schools in the United States of America: Impacts

After examining community school operations, it is important to understand the diverse impacts linked to community schools. The literature highlights ‘access’ and ‘human’ impacts. ‘Access’ impacts result from community schools granting students, parents, and other community members access to particular programs, services, and buildings. For example, community schools are often described as having improved the access students have to physical and mental services, food programs, and community events. Additionally, ‘human’ impacts pertain to stunts or improvements students, parents, and other community members experience primarily as a result of attending the school or getting involved with an academic, socio-economic, or community engagement program or service associated with the school. For instance, some argue that community schools have led students to achieve better academic performance results in terms of stronger standardized test scores and to realize a variety of ‘non-academic performance’ outcomes, such as improved health, feeling more confident, and enhanced enjoyment.

2.5.1 Practitioner-Based Works: Impacts

Similar to the previous section, the practitioner-based works in this section are separated into the following four groups, based on the type of author and the topic: Works by the Coalition for Community Schools on Community Schools, Works by Nonprofit Organizations on Community Schools, Works by For-Profit Consultancy Groups on

Community Schools, and Works by a Variety of Organizations on the Harlem Children's Zone. Once again, separating the works into groups helps readers identify potential biases more easily and if the topic is community schools or, specifically, the Harlem Children's Zone.

The topic of community school impacts is not as harmonious as the topic of community school operations. There are individuals who argue that community schools are unequivocally linked to favorable 'human' impacts, such as strong academic results and achievements, while others are less absolute. Generally, works by the Coalition for Community Schools, other nonprofit organizations, and for-profit consultancy groups almost exclusively cite only positive 'human' impacts, while works by a variety of organizations on the Harlem Children's Zone are less definitive. The topic of 'access' impacts, though, is less contentious. The majority of individuals agree that students and other community members associated with a community school have access to a variety of offerings, which can touch upon academics, socio-economics, and community engagement.

Although there are quality practitioner-based works on the impacts community schools have achieved, it must be noted that many of the works possess weaknesses. Generally, practitioner-based works do not rigorously or longitudinally review the community school concept. Specifically, the works are primarily descriptive and do not comprehensively review impacts tied to academic performance (e.g. both Math and English standardized exam scores of students), 'academic-related' elements (e.g. student interest levels), or 'non-academic-related' elements (e.g. adult ESL attainment levels) from a school-wide and/or narrow, specific program perspective over a short- and long-term basis. Thus, it is unclear, for example, if community schools, over the long-term, attain academic results and achievements that are stronger than those of traditional public schools. Despite the weaknesses, noteworthy practitioner-based works do exist.

2.5.1.1 Works by the Coalition for Community Schools on Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools has published a variety of works on community school impacts. These works cite a variety of positive ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts that particular community schools have achieved. Common ‘access’ impacts include individuals having access to physical and mental health services, food programs, and school buildings. Typical ‘human’ impacts involve academic performance (e.g. standardized test scores), ‘academic-related’ elements (e.g. attendance rates), and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (e.g. community engagement levels). Overall, though, one of the most pressing weaknesses of these reports is that some of the claims are unsubstantiated, as a result of primarily being descriptive.

The coalition clearly suggests that students, their family members, and other community members associated with a community school, by and large, have access to a variety of programs, services, and opportunities at the school. For example, Dryfoos (2002b) discusses the range of socio-economic services, including physical health services, that are available to community school students. Similarly, Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville (2012) discuss how community schools serve as a single access point that can effectively target and address a variety of socio-economic and community-based challenges.

The coalition also presents a range of ‘human’ impacts, arguing that community schools attain strong academic results and noteworthy academic achievements. Broadly, Dryfoos (2002b) stresses that community schools have helped students acquire skills. Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) provide evidence of academic advancement by asserting that 75% of the initiatives they evaluated saw improvements in student achievement. Similarly, Blank & Pearson (2009) support the position by stating:

Improvement in student academic performance is significant among community schools. An independent review of the national community school initiative, Communities in Schools, has reported that students in their schools excelled significantly in math and reading scores over students in other schools (Blank & Pearson, 2009, p.1).

The following year, Blank & Pearson (2010) offered two more examples of academic achievement. Blank & Pearson state, “In a 2009 study comparing Children’s Aid Society (CAS) community schools to other New York City schools, CAS schools’ students scored significantly higher on math tests than students in other city schools” (Blank & Pearson, 2010, p.1). Blank & Pearson also state, “The 150 schools in the Chicago Community School Initiative (CSI) have delivered standardized test results that show a steady closing of the achievement gap with other Chicago schools” (Blank & Pearson, 2010, p.1). Similarly, Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank (2011) provide two examples of community schools having yielded positive academic impacts. The authors state, “A state-funded program evaluation of Cedar Hall found that test scores increased by nearly 15 percent in the school year immediately following implementation of the full-service model” (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011, p.94). They also state, “On state achievement tests, grade 5 students in high-implementing TACSI [Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative] community schools were outperforming by 30 points grade 5 students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in non-community schools” (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011, p.118). Additionally, Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012) expand upon the achievement in Tulsa, affirming that “Students in community schools in and around Tulsa, Oklahoma, for example, are outperforming noncommunity schools on state tests in math by 32 points and reading by 19 points” (Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville, 2012, p.2-3).

In addition to citing a variety of positive ‘human’ impacts pertaining to academic performance, the coalition also cites an assortment of positive ‘human’ impacts pertaining to ‘academic-related’ elements. For example, Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) found that

40% of the evaluated initiatives saw improvements in attendance. Similarly, Blank & Pearson (2009) found that “Community schools have a significant impact on reducing the dropout rate... Higher attendance in community schools contributes to improved achievement. Children in community schools want to come to school and as a result they learn more” (Blank & Pearson, 2009, p.2). Axelroth (2009) also found evidence of increases in attendance rates, in addition to college acceptance and college going rates, and Blank, Jacobson, and Melaville (2012) found strong gains in attendance and behavioral areas.

The coalition also discusses how particular community schools can help strengthen various ‘non-academic-related’ elements. However, not all of the claims are supported by empirical evidence, but some are supported by this type of evidence. For example, Axelroth (2009) asserts that opening the doors of schools to the community can help parents support their child/children’s learning, while advancing their education. Blank & Pearson (2009) write:

Community schools promote better use of school buildings and neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents. Benefits to families – such as increased physical, economic, and emotional stability – contribute to the stability of their communities. So do more and better relationships among community agencies, businesses, and civic organizations, accompanied by a greater awareness of the services they offer (Blank & Pearson, 2009, p.3).

And Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville (2012) believe that community schools can, among other things, engage communities. Although many of these claims are based on the personal accounts of community school experts, it must be acknowledged that many of the claims do not offer detailed, empirical evidence in their support. However, there are a few works that strive to address this void. For example, Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) found that 35% of the evaluated initiatives saw increases in community use of school buildings, more family awareness of community agencies, and greater community access to facilities that

were previously unknown or unaffordable. Blank & Pearson (2010) add more substantiated claims by citing the following two examples:

- Carlin Springs Elementary School in Arlington, VA... serves a high population of children from non-English speaking families. To improve communications with parents, the school provides adult ESL classes. This effort has paid off as 95% of parents taking ESL classes also attended parent-teacher conferences at the school and report that they are now more likely to be engaged in their children's education.
- In Sayre High School in Philadelphia and Independence School District in Independence, Missouri, 90% of Family Fitness Night participants reported that they are eating healthier and exercising more (Blank & Pearson, 2010, p.2).

In all, it is clear that there are community schools that yield positive non-academic-related, community-based impacts.

The works by the coalition primarily offer examples of particular community schools providing students and other community members access to a range of offerings, and furthermore, particular community schools attaining strong academic results, noteworthy academic achievements, and other positive 'human' impacts. Thus, at this time, it is unclear if the community school concept or exemplary community schools are the force behind the positive impacts. This uncertainty is primarily due to evidence being based upon personal accounts, rather than empirical research, and a lack of rigorous, longitudinal research.

2.5.1.2 Works by Nonprofit Organizations on Community Schools

In addition to the Coalition for Community Schools, other nonprofit organizations have published works on the 'access' impacts and 'human' impacts of community schools. For the most part, the findings mirror those of the coalition. The works indicate that community schools provide students and other community members with access to educational programs, healthcare services, and other offerings. Furthermore, the works

contend that the select community schools attain strong academic results and notable academic achievements and that the schools address ‘academic-related’ elements (e.g. student engagement levels) and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (e.g. parent engagement levels). Unlike the works by the coalition, these works, collectively, present more empirical evidence, somewhat averting continuous questions over the validity of the findings.

Works by nonprofit organizations express that the community school students have access to a variety of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings. Collectively, Grossman and Vang (2009), the Hartford Public School District (2011), and Hemmerich (2012) craft an image of the community school that transcends that of the traditional public school. Together, these works establish that community schools are keenly focused on offering students and other community members access to academic, socio-economic, and community-based programs and services. In particular, Grossman and Vang (2009) write, “Research has found that school-based health services improve youth’s access to health care... [and the concept has been] improving access to and participation in services for both youth and families” (Grossman and Vang, 2009, p.1-3). The Partnership for Children and Youth (2013) also offers a glimpse into the broad nature of a community school, arguably leading to the conclusion that the community school concept is largely based on combining a school with a community center.

In terms of ‘human’ impacts, nonprofit organizations, like the coalition, cite instances of community schools attaining strong academic results and notable achievements. For example, Grossman and Vang (2009) suggest that community schools achieve strong academic performance results. Expanding upon this claim, the Hartford Public School District (2011) states:

Overall, afterschool participants scored at proficient levels in 2011 as or more often than in 2010, where non-participant scores dropped in math and reading between 2010 and 2011. Proficiency level increases between 2009 and 2011 were higher for afterschool participants than non-participants (Hartford Public School District, 2011, p.17-19).

Additionally, Hemmerich (2012) concludes:

Of the 25 studies and over 70 school initiatives reviewed, the most common outcome among community schools was improved academic achievement on math and reading standardized tests. Findings indicate that the vast majority of students participating in community school programs outperformed free/reduced lunch students in state math and reading tests at comparison schools. Community schools also increased the number of students meeting proficiency levels and state benchmarks for reading and math. In many evaluations, academic achievement had a positive correlation with the number of days students attended community school programs (Hemmerich, 2012, p.7-8).

The Partnership for Children and Youth (2013, p.11), which offers an even more descriptive perspective and separates results into populations, found:

Evidence of the close connection between social/emotional support and academic achievement. For example, data from the SCUSD [Sacramento City Unified School District] Village Project (2004-05) demonstrated the following successes for students receiving YFRC [Youth & Family Resource Center] services who had presented poor grades, chronic truancy and/or extreme behavior problems:

- Over 77% (N = 705) of students at high risk of academic failure referred by teachers to SCUSD YFRC's maintained or improved their math and English scores on the California Standards Test.
- Of students referred by teachers for academic challenges who were functioning below basic proficiency in English or math, 33% improved their language skills and 27% increased their level of math proficiency.
- Of those referred to the YFRC's for behavioral challenges who were functioning below basic proficiency in math (N = 355) or English (N = 394), 30% increased their level of Math proficiency and 28% improved their language skills.

Despite nonprofit works providing data in support of favorable academic findings, it should be acknowledged that 'unfavorable' findings (e.g. the Math scores of a community school that are below those of district averages) received limited attention.

Some works published by nonprofit organizations also cite that community schools can be linked to favorable 'academic-related' elements, which pertain to attendance,

engagement, and mental health status. Grossman and Vang (2009), the Hartford Public School District (2011), Hemmerich (2012), and the Partnership for Children and Youth (2013) found that students of community schools missed fewer days than their counterparts. Furthermore, Hemmerich (2012) also found that the evaluated community schools had “lower rates of disciplinary infractions” (Hemmerich, 2012, p.8). Additionally, Collins, Carrier, Moore, & Paisano-Trujillo (2010) concluded, “Students’ involvement in sports, the arts, and other out-of-school activities increased their school engagement as well as extended their learning (Collins, Carrier, Moore, & Paisano-Trujillo, 2010, p.2). Furthermore, the authors state, “Participants also reported that integrated services addressing the students’ family housing needs removed barriers to students’ school participation” (Collins, Carrier, Moore, & Paisano-Trujillo, 2010, p.2). In terms of healthcare, the Federation for Community Schools concurs with the views of the Coalition for Community Schools by asserting that services administered by community school staff members can help students achieve optimal mental and physical health. Positive youth development is further supported by the Partnership for Children and Youth (2013). The groups found that “64.9% of students served by the OMSD [Ontario-Montclair School District] counseling program showed significant improvement in mental health outcomes (as measured by the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale)” (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p.14). In light of all the positive findings, Hemmerich (2012) signals caution over unanimously drawing a positive conclusion about the community school concept. The author writes, in regard to his study, “It is important to note that only a few programs cited better access to healthcare or improved general health in their outcomes” (Hemmerich, 2012, p.8).

Several works by nonprofit organizations also contend that community schools are linked to favorable ‘non-academic-related’ elements that pertain to both students and adult

community members, such as strong student-school bond levels and strong parent engagement levels. Grossman and Vang (2009) found that community schools can experience an increase in the connection students feel with their school and an increase in family involvement in the schooling of students. Similarly, Hemmerich (2012) found that community schools “increased feeling of collective trust” and “parental engagement” (Hemmerich, 2012, p.8). Collins, Carrier, Moore, & Paisano-Trujillo (2010, p.2) even found that one school had the goal of increasing parent involvement by 20% the year integrated services were implemented; however, the school superseded the projected goal by over 300%. Furthermore, the Federation for Community Schools maintains that programs and services at a community school can help parents become advocates for students and help community members gain skills. Additionally, the Partnership for Children and Youth (2013), having completed a study on community school services and families, found a “24% improvement in parent skills; 17% improvement in employment and income... [and] 19% increase in access to community supports” (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013, p.14).

Works by nonprofit organizations confirm that there are community schools that are linked to both positive ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts. However, as was stated about works by the Coalition for Community Schools, it is unclear if this is a portrayal of the community school concept or, simply, specific, exemplary community schools. Furthermore, the somewhat modest levels of empirical evidence draw into question the validity of some of the findings. Nevertheless, nonprofit organizations offer various accounts of positive ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts.

2.5.1.3 Works by For-Profit Consultancy Groups on Community Schools

Works by for-profit consultancy groups tend to offer some of the most rigorously appraised findings on community school impacts. Works by LaFrance and Associates discuss both ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts. The works of the group are particularly well-respected, because their findings on ‘human’ impacts frequently separate statistically significant findings from those that are not statistically significant, but common. Although the latter type of finding is not ‘significant’ in statistical terms, it does, at the very least, highlight findings that occur frequently. Common statistically significant findings include improvements in grades and scores, attendance rates, and elements pertaining to youth development, and there are also some findings on elements pertaining to youth development that are not statistically significant, but are informative, due to their frequency. Separating the findings into the two groups – statistically significant and not statistically significant, but common – allows readers to recognize the strength of the findings. In addition to LaFrance and Associates, there are other for-profit consultancy groups that publish noteworthy works on the topic of community school impacts.

As with practitioner-based works by the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations, works by for-profit consultancy groups acknowledge that select community schools grant students access to a variety of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings. LaFrance and Associates, for example, acknowledges that students at the examined community schools can have access to an academic tutoring service, physical and mental health services, and a variety of community engagement opportunities. Furthermore, the group highlights how parents of students at the examined community schools can have access to educational and social opportunities.

LaFrance and Associates found that many of the reviewed community schools have attained noteworthy academic achievements, thus, for the most part, supporting the broad

findings of the Coalition for Community Schools and other nonprofit organizations. For example, the group found that students of two **Iowa** community schools, the Harding community school and the Moulton community school, experienced improvements in grades. In terms of the former school, the group writes, “The impact on Harding students has been positive and noticeable. Math grades have increased for FSCS (full-service community school) participants” (La France Associates, 2005a, p.68). As for the latter school, the group writes, “The impact on Moulton students has been positive and noticeable. English grades have increased for FSCS participants” (La France Associates, 2005a, p.113). Similarly, LaFrance and Associates found that students at select **Maryland** community schools also experienced improvements in grades (La France Associates, 2005b).

Two works published by LaFrance and Associates on the academic achievements of students at select **Pennsylvania** and **Washington** community schools are also particularly noteworthy. Both works identify statistically significant findings. The group writes:

Pennsylvania

- Case 1: We found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcome:
 - Academic achievement
(La France Associates, 2005c, p.27-28).
- Case 2: In looking for the different ways in which change may manifest among participators we found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcome:
 - Academic achievement
(La France Associates, 2005c, p.100-101).

Washington

- In looking for the different ways in which change may manifest among participators we found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcome:
 - Academic achievement
(La France Associates, 2005d, p.34-35).

These statistically significant findings contend that the select community schools have experienced academic improvements.

Although works by LaFrance and Associates suggest that community schools are linked to notable academic achievements, there are other for-profit consultancy groups that offer findings contesting this position. Murray and Ganet (2010), for example, assert that the community schools they reviewed “do not consistently meet academic year progress – set by district – for any subgroup other than White and Asian/Pacific Islander” (Murray et al., 2010, p.19). In short, for-profit consultancy groups do not reach a consensus on the academic results and achievements of community schools. However, there is a significant body of work that concludes that select community schools have attained notable academic achievements.

Beyond solely examining academic performance, LaFrance and Associates also reviewed ‘academic-related’ elements, such as interest levels, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as family cohesion levels, pertaining to the community schools. Uniquely, in some instances, the results are divided between findings that are statistically significant and those that are not. In terms of the select **Iowa** community schools, LaFrance and Associates found that both of the community schools saw improvements in a variety of youth development indicators, such as relationship quality and aspirations. The group writes:

The number of school absences for this year’s students decreased from last year [at the Harding community school]. FSCS participants have greater positive peer and adult relationships as a result of their participation in after-school programs; they are more oriented toward learning and express a greater feeling of self-esteem. Parents say that FSCS participation has made their child like school more and the future educational aspirations of FSCS participants increased over the year” (La France Associates, 2005a, p.68)... [Moulton] FSCS have greater positive adult relationships as a result of their participation in after-school programs; they express satisfaction with and attachment to school” (La France Associates, 2005a, p.113).

LaFrance and Associates, in comparing the baseline responses of students at select **Maryland** community schools with exit responses, isolated the following findings:

- 77% of students who said they wanted help with drug or alcohol use at baseline no longer said they needed help in this area at follow-up;
- 76% of students said they wanted help with managing their anger at baseline and not at follow-up;
- Likewise, 75% of students who said they wanted help with health problems and 71% who said they wanted help with emotional problems at baseline respectively, no longer needed help in these areas at follow-up (La France Associates, 2005b, p.38).

Furthermore, the group found that these Maryland community schools achieved improvements in curriculum understanding levels, positive peer and adult relationships, interest in education levels, self-esteem levels, and communication levels (La France Associates, 2005b).

LaFrance and Associates also evaluated ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements connected to the **Pennsylvania** and **Washington** community schools. In terms of the Pennsylvania community schools, the group states:

Pennsylvania

- Case 1: We found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcomes:
 - School behavior;
 - School attendance;
 - Positive peer relationships;
 - Positive adult relationships; and
 - Interest in non-academic subjects
- Case 1: For the following youth outcomes, while there were not statistically significant findings, we surfaced volumes of qualitative indicators that youth do experience positive changes in these areas:
 - Orientation towards learning;
 - Self-efficacy;
 - Positive future orientation;
 - Social support;
 - Sense of safety;
 - Exposure to new activities; and
 - Participation in school activities (La France Associates, 2005c, p.27-28).
- Case 2: We found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcomes:
 - Positive peer relationships; and
 - Sense of safety

- Case 2: For the following youth outcomes, while there were not statistically significant findings, we surfaced data... that youth do experience positive changes in these areas:
 - School attendance;
 - School behavior;
 - Satisfaction with/attachment to school;
 - Orientation towards learning;
 - Self-efficacy; and
 - Positive future orientation (La France Associates, 2005c, p.100-101).

Washington

- We found statistically significant findings for the following youth outcomes:
 - School behavior;
 - Satisfaction with/attachment to school;
 - Orientation towards learning;
 - Interest in non-academic subjects; and
 - Positive peer relationships
- For the following youth outcomes, while there were not statistically significant findings, we surfaced data... that youth do experience positive changes in these areas:
 - School attendance;
 - Self-efficacy;
 - Positive future orientation;
 - Positive adult relationships;
 - Social support;
 - Interest in non-academic subjects;
 - Exposure to new activities;
 - Participation in school activities; and
 - Sense of safety (La France Associates, 2005d, p.34-35).

The statistically significant findings show that the examined community schools achieved improvements in a variety of youth development indicators. Furthermore, the common findings, while not being statistically significant, largely supplement this position.

The examined works by for-profit consultancy groups generally support previous findings on community schools, which contend that specific community schools provide students with access to a range of offerings and are linked to an assortment of positive ‘human’ impacts. Once again, though, these specific findings do not clearly demonstrate that the community school concept is responsible for the positive impacts – it could be that the favorable impacts are simply linked to exemplary community schools. The lack of emphasis on weak or unfavorable impacts also draws into question the quality of the

research. Nevertheless, acknowledging all the positive impacts that specific community schools have yielded establishes the potential that the concept is tied to the positive impacts, not simply particular community schools.

2.5.1.4 Works by a Variety of Organizations on the Harlem Children's Zone

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), primarily due to its extensive media coverage and association with public figures, has been assessed by a variety of organizations and government departments, including the Brookings Institution, The Heritage Foundation, and the New York City Department of Education. Collectively, researchers from these organizations recognize that the Harlem Children's Zone – which could be categorized as a local federation of community schools – has helped students gain access to academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings, while also helping adult community members gain access to socio-economic and community engagement offerings. Researchers from these organizations have also assessed the 'human' impacts of the HCZ that relate to academics. However, a unanimous conclusion on this topic matter was not reached.

Irrespective of their view on the 'human' impacts associated with the Harlem Children's Zone, researchers consistently acknowledge that the HCZ provides students and adult community members with access to a variety of resources. Whitehurst and Croft (2010), Dobbie and Fryer (2009), and Hanson (2013) acknowledge that the HCZ provides students with a range of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement opportunities. Collectively, it is recognized that students have access, for example, to academic tutoring, physical health and mental health services, food programs, and afterschool activities. Furthermore, it is recognized that adult community members have access, for instance, to parenting workshops, adult education classes, and community events.

Views surrounding the academic performance results of the Harlem Children's Zone are more contentious than the views surrounding its 'access' impacts. The quarrels over academic performance largely surround the scale of the operation and its connection to academic results (i.e. Is such a large scale operation truly necessary to yield strong academic results?), and, furthermore, the actual strength of the academic results. Whitehurst and Croft (2010), for example, analyzed the effectiveness of the HCZ by assessing the work of Dobbie and Fryer (2009) and other data on the HCZ. Whitehurst and Croft acknowledge that community schools possess the potential to achieve strong academic results; however, they question if the "Broader, Bolder" approach is necessary. Whitehurst and Croft state:

In light of this finding and other results that show no relationship between community services and academic outcomes, they [Dobbie and Fryer] provide a conclusion that appears overly generous to the possible role of the community components of the HCZ: 'We conclude... that high-quality schools or high-quality schools coupled with community investments generate the achievement gains. Community investments alone cannot explain the results'. The more parsimonious conclusion might have been that the results can be explained without recourse to community investments... In contrast to disappointing results for Broader, Bolder initiatives, there is a large and growing body of evidence that schools themselves can have significant impacts on student achievement. The most powerful educational effects over which we have any societal control occur within the walls of schools. They are the effects produced by good teachers, effective curriculum, and the changes in leadership, management, culture, and time to learn that are incorporated into schools that beat the odds, including successful charter schools (Whitehurst and Croft, 2010, p.3-9).

Similar to Whitehurst and Croft, Hanson (2013) acknowledges that HCZ schools have the capacity to achieve favorable academic results, but questions elements of the approach.

Hanson clearly acknowledges the favorable academic results and notable achievements of the HCZ, writing:

In the 10 years from 2002 to 2011, 97.3 percent of the four-year olds at Harlem Gems scored average, advanced, or very advanced on the scale, exceeding the 84.1 percent expected to do so based on test norms... In fiscal year 2011, 95 percent of seniors in HCZ afterschool programs were accepted into further education... Less than 10 percent of their students drop out of school – significantly lower than the national average of 43.6 percent (Hanson, 2013, p.2-5).

However, questioning the HCZ approach, Hanson writes:

There are legitimate questions about the potential for replicating HCZ in cities across the country. The limiting nature of basing academic achievement on a set of standardized tests, the heavy cost of the Zone's pipeline model, and the Zone's relatively short and sometimes ambiguous history have given people pause. While the Harlem Children's Zone has been very successful at improving educational attainment and is making great strides in reweaving the social fabric of Harlem, how or whether the HCZ model could be applied in other communities is still unclear. For instance, is there a uniquely Harlem aspect and local culture that is a key to its success (Hanson, 2013, p.10)?

Research from the New York City Department of Education (2015), unlike the previous works, is the only research that plainly calls into question the academic results of the HCZ.

The Department published the following findings:

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy I (High School)

- Overall Grade: A
- Student Performance: A
- Student Progress: A

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy I (Elementary School)

- Overall Grade: B
- Student Performance: B
- Student Progress: C

Harlem Children's Zone Promise Academy II

- Overall Grade: C
- Student Performance: A
- Student Progress: D

This heterogeneous collection of grades, where one HCZ school achieved strong academic results and another school did not, leads to questions about the consistency of the academic results of the HCZ.

In the end, the research largely concludes that the Harlem Children's Zone grants students and other community members access to a variety of offerings, but draws into question if the HCZ has the ability to achieve strong, consistent academic results. Although there is uncertainty regarding the academic performance of the HCZ, it should be acknowledged that HCZ schools have demonstrated the ability to achieve strong academic

results. This should encourage researchers to conduct more studies on the topic.

Furthermore, researching this subject will address a major weakness associated with the topic of HCZ effectiveness: lack of research.

2.5.2 Academic Works: Impacts

Academic work on community school impacts, arguably, is the most rigorous body of work on the topic of ‘impacts,’ with findings derived from empirical research methods. These works address both ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts. The findings pertaining to ‘access’ impacts are largely favorable and unanimous – once again. However, the findings relating to ‘human’ impacts are not unanimous. In particular, quarrels revolve around the academic performance of community schools. Some works identify favorable academic achievements, whereas others do not. Views on the ability of community schools to address ‘academic-related’ elements, though, are mostly favorable and unanimous.

Proponents largely contend that community schools can help students and other community members access a range of programs and services, which focus on academics, socio-economics, and community engagement. For example, Whalen (2002) found a range of programs being offered to the entire family, not only to students; Whalen (2007) concluded that roughly 40% of the schools offered Saturday programs and services for students and families; Bireda (2009) found that many community schools offer health services, behavior counseling, and family therapy; and Rada and Lucas (2011) concluded, “At the Garfield case site, there appears to be an understanding that school is for the advancement of all stakeholders and not just limited to the children” (Rada and Lucas, 2011, p.23).

In addition to favorable ‘access’ impacts, some researchers assert that particular community schools are linked to strong academic achievements. Whalen (2002) found that

the reading rates of all three of the evaluated community schools exceeded Chicago Public School average rates, and the math rates of two of the three community schools significantly exceeded Chicago Public School average rates. In another work, Whalen (2007) identifies that, between 2001 and 2006, Community School Initiative schools showed greater gains in math and science standardized test scores than their counterparts – but, it should be noted, the standardized test scores in reading, math, and science of the Community School Initiative schools were comparable to Chicago Public School averages. Additionally, Bireda (2009), Adams (2010), and Dobbie and Fryer (2009) also cite a variety of favorable academic achievements that were attained by community schools. Specifically, Bireda (2009) concludes that numerous examples of community schools realizing gains in reading and math do exist, and Adams (2010, p.4) notes, “The evidence suggests that bringing the community school model to scale in TACSI [Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative] schools has the potential to enhance student achievement and to narrow the achievement gap attributed to poverty”. Research on the Harlem Children’s Zone also provides further evidence of favorable academic achievements. Dobbie and Fryer (2009) write:

Harlem Children’s Zone is enormously effective at increasing the achievement of the poorest minority children. Taken at face value, the effects in middle school are enough to reverse the black-white achievement gap in mathematics and reduce it in English Language Arts... Put differently, the typical student upon entering the HCZ charter school was at the 20th percentile of the white distribution. After three years, the typical student is at the 55th percentile... Lottery winners and losers have very similar ELA [English language acquisition] scores from fourth through seventh grade. In eighth grade, Promise Academy students distance themselves from the control group. These results are statistically meaningful, but much less so than the math results (Dobbie and Fryer, 2009, p.1-15).

Researchers provide evidence of community schools attaining favorable academic achievements. However, more comprehensive, longitudinal research would benefit the field.

All the studies on the academic performance of community schools are not positive. There are researchers who are cautious about concluding that community schools are synonymous with strong academic results and notable academic achievements. Adam (2010, p.3-4) concludes that “Significant math and reading achievement differences were not found when comparing students in Tulsa Area Community School Initiative (TACSI) schools and comparable non TACSI schools... (but) the evidence suggests that bringing the community school model to scale in TACSI schools has the potential to enhance student achievement and to narrow the achievement gap attributed to poverty”. Additionally, Rada and Lucas (2011) found that out of the two community schools evaluated, one increased its Illinois State Report Card score by almost 15 points three years after adopting the community school model, while the other school lost over 16 points during that time. Furthermore, Castrechini and London (2012, p.33) found that “The associations demonstrated between community schools and student outcomes do not necessarily mean that community schools give rise to these outcomes. Still, the data show some clear patterns linking participation to improvements in English language development for English learners”. In the end, collectively, the works on the academic performance of community schools yield inconsistent findings.

Despite concerns over the academic performance of community schools, researchers generally suggest that community schools are linked to a variety of strong ‘academic-related’ elements. Whalen (2002) found an increased student involvement rate in the after-school program; Whalen (2007) identified improvements in the areas of homework completion, in-class participation, and classroom behavior; and Bireda (2009) saw a reduction in the dropout rate. Additionally, Bireda (2009) writes, “A review of research on comprehensive school-based health care found that student attendance and grades improved when basic health needs were being met at school” (Bireda, 2009, p.6). These findings

suggest improvement in important ‘intermediate’ outcomes, which are important in their own right, but, moreover, may promote better attainment in the long term.

Academic works on community school impacts, for the most part, reflect the overall conclusion that can be drawn from other collections of works on community school impacts. Community schools are believed to help students and other community members access a range of offerings. Furthermore, community schools are believed to be tied to favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as strong student involvement levels and homework completion rates. However, questions surround the academic performance of community schools.

2.5.3 Summary

Findings from practitioner-based and academic works on the ‘access’ impacts and ‘human’ impacts of community schools can be woven together to form a general conclusion. In terms of ‘access’ impacts, it appears that community schools are largely viewed as helping students and other community members access a range of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings. The topic of ‘human’ impacts, though, possesses somewhat contrasting views. Contention exists over whether or not community schools are closely linked to strong academic results and notable academic achievements, and if the community school concept can be identified as the reason behind cited examples of favorable academic results and achievements. However, there appears to be a common view that community schools are linked to strong ‘academic-related’ elements, such as interest levels, and strong ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as family cohesion. In the end, though, it must be acknowledged that a substantial portion of the favorable findings on community school impacts discussed in this section do not derive from rigorous, comprehensive, longitudinal research. Accordingly, some of the works, for

example, may only concentrate on exemplary community schools and/or specific favorable outcomes, while ignoring less favorable community schools and/or outcomes. This clearly demonstrates a need for more rigorous, longitudinal research on the impacts of community schools. Ideally, this research will lead to a conclusion about the community school concept, rather than specific community schools.

2.6 Community Schools outside the United States of America: Impacts

Notable research has also been conducted on community schools in England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland. This research primarily consists of government reports, academic works, and government-sponsored academic works, all of which tend to focus on operations and impacts. In particular, the former topic, operations, focuses on the day-to-day management of the school, and the latter topic, impacts, involves the identification of ‘access’ impacts and the identification of ‘human’ impacts, which focus on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. This section, though, solely focuses on the ‘human’ impacts discussed in the works – i.e. academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. This topic was not comprehensively addressed by the U.S. works, and thus, findings on community schools outside the U.S. enhance the knowledge base on the topic. As for the topics of operations and ‘access’ impacts, these two topics are not examined in this section, because the findings on the operations and ‘access’ impacts of U.S. community schools are very similar to those of the works outside the U.S.

As with the works on U.S. community schools, the overall quality of the research is fair – research tools are used, inquiries have depth, biases are identified, etc. – with some works being stronger than others. However, the lack of comprehensive, longitudinal

research does not allow for well-researched conclusions to be reached on all the areas surrounding 'human' impacts, such as changes in the academic performance of students.

2.6.1 England

England has had a long history of promoting community schools. Recently established community schools in England share many similar characteristics with the 'village colleges' that Henry Morris established during the 1930s in Cambridgeshire (Jeffs, 1998).

2.6.1.1 'Human' Impacts

Findings on the academic performance of community schools in England are inconsistent; however, findings on the 'academic-related' elements and 'non-academic-related' elements of community schools in England – albeit limited – are positive and consistent.

Some works clearly identify notable academic achievements, while others offer far less definitive conclusions. For example, Dyson, Millward, and Todd (2002, p.43) found evidence that targeted interventions can help at-risk student populations, and concluded that “at the very least, we can refute the argument that extended activities are necessarily incompatible with high levels of attainment and with high quality in the school's 'core' business of teaching children”. Furthermore, Carpenter, Peters, Oseman, Papps, Dyson, Jones, Cummings, Laing, and Todd (2010, p.86) found that “In two thirds of the schools the development of extended services had had at least some influence in raising attainment”. However, there are other works that draw conclusions that have a positive tone, but are less definitive. For example, Cummings, Dyson, and Todd (2004, p.51) concluded that “It is possible to say that, taking into account the demonstrable immediate impacts they are

having and the increasingly convincing ‘theory of change’ which is beginning to emerge, it is reasonable to suppose that they will go on to have at least some important longer-term benefits”. Additionally, Cummings, Dyson, Muijs, Papps, Pearson, Raffo, Tiplady, and Todd (2007, p.46) found that “The attainment gaps between pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) and with special educational needs (SEN) on the one hand, and all other pupils on the other hand are smaller in Full Service Extended Schools (FSESs) than in other schools. It is possible that this finding has little to do with FSES status as such”. The authors went on to state, “FSES status seems to have contributed in most cases to rising levels of performance. It was not, however, the initiator of that rise nor its sole cause” (Cummings et al., 2007, p.65). Also, Cummings, Dyson, & Todd (2011, p. 103) write:

Although the effort involved in developing a full service or extended school is undoubtedly considerable, there is no evidence that this impacts negatively on the school’s core mission of raising its students’ educational achievements. On the contrary, although the evidence is far from conclusive, we found some indicators that such schools *might* do better than schools which do not develop full service provision, and that attainment gaps *may* be a little narrower in FSESs [Full Service Extended Schools].

Despite the research on the academic performance of community schools in England adding to the knowledge base on community schools, many voids still exist. For instance, questions surround how the academic performance of community schools explicitly compares to that of traditional Government funded state schools.

Findings on the ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of community schools in England are more positive and stable than findings pertaining to their academic performance. An extensive body of work on the topics of ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements is not available. However, the works that address these subject matters portray community schools as being focused on elements that go beyond strictly academic preparation and depict them as being attentive to community needs, not only student needs. Dyson, Millward, and Todd (2002, p.59), for example, state

that community schools “may have a positive impact on the cultures of schools and their communities, particularly in terms of how learning is viewed and of some notion of community cohesion”. Furthermore, Wilkin, Kinder, White, Atkinson, and Doherty (2003, p.1) conclude that “the school became regarded as a site of resources and support for the community”. Unfortunately, the limited research on ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements leaves some important questions unanswered. For instance, in terms of ‘non-academic-related’ elements, it is unclear what percentage of the student population is actually treated by the physical and mental health services.

Findings on the ‘human’ impacts of community schools in England closely align with findings on community schools in the U.S. Specifically, findings on community schools in both countries do not clearly and definitively conclude whether or not community schools attain notable academic results and/or prominent academic achievements. Although, findings on community schools in both countries suggest that community schools are linked to a range of ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements that could benefit both students and other community members. Nevertheless, more research needs to be conducted on the academic performance results and achievements, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements surrounding community schools.

2.6.2 Scotland

Scotland, like England, has had a longstanding commitment to the community school concept. This commitment became ever clearer in 1998 when the country aggressively adopted this concept. That year, the Government invited all 32 local authorities to take part in a pilot program that would help schools transform into community schools.

2.6.2.1 *'Human' Impacts*

Research on the 'human' impacts of community schools in Scotland identifies findings that somewhat resemble those of community schools in England. The examined works do not ardently contend that the Scottish community schools are linked to noteworthy academic results or achievements. However, these same works largely contend that the Scottish community schools are linked to a variety of favorable 'academic-related' elements and 'non-academic-related' elements.

The first work, "New Community Schools in Scotland, Final Report, National Evaluation of the Pilot Phase," was published by Sammons, Power, Elliot, Robertson, Campbell, and Whitty in 2002. The researchers collected baseline, year-one, and year-three data on 148 primary and secondary schools that took part in the New Community School (NCS) programme. This data was then compared with data on traditional public schools that was collected by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). Sammons, Power, Elliot, Robertson, Campbell, and Whitty (2002) contend that the academic performance of the Scottish community schools is equal to or slightly better than the performance of traditional public schools in Scotland. Additionally, in terms of 'academic-related' elements, the researchers found that the Scottish community schools achieved improvements in attendance rates, engagement levels, and behavioral levels for students. Furthermore, in terms of 'non-academic-related' elements, there was evidence of an increase in parent confidence levels and parent-school engagement levels. The researchers also found signs of an increase in community member involvement and an increase in community members acquiring vocationally-based and/or broad professional skills.

Two years later, in 2004, the second work, conducted by the HM Inspectorate of Education, also analyzed the 'human' impacts of Scottish community schools. The review

addresses academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Regarding academic performance, the researchers concluded:

The evidence suggested that the ICS [Integrated Community Schools] initiative had not directly influenced learning and teaching in schools. There was also little evidence that the initiative had led to widespread improvements in attainment as measured by examination results... Overall improvements in both attendance and attainment were generally in line with national averages (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004, p.12).

The impacts associated with ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, though, were overall far more favorable. The researchers found that “Several positive developments effectively enriched and extended the curriculum, and children’s learning, in the area of personal and social development and healthy living” (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004, p.12). Furthermore, the researchers found that:

In most ICS clusters improved support from a range of services had helped reduce barriers to learning for groups of particularly vulnerable young people and their families through helping to meet their social, emotional and health needs... Some authorities had introduced projects which helped to improve pupils’ confidence, social skills and anger management so that they could make better use of learning opportunities... [Also] There were a few instances of reductions in exclusions, vandalism and offending, increased attendance and improvements in attainment in some targeted groups of pupils (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004, p.17-19).

The researchers, though, made a point to offer a rather novel finding pertaining to ‘non-academic-related’ elements, on which, for the most part, community schools are commonly believed to have a consistent positive impact. On the topic of community engagement, the researchers wrote:

The ICS initiative had made little impact in terms of increasing the capacity of communities through involvement of pupils, School Boards, parents, voluntary organisations and members of the community in decision making. Many cluster and school development plans contained ethos statements but there was little evidence of these statements having been developed and agreed on a joint basis (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004, p.20).

Despite this finding, Scottish community schools were closely linked to a variety of favorable ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

The two examined works offer both favorable and unfavorable characteristics of the community school initiative in Scotland. Specifically, based on the works, the schools did not attain remarkable academic performance results or notable academic achievements. However, the schools were generally linked to favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as improved confidence levels, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, including improvements in adult education levels. It must be noted, though, that the HM Inspectorate of Education (2004) questioned if Scottish community schools were successful in engaging community members in a meaningful manner, despite the stated intention of the policy.

2.6.3 Australia

Although community schools have not had a profound historical presence in Australia, there is a view that a few community schools in Australia date back to the 1970s. The major push for community schools in Australia, arguably, however, came after 2007, with the establishment of the NAB Schools First Award. This award aims to promote and support school-community partnerships by providing winning schools with notability and financial support. It is unclear exactly how many community schools exist in Australia, but the number is expected to increase steadily in the future, in part due to the NAB Schools First Award.

2.6.3.1 ‘Human’ Impacts

Arguably, only three trusted works on the ‘human’ impacts of Australian community schools exist. This, in turn, means there is limited research on the academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of Australian community schools. Another issue tied to the lack of research on these schools is that the limited efforts have largely focused on identifying favorable outcomes, as opposed to presenting both

favorable and unfavorable outcomes. It is evident that community schools in Australia require more research; however, the current research on the topic – although limited – is valuable, because it offers rather sound conclusions.

Works broadly contend that Australian community schools have attained notable academic achievements. Lonsdale (2011, p.16), for example, found that Australian community schools “improved literacy, numeracy, communication or ICT [Information and Communication Technology] skills”. Unfortunately, a comprehensive, in-depth discourse did not accompany the finding. Similarly, Atelier Learning Solutions (2012) and the Clerke (2013) also offered broad, positive findings. The former group found that Australian community schools were closing the achievement gap, and the latter group found that Australian community schools achieved increases in academic performance. A comprehensive, in-depth discourse also did not complement these findings.

The limited works also broadly contend that Australian community schools aid in improving various ‘academic-related’ elements, particularly elements relating to youth development. Lonsdale (2011, p.16) found that Australian community schools:

Contributed to improved student attendance; helped reduce anti-social behaviour; improved students’ work ethic at school and the quality of their work, and led to more positive student-teacher relationships... [leading to] the emergence of a new culture of academic excellence in the school... [Additionally] Schools seeking to improve social and emotional wellbeing reported that their programs had helped bring about greater self-esteem, confidence, and self-awareness; [and] a greater ability to learn independently.

Furthermore, Atelier Learning Solutions (2012) found that Australian community schools display an ability to engage students. Once again, an in-depth discourse about the findings was not offered.

Works also examined the ability of Australian community schools to help address ‘non-academic-related’ elements. When concentrating on community engagement,

Lonsdale (2011) found that collaboration led to a “greater sense of bonding as a community,” and furthermore, it:

Led to improved adult learning opportunities within communities. Whole communities benefited through environmental projects, reduction of crime, and financial or in kind donations for communities that had faced hardship because of fire or drought. Others benefited from the networking opportunities provided through the partnership... [Furthermore] Schools seeking to improve social and emotional wellbeing reported that their programs had helped bring about improved student relationships with peers and family; higher aspirations for the future; improved goal setting, teamwork and conflict resolution skills; enhanced leadership skills; healthier lifestyle habits; greater respect for past generations; a more positive outlook on life; and increased awareness of the work of community groups” (Lonsdale, 2011, p.16-17).

Clerke (2013, p.4) also found a 90% increase in community engagement and, additionally, that Australian community schools can help engage parents.

Clearly there is limited work on the ‘human’ impacts of Australian community schools. Furthermore, it is evident that the works that exist are neither rigorous nor comprehensive. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that the investigated Australian community schools attained notable academic achievements and addressed various ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. More research, particularly rigorous academic research, on the topic of Australian community schools would benefit the knowledge base.

2.6.4 The Netherlands

A trend towards the community school concept in the Netherlands can be traced back to the 1990s. Officially, though, the first community schools appeared in Rotterdam in 1996. Roughly fifteen years later, there were over 1,500 primary community schools and over 400 secondary community schools in the Netherlands (Heers, Ghysels, Groot, and Maassen van den Brink, 2015).

2.6.4.1 *'Human' Impacts*

Works on community schools in the Netherlands do not support a common view on their 'human' impacts. Inconsistencies surround whether or not community schools in the Netherlands are connected to notable academic achievements and strengthening 'academic-related' elements. Of three prominent works on the academic achievements of community schools in the Netherlands, two of the works found that attending this type of school does not benefit students in terms of academic achievement. The one work that found a link between this type of school and academic achievement clearly states that the link is quite small. Additionally, of two notable works on the 'academic-related' elements of community schools in the Netherlands, one work found that attending this type of school is linked to improvements in social-emotional skills, whereas the other work found that attending this type of school does not appear to have a substantial positive impact on the socio-emotional development of students.

Collectively, the three prominent works on community schools in the Netherlands suggest that these schools had little to no academic benefit to students, and furthermore, the works offer contrasting findings on the 'academic-related' benefits of the schools, with one work concluding that they are substantial and another work concluding that they are not. Heers, Ghysels, Groot, and Maassen van den Brink (2009, p.29), who concluded that the community schools do not benefit students in terms of academic achievement but do benefit students in terms of 'academic-related' elements, write:

Hypothesis H.1 states that a longer exposure to community school education is beneficial to pupils' educational progress in terms of cognitive and social-emotional skills. Our findings do not confirm this hypothesis, although attending a community school as such was linked to improvements of social-emotional skills... With respect to cognitive outcomes, community school pupils perform as good as regular school students irrespective of how long they have attended a community school.

Similarly, Kruiter (2015) agrees that community schools in the Netherlands do not benefit students in terms of academic achievement. However, distinctly, the researcher asserts that the examined community schools in the Netherlands also generally do not benefit students in terms of ‘academic-related’ elements, writing:

On average, there are no differences in the cognitive and social-emotional development of community school students and control group students. However, the research also shows that the more children participated in community school activities, the better their social-emotional development is (Kruiter, 2015, p.7-8).

Heers, Ghysels, Groot, and Maassen van den Brink (2015, p. 375) are the only researchers to conclude that the examined community schools in the Netherlands benefit students in terms of academic achievements – albeit small – writing, “Community schools seem effective with respect to reducing underachievement... However, the effect on underachievement is rather small; therefore, it is debatable if this is enough to characterize community schools as effective”.

In the end, it appears there is consent around the view that these community schools have little to no academic benefit to students, but conflicting findings surround the ability of these schools to provide students with ‘academic-related’ benefits.

2.6.5 Northern Ireland

Community schools in Northern Ireland date back to 2006. During this time, the Renewing Communities Programme established the Full Service School Project (Public Sector Consultancy and Dyson, 2008). This project was responsible for initiating two community schools in Northern Ireland: the Belfast Boys’ Model School and the Belfast Model School for Girls.

2.6.5.1 *'Human' Impacts*

A significant body of research on the 'human' impacts of community schools in Northern Ireland does not exist. However, two prominent works on community schools in Northern Ireland were published. A private consultancy group in association with Professor Alan Dyson engendered "Evaluation of Full Service School Project" in 2008, and then members of the Northern Ireland Department of Education published "Full Service Extended School Evaluation Briefing". However, neither of the works was intended to offer a rigorous evaluation of the academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements of the community schools. The former work, "Evaluation of Full Service School Project," which was published roughly two years after the two community schools were established, was largely intended to offer an outlook on the community schools and guidance on how the community schools can accomplish stated aims. As for the latter work, "Full Service Extended School Evaluation Briefing," it was intended to be a primarily descriptive piece that briefly addresses the topics of academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. Despite these works not being geared towards providing a rigorous, longitudinal evaluation of the academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements of the two community schools in Northern Ireland, each work still offers valuable findings. For instance, in "Full Service Extended School Evaluation Briefing," it is stated:

Feedback from consultees was generally positive... The evidence in the evaluation suggested that the development of the programme was in line with similar programmes in England and other countries. The review concluded that early indications were that positive outcomes would emerge (Northern Ireland Department of Education, n.d., p.2).

This finding appears to suggest that the two community schools are expected to achieve positive impacts for students, though no firm evidence is presented.

2.6.6 Summary: ‘Human’ impacts outside of the U.S.

The research on the ‘human’ impacts of community schools in England, Scotland, Australia, the Netherlands, and Northern Ireland does not perfectly and uniformly agree upon how this type of school relates to the topics of academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Some works cite positive characteristics, whereas other works cite shortcomings. Despite this fact, the findings can be woven together to form general conclusions. Generally speaking, with few exceptions, the works conclude that the examined community schools largely did not attain notable academic results or academic achievements – although, one exception being works on Australian community schools. Furthermore, again, generally speaking and with few exceptions, the works also conclude that the community schools are largely associated with favorable ‘academic-related’ elements – although, an exception being a work on community schools in the Netherlands.

By and large, the research on community schools in the U.S., England, Scotland, Australia, and the Netherlands could broadly be summarized as concluding that the examined community schools did not appear to have attained substantial notable academic results or achievements, but were associated with favorable ‘academic-related’ elements (i.e. favorable non-academic performance elements).

2.7 School Improvement and More

Although the community school concept is commonly viewed as being predominately associated with the field of ‘school improvement,’ there is great value in also associating the concept with the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community enhancement’. Undeniably, community schools concentrate on core topics within the field of ‘school improvement’. These topics can commonly range from traditional school

planning and management to academic performance evaluation (Brookover and Lezotte, 1977; Danielson, 2002; Edmonds, 1979). However, community schools are also largely concerned with the community that surrounds the school, particularly the well-being of students and community members, and, furthermore, the interaction between the school and the community. Accordingly, community schools also focus considerable attention on core topics within the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community enhancement’. Topics central to these two fields include economic vitality, infrastructure development, accessible health services, skill development, strong community members, and sense of community (Roberts and Sykes, 1999; Tallon, 2013). Bearing the view that the community school concept is linked to the fields of ‘school improvement,’ ‘urban regeneration,’ and ‘community enhancement’ – as opposed to only ‘school improvement’ – provides researchers with a more authentic understanding of this concept.

The field of ‘school improvement’ is absolutely central to the study of the community school concept. Research in this field primarily influences elements of the community school concept that focus on the school as an ‘academic institution’. Accordingly, topics associated with socio-economic programs and services, community engagement offerings, and student and community member well-being are commonly not addressed by this literature. Instead, in particular, research in the field of ‘school improvement’ largely addresses topics such as traditional school administration and leadership (e.g. planning and management), teachers, instruction, and traditional school evaluation. For example, Chapman (2015), writing on ‘school improvement’ and in particular educational management administration and leadership, reflects on the value of school federations and chains. He explores the concept “federation” and its potential impact on ‘teaching, learning, and curriculum,’ ‘students,’ ‘staff members,’ and ‘the community

and other agencies'. In terms of the former topic, Chapman (2015, p.51) identifies the following four key characteristics of federations:

- A single governing body that is shared by all schools, established under statutory regulations (section 24 of the Education Act 2002);
- Shared common goals formalised in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and protocol;
- Opportunities to share budgets in some areas. Although budgets remain separate, sharing a governing body allows for budgetary decisions to be made on behalf of all schools;
- Potential for common appointments to management and other posts. The possibility of common management can lead to the appointment of a single head teacher across all the schools in the federation. (NUT, 2012)

As for the latter topic, Chapman identifies a range of positive impacts, from increasing the ability of teachers to focus more on teaching and learning to addressing head teacher shortages and aiding in the sharing of resources. Furthermore, he identifies less favorable impacts, such as mistrust and inauthentic collaboration. It should be noted that the researcher discusses how federation schools do not appear to have had a significant positive impact on student outcomes over those of non-federation schools, but recognizes that federation schools display potential. This work could offer insight on the construction, management, and evaluation of local federation model community schools. Chapman (2000), for instance, also shows how work on 'school improvement' is linked to the study of community schools. Chapman (2000), writing on 'school improvement' and in particular teachers, discusses the value of developing the knowledge and skills of teachers, and furthermore, describes actionable models of professional development. The researcher writes:

The model of professional development using peer observation and internal self review techniques from MIC [Maintain, Improve, and Change] demonstrates that it is possible to develop individuals and practice without the 'all stick and no carrot' format of formal OFSTED [Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills] inspections.

For self review to be effective there must be a culture of trust where teachers are willing to challenge their own and their peers practice without slipping

into the 'I'd rather not know syndrome' where there is an imbalance between support and no pressure...

The key question is: Are our schools developing the capacity for reflective, reliable and rigorous self-evaluation? Only when there is sufficient evidence that this exists will there be a shift from a highly pressurised framework to a more supportive one (Chapman, 2000, p. 62).

This research could provide guidance on professional development strategies to community school administrators and teachers. Additionally, Higgins, Sebba, Robinson, and Mackrill (2008) also offer an example of how research on 'school improvement' can apply to the 'academic institution' component of the community school concept. The researchers write:

In terms of teaching and learning, learner-centered and learner-led learning have been at the heart of many of the developments involving technology, particularly in schools...

Most of the examples of learner-led change have, however, taken place at an implicit level where teachers have retained control over the content and pedagogy of learning. Learner-led change has usually required the teacher to respond to pupils' preferences for how they want to use technology, so devolving control over *how* pupils learn.

When a curriculum is relatively loosely framed, such as in problem-based approaches, there may also be opportunities for learners to influence the content of *what* is learned.

There is little evidence that learner-led demand and the use of technology have had an influence on assessment practices in schools, although some schools have reported that they changed assessment practices by using technology to respond to developing personalised learning (Sebba et al., 2007).

A useful distinction may therefore be to consider the role of learner demand within the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and learner demand about these areas. The implications of personalised learning outlined in the introduction suggest that it is only when learner demand is about these aspects of teaching and learning that it will be 'personalised' in terms of Becta's aspiration for learners to co-design and manage the curriculum and to become more actively involved in designing and carrying out their own assessments (Higgins, Sebba, Robinson, and Mackrill, 2008, p.12).

This work has the potential to influence the manner in which community school administrators and teachers develop their curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment approach and how they use technology in classrooms. It must be noted, however, that research on

‘school improvement’ has the potential to lightly address topics relating to the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community development,’ which are geared more towards socio-economics, community engagement, and well-being. Chapman and Harris (2004, p. 221–225), for instance, identify the following strategies, which touch upon all three fields, as having contributed to the success of schools in their studies:

- Improve the environment
- Generate positive relationships
- Focus on teaching and learning
- Build community
- Focus on continuous professional development
- Concentrate on leadership
- Create an information-rich environment
- Provide external support

These strategies could aid administrators and teachers of community schools with the crafting of their school improvement plans. The main point is that narrowly associating the community school concept with the field of ‘school improvement’ could lead to a constrained view of the community school concept that does not respect its strong commitment to socio-economic and community engagement offerings and its concern for the well-being of students and other community members.

Although it may not appear apparent at first sight, the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community development’ are also closely associated to the study of the community school concept. Research in these two fields largely contributes to elements of the community school concept that focus on the school as being more than simply an ‘academic institution’. For example, Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto (2014, p.1463–1477), writing on ‘urban regeneration,’ state:

They [universities], therefore, play an important role in complementing and sometimes making up for the lack of a network of public social services able to reach the entire population... An important issue in policies pursuing the civic university is the promotion of place-based leadership (Hambleton,

2011), stimulating together with various relevant stakeholders, internal and external to the region, a transformational vision of the territory. The main assumption is that the development of place-based leadership involves substantive knowledge (“know what”), networks (“know who”) and skills (“know how”) to implement the process (European Commission, 2011).

This work, and others like it, could provide community school administrators and teachers with information on selecting, for instance, a university partner that can aid with an on-site health clinic. Additionally, for example, the work of Christens and Dolan (2011), which addresses ‘community development,’ serves as another example of how research does not necessarily need to narrowly revolve around the school as an ‘academic institution’ to be connected to the community school concept. Christens and Dolan (2011, p.541) write:

In this case study of a youth organizing initiative, several themes emerged that provide insights into ways that youth can be more effectively involved in their communities. The youth organizing in this study weaves together three distinct features into a single model: (1) youth leadership development, (2) community development, and (3) social change. Our observation is that this unified approach is a key to making youth organizing initiatives effective. If the focus of a youth organizing initiative is too heavily weighted toward one of these features to the detriment of another, it is unlikely to be as effective at achieving community-level and developmental impacts.

This work could offer community school administrators and teachers guidance on ways to strengthen ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as student confidence levels and the collective trust rate. In short, works by Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto (2014) and Christens and Dolan (2011), which are linked to the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community development,’ may not initially be associated with the community school concept; however, work from these two fields is certainly applicable to this concept.

The view that the community school concept is associated with the fields of ‘school improvement,’ ‘urban regeneration,’ and ‘community enhancement’ appears to complement the community school literature that was addressed earlier in this chapter. This earlier literature addresses topics within the field of ‘school improvement,’ such as traditional

school planning and academic performance evaluations. Additionally, though, this literature also clearly addresses topics pertaining to the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community development,’ such as socio-economic and community engagement opportunities and student well-being. Overall, this literature clearly demonstrates that the community school concept should not be narrowly associated with the field of ‘school improvement’ or perceived as possessing the same traits as a traditional public school. Moreover, given that the literature showed that community schools are not synonymous with notable academic results or achievements (i.e. elements associated with ‘school improvement’) but, instead, are associated with favorable non-academic elements, which arguably are linked to the socio-economic and community engagement elements of the community school concept and its concern with well-being, it would appear that considerable attention should be given to the fields of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community enhancement’.

2.8 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Community schools aim to be more than ‘traditional academic institutions;’ they strive to be institutions that comprehensively address academics, socio-economic challenges, and community engagement. Community schools set out to address these three areas – not only academics – because they believe that students are strongly influenced by elements – good or bad – that rest in their immediate and distant settings. In essence, for example, support from a tutor could help ease the academic stress of students as much as living in a peaceful neighborhood with many residents who have graduated from college or a trade school. Accordingly, community schools focus on strengthening the diverse settings that surround students, from the classroom to the health clinic, links between these settings, and broad features, such as the economic climate of a community. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory is similar to the community school concept in that it too focuses

on the diverse settings surrounding students, from the school to parents' employers, links between settings, and broad features. The depth of the community school concept aligns with the depth of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. Both the concept and the theory, fundamentally, argue that the powerful settings that surround children/young people, the links between these settings, and the broad features can strongly influence the type of life a student will live and the chances for good or poor outcomes, in terms of attainment, employment, and health, for example (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Leonard, 2011).

At the center of the community school concept rests the view that a school can increase its chances of improving the academic performance of its students by focusing on a diverse array of individual settings (e.g. the school and home), links between settings, and broad features (e.g. local economy) located in the environment of a child/young person, as opposed to focusing narrowly on the student and the school environment. Investigating this expansive, multifaceted concept can prove difficult. However, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory can aid in reducing the difficulty involved with such an analysis. The theory details notable settings, links, and broad features relating to students.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory revolves around five systems, which contain particular settings based primarily on their distance relative to the everyday interactions of a student (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory
Source: Yingst, 2011

The five systems include the following:

Microsystem: The settings where the student lives and constructs face-to-face relationships with individuals who are significant members of his/her life

Mesosystem: Lateral relationships between two or more microsystem environments that contain the student

Exosystem: Links between two or more settings, where at least one 'indirect' setting affects a 'direct' setting of a student (e.g. parents' employers and home)

Macrosystem: Overarching cultural pattern that indirectly involves the development of the student (e.g. racism)

Chronosystem: Shifts and changes due to time (e.g. economy during the Great Depression) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)

These five systems, along with the settings, links, and features within them, form the 'human ecological systems' of students.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory is not void of critique. There is literature – although, seemingly, not an abundant amount – that contends that the theory possesses its limitations, thus requiring refinement. For instance, McIntosh, Lyon, Carlson, Bates, & Loera (2008, p. 98) write, “Top priorities for the refinement of mesosystem measurement should be achieving theoretical fidelity, dimensionalism, and contextual unity”. These researchers recognize that Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory delineates settings and links between settings in the ecological systems of students (i.e. microsystem and mesosystem). However, they argue that the theory, for example, does not thoroughly separate dimensions surrounding cognitive, affective, and behavioral phenomena and address the notion of a less rigid delineation of settings (i.e. dimensionalism), and, also, they argue that there needs to be greater focus on cultural grounding (i.e. contextual unity). They believe addressing these areas will aid in reaching theoretical fidelity. Additionally, Shaffer (2009, p. 89 – 90), expanding upon the notation of cultural grounding, writes:

Yet, despite its strengths, ecological systems theory falls far short of being a complete account of human development. Though Bronfenbrenner characterizes the theory as a *biological* model, it really has very little to say about specific biological contributors to development. And even though developmentalists are indebted to the ecological systems perspective for describing the complexities of the natural environments that influence and are influenced by developing persons, we must still understand how children and adolescents *process* environmental *information and learn* from their experiences before we can fully comprehend how environments influence human development.

It appears that more research must be done on the intricacies surrounding how the established settings and links relate to the human development of children and adolescents.

Despite the critique, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory provides a theoretical framework of the world that surrounds students by identifying individual settings, links between settings, and broad features that can impact the development of students. Essentially, this theory abstractly displays the paramount environments, links, and

features that community schools value and aim to address, and thus has proved helpful in shaping the present study.

2.9 Well-Being: Definition

A primary goal of community schools is to address the socio-economic challenges that their students confront and, more broadly, care for their well-being. Although, arguably, the intention behind the goals of community schools are easily understood, the literature on community schools does not explicitly define the term “well-being” or offer a clear, enumerated list of domains and measures associated with it. To address this void, it was helpful to explore how literature and research on community schools and community school-related literature covers and defines the nature of child and adolescent well-being. The literature in this section does not serve as a robust or complete review on the topic of well-being, which is a complex field and can be subjective. It does not, for instance, address how well-being is associated with concurrent and later educational outcomes, a topic that is investigated by Gutman and Vorhaus (2012). This section, rather, is primarily intended to bring some clarity to the notion that the community school concept is concerned, to a degree, with well-being, and accordingly, it is beneficial to have knowledge on the definition of the term ‘well-being’ and common domains and measures that are used to discuss well-being. Although rather narrow in scope, the work helped frame this study and could aid future researchers design studies on the community school concept and evaluate data.

Based upon a review of literature on well-being, particularly Bourke & Geldens (2007), Engels, Aelterman, Van Petegem, & Schepens (2004), Rees, Bradshaw, Goswami, & Keung (2010), and Statham & Chase (2010), it is clear that defining the term “well-being” has historically been a challenging task, since it is continuously evolving and

definitions value different types of data and adopt divergent perspectives. Some definitions focus on ‘objective data,’ such as “children living in homes below the poverty line, children in homes where there was no employed adult, and children in homes where there were few educational resources” (Statham & Chase, 2010, p.5; UNICEF, 2007). Conversely, other definitions concentrate on ‘subjective data,’ like “happiness, social connectedness, perceived quality of life and life satisfaction” (Statham & Chase, 2010, p.5). Furthermore, as Pollard & Lee (2003) and Statham & Chase (2010) recognize, another distinction is between the ‘developmental perspective,’ which is associated with deficits such as poverty and physical illness, and the ‘children’s rights perspective,’ which is linked to data that stresses the potential and strengths of children.

Just as there are many definitions for the term “well-being,” there are also many domains and measures associated with this term. Domains range from health to economic, and measures range from access to health care to annual household income (Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, Van Vugt, & Misajon, 2003; Tomy & Cummins, 2011).

The contention over the term “well-being” and domains and measures associated with the term is advantageous, because it has created a depth of knowledge. For this thesis, I adopted a comprehensive definition of the term well-being that values both objective (e.g. household income) and subjective (e.g. satisfaction) data and, also, respects the importance of both the developmental (e.g. poverty) and the children’s rights (e.g. academic improvements) perspectives. Accordingly, the six community school cases address objective and subjective data, for example, by citing community and parent household income averages and presenting the view of participants on the level of positive impact academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings have had on students and other community members, respectively. Also, the six cases address both developmental and children’s rights by citing the percentage of students receiving ‘free or reduced lunch’

and providing a five-year summary of average academic performance results. Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full review of literature on the topic of well-being, the literature discussed in this section aided me in framing the investigation on the community school concept and its potential to strengthen settings, links between settings, and broad features in the human ecological systems of students.

2.10 Conclusion

The examined literature, which forms a base of knowledge on the community school concept, allowed me to frame my research. In particular, the collection of work helped me familiarize myself with notable research on the community school concept, identify explicit and implicit community school models, recognize key topics and subtopics related to the community school concept, and ascertain academic voids related to the concept.

Additionally, works on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory exposed a theory that could be used as a lens to largely evaluate and understand the potential of the community school concept to achieve its rather expansive stated aims. Overall, the examined literature was crucial to the construction of research questions one and two of this thesis.

In terms of research question one, the examined literature aided me in clearly identifying three primary community school organizational models – national, local federation, and independent – and confirming that no rigorous, comparative research on these three models had been conducted. Furthermore, this research helped me develop topics and subtopics for research question one that reflect the core essence of the community school concept. The three topics include aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts, and the three subtopics include academics, socio-economics, and community engagement.

As for research question two, work on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory offered a theory that closely aligns with the community school concept. After reviewing work on the theory, it became evident that both the theory and the concept maintain the position that students reside in complex environments that contain a diverse collection of important settings, links, and broad features, and furthermore, these variables can have noticeable impacts – good or bad – on their lives. The theory strives to theoretically map the complex 'human ecological system' of a child/young person, while, in practice, the community school concept strives to practically improve many of these settings, links, and broad features. Accordingly, the theory appears uniquely positioned to guide an evaluation of the potential of the community school concept.

Beyond influencing the design of the two research questions, the examined literature also provided me with considerable material on the academic performance of community schools and their association with favorable 'academic-related' elements and 'non-academic-related' elements. This particular body of work established the general view, despite some contention, that the community school concept is not synonymous with notable academic results and achievements, but is associated with favorable 'academic-related' elements, such as student engagement levels. Since many of the favorable 'academic-related' elements are arguably associated with efforts linked to the fields of 'urban regeneration' and 'community enhancement' (e.g. working to transform the school into a school-community center), rather than the field of 'school improvement' which is closely linked to the school as an 'academic institution,' it appears that the 'community component' of the community school concept is as prominent, if not more prominent, than the 'academic component' of the concept.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This exploratory investigation uses a mixed methods, case study research strategy and embedded, multi-case design to examine six community schools (two national, two local federation, and two independent model community schools) that serve predominantly socio-economically disadvantaged student populations in the U.S. Specifically, the two goals of this investigation are to understand (1) the distinguishing characteristics that each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts, and (2) if the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the individual settings, the link between two individual settings, and broad features that are located in the human ecological systems of students. To begin the examination, qualitative data, the predominant type of data collected for this study, was derived from interviews with individuals and focus groups, field notes on site visits, and documents. Additionally, limited quantitative data was collected through surveys and documents. This data was then analyzed using a three-step approach. Step one and two concentrate on the identification and refinement of the findings for each individual site. Step three, though, moves from individual analyses of each case to multi-case analyses. At this point, similar and different school model cases were analyzed using a cross-case analysis technique (Yin, 2009), allowing color-coded findings to be identified visually. The findings that resulted from the analysis possess a weak external validity. This means that another researcher who applies the methodology described in this thesis to the same six community schools is likely to draw findings similar to those reached in this study, but applying the same methodology to another set of six community schools could lead to new insight and some variation in findings. Although the findings are not strictly generalizable, they do

offer “fuzzy” analytical generalization, to draw on the work of Bassey (2000). Throughout the research study, reliability, validity, and trustworthiness were considered. Saturation and member checks were two primary techniques that were applied in order to increase the credibility of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

3.2 Exploratory Case Study Research Strategy that uses an Embedded, Multi-Case Design with Mixed Methods

This research uses an exploratory case study research strategy that draws upon an embedded, multi-case design with mixed methods to address the research questions. The exploratory case study research strategy is well suited for the exploratory nature of the investigations, which seek an understanding of the three community school models and the community school concept. Additionally, this strategy is ideal for this research because it supports an embedded, multi-case design and the use of mixed methods, two elements that research question one requires.

According to Creswell (2007), an exploratory case study research strategy allows a researcher to conduct an initial investigation of a phenomenon through one or more cases that are within a restricted system. Furthermore, Creswell (2009), Thomas (2011), and Yin (2009) discuss how this type of research strategy allows a researcher to provide a comprehensive description of a natural environment, collect qualitative and quantitative data using a variety of methods, and identify patterns between cases. Additionally, Scholz & Tietje (2002) and Yin (2003) state how embedded elements within a case allow the researcher to examine explicit ‘embedded’ topics.

Although there are many advantages to conducting an exploratory case study, drawbacks do exist. One primary limitation is that conclusions drawn from this type of study are context-specific and not generalizable (Bassey, 2000; Hodkinson & Hodkinson,

2001; Shuttleworth, 2008; Thomas, 2011). However, this limitation is less relevant given the exploratory nature of this study and the focus of the research on illuminating and understanding the enactment of the community school models in particular schools. Additionally, as Yin (2009) recognizes, embedding particular elements in cases can lead to restrictive investigations of each case, preventing the researcher from offering vivid descriptions. To avoid this possibility, I met the majority of the participants in their natural environments, encouraged them to speak freely and openly, kept an open mind during the data collection phase, and wrote extensive field notes on my experiences. Furthermore, during the analysis phase, the embedded elements were solely used to indicate broad topics that should be investigated, such as programs addressing student hunger. These cues may have surfaced some of the findings, but others surfaced naturally during the analysis of the data. It is also worth noting that, according to Andrew, Pedersen, & McEvoy (2011), Gerring (2007), and Perry (1998), two possible weaknesses of the case study research strategy are that the strategy can be expensive and time-consuming. I addressed these two potential deterrents by securing sufficient private funding and making a strict schedule for the data collection phase.

Despite the weaknesses discussed, I elected to implement an exploratory case study research strategy. One particular reason is that, to my knowledge, an in-depth review of the similarities and differences between similar (national vs. national; local federation vs. local federation; independent vs. independent) and different (national vs. local federation vs. independent) national, local federation, and independent model community schools had not been conducted, truly deeming the work 'exploratory'. Additionally, I chose this research strategy because it allowed me to engage with directors of the national and local federation models, directors of the school districts, principals, assistant principals, community school directors, teachers, parents, and involved community members in their natural environments

through interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys. This research strategy also allowed me to conduct site visits and review documents. The interviews, focus groups, site visits, and many of the documents offered a qualitative perspective, while the surveys and other documents provided additional quantitative evidence. In the end, the mixed methods approach allowed me to search for patterns and draw conclusions from a broad range of data, which research question one requires.

This level of engagement, specifically through interviews, focus groups, and on-site observations, supported my interpretivist theoretical perspective. This theoretical perspective maintains the position that an individual constructs meaning while engaging with the world that he/she attempts to interpret (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998). For example, a researcher can gain an understanding of the community school model of a school by engaging with individuals connected to the school through interviews and focus groups and by conducting on-site observations. Enquiry through interviews, focus groups, and on-site observations also complemented my interpretivist theoretical perspective that holds the view that gathered data can be subjective, and accordingly, discussions and interactive engagement with individuals and environments can be beneficial in providing clarity and interpreting meaning (Creswell, 2007; Farquhar, 2012; Grbich, 2007).

I also specifically implemented an exploratory case study research strategy because it allows for the construction of multiple cases, not simply one. The multiple case element permitted me to research six community schools and replicate the research at each site. This yielded findings that relate to three community school models and six community schools from six states in the U.S. Furthermore, adopting this strategy allowed me to compare and contrast multiple community schools and community school models in different contexts, rather than simply describing one school and one model, for example.

Lastly, I explicitly elected to adopt this research strategy because it permits topics and subtopics to be embedded in the research. The embedded component allowed me to review three key topics related to my main research questions (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) and three particular subtopics (academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement) (See Table 1). The specific declaration of embedded topics and subtopics also allowed me to collect a common set of data that could be easily organized during the analysis phase.

Although some disadvantages are associated with an exploratory case study research strategy that uses an embedded, multi-case design with mixed methods, the drawbacks did not prevent me from addressing my research questions. I secured sufficient funding, scheduled my time accordingly, and challenged myself to have a broad perspective, while still concentrating on the specific topics and subtopics during the data collection and analysis phases.

3.3 Criteria Sampling Design: Six Cases and a Three-Stage Procedure

The six cases were selected using a three-stage, purposive selection process that is based on a selection process that Yin (2009) presents. The first stage consisted of using a list of criteria to reduce the number of possible 108 community schools, which were identified and discussed by the Coalition for Community Schools, academics, and/or practitioners. The list included the following requirements:

- All the schools must be primary, middle, and/or high schools (K – 12) in the U.S.
- All the schools must subscribe to one of the three community school models
- All the schools must serve primarily socio-economically disadvantaged student populations (defined as over 50% of students receiving free or reduced lunch)

- All the schools must be comprehensive community schools that address all three subtopics (academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement)
- All the schools must have been in operation as a community school for over two years

The second stage involved discussing the possible 32 community schools with the following three community school experts: a retired community school principal who worked in school administration for over 25 years (the community school the principal worked at is not one of the six community schools being analyzed), a retired teacher who taught at a traditional public school for over 20 years and studied community schools, and a professor who served as a political advisor to politicians on educational and socio-economic matters. The advice of these individuals helped reduce the number of potential schools to nine – three nominees for each model, two schools being strong candidates and one being less desirable due to a reputation of not welcoming researchers or due to a similar matter – based upon their views of the following criteria:

- The schools are correctly deemed as full-service community schools (some schools adopt the title “community school” even though they are indistinguishable from traditional public schools)
- The schools are located in districts that regularly allow comprehensive research to be conducted

The third and final stage involved contacting an administrator at each of the nine schools. During each conversation, I described my research and specifically asked if the school would be willing to be involved in the enquiry and disposed to seek informed consent. One school administrator at a school stated the school was not interested in participating in the research during our first discussion (school did not like to engage in research); a school administrator at a different school stated the school was not interested in participating in the research after several discussions between the two of us (consent forms had historically posed problems for the school); and one school administrator did not respond to phone calls

or emails. All three of these schools were deemed by the community school experts as ‘unlikely to participate’. Accordingly, I was left with a purposive sample of two national model schools, two local federation model schools, and two independent model schools.

Further discussions with individuals from the six selected schools led to an agreement that the developing and final findings would be made available to them for review before the publishing of a final draft. Additionally, in support of co-construction, we agreed that if any finding was deemed questionable by the administrative or teaching staff, I would review the finding and then report back to the school.

Conversations on the topic of privacy and anonymity also surfaced early on with the six selected schools. I assured individuals that a pseudonym would be used in lieu of the name of their school. It was also agreed upon that the type of environment the school is located in, urban or rural, would not be disguised, since readers may find the classification valuable, but the city itself would be disguised. Thus, if a school is located in an urban or rural environment, its pseudonym reflects it. All the names of the urban schools begin with a name from the title of Boston’s ‘Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum’ or ‘Fenway Court,’ as it was known during Ms. Stewart’s lifetime, while the names of the rural schools begin with the type of a tree, for example the Isabella National Community School (urban) and the Oak National Community School (rural), respectively.

3.4 The Participants

The participants who took part in the interviews and focus groups and completed surveys can be divided into four main groups – model-specific, administration, close student interaction at the school, and stakeholders (See Table 6). The first group, model-specific, includes participants who are associated exclusively with a particular community school model. For instance, a national model community school has a national director, but an

independent model community school does not. These interviews provided information that is exclusive to a particular model and included the views of top-level officials. The second group, administration, is comprised of district- and school-level administrators, which afforded me the opportunity to gather data from key district and school officials. Interviewing this group of individuals was particularly valuable, because it provided both a district and a local school perspective. The third group, close student interaction at the school, includes teachers and counselors who work with students on a daily basis. These individuals are unique, because they have relationships with administrators, are responsible for educating and/or guiding the students, and, many times, have close relationships with the students and their families. Lastly, the fourth group, stakeholders, includes parents and community members who have a relationship with the school and are not paid by the school district. Some of these individuals frequently volunteer at the school.

Table 6: Groups and Participants

Model-Specific	• Director of National Model	• Director of Local Federation Model
Administration	• Director of School District • Principal or Assistant Principal	• Community School Director
Close Student Interaction at the School	• Teachers	• Counselors (Mentors)
Stakeholders	• Parents	• Community Members

Collectively, the four groups of participants provided a comprehensive perspective that ranges from the district-level to the community-level, from nominal to close student interactions, and from paid to unpaid individuals.

The greatest void pertaining to participants was that the views of students were not gathered directly from them. Some data on their experiences and perspectives, however, were often mentioned indirectly during interviews and focus groups with their parents. This,

of course, is secondhand data that is mediated by the perspectives of the parents, and thus, it cannot be regarded as robust in comparison with data from face-to-face interviews with students. Specifically, it would have been valuable to have captured the first-hand perspective of students on academic performance results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements in order to understand their perception of specific impacts the school has produced and their level of satisfaction. This perspective also would have provided a richer picture of their experiences and additional insight on how community schools might have strengthened the links between different settings (e.g. home and school). It is my personal belief that the views of students would have largely supported the views of interviewed participants. Furthermore, though, it would have been advantageous to have heard directly from students on the rare occasion when two contrasting opinions on a matter existed, for example, on the topic of school staff ‘buy-in’ at the Gardner Local Federation Community School.

All the interviewees were provided with anonymity and confidentiality, just like the schools themselves. The names of the participants, the name of their school, their association with the school (e.g. principal, teacher, parent, etc.), the type of data collection method (e.g. interview, focus group, or survey), and the location and time of the interview or the survey distribution date were recorded on a master list, and then a code was assigned to each individual. This master list was stored on an encrypted drive in the U.S., and was never shared with anyone.

3.5 Access: Schools and Participants

One of my primary concerns during the data collection phase was that, after forming a relationship with a community school, the administrators at the school would deny me access to the school and/or particular participants. I was allowed to visit each school on the

planned upon time period; however, unfortunately, as many of the relationships matured, it became clear that the majority of the schools could not assist me with the recruitment of survey participants due to district policies that prevent such engagement. For example, one school stated that it was policy for administrators to help with the recruitment of survey participants only for research that was being conducted by the district, and administrators at another school stated that it was policy not to help independent researchers with the recruitment of survey participants, because providing the researcher with the names and contact information of parents and other community members violated their privacy. In the end, a tacit agreement was reached. I would primarily administer and collect surveys from parents and community members after school, without the aid of the majority of the schools. The lack of support with the recruitment of participants was the reason why a larger pool of parents and community members could not be surveyed in the time scale allowed for my field visits.

3.6 Referral and Convenience Sampling: Teachers, Counselors, Parents, and Community Members

Teachers, counselors, parents, and community members were the only four participant types that required a sampling tool for selection. The other participant types (e.g. community school director) did not require a sampling tool for selection because there was only one individual in the position, unlike the position of teacher, for example, which can post over twenty people in the role.

Teachers and counselors were generally selected using referral sampling, while parents and community members were solely identified using convenience sampling. In the majority of the cases, the community school director identified teachers and counselors who could be interviewed; however, there were instances in which I met teachers and counselors

independently after school or at community events, and then interviewed them. Using both referral and convenience sampling to select teachers and counselors was particularly valuable, because it had the potential to reduce the personal bias that can be associated with referral sampling (i.e. had the potential to reduce the possible bias of the community school director only introducing me to teachers and counselors who would speak favorably about the school). In terms of parents and community members, all of these participants were identified after school as they waited for school to be dismissed or as they attended community events. Each parent had to have at least one child currently enrolled in the school and community members had to visit the school, on average, at least once every ten weeks. The primary concern with these two pools of individuals was that they may not be an accurate representation of the parent or community member populations, because the average parent and community member may not have that level of contact with the school. However, the risk was accepted due to the circumstances and because parents and community members who regularly visit the school are generally more knowledgeable of the school than those who do not.

3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to refine the semi-structured interview and focus group frameworks, the surveys, the observation table, and the document table and to review the data analysis strategy. Thirteen participants – one administrator (participated in an interview), two teachers (participated in interviews), five parents (two participated in two separate interviews and another three participated in one focus group), and five community members (two participated in two separate interviews and another three participated in one focus group) – partook in interviews and focus groups; twelve participants – six parents and six community members – completed surveys; three participants – one administrator and

two teachers, same administrator and teachers as before – discussed the observation table; and three participants – one administrator and two teachers, same administrator and teachers as before – reviewed the document table. All the participants, at the time, were associated with a school in the U.S., but were not all drawn from the same institution. Next, with the use of NVivo and, additionally, by hand, a thematic coding strategy was applied to select sections of data gathered from the interviews and focus groups, and with the use of SPSS, an analysis of the quantitative data was conducted. However, a self-directed, thematic coding strategy could not be applied to data in the observation and document tables because I was not able to gain access to a school; thus, there was no data to analyze.

First, I crafted the preliminary semi-structured interview frameworks that would be used as guides during the interviews, and then, after reflecting on them for months and discussing them with my advisor, I piloted them on three groups of participants, consisting of an administrator and two teachers, two parents, and two community members. A roughly 30-minute interview was conducted with each participant, and then an additional 15 minutes were dedicated to participant feedback that same day. During the latter part, participants typically informed me that a topic needed to be stated more broadly or was irrelevant. I took this feedback into consideration, applied it to the frameworks, and then days later, once again, met with the participants to discuss the updated frameworks. Each of these meetings lasted roughly 20 minutes, and each gave me an opportunity to discuss the edits I had made to the frameworks. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. However, before the final version was printed, some minor amendments were made based upon the latest feedback I received (See Appendix 1).

Crafting the semi-structured focus group frameworks followed a similar suit; however, the participants were strictly parents and community members. Accordingly, two roughly 45-minute focus groups took place – three parents in one group and three

community members in the other group. After each focus group was completed, participants from each group provided feedback for roughly 25 minutes that same day. Next, I edited the frameworks based on the feedback, and then I had a follow-up meeting with one participant from each focus group – more participants could not attend due to scheduling conflicts. Lastly, more edits were made to the frameworks, and then a final draft was created (See Appendix 1).

Selecting semi-structured interview schedules proved to be appropriate given that an embedded, multi-case design was adopted. The structure of the schedules allowed me to focus on the embedded topics, while their flexibility provided the interviewees with sufficient freedom to spontaneously discuss the embedded topics along with additional topics. Generally, I proposed a topic through a question, and the interviewee responded to that particular topic and provided additional information, allowing for a range of topics that were not embedded in the study to also be explored. Accordingly, this provided me with rich data that is specific to both the embedded elements and non-fixed topics.

Select sections of data gathered from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed and coded. First, these sections were transcribed, and then they were analyzed and coded with the use of NVivo and by hand (See Appendix 2). Each initial analysis yielded about three to sixteen coded findings, which organically developed from the data, per sub-question; the second analysis reduced the number of coded findings to between three and fifteen per sub-question; and the final analysis reduced the number of coded findings to about three to twelve per sub-question. The reductions were primarily due to theme consolidation and the refocusing of the code. See Appendix 2 for examples. Coded findings that were not directly associated with sub-questions also organically developed during this process.

Piloting the surveys also only involved parents and community members. Each participant completed his/her respective survey, and then afterwards, I discussed the survey questions with each of them for about 20 minutes that same day. The feedback I received, which primarily focused on clarifying and narrowing questions, was incorporated into the surveys, and then, once again, it was discussed with the participants a few days later. Subsequently, adjustments, some major and some minor, were made to the surveys, before a final version was printed (See Appendix 3).

Data from the surveys was also analyzed. First, the data was inserted and organized in tables (See Appendix 4), and then, using SPSS, correlations and partial correlations were calculated, t-tests were conducted, and ordinary least square regressions were conducted. Although there was an insufficient amount of participants to yield statistically significant findings, it was good practice.

Lastly, the observation and document tables were piloted with the same administrator and two teachers who reviewed the interview frameworks. Both types of tables were shared with the three participants, and then the individuals provided feedback. The feedback, which mainly included suggestions on additional things that could be observed or other documents that could be gathered, was incorporated into the tables. A few days later, again, the participants were asked to provide feedback on the tables. This feedback was included in the tables, before final drafts were printed (See Appendixes 5 and 6).

I was not able to pilot my analysis strategy on observation and documentary data, because observations were not conducted and documents were not gathered. The school administrator was not able to offer me a school tour or provide me with extensive documents, since I was completing a pilot study and tours and documents are only offered

to individuals conducting formal research studies. However, the strategies were informed by my past MPhil work.

3.8 Data Collection

Data collection at each school encompassed two phases. The first phase consisted of holding interviews and focus groups (qualitative), conducting on-site observations and writing field notes (qualitative), and gathering documents (qualitative and quantitative), while the second phase entailed administering surveys (quantitative) (See Table 7).

Table 7: Phases, Participants, and Types of Data Collection Instruments

PHASE ONE: INTERVIEWS, ON-SITE OBSERVATIONS, AND COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS	
• Director of National or Local Federation Model (where applicable): TI • Principal or Assistant Principal: IPI • Community School Director: IPI • Teachers (3-4): IPI	• Counselors (Mentors) (1-2): IPI • Parents (7-8): 1 IPI & 2 FG • Community Members (7-8): 1 IPI & 2 FG • On-Site Observations • Documents
PHASE TWO: SURVEYS	
• Parents: S	• Community Members: S
<u>Key</u> • In-Person Interview: IPI • Telephonic Interview: TI Focus Group: FG • Survey: S	

3.8.1 Phase One of Data Collection

The first phase began with interviews and focus groups, and was followed by on-site observations and the gathering of documents. Interview and focus group participants associated with each school typically included the following: the director of the national model (only applied to the national model schools), the director of the local federation model (only applied to the local federation model schools), the principal or assistant principal, the community school director, three to four teachers, one to two school

counselors, seven to eight parents, and seven to eight active community members. Parents and community members were the only group of participants who were involved in both individual interviews and focus groups. In these instances, typically, one in-person interview was conducted, and then two focus groups, each consisting of about three to four individuals, were held.

Almost all of the individuals participated in roughly 30-minute, on-site interviews that were held in their natural environments, which ranged from administrative offices and classrooms to auditoriums and schoolyards. The only exceptions were the approximately 30-minute phone interviews with directors of the national and local federation model schools. These interviews were held over the phone to accommodate their schedules.

During each interview and focus group, I used a semi-structured framework as a guide (See Appendix 1). The two types of frameworks, one for interviews and the other for focus groups, highlight important topics that are directly tied to the research questions. Since the frameworks were only used as general guides for the conversations, I do not believe they restricted participant responses unduly; in practice, the conversations were largely participant-driven.

This phase concluded with on-site observations of facilities, programs, and services that serve students, parents, and community members and the gathering of select documents released by the districts, schools, and partners of the schools. I was typically given anywhere between a 30- to 60-minute tour either by the community school director or by the community school director and one of his/her colleagues. At each site, I tried, at a minimum, to visit the following facilities, which pertain to the various aspects of community school provisioning most likely to be provided based on my earlier MPhil research, to see if they existed and were operational:

- Academic tutoring classroom(s)
- Physical, mental, and oral health offices

- Cafeteria
- Food pantry
- Clothing closet
- Schoolyard
- Community members' lounge and classroom(s)
- Community's meeting area (e.g. auditorium or cafeteria)
- Internet zone

Data was entered into a table (See Appendix 5). However, since not all of these facilities were present at all six schools, I was unable to observe them at all the schools.

Also, while at each school, at a minimum, I attempted to obtain the following documents that could provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence:

To Answer Questions on Aims and Motivations

- Online profile of the school (qualitative)
- Program pamphlets (e.g. pamphlet on tutoring services) (qualitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the parents and students (e.g. letter welcoming parents and students to the school) (qualitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the community members (e.g. letter welcoming community members to the school) (qualitative)

To Answer Questions on Implementation Strategies

- Online profile of the school (qualitative and quantitative)
- Program pamphlets (e.g. pamphlet describing available physical health services) (qualitative and quantitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the parents and students (e.g. letter describing food programs that are being offered) (qualitative and quantitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the community members (e.g. letter describing educational community programs that are being offered) (qualitative and quantitative)
- School calendar for the students (qualitative)
- Calendar for the community members (qualitative)

To Answer Questions on Impacts

- Online profile of the school (quantitative)
- Program pamphlets (quantitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the parents and students (e.g. annual letter summarizing school performance) (quantitative)
- Letters from the school district and/or school to the community members (e.g. annual letter summarizing community impacts) (quantitative)
- Local academic evaluations (quantitative)

These documents were typically provided to me by individuals who were interviewed or surveyed. Overall, I did not encounter frequent issues surrounding access to documents.

Although, in a few instances, gaining access to documents on impacts proved to be the most challenging. After reviewing the documents, the data was also entered into a table (See Appendix 6).

3.8.2 Phase Two of Data Collection

The second phase consisted of surveying parents and involved community members (See Appendix 3). By doing this second, I was able to refine the surveys based upon a preliminary analysis of information gathered from the interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents. The surveys were distributed in-person to an average of 26 parents and 25 active community members at each school. Many participants completed their survey in front of me, while others returned the surveys to me by mail after completing them elsewhere. With an average response rate of 55% for parents and 56% for community members at the school-level, I received an average of 14 parent and 14 community member surveys from each school. Table 8 shows the exact sample size, number of responses, and the response rate for each of the schools. The table also displays the average for each model and the overall average for all six schools.

Table 8. Survey Response Rate

Community Schools	Parent (P)/ Community Member (CM)	Sample Size	Responses	Response Rate	Response Rate Per Model	Overall Response Rate
Isabella National School	P	25	13	52%	56% (29/52 P)	55% (86/157 P) 56% (85/152 CM)
	CM	24	15	63%		
Oak National School	P	27	16	59%	58% (29/50 CM)	
	CM	26	14	54%		
Stewart Local Federation School	P	24	12	50%	49% (24/49 P)	
	CM	26	17	65%		
Gardner Local Federation School	P	25	12	48%	55% (28/51 CM)	
	CM	25	11	44%		
Fenway Independent School	P	29	17	59%	59% (33/56 P)	
	CM	28	15	54%		
Teak Independent School	P	27	16	59%	55% (28/51 CM)	
	CM	23	13	57%		
Totals	P	157	86			
	CM	152	85			

3.9 Data Analysis

A concurrent mixed methods research design, based on Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, 2006), was implemented. The data analysis began by concentrating on research question one. First, separately for each school, interview and focus group data was transcribed, analyzed, and theme coded; survey data was analyzed and inserted into a table; observation data (i.e. field notes) was analyzed and theme coded; and documentary data was retrieved, analyzed, and theme coded. After each one of these processes was completed, various findings were identified. Secondly, and still separately for each school, findings

from all four data groups (interviews and focus groups, surveys, observations, and documents) were compared against each other and then consolidated, allowing for the creation of one community school case profile for each of the six schools. Lastly, now no longer separately for each school, similar and different community school case profiles were compared and contrasted using a cross-case synthesis technique adapted from Yin (2009). Figure 4 provides an overview of how the different data sources were analyzed and integrated into individual case profiles that were used in the cross-case analysis.

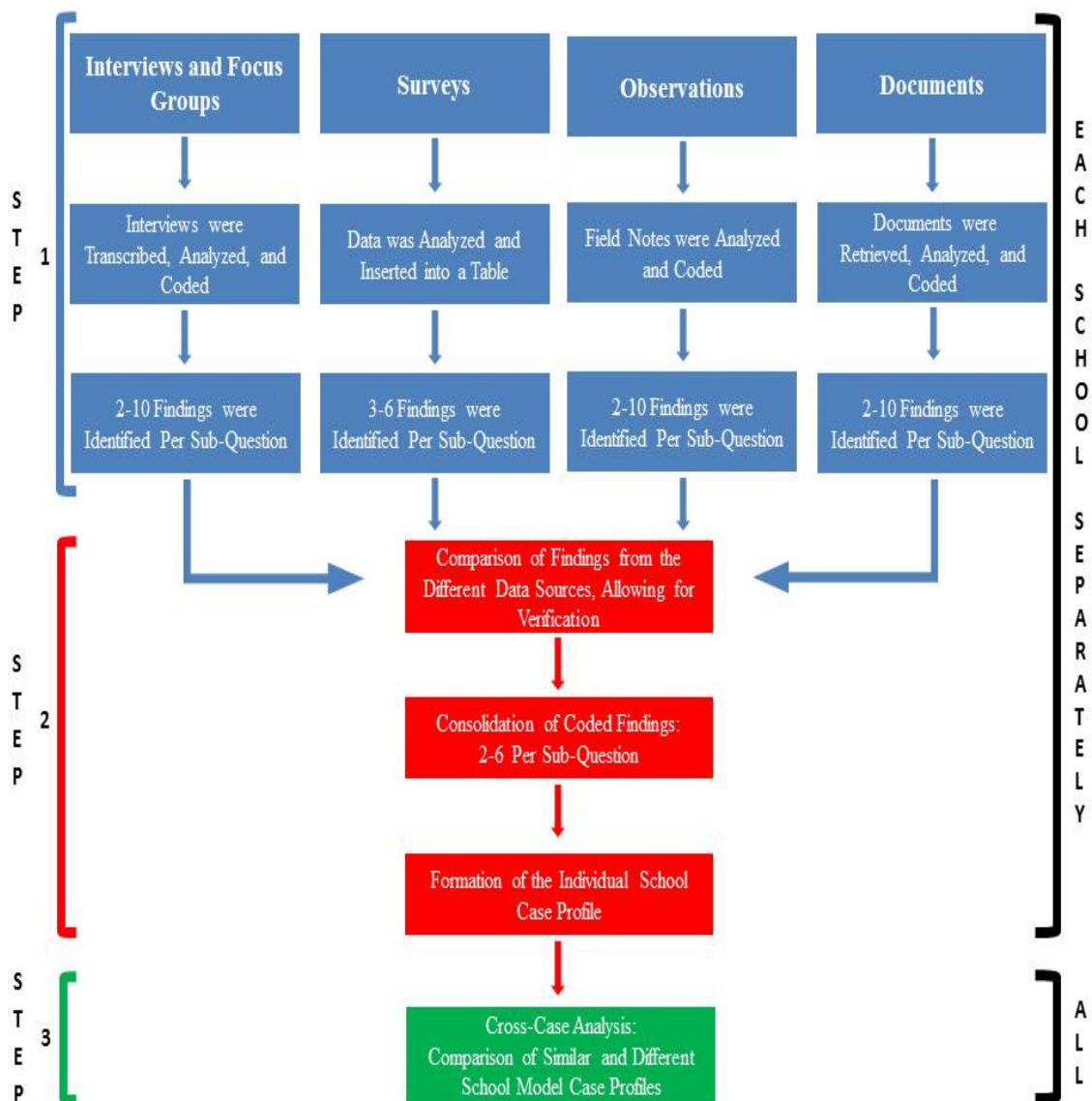


Figure 4. Mixed Methods Design and Data Analytic Procedures

In addition to allowing findings to emerge from the various sources of data (as previously described), a subsequent data analysis steeped in theory also occurred. This analysis focused on research question two. Based upon the six community school case profiles, an exemplary theoretical community school was crafted. This ‘ideal community school’ adopted the best traits of the six real-life schools. For example, if only one community school offers a high-impact academic tutoring program, then the ideal community school adopts that program and impact level. Next, data from the ideal community school was adapted to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory and then inserted into a table. Lastly, the table containing data on the ideal community school was appraised through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. During all of the analyses, I was consciously seeking to identify patterns and themes in the data that naturally emerged from the various data sources. However, in this subsequent stage, there was an explicit reference to the Ecological Systems theory.

On the whole, both the data collection and data analysis can be viewed as drawing on inductive reasoning, which is commonly referred to as a ‘bottom up approach’. First, qualitative and quantitative data on the three topics and three subtopics was collected for each of the six community schools. Next, key findings on the topics and subtopics for the six community schools and the three models were identified through a set of analyses. Lastly, empirical data from the comparisons of the six community schools and three models was used to form an ideal community school that was evaluated against Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. The assessment focused on understanding whether or not the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the individual settings, the link between two individual settings, and broad features of the human ecological systems of students.

3.9.1 Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step One of Three (Research Question One)

The goal of this step was to take raw data from each of the four sources, analyze and code it, and then develop it into findings for each of the sub-questions from research question one (See Figure 5).

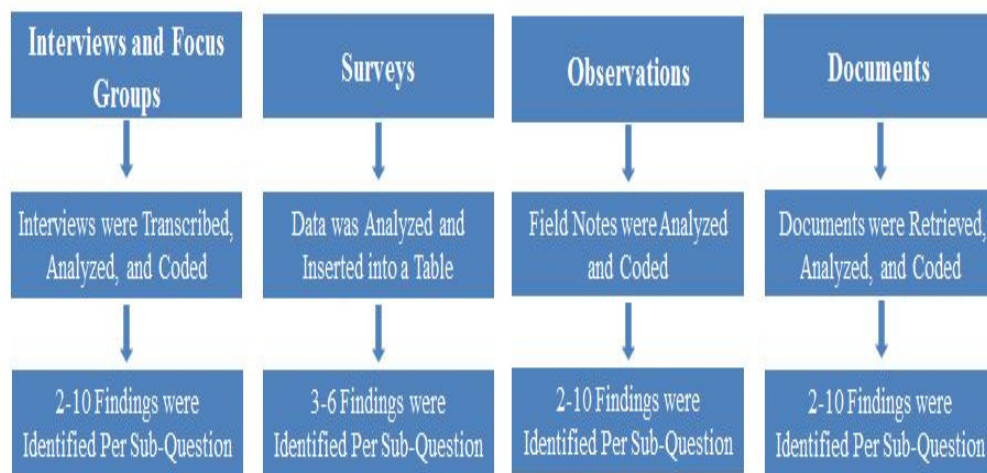


Figure 5. Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step One of Three

Before any transcripts were read, however, a table outlining areas requiring findings was created. This table is based upon the sub-questions of research question one (See Table 9).

Table 9. The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Research Question One

Aims and Motivations
Academics
• What are the goals of the curricula and academic tutoring services? Findings: • Why did the schools select these goals? Findings:
The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront
• What are the overall goals of the programs and services that seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront? Findings: • Why do the schools seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront? Findings:
Community Engagement
• What are the general goals of the opportunities that attempt to engage the community? Findings: • Why do the schools attempt to engage the community? Findings:

Implementation Strategies
Academics
• Do the schools adopt a standard curriculum or craft a unique one independently? Findings: • How do the schools address academic tutoring? Findings: • Who manages the academic tutoring services? Findings: • How do the schools fund/sustain the academic tutoring services? Findings: • Do the services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand? Findings:
The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront
• How do the schools address physical health? Findings: • How do the schools fund/sustain the physical health services? Findings: • Do the physical health services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand? Findings: • How do the schools address mental health? Findings: • How do the schools fund/sustain the mental health services? Findings: • Do the mental health services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand? Findings: • What programs do the schools offer to address hunger? Findings: • How do the schools fund/sustain the programs targeting hunger? Findings: • Who manages the programs that address hunger? Findings: • Do the food programs have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand? Findings:
Community Engagement
• What opportunities do the schools offer to engage the community at-large? Findings: • How do the schools fund/sustain opportunities that engage the community at-large? Findings: • Who manages the opportunities that engage the community at-large? Findings: • Do the community engagement opportunities have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand? Findings:

Impacts
Academics • What academic performance results and overall percentile ranks did the schools achieve over the past five academic years? Has academic performance improved year after year, over the past five academic years? Findings: • Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ elements? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the courses had on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, such as confidence levels? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the academic tutoring programs had on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements? Findings:
The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront • Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the physical health services had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the mental health services had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the food programs had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements? Findings:
Community Engagement • Do the schools possess favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the community engagement programs had on students and other community members? Findings: • How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the adult community educational programs had on mature community members? Findings:

This table functioned as a guide during the code development phase. In essence, it served as a visual representation of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Data from the **interviews and focus groups** was used to answer sub-questions from all three topic areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) and all

three subtopic areas (academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement) of research question one. Based upon work by Babbie (2002), Bryman & Burgess (1994), Dey (1993), Mason (2002), Prior (2003), Punch (1999), Strauss & Corbin (1990), and Thomas (2003), interview and focus group data was transcribed and analyzed, and then, using two separate coding approaches, coded findings were identified.

Transcriptions were guided by the pragmatic approach, which involves listening to the interviews and focus groups through a headset and typing what is stated into a word processor (Flick, 2007). This process was time-consuming and, at times, challenging due to stints of poor audio quality, but became easier with practice. Not transcribing nonessential data, such as salutations and tangential information, which was irrelevant to the first research question, also made the process easier.

With the use of NVivo, the interview and focus group transcriptions were coded by applying an inductive, thematic coding method, and findings linked to Table 9 were identified (See Appendix 2). The topics, subtopics, and sub-questions of research question one offered guidance on particular areas that should be focused on during the analysis. These three cues provided overarching themes that should be investigated, but did not constrain the analysis as the findings emerged from the data. For example, Appendix 2 shows how a topic (implementation strategy), a subtopic (the socio-economic challenges that the students confront), and a sub-question (What programs do the schools offer to address hunger?) are at the center of six sets of coded findings and their associated direct quotes. Stemming from these three black-colored cues are the participant quotes that naturally surfaced during the analyses of the transcripts (each marked with quotation marks and colored in yellow, olive, green, gray, purple, and blue) and the codes that summarize these quotes (each marked as “coded finding” and also colored in yellow, olive, green, gray, purple, and blue). In this instance – and common among all the analyses – a collection of

related quotes surfaced by the third review of the data. The fourth review, and subsequent ones, which did not surface additional quotes, confirmed that a comprehensive analysis had been conducted. After confirming the rigor of the analysis, an individual coded finding was crafted (e.g. breakfast and lunch, dinner, food pantry, sufficient food programs offered, summer meal program, and weekend backpack program) to summarize each cluster of associated direct quotes.

To add greater validity to the findings, the transcriptions were analyzed by hand by applying, again, an inductive, thematic coding method that mirrored the one previously outlined (See Appendix 2). It was rare for additional direct quotes linked to the coded findings to be identified. This confirmed the rigor of the initial analysis.

The **surveys** I administered to parents and community members were specifically focused on addressing questions related to impacts. The surveys primarily focused on how the schools, academic tutors, health clinics, guidance offices, food programs, community events, and community educational programs help students, their parents, and community members who are associated with them. The mean response for each sub-question was inserted into a table, which includes rows titled, “Research Question,” “Administered Question,” “Number of Participants,” and “Mean Response” (See Appendix 4).

Originally, my goal was to use the surveys as a primary data source to explore significant relationships amongst independent and dependent variables, identify associations and correlations, and possibly draw statistically significant conclusions, and then use this information to identify a collection of findings pertaining to impacts. This would have given me a greater understanding of a range of indicators, such as gender, age, relationship status, household income, number of children in household, years living in the school neighborhood, years involved with the school, and average number of times per month at the school. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen challenges at the majority of the schools (e.g.

school administrators are not allowed to assist researchers with the recruitment of participants; participants can only be recruited by placing a flyer on the school bulletin board; the researcher primarily had to meet parent and community member participants independently during after school hours), a more complex statistical analysis involving significance testing at the school level could not be conducted due to a lack of participants. Accordingly, through comparisons of means, the surveys were used as a data source that augmented and complemented the qualitative data. Although this was a basic use of the surveys, having this additional data, nonetheless, was of value in providing additional evidence on the rare occasion when the qualitative data could suggest different trends.

The field notes from the **observations** helped address questions pertaining to implementation strategies and impacts. These notes, which were organized in a table, were read numerous times and a thematic coding method was applied (See Appendix 7). By the fourth read-through, the initial, organically created coded findings from the first read-through came to form roughly two to ten specific coded findings for many of the sub-questions.

Data from the collected **documents** was used to address questions associated with all three topic areas. Most commonly, the documents included online profiles of the schools, program pamphlets, letters from the school and district to students, parents, and community members, activity calendars, and local academic evaluations. The documents from each school were reviewed for information associated with the sub-questions. Quotes and paraphrases from the documents answering the sub-questions were inserted into an organized table constructed for each school. After numerous reviews of the data in a table, two to ten organically developed coded findings, summarizing the quotes and paraphrases, were crafted for many of the sub-questions (See Appendix 8).

3.9.2 Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step Two of Three (Research Question One)

At this point, four separate data analyses had been conducted – one for each data group – and the next step was for the findings of all four groups to be compared against each other and then consolidated, allowing for the creation of one individual case profile for each of the six schools (See Figure 6) (See Appendix 9).

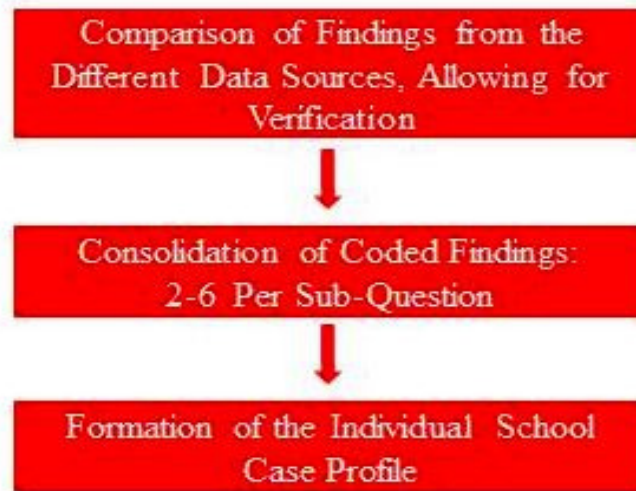


Figure 6. Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step Two of Three

First, data from the four groups was cross-referenced (i.e. compared against each other). This was done by going through each of the sub-questions associated with the first research question, one-by-one, and comparing the coded findings across the four data groups, although not all the data groups had coded findings for every sub-question (i.e. for each sub-question, the coded findings from the interviews and focus groups, surveys, observations, and documents were compared, when coded findings were available). Oftentimes, the coded findings for a sub-question were so closely related that they mirrored one another. It was uncommon for a stark difference to exist between the coded findings of at least two data groups. On occasion, however, there were a few minor differences between the coded findings of two or more data groups on impacts.

Next, the coded findings for each sub-question, across the data groups, were consolidated to form one set of coded findings per sub-question, which ranged from two to six coded findings (i.e. each sub-question now had two to six coded findings that were based on the data groups). Although, as I stated earlier, the coded findings from across the data groups were often similar, crafting coded findings for each sub-question that honored coded findings from multiple data groups and were lucid was time-consuming. The coded findings of each sub-question were reviewed a minimum of four times, and the primary strategy for creating the codes was consolidating information across data groups.

Lastly, the two to six coded findings per sub-question came to form an individual case profile for each community school. These case profiles would later serve as the basis of the cross-case synthesis analysis.

3.9.3 Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step Three of Three (Research Question One)

After the formation of the six separate community school case profiles, each one was compared and contrasted using the cross-case synthesis technique that Yin (2009) outlines (See Figure 7).

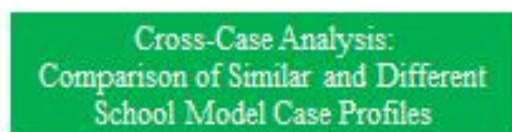


Figure 7. Analysis of the Four Data Groups: Step Three of Three

According to Yin (2009), each case should be treated as an independent study and evaluated through the use of a word table. The table should visually display a connection between subjects in the case study and, consequently, show topics and subtopics that are essential to addressing the research question(s). For this study, the structured case profile of each school served as the word table. Additionally, Yin (2009) asserts that, at the very least, four

principles must be followed to ensure a quality analysis. The principles include the following:

1. A comprehensive review of all the data must be conducted.
2. Significant opposing views should be examined.
3. The analysis should concentrate on key topics of the case study, which are outlined in the table.
4. Prior knowledge of the study should be utilized.

Additionally, Stake (2006) explicitly warns that many researchers conducting this type of analysis narrowly focus on findings that are common across the cases, rather than focusing on both common and distinctive findings.

The four principles described by Yin (2009) and the common error emphasized by Stake (2006) were considered during the analysis. To make the review manageable, the six case profiles were positioned next to one another. This allowed me to visually identify similarities and differences between similar and different community school models. I began the comprehensive review by comparing two schools of similar models for each of the three models (i.e. 'within' the model). This provided findings on characteristics of each model, thus establishing model profiles. Next, using the model profiles that summarize the general characteristics of each model, I compared the three models (i.e. 'across' the models). Each analysis consisted of at least four reviews, during which I attempted to identify both common and distinctive findings on the topics and subtopics. Although there was a significant amount of data, utilizing my understanding of the data itself and its organization was helpful. In particular, conducting numerous reviews and drawing on prior knowledge helped me attain an extremely sound understanding of the data and made me feel confident in the distinguishing characteristics I identified. Interesting findings surrounded both characteristics that are common to all six schools and those that are rarer. In regard to the former type, appropriately, these findings are regularly referred to as a

“common finding” in the cases and the cross-case analysis chapter that presents the main findings.

3.9.4 Analysis using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Research Question Two)

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory was used to assess evidence from the six community school case profiles, which were formed from qualitative and quantitative data collected at the schools. Specifically, through inductive reasoning, the theory was used to analyze the potential of the community school concept to strengthen individual settings, the link between two individual settings, and broad features that are located in the human ecological systems of students, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1986, 1994). This was accomplished through the following four-step process, which is explained in more detail later in the chapter:

- Step One: An ideal, theoretical community school case profile, based on data from all six of the real-life, evaluated community schools was constructed. This ‘ideal’ community school adopted the most positive characteristics the six community schools achieved in the three topic areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) and the three subtopic areas (academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement).
- Step Two: Data from the ideal community school was entered into a table based on how a typical community school and its students interact with four human ecological systems. In a few instances, findings not addressed by the three topics or subtopics, but relevant to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, were included in the table.
- Step Three: The ideal community school was assessed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory.

- Step Four: Conclusions on the potential of the ideal community school to strengthen individual settings, the link between two individual settings, and broad features that rest within the human ecological systems of students were drawn.

Figure 8 visually displays this four-step process. It must be noted, however, that the fifth system of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, the Chronosystem, arguably the most theoretical and removed of the five, is not included in the analysis. This system concentrates on shifts and changes over time. Considering the scope of the research, findings related to this system would be questionable. The majority of the six community schools have been operating as community schools for a limited time, and thus, it is not possible to study their development over an extended period of time.

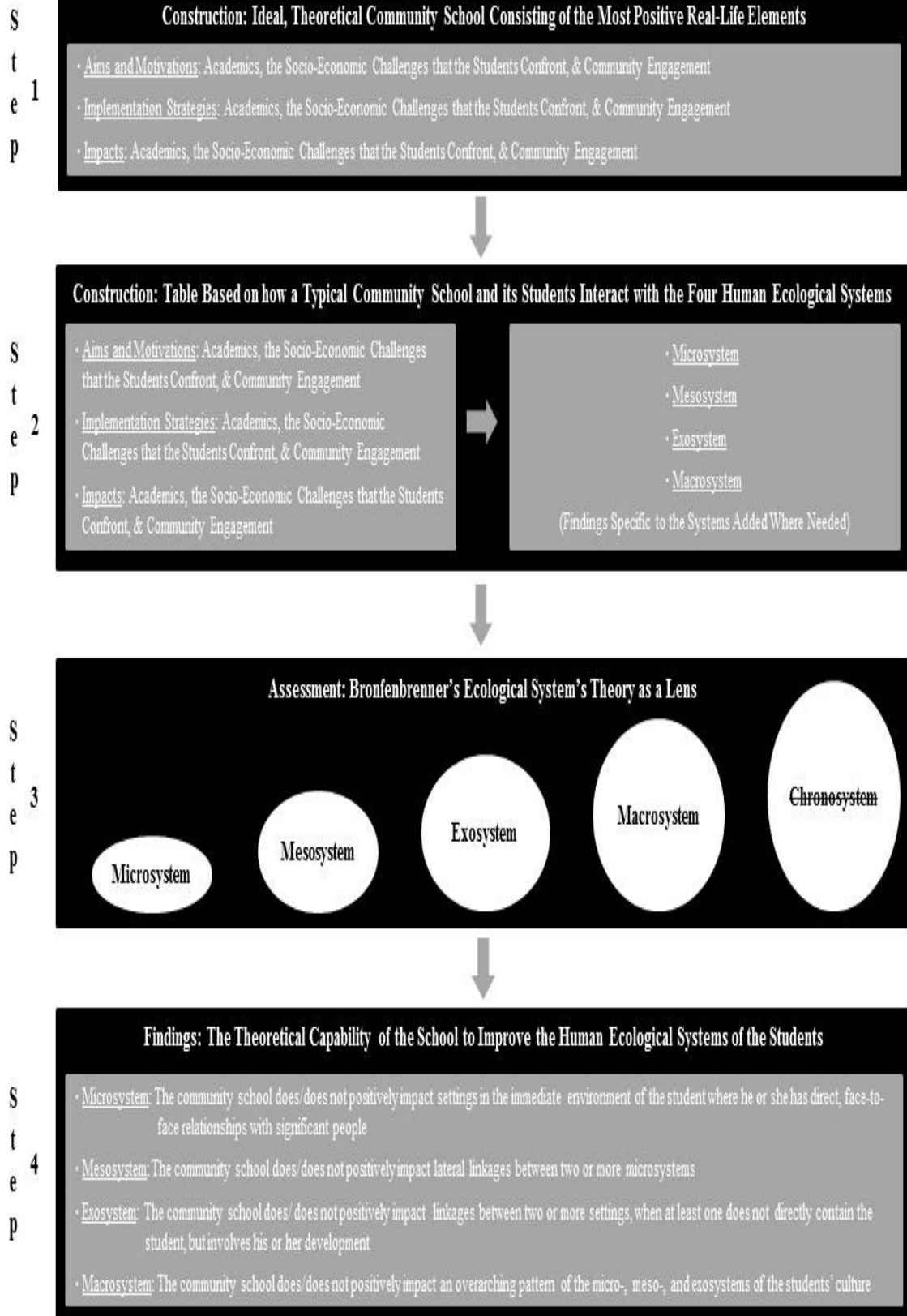


Figure 8. The Construction, Assessment, and Findings of the Ideal, Theoretical Community School

Step one entailed the construction of the ideal, theoretical community school. This required a review of both positive and negative data on the six real-life community school case profiles. The most positive findings of the three topics and three subtopics, from across the six community school case profiles, were identified during the analysis. These exemplary findings were adopted by the ideal, theoretical community school.

Step two involved adapting the ideal, theoretical community school to Bronfenbrenner's theory (1977, 1979, 1986, 1994). To accomplish the adaptation, a table outlining how a typical community school and its students interact with the four systems was constructed (See Appendix 10). This table is based on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1994) (See Figure 9). Only settings specific to community schools were included in the table. In spite of the exclusion of some settings, the table closely represents Bronfenbrenner's theory (1994). Coded findings from the ideal, theoretical community school were entered into this table. In particular, the focus was placed on coded findings pertaining to the comprehensive nature of the available offerings, management system, and funding arrangement. Additionally, concentration was centered around empirical coded findings and impact levels. In a few instances, to provide information on subjects not covered by the three topics, three subtopics, or sub-questions, but specific to Bronfenbrenner's theory (e.g. the impact of the six community schools on broad features that include racism and political culture), supplementary data analyses mirroring those outlined in steps one to three of the data analysis (See Sections 3.9.1 – 3.9.3) were conducted. These additional findings allowed for the construction of a more comprehensive table.

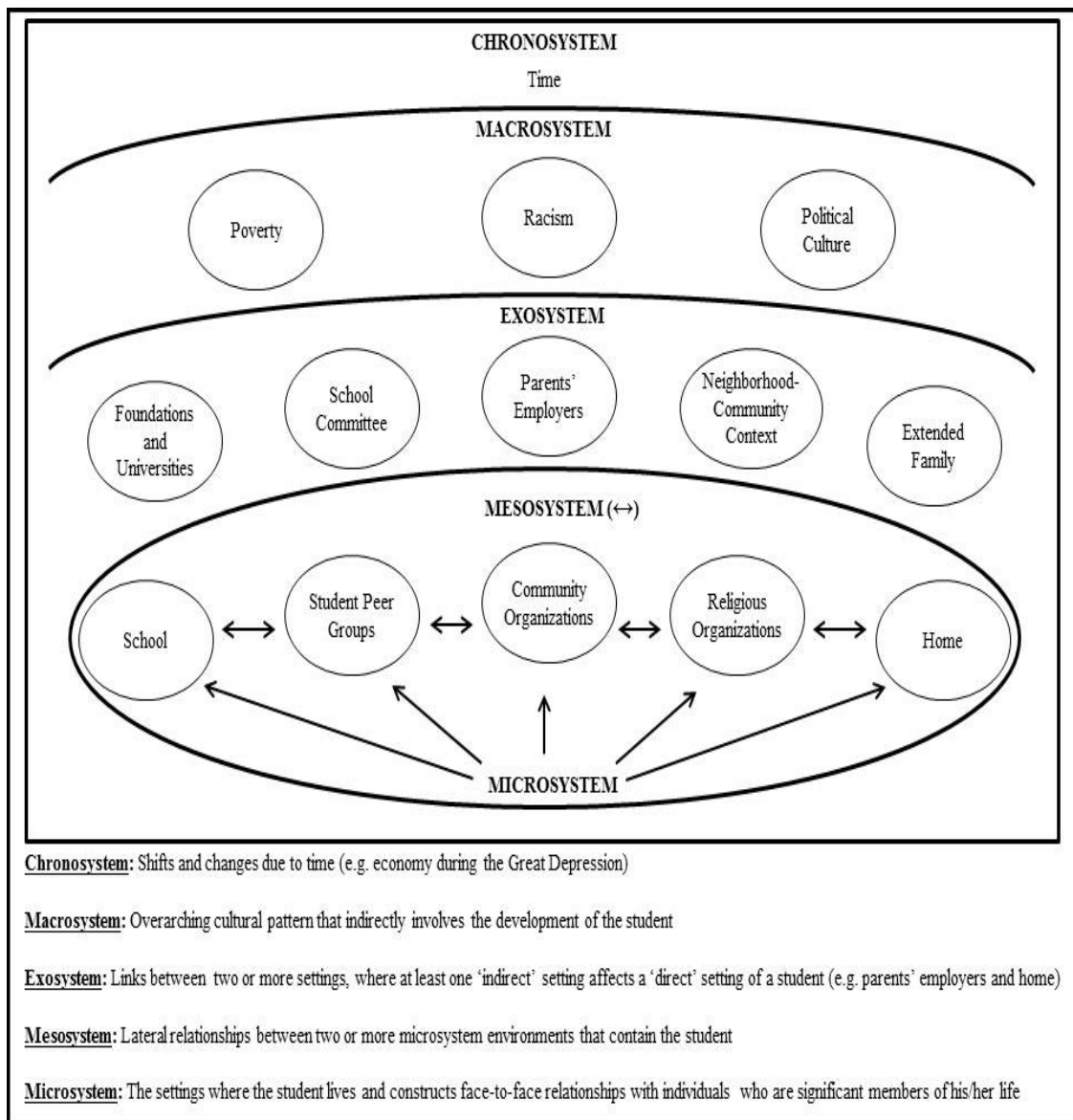


Figure 9. Example of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Applied to a Student

Step three entailed an assessment of the data in the table, which outlines how a typical community school and its students interact with the four systems. The assessment focused on the potential of the ideal, theoretical community school to strengthen the settings, the link between two settings, and broad features that are located in the four systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) and are part of the ecological systems of students. This rigorous review of the data was accomplished through an interactive process. The coded findings were read at least four times to confirm patterns.

Lastly, step four entailed drawing conclusions based on the coded findings and patterns that emerged during the assessment. If the ideal community school is deemed unlikely to possess the potential to strengthen the settings, the link between two settings, and/or broad features within the human ecological systems of the students, I could reasonably conclude that real-life community schools are also unlikely to accomplish this undertaking effectively. Furthermore, if I were to arrive at this conclusion, I could manipulate the data in the table to see how the ideal community school could possess the potential to strengthen the settings, the link between two settings, and/or broad features in the human ecological systems of students.

3.10 Instrumentation: Reliability and Validity

To increase the trustworthiness of the conclusions in this mixed methods, but primarily qualitative, study, many individuals in diverse roles were interviewed at each school and a range of data collection tools were used. Interviewees holding different roles, from school principal to community member, and maintaining different levels of accountability with the local school board, ranging from high-level to low-level, were interviewed. Furthermore, surveys, observations, and documents were employed to provide diverse perspectives, thus triangulating evidence. All the tools were selected on the basis of what Babbie (2001) and Trochim (2005) describe as face validity (it is projected, on 'face value,' that the tool will measure what is being researched) and content validity (the ability of the tool to yield a variety of data necessary to address the research question(s)). Expert opinions were also sought during the pilot stage as instruments were developed.

Based on the diversity of interviewees, data collection tools, both the face validity and the content validity, and expert opinions, the findings are likely to be reliable in the sense that another researcher using the same approaches would be likely to draw similar

conclusions from the evidence. However, at the same time, the yielded conclusions possess a relatively weak external validity, and thus, are not generalizable. Nonetheless, the rigor of the approach allows for a trustworthy account.

Interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, and documents have historically provided valuable data that pertains to organizational models. Accordingly, I saw fit to use these tools to gather data for this work. Furthermore, discussions with academics and practitioners both confirmed that it was reasonable to assume that these instruments would be reliable in the context of my research.

The selected tools were also chosen because they are capable of yielding relevant data pertaining to aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Furthermore, they are able to yield data on academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement

Despite the favorable characteristics, the research design is likely to yield results that possess a weak external validity. Thus, if another researcher were to use the methodology described in this chapter to examine the same six schools included in this study, there is a strong likelihood that the findings drawn by the researcher would be similar to those found in this study. However, if this same researcher were to apply the methodology described in this chapter to community schools not included in this study, there is a possibility that the findings drawn by the researcher could differ from the ones found in this study due to contextual factors. Accordingly, it is not claimed that the findings in this research are generalizable. This, though, should not detract from the value of the conclusions. Findings that are not generalizable can offer a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, be used as a foundation for future research, be applied to a theory, and, naturally in this instance, provide academics, practitioners, and policymakers with insights on distinguishing characteristics that are particular to each of the three community school

models. Thus, “fuzzy” generalization, to quote Bassey (2000), may be achieved – the generalizability, though, is analytical and not statistical (Yin, 1994). The findings, furthermore, are valuable because they seek to offer an authentic, trustworthy account that illuminates and increases understanding of the nature of the three different community school models, which links with my overarching aim.

3.11 Saturation and Member Checking

In addition to focusing on instrumentation, monitoring saturation and applying member checking were two additional techniques used to increase confidence in the findings. Saturation, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Miles and Huberman (1994), is the point in the investigation where continuing to further collect data, whether through interviews, focus groups, or on-site observations, does not offer new insight on the research question(s). As for member checking, it involves having a select number of individuals associated with each case review a draft of the written-up case in order to ensure accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To further increase the trustworthiness of the study, all six cases were also reviewed by a community school expert who is autonomous of the six community schools.

The quantity, diversity, and depth of the data collected at each of the six community schools helped suggest that saturation had been achieved. At each school, on average, about 15 interviews and focus groups, totaling 25 participants, were conducted; 14 parent and 14 community member surveys were completed; a variety of documents, from letters written by administrators to parents to tables on academic performance results, were gathered; and, on-site observations, ranging from a school tour to more removed observations of offerings, occurred. The analysis of this data uncovered clear patterns that were continuously

confirmed. There did not appear to be a topic that could have benefited from gathering additional data.

Once a complete draft of each case was written, I attempted to hold a meeting about the document with an individual from three separate participant groups at each school, specifically administrators and teachers, parents with students attending the school, and adult community members. In a few instances, administrators were not available to meet due to a scheduling conflict. Generally, parents and adult community members were the most accessible. During the meeting, participants commonly provided context on certain topics in the case, identified areas that required greater clarity, and asked questions about findings. The discussions helped me refine each case, particularly in the area of ‘non-academic-performance’ impacts. I believe those who participated, overall, found the cases to be accurate and representative of their school.

I also held a meeting with one of the three community school experts, who aided me with the three-stage, purposive selection process used to identify the six community schools, in order to discuss the draft of the six cases. This expert is a retired public school teacher, with over 20 years of experience, and has extensive knowledge on the community school concept. Her understanding of the community school concept, along with knowledge on community school sites and personnel, placed her in a strong position to examine the work. She looked for consistency between the data and the findings, while also evaluating the data and the findings against her knowledge of the public school system and community schools. In the end, she was pleased with the quality of the six cases.

Concentrating on saturation and member checking, along with having a community school expert review the six community school cases, helped increase the trustworthiness of the research study. There should be confidence in the diversity and depth of the enquiry and the accuracy of the data and findings.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Based on the “Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research,” published by the British Educational Research Association in 2011, I recognize that I have a responsibility to the following four groups: (1) the participants, (2) the sponsors of the research, (3) the community of educational researchers, and (4) the educational professionals, policymakers, and general public (BERA, 2011). Moreover, I understand that honesty must be at the center of each of these four relationships. Fortunately, I have always strived to represent the views of participants to the best of my ability, and none of the groups or individuals to whom I feel responsible pressured me to produce biased work.

I would not have been able to conduct this research project without the participants I interviewed and surveyed, and thus, I am extremely grateful to them and feel that I am obliged to honor their views and feelings. At the commencement of each engagement with a participant, I described my research project and its academic aims and political context, and also gave individuals the opportunity to ask questions about it. During this initial conversation, I also made it a point to assure participants that codes and pseudonyms would be used to conceal their personal identity and the identity of their school, respectively. Throughout my interactions with the participants, I regularly felt the need to assure them that my goal was to best represent their views, not mine. I would often state that they were the main characters, and that I was simply writing about them. I believe hearing this, in addition to seeing me conduct follow-up interviews, brought them reassurance. Additionally, many participants informed me that the discussions we had about possible negative discoveries during the study were both informative and comforting, because the conversations provided more information about the study, reduced fears of the unknown, and attested to my desire of being honest about the research. Many administrators, in particular, also stated that they felt at ease knowing that the preliminary findings would be

made available to them, that discussions with me about these findings could easily be scheduled, and that their role in verifying the research findings would strengthen the work.

I was fortunate to be conducting research for a university, department, and college and to have received support for my DPhil from a private funder that never attempted to influence my findings. They did not, for example, encourage me to promote one model over the others or solely focus on the advantages of community schools. Rather, each of the sponsors provided me with the autonomy needed to draw my own conclusions from the evidence collected. As a result, their views are unlikely to have shaped my conclusions. I feel that this honored my integrity and theirs and respected our collective goal of producing a respectable piece of academic work.

I also did not feel pressure from the academic community to reach a particular conclusion. Instead, members of this community compelled me to try to conduct research that was honest and rigorous when selecting participants, collecting data, analyzing it, isolating key findings, and drawing conclusions. I felt a particular responsibility to this group, because I personally identify with it, and because I wanted to leave other community school researchers with a sound piece of research to draw from in the future.

Although I have built relationships with educational professionals, policymakers, and community members over the years, I did not feel pressured by them, nor did I possess a personal desire, to reach conclusions that had been manipulated. I respected the views of the educational professionals I had worked with over the years, the political appointees I had helped in the past, and the community members I had spent time with over the years. Furthermore, I have attempted to separate my personal and professional relationships from my research. I feel that each of these individuals is owed rigorous research, which, for example, assists educational professionals with decisions that best serve students, helps policymakers make decisions that best serve their community, and supports community

members who strive to learn more about school improvement. Throughout this process I have maintained a professional commitment to equity and the support of the disadvantaged, while seeking to ensure this commitment did not influence my analysis or conclusions.

3.13 Summary

The goal of any research design and methodology is to provide a set of procedures that will help to address the research question(s) in a rigorous manner. The descriptive and exploratory case study research strategy that I described in this chapter supports this goal. It allows me to produce an authentic and trustworthy account based on a range of evidence from key stakeholders that illuminates significant topic areas and provide rich descriptions that can inform policymakers, practitioners, and community members. The six cases – two from each community school model – set the stage for a comparison of similar and different community school models. And the mixed methods approach allows for a gathering of data from a range of sources and participants. Ultimately, the rich data that I collected permitted me to conduct a thorough and focused analysis of the cases and identify relevant findings associated with the sub-questions of research question one. This methodology also allows me to address research question two by applying and analyzing the empirical data in relation to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory. This contributes to theory testing and development. In the end, this methodology yielded rich, authentic data that addresses both research questions and allows, across the six cases, for what Bassey (2000) describes as some “fuzzy” generalization, “do x in y circumstances and z may be the result”.

CHAPTER FOUR:

A NATIONAL MODEL COMMUNITY SCHOOL CASE

This chapter offers a description and analysis of the Isabella National Community School, while Appendix 11 provides an analysis and description of the Oak National Community School. Unfortunately, the two national model cases could not be featured in this chapter largely due to restrictions pertaining to the word limit of the thesis.

The two national model cases draw heavily on qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents. Additionally, the cases utilize quantitative data from documents and surveys. As was previously stated, a national model community school is typically a member of a network of more than five community schools that are located in two or more states. A national headquarters, generally, is closely aligned with all the community schools in each network. The headquarters commonly offers the schools strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support.

Each of the two cases is divided into the following seven sections: demographics, history of the school, school culture, aims and motivations, implementation strategies, impacts, and summary. A profile of the demographics of the school, its development, and its culture provides background context for a narrative about distinguishing characteristics associated with the aims and motivations, the implementation strategies, and the impacts of the school. In particular, the illustration of the aims and motivations concentrates on the goals of the curriculum, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities. Furthermore, it focuses on the motivations behind these goals. The depiction of the implementation strategies focuses on the identification of the curriculum type and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services, along with their level of funding and staffing and their ability to meet demand. The explanation of the impacts concentrates on achieved academic performance results and

the perceived positive impacts programs and services have had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The chapter closes with a summary of the Isabella National Community School and a synopsis of the two national model cases.

The section and subsection headings are derived from noteworthy themes that emerged from both community school literature and the collected field data. Commonly, words and phrases before a colon in a heading are associated with the former, and expressions after the colon in a heading are linked to the latter.

The Isabella National Community School: The Modern-Day Community School Pioneer and Oracle of the U.S.

The Isabella National Community School has been operating as a community school in an urban environment since the early 1990s. Its national headquarters is actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the community school, and it provides the school with extensive strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support.

4.1 Demographics: A Mexican population that does not have it easy

The Isabella National Community School is a grade 6 – 12 school with an average enrollment of 600 students per year. The urban school is located in a socio-economically disadvantaged, largely immigrant neighborhood of a vibrant major U.S. city. The neighborhood boasts a population that is over 60% Mexican, and Spanish is spoken as frequently as English. The warm and sunny main streets of the neighborhood are lively, with Latin music regularly playing and street vendors commonly engaging local pedestrians. Additionally, the streets are densely populated with bodegas, family owned restaurants and bakeries, hair salons, and fast food chain restaurants. Much to the dissatisfaction of many residents, there are only two economically dominant organizations in the neighborhood: a hospital and a department of a university. A community member (Isabella, P17) stated, *“Business people from downtown are afraid to walk these streets. They don’t come here for anything... That’s a huge reason why we don’t have big companies and good jobs around here... Those big companies feel good staying away... I can’t blame people like that. Crime is a part of life here. It happens”*. Locals recognize that crime is a significant problem in the neighborhood.

The existence of limited legal commerce in the neighborhood is augmented by significant illegal commerce. The neighborhood has a national reputation of possessing a

robust gang and drug trade culture. Gangs and drug organizations are openly acknowledged by residents, but are also feared by many of them. The police acknowledge the persistent gang- and drug-related activity in the area, but argue that the crime rate of the neighborhood is lower than other neighborhoods of the city and has decreased over the past two decades. Despite this, in 2015, the neighborhood of approximately 200,000 residents experienced the following crime complaints, according to the police department (ranges used to protect anonymity): 1– 5 murders, 10 – 25 rapes, 200 – 300 felony assaults, and 850 – 1000 robberies, among hundreds of other types of criminal complaints. Several of these figures are significantly lower than those of other neighborhoods in the city, but some are higher than those of other neighborhoods. Many interviewees, however, asserted that the crime figures are not reflective of all the crime that occurs in the neighborhood. One teacher (Isabella, P4) stated, *“The stats [crime figures] can be misleading. A lot of things [crimes] go unreported, because people are afraid of retaliation... A lot of issues between gangs are probably not in those reports [crime summaries]... I don’t think [gang] members report crimes between each other very often, you know... Thinking this is a safe neighborhood will get you hurt”*. Administrators, teachers, parents, and other community members with firsthand knowledge of the realities behind the crime figures regularly told me to leave before dark, keep to myself, and stay on the main street. I commonly received suspicious glares from residents as I made the half mile walk between the school and the subway station in my button down shirt, khaki or gray pants, and loafers.

Five miles away from the Isabella National Community School, which translates into a 20-minute car ride or 30-minute subway trip, rests the city center. There are many contrasts between the neighborhood of the school and this area. Upon arriving in the center, one is surrounded by skyscrapers, office buildings, and tourist attractions. World-class universities, theater productions, restaurants, and boutiques, also blanket the area. The city

seems alive, healthy, wealthy, and thriving. With this splendor, however, comes some of the highest commercial and residential real estate prices in the country and a vigilant police force that has kept crime down, earning it a reputation of being a safe city center. This is one of the crown jewels of the state, and both the state and city governments are dedicated to preserving its favorable reputation.

Parents and other community members of the Isabella National Community School do not experience the same life as residents living in the city center. Parents and community members associated with the school, overall, possess limited advanced education and are in weak socio-economic positions, which is also true for a significant portion of the individuals residing in the neighborhood. According to two school administrators, parents and other community members tied to the school are 95% Mexican, and 80% of them receive some form of government assistance, from Cash Assistance to Medicaid. Only 20% of these individuals possess a college degree or trade skill. The lack of higher education and trade skills has meant that many of the parents and other community members associated with the school earn low to modest wages as sales associates, administrators, cosmetologists, or cooks. The most common employers of these individuals are bodegas, restaurants, bakeries, hair salons, national fast food restaurants, major department stores, the nearby hospital, and the nearby university department. From these jobs, individuals earn an average household income of approximately \$35,000, while the city average is approximately \$50,000. The above average rate of single parent homes in the neighborhood, which is estimated to be 35%, also has had a negative impact on the socio-economic situation of many families. Overall, the majority of the families in the neighborhood seem to live paycheck-to-paycheck. One parent (Isabella, P9) described life in the neighborhood as *“trying to keep all of them safe [children] and fighting to earn enough money to cover basics... It seriously wears you out”*.

The student population of the Isabella National Community School also faces a host of challenges, but not without possessing strengths. The student population of the school is 95% Mexican, and with this culture, there comes a love of community. Students seemed most happy when they were together working, socializing, playing, dancing, and eating. Enthusiasm and joy often radiated from groups of students. It was extremely rare to see a student alone or isolated. Within this tightknit student body there are many students who face significant economic, language, and educational challenges. During a recent academic year, 75% of students received free lunch, 20% were classified as English Language Learners, and over 50% were assessed as being below grade level in Math and English. The community school director (Isabella, P3) stated, *“They don’t come from wealthy families. It’s not important. What matters is that they are part of a community, right here. That matters, and that’s valuable... Give them time. They are going to do well in life”*. The more time I spent at events, and particularly the more time I spent speaking with and learning about alumni, the more aware I became of how important creating a sense of community is to this school. Having students feel that each one of them is a member of a community and cultivating an optimistic view of the future seems extremely important to the adult members of the school.

4.2 History of the School: From forsaken to extolled

The Isabella National Community School began as a traditional public school in the 1960s, and then it developed into a community school in the 1990s. This occurred after a partnership was crafted between the school and a nonprofit organization (often referred to as the “national headquarters” or “headquarters”), which is an expert on the community school concept. The original Isabella traditional school was established during a time when public schools in its area were largely homogenous, both inside and out. For decade after

decade, the Isabella traditional school, like most public schools in the neighborhood, narrowly concentrated on providing academic instruction and offering a few afterschool sports from its brick fortress of a school building. An older, lifelong resident of the community (Isabella, P18) recollects, *“None of them [schools in the neighborhood] looked welcoming when they went up. People weren’t sure what to think... This is the blueprint right here: a big brick building and an asphalt playground. And there you have it... It’s a good thing they don’t anymore, but they all used to only care about reading, writing, and arithmetic”*. During the late 1980s, in particular, the Isabella traditional school and other schools in its neighborhood – along with schools from neighboring areas – gained mass public attention as their poor academic performance and the high rates of neighborhood violence associated with their localities became embedded in their identity. Simply stated, for the most part, the Isabella traditional school and other public schools around it had the reputation of residing in dangerous neighborhoods and yielding poor academic results. This led state and city officials to support a range of improvement strategies, which included comprehensive evaluations, teacher training programs, and partnership programs.

One of the programs supported by local officials was a partnership between the Isabella traditional school and an over 50-year old national nonprofit organization, which planned to take its particular community school approach nationally. This partnership united the knowledge and resources of the local, well-established nonprofit organization with the poor performing urban traditional public school. Ultimately, the Isabella National Community School was formed and the national organization began developing the school into one that focused on the three primary areas of a community school: academics, socio-economics, and community engagement. The union of a public school and a nonprofit organization was nothing new at the time; however, the proposed close relationship between the two organizations and the level of investment by the national headquarters was novel.

During the early years, with few community school partnerships to draw upon, crafting the school-headquarters relationship and the vision of this relationship was slow to develop. Ultimately, the slow progress was seen as beneficial by many individuals associated with the headquarters, because it allowed the national headquarters to learn about the community, specifically its primarily Mexican, socio-economically disadvantaged population, and then, initiate programs and services that would benefit the community.

Developing a management and funding strategy that would set the foundation for the Isabella National Community School to address the local challenges was time-consuming. During the early days of the partnership, the national headquarters had a limited presence at the school and provided the school with about \$100,000. As time passed and the vision of the community school developed, both the number of employees at the school that were directly associated with the national headquarters and the level of funding grew significantly. Today, four staff members (a community school director, an assistant community school director, and two staff members), all paid for by the national headquarters, occupy a three-room community school office suite at the school. Out of this office, with an estimated annual budget of over \$750,000 that derives primarily from both the national headquarters and 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding (21C funding), the individuals invest in and manage a range of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services. Furthermore, the professional grant writers at the national headquarters help the school win additional grants, which can each commonly exceed \$2,500.

Presently, to provide immediate relief to students and to help community members improve their financial situations, acquire more education and skills, and stabilize their homes, the Isabella National Community School offers an assortment of programs and services to its students, their parents, and other community members, which total over 2,000

individuals. The students have access to an on-site academic tutoring program, on-site physical and mental health clinics, food programs, and on-site afterschool activities, among other things. And their parents and other community members have access to a General Educational Development (GED) program, ESL classes, skill workshops, and parenting programs, in addition to other things, which are all on-site.

Today, the Isabella National Community School, which has a student intake that is demographically and socio-economically similar to the vast number of public schools in the city, is highly respected within the community and across the country. According to the community school director, its management and funding style, program and service offerings, and relationships have been studied and mimicked by school administrators, city officials, and politicians across the United States. The successes the school has achieved have been studied, and practitioners and researchers frequently tour the school. In particular, individuals are often most impressed by the ability of the school to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, mainly those rising from a lack of access to physical health care, emotional support and guidance, and food. Furthermore, individuals often value how the school has been able to help many parents and other community members earn their GED, improve their English language skills, expand their knowledge of parenting, and create a sense of community around the school, through student productions and celebrations. All of these successes, oftentimes, however, overshadow three primary concerns that some critics of the school maintain. First, there are concerns about the academic results the school has been able to produce for students over the years. Despite the dedication of the Isabella National Community School to academics and standardized exams, it is generally accepted that the school obtains academic results below those of traditional public schools in the area. Secondly, there are concerns that the school does not engage enough community members or offer sufficient adult education

programs to an adult population that is viewed as possessing modest levels of advanced education. And thirdly, there are concerns that the successes of the school have come with a hefty price tag, of which a large portion has been paid for by the national headquarters.

4.3 School Culture: One big Latin family

A distinct dichotomy exists between the cold, uninviting, fortress-like physical appearance of the Isabella National Community School building and the warm, inviting spirit of the school. This school has a genuine soul. Many connected to the school describe its nature as being the archetype of life in rural Mexico, where, in particular, family gatherings, community events, respect, and jubilation are heavily valued. In one sense, the Isabella National Community School possesses four separate populations, which include staff members, students, parents, and community members. However, these seemingly distinctive groups sincerely unite to form a community, where members know the names, families, and stories of one another and where challenges are addressed in a unified manner. The school, uniquely, closely resembles one big family. The biggest challenge concerning its cohesiveness is that community member participation (excluding parents) is modest and some adult community members are frustrated that their requests for more adult education opportunities have gone unanswered.

Staff members of the school serve in professional roles, such as administrators and educators, but also serve as friends to community members. Relationships between the staff members and the students and other community members seemed genuinely sincere. Administrators and teachers were often observed providing students with formal instruction or advice at school one day and then were seen informally socializing with them and their parents at community events another day. Furthermore, the interactions between staff members and community members, including students, parents, and other residents of the

neighborhood, gave the impression that close bonds exist. It was not uncommon, at community events, to hear staff members publicly celebrate specific achievements of community members, such as college acceptances and career advancements, or discuss how specific individuals need additional support. One teacher (Isabella, P5) stated, *“My friend told me to apply [to this school] because of the community feel... It didn’t sound real, but it is... Being a part of this family will probably extend my teaching career by over a decade. Crazy, I know... I do not want to leave”*.

Significant attention is given to students at the Isabella National Community School. The students are the ‘children of the school family’. The school staff and adult community members strive for respectful, meaningful relationships with the students, while attempting to instill that the school staff is available to speak with students about anything, from college applications to gang violence, and to help them with any problems they may face, from lack of access to health care to lack of access to food. The community school director (Isabella, P3) stated:

There are challenges all around us. And life can be really hard when you are young, alone, and facing something that you have no idea how to overcome... Respect is important, but you don’t want that to turn into them not being open and honest... I want to hear the good and bad things that are going on... If they [students] need food, we will make sure they get it... I would never want them to worry about that, none of us here would.

Observed interactions between students and adults during school hours and after school hours were supportive of this aspiration. There seemed to be a respectful, yet spirited, relationship between the two groups. Loud disturbances were not heard emanating from classrooms. Although, loud, spirited community events did occur, where adults and students alike were seen singing, dancing, and conversing. One parent (Isabella, P10) stated, *“Like any family, there are issues: this person doesn’t like that person; that person was mean... At the end of the day, kids here know that they are part of a family that cares... That word [family] gets used over and over”*.

Parents of students and other community members are also important members of the Isabella National Community School. Their relationship with the school seemed to transcend the typical affiliation parents and community members have with a school, which generally revolves around the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), parent teacher conferences, and volunteering. Here, instead, parents and other community members are vocally described and treated as seminal members of the school. These two groups of adults are encouraged to contribute to the school in traditional ways and by regularly attending events at the school that seek to create a sense of community. Additionally, though, the school is passionate about contributing to the lives of parents and other community members. Annual meetings are held to hear what programs and services would benefit the adult members of the community. Currently, based on feedback received from the adults, the school offers adults access to a GED program, ESL courses, and family life workshops. Overall, parent participation is 80%, whereas participation by other community members in the neighborhood is extremely low. The school has stated it is dedicated to increasing the participation levels of both groups. An additional concern involves requests by adult community members for more adult education programs, such as a carpentry program. The school has acknowledged the requests, and it hopes to establish these types of opportunities once funding becomes available or a partnership is established.

4.4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles join force with a test-centered credo

This section focuses on the stated goals of the curriculum, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Isabella National Community School, and furthermore, it concentrates on the motivations behind these goals. The stated aims and motivations of the school are largely tied to traditional

community school principles, which include a commitment to offering a strong curriculum, a dedication to addressing socio-economic challenges, and a pledge to investing in the community. Distinctively, however, the school possesses the less common academic aim of focusing on standardized exams, which sets it apart from other community schools. Despite the aims and motivations of the Isabella National Community School being closely aligned with traditional community school principles, its aims and motivations are largely locally-based. They acknowledge many local elements, including poor historic academic performance, a weak local economy, and local future possibilities, but, interestingly, fail to vocally recognize a widespread gang and drug culture in the neighborhood.

The curriculum of the Isabella National Community School primarily aims to offer rich lessons to students and to prepare them for standardized exams. These two aims are mainly motivated by the view that administrators and teachers believe both are extremely important.

4.4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is absolutely essential

The primary stated academic aim of the Isabella National Community School is to offer its students a challenging, diverse, engaging curriculum. This aim is motivated by the view that a well-designed curriculum can mean the difference between student success and failure. Administrators and teachers often made fearless statements about the importance of a good curriculum. One teacher (Isabella, P6) confidently stated, *“A good curriculum can mean the difference between being a productive citizen and not amounting to much”*. Additionally, interviewees consistently stated that the aim is particularly cherished in the neighborhood, given, in their opinion, that many of the public schools in the area appear indifferent about the aim of their curriculum and the motivation behind it. Parents from the Isabella National

Community School, in particular, were pleased with the lucidness of both the aim and the motivation. An honest, sincere happiness emanated from many of them during discussions about the topic. One parent (Isabella, P11) stated:

A lot of them [schools in the neighborhood] operate in secrecy. You really don't know what they're doing because they lock their doors right after school lets out... I get the serious feeling they [aim and motivation] are easy to understand because they don't want to be like the others... I respect how upfront they [administrators and teachers] are... I know exactly what we're shooting for... Those are solid goals that matter.

Another parent (Isabella, P12) stated, *“Complicated reasons and goals can mean headaches... I like that it's clear... The parent board can hold it [school] responsible for its actions very easily... This country would be better off if more schools had that drive and goal”*.

4.4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because filling in the correct bubbles matters, both today and tomorrow

A distinguishing academic aim of the Isabella National Community School is to prepare students for standardized exams, by focusing on building up content knowledge and test-taking skills. The school selected this as a primary aim because it believes students will significantly benefit from the effort in the test-driven world that currently exists.

Administrators and teachers often remarked that being comfortable with standardized exams, particularly verbal reasoning and quantitative reasoning, can lead to higher college acceptance and college scholarship rates for students. A teacher (Isabella, P7) at the school stated, *“We think that having students become ‘good test takers’ will benefit them now and when they are applying for college, and not to mention if they want to become doctors, lawyers, and architects... You don't ever want to hear that a standardized test stopped any of the kids from achieving their goals”*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Isabella National Community School aim to address destructive socio-economic challenges that can hinder academic advancement and social development. This aim is primarily motivated by the view that the work is both moral and logical.

4.4.3 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical

Study participants commonly praised the school for identifying physical health, mental health, and food security challenges as three of the strongest potential barriers to academic success and social development in the neighborhood. These participants were pleased that their school aims to address socio-economic challenges that they specifically believe are linked to low grades, poor self-esteem, and weak self-confidence. Public statements by some school administrators and the national director on how addressing socio-economic challenges can have broad positive impacts on students confirmed the overall goal of the socio-economic programs and services. The community school director (Isabella, P3) of the school stated, *“The office addresses these things [the socio-economic challenges that the students confront] because they can lower confidence levels and grades... It’s very serious... You can’t expect a student who is hungry every day to do well. It is just not going to happen”*.

When the topic of socio-economic motivations surfaced, study participants regularly discussed how the school is not run by a distant, far-off, out of touch headquarters. Rather, they commonly maintained that it is managed by individuals, from both the school and headquarters, who are courageously motivated by a desire to do what is right and driven by logic. Teachers and parents, in particular, discussed how the school simply does not believe it is ethical to have students face a landslide of socio-economic challenges alone, while adults sit by passively and question why students are not performing well. Interviewees

regularly made bold remarks about the morality of the school, such as, *“These administrators wouldn’t be able to sleep at night if they felt they were ignoring our kids”* and *“They are ethical people, unlike a lot of other people in this city”*. Interviewees were also proud of how, in their view, the school is motivated by a strong, rational understanding of how modest investments in socio-economic programs and services can lead to improvements in academic performance, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The community school director (Isabella, P3) stated, *“We’re in a very strategic position to aid families and students... Basic efforts around here can have a huge impact... Morally it is on us to do our best”*.

The community engagement opportunities of the Isabella National Community School aim to bring students and other community members together through enriching experiences. This objective is driven by the belief that the school and community are one and by the view that the school is capable of bringing the community together.

4.4.4 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so

It was evident through interviews and observations that promoting community engagement is a central part of the Isabella National Community School. The school has no desire to be isolated from the community or operate solely from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Members of this school are particularly proud that the school aims to offer regular social community events and educational opportunities, like a GED program, ESL courses, and family life workshops, many of which keep the school open late into the night. This aim of community engagement is driven by the sincere, humble view that the school and community are one, and thus a school should support its community and a community should support its school. The aim, furthermore, is motivated by the belief that the Isabella National Community

School is in a position to engage and support the community. Administrators candidly discussed how the school has resources and with these resources comes an obligation to help the community, particularly since many community members truly need support. The community school director (Isabella, P3) stated, *“I feel a need to help. We are fortunate to have great partners and resources... With this comes a responsibility... It typically means hosting classes for adults, events, celebrations, and holidays”*.

Overall, the most surprising finding pertaining to aims and motivations relates to the limited remarks on how they are tied to addressing needs linked to the gang and drug culture of the neighborhood.

4.4.5 Surprising: Little mention of the local gang and drug culture

There was limited mention by participants about the aims and motivations of the Isabella National Community School being linked to the local gang and drug trade culture of the neighborhood. One parent (Isabella, P13) stated, *“Teachers need to make a point of having classes stop kids from even thinking about getting involved with this kind of stuff [gangs and the drug trade]... Sometimes it feels like they [administrators and teachers] don’t want to acknowledge it [gangs and the drug trade]. And that’s dangerous”*. There were times during the interviews, particularly with administrators and teachers, that the topic seemed to be ignored or given limited attention.

The community school director responded to the finding by discussing the need of the school to focus on the good, rather than the bad. She (Isabella, P3) stated:

Everyone knows about the problem and image that comes with it, but this school and community are much more than that... This is a place where we try to focus on the good and the possibilities... Little good can come from constantly bringing up gangs and drugs... We know it’s out there. We just don’t talk about it much.

The community school director went on to discuss how the city administers a drug prevention program, which includes on-site classes and workshops. She acknowledged, however, that the program could more aggressively attack the issue of gang recruitment.

4.5 Implementation Strategies: A school board prescribed curriculum and pages upon pages of well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand

This section concentrates on the identification of the curriculum type of the Isabella National Community School, and the identification of the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services of the school, their level of funding and staffing, and their ability to meet demand. The curriculum, which was prescribed by the local school board, was regularly described, particularly by parents, as not being sufficiently engaging or tailored to students at the school. The plethora of well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand, however, essentially received adoring approval from interviewees, ranging from teachers to parents (See Table 10).

**Table 10. Isabella National Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 100 students, 17% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 300 students, 50% participation rate)
Mental Health Services	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 125 students, 21% participation rate)
Food Programs	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 600 students, 100% participation rate)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 300 students, 50% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 450 students, 75% participation rate) (Approx. 1,500 community members)
GED Program	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 15 community members)
ESL Courses	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 20 community members)
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 75 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

An issue surrounding the programs and services did surface during the interviews, though. Specifically, adult community members regularly discussed how they felt that more adult education opportunities should be offered at the school

The school board prescribed curriculum of the Isabella National Community School was often criticized by interviewees, particularly parents, for not motivating students enough or being suitable for the student body, whereas the academic tutoring service was regularly praised by interviewees for being well-staffed and well-funded and meeting demand.

4.5.1 Academics: School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored

The Isabella National Community School uses a curriculum that was prescribed by the local school board. Administrators and teachers commonly discussed how using this curriculum is both common among non-charter schools in the city and reasonable, as it prevents administrators and teachers from having to locate and then petition for a unique curriculum. Many parent interviewees, however, believe the curriculum needs to be more engaging and tailored to the students of this particular school. Specifically, these interviewees commonly suggested having the curriculum draw more on the Mexican culture of the community and embrace the active, energetic nature of the children. Some interviewees, for example, suggested integrating Latin events, music, and idols into the curriculum and having students act out, dance, or physically make objects tied to the curriculum. A few teachers agreed with these sentiments. One teacher (Isabella, P4) stated, *“If you do not supplement it [curriculum] with lessons and projects, it can be painstakingly boring... Most teachers do not because they don’t have enough time...These children would be ecstatic if they had to read about... [Mexican] baseball players and musicians”*. This issue about the curriculum is particularly surprising given that the primary academic aim of the school focuses on the curriculum being “engaging” (See Section 4.4.1).

4.5.2 Academics: A well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand

The tutoring service of the school, on the other hand, received little criticism. It was commonly described as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. It is estimated that 100 students (more than 15% of the student population) use the service. Interviewees commonly made favorable statements about funding levels, such as “*The service is well-funded*” and “*It receives sufficient grant money*”. Additionally, these individuals regularly discussed how important the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the national headquarters are to the tutoring service. The commitment of the national headquarters to the tutoring service, in particular, was evident through posters affixed to bulletin boards. These tutoring posters, clearly stamped with the name of the national headquarters, were easily visible and described the tutoring service. As for staffing, the service is overseen by the community school director and her staff, both of which are actively involved in the management of the service. The director and the administrative staff members were commonly observed engaging school administrators, teachers, students, and parents in discussions about matters pertaining to tutoring. Interviewees described the service as having a sufficient number of knowledgeable, caring, and energetic tutors who are easily accessible to students throughout the school day. To schedule an appointment with a tutor, who can range from a teacher to a trained tutor, a teacher can request an appointment on behalf of a student, or a student can independently request one. The commitment of the school to its academic aim of preparing its students for standardized exams was also evident, since tutors described spending a significant amount of time on test preparation (See Section 4.4.2).

The dedication of the Isabella National Community School to addressing the socio-economic challenges that the students confront is quite remarkable. The school is perceived as offering students access to well-funded and well-staffed physical health services, mental health services, and food programs that meet demand.

4.5.3 Socio-Economic: Well-funded and well-staffed physical health services, mental health services, and food programs that meet demand

Study participants unfailingly praised the Isabella National Community School administrators for offering students access to well-managed socio-economic programs and services. These participants were immensely and genuinely proud of their school. Upon a review of a paper describing these programs and services, one cannot help but notice the sheer number of socio-economic programs and services that exist. It is both striking and almost unparalleled. Physical health services, which are used by approximately 300 students (50% of the student population), include routine checkups and emergency care, and are offered through an on-site health clinic, on-site dental office, and off-site vision clinic; mental health services, which are used by approximately 125 students (slightly over 20% of the student population), include weekly sessions, and are offered through an on-site mental health office; and the food programs, which are used by basically all 600 students, include breakfast, lunch, and dinner, a weekend backpack program, a summer meal program, and a food pantry. Interviewees largely believe that all the programs and services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. These individuals, in particular, believe that delivering these programs and services would not be possible without funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the headquarters. A parent (Isabella, P14) stated, *“Everything [pertaining to physical and mental health] is at the school... There are no hoops to jump through... Getting help is easy. Someone is always available... And the staff sticks with the kids. The staff doesn’t forget about kids once they walk out the door. They*

follow up". Another parent (Isabella, P15) also had a positive view, stating, "*Not having enough food is a struggle for some people around here. Luckily, there are more than enough people and programs to help them out*". Observations supported the favorable views of the participants. The health clinic, dental office, and mental health office all appeared busy, but able to address student demand. The food services also seemed to be meeting student demand. Observable issues commonly associated with these programs and services, such as insufficient employees, lengthy wait times, and lack of products, were not witnessed. The number of socio-economic programs and services offered and their keen management supports the dedication of the school to its socio-economic aim of offering programs and services capable of addressing socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development (See Section 4.4.3).

The Isabella National Community School also received a great deal of praise from interviewees for offering a variety of well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand. However, as noted before, the school also received considerable criticism from many interviewees for not offering more adult education opportunities, when the demand exists.

4.5.4 Community Engagement: Long list of well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand, although more adult education opportunities are wanted

The Isabella National Community School offers an amazing number of well-managed community engagement opportunities, despite concerns related to there being an unmet demand for more adult education opportunities. Study participants generally believe the school frequently offers both students and community members access to a significant number of well-funded and well-staffed opportunities that meet demand. Students can participate in clubs, sports leagues, and a variety of athletic activities, while parents can

partake in a GED program, ESL courses, and workshops on a range of topics. Additionally, the community comes together regularly for performances, sporting events, and themed community events. The frequency of the offerings is astonishing. The school never seems to close (See Appendix 12). It is estimated that approximately 500 students (almost 85% of the student population) and 1,500 community members participate in at least one community engagement offering each year. To provide all of these opportunities, the community school significantly draws upon funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the headquarters and support from local volunteers. A parent (Isabella, P16) stated, *“You see a big emphasis on building a sense of community and maintaining it. Events are going on during the whole year...It’s nice that students and parents are able to participate in all the different events... My kids love the basketball league, and I think the workshops on family life are good”*. Observations of some of the community programs and events, including sporting events and a Thanksgiving holiday gathering, supported the view that events are well-funded, well-staffed, accessible, and well-attended. Attendees generally seemed content, and none were witnessed articulating significant grievances. Even with all the positive views of the opportunities, many participants expressed concerns over the number of adult education offerings. These individuals believe an unmet demand exists. Specifically, many of them want to see more opportunities that teach employable skills, such as vocational skills and/or craft skills like sewing. Learning about this issue was particularly surprising, one, given that a community engagement aim of the school is to offer adult community members enriching experiences and, two, given the sincere need for more community members to gain additional employable skills (See Section 4.4.4).

In general, the most surprising finding linked to the implementation strategies pertains to the disconnect that can occur between the stated aims and the implementation strategies of the Isabella National Community School.

4.5.5 Surprising: Stated aims and implementation strategies not always synchronized

The stated aims and the implementation strategies of the Isabella National Community School do not always equate. For example, the stated academic aim of the school includes engaging students; however, the Mexican culture of 95% of the student population is not tightly woven into the curriculum. Furthermore, a stated community engagement aim of the school is to offer enriching experiences; however, community members, many of which are in difficult economic situations and do not possess higher education degrees or trade skills, are not offered a variety of educational opportunities that teach employable skills, such as welding or sewing.

4.6 Impacts: Unexceptional test scores and rank, but serious academic, socio-economic, and community impacts perceived

This section focuses on impacts associated with academics, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities. In terms of academics, teachers asserted and a public school database shows that, over a recent five-year academic period, the Isabella National Community School averaged 40% of students at grade level or above in Math and 20% of students at grade level or above in English, while the citywide averages were roughly 25% and 30% higher, respectively. Additionally, during this five-year period, the local school board ranked the Isabella National Community School among the highest performing schools in the city during one of the five years, but ranked the school among the lowest performing schools in the city during the other four years. Interviewees were largely confused about the reason behind the outlier, and some believe it

is misleading and possibly erroneous. Interviewees, though, were confident in the view that the school possesses a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong student confidence levels and high family cohesion levels, respectively. The perceived impact levels of school offerings were also largely favorable. The courses and tutoring program of the school were commonly described by study participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance but moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements. Additionally, the socio-economic programs and services, such as the physical health clinic, mental health office, and the food programs, were commonly described as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, study participants generally believed that the community engagement programs, such as the themed community events and GED program, have had a strong positive impact on a range of elements for both students and community members. However, weaknesses concerning local unity, community engagement, and adult education programs surfaced. Regardless of all the positive sentiments, the school has undeniable areas of weakness pertaining to academics and community engagement.

The Isabella National Community School, over a recent five-year academic period, averaged less than 50% of its students at grade level or above in Math and English and was below the 50 percentile in overall performance (See Table 11).

**Table 11. Isabella National Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Percentile Ranks**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Percentile Rank
Year-One (Most Distant)	40% – 49%	20% – 29%	20% – 29%
Year-Two	60% – 69%	30% – 39%	30% – 39%
Year-Three	20% – 29%	10% – 19%	30% – 39%
Year-Four	20% – 29%	10% – 19%	80% – 89%
Year-Five (Most Recent)	40% – 49%	10% – 19%	30% – 39%
All Five Years	40% (Citywide: 65%)	20% (Citywide: 50%)	45%
<u>Key</u> Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

Its courses and tutoring program, though, were regularly described by participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance but a moderate positive impact on other ‘academic-related’ elements (See Table 12).

4.6.1 Academics: Weak and moderate performance

The Isabella National Community School averaged weak and moderate academic performance results over a recent five-year academic period, with its five-year 40% Math and five-year 20% English proficiency averages well below the citywide averages of 65% and 50%, respectively, and the five-year, overall 45 percentile rank average below the 50% mark. In terms of Math proficiency rates, the Isabella National Community School, first, had 40% – 49% of students at grade level or above, then it jumped to 60% – 69%, and then it dropped to 20% – 29% for two years, and then, lastly, it rose to 40% – 49%. In the end, after the up-down-up pattern, the Math proficiency rate between year-one and year-five fell almost 5%. As for English proficiency rates, the school, first, had 20% – 29% of students at grade level or above, then it went up to 30% – 39%, and then, for the most recent three years, it stayed at 10% – 19%. After five years, and the up-down pattern, the school ended up dropping five percent. In terms of overall percentile rank, the Isabella National Community School had one strong academic year and four weaker ones. Specifically, during this time period, between city testing documents and teacher statements, it was established that the school achieved a five-year overall percentile rank average of 45%. This materialized from, first, a year-one percentile rank between 20 and 29%, followed by 30% – 39%, 30% – 39%, and 80% – 89%, and then, most recently, 30% – 39%. Accordingly, on average, during this five-year period, the Isabella National Community School overall performed slightly below the average public school in the city. However, it must be acknowledged that study participants consistently questioned the validity of the breakout year, year-four (80% – 89%). Broadly speaking, the Isabella National Community School displayed the ability to improve its Math and English proficiency rates and overall percentile rank; however, it did not display a strong ability to maintain the improvements.

According to teachers, no particular gender, race, or ethnicity performed better or worse than its counterpart. The only subgroup that was identified as showing some signs of weakness relative to its counterpart was the ESL student population, which generally totals approximately 15% of the student population. School administrators and teachers regularly stated that ESL students often received scores that were below the school average. However, these interviewees discussed how efforts, including intensive tutoring, have been put in place to try to mitigate the problem.

4.6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance but a moderate impact on ‘academic-related’ elements

Despite the Isabella National Community School achieving an average overall percentile rank of 45% during a recent five-year academic period, study participants generally agreed that the courses and tutoring program have had a strong positive impact on academic performance but moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements. Participants regularly cited an overall appreciation for the courses and tutoring program, but acknowledged the former could draw more on the Mexican culture of the students. A deeper exploration of this generally positive sentiment about the courses and tutoring program, in spite of the weak and moderate academic performance averages, revealed that the view is largely driven by the poor quality of surrounding schools in the neighborhood – an ‘it could be worse’ type of sentiment. A parent (Isabella, P12) of a student stated:

The classes get my kids ready for exams... Tutors are always available to help out if one of them is having trouble [academically]... Better scores would be awesome, but that’s always the case... More time on... [Mexican] topics would be perfect. I’m not going to hit them too hard for that, nah... My mom was so happy when they [students] got into this school... Have you seen others schools around [name of the neighborhood]?

Participants, however, were generally less optimistic about the level of positive impact the courses and tutoring program have had on ‘academic-related’ elements, such as interest in

school levels, confidence levels, the attendance rate, and the disruptive incident rate. Many interviewees believe both the courses and the tutors could do more to address ‘academic-related’ elements. These participants want to see the courses and the tutors, in particular, increase the interest and confidence levels of students, given the environment the school resides in. Their grave concern is that students who are disinterested in school and lack confidence may simply dropout. Thus, many parents and community members are “*calling on the school to go way above and beyond,*” according to one interviewee. Concerned individuals want the courses to be even more attention-grabbing, interesting, relatable, practical, and hands-on. They also want the tutors to focus more on getting students interested in school and building their confidence levels. Additionally, having teachers and tutors draw more on the Mexican culture of the students was regularly stated as vital to addressing ‘academic-related’ elements. As for the attendance and disruptive incident rates, both are in line with city averages; however, participants believe that better designed courses and more personalized tutoring sessions could improve the rates even further.

The study participants consistently praised the physical health services, mental health office, and food programs of the Isabella National Community School for having strong positive impacts on both ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (See Table 12).

4.6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Participants regularly discussed how the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs all have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Many interviewees discussed how these programs and services have come to form an integral part of the school

and how students would be at an academic, developmental, and physical disadvantage without them. Specifically, in addition to making positive comments about academic performance, individuals often commented on how these programs and services have had a strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements less commonly affiliated with the offerings, including the following:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Additionally, individuals also often discussed how the programs and services have each had a strong positive impact on two ‘non-academic-related’ elements commonly affiliated with each of the programs and services, such as the following:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student and Family Hunger Rates (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

Comments interviewees made vividly depict the strong, diverse positive impacts the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs have had on both students and their family members. Many participants discussed the immediate benefits of the health clinic, which include easily accessible annual check-ups, vaccinations, and immediate care for students. However, talks about benefits beyond these obvious ones came to dominate the conversations. One parent (Isabella, P10) stated:

Sure, having the clinic has meant that they [students] are healthy... That’s just on the surface... A lot of kids are doing good in school because they don’t have to wait a long time for their parents to get them to a doctor’s office... Weeks of school aren’t being lost because of some bug that spiraled into a major thing... Kids can focus on their school work without having to give much thought to how they will get to a doctor or medicine... The clinic adds to the school’s environment. It calms a lot of them down, because they know that people really care about them... It’s brought us all together... The

feeling of community that comes with it has helped make attitude and violence problems not a regular thing.

It was clear that the majority of the participants are pleased with how the socio-economic programs and services address specific concerns, such as physical illnesses, mental challenges, and hunger, and related concerns, such as poor academic performance and concentration levels. Observations of many of these programs and services also seemed to confirm their broad positive impacts. Students at the health clinic, for example, were regularly seen smiling as they patiently waited for their appointment, with some even completing homework assignments during this time.

The study participants also regularly described the community engagement opportunities as having had strong positive impacts on both students and adults. However, over half of these individuals wanted to see more educational opportunities offered to adult community members and greater attention given to community unity and engagement (See Table 12).

4.6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had strong positive impacts, but more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

The community engagement programs were also regularly described as having had a strong positive impact on participants; however, three weaknesses surfaced. Participants commonly discussed how the community engagement programs, such as annual cultural events and club performances, in particular, have had a strong positive impact on the following areas for both students and community members:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

An observed community dinner at the school that the researcher witnessed himself, for example, highlighted many of these positive characteristics. First, both students and community members organized the event by researching historical events, food, and music, and then they managed the occasion. Discussions about education and immigration, among other topics, were surrounded by Native dishes prepared by community members and music played by them as well. The adult education programs, which include a GED program, ESL courses, and workshops, collectively, were also commonly described as having had a positive impact on participants. Specifically, these programs were described as having had a strong positive impact on the following areas:

- Content Knowledge (e.g. workshops)
- Analytical Skills (e.g. GED program)
- Skills Commonly Associated with High School (e.g. GED program)
- Language Skills (e.g. ESL courses)
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

Community members often made positive remarks about the impacts these programs have yielded, such as *“The GED program has changed peoples’ lives,” “The ESL courses have helped them get better jobs,”* and *“Some workshops have strengthened families”*. A community member (Isabella, P19) who participated in some of the first ESL courses and family workshops offered by the school stated:

Many people immigrated to [neighborhood of city] from a Spanish-speaking country and were not able to take ESL classes because they cost so much or are too formal. The classes here [at the school] are free, so there is no reason not to take them... I felt so confident that I applied for better jobs a few months after I finished. I ended up getting one... The meetings on family [also called “family workshops”] are good... Classes make you look at things differently.

Despite all the reported strong positive impacts achieved by the community engagement programs, three concerns regularly surfaced during the discussions. First, many participants were concerned that the community has not come together enough. They feel that the

community is still divided, meaning there is the school and separately there is the community. Second, many interviewees were concerned about the community participation levels (See Table 10). They want to see more people from the community involved in the school, from volunteering to attending events. Lastly, many interviewees, specifically more than half of the parents and community members, were concerned that the school does not offer a sufficient number of adult education programs. Individuals want to see the school offer more programs that teach employable skills, such as trade skills like welding and advanced craft skills like tailoring.

It is somewhat surprising that the five-year Math and English proficiency averages and the five-year overall percentile rank average of the Isabella National Community School are not higher, given that the school invested immense resources into academic tutoring, socio-economic programs and services, and community engagement opportunities.

4.6.5 Surprising: Vast investments in academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services did not produce breakout ‘academic performance results’

Some individuals believed that the great economic and non-economic investments of the school in academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services, naturally, would have helped raise the five-year Math and English proficiency averages and the five-year overall percentile rank average above the halfway mark. This, though, did not occur. The investments, however, appear to have had a strong positive impact on many ‘non-academic performance’ elements.

4.7 Summary

The Isabella National Community School valiantly works to offer its students and community members access to a school that focuses on academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement, but challenges and defeats are not foreign to this school. The Isabella National Community School adapted traditional community school aims to its urban community that is primarily Mexican and socio-economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, the school has been able to offer its students and community members access to a long list of well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand. Many of these programs and services have had strong positive impacts on numerous ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. However, despite all of the successes, many study participants commonly drew attention to a few grave concerns. Specifically, these individuals are troubled by a curriculum that could draw more on Mexican culture, a community that is divided into those who are connected to the school and those who are not, moderate community member participation rates, and an unmet demand for more adult education opportunities. Although study participants were generally satisfied with the academic performance of the school, its five-year average Math and English proficiency rates are both over 20% below the citywide averages, and the five-year overall performance percentile rank hovers slightly below the 50% mark.

The Isabella National Community School comes close to reaching the ideal image of a community school, as described by the Coalition for Community Schools, but, ultimately, does not. The inability of the school to achieve strong ‘academic performance results’ and yield a more diverse collection of strong community engagement impacts are significant reasons behind this shortcoming. Specifically, in terms of the latter, it seems from the evidence and views collected that this school was not able to create a strong, unified sense

of community, engage a significant share of the community, and provide access to an acceptable number of adult education courses that teach employable skills.

Synopsis:
Isabella National Community School and
Oak National Community School

Tables 12 and 13 summarize data associated with each of the two national model community schools. This data is comprehensively compared and contrasted in Chapter 7: Cross-Case Analysis.

Table 12. Summary of Isabella National Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 15	Weak urban economy that is a 20-min. car ride or 30-min. subway trip from a strong, dominant economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 40% (65%) 5-Year English Average: 20% (50%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 45%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$750,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · Headquarters · Small grants	Largely Hispanic population with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 4 Considerable additional support from the headquarters		Moderately locally-based aims and motivations Little mention of gang and drug culture	Well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible programs and services	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements <u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults, but more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

Table 13. Summary of Oak National Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 5	Weak rural economy that is a 90-min. drive from a strong, central economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 60% (75%) 5-Year English Average: 65% (85%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 35%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$500,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · Headquarters · Substantial Private Funding · Small grants	Largely white population with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Limited additional support from the headquarters		Locally-based aims and motivations Weak economic state acknowledged	Many well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible programs and services However, more mental health professionals encouraged	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong and moderate positive impacts on academic performance Strong and moderate positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong and moderate positive impacts on ‘non-academic-related’ elements <u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults, but more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

CHAPTER FIVE:

A LOCAL FEDERATION MODEL COMMUNITY SCHOOL CASE

This chapter provides a description and analysis of the Stewart Local Federation (LF) Community School, while Appendix 13 offers a description and analysis of the Gardner Local Federation (LF) Community School. As with the national model cases, the two local federation model cases could not be included in this chapter primarily due to restrictions related to the word limit of the thesis.

Each of the two cases includes qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents. Furthermore, each of the two cases contains quantitative data from a variety of documents and surveys. As was specified in chapter one, each local federation model community school is commonly linked to a local federation of more than two community schools that are all located within a particular area, such as a city or county. In terms of operations, each federation of community schools is commonly managed by a local school board or a local organization (e.g. foundation or university) that controls the day-to-day upper management of the federation and provides each community school with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, and financial support. Additionally, community school local federations frequently seek additional support from local organizations (e.g. foundations, universities, or nonprofits) that provide the community schools with further strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support. It should be noted that the Stewart LF Community School is associated with a school board-managed federation, whereas the Gardner LF Community School is affiliated with a university-managed federation. In the end, the variance revolves around the entity that controls the day-to-day upper management operations of the community school federation and provides the community schools with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, and financial support: the school board or the university, in this instance.

As with the previous chapter, each of the local federation model cases has been divided into the following seven sections: demographics, history of the school, school culture, aims and motivations, implementation strategies, impacts, and summary. The first three sections provide an overview of the student and community member populations, the historical development of the community school, and the culture within the school. This information allows for the findings pertaining to the aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts to be put into context. Lastly, the chapter closes with a summary of the Stewart LF Community School and a synopsis of the two cases.

**The Stewart Local Federation Community School:
A Member of a School Board-Managed Community School Federation,
and Noticeably dedicated to the Community School Concept**

The Stewart Local Federation Community School, located in a socio-economically disadvantaged urban area, began operating as a community school by 2010 after joining a local school board-managed community school federation, which currently consists of seven public schools in the same city. Since its inception as a community school, administrators and teachers at the Stewart Local Federation Community School, for the most part, have ardently supported the community school concept. This positive attitude has helped the school maintain a close, productive relationship with the local school board and a local foundation. Specifically, over the years, the local school board has controlled the day-to-day upper management operations of the community school federation and provided the community school with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, and financial support. Additionally, during these years, a local foundation has provided the school with strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support.

5.1 Demographics: An African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino population that lives on the ‘other side’ of the city

The Stewart Local Federation Community School is a pre-kindergarten through grade eight school that averages 700 students per year. This urban school resides in a small U.S. city where over 75% of the approximately 120,000 residents identify as either African American/Black or Hispanic/Latino. From a demographic perspective, the entire city can be largely divided into three groups: ‘city center,’ ‘suburbs,’ and ‘disadvantaged neighborhoods immediately surrounding the city center’. The city center possesses a robust, corporate-driven economy, a large number of residents and employees with advanced

degrees or trade skills, and low levels of crime. Similarly, the suburban areas maintain a strong local economy, a well-educated population, and low levels of crime. Many of the neighborhoods bordering the city center, however, have weak local economies, moderate to low numbers of residents with advanced degrees or trade skills, and high levels of crime. The Stewart LF Community School resides in the last group.

A 10-minute car ride or 15-minute bus ride from the well-kept, financially flourishing city center to the Stewart LF Community School can stun the senses. The school is in a rough, overlooked neighborhood. Bodegas, family owned restaurants, hair salons, and fast food chain restaurants, some of which are located in derelict buildings, rest on poorly maintained roads and border what seems to be a legion of abandoned empty spaces. Gang members, who interviewees regularly described as being “active,” “around,” and “violent,” are also part of the landscape. One longtime resident (Stewart, P18) who lives close to the school stated, *“No doubt, this [neighborhood] is a real fixer upper... Abandoned buildings are everywhere... It’s impossible to drive down the street without seeing a bunch of wrecked houses”*. This individual, like many other interviewees, also discussed how she believes the physical appearance of the neighborhood has prevented crime figures from dropping. *“Why wouldn’t a member be doing all that shady stuff?... A block down looks like a place that you sell drugs with your boys... What you see in crazy gang movies happens here all the time... People have gotten shot on [name of street], over there, so be careful”*. This grim description of daily life is supported by numerous newspaper articles. A couple of articles published in 2013 and 2014 even describe the city as one of the most dangerous small cities in America.

Predictably, the overall socio-economic situation of the parents of the students and other adult community members living around the Stewart LF Community is poor. According to two school administrators, approximately 85% of parents of students and

other local adult community members linked to the school receive some form of government assistance, while approximately 20% of them possess an associate's degree (two-year college degree), a college degree, or trade certificate. The limited levels of advanced education have helped propel the unemployment rate of the neighborhood up to roughly 20%. And of those parents and other community members who are employed, many are working low to modest wage jobs as cooks, beauty specialists, sales associates, and office administrators. This translates into a median household income of approximately \$19,000 a year for the neighborhood, while the citywide median is approximately \$21,000.

Many students at the Stewart LF Community School also confront their share of challenges. In 2011, 95% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch, 38% of students were classified as ESL, and 12% of them were designated as special needs. Additionally, less than 50% of third graders were deemed proficient in Reading and Math that same year.

5.2 History of the School: From disregarded to regarded

The Stewart Local Federation Community School began as a traditional public school in the 1980s, and then through a city-sponsored program focused on establishing a federation of seven local community schools, it was transformed into a community school by 2010. The local school board primarily selected the Stewart LF Community School to take part in the program due to its consistent academic underperformance, high number of student incidents, large student population with unaddressed socio-economic challenges, and overall dismal reputation within the community. One parent (Stewart, P10), while reflecting on the school before the transformation, stated, *“Seriously, people use to hate it, yeah, because you knew it was the district’s dumping ground, where they sent the worst kids to get rid of them... No one gave it much thought”*. Additionally, the Stewart LF Community School was selected to become a community school due to broad, community-

based reasons. The school board felt that transforming the school could help improve the ability of local municipal departments to channel much needed resources to the neighborhood. Specifically, the board hoped that providing community members with access to an influx of socio-economic programs, community engagement opportunities, and adult education offerings would help address weak employment figures, a high rate of evictions, moderate levels of food security, and high rates of gang activity, violence, and drug sales.

With local needs in mind since its inception as a community school, the Stewart LF Community School has been dedicated to offering students, parents, and other community members access to a range of valuable programs and services. The school recognizes their broad needs and is committed to offering them support, rather than ignoring the challenges, as was common in the past. Students have access to an academic tutoring program, off-site physical health, dental, and vision care offices, an on-site mental health office, on-site food programs, and enrichment programs and events. Additionally, many programs, services, and events are open to the parents of the students and other community members. These adult programs and services include educational workshops and private sessions that span a range of topics, from family life to job hunting, and the events range from theater performances by students to ethnic festivals. One parent (Stewart, P11) described the transformation from a traditional public school to a community school as “*a major upgrade that brought necessities to people that should have had them before the dark years of the school being like a prison*”.

To assist with the management and funding of the Stewart LF Community School, a well-funded and respected local foundation, known for serving the community for over fifty years, joined the collaboration between the school and the school board. This school-school board-foundation partnership led a variety of individuals, with unique skills and access, to

fund and closely associate with the school. School administrators oversee the curriculum, courses, scheduling, and general management of the school. And a community school director and assistant community school director, along with two staff members, all working out of a large community school office at the school, oversee the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services. Additionally, on any given day, five activity leaders tied to the community school office manage many of the day-to-day activities. Concurrently, district personnel closely monitor the school from the central office. As for funding, the school uses district funding to pay for expenses commonly associated with a traditional public school. Also, the school, which uses 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, and the foundation split the cost of the academic tutoring service and the cost of the socio-economic and community engagement programs and services. Additionally, the foundation pays the salaries of the community school director, the assistant community school director, the two staff members, and the activity leaders. Overall, the annual budget for the added non-traditional, community school programs and services is estimated to be in excess of \$300,000.

The Stewart LF Community School has not achieved sweeping, unequivocal success for all community members, much less for students in the target areas of academics, socio-economics, and community engagement; however, many city officials and community members alike continue to support the school, the school board, and the foundation. Many individuals commend the school for its dedication to the community and believe that achieving stronger results will take time. Despite this level of understanding and patience, there is a considerable number of individuals who believe the school must immediately begin focusing more attention, in particular, on academic performance, community engagement, and adult education. These grievances primarily derive from the school having

low Math and English proficiency rates, low community member involvement levels, and not providing a GED program or technical training.

5.3 School Culture: A caring school that is trying to create a stronger sense of community

Since its inception as a community school, the Stewart Local Federation Community School has maintained the position that improving the culture of the school, given its once poor reputation in the community, requires a long-term perspective. Accordingly, upon becoming a community school, the Stewart LF Community School adopted the strategy of first, strongly dedicating itself to establishing an upright, compassionate, orderly, opportunity-rich culture for students and their parents, and then, over time, expanding this culture to include other community members. Interviewees consistently acknowledged this strategy and made positive statements about the school culture pertaining to students and their parents. The principal (Stewart, P2) of the school stated, *“Officers used to be called for incidents every day of the year... I felt that we had to start putting in more effort into building up the respect and getting to a place where people cared about the environment... Students needed more resources than they were getting... Progress has been made, because we wanted to be defined differently”*. A parent (Stewart, P12), while discussing the experiences of his children, supported the view by stating:

They’d tell me what they saw at school, out of control stuff, like straight up disrespect and fights... I would get mad as all ever... I did. I called about getting my kids out of this here... A full circle I never dreamed happened, really tough to imagine... You see them walking in straight lines next to teachers they want to be around... Kids get access to features I didn’t even know schools offer... Being here isn’t stressful at all anymore, because you know people care about teaching... When you’re at parent teacher meetings you feel like they care about your kid and are wanting them to be the best.

This warm culture, however, has been slow to include the entire community. Many teachers, parents, and other community members, in particular, acknowledged the variance between the culture that applies to students and their parents and the culture that surrounds

other community members. Interviews with these individuals commonly included discussions about how the school is genuinely trying to make community members feel that they are part of a caring school that offers opportunities to adults. However, these interviewees also regularly discussed how the school has been unsuccessful at accomplishing this goal, primarily due to a lack of resources and program offerings. Reportedly, this has led to low community member participation rates.

5.4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles, a test-centered credo, and an all-you-can-do attitude

This section concentrates on the aims and motivations linked to the curriculum, the academic tutoring program, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement offerings of the Stewart Local Federation Community School. The majority of the aims and motivations of the school relate to traditional community school principles. These principles emphasize offering a strong curriculum, addressing socio-economic challenges, and supporting the community at-large. Additionally, however, the Stewart LF Community School also possesses a collection of aims and motivations that are somewhat rare among community schools. Specifically, the additional stated academic aims are to prepare students for standardized exams and to keep them out of trouble. Furthermore, in terms of added motivations, the school is motivated by the belief that a strong curriculum can save students, it is the only local organization that will comprehensively address local socio-economic challenges, and a school should do everything in its power to help students and other community members. Overall, the union of the traditional community school aims and motivations with the aims and motivations that are less common among community schools helps create a set of aims and motivations that is locally-based. Together, all of these aims and motivations accurately reflect the poor historic academic performance of the

school, the weak local economy of the neighborhood, and the capabilities of students and community members.

The curriculum of the Stewart Local Federation Community School largely aims to expose students to quality lessons, prepare students for standardized exams, and keep students out of trouble. These three aims are mainly driven by the view that all three of them are extremely important and all can lead students to valuable future opportunities.

5.4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is absolutely essential

Since becoming a community school, the Stewart Local Federation Community School has ardently dedicated itself to provide its students with a challenging, diverse, and engaging curriculum. This stated aim is motivated by the belief that this type of curriculum can help students experience academic success and, ultimately, help them exit the gripping confines of poverty. Much to the liking of parents and other community members, both school administrators and teachers regularly made forceful statements in support of this view. One teacher (Stewart, P4) stated:

During the first meetings, everyone around the table agreed that we had to wisely choose a curriculum that can get them to do their best and pick plans that give teachers a good foundation and offer us room to add important personal touches... And, it was really a high stakes time, and a lot was on the line... Poverty is an ugly thing that we know about too well here. The life that comes with it is harder than anyone outside of it can dream up... I work into the night and hardly see my husband, because I know these kids can get out of this if we all sit down together and give them the best possible experience.

Parents and other community members also made strong statements in support of this particular academic aim and motivation. One parent (Stewart, P13), who now cherishes the school after disliking it before it became a community school, stated, *“We’d be talking about how the principal and them inside would probably take any random curriculum if it*

saved time and money... Talks after school are more upbeat since the change... All our values look like they're lined up when it comes to what kids should be getting educated on... This is a place of good opportunities, where we want kids to do better than we did... We didn't see that before, but we do now, finally".

5.4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because filling in the correct bubbles matters, both today and tomorrow

School administrators at the Stewart Local Federation Community School have made it clear that a principal academic aim of the school is to prepare students for standardized exams. This stated aim, broadly speaking, is fundamentally driven by the historic poor academic performance of the school and the restricted set of opportunities offered by the neighborhood. Specifically, though, the school administrators are motivated by the view that performing well on standardized exams can improve the odds that students will be accepted to college and, also, increase their chances of escaping poverty. One teacher (Stewart, P5), who grew up in a neighborhood that resembles the one surrounding the Stewart LF Community School, stated, *"I'm a breathing example of how getting a good score on the SATs, no matter how much you don't like or believe in testing, can mean a chance at a life full of freedom and opportunities... My principal when I was in high school kept saying that scores matter, scores matter... The principal you met thinks the same thing".*

5.4.3 Academics: Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble, because a good curriculum can have serious positive impacts

The Stewart LF Community School also has the stated academic aim of using its curriculum to reduce student incident rates within the school and to deter students from entering gangs. This aim is motivated by the belief that a strong curriculum can help focus the attention of

students on positive daily activities, which, over time, could lead to promising future opportunities. One teacher (Stewart, P6) stated, *“A fight happened every single day. Some days a few fights would break out at the same time... It’s depressing, but there are some that are in gangs, because they offer them safety and say, ‘Hey, you can be a lieutenant, someone important’... Good instruction is being used as a tool to keep students away from that life, and it’s working”*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Stewart Local Federation Community School strive to address many physical and mental health challenges that the students confront. This effort is largely driven by the view that the work is both moral and logical, and furthermore, it is motivated by the position that local socio-economic challenges would be addressed poorly by other organizations.

5.4.4 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical and because no other local organization comprehensively addresses these types of challenges

The Stewart Local Federation Community School does not shy away from aiming to address pervasive, historic socio-economic challenges that threaten the academic and social development of their students. The motivation for addressing these types of local challenges, include the following, according to study participants: (1) a moral obligation and the school being in a position to help, (2) the view that socio-economic challenges can impede academic performance and self-confidence, (3) the belief that it is a great investment, and (4) the view that other local organizations are not comprehensively addressing these types of challenges. Staff members of the Stewart LF Community School regularly commented on how the stated aims of the socio-economic programs and services are based on the needs of the students. A teacher (Stewart, P7) at the school stated:

When I heard that the [name of school] was trying to become a “community school,” I looked up what the heck that meant... To be honest, based on what I’ve seen and the long list of pilot programs that have failed, I figured this was going to be a huge waste of money... I am fine with admitting that I was wrong... The [planning] meetings were different than what I have ever seen come out of this district... We all made suggestions on what makes life so hard for them [students]... The big shot administrators listened and here we are with something that actually works.

Interviewed parents of students confirmed the stated socio-economic aim of the school, and how it is locally-based. One parent (Stewart, P14), in particular, stated, *“This ain’t no school that talks a big game and then drops the ball after pumping everyone up... The stuff can make life easier for him... A lot of that [aim] comes from what we said needs to get done now”*.

The Stewart Local Federation Community School is also dedicated to the community. Its stated aim for the community engagement opportunities is to offer the community access to a diverse set of social occasions and educational experiences. This aim is inspired by locally-based motivations.

5.4.5 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one, the school is in a position to do so, and a school should do everything in its power to help students and other community members

Since becoming a community school, the Stewart Local Federation Community School has ardently believed that a public school should serve the entire community, not only attending students and their parents. Accordingly, the Stewart LF Community School has the stated community engagement aim of hosting social events and educational classes that are open to community members from the neighborhood. In essence, these enriching experiences, which expose students to the arts, cultures, sports, and social events and adults to educational opportunities and social events, add a community center focused on unity and enrichment to the school. This desire to expand the scope of the school was largely

motivated by (1) the belief that a school should be tied closely to its community, (2) the view that the school is capable of supporting the community, and (3) the attitude that a school should do everything possible to support a variety of community members.

Interviewees, ranging from school administrators to community members, regularly discussed how the aims and motivations are reflective of local needs. One parent (Stewart, P15), who is actively involved in the community engagement opportunities, stated,

“Schools should not be just for kids to use seven hours a day... The building can do a lot more... I’m hoping people get mad if a school is not open from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM... Our community needs this pulling us together, because we don’t have anything else doing it right now, and it will benefit everyone and obviously gets us closer to being a community”.

It was surprising to learn that the Stewart Local Federation Community School genuinely recognizes the school- and community-based challenges it confronts and possesses exceptionally high expectations of itself.

5.4.6 Surprising: Straightforward view of local challenges and serious expectations of itself

Interviewed school administrators and teachers, in particular, openly discussed how many of the stated aims and motivations of the Stewart Local Federation Community School derive from grave challenges within the school and community. Specifically, almost all of these participants discussed the historically poor academic performance of the school, weak local economy, robust, local gang and drug culture, and heightened level of violence in the neighborhood.

The majority of the interviewees also discussed how the stated aims of the school stem from elevated expectations. Many of these individuals talked about how the school accepts responsibility for addressing many academic, socio-economic, and community

engagement challenges. Participants, overall, reinforced the view that the school does not look to other organizations to solve difficult challenges.

5.5 Implementation Strategies: A school board prescribed curriculum and several well-funded, and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand

This section concentrates on identifying and examining the curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services offered at the Stewart Local Federation Community School. Furthermore, the funding and staffing levels of the programs and services, along with their ability to meet demand, are examined. Overall, in terms of curriculum, the school offers a curriculum that was prescribed by the local school board. Additionally, in terms of offerings, the school offers several well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand (See Table 14).

**Table 14. Stewart Local Federation Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 250 students, 36% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	Yes	No (On-Site)	Yes (Approx. 200 students, 29% participation rate)
		Yes (Off-Site)	
Mental Health Services	Yes	No	Yes (Approx. 100 students, 14% participation rate)
Food Programs	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 700 students, 100% participation rate)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 500 students, 71% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 600 students, 86% participation rate) (Approx. 1,500 community members)
GED Program	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered
ESL Courses	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 35 community members)
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 100 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

Despite this generally positive characterization, many study participants regularly voiced concerns over four particular elements. Distinctively, apprehensions revolved around the curriculum not being adequately engaging or tailored to the students, the nurse's office not having more health professionals, the mental health office not having more counselors, and the adult education opportunities not including a greater number of offerings.

Findings surrounding the academic implementation strategies were mixed. Many study participants discussed their concerns over the curriculum not being sufficiently engaging or tailored to the students, but contended that the academic tutoring service is well-staffed and well-funded and meets demand.

5.5.1 Academics: School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored

The Stewart Local Federation Community School uses a curriculum that was offered by the local school board. Administrators and teachers both regularly discussed how the practice is common among public schools in the city and across the country. Furthermore, many of the administrators, in particular, defended the practice by discussing how the recommended curriculum was thoroughly reviewed by the school board, how select teachers were part of the review process, and how teachers can adapt the prescribed curriculum. Additionally, several teachers defended the decision to use the school board prescribed curriculum by discussing how a curriculum is largely a framework that must be shaped by a teacher and, in most situations, a curriculum should not be viewed as either good or bad, since individual teacher adaptation plays a significant role. Many parents and a few other teachers, however, disagreed with the view that a curriculum prescribed by the school board should be used. These interviewees believe that the selected curriculum could be more tailored to the students. Specifically, they regularly discussed how the curriculum inherently could be more engaging by drawing further on the African American and Hispanic backgrounds of the majority of the student population and by emphasizing a more hands-on approach. One parent (Stewart, P16) stated, *“I really can’t tell her [daughter] that it isn’t boring after she yells and screams about it, because it is... I want to go to sleep after a few minutes of doing homework with her”*. This distress over the curriculum is somewhat unanticipated given that the school aims to offer a curriculum that is “engaging” (See Section 5.4.1).

5.5.2 Academics: A well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand

The academic tutoring service at the Stewart Local Federation Community School was repeatedly described by school administrators, teachers, and parents as being well-funded, well-staffed, and easily accessible. Interestingly, none of the participants had anything negative to say about the service. Rather, these individuals frequently used positive phrases, including “as good as it gets” and “nice to have,” to describe the service, which is used by approximately 250 students (slightly more than 35% of the student population). This tutoring service is managed by the community school director and is offered every school day from morning to late into the evening. The community school director commented that the scale of this service would not be possible without funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the partnering foundation. In terms of staffing, the community school director (Stewart, P3) described the operation as having about ten tutors who come from a range of professional backgrounds. Some of the tutors are tutoring specialists and teachers, while others are community school administrators and junior community school counselors. The community school director explained how having tutors with different professional backgrounds and tutors who range in age allows for a better overall service. One parent (Stewart, P17), while describing the tutoring service operation, stated:

I'm sure the teachers I talked to want the children to have tutors if it will do them good... I didn't have to fight with anyone about getting my son in... Extra help is taken seriously and not snubbed off... He meets with his tutor twice a week unless something comes up... I will definitely keep him enrolled [in tutoring] until graduation day.

Like this interviewee, many other parents described the tutoring service as being well-managed. Furthermore, observations of the service confirmed this characteristic. In particular, tutors were regularly seen productively working with many students throughout the day, and parents were commonly seen conversing with the tutors. Additionally, on a few

occasions, tutors were seen working on standardized questions with students. One tutor (Stewart, P26), who described himself as being committed to helping students with standardized exams, like the other tutors, stated, *“The [standardized] exams they take require learning the different styles of questions... I help them with projects, homework assignments, standardized test prep, and anything else they might want”*.

The Stewart Local Federation Community School also strives to address socio-economic challenges that the students face. Its socio-economic programs and services, however, have received mixed reviews from study participants.

5.5.3 Socio-Economic: Well-funded and well-staffed food programs that meet demand, but concerns loom over the physical health services and mental health services

Study participants favorably described the overall management of the food programs, whereas the physical health services and mental health services were described less favorably. Specifically, the food programs were viewed as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand; however, the physical health services and mental health services, despite also being characterized as being well-funded and meeting demand, were largely seen as requiring more staffing. The community school director, who oversees all the socio-economic programs and services, made it quite clear that the school has sufficient funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the partnering foundation to add more on-site physical and mental health professionals, but does not see the need. Despite concerns over there being insufficient on-site health professionals, the efforts of the community school director were regularly praised by study participants. One parent (Stewart, P16) stated, *“She’s a smooth operator that keeps everything going... The staff loves her. That’s something I always look at, because that says a lot”*.

The nurse's office at the Stewart LF Community School rests at the epicenter of physical health care for the school, and it is visited by approximately 200 students (almost 30% of the student population). This office visually appears like any other traditional nurse's office: a nurse, health supplies, and an observation area. However, its relationships with off-site health providers, including a primary care physician's office, dental office, and vision clinic, make it unique. Students can meet with a nurse during school hours by scheduled appointment or walk-in appointment. If the student requires support beyond what the nurse can provide, the nurse will recommend that the student meet with an off-site health professional who has an established relationship with the school. Study participants were generally pleased with the accessibility of the care. However, many parent interviewees and a few teacher interviewees expressed concern over the level of staffing at the nurse's office. These individuals believe that having at least two health professionals and an administrator in the office would improve the quality of the service, particularly the preventive care and the referral system.

The on-site mental health services were also described by many study participants as being well-funded and meeting demand, but requiring more on-site professionals. This service is used by an estimated 100 students (slightly less than 15% of the student population). Participants frequently commended the counselors, who are freely available throughout the school day, for helping students with a range of challenges. Once again, however, numerous parents and a few teachers felt that having a larger staff would benefit the students. One parent (Stewart, P13) stated, *"Being turned away wouldn't happen, I don't think, but he might only get to see someone once a week and not two times... More therapists for them to talk to could help them out"*.

The food programs were the one set of socio-economic programs and services that generally received overall approval for being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting

demand; although, some interviewees wanted the school to offer an additional food program. The school currently offers students breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a weekend backpack program. Additionally, students have access to a food pantry, where, as one teacher stated, “*Students have a chance to go shopping for things they like*”. Currently, the student participation rate rests at 100%. Many interviewees, however, believe that a summer food program should be added. Teachers, in particular, expressed concerns over food security during the summer months.

Concerns over the physical health staffing level, the mental health staffing level, and a summer food program should not erase the commitment of the Stewart LF Community School to addressing socio-economic challenges. The school is dedicated to its stated aim of addressing socio-economic challenges that the students confront. Nevertheless, the concerns display some detachment between the stated aim and the implementation strategies (See Section 5.4.4).

The Stewart Local Federation Community School is also committed to engaging students, parents, and other community members through a range of community opportunities. However, many study participants explicitly expressed concerns pertaining to a lack of adult education offerings.

5.5.4 Community Engagement: Many well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand, although more adult education offerings are wanted

The Stewart Local Federation Community School has a reputation of being one of only a limited number of public schools in the city that regularly offers students, parents, and other community members access to many well-funded, well-staffed, demand-meeting opportunities, which frequently go late into the evening (See Appendix 12). Students from the school are able to participate in clubs, sports leagues, and a variety of athletic activities,

and adult community members have access to ESL courses, a range of family- and career-oriented workshops, and career coaching, which includes job search support, resumé guidance, and interview preparation. Additionally, both students and adults frequently come together for performances, sporting events, and themed community events. It is estimated that 600 students (slightly more than 85% of the student population) and roughly 1,500 adult community members partake in at least one community engagement activity each year. Observations of these gatherings confirmed that the existing offerings are well-funded, well-staffed, and well-attended. Furthermore, one community member (Stewart, P19), who has been participating in community events for the past three years, stated:

People are always like ‘whoa, [name of school] has that?’ ... I used to sign up for stuff that would help me get a job, but now that I have one that I like, I only go to group stuff that’s fun... Always one-hundred percent beautiful... There are a bunch of people from the school if you need to talk with someone... The school must spend a few bags of cash on all of it.

The community school director oversees the funding and management of all the community engagement opportunities. The director openly discussed how the opportunities are primarily funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the partnering local foundation. The director, furthermore, articulated that without these two funding sources, she is unclear whether or not the school would be able to continue offering a diverse set of well-funded community engagement opportunities. Despite all the favorable comments study participants made about the community engagement opportunities, many of them voiced serious concerns over the unmet demand for more adult education opportunities. Many participants believe that offering vocational education opportunities would significantly benefit community members, given the poor economic situation of the neighborhood and the overall modest levels of academic achievement by local community members. It is somewhat unexpected that the Stewart LF Community School does not address this concern, since it aims to offer community members access to enriching

experiences and since there is a strong possibility that program participants would improve their socio-economic positions (See Section 5.4.5).

In the end, it was rather surprising to see implementation strategies that do not support the stated aims of the school.

5.5.5 Surprising: Stated aims and implementation strategies not always synchronized

The Stewart Local Federation Community School does not always execute implementation strategies that are consistent with their stated aims. For example, a stated academic aim of the school includes offering an engaging curriculum; however, many study participants believe this is not being achieved, since the school is not strongly drawing on the African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino culture of the majority of the students. Additionally, the stated socio-economic aim of the school includes addressing socio-economic challenges that the students confront; however, according to many participants, the school could better meet this aim by having more on-site physical and mental health professionals and by offering a summer food program. Lastly, the stated community engagement aim of the school includes offering community members access to enriching experiences; however, many participants believe this is not being met as a result of the school only offering a restrictive list of adult education opportunities.

5.6 Impacts: Poor academic performance, along with moderate and strong perceived impacts

This section focuses on impacts associated with the academics, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Stewart Local Federation Community School. Over a recent five-year period, the school mainly achieved weak academic performance results in terms of Math and English proficiency rates and

overall school percentile rank. Specifically, during each of the five academic years, the school did not surpass the citywide at grade level or above average for Math or English or exceed the 50 percentile mark for overall performance rank. The Stewart LF Community School, however, displayed an ability to improve its Math and English at grade level or above rates and its overall percentile rank between year-one and year-five. Beyond academic performance, the school was commonly perceived by study participants as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as high student interest levels and strong student physical health treatment rates. In terms of impacts related to specific offerings, the courses and tutoring program of the school earned less than stellar reviews. Study participants commonly described the courses and tutoring program as having had a moderate positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements. As for the socio-economic programs and services of the school, the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs were all commonly described by study participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Surprisingly, this was in spite of many study participants having concerns over the staffing levels of the physical health and mental health services. Lastly, the community engagement opportunities did not receive a strong favorable review. Study participants frequently described the offerings as having had a moderate positive impact on participants. Many of the participants, in particular, wanted to see the offerings focus more on unity, engagement, and adult education.

The Stewart Local Federation Community School, over a recent five-year academic period, averaged 5% of students at grade level or above in Math, 10% of students at grade level or above in English, and a 10% overall percentile rank, despite figures improving considerably between year-four and year-five (See Table 15).

**Table 15. Stewart Local Federation Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Percentile Ranks**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Percentile Rank
Year-One (Most Distant)	1% – 9%	1% – 9%	10% – 19%
Year-Two	1% – 9%	1% – 9%	1% – 9%
Year-Three	1% – 9%	1% – 9%	1% – 9%
Year-Four	1% – 9%	1% – 9%	1% – 9%
Year-Five (Most Recent)	10% – 19%	10% – 19%	30% – 39%
All Five Years	5% (Citywide: 15%)	10% (Citywide: 20%)	10%
<u>Key</u> Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

In the same vein, the courses and tutoring program of the school were commonly described as having had a moderate, not strong, positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements (See Table 16).

5.6.1 Academics: Poor Math and English proficiency rates and overall percentile rank

Although the Math and English proficiency rates and the overall percentile rank of the Stewart Local Federation Community School increased between year-one and year-five, the school has substantial room for improvement. Specifically, during this time period, in terms of Math, school administrators and testing evaluation documents, together, confirmed that the percentage of students at grade level or above was essentially consistent at 1% – 9% between year-one and year-four, and then the rate increased to 10% – 19% year-five. The flat-up pattern helped yield a five-year average of 5% of students at grade level or above in Math, despite the citywide average being 15%. Similarly, in terms of English, the percentage of students at grade level or above was essentially consistent at 1% – 9% between year-one and year-four, and then it increased to 10% – 19% year-five. This time, the flat-up pattern helped bring a five-year average of 10% of students at grade level or above in English, although the citywide average was 20%. As for the overall percentile rank, first, the school earned a percentile rank of 10% – 19%, then, for the three subsequent years it was 1% – 9%, and then, in year-five, the rank rose to 30% – 39%. The down-flat-up pattern translated into a five-year overall percentile rank of 10%. Despite the generally poor academic performance of the Stewart LF Community School, it must be acknowledged that, between year-one and year-five, the school was able to improve the percentage of students at grade level or above in Math by over 5% and the percentage of students at grade level or above in English by over 10%, while increasing its percentile rank by over 20%. Study participants consistently discussed how this fact confirms that the community school approach is beginning to reflect in the academic attainment figures of the school.

A closer review of the data uncovered that no particular gender, race, or ethnicity substantially outperformed or underperformed its counterpart. Some school administrators and teachers, however, did state that ‘males’ and ‘males from single parent homes’ are

closely monitored in an informal manner, as a result of the two populations historically being viewed as ‘at-risk’ and ‘vulnerable’. Many of the interviewees discussed how focusing on these two populations is primarily based on data from over ten years ago, rather than on current data. Despite the concern being driven by less than current data, interviewees also regularly discussed how the school hopes that its academic tutors and counselors will help address the potential problem.

5.6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements

Consistent with the poor academic performance of the Stewart Local Federation Community School, the courses and tutoring program of the school were viewed by study participants as having had only a moderate positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements. In particular, study participants frequently argued that the two primary reasons behind the courses and tutoring program having had only a moderate positive impact on academic performance are that, one, the courses do not sufficiently draw on the African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino backgrounds of the majority of the student population and, two, the teachers and tutors do not strongly emphasize a hands-on approach to learning. Many participants, though, spoke passionately about the potential the courses and tutoring program possess. One teacher (Stewart, P7) stated:

Central is worried that we are going to stall unless we redo the center of the school, yeah, teaching styles, curriculum, books, teacher reviews, all that... We haven’t touched any of it, because it’s a mammoth of a job, no joke... I know I annoy them when I say ‘This is fantastic news,’ but it’s true... Think about it. When we get to working on it that has to make the scores pop up.

Many study participants were also critical, yet optimistic, about the level of positive impact the courses and tutoring program have had on ‘academic-related’ elements. Specifically, many participants, particularly parents, want to see the courses and tutoring sessions further help reduce the student incident rate and increase student interest and confidence levels.

Many of these participants acknowledged that the disruptive incident rate has plummeted over the past five years, and currently sits slightly above the citywide average; however, they believe the figure could drop further if the courses and tutoring sessions are better tailored to students. Additionally, several participants discussed how better tailoring the courses and tutoring sessions could help increase student interest and confidence levels. According to some of these participants, the current interest and confidence levels for a significant number of students seem vulnerable and capable of quickly dropping. In general, the views of the participants were commonly tied to genuine concern for the students. Participants want students to stay out of trouble and begin creating future opportunities for themselves.

Study participants were generally pleased with the positive impact levels that the socio-economic programs and services have had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (See Table 16).

5.6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

The physical health services, mental health services, and food programs were all regularly described by study participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Although many of these participants adamantly voiced concerns over the weak staffing levels of the physical and mental health services, they commonly overlooked these issues during discussions about impact levels. Interviewees regularly depicted the extensive socio-economic programs and services of the Stewart Local Federation Community School as yielding notable positive impacts that surpassed their expectations. Specifically, study participants commonly discussed how the collection of socio-economic programs and

services has had a strong positive impact on academic performance and the following ‘academic-related’ elements:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

These participants, furthermore, regularly discussed how the collection of programs and services has had a strong positive impact on the following ‘non-academic-related’ elements:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student and Family Hunger Rates (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

Many study participants spent significant time talking about how staff members of the socio-economic programs and services accept great responsibility for the overall well-being of the students and community members. One teacher (Stewart, P4) stated:

This is like a second home for all of my kids, as it should be, a place where they can learn and be cared for... We take care of their development every day we're here... The stability of it makes them feel safe in a zone that pushes hard to pull kids down any chance possible... I've seen all my kids grow as individuals... A meal program should not have the single goal of giving out food. That is a wasted opportunity... We expect more from the food line... Obviously, food can curb hunger... But it can lessen anxiety and show concern.

Observations of many of the socio-economic programs and services seemed to confirm the positive impact levels described by study participants. For example, students were regularly seen taking part in meal programs that resembled family meals. Specifically, during meals and snack periods, it was common to observe a bounty of food being served and adults having genuine conversations with students.

On the other hand, study participants were generally less content with the impact levels the community engagement opportunities have yielded (See Table 16).

5.6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had moderate positive impacts, but more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

The community engagement opportunities were generally described by study participants as having had moderate positive impacts on students, parents, and other community members.

The majority of the study participants discussed how they are extremely content with the commitment of the school to community engagement. One parent (Stewart, P10) stated,

“We ain’t at a [name of city] Public School that nobody cares about... Where people wouldn’t lift a finger to help parents”. However, many of the participants, particularly teachers, parents, and other community members, discussed how they believe the school needs to transition from focusing on ‘the number of community engagement offerings’ to concentrating on ‘the number of community engagement offerings and their levels of impact’. One teacher (Stewart, P6) stated:

I saw people from the [name of foundation] and superintendents wanting the community to be part of the school as soon as it was announced that this was going to be turned into a community school. It makes sense, and I can see their point: A community school needs to be community oriented... [Name of community school director] and [name of assistant community school director] ran to get activities offered ASAP... I saw her [community school director] pull in a few not-for-profits to help with services for adults... I never heard anyone say a word about what they’ve actually done, until now and our convo, because no one really asks about it.

Specifically, this lack of attention to impacts was styled by many study participants as a primary reason why the community engagement opportunities, such as the music performances, concerts, and themed-events, have had only a moderate positive impact on the following areas for both students and other community members:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

Furthermore, the lack of attention to impacts was also cited by many participants as a chief reason why the adult education opportunities, such as the ESL courses and workshops, have had only a moderate positive impact on the following areas for adults:

- Content Knowledge (e.g. workshops)
- Analytical Skills (e.g. workshops)
- Language Skills (e.g. ESL courses)
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

Many study participants, however, were clear about specific actions that could help strengthen the impact levels of the community engagement opportunities. First and foremost, many of these participants discussed how impact reviews should be conducted annually. Additionally, beyond solely focusing on impacts, many study participants suggested that concentrating on the following areas could also assist in improving the overall impact level from moderate to strong: focus on uniting the school and the community, engaging more community members, and offering more high-quality adult education programs.

It was particularly interesting to learn that, from the beginning of the five-year period to the end of it, the Stewart Local Federation Community School achieved improvements in Math and English proficiency rates and overall percentile rank, after plateauing for about four years.

5.6.5 Interesting: Noticeable academic improvements achieved between year-one and year-five

Study participants consistently affirmed their belief that achieving substantial impacts, particularly academic ones, could take between five to ten years. For many of these individuals, having the school realize, between year-one and year-five, an over 5% increase of students at grade level or above in Math, an over 10% increase of students at grade level or above in English, while seeing an over 20% increase in the percentile rank, confirmed their belief.

5.7 Summary

The Stewart Local Federation Community School enthusiastically seized an opportunity to become a community school through a program offered by the local school board. Since joining, the Stewart LF Community School has earned a reputation as one of only a small number of public schools in the city that is committed to academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement; however, the journey has not been without its challenges and setbacks. Specifically, on a positive note, the school currently possesses both traditional community school aims and motivations, along with ones that are less common among this type of school. This combination has helped the school maintain a set of aims and motivations that is largely locally-based. Acting on the stated aims, the school offers a school board prescribed curriculum, which many administrators argue is well-researched and customizable, and several well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services. However, on a less positive note, concerns over the curriculum not being sufficiently engaging or tailored to the students, the nurse's office and mental health office not having sufficient staff members, and the adult education opportunities being

limited were verbalized by many participants. Although, participants consistently discussed how they believe the school possesses a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The impact levels of the courses, programs, and services varied greatly, though, with levels ranging between moderate and strong. It must be noted that the most recent Math and English proficiency rates and the most current overall performance percentile ranking show that the school is capable of noticeably improving its academic performance.

Despite the Stewart Local Federation Community School not currently meeting the ideal image of a community school, as described by the Coalition for Community Schools, the potential of the school cannot be ignored. Concentrating more attention and resources, for example, on the curriculum, staffing levels, Math and English proficiency rates, community unity and engagement, adult education opportunities, and impact evaluation could help the school meet the ideal image in the near future.

Synopsis:

Stewart Local Federation Community School and Gardner Local Federation Community School

Data from each of the two local federation model community school cases is summarized in Tables 16 and 17. Additionally, data from the two cases is comprehensively compared and contrasted in Chapter 7: Cross-Case Analysis.

Table 16. Summary of Stewart Local Federation Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 6	Weak urban economy that is a 10-min. car ride or 15-min. bus ride from a strong economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 5% (15%) 5-Year English Average: 10% (20%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 10%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$300,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · Foundation · Small grants	Largely African American and Hispanic populations with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements, no-one-else-will attitude, and belief that a school should do as much as possible	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 4 Considerable additional support from a local foundation: 5 daily staffers		Locally-based aims and motivations, which acknowledge gang and drug culture	Food programs are well-staffed and well-funded and meet demand, whereas physical health and mental health services are well-funded and meet demand, but require better staffing	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements <u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students Moderate positive impact on adults

Table 17. Summary of Gardner Local Federation Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 5	Weak local economy that is a 10-min. bus ride from a strong economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 35% (50%) 5-Year English Average: 35% (45%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 30%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$250,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · University partner · Small grants	Large African America population and small Hispanic population, both of which possess moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on 'academic-related' elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Considerable added support from a large group of college student volunteers who attend the university-partner		Locally-based aims and motivations, which acknowledge gang and drug culture	Uneasiness over the staffing and funding levels of the majority of the programs and services, and apprehension over their ability to meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on 'academic-related' elements Moderate positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements
				<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students Moderate positive impact on adults – more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

CHAPTER SIX:

AN INDEPENDENT MODEL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Fenway Independent Community School is described and analyzed in this chapter, while the Teak Independent Community School is described and analyzed in Appendix 14. This separation, again, is largely due to restrictions pertaining to the word limit of the thesis.

Each of the two independent model cases possesses qualitative data derived from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documents. Additionally, each of the cases possesses quantitative data stemming from a variety of documents and surveys. As was detailed in chapter one, an independent model community school is autonomous, possessing no central headquarters or community school network. Its administrators and teachers, out of the three community school models, have the greatest control over their implementation strategies. This independence, however, can pose significant challenges. For instance, if an independent model community school desires additional strategic guidance, financial support, and/or non-financial support, its administrators and teachers must identify, apply, and secure it without the aid of a central headquarters or community school network.

Each of the two cases follows the layout of the previous four cases. Thus, each case is divided into the following seven sections: demographics, history of the school, school culture, aims and motivations, implementation strategies, impacts, and summary. Additionally, this chapter, like the previous two chapters, closes with a synopsis that highlights key points from each of the two cases.

**The Fenway Independent Community School:
Intensely Focused on the Local Community and
Passionately Dedicated to doing as much as Possible for its Members**

The Fenway Independent Community School, located in an urban area with its fair share of socio-economic challenges, began transitioning from a traditional school to a community school in 2010. Since then, teachers and administrators at the school, for the most part, have steadfastly supported the community school concept, as the majority of them believe it provides students, parents, and other community members with valuable, easily accessible resources. The school also has garnered the support of other individuals within the community. A large adult community member population is generally content with the curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services the school offers. Furthermore, the local school board and local politicians, pleased with the benefits the school is perceived to offer the community, have formed strong, meaningful relationships with the school. Specifically, the Fenway Independent Community School, which has administrators who autonomously control the day-to-day upper management operations of the school, was provided with an on-site community school administrator that was fully funded by the local school board. Additionally, many local politicians have been enthusiastic about offering general advice to school administrators – and at times, demanding that the school expand its scope. The Fenway Independent Community School has also received significant support from a local university and financial institution, each providing the school with general advice, financial support, and non-financial support, in addition to receiving financial and non-financial support from a range of other organizations. In terms of academic performance over a recent five-year period, the ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency rates (i.e. year-three through year-five) were not unanimously stronger than those of the ‘traditional

school tenure' (i.e. year-one and year-two). The Math proficiency average was stronger during the 'traditional school tenure,' and the English proficiency average was stronger during the 'community school tenure'. Nevertheless, the school is perceived as possessing a variety of favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements, and is viewed as having offerings that have had strong positive impacts on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements.

6.1 Demographics: A diverse population that has not been able to secure high-wage positions

The Fenway Independent Community School, a grades 9 – 12 school, averages a population of over 1,000 students each year. This urban school is nestled in a moderate-sized urban city that boasts a population of over 2,000,000 residents. A recent census of the city found the population is roughly 40% Caucasian, 30% Hispanic/Latino, 25% Black/African American, and 5% Asian. Many members of this diverse population work in a range of lucrative local industries, including defense, technology, and tourism.

The Fenway Independent Community School is a 15-minute car ride or 60-minute bus trip from the vibrant city center, which possesses an international reputation, elegant hotels, fine restaurants, and low levels of crime. However, the particular neighborhood where the school resides is certainly not as financially alive, well-manicured, or safe as the city center. Around the Fenway Independent Community School it is common to see commercialized streets that are dotted with both big box retailers and small, worn-down shops. Entirely neglected buildings and overgrown lots littered with trash are also commonplace. A longtime resident (Fenway, P17) described his neighborhood by stating:

It's not the worst place ever... But, thinking everything is cool is really not a lie to believe... Bottom line is if you live here, you got to be alert... Yeah, gangs got a good piece... Fighting, guns, that's what they use to protect their turf.

Observations of the neighborhood were consistent with many of the views of this interviewee and likeminded interviewees. Another local resident (Fenway, P18) expanded on the crime problem, stating, *“The newspapers don’t always say how bad crime is in [name of neighborhood]... Go on the police website, and you can’t even get this year’s crime totals. I had to call and make a request... The police don’t want you blaming them, so they make it hard... Murders and robberies are common”*. A teacher sympathized with community members and acknowledged that obtaining criminal data from local government groups can be difficult. This was also my experience. I enquired about data, but requests were met with some resistance. Accordingly, I relied heavily on the personal accounts of study participants. I was frequently told by participants that murders, assaults, and robberies commonly occur in the neighborhood where the school is located.

Many parents of students at the Fenway Independent Community School, along with other local community members, continuously confront a multitude of vexing challenges. Currently, according to an administrator and a teacher at the school, the median household income of the neighborhood is roughly \$35,000, while the state average is about 25% higher. They also asserted that the unemployment rate of the neighborhood is slightly above 10%, while the state average is practically half that. These two interviewees also discussed the topics of adult education and employment. Both agreed that roughly 20% of local community members possess an associate’s degree, college degree, or trade certificate. Ruefully, they made a connection between the modest levels of formal education and the types of jobs community members possess, which are often low- to moderate-wage positions at hotels, restaurants, salons, barber shops, and automotive stores. Furthermore, many study participants, regrettably, estimated the government assistance rate of parents and other community members in the neighborhood to be upwards of 75%.

Students at the Fenway Independent Community School are also not exempt from confronting their share of challenges. The current student population, which is 80% Black/African American, 10% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 5% White, includes many students who face academic and/or socio-economic challenges. Administrators confirmed that, currently, 80% of students receive free or reduced lunch, while only about half of the students are at grade level or above in Math and English. Additionally, it was frequently stated that 15% of students do not graduate, a figure which is in line with the state average.

6.2 History of the School: A neighborhood riddled with poor-performing public schools births a community school grounded in strong bonds with its school board, a university, a health center, six major organizations, and a host of other local organizations

The Fenway Independent Community School developed out of disappointment over the academic results public schools in the area were yielding and dissatisfaction over the chasm that existed between local need and available resources. A few irritated, passionate school administrators and a number of members of a local university, who conducted research on concepts that could help alleviate troublesome academic, socio-economic, and community challenges, proposed that the school district investigate the community school concept and pilot a community school. After roughly two years of research and countless public hearings, the district supported the transformation of a traditional public school into a public community school.

Since the first school day at the Fenway Independent Community School, school officials have consistently vowed to focus on the needs of students, their parents, and other community members. Today, after steadfastly expanding and refining the implementation strategies over the years, the Fenway Independent Community School is proud to offer students access to a relatable, custom-designed curriculum that it reports reflects student interests, promotes a practical, hands-on approach, includes the option of job training, and

values internships. The school is also delighted to provide students access to a tutoring service, an array of on-site physical health services, including a physical health clinic, dental office, and vision referral program, mental health services, and a variety of afterschool activities. Furthermore, community members from the area have full-access to the physical health clinic and limited-access to the dental office, in addition to having access to ESL courses and workshops. All community members, from students to other local residents, also have the opportunity to come together during free community events, which commonly surround sporting events, theater productions, cultural events, and celebrations.

The Fenway Independent Community School has had to form many strong, healthy partnerships to maintain its extensive operation. Realistically, school administrators, who run the day-to-day operations of the school, would not be able to offer students and other community members access to the current breadth of resources if they solely relied on school staff members and funding from the district and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Accordingly, the school depends on a tremendous amount of additional financial and non-financial support. A nearby university and an international financial institution provide the school with strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support. A local health center also provides the school with strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support, in addition to operating the physical health services. Beyond this support, the school obtains pockets of strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support from other local organizations, ranging from a food bank to local businesses. All in all, school staff members commonly estimated the yearly support for community school components to exceed \$350,000. To put this in perspective, this represents 3.5% of its core funding.

The overall reputation of the Fenway Independent Community School has consistently been strong, despite its academic performance results regularly being below citywide averages. Regardless of the poor performance, significant support, stemming from school administrators to parents of students, exists. These individuals commonly maintain that the academic performance of the school and many of its ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as student confidence levels and family cohesion levels, have steadfastly been improving over the past few years. Many vocal state-level politicians also support the school, with some calling for more community schools to be constructed in the state.

6.3 School Culture: This school belongs to the community, from children to adults

The culture of the Fenway Independent Community School was commonly depicted as ‘welcoming,’ ‘compassionate,’ and ‘benefit-focused’. According to study participants, the school is to be viewed as a community resource that serves all local residents, not only students and the well-off. This means, as one parent (Fenway, P9) stated, *“We aren’t getting ignored if we call to talk about an opportunity that might be valuable... Will doing that help the neighborhood?... It is what they think about... If it’ll help us, they are happy to work with the idea”*.

Throughout the hours of operation, a vast number of school staff members, students, parents, and other community members were all observed at the school, walking the halls, settling into classrooms, visiting the health clinic, and attending to their schedules, without one group disrupting the other. It appeared that all community members are sincerely welcomed with an ‘open door’ policy – and, even at times, passionately encouraged – to use resources offered at the school. When discussing the future culture of the school with a local resident (Fenway, P19), she stated, *“As long as they keep letting us go to the school without*

pointless restrictions and hearing us at meetings, it's safe... I'm hopeful and so is my husband – and he can be really suspicious, but he is not at all”.

6.4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles, a desire to keep students out of trouble, a yearning to help all community members, political demands, and an ‘it-is-on-us’ stance come together

This section identifies and examines aims and motivations that pertain to the curriculum and academic tutoring program, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Fenway Independent Community School. The aims and motivations of the school are largely tied to traditional community school principles. This means the school values providing a strong curriculum, addressing socio-economic challenges, and investing in the community at-large. Interestingly, though, the Fenway Independent Community School also possesses additional aims and motivations that are somewhat rare among the other community schools in this study. Specifically, the additional aims are to keep students out of trouble and to address socio-economic challenges related to both students and adult community members. As for the added motivations, they stem from valuing a natural learning environment, politicians encouraging school administrators to expand the scope of the school, and the school feeling that no other organization would comprehensively address local socio-economic and community-based challenges. Overall, the traditional aims and motivations of the school along with those that are less common reflect the historically poor academic performance of the school, the weak local economy, and the perceived need to support the potential of the students and community members.

In terms of curriculum, the Fenway Independent Community School aims to offer students quality instruction and strives to keep students out of trouble, all while not becoming fixated on standardized exams. These aims are largely motivated by the belief that the aims are extremely important and by the view that they will help prepare students for the future.

6.4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is absolutely essential

The Fenway Independent Community School has steadily aimed to offer a challenging, multifaceted curriculum that engages students, because the school feels that this type of curriculum can increase the chances of present-day and future student success. School administrators and teachers, in particular, frequently discussed how the school never had any intention of offering students a ‘standard curriculum’ that ignores or tempers how essential a challenging, diverse, engaging curriculum is to students and the long-term prosperity of the neighborhood. One teacher (Fenway, P4) stated:

Teachers from the last school I taught at would have been like, ‘it is here to teach the kids’... The conversation probably would have ended at that point... Here there’s more deepness... The books and subjects need to get their attention... We want them to want to be here... I know if I fail it can mean some students would probably enter the system... I hate to sound dramatic. I have seen it happen.

Parents consistently championed this aim, and regretfully, they steadily acknowledged the motivation. One parent (Fenway, P10), in particular, stated:

Yes, they [teachers at previous public school] said that he was spacing out during class. None said maybe what I’m doing is not good for him... I was talking with them [teachers of the student] during the first week... His teachers all said that it was their job to not have him space out during class... I was shocked when everyone took some responsibility... Everyone around this part knows if a kid doesn’t graduate, life isn’t going to be easy.

Overall, the aim of the curriculum and motivation behind it were supported by study participants.

6.4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to promote student achievement, while not becoming consumed by standardized exams, because creating a natural learning environment promotes lifelong learning

School administrators and teachers at the Fenway Independent Community School did not waver on their aim to have the curriculum encourage academic advancement. They were very clear that the school is unequivocally focused on promoting student attainment.

However, school administrators and teachers at the school were also very clear that student achievement is not solely about a fixation on raising standardized exam scores. Rather, the school has the ambition to create a balance between a more rounded focus on promoting academic achievement and also raising standardized exam results. In essence, the school wants students to excel academically and be comfortable with standardized exams, while not feeling that standardized exams define their intelligence. School administrators and teachers frequently discussed how this aim is motivated by the view that helping form lifelong learners, who sincerely enjoy academic exploration, is far more valuable than helping craft students who simply want to score well on standardized exams. The community school director (Fenway, P3) stated, *“Telling them every day that they have to do well on tests stresses them out... Kids lose that joy about learning that they should always have... It needs to be balanced. We want them to enjoy learning and get good scores... I definitely believe that bringing down pressure around a score will make them want to be here more and keep them interested in college”*.

6.4.3 Academics: Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble, because a good curriculum can have serious positive impacts

School administrators and teachers at the Fenway Independent Community School also did not waver on how the curriculum is intended to keep students off the violent streets and out of trouble. Study participants frequently described the harrowing socio-economic and community-based challenges that many students confront on a daily basis, from living

below the poverty line without sufficient food to being recruited into gangs regularly. Sheltering students from the array of wearisome local challenges seems to be largely motivated by the belief that a strong curriculum cannot only help students overcome challenges but will also help them prosper. One teacher (Fenway, P5), who described the curriculum as one of the strongest tools the school possesses, stated, *“Look at it as one of the most powerful tools available in the toolbox, because it is. Sure it can help kids learn, but it is capable of doing so much more... A curriculum that has been designed by teachers who are knowledgeable and socially conscious is a curriculum that can do incredible things... Its potential is endless”*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Fenway Independent Community School aggressively strive to support students, along with adult community members. The efforts are largely motivated by moral and logical reasons, politicians, and an awareness of a resource void in the neighborhood.

6.4.4 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development and provide students and other residents with essentials, because it is both moral and logical and because politicians demanded it, since no other local organization comprehensively addresses these types of challenges

The Fenway Independent Community School is deeply committed to help students overcome socio-economic challenges that could pose a serious threat to their academic and social prosperity, and furthermore, the school is committed to aid adult community members in need of physical health care and food. The school absolutely does not want a socio-economic challenge, which could have been handled reasonably, to spiral into unwieldy trouble. Accordingly, members of the school staff continuously try to understand the socio-economic situations of students, their parents, and other community members, and then provide beneficial assistance. The desire to offer support that pushes traditional public

school boundaries, by displaying sincere concern over physical health care, mental health, and food stability, is largely motivated by the following four factors, according to study participants: (1) a moral responsibility dictating that a school should do everything in its power to address local socio-economic challenges, (2) the view that these types of challenges can significantly impede the academic performance and social development of students, (3) the belief that investing in socio-economic offerings is a good, cost-effective investment, and (4) the view that other local organizations are not comprehensively addressing these types of challenges. Additionally, the school staff was also motivated by a few vocal local politicians who enthusiastically encouraged the school to expand its scope. Parents of students are elated that the school invests heavily in socio-economic programs and services that address real local challenges. One parent (Fenway, P11), in particular, stated:

There's this weird feeling that's like, yeah, kids need this stuff, even if 90% don't use it, it should be there. It's the right thing. But a lot of systems don't care much about what's right anymore... I tell you the truth when I say they know about this place and they deal with it... Kids get to doctors... Their parents can go too... Young people do not need to have anxiety over snacks and food... It's because they are honest people.

A teacher (Fenway, P6) responded to appreciation from parents by stating, *"I have to feel pride in what I'm doing, and offering a holistic education makes me feel like I'm part of something special... I love that they [parents] respect all the time we put in"*.

The Fenway Independent Community School also seriously concentrates on community engagement. By offering social, athletic, and educational opportunities, the school aims to bring community members together, while enriching their lives. This work is largely motivated by a sincere dedication to the community, being in a position to help, and, once again, requests from local politicians.

6.4.5 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one, the school is in a position to do so, and politicians demanded it

The Fenway Independent Community School does not halfheartedly strive to engage the local community; rather, its expectations of itself are mighty. School administrators and teachers commonly discussed how the school is dedicated to engaging students, parents, and community members. These staff members truly want the school to be an active focal point of the community. Accordingly, the school aims to offer all community members, from students to adults, the opportunity to take part in a range of rich, meaningful community-based opportunities. Students, for example, are exposed firsthand to the arts, cultures, sports, and social events, while adults are directly exposed to educational opportunities and social events. School administrators, teachers, and parents, for the most part, all suggested during interviews that the community engagement aim of the school is motivated by the following three factors: (1) the belief that the school should welcome the community into the school, (2) the view that a school should share available resources with the community, and (3) encouragement from local politicians. Parents and other local interviewees were particularly satisfied with the community engagement aim, which they feel is genuinely locally-based. One community member (Fenway, P20), who once had reservations about the school, but no longer does, stated, *“It’s amazing how this is a school for kids to learn and a resource for us all... You can see people around at 8:00 PM... It’s cool that we got a*

school and leaders that are thinking about us... I went to a bunch of meetings... I see that more programs came from suggestions we made”.

It was interesting to learn that the Fenway Independent Community School is thinking about a long-term academic aim, which is years out. The school wants students to have a strong, favorable relationship with learning.

6.4.6 Interesting: Truly wants to create lifelong learners who enjoy learning – long-term aim

It was fascinating to hear that school administrators and teachers purposefully do not stress or pressure students about standardized test scores in order to protect the view that learning should be enjoyable, fulfilling, and natural. The school strives to have students possess this view about learning today and years from now.

6.5 Implementation Strategies: A custom curriculum and an offerings basket brimming with well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand

This section identifies and analyzes the curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings of the Fenway Independent Community School. In particular, the funding and staffing levels of the programs and services, in addition to their ability to meet demand, are examined. Essentially, the school offers an engaging tailored curriculum and a plethora of well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand. Table 18 offers a summary of the implementation strategies of the school, which is based on the views of study participants.

**Table 18. Fenway Independent Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 200 students, 20% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 500 students, 50% participation rate) (Over approx. 1,500 other community members)
Mental Health Services	Yes	No	Yes (Approx. 80 students, 8% participation rate)
Food Programs	Yes	Yes	No (Approx. 950 students, 95% participation rate) (Over approx. 250 other community members)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 750 students, 75% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 850 students, 85% participation rate) (Approx. 5,000 community members)
GED Program	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered
ESL Courses	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 50 community members)
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 150 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

The Fenway Independent Community School, however, confronts a few notable challenges pertaining to its implementation strategies, according to study participants. Participants continuously described the mental health services as being understaffed and the food programs as not meeting demand, and, furthermore, they repeatedly suggested that more adult education offerings revolving around trades and apprenticeships should be offered.

The custom-built curriculum and the academic tutoring program both received glowing reviews.

6.5.1 Academics: The tailored curriculum is engaging

The tailor-made curriculum of the Fenway Independent Community School is unlike most public school curriculums in its area – and this is a point of extreme pride among those associated with the school. School administrators, with the support of teachers, parents, and other community members, elected to personally craft the curriculum, rather than adopt a school board prescribed curriculum. Administrators commonly maintained that a curriculum should be crafted to meet the needs and interests of a specific student population, and furthermore, the curriculum should have the ability to develop over time, rather than be fixed and rigid. Accordingly, the Fenway Independent Community School crafted a curriculum that can be separated into the following three areas: (1) traditional courses, (2) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses, and (3) workforce-focused opportunities. All three areas value a hands-on approach to learning and draw heavily on the culture and modern-day interests of students. Specifically, the traditional courses provide students with ‘foundation courses’ that cover subjects such as Math, English, History, Art, and Physical Education; the STEM courses cover a range of topics, from aerospace engineering to architecture; and the workforce-focused opportunities allow students to learn about industries such as finance and entertainment. One teacher (Fenway, P7) stated:

By the second month they’re telling their parents that school isn’t that bad... It’s because they can learn about subjects they find interesting and take classes with teachers who understand that keeping students interested has to be a priority... We don’t want any of them sitting the whole time without moving, as one fact after the other is dictated to them... That’s a horrible way to learn.

Parents were largely in agreement with the views of this teacher. One parent (Fenway, P12) even described a conversation she recently had with her son, stating, *“He told me to have his sister go to [Fenway Independent Community School], because she will be able to know what she likes before going to college... He tells his advisor the classes he wants to try... His schedule really fits him”*. It was interesting to see how the academic implementation strategy of the Fenway Independent Community School supports the aim of the school to offer a challenging, engaging, diverse curriculum (See Section 6.4.1).

6.5.2 Academics: A well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand

The academic tutoring service at the Fenway Independent Community School was consistently described by study participants as having its funding in order, as maintaining a sufficient level of staff members, and as meeting student need. Participants spoke passionately about the service, which serves 200 students (20% of the student population). One parent (Fenway, P10) stated, *“It’s scary. I really don’t like to think the position he would be in if he could not see her [tutor]”*. Genuine gratitude emanated from study participants as they described the academic tutoring service. And moreover, this thankfulness had less to do with simply the service being offered and more to do with the service being genuinely well-maintained and nurturing. These two characteristics are what sincerely touched many participants, particularly parents. In terms of management, the academic tutoring service, which is offered every school day from early to late into the evening, is overseen by a community school director and a school district administrator. These two individuals direct a staff of over twenty tutors, which includes tutoring specialists, teachers, college students, and local volunteers. Funding for the service is primarily derived from 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, a large financial institution, and a collection of for-profit and non-profit organizations. The greatest

exception, though, relates to the salary of the school district administrator. That salary is paid for by the school district. A teacher (Fenway, P4) stated:

In every school there will be those who need more than a teacher can give during a period... It's really an honest truth that needs to be taken seriously... They [other schools] should be ashamed over what they are doing to kids. Not us. Extra help is managed like a classroom subject... An instructor is expected to help teach and answer questions... It's not play time... There are enough tutors... The program can't work if only like one tutor is around.

A parent (Fenway, P13) agreed with the positive characterization of the tutoring service, stating, *"I asked about clubs and tutoring during a conference, you know to get more details, and he got one [tutor] in a week... No, scheduling was a breeze"*.

For the most part, the socio-economic programs and services also received stellar reviews.

6.5.3 Socio-Economic: Well-funded and well-staffed physical health services, but some concerns surround the mental health services and food programs

The majority of the study participants at the Fenway Independent Community School proudly discussed, with visible cheek-to-cheek smiles, how fortunate they feel to have access to many well-funded, well-staffed, and demand-meeting socio-economic programs and services, but grave concerns over the staffing level of the mental health office and the lack of a summer food program surfaced. The on-site physical health clinic serves approximately 500 students (50% of the student population) and offers annual physical check-ups and emergency physical care and dental check-ups and emergency dental care. The mental health office serves an estimated 80 students (8% of the student population) and provides private guidance and therapy sessions. The food programs offer students access to breakfast, lunch, dinner, a snack, a weekend backpack program, and a food pantry. Approximately 950 students (95% of the student population) take advantage of these food programs. Additionally, parents of students and other local adult community members have

full-access to the physical health clinic and the food pantry and limited-access to dental services. It is estimated that over 1,500 adult community members visit the health clinic and 250 adult community members use the food pantry. Administrators and teachers, including the community school director and the school district administrator who oversee the offerings, frequently discussed how the socio-economic programs and services are well-funded in large part due to 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, a large financial institution, and a collection of for-profit and non-profit organizations. The staffing levels of the socio-economic programs and services and their ability to meet demand, however, were not unanimously favorable. Specifically, all the socio-economic offerings except for the mental health office were viewed as being well-staffed and all the socio-economic offerings except for the food programs were viewed as meeting demand. Specifically, teachers, parents, and other community members frequently discussed how they hope the school will add more mental health counselors to the staff, thus allowing more students to meet with counselors. Furthermore, a summer food program was seen as a priority that needs to be added in order to address food security during the summer break.

One parent (Fenway, P14) stated:

Don't write that we ain't getting anything, because that's far from what's true. All I'm saying is that fixes could be made, but that's true for anything... Getting them [students] a bag of food each week during the summer is one thing I think is a good idea... I heard from a teacher and another mom that it is not as easy to get a counselor... That is not acceptable.

Although the Fenway Independent Community School possesses some weaknesses pertaining to the implementation strategies of the socio-economic programs and services, the commitment of the school to addressing socio-economic challenges is evident (See Section 6.4.4).

The community engagement offerings, like the socio-economic programs and services, also received significant positive feedback.

6.5.4 Community Engagement: Many well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand, although more adult education offerings are wanted

Together, interviewees, school documents, and site observations revealed that the Fenway Independent Community School is deeply committed to offering students, parents, and other community members access to an array of well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand. *“Everyone working here knows not to confuse it with a school that is not a community school... If they do, because they don’t know, they’re better off transferring to another public school,”* stated a teacher (Fenway, P5). The school booklet, packed with a collection of community engagement opportunities that keeps the school open late into the night, displays the staunch commitment the Fenway Independent Community School has to community engagement (See Appendix 12). Students have access to clubs, workshops, sports leagues, athletic activities, and themed events. Additionally, parents and other community members can participate in ESL classes, family-oriented workshops, and themed events. Students, parents, and other community members also frequently come together for performances, sports games, and themed events. It is estimated that 900 students (90% of the student population) and 5,000 adult community members participate in at least one community engagement activity each year. Study participants regularly confirmed that all the offerings are well-funded, due in large part to 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, a large financial institution, and a collection of for-profit and non-profit organizations. Participants also commonly discussed how the opportunities are well-managed by the community school director and the school district administrator, who monitor the quality of existing offerings, introduce new offerings as needed, and speak with community members about offerings that should be added.

Despite all the acclaim, concerns around a lack of workforce-focused adult education opportunities, such as an administrative certificate and basic construction program, did arise during interviews, particularly those with parents and other community members. Community members commonly discussed how having these types of opportunities at the school would make them easily accessible, less intimidating than college courses, and reasonably priced. Furthermore, many felt that having the school offer these types of opportunities would fulfill promises the school has made about helping support the community and aiding its members in enhancing their work skills and employment prospects. Hearing concerns over the perceived lack of adult education opportunities was certainly surprising, given that a stated community engagement aim of the school is to offer enriching experiences (See Section 6.4.5).

Interestingly, a few parent and other community member interviewees possessed such immense confidence in the Fenway Independent Community School that they believe it could help curb the local recidivism rate by offering a *Skill and Status program*. The described program would offer participants therapeutic workshops, provide them with professional training, and evaluate their current drug and violence status. These interviewees believe this program could help address employer skepticism, which all too often prevents released inmates from securing employment. The school, however, does not offer this type of program.

It was surprising to see that the stated aims and implementation strategies of the Fenway Independent Community School do not align in a few important areas.

6.5.5 Surprising: Stated aims and implementation strategies not always synchronized

The Fenway Independent Community School possesses the stated socio-economic aim of addressing grim socio-economic challenges and the stated community engagement aim of offering community members enriching opportunities; however, the school is reported not to offer sufficient on-site mental health professionals, a summer meal program, or an array of adult education opportunities.

6.6 Impacts: Moderate academic performance results and strong positive impacts perceived, despite confronting some challenges with the implementation strategies – and facing a possible enigma in the data

This section concentrates on academic, socio-economic, and community engagement impacts achieved by the Fenway Independent Community School. The impacts span a recent five-year period, during which the first two years account for when the school was a traditional school and the most recent three years account for the current community school status of the school. In terms of Math performance, English performance, and overall rating score, five-year trends were examined and five-year averages were identified and compared with citywide averages, when possible. Additionally, the dataset allowed for comparisons between impacts of the previous ‘traditional school tenure’ and those of the current ‘community school tenure’. For the most part, Math and English proficiency rates between 40% and 59% were achieved during both tenures. As for ‘non-academic performance’ results, the school was commonly perceived by study participants as possessing both favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The curriculum, academic tutoring program, socio-economic programs and services, and

community engagement opportunities also were viewed favorably. Participants generally described them as having had strong positive impacts on a variety of elements.

Interestingly, the socio-economic and community engagement opportunities were able to achieve this level of positive impact despite a described lack of on-site mental health counselors, no summer food program, and few adult education opportunities.

During a recent three-year community school tenure, the Fenway Independent Community School averaged 45% of students at grade level or above in Math and English, while the citywide averages were both 65%. Additionally, during this time period, the school earned an overall rating score between 5 – 6, while the top score was 10 (See Table 19).

**Table 19. Fenway Independent Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Rating Scores**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Rating Score (1=Lowest, 10 Highest)
Year-One: Traditional (Most Distant)	50% – 59%	50% – 59%	3 – 4
Year-Two: Traditional	50% – 59%	40% – 49%	5 – 6
Year-Three: Community	30% – 39%	50% – 59%	7 – 8
Year-Four: Community	40% – 49%	40% – 49%	7 – 8
Year-Five: Community (Most Recent)	50% – 59%	40% – 49%	5 – 6
Traditional Two Years	50% – 59% (Citywide: 70%)	40% – 45% (Citywide: 75%)	3 – 4
Community Three Years	45% (Citywide: 65%)	45% (Citywide: 65%)	5 – 6
All Five Years	45% (Citywide: 65%)	45% (Citywide: 65%)	5 – 6
<u>Key</u> Green Highlighting: Highest average between ‘traditional school tenure’ and ‘community school tenure’ Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

Despite the Fenway Independent Community School not meeting or surpassing either of the Math or English citywide averages of 65%, the courses and academic tutoring program reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, according to study participants (See Table 20).

It must be noted that at least two teachers and four parents expressed suspicion over a possible manipulation of the relationship between the proficiency rates and the overall rating scores. These participants suggested that some of the overall rating scores may have been inflated. Specifically, they were unable to understand how proficiency rates before the change to the community school concept (year-one and year-two) earned overall rating scores between 3 and 6; however, as a community school (year-three through year-five), similar proficiency rates – if not worse rates – earned overall rating scores between 5 and 8. Participants commonly suggested that the possible deceptive maneuver may be politically motivated, because neither the school board nor many local politicians, both of which supported the adoption of the community school concept, want to appear as though significant funding did not yield tangible academic results.

6.6.1 Academics: Moderate Math and English proficiency rates and a mostly rising overall rating score

Whether examining the entire five-year period, the ‘traditional school tenure’ (year-one and year-two), or the ‘community school tenure’ (year-three through year-five), the Fenway Independent Community School did not commonly achieve large, notable improvements in Math and English proficiency rates or overall rating scores. Specifically, during the five-year period, in terms of Math proficiency rates, the school had 50% – 59% of students at grade level or above the first two years, then the rate dropped to 30% – 39% during year-three, next the rate increased to 40% – 49% during year-four, and lastly, the rate further rose to 50% – 59% during year-five. This down-up trend resulted in a five-year Math proficiency

average of 45%, which is 20% below the citywide average. The English proficiency rates fared similarly. For year-one, 50% – 59% of students were at grade level or above in English, then, for year-two, the rate decreased to 40% – 49%, next, for year-three, the rate increased back up to 50% – 59%, and then, the rate decreased to 40% – 49% for year-four and year-five. The down-up-down pattern resulted in a five-year English proficiency average of 45%, which is 20% below the citywide average. As for the overall rating scores, there was steady growth and then a drop occurred the final year. During year-one, the score was 3 – 4, next, during year-two, the score increased to 5 – 6, then, during year-three and year-four, each score was 7 – 8, and finally, during year-five, the score dropped to 5 – 6. The result was a five-year average of 5 – 6. In the end, between year-one and year-five, the Fenway Independent Community School increased its Math proficiency rate by roughly 5%, lost about 5% of its English proficiency rate; and managed to increase its overall rating score by around 2 points.

When placing the ‘traditional school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages and overall rating score average (year-one and year-two) against the ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages and overall rating score average (year-three through year-five), the results are basically split. During the ‘traditional school tenure’ a stronger Math proficiency average was achieved (i.e. 50% – 59% versus 45%). However, during the ‘community school tenure,’ a stronger English proficiency average (ever so slightly above 45% versus roughly 40 – 45%) and overall rating score average (5 – 6 versus 3 – 4) were achieved. Despite the differences, overall, the proficiency averages during both tenures are not entirely worlds apart (i.e. less than 15% difference).

Discussions with teachers about the data uncovered that male students and special needs students receive added attention. Teachers commonly discussed how male students often score lower than female students and how special needs students largely score below

grade level averages. Teachers also regularly expressed concerns over the graduation rates of these two groups, which were commonly described as being below average. Overall, there is no evidence that the two community schools managed to close the achievement gap for male students and special needs students.

6.6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements

Even though the Fenway Independent Community School did not achieve measured Math and English proficiency rates above the citywide averages, study participants consistently maintained that the courses and tutoring program have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic related’ elements, such as confidence levels. A deep sense of pride commonly exuded from administrators and teachers as they spoke about the courses and the academic tutoring program. Teachers were particularly proud of the multifaceted curriculum that offers traditional courses, STEM courses, and workforce-focused opportunities, such as internships with local companies. They also were proud that the courses emphasize engaging students, teaching relatable lessons, and exposing students to subjects typically only offered by colleges. The consensus was that the courses have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, confidence levels, and behavior, demonstrated in part by better attendance and disruptive incident rates. A teacher (Fenway, P6) stated:

Classes have to entice and hold students’ attention the whole time, and, yes, clearly, they are all different... Some love Math and Science and some don’t... Options and more options, that’s important... I’ve had parents pull me aside at events and tell me that the approach we have has made their son or daughter want to come to school... You can see it in their eyes, they feel better about themselves... The school is calmer now, too.

Study participants were also generally positive about the impacts the tutoring program has yielded. Teachers and parents, in particular, commonly discussed how the program has had

a strong positive impact on academic performance and confidence levels. One parent (Fenway, P15) discussed how the program has surpassed her expectations, stating, *“I was terrified he wouldn’t graduate because of failing out or missing too many days... Really, they’re like coaches... She helps him with work... He’ll go to school sick now, to not miss a day... We talk about college like all the time”*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Fenway Independent Community School, like the courses and academic tutoring program, were also said to have had a strong positive impact on a range of elements pertaining to students (See Table 20).

6.6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Study participants at the Fenway Independent Community School were delighted to discuss the impacts the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs have yielded. Although participants commonly reported a lack of mental health counselors and the need for a summer food program, this did not prevent them from largely agreeing that the socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Some participants, particularly teachers and parents, discussed how these programs and services are essential to the well-being of students. Furthermore, some went on to discuss, regrettably, how not offering these essential socio-economic programs and services could lead to academic, physical, mental, and/or social ruin for numerous students and to some students entering local gangs and the drug trade.

Study participants made it clear that, in their view, the socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on an array of areas. Specifically, participants generally felt that these programs and services have had a strong positive impact on

academic performance and the following ‘academic-related’ elements, many of which may not be commonly associated with socio-economic offerings:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Study participants also affirmed that the socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements, including the following:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student and Family Hunger Rates (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

Parents, more than any other set of interviewees, vividly described how the socio-economic offerings have helped the students become stronger academically, healthier, and more genial. One parent (Fenway, P16) stated:

Not overnight, but she trusts them [school staff]... They want to help... I’ve heard her say to her cousins that she doesn’t feel so alone... Our lives are not perfect ... My opinion is that those services take family pressure off the child... This helps them grow.

Simply stated, parents interviewed seemed deeply thankful for the sincere support, quality offerings, and noteworthy impacts.

By and large, the community engagement offerings were also said to have had a strong positive impact; however, concerns surrounding the offerings surfaced (See Table 20).

6.6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had strong positive impacts, but more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

Discussions about the community engagement opportunities at the Fenway Independent Community School often brought study participants significant joy, despite the opportunities possessing three reported challenges. Participants never expressed concerns over the community engagement opportunities being neglected or ignored. Rather, individuals expressed feeling as though the management of the opportunities and its results are of great importance to the school, and in particular of great importance to the community school director and the school district administrator. *“The workshops are not a waste of time... It’s cool that they want feedback... She will investigate a complaint or suggestion to the fullest... That’s why I think events and classes have helped us as people,”* stated a community member (Fenway, P21) who has been involved in community engagement opportunities at the school for over two years. In particular, school administrators, teachers, and parents discussed how the opportunities have had a strong positive impact on the following areas for students:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

Additionally, these individuals were not shy about discussing the impacts opportunities have had on adults. They consistently described how the opportunities have had a strong positive impact on the following areas:

- Content Knowledge (e.g. workshops)
- Analytical Skills (e.g. workshops)
- Language Skills (e.g. ESL courses)
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

One parent (Fenway, P11) stated, “*When a boy joins a team, he’s going to learn about sportsmanship... They get healthy running outside... The same thing goes for old people. Take a class. It’s going to do you really good*”. Despite all the positive remarks, participants overwhelmingly wanted the school to form a closer bond with the community, to get more residents on-site, by offering more social and educational opportunities, for example, and to provide adult workforce-focused offerings.

Despite these positive perceptions, it must be recognized that the Math and English proficiency rates during the ‘community school tenure’ do not always surpass the Math and English proficiency rates of the ‘traditional school tenure’.

6.6.5 Interesting: ‘Community school tenure’ figures do not always surpass ‘traditional school tenure’ figures

Although the Math and English proficiency averages of the Fenway Independent Community School were not unanimously stronger during the ‘community school tenure’ than during the ‘traditional school tenure,’ study participants consistently maintained that all the ‘community school tenure’ averages should soon surpass those of its predecessor. “*The strategy is fine. You can’t expect 10% gains right away, every year... We’re waiting,*” stated a teacher (Fenway, P7).

6.7 Summary

According to study participants, who range from administrators to community members, the Fenway Independent Community School truly strives to be a community school that successfully addresses academic, socio-economic, and community-based challenges. Participants repeatedly contended that the school does not display the ‘community school’ badge because it is trendy or can lead to additional financial and non-financial support. Members of the rather diverse participant pool, instead, consistently clarified that the school is genuinely attempting to aid and support students, their parents, and other community members by expanding the scope of the school. Accordingly, the school possesses a set of locally-based stated aims and motivations that concentrate on the three areas – academics, socio-economics, and community engagement. These aims and motivations are largely supported by the implementation strategies of the school. However, it should not be ignored that the aims and implementation strategies of the school are not always in unison. Specifically, it is reported that to have more harmonious aims and implementation strategies the school requires additional on-site mental health counselors, a summer food program for students, and more adult education opportunities. In the end, the academic results the school achieved over a recent five-year period are moderate, and are noticeably below citywide averages. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the ‘traditional school tenure’ Math proficiency average (year-one and year-two) is stronger than that of its counterpart. However, conversely, the ‘community school tenure’ English proficiency average (year-three through year-five) is stronger than that of its counterpart. Thus, in this situation, it could be argued that in the ‘traditional versus community school tenure competition over proficiency rates,’ it is a draw. Far less complex is the view participants possess on the ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of the school. Individuals consistently discussed how they believe the school possesses these

favorable elements and, furthermore, how the programs and services at the school have had a strong positive impact on them. The overall mixed findings involving academic performance and other elements, however, has not caused local residents to blame the school. Instead, they continue to be hopeful and patient, and believe the ‘academic performance results’ of the school will one day be as strong as its ‘non-academic performance’ elements.

The Fenway Independent Community School, in its current state, comes close to meeting the ideal image of a community school, as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools. However, the school could come closer to achieving this ideal image by adding more on-site mental health counselors, introducing a summer food program, strengthening its academic performance results, focusing more on unity and engagement efforts, and expanding its adult education opportunities. Furthermore, in terms of results, it does not provide strong evidence that the approach has led to strong, consistent improvements in measured outcomes. Math and English proficiency rates remain well below citywide averages.

Synopsis:

Fenway Independent Community School and Teak Independent Community School

Tables 20 and 21 summarize data pertaining to each of the two independent model community schools. Chapter 7: Cross-Case Analysis consists of a comprehensive analysis focused on comparing and contrasting the data.

Table 20. Summary of Fenway Independent Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 3	Weak urban economy that is a 15-min. car ride or 60-min. bus trip from a strong, dominant economy	Traditional aims & Keep students out of trouble Not consumed by exams	Tailored curriculum is engaging	<u>Performance</u> 3-Year Math Average: 45% (65%) 3-Year English Average: 45% (65%) 3-Year Average Rating Score: 5-6
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$350,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · Financial institution · University · Health center · Local organizations	A large Black/ African American population and a modest Hispanic population Both populations possess moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements, including an offerings void, and politicians Locally-based aims and motivations Gang and drug culture acknowledged	Many programs and services However, a summer food program and more adult education opportunities desired Mostly well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible programs and services	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements <u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements <u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2				

Table 21. Summary of Teak Independent Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 4	Weak rural economy that is a 45-min. drive from a strong, central economy	Traditional aims & excite students Not consumed by standardized testing	School board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 4-Year Math Average: 20% (25%) 4-Year English Average: 15% (30%) 4-Year Average Percentile Rank: 9%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$200,000 (est.) · 21st Century · Partnerships · Small grants · Private donations	Largely Hispanic population with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements, including an offerings void	Many programs and services However, a summer food program and more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Support from the school board		Locally-based aims and motivations Weak economic state acknowledged	Funding and on-site staffing are challenges, but off-site partners help the school meet demand more often than not	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements
				<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults, but more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

FINDINGS FROM THE CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

‘ACROSS’ THE THREE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODELS

7.1 Introduction

The cross-case synthesis technique was used to address **research question one: What distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts?**

Before the distinguishing characteristics ‘across’ the three models can be explored (i.e. national model versus local federation model versus independent model), the general, overall characteristics of each model must first be established. Appendix 15 addresses each of the three community school models separately. Specifically, in terms of Appendix 15, Section 1 focuses on characteristics surrounding the national model; Section 2 concentrates on characteristics pertaining to the local federation model; and, Section 3 centers on characteristics concerning the independent model. Beyond the narrow identification of characteristics solely pertaining to one of the three areas (i.e. aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts), each of these three sections also includes an examination of potential interrelationships between the aims, implementation strategies, and impacts of the model. For example, in terms of the interrelationship between the three areas, it was asked: Were strong academic results achieved when the aims and implementation strategies were in unison? Additionally, for instance, it was asked: Was a larger budget for community school-related expenses potentially linked to stronger ‘academic performance results?’ Other interrelated topics within each model are also discussed in these sections. Lastly, each of the three sections concludes with a proposal of the characteristics of a particular model, based on the collected data.

Moving away from analyses ‘within’ each model, Section 7.2 of this chapter focuses on an analysis ‘across’ the three models (i.e. national model characteristics versus local federation model characteristics versus independent model characteristics). This, in particular, allows for common characteristics shared by all three of the models to be identified and, conversely, for unique characteristics exclusive to one or two of the models to be isolated. This section primarily addresses research question one. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

The following chapter addresses research question two: Does the community school concept have the potential to strengthen individual settings, links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986)?

7.2 ‘Across’ the Three Models

This section specifically focuses on addressing **research question one: What distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts?** The model summaries in Appendix 15 serve as the foundation of the findings in this section (See Table 22).

Table 22. Model Summaries

	National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
Aims and Motivations	Grounded in traditional community school principles Largely locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based
Implementation Strategies	Many offerings Predominately well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand	Moderate to many offerings Divided	Many offerings Somewhat divided on funding and staffing levels, but mostly able to meet demand
Achieved 'Academic Performance Results' (Average)	Mainly moderate 5-Yr Math Avg. for Model: 50% 5-Yr English Avg. for Model: 43% 5-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 40%	Weak to moderate 5-Yr Math Avg. for Model: 20% 5-Yr English Avg. for Model: 23% 5-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 20%	Weak to moderate 3/4-Yr Math Avg. for Model: 33% 3/4-Yr English Avg. for Model: 30% 3/4-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 27%
Perceived as Possessing Favorable 'Academic-Related' and 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements (i.e. 'non-academic performance' elements)	Yes Perceived as possessing favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements	Yes Perceived as possessing favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements	Yes Perceived as possessing favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	Primarily Strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Academic-Related' Elements	Moderate to strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements	Primarily Strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/Divided/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%			

In terms of overarching similarities, the three models possess a foundation of aims and motivations that respect widely-acknowledged community school principles, as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools, and reflect the local community. Beyond this overarching similarity, the three models share several interrelated findings pertaining to aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts and several specific, narrow characteristics related to implementation strategies and impacts. One of the most noteworthy specific similarities common to the three models is that all three of them are perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (i.e. favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements).

In terms of overarching differences, the implementation strategies and impacts of the three models are dissimilar. Specifically, the implementation strategies of the models vary in terms of curriculum type, offering levels, funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand. Notable differences regarding impacts also exist. In particular, the achieved ‘academic performance results’ and the degree to which study participants believe the offerings have had a positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements vary by model. Some differences pertaining to interrelated findings also exist among the models. Furthermore, a few narrow differences related to aims and motivations were identified in the cross-case analysis. Despite the three models sharing an overarching foundation of similar aims and motivations, some of the models possess additional aims and/or motivations that are more locally-based than those of their counterparts.

In the end, overall, it is important to understand that the three models possess a similar foundation of aims and motivations and a common set of favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements, while possessing largely dissimilar implementation strategies, achieved ‘academic performance results,’ and perceived impacts.

7.2.1 Mutual Characteristics: Aims and motivations – plus several interrelated findings and several specific, narrow characteristics pertaining to implementation strategies and impacts (e.g. favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements)

Generally, the aims and motivations of the three models strongly relate – whereas, overall, the implementation strategies and impacts of the three models seem to largely differ. All three models possess a foundation of aims and motivations that are grounded in traditional community school principles and are largely locally-based. Additionally, the three models share several interrelated findings and several specific, narrow characteristics related to implementation strategies and impacts. A noteworthy specific, narrow characteristic is that all three models possess a similar collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

7.2.1.1 Overarching Theme: Similar foundation of aims and motivation

Although the three models do not share all the same stated aims and motivations, they possess a similar foundation of aims and motivations (See Table 23).

Table 23. Mutual Characteristics: Aims and Motivations

Aims and Motivations
<u>Academic</u> All three models strive to have the curriculum be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential
<u>Socio-Economic</u> All three models strive to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical
<u>Community Engagement</u> All three models strive to unite community members through community-based occasions and classes and to offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so
Summary All three models possess a common foundation of academic, socio-economic, and community engagement aims and motivations that respect community school principles and are largely locally-based.

This shared foundation of aims and motivations respects community school principles and is largely locally-based.

All three models strive to have a challenging, diverse, and engaging curriculum, because it is believed that a good curriculum – without question – is essential. The academic aim and motivation reflect the tradition of community schools offering strong curriculums. Furthermore, the aim and motivation, to some degree, acknowledge that, for the most part, many students at these schools confront grave socio-economic challenges and a strong curriculum could aid them in improving their quality of life in the future.

The three models also aim to have their socio-economic offerings address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical. The aim and motivation respect the traditional community school principle that community schools must care for the broad needs of students, not only their academic needs. Additionally, the aim and motivation are locally-based, because they acknowledge that students at the schools largely confront challenges pertaining to steady access to physical health services, mental health services, and food.

All three models, additionally, aim to offer community-based events and classes that bring the community together and provide enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and because the school is in a position to do so. The aim and motivations respect the traditional community school principle that this type of school must focus on enriching the lives of both students and community members. Furthermore, the aim and motivations are locally-based, because they acknowledge that, oftentimes, few free community-based enrichment opportunities are available to community members.

In short, all three models possess a foundation of aims and motivations that respects community school principles and largely reflects the local community.

7.2.1.2 Interrelated Findings: Several similarities

In addition to the three models possessing similar overarching characteristics pertaining to aims and motivations, the three models also possess several common interrelated characteristics, which are noteworthy (Table 24).

Table 24. Interrelated Characteristics Shared Among the Models

All Three Models
• Commonly possess disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are linked to weak and/or moderate ‘academic performance averages’ • Possess mostly disconnected aims and implementation strategies that are commonly linked to the perception that offerings have had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements • Potentially possesses headquarters/local federation/school staff that can help craft locally-based aims • Potentially uses a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings
Only Applicable to Two Models, Associated with Context
• The one time each of the two models had an aim and implementation strategy that were in unison, study participants perceived a strong positive impact level on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements – National Model and Independent Model • Possess the stated academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams, but averaged weak and moderate ‘academic performance results’ – National Model and Local Federation Model • Appear not to allow the setting (urban or rural) to have a strong impact on the three areas – National Model and Independent Model

In three separate instances, interrelated findings concerning only two models are discussed, as a result of the topics (i.e. harmonious aim and implementation strategy, standardized exams, and setting) only applying to two models, rather than all three.

The three models, collectively, provide valuable findings on disconnected aims and implementation strategies. First, specifically regarding academics, the schools from across the three models commonly possess disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies. Furthermore, these disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are solely linked to weak and/or moderate ‘academic performance

averages'. This suggests that disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are generally linked to weak and/or moderate 'academic performance averages,' but not strong averages. Secondly, broadly speaking, the three models mostly possess disconnected aims and implementation strategies that are linked to the perception that the offerings have had moderate and strong positive impact levels on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. This reveals that disconnected aims and implementation strategies do not prevent the schools from being perceived as having had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. In the end, it may be concluded that disconnected aims and implementation strategies are less problematic in terms of 'perception' than 'achievement'.

The three models, collectively, also offer findings on the potential value of national headquarters/local federations/school staffs and the possible benefit of a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo. Specifically, all three models reveal that a headquarters, a local federation, or a school staff, potentially, can help craft locally-based aims. Furthermore, all three models, potentially, show that having a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo can support a school in securing substantial funding and providing extensive offerings.

Interrelated findings from two models – two models due to circumstances – also provide insight on the potential of harmonious aims and implementation strategies and how potentially neither an academic aim nor the school setting may have had a strong impact on any of the three areas. Specifically, where the national model and the independent model school each had an aim and implementation strategy in unison, study participants perceived a strong positive impact on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements. This displays the potential benefit of having aims that are supported by implementation

strategies. Additionally, the national model and the local federation model show that possessing the academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams does not guarantee a school will achieve strong ‘academic performance results’. Furthermore, findings from the national model and the independent model suggest that the setting (urban or rural) does not seem to have a strong impact on the three areas.

7.2.1.3 Specific, Narrow, Similar Characteristics regarding Implementation Strategies and Impacts Acknowledged

It must be acknowledged that, together, the three models possess some specific characteristics beyond the overarching finding (i.e. similar foundation of aims and motivations) and the interrelated characteristics. These specific, common findings related to implementation strategies and impacts are as follows:

Implementation Strategies

- All three models – and all six schools – (1) offer an academic tutoring program, (2) provide at least a moderate level of socio-economic offerings, and (3) offer community engagement opportunities that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand
- None of the three models – none of the six schools – offer workforce training programs
- All three models – at least one school per model – (1) apply a school board curriculum, (2) have a socio-economic offering that confronts challenges pertaining to funding, staffing, and/or meeting demand, and (3) offer at least a limited level of community engagement opportunities

Impacts

- All three models – and all six schools – are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as strong student interest levels, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong family cohesion levels, but the models also share elements that are viewed as requiring greater attention, including school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities
- All three models – at least one school per model – averaged moderate ‘academic performance results’ and are viewed as having had between moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

These specific findings show that, even though the three models largely vary in their implementation strategies and impacts, the three models share some specific commonalities in these two areas. It is particularly valuable to recognize that all three models are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements (i.e. ‘non-academic performance’ elements).

7.2.1.4 Similarities: Summary

The overarching conclusion that can be drawn is that the three models share a foundation of aims and motivations that respect community school principles and reflect the local community, and furthermore, the three share a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, along with three specific less favorable elements – whereas, for the most part, their implementation strategies and impacts largely differ. Navigating away from overarching conclusions and focusing on interrelated findings is also valuable. Specifically, the interrelated findings of the three models show that (1) disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are associated with weak and/or moderate ‘academic performance averages,’ (2) disconnected aims and implementation strategies are commonly associated with participants believing that offerings have had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, (3) national headquarters/local federations/school staffs appear to support the crafting of locally-based aims, and (4) a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo may assist in securing substantial funding and providing extensive offerings. Furthermore, the interrelated findings of two models at a time show that (5) having an aim and implementation strategy in unison may increase the chances of being perceived as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, (6)

possessing the academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams does not guarantee strong ‘academic performance results,’ and (7) setting (urban and rural) does not seem to influence the three areas. Additionally, focusing on specific characteristics the three models possess in the areas of implementation strategies and impacts is also valuable. It is beneficial to understand that despite the three models having overarching implementation strategies and impacts that are largely dissimilar, these three models share some specific, narrow similarities in these two areas, such as all the models having an academic tutoring program and all three being perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements.

7.2.2 Distinctive Characteristics: Implementation strategies and impacts – plus several interconnected findings and several specific, narrow characteristics related to aims and motivations

Broadly speaking, the implementation strategies and impacts of the three models strongly vary. The three models do not align in terms of curriculum type, offering levels, funding levels, staffing levels, or ability to meet demand. Furthermore, these models vary in terms of ‘academic performance results’ and the extent to which study participants perceived the offerings to have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The three models also vary in terms of several interrelated findings and in terms of several specific, narrow characteristics related to aims and motivations.

This subsection, like the previous subsection, predominantly concentrates on broad characteristics and a limited set of specific characteristics, rather than mainly focusing on specific, narrow characteristics. As a result, significant attention is given to the overarching view that the implementation strategies and impacts strongly differ, rather than, for example, that the percentile rank average of the national model is stronger than that of the

local federation model. Arguably, adopting this style allows for a better overarching conclusion to be drawn (i.e. overall, implementation strategies and impacts are largely dissimilar – plus several interrelated findings and several specific, narrow characteristics pertaining to aims and motivations are also dissimilar) and reduces the potential of the findings being largely confusing due to an emphasis on an abundance of minute details, which are not woven together.

7.2.2.1 Overarching Theme: Distinctive Implementation Strategies – National model strongest, followed by independent model, and then local federation model, arguably

The implementation strategies of the three models do not share a common set of characteristics. Instead, the three models vary in terms of curriculum type, offering levels, funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand (See Table 25).

Table 25. Distinctive Characteristics: Implementation Strategies

Implementation Strategies		
National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
<u>Academics</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academics</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academics</u> - Divided: (1) Tailored curriculum is engaging and (2) school board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Divided: (1) Academic tutoring service that is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand and (2) academic tutoring service that is not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand
<u>Socio-Economics</u> Many offerings - Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs are largely well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economics</u> Moderate and many offerings - Divided: (1) Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs are largely well-funded and able to meet demand, but not well-staffed and (2) socio-economic offerings are largely not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand	<u>Socio-Economics</u> Many offerings - Divided: (1) Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs are largely well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand and (2) socio-economic offerings are largely able to meet demand, but largely not well-funded or well-staffed
<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings	<u>Community Engagement</u> Limited and many offerings	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings
Summary of Implementation Strategies		
<u>Academics</u> School board curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored Academic tutoring program that is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academics</u> School board curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored Academic tutoring program that is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academics</u> Tailored curriculum that is engaging and school board curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored Academic tutoring programs are divided between weak and strong funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings Socio-Economic offerings are largely well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Moderate and many offerings Socio-Economic offerings are largely divided between weak and strong funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings Socio-Economic offerings are somewhat divided between weak and strong funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand
<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings	<u>Community Engagement</u> Limited and many offerings	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%	

Overall, comparatively speaking, the implementation strategies of the national model appear the strongest, while, arguably, followed by the independent model and then the local federation model. However, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that the independent model is the only model to apply a tailored curriculum, which was developed by the school staff.

It must be noted that the funding and staffing levels of the community engagement opportunities and their ability to meet demand are not discussed in this subsection. The three models share the characteristic of possessing community engagement opportunities that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. Furthermore, all three models share the characteristic of not having introduced workforce training programs, despite strong demand for such programs. This topic is discussed in Subsection 7.2.1.3, which focuses on similar characteristics.

The national model possesses the strongest implementation strategies, despite there being concerns over its curriculum. Specifically, the academic implementation strategies of the national model include a school board prescribed curriculum that some participants felt could be more engaging and tailored and an academic tutoring service that is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the model, though, are almost entirely strong. The model offers a diverse assortment of socio-economic offerings that are largely well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. The community engagement offerings are also strong. The model provides students and other community members with access to many offerings.

The implementation strategies of the independent model, particularly due to poor funding and staffing levels, are noticeably weaker than those of the national model. Academically, the independent model is divided in terms of curriculum, with one school using a tailored curriculum that is perceived as being engaging and the other school using a school board prescribed curriculum that is viewed as not being extremely engaging or

tailored. Furthermore, the academic tutoring services of the model are also divided. One school possesses a well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring program that meets demand, whereas the other school maintains an academic tutoring program that is not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the model are also largely divided, although both schools provide many socio-economic offerings. Specifically, one school provides largely well-funded and well-staffed socio-economic offerings that meet demand, while the other school provides socio-economic offerings that are largely not well-funded or well-staffed, but mostly meet demand. The community engagement offerings, however, are not divided. The two schools in this model offer students and other community members access to many community engagement offerings.

The local federation model, arguably, is the weakest model of the three in terms of implementation strategies. Academically, each school uses a school board prescribed curriculum, which could be more engaging and tailored, but maintains a strong academic tutoring service. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the model, though, face more challenges. The model offers moderate to many socio-economic offerings, but roughly half of the offerings confront challenges regarding funding, staffing, and meeting demand. Furthermore, the community engagement implementation strategies face challenges. This is the only model where schools differ in the providing of community engagement opportunities – limited to many.

In the end, the three models possess distinctive profiles in terms of implementation strategies, and, arguably, a hierarchy exists. Overall, the national model has the strongest implementation strategies. Despite offering a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored, the model, uniquely, provides a strong academic tutoring service, many strong socio-economic offerings, and a variety of community engagement

opportunities. The independent model could be viewed as offering the second strongest implementation strategies. The model is divided in terms of curriculum, academic tutoring, and socio-economic offerings. Nevertheless, the independent model is linked to a tailored curriculum that is engaging, a strong academic tutoring program, many strong socio-economic offerings, and a variety of community engagement offerings. Lastly, the local federation model could be considered to possess the weakest implementation strategies. The model possesses a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging, moderate to many socio-economic offerings, socio-economic offerings confronting funding, staffing, and demand challenges, and limited to many community engagement offerings. Basically, no one model is strong in all areas. Accordingly, all three models reside rather organized within a range that stretches from ‘weak’ to ‘strong’.

7.2.2.2 Overarching Theme: Distinctive Impacts – ‘Academic Performance Results’

Clear differences exist among the Math and English proficiency averages of the three models and their ranks. Interestingly, the order of the models based on ‘academic performance results’ follows that of the implementation strategies – which is also a rather notable finding. The national model achieved the strongest results, followed by the independent model, and then followed by the local federation model (See Table 26).

Table 26. Distinctive Characteristics: Impacts – ‘Academic Performance Results’

Impacts		
National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
<u>Academic Performance Results</u> • 5-Yr. Math Avg. for Model: 50% • 5-Yr. English Avg. for Model: 43% • 5-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 40%	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> • 5-Yr. Math Avg. for Model: 20% • 5-Yr. English Avg. for Model: 23% • 5-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 20%	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> • 3/4-Yr. Math Avg. for Model: 33% • 3/4-Yr. English Avg. for Model: 30% • 3/4-Yr. Avg. Rank for Model: 27%
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29%	Font: Moderate/30% – 69%
		Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%

Over a recent five-year period, the national model achieved a Math proficiency average, an English proficiency average, and an average rank of 50%, 43%, and 40%, respectively. The independent model, comparatively, came in second. Over a recent three- to four-year period, the independent model achieved a Math proficiency average, an English proficiency average, and an average rank of 33%, 30%, and 27%, respectively. Lastly, the local federation model, over a five-year period, achieved a Math proficiency average, an English proficiency average, and an average rank of 20%, 23%, and 20%, respectively.

Despite the national model achieving the strongest ‘academic performance results’ out of the three models, neither the Math proficiency average, nor the English proficiency average, nor the rank average of the model surpassed the 50% mark.

7.2.2.3 Overarching Theme: Distinctive Impacts – Perceived

The three models are viewed differently in terms of the perceived positive impact levels their offerings have had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Interestingly, the rank order of the perceived impacts does not follow the two previous rank orders – i.e. national model first, independent model second, and local federation model third. Instead, in this instance, the order is slightly different. Overall, the perceived positive impacts of the independent model are the strongest, then the national model, and then the local federation model (See Table 27).

Table 27. Distinctive Characteristics: Impacts – Perceived

Impacts		
National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> • Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived • Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> • Moderate positive impact on academic performance perceived • Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> • Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived • Strong positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> • Divided: (1) Strong positive impact on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements perceived and (2) all offerings except for the mental health services – which had a moderate positive impact – have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements • Divided: (1) Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived and (2) all offerings except for the mental health services – which had a moderate positive impact – have had a strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements	<u>Socio-Economics</u> • Moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements perceived • Moderate and strong positive impacts on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived	<u>Socio-Economics</u> • Strong positive impact on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements perceived • Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement Offerings</u> • Strong positive impact on students perceived • Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted	<u>Community Engagement</u> • Moderate positive impact on students perceived • Moderate positive impact on adults perceived – more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted	<u>Community Engagement Offerings</u> • Strong positive impact on students perceived • Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Summary of Impacts		
<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance</u> Primarily strong	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance</u> Primarily moderate	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance</u> Strong
<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Academic-Related' Elements</u> Moderate and strong	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Academic-Related' Elements</u> Primarily moderate	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Academic-Related' Elements</u> Strong
<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements</u> Primarily strong	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements</u> Primarily moderate	<u>Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements</u> Strong
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29%	Font: Moderate/30% – 69%
		Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%

The local federation model, though, again remained in third place.

Study participants viewed the offerings of the independent model as having had an across-the-board strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Specifically, the courses and tutoring program were perceived as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements; the socio-economic programs and services were viewed as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements; and, the community engagement offerings were perceived as having had a strong positive impact on a broad range of elements for both students and adults. Interestingly, this strong, positive perception of impacts comes despite the two schools in this model collectively averaging weak and moderate ‘academic performance results’. Study participants from this model consistently addressed this somewhat perplexing outcome by focusing the discussion on being ‘proud,’ ‘appreciative,’ and ‘thankful’. Participants largely value the resources that are available to students and parents, which were not available prior to the community school concept being adopted. Furthermore, for the most part, they believe the ‘academic performance results’ will match the strength of the perceived strong positive impacts in the future.

The perceived positive impacts of programs and services offered by the national model were slightly less favorable than those of the independent model. The national model offerings were viewed as having had primarily strong positive impacts on academic performance, moderate and strong positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements, and primarily strong positive impacts on ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Specifically, the courses and tutoring program were viewed as having had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements; the socio-economic programs and services were perceived as having had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’

elements; and, the community engagement offerings were viewed as solely having had strong positive impacts on a collection of elements for students and adults.

The local federation model was perceived as having had the weakest positive impacts. In essence, study participants viewed the programs and services as having had primarily moderate positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. In particular, the courses and tutoring program were viewed as having had moderate positive impacts on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements; the socio-economic programs and services were perceived as having had a mix between moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements; and, the community engagement offerings were viewed as having had moderate positive impacts on a variety of elements for students and other community members.

Each model possesses distinctive perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and a hierarchy exists. The independent model possesses the strongest perceived impacts, then the national model, and, lastly, the local federation model. It is worth mentioning that the differences all revolve around the perception of moderate positive impacts and the perception of strong positive impacts – the offerings of a model were never viewed as having had weak positive impacts.

7.2.2.4 Interrelated Findings: Several differences

The three models also vary in terms of a few particular interrelated findings. Specifically, a difference exists between, on one side, the school board prescribed curriculum and the ‘academic performance averages’ of the national and local federation models and, on the other side, the tailored curriculum and the ‘academic performance averages’ of the Fenway

Independent Community School. Additionally, differences among the three models exist in terms of the type of impacts that are linked to a larger budget size for community school expenses (See Table 28).

Table 28. Interrelated Characteristics not Shared by the Models

Distinctive Interrelated Findings		
National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
Displays that a school board prescribed curriculum is linked to mostly moderate ‘academic performance averages’	Displays that a school board prescribed curriculum is linked to weak and moderate ‘academic performance averages’	(Fenway Independent) Displays that a tailored curriculum is linked to solely moderate ‘academic performance averages’
Appears to show that a larger budget size is <u>not</u> tied to stronger ‘academic performance averages’	Appears to show that a larger budget size is <u>not</u> tied to stronger ‘academic performance averages’	Appears to show that a larger budget size is tied to stronger ‘academic performance averages’
Appears to display that a larger budget size is tied to study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements	Appears to display that a larger budget size is tied to study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements	Appears to <u>not</u> display a relationship between a larger budget size and study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%		

The school board prescribed curriculums associated with the national and local federation models are linked to weak and moderate ‘academic performance averages,’ whereas the tailored curriculum of the Fenway Independent Community School is linked to solely moderate ‘academic performance averages’. However, the tailored curriculum of the Fenway Independent Community School is not linked to the strongest ‘academic performance averages’ of all six community schools. Nevertheless, this finding draws attention to the potential benefit of a tailored curriculum.

Inconsistencies related to the relationship between the budget size for community school-related expenses and ‘academic performance averages’ also surfaced across the three

models. A larger budget for community school-related expenses was not linked to stronger ‘academic performance averages’ for the national model or the local federation model. However, the opposite was true about the independent model. Accordingly, it is not true for all three models that a larger budget size for community school-related expenses is linked to stronger ‘academic performance results’.

Inconsistencies pertaining to the relationship between the budget size for community school-related expenses and perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements also appeared across the three models. In terms of the independent model, a larger budget for community school-related expense was not linked to study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The opposite, however, was found for the national and local federation models. Nevertheless, it is not true for all three models that a larger budget size for community school-related expenses is linked to study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

The interrelated findings of the three models, collectively, show that using a tailored curriculum may benefit a school and that a school cannot in essence simply ‘purchase’ – with a guarantee – stronger ‘academic performance results’ or perceived positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements by increasing their budget for community school-related expenses.

7.2.2.5 Specific, Narrow, Dissimilar Characteristics about Aims and Motivations Acknowledged

The three models possess a foundation of stated aims and motivations that respect community school principles and reflect the local community; however, at the same time, the three models diverge on several specific, narrow characteristics regarding aims and motivations. Table 29 provides an overview of the differences. In terms of academics, the differences revolve around aiming to prepare students for standardized exams, striving to keep students out of trouble, and aiming to excite students. Additionally, only one of the three models is motivated by the belief that a natural learning environment can benefit students. Differences also exist around how strongly local challenges, such as a gang and drug culture, are acknowledged. As for socio-economics, contrasts revolve around aiming to aid solely students versus both students and adult community members and, additionally, being motivated by politicians and the lack of local, comprehensive support. Lastly, in terms of community engagement, differences revolve around being driven by the view that a school should do everything in its power to support its community and being motivated by politicians.

Table 29. Specific Difference between the Models – Aims and Motivations

Aims and Motivations		
National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
<u>Academics</u> • Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams • Does not strongly acknowledge significant local gang and drug culture	<u>Academics</u> • Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams • Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble	<u>Academics</u> • Limited attention placed on standardized exams • Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble • Curriculum is to excite students • Motivated by the belief that a natural learning environment can benefit students
<u>Socio-Economics</u> • Aim to aid both students and adult community members	<u>Socio-Economics</u> • Motivated by the view that no other local organization is comprehensively addressing local challenges	<u>Socio-Economics</u> • Aim to aid both students and adult community members • Motivated by politicians • Motivated by the view that no other local organization is comprehensively addressing local challenges
<u>Community Engagement</u>	<u>Community Engagement</u> • Driven by the view that a school should do everything in its power to help students and other community members	<u>Community Engagement</u> • Motivated by politicians

The unique characteristics of the national model revolve around prioritizing standardized exams, addressing the socio-economic needs of both students and adults, and not strongly tailoring its offerings to particular local challenges. Specifically, the national model aims to rigorously prepare students for standardized exams. Study participants

regularly discussed how this aim is outside the foundation of aims common to community schools because it is controversial. Many community schools believe the aim carries significant risks, including a decline in student interest levels and an increase in the dropout rate. However, holding a more favorable outlook, including the belief that the aim can lead to increases in college acceptance rates, the national model possesses this somewhat unique aim. Additionally, the national model also possesses the rather unique aim of having socio-economic programs and services aid both students and adult community members, rather than solely students. Lastly, the national model also possesses the rather unique characteristic of having academic aims and motivations that do not strongly acknowledge a significant local gang and drug culture. In general, together, the two added aims – prioritizing standardized exams and aiding both students and adults – arguably, show the strong dedication the model has to serving both students and adult community members.

The local federation model possesses a similar sized list of unique aims and motivations to that of the national model. The unique aims and motivations of the local federation model revolve around concentrating on standardized exams, striving to keep students out of trouble, being motivated by a lack of comprehensive local organizations, and being driven by the view that a capable school should act. In particular, the local federation model aims to prepare students for standardized exams – and it is unapologetic about the aim – and also to keep students out of trouble. Interestingly, the model is motivated by the view that the community suffers from a void of comprehensive resources and also by the belief that a school with available resources must act to support the community. Overall, the additional aims and motivations – particularly, striving to keep students out of trouble and being driven by the view that a capable school should act – arguably, display the strong commitment of the local federation model to both students and adult community members.

The independent model possesses the most additional aims and motivation beyond the common set. These unique characteristics include aiming to place limited attention on standardized exams, trying to keep students out of trouble, striving to excite students, and aiming to aid both student and adult community members, and, additionally, the added motivations include the belief that a natural learning environment is valuable, the encouragement of politicians, and the view that no other local organization is comprehensively taking action. The added aims and motivations of this model, like those of the other two models, also, arguably, exhibit the strong dedication of the model to both students and adult community members.

7.2.2.6 Differences: Summary

The overarching findings are that each of the three models possesses largely distinctive implementation strategies and generally unique impacts. Interestingly, the differences among the three models allow for the implementation strategies and impacts of all three to be compared with each other. In terms of implementation strategies and ‘academic performance results,’ the national model is the strongest, followed by the independent model, and then, lastly, the local federation model. The perceived positive impacts the offerings have had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements resulted in a slightly different ranking order. The offerings of the independent model were viewed most positively by participants, followed by those of the national model, and then, lastly, those of the local federation model. Collectively, the national model and the independent model seem to possess the strongest implementation strategies and impacts, while the local federation model shows the weakest implementation strategies and impacts.

Shifting from the overarching findings to the interrelated findings highlights three valuable conclusions. The interrelated findings of the three models potentially demonstrate that (1) using a tailored curriculum may benefit a school, (2) having a larger budget for community school-related expenses does not guarantee stronger ‘academic performance results,’ and (3) maintaining a larger budget for community school-related expenses does not guarantee that participants will perceive the programs and services as having had a stronger positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Basically, strong results cannot simply be purchased.

Although the three models possess an overarching, common foundation of aims and motivations, focusing on specific characteristics that are not common among the aims and motivations of all three models is informative. In particular, it is valuable to note that the national model could have more locally-based aims and motivations, by better acknowledging local gang and drug challenges; the national model and the local federation model aim to prepare students for standardized exams; and the independent model focuses limited attention on standardized exams and received significant motivation from local politicians.

7.3 Conclusion

The cross-case synthesis technique helped address **research question one: What distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts?** In terms of overarching findings, the three models possess a common foundation of aims and motivations, distinctive implementation strategies, and distinct impacts. Specifically, all three models possess aims and motivations that respect community school principles and reflect the local community. The three models, however, maintain largely distinctive

implementation strategies that highlight differences pertaining to curriculum type, offering levels, funding levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand. These differences lead to the conclusion that the national model possesses the strongest overall implementation strategies, then the independent model has the second strongest strategies, and, lastly, the local federation model has the weakest strategies. The generally distinct impacts of the three models also offer valuable findings, particularly concerning achieved ‘academic performance results’ and perceived positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The same ranking hierarchy that applies to the implementation strategies applies to the achieved ‘academic performance results,’ which solely include weak and moderate averages. The national model averaged the strongest overall ‘academic performance results;’ the independent model came in second; and, the local federation model came in third. The order, though, is slightly different in terms of perceived positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. This time, the independent model came in first; the national model came in second; and, once again, the local federation model came in third place.

In short, a foundation of aims and motivations is maintained by all three models; the implementation strategies and ‘academic performance results’ of the national model, arguably, are the strongest, followed by the independent model, and then the local federation model; and, the perceived positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of the independent model are the strongest, followed by the national model, and then the local federation model.

Migrating from broad themes about the three models, such as all three models possess a common foundation of aims and motivations, to specific interrelated findings is

also helpful in gaining a better understanding of the three models. Particularly noteworthy interrelated findings include the following:

- Disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are associated with only weak and/or moderate achieved ‘academic performance averages’
- Disconnected aims and implementation strategies are associated with the view that the offerings have had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- National headquarters/local federations/school staffs may be valuable in crafting locally-based aims
- A knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo may help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings
- The academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams does not guarantee strong ‘academic performance results’
- Setting may not have a strong impact on the three areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts)
- A tailored curriculum may benefit a school
- A larger budget for community school-related expenses does not guarantee stronger ‘academic performance results’
- A larger budget for community school-related expense also does not guarantee that individuals will perceive the programs and services as having had a stronger positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Policymakers, in particular, may find these findings helpful when discussing ways to promote school improvement and ways to meet student and community needs.

In addition to understanding specific interrelated findings, it is also valuable to recognize specific, narrow characteristics among the models.

Aims and Motivations

- The aims and motivations of the national model could be more explicit in acknowledging local gang and drug challenges
- The national model and the local federation model aim to prepare students for standardized exams
- The independent model aims to place limited attention on standardized exams
- The independent model received significant motivation from local politicians

Implementation Strategies

- All six schools (1) offer an academic tutoring program, (2) provide at least a moderate level of socio-economic offerings, and (3) offer community engagement opportunities that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand
- None of the six schools offer workforce training programs
- At least one school per model (1) applies a school board prescribed curriculum, (2) has a socio-economic offering that confronts challenges pertaining to funding, staffing, and/or meeting demand, and (3) offers at least a limited level of community engagement opportunities

Impacts

- The six schools do not share a common set of ‘academic performance results’ or perceived positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- At least one school per model achieved moderate ‘academic performance averages’ and is viewed as having had at the very least moderate positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- All three models – and all six schools – are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as strong student interest levels, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong family cohesion levels, but concerns surround the areas of school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities

As was stated earlier, this chapter does not emphasize specific, narrow characteristics in order to reduce the possibility that these types of findings would overrun the analysis, and thus prevent an overarching conclusion from being drawn. Nevertheless, there is value in highlighting a few of them, as was done in this section. In particular, it is valuable to acknowledge that all three models are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable

‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, based on this finding and other findings on impacts, it is important to understand that it could be argued that all three models had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements than on ‘academic performance results’.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

USING BRONFENBRENNER’S HUMAN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY TO UNDERSTAND THE CAPABILITIES OF THE IDEAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

8.1 Introduction

An ideal community school, constructed from the strongest characteristics of the six cases, was examined using Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory as a lens in order to address **research question two: Does the community school concept have the potential to strengthen individual settings, links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986)?** Following this introduction, Section 8.2 sets the groundwork for the analysis. In this section the aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts of the ideal community school, which are based upon the strongest qualities of the six community school cases, are identified. Sections 8.3 to 8.6 then address how the ideal community school interacts with four systems in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory – microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (See Figure 10).

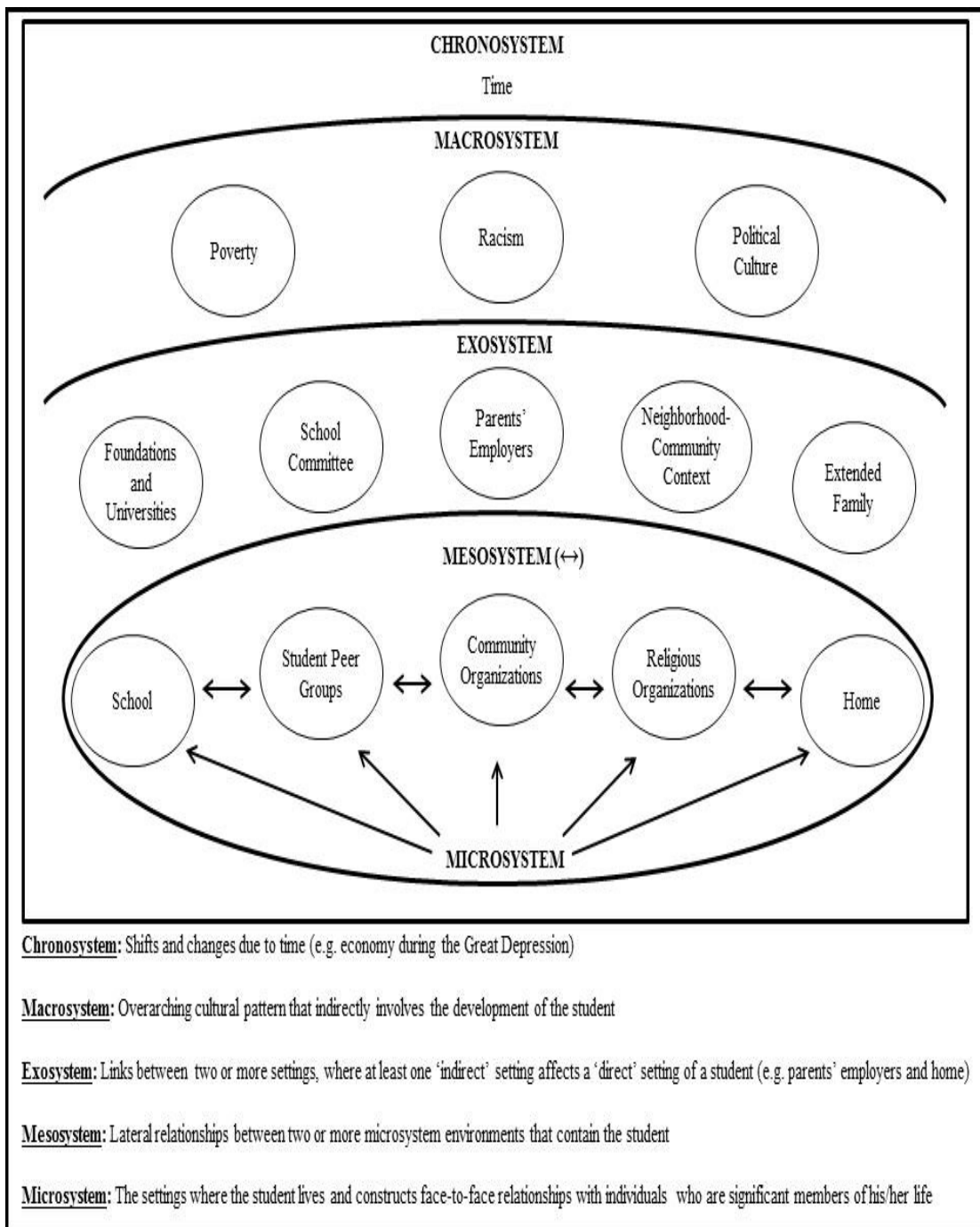


Figure 10. Example of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory Applied to a Community School Student

Specifically, Section 8.3 focuses on the microsystem, which includes settings in the immediate environment of students (e.g. school); Section 8.4 concentrates on the mesosystem, which consists of links between two or more microsystem settings (e.g. home and school); Section 8.5 looks at the exosystem, which involves links between two or more

settings, where at least one ‘indirect’ setting influences a ‘direct’ setting of students (e.g. parents’ employers and home); and, Section 8.6 centers on the macrosystem, which involves overarching cultural features that indirectly influence the development of students (e.g. poverty). Lastly, this chapter ends with a conclusion that summarizes the main findings.

It must be noted that Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory includes a fifth system called the chronosystem. It, arguably, is the most theoretical and removed system of the five, and it concentrates on shifts and changes due to time. However, an analysis of this system is not included in this chapter, because, given the scope of the research, its application is questionable. The majority of the schools have been operating as community schools for a limited time span, and thus, it is not possible to study their evolution over long periods of time.

8.2 The Ideal Community School

The strongest characteristics of the six community school cases were combined to form a theoretical ideal community school. Table 30 summarizes the aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts of this ideal community school.

Table 30. Summary of Ideal Community School

Ideal Community School		
Aims and Motivations	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because these exams matter, today and tomorrow Or Curriculum is to promote achievement, but is not focused on standardized exams, because a natural learning environment helps - Curriculum is to excite students, because this can save students - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble, because this can save students - Local challenges acknowledged	<u>Academic</u> - Tailored curriculum is engaging - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 5-Yr. Math Average: 60% 5-Yr. English Average: 65% 5-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 45% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address challenges that have the potential to impede academic and social development and provide both students and other residents with essentials, because (1) it is moral and logical, (2) politicians demanded it, and (3) no other local organization does it comprehensively	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Mental health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived Strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because (1) the school and community are one, (2) it is in a position to do so, (3) it must push itself, and (4) politicians demanded it	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand (No workforce training programs)	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students perceived Strong positive impact on adults perceived – but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%	

The table shows that the ideal community school possesses many strengths, but there are still a few weaknesses associated with its implementation strategies and impacts. In particular, the school averaged moderate achieved 'academic performance results,' reflecting the strongest 'academic performance results' of the six community school cases. Furthermore, this ideal community school does not possess workforce training programs, as a result of not one of the six schools possessing these types of training programs, despite local demand. Furthermore, the ideal school confronts some challenges related to school-community unity and community member engagement, in order to reflect the six cases.

The aims and motivations of the school, overall, respect community school principles and reflect local challenges. The school, though, also possesses added aims and motivations that are not widely held by community schools. For example, the school aims to focus on standardized exams, excite students, keep students out of trouble, and have socio-economic offerings aid both students and adults. Additionally, for example, the school is motivated by the view that a natural learning environment supports students, by the demands of politicians, by the belief that no other local organization is comprehensively addressing the socio-economic needs of the community, and by the view that a school with resources must act.

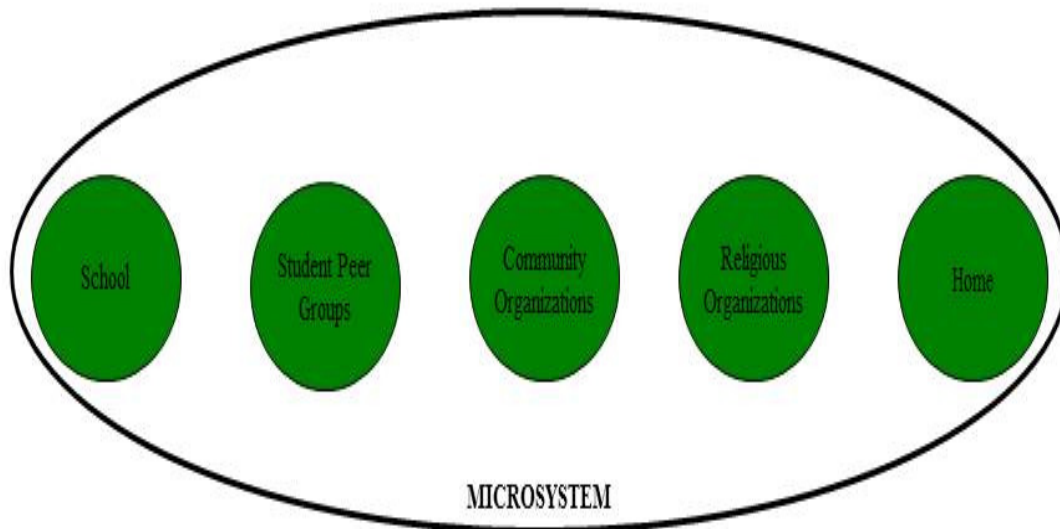
The implementation strategies of the school are almost unanimously strong. The school possesses a tailored curriculum that is engaging and an academic tutoring program that is well-funded, well-staffed, and able to meet demand. Furthermore, the school has a range of socio-economic and community engagement offerings that are also well-funded, well-staffed, and able to meet demand. The implementation strategies of the school, however, possess a weakness. Specifically, the school does not offer workforce training programs, despite local demand.

The impacts of the school, like its implementation strategies, also are a bit shy of being unanimously strong. Specifically, the school averaged moderate ‘academic performance results’ – as opposed to strong ‘academic performance results,’ and furthermore, it faces challenges concerning school-community unity and community member engagement. However, the school was perceived as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. This shows that the ‘perceived’ impacts are more favorable than the ‘achieved’ impacts.

Arguably, the overall quality of the ideal community school is moderate to strong. It could be concluded that the school possesses aims and motivations that reflect the local community and implementation strategies that are well-funded, well-staffed, and able to meet demand. Furthermore, it could be concluded that the school averaged moderate ‘academic performance results’ and achieved the perception of having had strong positive impacts on both academic performance and ‘non-academic performance’ elements.

8.3 Microsystem: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen elements of individual settings

The microsystem of community school students consists of settings where students have direct, face-to-face relationships with significant organizations, groups, and individuals located in their immediate surroundings. Five primary settings in the microsystem of community school students include the school itself, student peer groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home (See Figure 11).



Key

Shading: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen setting

Shading: The community school concept does not have the potential to strengthen setting

Figure 11. Whether or not the Community School Concept Possesses the Potential to Strengthen Settings within the Microsystem of Community School Students

Based on an analysis of the ideal community school, it appears that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen elements of the five individual settings in the microsystem of community school students.

The ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen elements of the school. Specifically, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept could encourage a school to maintain a broad set of aims that reflect the needs of the local community. The ideal community school, for example, has significant locally-based academic, socio-economic, and community engagement aims that respect community school principles. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept could motivate a school to offer an engaging tailored curriculum and a variety of well-managed academic, socio-economic, and community engagement opportunities. A teacher at the Isabella National Community School (Isabela, P7) stated:

You think so much about the community... plans have to reflect that... Being a community-focused school pushes you in a bunch of directions that you probably would not think about if you weren't... The regular teacher doesn't pay that much attention to the nurse's office... Being at [school name] and reading about community schools makes me want our services to be the best.

The 'academic performance results' of the ideal community school, though, would still provide a source of concern. Although the school averaged moderate 'academic performance results,' its Math and English proficiency averages were below citywide averages. Interestingly, despite the moderate averages, individuals have had strong positive perceptions of the community school. The school is viewed as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. A parent from the Teak Independent Community School (Teak, P11) stated, "*All [students] are not going to earn As after a few years of there being more programs... Nobody should say that it's not doing good... Yes, tutoring is helping... Give it time. You'll see that we will get awards*". In short, the community school concept could help students gain access to a school with expansive, locally-based aims, an engaging tailored curriculum, and a range of well-funded and well-staffed academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings. Furthermore, the concept could aid students in accessing a school with offerings that are viewed as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. However, it should be understood that attending a community school does not guarantee that students will achieve above average 'academic performance results'.

The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen student peer groups, such as sports teams and clubs. In particular, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept could help encourage school staff members to prioritize school sports teams, school clubs, and other school-related groups. This could lead to a community school offering students access to a

variety of well-funded and well-staffed activities that are free-of-cost and that meet demand. Furthermore, this could allow students, for example, to try new activities, express themselves in a new manner, and exercise, all while being members of respectful, caring, supportive student peer groups that are monitored by invested coaches and leaders. Providing students with access to strong on-site student peer groups could also potentially aid students outside the school. Some school administrators contend that having a diverse array of well-managed on-site opportunities, where students can form strong peer groups and feel enthused, can help reduce the odds that students will join gangs. A teacher at the Fenway Independent Community School (Fenway, P4) stated, *“Student activities get attention, since it is a big part of our commitment... Donations and funding are put into it early... They can also pick something that interests them... I tell students to at least try one activity while they are here that they aren’t sure about... Results could be a passion being discovered or exercising more... Might be the difference between soccer after school or being in a gang”*. Essentially, the community school concept could help improve the quality of the student peer groups and help reduce the odds that students will turn to gangs.

Community organizations also have the potential to become stronger due to the community school concept. The ideal community school shows that the community school concept could help facilitate the relationship between, on one side, local community organizations, such as local volunteer groups, physical and mental health providers, and food pantries, that wish to provide support and, on the other side, local students who require support. For example, the community school concept could lead to a student in need of medical attention being connected with a local health clinic, or, on a personal level, the concept could lead to a student in need of an adult mentor being introduced to a college student volunteer. A parent from the Stewart Local Federation Community School (Stewart, P14) stated:

Help sometimes can't reach us because it doesn't know how... They made a way to make it simple... Places know to come here if they want to help. People know there is help that is easy to get at the school... A group of boys from this school would be getting arrested by the police if not for [name of community school director] bringing volunteers.

In short, the community school concept could strengthen community organizations, which surround students, by serving as an intermediary between local organizations with resources and students in need of resources.

In a similar fashion, religious organizations could also potentially become stronger as a result of the community school concept. The ideal community school again shows that it could help facilitate a prosperous relationship between resource-rich organizations and students in need. Specifically, the ideal community school displays that a religious organization devoted to improving local access to food and clothing, for example, could benefit from engaging with a community school. Having a relationship with a community school could help a religious institution gain direct access to and support students and families in need. Furthermore, the religious institution could receive feedback from the community school, which could lead to operational improvements. The community school director at the Oak National Community School (Oak, P3) discussed the rich relationship that exists between the school and a local church. She stated, *"The church members wanted to help community members who need food and clothing... We discussed some options... They made a 'clothing closet'... There is a food pantry they have here that anyone can shop at for free... That is a strong partnership that continues to grow"*. Ultimately, the community school concept could aid in strengthening the operation of a religious organization, which, in turn, could improve the access students have to food and clothing, for example. Furthermore, better access to resources could help improve the quality of life of students and reduce their stress levels, allowing them to concentrate more on academic excellence.

The community school concept also has the potential to strengthen many elements of home life for students. The ideal community school shows that academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services, which are at the center of the community school concept, could help improve the home environment of community school students. For example, a well-managed academic tutoring service and an extended-day program at the community school could reduce student stress over homework assignments. Furthermore, for instance, a physical health clinic and food pantry that is connected to the school and available to both students and their family members could reduce concerns over poor access to healthcare and food, while also reducing stress levels and improving health. Additionally, for example, adult workshops focusing on family life could help parents understand more about how to resolve family conflicts and provide students with emotional support. A parent at the Fenway Independent Community School (Fenway, P9), discussing the ‘real-life’ positive impacts the community school concept can have on the home, stated, *“My daughter would get frustrated when she could not understand her homework... I work and cannot always help them... Her tutor is teaching her rules she didn’t pick up... At home, my daughter is much happier – and so am I... It would hurt me to see her like that... Life is less stressful”*. In essence, the community school concept could have a positive impact on the home life of community school students.

Based on the ideal community school, it appears that the community school concept, at the very least, has the capacity to strengthen elements of settings that are significant to students. However, one element that the community school concept does not appear to strongly and directly impact in a positive manner is achieved ‘academic performance results,’ although through an engaging curriculum and academic tutoring program it has the potential.

8.4 Mesosystem: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen links between individual settings

The mesosystem consists of links between two or more individual settings in the microsystem of community school students. In building upon the previous section, links between the school itself, student peer groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home were examined (See Figure 12).

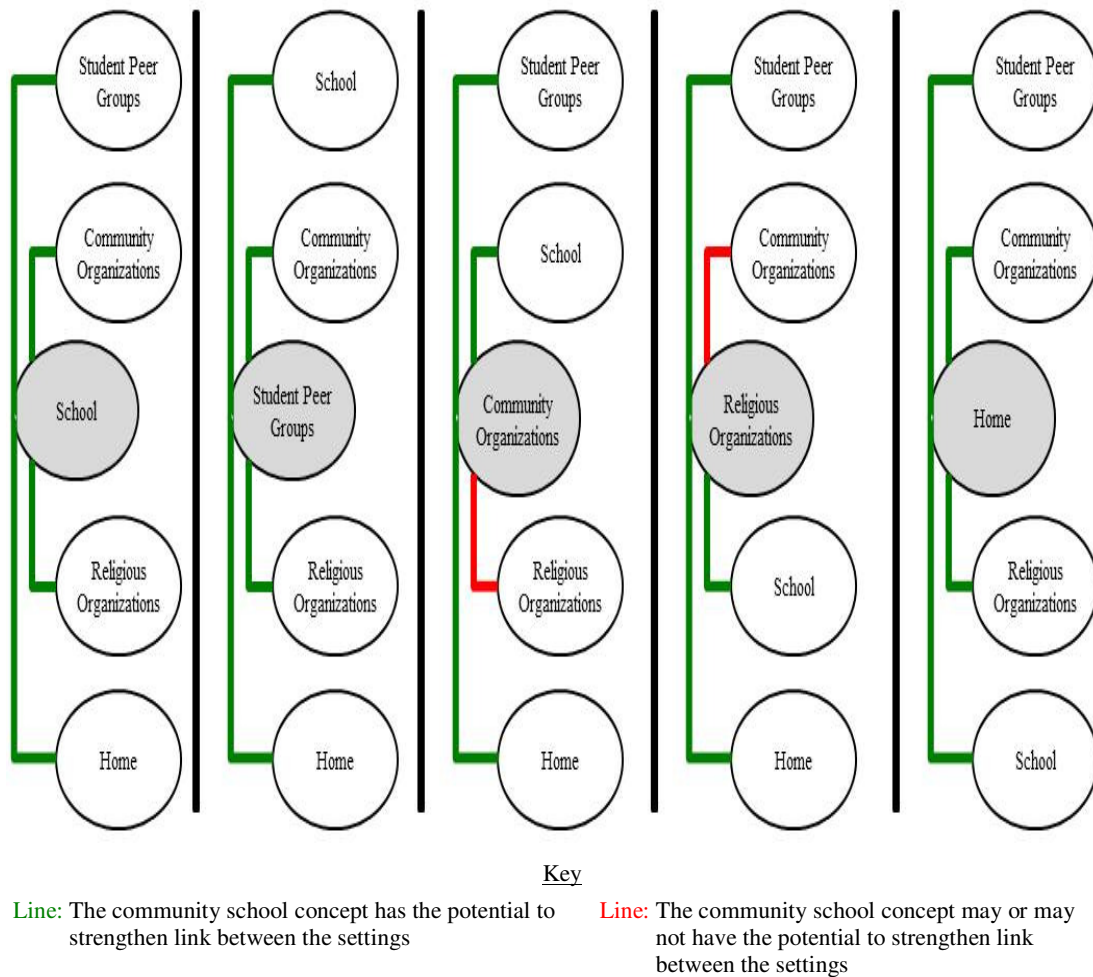


Figure 12. Whether or not the Community School Concept Possesses the Potential to Strengthen Links between Individual Settings within the Mesosystem of Community School Students

An analysis of the ideal community school shows that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the majority of the links between the five primary settings in the mesosystem of students, but not all.

The community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the links between the school and the other four proposed primary settings of students – student peer groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home. Stronger links between these settings could result in better environments and more resources for students. Specifically, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept, by emphasizing the importance of student activities, could help strengthen the link between the school and student peer groups. A stronger relationship between the two settings could lead to students having the opportunity to easily join, for example, well-funded and well-staffed sports teams and clubs at school. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept, by stressing the importance of partnerships, could help strengthen the link between the school and community organizations and, additionally, the link between the school and religious organizations. Stronger links between these organizations could also certainly benefit community school students. In practical terms, stronger links could lead to students having better access to comprehensive off-site physical healthcare centers, college student mentors, and a well-stocked neighborhood food pantry. There is also evidence that the community school concept, by highlighting the value of family life workshops, could help strengthen the link between the school and home. Strengthening this link could also significantly benefit students. For instance, these types of workshops may lead to a more positive home life for students. A parent at the Stewart Local Federation Community School (Stewart, P11) stated, *“Afterschool activities are common [at local public schools]... Kids will get better at sports... It’s a chance they could learn an instrument... Kids get more opportunities [at this particular public school] really because it’s a community school... A connection with the private doctor, so you can be healthy... Adults get to go to parenting classes... Better parents is what we are... My family lives a fuller life [due to the community school approach]”*. In short, it appears that the community

school concept has the potential to strengthen the links between the school and the other four primary settings of a community school student.

The community school concept also possesses the potential to improve the links between student peer groups and the other four primary settings of students. Again, stronger links between these settings could mean better environments and more resources for students. In particular, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by promoting an environment that supports alliances and by stressing that students need resources, could help strengthen the link between student peer groups and community organizations. Strengthening this relationship could result in students having access to teams, clubs, and activities at school that are staffed with a diverse group of congenial volunteers, from college students to local professionals, and students having opportunities that are packed with resources, from sports equipment to snacks. Furthermore, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by highlighting the importance of partnerships and emphasizing the need for students to feel supported, could help strengthen the connection between student peer groups and religious organizations and, also, the connection between student peer groups and the home. Improving these links could also result in student peer groups having better access to a diverse set of enthusiastic volunteers and an assortment of snacks. Strengthening the relationships between student peer groups and the home, though, is particularly noteworthy. Improving this link could lead to stronger bonds between students and family members. A community member from the Gardner Local Federation Community School (Gardner, P22) provided insight on the difference between student peer groups during the traditional public school tenure and the current community school tenure. He stated, *“Resources, you see it. Then you had some, but nowhere what you got now... College kids who like being here are always free for the kids... The principal got them when the school did the change [to the community school*

approach]... Colleges donate equipment... Kids in college make the place lively... They keep the kids active... Their parents are drawn to the warm environment as well”.

Basically, the community school concept seems to possess the potential to strengthen the links between student peer groups and the other four primary settings of a community school student.

Although the community school concept does not seem to possess the clear potential to improve the links between community organizations and all four of the proposed primary settings of community school students, it has the clear potential to improve the links between community organizations and three of the settings – school, student peer groups, and the home. The stronger links, at the very least, could mean more resources for students. Specifically, as was discussed earlier, the ideal community school displays that the community school concept, by stressing the importance of partnerships and access to resources, could help strengthen the relationship between community organizations and the school and, also, the relationship between community organizations and student peer groups. This, for example, could result in students having better access to comprehensive off-site physical health services and well-staffed and well-resourced teams, clubs, and activities. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept, by emphasizing that local organizations serve all community members, not only students, could aid in strengthening the link between community organizations and the home. This could help address family-based challenges pertaining to poor access to healthcare and food. A teacher at the Teak Independent Community School (Teak, P5) discussed her experience with community organizations. She stated, *“Organizations that are not-for-profit will come to us for leadership... Not-for-profits can have big grants that they do not know who to award... A few times we have told them that our families need food... Or they need safe events... Organizations will take the information back and then take action”.*

Despite all the strengths, the community school concept exhibits a potential weakness. The ideal community school does not explicitly display that the community school concept could help strengthen the link between community organizations and religious organizations. For example, the ideal community school does not appear to encourage a community organization, such as a local food bank, to partner with a religious organization that operates a food pantry and ‘clothing closet’. This type of relationship, though, seems possible. Furthermore, it seems that the community school concept could help make the relationship strong and, in particular, aid in connecting the organizations with students and families in need. Overall, the community school concept appears to possess the potential to strengthen the majority of the links between community organizations and the other primary settings of a community school student.

As with the links between community organizations and the four settings, the community school concept possesses the clear potential to improve the links between religious organizations and three of the four settings of community school students – school, student peer groups, and the home. Having strong links between the religious organizations and the settings could help improve the access students have to volunteers, food, and clothing. For example, as previously stated, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by stressing the importance of partnerships, possesses the potential to strengthen the link between religious organizations and the school and, also, the link between religious organizations and student peer groups. Stronger links in these areas have the potential to benefit students in a substantial manner. For example, students could have access to more volunteers and a more comprehensive neighborhood food pantry. Additionally, the ideal community school displays that the community school concept, by stressing the value of partnerships and the need for local organizations to support local families, possesses the potential to strengthen the link between religious organizations and

the home. This could benefit not only a student but their entire family. For instance, strengthening the link could result in both students and their family members having better access to a neighborhood food pantry and free clothing. A local community member (Oak, P16) was particularly pleased to see religious organizations at the Oak National Community School. She stated, *“The relationships are beautiful to witness... Volunteers are at the school serving those in need... Children are benefiting from the holiday gifts... Food is being bagged and given to them... Those helping learn more about challenges in the town... All the organizations become stronger”*. It should be noted, as acknowledged earlier, that despite the community school concept possessing the potential to strengthen the links between religious organizations and three of the four settings, the ideal community school does not explicitly display that the concept could aid in strengthening the link between religious organizations and community organizations. Nevertheless, in general, the community school concept looks as though it possesses the potential to strengthen almost all of the links between religious organizations and the other primary settings of a community school student.

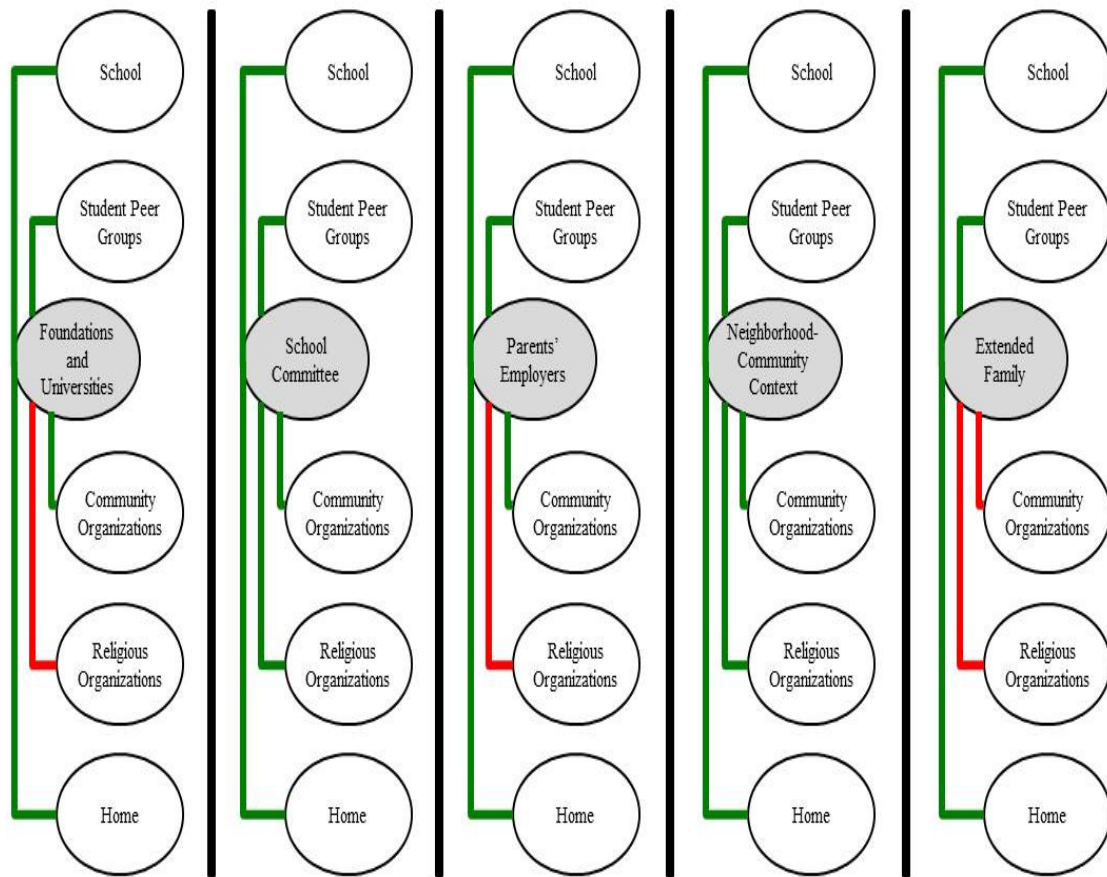
Uniformly, the community school concept possesses the potential to improve the links between the home and the other four primary settings of students. Strengthening these links could lead to students having access to more resources and experiencing better home environments. Specifically, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by emphasizing the value of supporting families, could help strengthen the link between the home and the school. This could result in more supportive home environments for students, due to parents having attended family life workshops. Also, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept, by stressing the value of community engagement, could help strengthen the relationship between the home and student peer groups. This could translate into stronger bonds between students and their

family members, due to family members having attended school events in which students are involved. Additionally, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by calling upon local organizations to serve the community, could aid in strengthening the link between the home and community organizations and the link between the home and religious organizations. This could help address poor access to physical and mental healthcare, food, and clothing for students. A teacher at the Fenway Independent Community School (Fenway, P6) enthusiastically spoke about how the community school concept can positively touch the home, stating, *“Families can use the occasions to make life easier on themselves... Public classes on understanding adolescent children are worth it... Succeeding is going to require alliances... Partnering with a community center can bring families even more resources... Community schools want homes to thrive”*. It appears that students can certainly benefit from a home that is strongly connected to the other four primary settings. In essence, the ecological analysis suggests that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the links between the home and the other four primary settings of a community school student.

Based on the ideal community school, the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the overwhelming majority of the links between the five primary settings of community school students. This appears to be extremely beneficial to students – and in some instances to their families as well. In the end, stronger relationships between the five settings, at the very least, appear to increase the level of access students have to an array of valuable resources.

8.5 Exosystem: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen the links between settings that ‘indirectly’ contain students and settings that ‘directly’ contain students

The exosystem entails links between at least two settings, where at least one ‘indirect’ setting of a community school student influences a ‘direct’ setting of a student (e.g. parents’ employers and home, respectively). This section expands upon the two previous sections by investigating if the community school concept can help strengthen the links between, on one side, individual settings that can ‘indirectly’ influence the development of a student, such as foundations and universities, the local school committee, parents’ employers, the neighborhood-community context, and extended family, and, on the other side, individual settings in the microsystem that ‘directly’ contain students (See Figure 13). Understanding if the community school concept can help strengthen the links between settings that ‘indirectly’ influence students (e.g. parents’ employers) and settings that ‘directly’ contain students (e.g. home) is valuable. If the community school concept is able to strengthen these links, it could display that the concept is capable of supporting the positive development of students.



Key

Line: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen link between the settings

Line: The community school concept may or may not have the potential to strengthen link between the settings

Figure 13. Whether or not the Community School Concept Possesses the Potential to Strengthen Links between Settings that ‘Indirectly’ Contain Students and Settings that ‘Directly’ Contain Students

An examination of the exosystem shows that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the majority of the links between the proposed settings that ‘indirectly’ influence students (e.g. parents’ employers) and those that ‘directly’ involve students (e.g. home), but not all. In the end, although not all the links may be strengthened, the links that are strengthened could considerably benefit students.

The community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the links between foundations and universities (i.e. ‘indirect’ student settings) and four of the five settings that ‘directly’ contain students – school, student peer groups, community

organizations, and the home. Stronger links between the two setting types could result in students having access to more resources, additional opportunities, and better environments. In particular, the ideal community school displays that the community school concept, by stressing the benefit of partnerships and cooperation, could help strengthen the links between foundations and universities (i.e. 'indirect' student settings) and the school, student peer groups, and community organizations (i.e. 'direct' student settings). Strengthening these links could mean students have better access to a neighborhood food pantry, a local 'clothing closet,' mentors and coaches, unique university tours, and caring and educational environments, such as a health clinic and tutoring service. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept, through its prioritization of broad community support, could help improve the link between foundations and universities (i.e. 'indirect' student settings) and the home (i.e. 'direct' student setting). Strengthening this relationship could lead to students, along with their family members, having better access to donated food and clothing and free family activities. The community school director at the Gardner Local Federation Community School (Gardner, P3) discussed the pivotal role that a community school can play in linking foundations and universities with a variety of student settings. He stated:

They [foundations and universities] are not in contact every day with people from the community like us, but they want to manage community programs... I can help them get into the community... Once the people and the foundation became comfortable, you could see that it was going to work... Big organizations can invest in programs for the community... Students were going on campus tours at the university... I have seen a foundation do work here, meet a smaller community center, and invest in it... It can revitalize a place... Better access to healthcare can be a benefit.

However, based on the ideal community school, it is unclear whether or not the community school concept is capable of strengthening the relationship between foundations and universities (i.e. 'indirect' student settings) and religious organizations ('direct' student settings). Strengthening this link, though, could mean better access to resources for students.

Nevertheless, in the end, the community school concept appears to possess the potential to strengthen the links between foundations and universities and the majority of the primary settings of community school students, which in turn, could improve the access students have to more resources, additional opportunities, and better environments.

The community school concept has the potential to improve the relationships between the school committee and all five settings that ‘directly’ contain students – school, student peer groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home. Improving the links between the school committee and the five settings that ‘directly’ contain students could lead to not only more resources for students, but more holistic and more locally-based resources for them. Specifically, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by stressing the importance of educational reform and access to resources, has the potential to strengthen the relationships between the school committee and the five settings that ‘directly’ contain students. This could help increase the access students have to a diverse set of well-funded and well-staffed holistic offerings that meet student demand. For example, the concept could lead to the school committee developing a greater appreciation for holistic, school-based services and student clubs, and then the committee recommending that more funding be allocated to these types of offerings. Additionally, the ideal community school reveals that the community school concept, through encouraging local governments to ally with local organizations, could help improve the relationship between the school committee and community organizations and the relationship between the school committee and religious organizations. This could lead to the school having better access to the resources of these organizations, thus being able to better serve students. Furthermore, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by emphasizing the importance of community member involvement, could aid in strengthening the link between the school committee and the home. Strengthening

this relationship could result in more engaged parents making public requests for additional resources centered around the family, such as early education opportunities, workshops, and festivals. These requests could result in students receiving more resources across the age span, from the early years to young adulthood. The community school director at the Isabella National Community School (Isabella, P3) discussed the pivotal role that the community school plays in bringing the school committee closer to student settings. She stated:

Committees sometimes have an idea about a school that is completely from collected data... Members can have ideas of neighborhoods that are outdated. It could be better, it might be worse... When I'm talking, I try to give them a real sense of the potential... Community schools have a deep understanding of the community... I might be able to get the committee members to fund more adult ed programs... Students' parents and grandparents attend public meetings too and say why more resources are important. They describe what they have seen... A couple of them [non-profit organizations] got introduced to the committee because of us telling them.

In essence, the community school concept seems to possess the potential to strengthen the relationships between the school committee and the five settings that 'directly' contain students, which could result in the school committee better understanding local challenges and, furthermore, delivering more resources focused on addressing these challenges.

The situation with parents' employers is similar to that of foundations and universities. The community school concept has the potential to strengthen the links between parents' employers and four settings 'directly' involving students – school, student peer groups, community organizations, and the home – but not all five settings.

Strengthening the links between parents' employers and the four settings that 'directly' contain students could not only benefit students but also their family members. For instance, the ideal community school displays that the community school concept, through its support of adult education, could help strengthen the link between parents' employers and the school. The community school concept could result in employers using the school, in

essence, as a training center for employees, where individuals are encouraged to enroll in a GED program and/or take ESL courses. This could lead to an increase in the employability level of parents, and, in turn, could reduce concerns students may have about the family becoming homeless. Furthermore, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, by encouraging adult employment training, could help strengthen the link between parents' employers and community organizations. The community school concept may lead some employers, for instance, to form relationships with community organizations that work with community schools. The employers may look to these community organizations to provide employees with basic staff skills. This type of relationship could lead to adults advancing professionally and, consequently, to students feeling more secure about the financial situation of their family. Interestingly, the ideal community school also displays that the community school concept, again through its support of adult education, could help improve the link between parents' employers and the home and parents' employers and student peer groups. Programs and services offered at the community school could help parents secure full-time, 40-hour per/week, moderate to strong salary positions, as opposed to hourly low-wage work. Accordingly, this could result in parents spending more time with their children. A parent at the Isabella National Community School (Isabella, P11) depicted the community school concept as engaging parents' employers, as opposed to ignoring them like most traditional public schools. He stated:

When you get into community building, money has to be a part of the conversation... The principals, the teachers, everyone feels that way. That's why they try to reach companies... It works... She [adult family member] went to the ESL classes at night... She learned English... The teacher [of the ESL classes] was paid by people who got money from a company that wanted diversity... That company hired her [ESL student] when she finished the classes... She can support her kids... Not all because of the school, she worked hard, but it gave her a chance at making a better life for herself.

However, based on the ideal community school, it is unclear if the concept is capable of strengthening the tie between parents' employers and religious organizations. In the end,

though, it appears that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the relationships between parents' employers and four settings that 'directly' contain students, and accomplishing this could benefit the entire family.

The relationships involving the neighborhood-community contexts are all favorable. The community school concept maintains the potential to strengthen the relationships between the neighborhood-community context and the five settings 'directly' involving students. Strengthening these relationships could provide students and their family members with more resources and better environments. Specifically, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept, by emphasizing the importance of understanding the local environment, could lead to school staff members, coaches of student peer groups, members of community organizations, and volunteers of religious organizations gaining a better understanding of their local community. Furthermore, the ideal community school shows that the concept, with its emphasis on community engagement, could help the four groups achieve greater levels of community member involvement. These improvements could lead to students and their family members gaining access to more locally-based resources and experiencing a greater sense of unity within the community. Additionally, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept, by stressing the value of community building, could strengthen the relationship between the neighborhood-community context and the home. Free community events at the school could lead to families spending time with other local families and, as a result, strengthening the community. A parent at the Fenway Independent Community School (Fenway, P13) described how the community school has helped bring the community closer together. He stated, *"They [school staff] teach you to consider what this will do for the community... Think about this man's life... That spreads to everyone... A volunteer will act in the way that shows he knows. He could be more sensitive... That makes*

the place more comfortable... And that brings different kids and adults together... A community gets the food and health services that it needs... Giving time becomes relaxing”.

Basically, the community school concept seems to possess the potential to strengthen the relationships between the neighborhood-community context and the five settings that ‘directly’ involve students, and, moreover, doing this could result in students and their family members having better access to resources and residing in more unified communities.

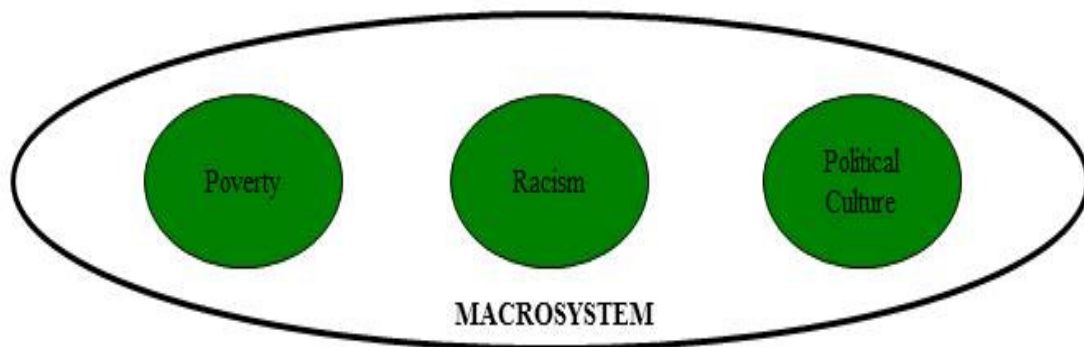
The relationships involving the extended family are mixed. The community school concept has the potential to strengthen the links between the extended family and three settings ‘directly’ containing students – school, student peer groups, and the home. Although the concept appears to only have the potential to improve the relationships between the extended family and three of the five settings, strengthening these three particular relationships could result in students feeling that their extended family is more invested in them. Specifically, the ideal community school shows that the community school concept, through its commitment to supporting families, could aid in strengthening the relationship between the extended family and the school and the relationship between the extended family and student peer groups. This could lead to additional extended family members volunteering at the school and/or more extended family members attending a student production of a play. The ideal community school also displays that the community school concept, by stressing the importance of strong families, could help strengthen the link between the extended family and the home. This could result in family members and extended family members spending time together after a free community event at the school. A parent at the Fenway Independent Community School (Fenway, P14) felt that the school has brought her family closer together, particularly the teenage students and younger adolescent children, stating, *“That includes the whole family... Everyone is invited to the*

games... The parties were great... It's exciting to watch a football game... His younger cousins stood on the sidelines and look up to him and the man he has become... He's a role model... They talked about sports and college after the game". Based on the ideal community school, however, it is unclear if the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the relationship between the extended family and community organizations and the relationship between the extended family and religious organizations. Nevertheless, the community school concept looks as though it has the potential to strengthen the relationships between the extended family and most of the five settings 'directly' surrounding students, and this could be particularly beneficial to students, because it could help make them feel more involved with and cared for by their extended family.

The ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the majority of the links between the five settings that 'indirectly' influence community school students (e.g. parents' employers) and the five settings that 'directly' surround these students (e.g. home). The community school concept has the potential to be effective in strengthening the relationships in large part due to its central principles, which focus on academics, socio-economics, and community engagement. Additionally, the concept is effective in strengthening the relationships largely due to its promoting an environment where collaboration is valued and its fostering a physical space where those with resources can support those in need. In the end, it appears that strengthening the relationships could greatly benefit students and, in some instances, also noticeably benefit their family members. At the very least, strengthening the relationships between the settings that 'indirectly' and 'directly' involve students could mean more resources, additional opportunities, and better environments for students.

8.6 Macrosystem: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen broad features

The macrosystem involves the general cultural pattern of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem of community school students. Three broad features that are particularly relevant to community schools include poverty, racism, and political culture (See Figure 14).



Key
Shading: The community school concept has the potential to strengthen broad feature
Shading: The community school concept does not have the potential to strengthen broad feature

Figure 14. Whether or not the Community School Concept Possesses the Potential to Strengthen Broad Features of the Microsystem, Mesosystem, and Exosystem of Community School Students

An evaluation of the ideal community school shows that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen broad features related to the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem of community school students.

The ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the manner in which a school addresses aspects of local poverty, particularly those involving poor access to resources, insufficient preparation for future opportunities, and unhealthy, neglected environments. The efforts can significantly benefit both students and their family members. Specifically, the ideal community school demonstrates that the community school concept, by focusing on socio-economic challenges, has the potential to help improve the access students have to physical health

services, mental health services, and food programs and the access their family members have to physical health services and food programs. Notably, this could result in the student population from a socio-economically disadvantaged area having better access to physical and mental healthcare and food. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept, through its emphasis on high quality educational opportunities for both students and adults, could aid in preparing students and adult community members for the future, even if the individuals are in difficult socio-economic situations and reside in socio-economically disadvantaged areas. In practical terms, the concept could help students gain access to a tailored curriculum and a well-managed academic tutoring service that, in return, may help them enter and succeed in college. As for adults, the concept could help provide them with the opportunity to earn a GED, which later could lead to a stable job. This demonstrates that the community school concept would help address the link between poverty and restricted access to valuable resources and sufficient preparation. The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept has the potential to go beyond solely addressing poverty challenges revolving around poor access to resources. The community school concept could help improve the perception and livability of a socio-economically disadvantaged area. Having a community school in a socio-economically deprived area, for example, could publicly demonstrate that elected officials are invested in the area and its educational system. This favorable attention could encourage young families that value education to move to the area. As more families focused on quality education move to the area and community school staff members encourage community members to speak to elected officials about their expectations, public investment in projects focused on community building, such as the refurbishment of a park, could increase. One teacher from the Oak National Community School (Oak, P5), who believes community schools can address elements of poverty, stated, *"It's a system [community school*

approach] that wants to deal with poverty. Schools can be like agencies... Our aims include investing in socio-economic services... Strategies must assist in delivering resources... The system costs money, but poverty rates can come down... Our town has gotten better". This could lead to an area transforming from unhealthy and ignored to healthy and noticed. Basically, it appears that the community school concept has the potential to help address elements of poverty that if gone unaddressed could negatively impact community school students – and, in many instances, their family members as well.

The ideal community school also shows that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the way in which a school handles elements of racism. Study participants did not contend that the community school concept aggressively combats all forms of racism. Instead, it was common to hear study participants discuss how the concept is particularly strong in battling against the perception of ‘lack of attention’ and ‘poor resource distribution’ due to race. In essence, before the community school concept was adopted locally, some community members felt that their particular community was being discriminated against and ignored by local officials due to race. At the center of the matter was the question: For the most part, why are schools in ‘White’ parts of town better funded, more resource-rich, and more visually appealing than schools in ‘Black’ parts of town? The establishment of a community school did not dispel all the concerns community members held. However, it was commonly articulated that establishing the community school was a step in the right direction. Many community members felt largely satisfied that their neighborhood now has a premier school that matches the quality level of schools in wealthier ‘White’ areas. For some community members, though, the battle against racism did not end there. Many community members used the opening of one community school as motivation to open more community schools and continue fighting for a more equitable distribution of resources. A community member from the Fenway Independent Community

School (Fenway, P22) discussed how the resource-intensive community school approach has eased some local concerns pertaining to racism. He stated, *“Their parents thought that it was so obvious... The schools for poor minorities weren’t as good... Shortages were expected... When this school was finished, the tone got better... It is a nice school with great teachers... It could be one of the most expensive schools in the city... The school got the city more together”*. Overall, it seems that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the ability of the school to address concerns over racism, and this could lead to less tension in the community and a more just distribution of resources for students and their family members.

As with poverty and racism, the ideal community school displays that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the way in which the school interacts with the political culture that surrounds it. Public schools by nature are political. Elected officials oversee the schools; political candidates commonly debate the future of the public school system; and, the funding of public schools derives largely from public funds. The ideal community school, though, demonstrates that the community school concept, which encourages activism and engagement, has the potential to improve the ability of the school to craft the political culture, by taking the school from somewhat passive to considerably assertive. In essence, the community school is capable of being an active participant in the political system, pulling up a seat next to a mayor, city council officials, department of education staff members, and union members. The school loudly professes its support for holistic education, asserts the value of comprehensive physical health and mental health services, argues the need to provide broad food programs, asserts the benefit of offering adult community members access to health services, and pushes to expand community offerings. Arguably, the true strength of the community school concept lays not in its public statements but in its actions. The community school, in particular, is uniquely

able to craft the political culture because it acts. The school, for example, can (1) assert the value of having comprehensive on-site physical and mental healthcare services and food programs, (2) pilot the programs, and then (3) follow up the claim with evidence. This mix of educational specialist, political activist, and pilot program operator separates it from others in the political arena. A teacher at the Gardner Local Federation Community School (Gardner, P7) discussed how the school has a strong political side. She stated, “[*Name of community school director*] is at the meetings talking about community schools... She [*administrator*] brings data on the school... The board knows that the style helped students do better... Parents have been going to meetings too... Changing [*to a community school*] has brought out their want to be heard”. In essence, it appears that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the ability of the school to craft the political culture, and this could result in students and their family members having access to a school and resources that better reflect their needs.

The ideal community school shows that the community school concept possesses the potential to strengthen the manner in which the school addresses elements of poverty, racism, and the political culture. It appears this could greatly benefit students and parents alike. Specifically, it could lead to both groups of individuals having access to more resources, additional opportunities, and better environments. Arguably as important, though, the work could lead to community members feeling a greater sense of fairness, equality, and optimism.

8.7 Conclusion

The lucid answer to research question two is ‘yes,’ the community school concept has the potential to strengthen individual settings, links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986). Specifically, in terms of predominant individual settings that ‘directly’ contain students (i.e. microsystem), it appears that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen the school itself, student peer groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home. Furthermore, on the topic of links between these five settings, which ‘directly’ contain students (i.e. mesosystem), it appears that the community school concept has the potential to strengthen links between them. The community school concept also displays the potential to strengthen links between settings that ‘directly’ contain students, such as the home and school, and settings that ‘indirectly’ contain students, such as foundations and universities, the school committee, parents’ employers, the neighborhood-community context, and the extended family (i.e. exosystem). This, in essence, suggests that the reach of the concept is substantial. Lastly, the community school concept demonstrates the capacity to improve the ability of the school to strengthen broad features surrounding students, including poverty, racism, and the political culture (i.e. macrosystem). This too, essentially, suggests that the concept has an expansive reach. In the end, though, it is valuable to recognize that strengthening these settings, links, and broad features could result in community school students – along with their family members, in some instances – having access to more resources, additional opportunities, and better environments. In theory, this should also promote student, family, and community well-being and better long-term outcomes.

CHAPTER NINE:

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to draw together the research results in order to address the two primary research questions, while also putting individual findings into context, recognizing connections between such findings, and further developing findings. Accordingly, a summary and overview of findings is provided for each research question; evidence on the ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ of each community school model is discussed; and, the findings of prior community school and community school-related studies are evaluated against the results of the six cases of this thesis. Additionally, particularly noteworthy key findings from my analysis are highlighted. Limitations are also acknowledged. Despite this investigation making a novel contribution to the knowledge base, my thesis cannot provide a definitive conclusion and could not address all features of interest. With all the discussion of findings, though, it is valuable to step back for a moment and acknowledge that a thesis is more than the sum of individual findings or a collection of neatly knitted findings – although certainly important. Producing a thesis represents an intellectual journey and the development of research expertise. To respect this element of the research, I include a discussion of how my work developed from an initial MPhil into a more substantial DPhil investigation, and, furthermore, I revisit the community school concept – where it all began roughly five years ago. Lastly, the chapter closes with some implications and recommendations for practitioners and policymakers, suggestions for further study, and a summary that seeks to encapsulate the original contribution this research makes to knowledge on the community school concept.

9.2 The Two Primary Research Questions and their Significance

Data from the six community school cases was used to address both research questions one and two. An examination of this data clearly shows that, in terms of research question one, the three community school models do not possess the same exact aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Instead, there are instances where all three models possess similar characteristics and other instances where all three possess distinctive characteristics. Additionally, in terms of research question two, the data indicates that the community school concept (as articulated by the six cases) possesses the potential to strengthen settings, the links between the settings, and broad features that surround students.

Beyond directly addressing the two research questions at hand, this thesis makes other notable contributions to the body of knowledge on community schools. This work, for example, suggests that administrators thinking about establishing a local federation community school may want to consider potential comparative weaknesses. Additionally, for example, this work suggests that academics should consider acknowledging the differences among community school models, rather than ignoring model types, and by default ignoring inherent and potential characteristics associated with each model that could affect the impact level and the likelihood of a successful implementation.

9.2.1 Research Question One: What distinguishing characteristics does each of the three community school models possess in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts?

A central component of the response to research question one is that, yes, distinctive differences between the three models exist in terms of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Recognizing these differences could benefit the future development of community schools and advance the study of the community school

concept as a way to promote equity and help better address a variety of socio-economic-based challenges surrounding students.

The three models possess a common foundation of **aims and motivations** that revolve around a dedication to enhance academics, address socio-economic challenges, and foster community engagement; however, some differences between the three models exist. For example, a notable difference involves the national and local federation models strongly aiming to prepare students for standardized exams, while this was not found to be a strong feature of the independent model. Furthermore, the national model, unlike the other two models, maintains aims that arguably could be more locally-based (i.e. be more explicit in acknowledging local gang and drug challenges). Understanding that the national and local federation models potentially possess the propensity to stress standardized exams may lead administrators of these schools to establish whether such an aim is positively or negatively impacting particular ‘academic-related’ elements, such as student confidence levels. Additionally, understanding that the national model possesses aims that could be more locally-based may lead administrators of these schools to re-evaluate their aims. This foundation of knowledge is also relevant to researchers in the field. The findings could help guide their future work. Specifically, seeing that model-specific characteristics exist, researchers may benefit from designing studies that acknowledge different community school models – a practice that has not been widely adopted. Furthermore, researchers may benefit from acknowledging the potential of a specific model to possess a particular characteristic, such as having a propensity to focus on preparing students for standardized exams.

The **implementation strategies** of the three models, which focus on curriculum type, offering levels, staffing levels, and ability to meet demand, are largely distinctive. Accordingly, it could be argued that a hierarchy exists: the two national model cases

suggest that they have the strongest overall implementation strategies, followed by the independent model, and, lastly, the local federation model, which has the weakest implementation strategies. It is certainly valuable for school administrators to recognize that an order appears to exist. In particular, administrators of local federation model community schools may find it useful to learn, for example, that a potential relationship exists between having strong implementation strategies (i.e. national model) and being linked to a headquarters (i.e. national model). This could be due to national model schools having formal links to headquarters that provide financial and non-financial support. This knowledge also has implications for researchers. Seeing, again, as though model-specific characteristics exist, it may be wise that researchers ensure their designs take into consideration community school models (i.e. design study around models). Furthermore, acknowledging particular inherent model-specific characteristics, such as a national model school possessing a headquarters, could inform their analysis.

The **impacts** of the three models, which revolve around achieved ‘academic performance results,’ perceived ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, are also largely distinctive, although two notable similarities exist. The hierarchy involving achieved ‘academic performance results’ mirrors that of the implementation strategies: the two schools from the national model achieved the strongest overall academic results, followed by the independent model, and then, lastly, the local federation model. Understanding this finding could inform administrators of a local federation community school and administrators of a traditional public school who are pondering which model to adopt. Additionally, a hierarchy surrounding perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements was identified. This rank slightly deviates

from the two previous rank orders, and goes as follows: the independent model came in first, followed by the national model, and, once again, the local federation model came in third. Administrators from local federation model community schools, in particular, may benefit from this finding. At the very least, the finding suggests that administrators from this model may want to focus on the topic of perceived impacts and identify practical strategies that could lead to improvements. In terms of common characteristics, all three models were perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong student interest levels and parent cohesion levels, but were also found to possess less favorable elements related to school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities. When considering this finding along with others on impacts, it appears, nevertheless, the three models are stronger in the area of ‘non-academic performance’ than in the area of ‘academic performance’. The findings on impacts also contribute to the future academic study of the community school concept. Researchers may benefit from acknowledging at least three community school models and, moreover, recognizing that the national and independent models may be linked to stronger academic results and perceived positive impact levels than the local federation model. Further research, however, is needed to test out the findings, as only six cases, two for each model, were studied in this thesis.

In short, the three models possess a foundation of common aims and motivations along with a few unique aims and motivations; they also generally maintain distinctive implementation strategies; and, additionally, they largely have different impacts, with two particularly notable exceptions – one, all are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements and, two, all are viewed as possessing three elements that require greater attention. Table 31 offers a summary and ranking of the three models.

Table 31. The Three Models: Aims and Motivations, Implementation Strategies, and Impacts

Summary of the Three Models			
	National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
Aims and Motivations	· Common foundation · Prepare students for standardized exams · Could acknowledge more local challenges	· Common foundation · Prepare students for standardized exams	· Common foundation
Implementation Strategies (Comprehensiveness)	· First	· Third	· Second
Achieved ‘Academic Performance Results’	· First	· Third	· Second
Perceived as Possessing Favorable ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements	· Yes	· Yes	· Yes
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	· Second	· Third	· First
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Academic-Related’ Elements	· Second	· Third	· First
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements	· Second	· Third	· First
Viewed as Needing to Focus More on School-Community Unity, Community Member Engagement, and Workforce Training	· Yes	· Yes	· Yes
TOTALS	· 8	· 15	· 7

The overview of findings reveals noticeable differences in approaches and impacts between the three models. Knowing this can direct current administrators of community schools and, additionally, guide administrators interested in establishing a community school.

Furthermore, given that model-specific characteristics exist, it would appear wise for researchers to acknowledge the role of the community school models in their work, rather than treating all community schools as similar in concept. Understanding that certain models possess inherent features, such as a national model school being linked to a national headquarters, and that particular models may be prone to a certain trend, such as having comprehensive implementation strategies, may help the researcher frame a study, analyze data, and draw robust conclusions.

9.2.2 Research Question Two: Does the community school concept have the potential to strengthen individual settings, the links between such settings, and broad features that are located in the “human ecological systems” of students (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1986)?

The direct answer to research question two is, yes, the community school concept has the potential to strengthen individual settings, the links between such settings, and broad features surrounding students. Additionally, it is valuable to recognize the broader implications of the finding. The finding benefits community school administrators by providing them with detailed, practical insight on systems surrounding students, and further, it develops the study of the community school concept by underscoring possible positive ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements associated with the concept.

After using Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory as a lens to examine the community school concept, the research confirms that the community school concept does have the potential to strengthen settings, links, and broad features related to students. Specifically, the concept appears to possess the potential to strengthen individual settings ‘directly’ containing students (i.e. microsystem), such as the school itself, student peer

groups, community organizations, religious organizations, and the home. The concept also appears to possess the potential to strengthen links between these settings, which ‘directly’ involve students (i.e. mesosystem). Furthermore, stepping beyond settings ‘directly’ surrounding students, the community school concept appears to possess the potential to strengthen links between settings that ‘directly’ contain students, such as the home, and settings that ‘indirectly’ contain students, such as foundations and universities, the school committee, and parents’ employers (i.e. exosystem). Stepping even farther away from settings that ‘directly’ surround students, the community school concept displays the potential to enable the school to strengthen broad features around students (i.e. macrosystem). For example, the community school concept displayed some success in ameliorating the adverse impacts of elements related to poverty, and the concept was also linked to attempts to influence the local political culture to better support student and community needs.

This finding, which is detailed in Chapter Eight, offers a clear illustration of the relationship between the community school concept and particular settings, links, and broad features surrounding students. This could prove valuable to community school administrators. These school officials could use the finding to learn about the overwhelming number of specific settings (e.g. the home, community organizations, and student peer groups), links (e.g. school and home), and broad features (e.g. poverty, racism, and political culture) that the concept possesses the potential to strengthen. Additionally, administrators might want to take note of the links between settings that the community school concept did not explicitly display the potential to strengthen, such as the link between community organizations and religious organizations (mesosystem) and the link between the extended family and religious organizations (exosystem). The finding also has the capacity to ease

some concerns and fears administrators may have about the overall potential of the community school concept.

The finding on research question two also contributes to the body of knowledge on the community school concept. Groups like the Coalition for Community Schools (2013), La France Associates (2005a, b, c, and d), and The Children's Aid Society (2013) have long argued that the community school concept is synonymous with strong academic performance. A collection of researchers, including Blank & Pearson (2010), Grossman and Vang (2009), and Hemmerich (2012), have also supported the position. However, many academic works, such as Adams (2010), Rada and Lucas (2011), and Castrechini and London (2012), which are discussed in Chapter Two, have not supported this view. The finding of limited positive effects on academic performance results has led some practitioners and researchers to suggest that the community school concept has failed as a school improvement catalyst. Evidence from the present research, though, possesses the potential to refrain individuals from abandoning the whole concept. This work suggests that, even though the community school concept may not be linked to strong academic performance results in all the cases, the concept has the potential to be associated with positive settings, links, and broad features that largely pertain to 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements. This also enhances the knowledge base by supporting the view that the community school concept is linked to positive 'non-academic-performance' elements.

9.3 General ‘Strengths’ and ‘Weaknesses’ of Each Model

Characteristics common to the three community school models and characteristics distinctive to one or two of the models established some apparent ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ of each model. An evaluation of the six cases suggests that all three models are perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, along with less favorable elements related to school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities. Furthermore, the cases suggest that the **independent model** shows particular strength in the areas of aims and motivations and perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and the **national model** displays strength in the areas of implementation strategies and achieved ‘academic performance results’.

9.3.1 National Model

The national model displayed particular strength in the areas of implementation strategies, achieved ‘academic performance results,’ and established ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Specifically, the implementation strategies of the model can largely be characterized as well-funded, well-staffed, and able to meet demand.

Furthermore, the model averaged moderate ‘academic performance results,’ as opposed to averaging weak or weak to moderate results. Additionally, the national model, like the other two models, appears to possess a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The national model, however, could benefit from crafting aims and motivations that better acknowledge local challenges, addressing concerns related to school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities, and focusing more on its perception.

9.3.2 Local Federation Model

The local federation model, overall, did not positively distinguish itself from the other two models in terms of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Arguably, its aim of focusing on standardized exams is too narrow, and this aim could impede the social development of students. Additional areas of concern include its challenges related to funding, staffing, and meeting demand, its weak to moderate achieved academic performance averages, and its mostly moderate perceived positive impact levels. On a positive note, the model is viewed as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. However, the model also confronts challenges concerning school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities.

9.3.3 Independent Model

The independent model displayed noticeable strength in the areas of aims and motivations, established ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and perceived positive impact levels. The aims and motivations are locally-based and balance the academic and social development interests of students. Furthermore, participants from the two schools viewed their school as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Additionally, the perceived positive impact levels of the two cases from this model, which touch upon academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, are unanimously strong. The model, however, would benefit from strengthening its implementation strategies, raising its achieved academic results to the level of its perceived impact levels, and addressing concerns regarding school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities.

9.4 Do the Findings from the Six Cases Support the Reviewed Literature on Community Schools and Contribute to School Improvement, 'Urban Regeneration,' and 'Community Enhancement' Literature?

In addition to addressing the two research questions and providing insight on the general 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' of each model, findings from the six cases can be compared with findings from past literature on community schools, which was discussed in Chapter Two. The findings of this thesis largely support the general conclusions of previous studies in the areas of operations, 'access' impacts, and 'human' impacts. Additionally, findings from the six cases augment literature on school improvement, 'urban regeneration,' and 'community enhancement'.

9.4.1 Operations: Funding and Management

Findings of previous studies on community school operations, specifically those addressing the funding and management of community schools, largely align with the findings of this thesis. Both past works and this thesis agree that proper community school funding and management are vital to the success of the school. Furthermore, the collection of work concurs on particularly important elements related to community school funding and management.

Both past works and this thesis recognize the importance of proper community school funding. Specifically, surveyed literature, such as Blank, Berg, and Melaville (2006), Blank, Jacobson, Melaville, and Pearson (2010), and Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank (2011), and this thesis emphasize the importance of diverse funding. This means schools should concentrate on securing public funds, stretching from the federal to the local level, and, additionally, they should focus on gaining access to private funds, ranging from grants offered by well-established private organizations to those offered by small, local nonprofit organizations. Reviewed literature, including Blank, Melaville, and Shah (2003) and Blank, Ameyaw, Shah, and Jacobson (2006), along with this thesis, also make clear that depending

solely on financial support, no matter how diverse, could greatly inhibit a community school from thriving. To address this potential challenge, past works, such as Blank, Berg, & Lindsay (2006) and the Partnership for Children and Youth (2013), and new evidence provided by this thesis acknowledge the importance of non-financial support, particularly guidance, volunteering, food and clothing donations, and strategic partnerships.

Past works and the research in this thesis also acknowledge how essential proper community school management is to the success of the community school. Specifically, the collection of work, including the Federation for Community Schools (n.d.), displays how important it is for community schools to possess an expansive management structure that is led by a dedicated, knowledgeable community school director. Furthermore, past works, such as Collins, Moore, and Paisano-Trujillo (2009), and this thesis make clear that community schools must be staffed with a variety of other committed individuals, ranging from counselors to local volunteers.

In short, both past works and this thesis recognize the importance of diverse financial and non-financial support, the necessity of the community school director position, and the need for an expansive staff.

9.4.2 ‘Access’ Impacts

The literature review and evidence from this thesis support the view that community schools attempt to provide students, their parents, and other community members with access to a range of offerings that are commonly not available to those associated with a traditional public school. Dobbie and Fryer (2009), La France Associates (2005a), and Sanders (2016), for example, and this thesis show that students enrolled in community schools generally have access to an academic tutoring service, physical health clinic, mental health office, and a range of afterschool activities. Additionally, the works show that parents

of students and other adult community members, at a minimum, commonly have access to workshops and gatherings. It is also valuable to acknowledge that past works and this thesis show community schools bringing community members of all ages together for student-focused events and themed celebrations. Nevertheless, some community school models offer more additional services and opportunities than others.

9.4.3 ‘Human’ Impacts: Academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

As a whole, previous works on the ‘human’ impacts of community schools draw conclusions on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements that are similar to those drawn from the six community school cases in this thesis. In general, past literature, such as Adams (2010) and Rada and Lucas (2011), and this thesis conclude that community schools are not synonymous with strong academic performance results. This, though, is despite strong, favorable claims by works such as Bireda (2009) and Whalen (2002, 2007) about the role community schools have had in promoting academic performance and, furthermore, notwithstanding the view held by most interviewees in this research that the community school concept has had a positive impact on the academic performance of their school. Past studies, such as Dyson, Millward, and Todd (2002) and Grossman and Vang (2009), and this research also support the conclusion that community schools are associated with a range of favorable ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, which, for example, touch upon student interest levels and parent engagement levels.

In the end, when comparing the quality of the achieved academic results of the six community schools against the quality of their ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, it could be argued that the ‘non-academic performance component’ of the schools is stronger than their ‘academic performance component’.

9.4.4 School Improvement

Findings from the six cases also augment existing literature on school improvement. For instance, Chapman (2015), writing on school improvement, focuses on the value of school federations and chains by examining the concept “federation” and exploring potential impacts federations have had on ‘teaching, learning, and curriculum,’ ‘students,’ ‘staff members,’ and ‘the community and other agencies’. This thesis supplements the work by offering, in particular, an inside look at the implementation strategies and impacts of two local federation model community schools. These two local federation model school cases help further develop the concept “federation,” and, additionally, identify potential benefits, such as increased access to funding, and possible challenges, such as a lack of staff member ‘buy-in,’ associated with being a member of a federation. On a broader note, this thesis also has the ability to augment the work of Chapman (2015), along with other research on school federations, by showing how the implementation strategies and impacts of two federation model schools compare with four non-federation model schools (i.e. the two local federation model community schools versus the two national model and two independent model community schools). This thesis could also augment school improvement literature that focuses on a more holistic approach to school improvement. For instance, Chapman and Harris (2004) identify a variety of strategies that have contributed to the success of schools in their studies. The strategies range from concentrating on leadership, professional development, and teaching and learning to focusing on improving the environment and building community. This thesis has the ability to contribute to traditional components of school improvement literature, such as leadership and curriculum, which garner substantial attention, and less traditional components, such as community building.

9.4.5 ‘Urban Regeneration’ and ‘Community Enhancement’

This thesis also has the ability to augment literature focused on the topics of ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘community enhancement’. For example, Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto (2014), writing about ‘urban regeneration,’ discuss how universities are uniquely qualified and equipped to strengthen public social services and communities through local partnerships, for instance with a public high school. The authors, in particular, discuss how local, place-based leadership, which requires knowledge about a topic matter (e.g. academic subjects and tutoring), knowledge about networks, and knowledge about implementation, is central to the success of the approach. The Gardner Local Federation Community School case contributes to the work of Fernández-Esquinas and Pinto (2014). This case supports the position of the researchers that universities can strengthen social services. Furthermore, the case supports their view that leaders within the university and partnering organization must be knowledgeable about the topic matter, networks, and implementation. This thesis also has the ability to contribute to literature focused on ‘community enhancement’. For example, Christens and Dolan (2011) isolate three features they found make community-based, student organizing initiatives effective. These three features, which all should be present, include “(1) youth leadership development, (2) community development, and (3) social change” (Christens and Dolan, 2011, p.541). The six community school cases largely support the view of the researchers that emphasizing all three features can lead to stronger initiatives and better community enhancement efforts. The cases, for example, commonly portray students organizing cultural events with support from staff members and adult community members (i.e. youth leadership development) in order to unite a community that once largely lacked unity (i.e. community development and social change).

9.5 Implications of the Research: Key Findings

Data from the six cases also offers specific findings on community school operations, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory, and the identification of a superior community school model.

OPERATIONS

9.5.1 Essential elements appear to exist

The six community school cases show that possessing locally-based aims and motivations, securing financial and non-financial support, and having a community school director are central to success as a community school. Possessing a list of locally-based aims and motivations makes a powerful statement. It conveys to the school staff and the community that the community school concept is being adapted to the local environment, rather than the local environment having to adapt to a rigid concept. Aims also provide staff members with guidance, which can be particularly valuable given the complexity of the community school concept. Additionally, securing financial and non-financial support is central to a community school. Addressing academics, socio-economic challenges, and community engagement is a resource-intensive venture. Solely relying on financial funding may not be enough. Accordingly, it is important for community schools to have access to financial support, which should include both public and private funding, and, additionally, have access to non-financial support, which could take the form of volunteers, food and clothing donations, guidance, and strategic alliances. Lastly, the community school director is a central figure of the community school concept. This is the individual who oversees the non-traditional school offerings, which can include an academic tutoring service, a physical health clinic, a mental health office, adult education programs, and community events.

Ignoring this position would place a community school in a challenging situation. Although there are other central elements to a community school, these are three of the most essential.

9.5.2 National model headquarters and local federations possess strengths

Having the support of a national headquarters or a local federation can benefit a community school, particularly a community school that was recently established. Four community school cases show how national headquarters and local federations are particularly strong at helping craft aims and motivations and aiding with the securing of financial and non-financial support. Headquarters and local federations generally have a depth of knowledge on the establishment and operation of community schools, and this experience, in particular, can help a community school identify and form its aims and motivations. In practice, the guidance can range from encouraging a school to expand its aims to advising a school to consider a specific goal. Additionally, national headquarters and local federations are particularly valuable in connecting schools with financial and non-financial support, which, as discussed earlier, are essential to community schools. Headquarters and federations, drawing on their network and knowledge, can inform the staff of a community school about grants, awards, and private funding that are geared towards community schools. Equally important, headquarters and federations can also guide staff members on securing non-financial support, which could take the shape of food donations, a strategic guidance partner, or even a partnership with a local health clinic.

9.5.3 Striving for harmony between academic aims and academic implementation strategies may be wise

In terms of all six community school cases, disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies were associated with weak or moderate ‘academic performance averages’. This is not to say that disconnected academic aims and implementation strategies cause weak and moderate academic results, but they may be associated. The importance of this finding is that having harmonious academic aims and academic implementation strategies could potentially have a positive impact on academic performance.

9.5.4 Neither aiming to rigorously prepare students for standardized exams nor securing greater funding guarantees better ‘academic performance results’

The view that focusing on standardized exam preparation or securing greater funding than another school assures stronger ‘academic performance results’ did not hold true in terms of the six community schools. For example, the Isabella National Community School, which aims to rigorously prepare students for standardized exams, achieved five-year Math and English proficiency averages of 40% and 20%, respectively, whereas the Fenway Independent Community School, which does not focus on rigorously preparing students for standardized exams, achieved three-year Math and English proficiency averages of 45% each. Additionally, these two schools also support the view that greater funding does not guarantee stronger ‘academic performance results’. The Isabella National Community School has an estimated community school-related annual budget of \$750,000, while the Fenway Independent Community School has an estimated community school-related annual budget of \$350,000. As discussed earlier, the former school, with a larger budget, did not achieve stronger Math and English proficiency averages than the latter school, which possesses a smaller budget.

9.5.5 Tailored curriculum shows promise

Possessing a tailored curriculum may be associated with stronger ‘academic performance results’. The Fenway Independent Community School is the only community school out of the six examined schools to offer a tailored curriculum, as opposed to a school board prescribed curriculum. And it is linked to solely moderate academic performance averages. As for the other five examined community schools, all five of which offer a school board prescribed curriculum, only two of these schools achieved solely moderate academic averages – the Oak National Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School – while the rest did worse. It is not to say that having a tailored curriculum guarantees stronger academic results. Instead, based on the very limited data, it appears that a tailored curriculum could potentially be associated with promoting better academic performance results.

9.5.6 A knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo possibly can help a school secure substantial funding and, also, help it provide extensive offerings

Study participants from the six community schools consistently expressed the belief that a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo can enhance the ability of a community school to secure substantial funding and, furthermore, can improve the ability of a community school to offer extensive programs and services. This view was expressed by both participants from community schools that have a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo and, also, by participants at the Gardner Local Federation Community School, which does not possess this type of favorable duo, according to participants. Essentially, study participants from all six schools generally agreed, irrespective of the school having or not having a knowledgeable, dedicated principal

and community school director, that the duo can help in securing substantial funding and establishing extensive offerings.

9.5.7 Off-site partners and local volunteers (non-financial resources) possibly can help strengthen implementation strategies

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Teak Independent Community School each strengthened their implementation strategies by strategically applying non-financial resources, such as a local partnership and/or volunteers. At one point, the Stewart Local Federation Community School was confronting substantive challenges pertaining to the delivery of physical health services. Instead of seeking greater funding and working to expand its on-site physical health services, school administrators partnered with an off-site health clinic that offered to treat students. The partnership helped the school meet student demand, without the need for additional funding. The Teak Independent Community School also once found itself in a similar position. The school was confronting challenges related to the delivery of academic tutoring and, furthermore, the delivery of physical and mental health services. To address the former challenge, school administrators turned to local volunteers, who range from students enrolled in a teaching program at a local college to community members. As for the latter challenge, school administrators partnered with an off-site health clinic and an off-site mental health group.

9.5.8 Not having uniform support within the school possibly can cause problems

Not maintaining a unified front, where the school staff is one, could lead to challenges. The Gardner Local Federation Community School serves as an example. The socio-economic programs and services of this school are riddled with problems. Study participants consistently discussed how the majority of the offerings are poorly funded and staffed and do not meet student demand. The problem, however, does not end there. The poor status of

the socio-economic programs and services has led many teachers to avoid these offerings altogether, in order to prevent students and themselves from becoming frustrated and irritated with them. This lack of support and trust in the socio-economic programs and services, though, has, in essence, exacerbated the problem, reducing already low participation rates.

9.5.9 Don't worry too much about landscape (urban or rural)

The six cases, collectively, did not appear to present any notable differences among urban and rural community schools in the areas of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Furthermore, it does not appear that the community school concept is better suited for one type of setting over the other. Accordingly, school administrators thinking about establishing a community school should not fret over whether or not their setting is suitable for this type of school. School administrators also should not be concerned about findings on the community school concept being setting-specific.

THEORY

9.5.10 The community school concept has the potential to have a positive impact on the immediate and distant settings that surround students, along with broad features that exist around them

Traditional public schools can frequently become isolated fixtures of a community, acknowledged by the community but not embedded in it. Community schools, however, appear to possess the potential to transcend this state and reach a position of greater relevance. Using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory as a guide to examine the six community school cases yields findings about the expansive nature of the concept. The findings, in particular, reveal that the community school concept has the potential to have a favorable positive impact on settings that closely surround students, such as the school,

home, and community organizations. Additionally, the findings show that the concept has the potential to have a positive impact on settings and features that do not immediately surround students – and, furthermore, settings and features that are not commonly associated with a school. These distant settings include foundations and parents’ employers, and the broad features include poverty and racism.

OVERALL

9.5.11 An entirely superior model does not exist

A common question about my study of the three community school models is: Which model is the ‘best?’ In some ways, having a ‘best model’ would be helpful. Unfortunately, though, that is not the situation. The reality is that one model is not outright, entirely superior to the other two models in all the areas – aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts. Instead, it appears that the strongest characteristics are split between the independent model and the national model. The independent model displays strength in the area of aims and motivations and, additionally, in the area of perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. As for the national model, it exhibits strength in the areas of implementation strategies and achieved academic results. The findings on the local federation model suggest it did not dominate any of these areas. It should be noted that all three models were viewed as possessing a number of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

9.6 Areas for Future Research

Despite the two research questions being addressed, the strengths and weaknesses of each model being discussed, findings from past works being compared against findings from the six cases, and key findings being isolated, some important questions that are beyond the scope of this thesis remain. Four particularly notable unaddressed questions are discussed in this section.

9.6.1 What is the long-term academic performance record of community schools in the U.S., and, furthermore, during this time span, do differences related to academic performance results exist among the three community school models?

An analysis of the three- to five-year academic performance results of six U.S. community schools – two schools per model – is conducted in this thesis. The findings of this analysis draw into question the view that the six community schools are synonymous with strong academic performance results. Additionally, the findings show that a rank-order exists among the academic performance results of the examined models (i.e. first: national model, second: independent model, and third: local federation model).

A future research project could expand upon this thesis by widening the time span, for example, to between ten- and twenty-years and increasing the number of cases, for instance, to seventy-five community schools. Addressing these two elements (i.e. time span and sample size) would provide more rigorous findings on the ‘academic performance’ component of U.S. community schools and the three models.

9.6.2 Are community schools in the U.S. able to maintain strong ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements over the long-term, and, furthermore, during this time span, do differences pertaining to these elements exist among the three community school models?

This thesis investigated the ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of six community schools – and three models. The findings of this research show that the six community schools – and, by default, the three models – are perceived as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Additionally, the findings show that the perceived positive impact levels of the schools on these elements varies by model (i.e. first: independent model, second: national model, and third: local federation model).

A future research project could further develop this research by increasing the time span and number of cases. Addressing these two elements would yield more rigorous findings on the ‘non-academic’ component of U.S. community schools and the three models.

9.6.3 Does the success of the community school concept significantly hinge on whether or not dense community school networks exist?

This study includes the local federation model, but even this model did not achieve a high level of community school density in the community. Study participants commonly discussed how the ‘community’ piece of the community school concept largely involves *bringing the school into the community and bringing the community into the school*. It was commonly asserted that this is central to the success of a community school. However, what if bringing one community school, say, to 5,000 local community members – 5% of the local population, for example – and bringing these 5,000 local community members into the school is simply not enough? Should community school density be examined? It would appear that this scenario would be rather different from bringing 15 community schools, say,

to 75,000 local residents – 75% of the local population, for example – and bringing these 75,000 local community members into the school. Accordingly, it appears that the value of community school density was not fully examined, other than weakly through the study of the local federation model.

9.6.4 What ‘academic performance results’ and ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements would result from an examination of a city or town that is densely populated with community schools that possess locally-based aims and motivations and strong implementation strategies?

Expanding upon the previous unaddressed question, it would appear valuable for future studies to focus on the ‘academic performance results,’ ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of community schools that reside in an area that is densely populated with community schools. Addressing this topic would bring clarity to the hypothesis that community school density may be connected to favorable ‘academic performance results,’ ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

9.7 Linking MPhil and DPhil Findings

This DPhil thesis developed from an earlier MPhil dissertation I completed. I became interested in the community school concept as a master’s degree student at Cambridge. I was fascinated by how community schools around the world were focusing on academics, socio-economic challenges, and community engagement in an effort to provide students with a more supportive environment and ‘holistic’ experience. After conducting a preliminary literature review on the community school concept and discussing the works with my advisor, Professor John Gray, it appeared that distinctive community school models could exist within the community school concept. However, I could not locate any comprehensive or rigorous work that discussed community school models, much less any

work that conducted a comparative analysis of the models. With the eventual goal of enrolling in a doctoral program, I planned to have the MPhil dissertation focus on two of the three community school models and the area of implementation strategies, and then have the DPhil thesis serve as a more comprehensive research project.

This DPhil thesis set out to expand upon the MPhil dissertation by including an additional community school model (i.e. local federation model), widening the investigation on implementation strategies, and including the two previously unstudied areas of (1) aims and motivations and (2) impacts. Findings on the national model, local federation model, and independent model largely support findings from the MPhil dissertation. Both works essentially contend that the investigated community school models construct their curricula, address socio-economic challenges that students face (e.g. physical health, mental health, and food security), and support community engagement (e.g. afterschool activities, parent workshops, and themed events) in a rather comparable manner. However, the more detailed cases of the DPhil thesis also led to findings related to aims and motivations and impacts and greater knowledge about the implementation strategies of the three models.

9.8 The Concept of Community School Revisited: Personal Views

My views on the community school concept have evolved over the years. In particular, I now have a better understanding of how feasible it is to establish community schools that reflect the ideal image, as offered by the Coalition for Community Schools. I also believe I now have a better understanding of how to address the question ‘Are community schools worth the investment?’

9.8.1 Creating community schools that embody the ideal image of a community school, as described by the Coalition for Community Schools, is feasible.

It is widely believed that the ideal community school implements a comprehensive ‘operations’ strategy and achieves strong ‘results’. In terms of ‘operations,’ the ideal community school is expected to offer an engaging curriculum, provide academic tutors, physical health services, mental health services, and food programs, and organize educational and social offerings that bring the community together, while exposing members to valuable experiences. Additionally, these programs and services are expected to be well-managed. The ideal community school is also expected to have its programs and services achieve strong ‘academic performance results’ and, furthermore, ‘non-academic performance’ results, which touch upon ‘academic-related’ elements and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as student confidence levels and parent engagement levels, respectively.

Based on the literature review and the six community school cases, the ideal image of a community school is not easy to achieve. However, it is not to say that it is unachievable. If an individual examines existing community schools in term of ‘operations,’ ‘academic performance results,’ and ‘non-academic-performance’ results, it is evident that community schools vary in their ability to reach the ideal image. With some improvements, though, it seems feasible that many of these schools could get closer to achieving this standing. Community schools, based on this research and past studies, generally appear to be quite strong in the area of ‘operations’ (i.e. offering a range of programs and services that are largely well-managed). This work and past studies on community schools also seem to suggest that the schools are strong in the area of ‘non-academic-performance’ results (i.e. ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements). The weakest area of community schools, based on this and other works, appears to pertain to improving ‘academic performance’ results for students. Having community schools demonstrate the ability to

promote strong ‘academic performance’ results could lead more community schools to embody the ideal image of a community school.

9.8.2 The question, ‘Are community schools worth the investment?’ can only be answered by local communities.

It could be argued that at the center of the question ‘Are community schools worth the investment?’ rest two key perspectives: an economic perspective and a moral perspective. The economic perspective commonly concentrates on the cost of the community school-elements and personal judgements based on this figure (See Table 32). The moral perspective largely focuses on personal values.

Table 32. The Six Community Schools: Economic Perspective

	Annual Budget (Est.) for Community School-Elements
Isabella National	\$750,000
Oak National	\$500,000
Stewart Local Federation	\$300,000
Gardner Local Federation	\$250,000
Fenway Independent	\$350,000
Teak Independent	\$200,000

In terms of the six community school cases, the economic perspective weighs if the community school-elements (i.e. offerings and impacts) are worth an estimated price tag of between \$200,000 and \$750,000 annually. The moral perspective, on the other hand, can be a little more abstract since it can involve a range of ethical questions, such as, ‘Should every student have the right to an easily accessible, on- or off-site physical health clinic irrespective of the cost?’ Given that personal judgements and personal values largely surround the question ‘Are community schools worth the investment?’ this question may be best dealt with at the community level.

9.9 Recommendations to Practitioners and Policymakers

This thesis is not only intended to make a contribution to academic knowledge, it is also intended to produce findings, insight, and conclusions that may benefit practitioners, policymakers, and community members. Accordingly, a number of practitioner-based and policy-based recommendations are offered in this section.

9.9.1 A list of community school essentials appears to exist.

The six community school cases show that possessing locally-based aims and motivations, securing financial and non-financial support, and having a community school director are central to a community school. These three elements, essentially, are a crucial component of any community school. Accordingly, practitioners establishing a community school should concentrate on the three elements, and practitioners at a community school currently in operation should verify that these three elements have received sufficient attention.

Policymakers concerned with community schools should also reflect on aims and motivations, financial and non-financial support, and the position of community school director. Their work, at a minimum, should help support practitioners in addressing these three elements.

Beyond community schools, practitioners and policymakers associated with traditional public schools may also find value in understanding the three essential elements of any community school. For example, administrators attempting to expand the community component of their traditional public school may draw the conclusion that a part-time, volunteer community school director position should be established. Additionally, policymakers focused on traditional public schools, for example, may draw the conclusion that all public schools should have clearly stated aims and motivations.

9.9.2 Volunteers and networks can help a school save money, while strengthening its implementation strategies.

The six community school cases show that the community school-elements can cost between \$200,000 and \$750,000 annually. However, financial funding oftentimes does not suffice. Accordingly, community schools commonly rely on non-financial support in the form of volunteers and/or networks. This support does not draw from the budget, but can help strengthen implementation strategies. The Teak Independent Community School serves as an example of a school that has benefited from volunteers and a network. The academic tutoring service of the school, although not currently able to meet demand, would be in an even worse position if it were not for the volunteer tutors. Furthermore, the school would not be able to meet the demand for physical and mental health services if it were not for a network it established between the school, an off-site physical health clinic, and an off-site mental health office. Networks can be particularly effective at saving schools money while strengthening their implementation strategies. However, it must be acknowledged that relying on volunteers may have downsides, particularly in terms of availability, expertise and experience, and continuity.

9.9.3 It is important to focus on both ‘academic performance results’ and ‘non-academic performance’ elements, particularly if favorable characteristics in both areas were promised.

Community school administrators and policymakers in support of community schools commonly discuss how the community school concept is synonymous with both strong ‘academic performance results’ and ‘non-academic performance’ elements. However, as the literature review shows and findings from the six cases display, community schools are synonymous with a collection of favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements, such as strong student engagement levels and strong family cohesion levels (Dyson, Millward, & Todd, 2002; Grossman & Vang, 2009), but are not closely associated with strong ‘academic

performance results' (Adams, 2010; Rada & Lucas, 2011). Given this reality, it is important that community school staff members focus heavily on developing strategies to greatly improve 'academic performance results'. The knowledge base on school improvement provides a basis that could be used, but it is notable that during the interviews, references about the use of school improvement research to support change were rare or nonexistent.

'Overselling' the community school concept should be monitored. It is particularly dangerous because, in the end, a concept that has shown to be closely linked to a variety of favorable 'non-academic performance' elements could be entirely ignored due to not meeting an exaggerated portrayal of potential for positive academic impacts.

9.9.4 It may be valuable to comprehensively explore on-site adult workforce training programs, particularly if the school has made public statements in support of adult education.

It is common for community schools to profess a strong commitment to adult education, and then fall short. The six community school cases are no exception. Administrators from these six schools commonly made statements and crafted aims that displayed a strong commitment to adult education. However, a review of the school offerings generally uncovered only a few family life workshops and sometimes a GED program and ESL courses. Although these offerings are certainly valuable, they do not appear to embody the spirit of what community school administrators promised: training will prepare you for employment. Adult community members, under this mindset, expected that some of the adult education programs would help them secure a job. As a result, adult community member interviewees commonly discussed wanting their school to offer training in a trade, such as welding, and an advanced craft, such as upholstering. In the end, though, the adult education offerings of the six community schools do not appear to match the spirit of the promise – a common problem among community schools.

9.10 Recommendations for Further Study

Additional research on community school models would certainly help expand the knowledge base on the community school concept. It would be particularly valuable if the research were to contain more than two cases per model, the firsthand views of students, and substantial data pertaining to academic performance results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Also, investigating the role of ‘community school density’ should prove beneficial.

9.10.1 Evaluate more cases per model

This work is constructed around two community school cases per model – for a total of six cases – largely due to the exploratory nature of the research and the limited time and resources of a single DPhil student, but a future study with more cases per model would be valuable. The exploratory nature of this work led me to strike a balance between the need to cast an expansive net and the number of cases. I settled on two cases per model because it permitted me to investigate three topics (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) and three subtopics (academics, socio-economics, and community engagement) while providing the ability for cases of the same model to be compared. Additionally, it cannot be ignored that data collection was restricted to roughly one year and a budget of about £5,000. Future work, though, could increase the number of cases per model by restricting the number of topics and subtopics based on findings from this work and the personal interests of the researcher. Additionally, the number of cases could be increased by having the data collection period exceed one year and the budget surpass £5,000 – having a team of researchers could also help. In the end, including more cases could lead to stronger findings and conclusions.

9.10.2 Include the firsthand views of students

Having the direct voice of students included in a study on community schools could add greater depth. The original intention was for this thesis to include the firsthand views of students, but the school districts of the six community schools generally opposed student interviews due to a variety of reasons. Explanations about the opposition ranged from only allowing researchers of professional consultancy reports to have access to students to believing that student interviews bear the potential to place students at-risk. Despite concerns such as these having legitimacy, capturing the authentic voice of students would be extremely beneficial to future case studies. It would be particularly valuable to gather the perspective of students on ‘human’ impacts, specifically those related to academic performance results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and to understand their level of satisfaction with regard to the impacts. For example, a researcher may ask students, “How do you feel about the school-wide academic performance results of the institution?” and “Do you think community school-related elements, such as the tutoring program, physical and mental health offerings, food programs, and community engagement opportunities, have had a strong positive impact on ‘academic performance’ and, also, ‘non-academic-performance’ elements, such as student interest and confidence levels”? Capturing the voice of students has the potential to bring a greater depth and, even quite possibly, bring a fresh perspective to the research. In terms of this research study, I believe, though, that the perspective of students would have largely aligned with the views of the interviewees.

9.10.3 Gather greater data on academic performance results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Findings from this thesis draw general conclusions about the academic performance results, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of community schools, but collecting more data on these areas could offer greater insight and could increase the prominence of the findings. For example, it could be valuable to have a depth of data on the academic performance results of numerous public schools during their ‘traditional school tenure’ and then their subsequent ‘community school tenure’. This, for instance, could allow a researcher to draw a better conclusion, first, as to whether or not public schools attain stronger academic performance results under the traditional approach or the community school approach, and, secondly, provide insight on specific academic elements, such as the math proficiency rate of at-risk students.

9.10.4 Consider ‘community school density’

The topic of ‘community school density’ appears to be an overlooked area that could yield valuable findings. It would seem that having multiple community schools in a neighborhood (i.e. high community school density), as opposed to a single community school in that same neighborhood (i.e. low community school density), could have a positive impact, in particular, on the implementation strategies and impacts of a community school.

Accordingly, researchers conducting a study on the community school concept may want to add a small exploratory component on ‘community school density’ to their larger work. In particular, the researchers could investigate whether a relationship exists between ‘community school density’ and community school operations and/or impacts. Depending on the findings, a future work may focus entirely on this topic.

9.11 Summary of Original Contribution to Knowledge

Addressing the two primary research questions at the center of this work yields both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ findings on the questions – and the latter findings are equally as valuable, if not more valuable, than the former findings. Table 33 provides ‘direct’ findings on research question one, which inquires about model-specific characteristics related to the three topic areas. It is also valuable, though, to recognize ‘indirect’ findings associated with research question one.

Table 33. Research Question One

	National Model	Local Federation Model	Independent Model
Aims and Motivations	Grounded in traditional community school principles Largely locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based
Implementation Strategies	Many offerings Predominately well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand	Moderate to many offerings Divided	Many offerings Somewhat divided on funding and staffing levels, but mostly able to meet demand
Achieved Academic Performance Results	Mainly moderate	Weak to moderate	Weak to moderate
Perceived as Possessing Favorable ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements	Yes	Yes	Yes
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	Primarily Strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Academic-Related’ Elements	Moderate to strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements	Primarily Strong	Primarily moderate	Strong
Viewed as Needing to Focus More on School-Community Unity, Community Member Engagement, and Workforce Training	Yes	Yes	Yes
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/Divided/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%			

As one can see by the color-coded findings, a hierarchy involving the characteristics of the models can be established. Specifically, the **independent model** displays strength in the areas of aims and motivations and perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, and the **national model** shows strength in the areas of implementation strategies and achieved academic performance results. Outside of this rank-and-order, all three models were perceived as possessing a collection of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, along with weaknesses related to school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities. In broader terms, the ‘indirect’ findings to this question emphasize the importance of acknowledging the role of community school models when researching the community school concept. This is because models can possess inherent characteristics and be prone to certain general characteristics – e.g. the national model is inherently linked to national headquarters and may be prone to strong implementation strategies. This type of control, for example, is clearly exhibited by business scholars and business professionals. These individuals display discipline by commonly separating for-profit organizations into three groups: ‘multinational corporations,’ ‘midsize’ companies, and ‘small’ businesses. This is done to acknowledge inherent and general characteristics that are commonly associated with each group. Furthermore, this type of discipline can lead to a greater understanding of a concept. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that both the ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ findings of research question one also contribute to the body of knowledge on community schools by offering a classification system for community school impacts. No other work on community schools explicitly proposes that community school impacts be separated into the following four groups: academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements and, furthermore, ‘non-academic performance’. The second

primary research question also has ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ findings. A ‘direct’ finding involving this research question, which surrounds Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory, is that, yes, the community school concept has the potential to strengthen individual settings, links between such settings, and broad features surrounding students. A particularly important ‘indirect’ finding regarding this research question is that, even though the community school concept is not synonymous with strong academic performance, it possesses the potential to have a strong positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements that closely touch the lives of both students and adult community members – and, frankly, that should matter given how brutal many non-academic performance challenges, such as food insecurity, can be on students and adult community members alike.

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APPENDIX 1:

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP FRAMEWORKS

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK: ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

1. Aims and Motivations

Academics

- What are the main goals of the **curricula**? Why?
 - > Academic > Social > Well-being > Strong Citizen > Engage Students
- How have these main goals developed?
- If academic **support services** are offered, such as one-on-one tutoring, what are the main goals of these services? Why?
 - > Academic > Social > Well-being > Extend Day
- How have these main goals developed?

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- Why does the school address the **socio-economic challenges** that the students confront?
 - > Academic > Social > Well-being > Community
- How has this aim developed?

Community Engagement

- Why does the school attempt to **strengthen the community**?
 - > Lives of Students (e.g. Safety, Opportunities, Sense of Community, Show Membership)
 - > Lives of Parents
 - > Lives of Community Members
 - > Local Economy
- How has this aim developed?

2. Implementation Strategy

Academics

- How does the school **construct its curriculum**? What is the primary driving force?
 - > School Board > School > National or Local Federation > Combination

- Is the school provided with curriculum **support services by the district or an outside organization**?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Seminars > Consultants > On-Line Resources > Hub Resources > Headquarters

- What are the **top three academic support services**?
 - > Rank

- Does the school **require more or less curriculum support services**, or is its current level of support adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

- How does the school establish and **manage its in-house academic support services**?
 - > ‘Typical’ School Administrators > Director of Community School > Combination

- Is the school provided with **financial and/or nonfinancial support**, which helps it to establish and manage the academic support services?
 - > School Budget
 - > Grants (e.g. Federal, State, Nonprofit, For-Profit)
 - > Donations (Nonprofit, For-Profit, Individuals)
 - > Resources from National or Local Federation
 - > Hub Resources
 - > Seminars

- Are there **other opportunities** for the school **to secure more financial and/or nonfinancial support**?
 - > Yes/No

- If so, what would it require?

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- What **programs** and services does the school offer to address **food, physical health, and mental health**?
 - > Meal Programs (e.g. In-School, Afterschool, and/or Weekend)
 - > Health Clinics (e.g. Full or Partial Services; Hub; Student, Family, and/or Community Members)
 - > Guidance (e.g. Full-Time Counselors, Part-Time Counselors; High or Low Student:Counselor Ratio)
 - > Mental Health Services (e.g. Full or Partial Services; Hub; Student, Family, and/or Community Members)

- What are the **top programs and services**?
 - > Rank Food
 - > Rank Health Care
 - > Rank Guidance

- Does the school **require more or less socio-economic programs and services**, or is its current level of support adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

- Is the school provided with **financial and/or non-financial support** that helps it to establish and manage these programs and services?
 - > School Budget
 - > Grants (e.g. Federal, State, Nonprofit, For-Profit)
 - > Donations (Nonprofit, For-Profit, Individuals)
 - > Resources from National or Local Federation
 - > Hub Resources

- Are there other **opportunities for the school to secure more financial and/or nonfinancial support**?
 - > Yes/No

- If so, what would it require?

Community Engagement

- What **opportunities** does the school offer to **engage the community at-large**?
 - > Courses (e.g. Language, Vocational)
 - > Festivals (e.g. Music, Food)
 - > Farmers Market

- What are the **top three opportunities**?
 - > Rank

- Does the school **require more or less community-focused opportunities**, or is its current level of offerings adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

- How does the school **fund** these opportunities?
 - > School Budget
 - > Grant(s) (e.g. Federal, State, Nonprofit, For-Profit)
 - > Donations (Nonprofit, For-Profit, Individuals)
 - > Resources from National or Local Federation

- Are there **other opportunities** for the school to secure more **funding**?
 - > Yes/No

- If so, what would it require?

3. Impacts

Academics

- Around what **percentage** (i.e. 50% or 100%) of the **student population uses academic support services**?
 - > Percentage
- Would you say that there is a **general level of satisfaction** (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) with the **academic support services**?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)
- What are your thoughts on the **grades the state** has given the school over the past three years (school-level summary statistics)?
- How have the **gains and scores of the standardized exams** been for the past three years?
- What specific **impacts have the programs and services yielded**?
 - > Students (Human Impacts: Scores and Grades)
 - > Students (Human Impacts: Youth Development)
 - > Parents (Human Impacts: Engagement)

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- Around what **percentage** (i.e. 50% or 100%) of the student population uses programs and services that target **socio-economic** challenges?
 - > Percentage
- Would you say that there is a **general level of satisfaction** (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) with the **programs and services**?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)
- What **specific impacts** have the programs and services yielded?
 - > Students (Human Impacts: Youth Development)
 - > Parents (Human Impacts: Engagement)

Community Engagement

- Around what **percentage** (i.e. 50% or 100%) of the student population **participates in community engagement programs and services**?
 - > Percentage

- About how many community members participate?
 - > Number

- Would you say that there is a general level of **satisfaction** (administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members) **with the programs and services**?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)

- What specific **impacts** have the **programs and services yielded**?
 - > Students (Academic/Social)
 - > Parents (Academic/Social)
 - > Community Members (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Community

- Have the programs and services **helped to improve the socio-economic rates and reduce the violence rates of the neighborhood**?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Which Programs and Services
 - > How (e.g. Engage the Community, Help Establish Sense of Community/Ownership; Offer Opportunity to Discuss Problems, Serve as Conduit – Form Neighborhood Alliance)

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP FRAMEWORKS: PARENTS

2. Implementation Strategy

Academics

- Does the school require more or less curriculum support services, or is its current level of support adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- What programs and services does the school offer to address food, physical health, and mental health?
 - > Meal Programs (e.g. In-School, Afterschool, and/or Weekend)
 - > Health Clinics (e.g. Full or Partial Services; Hub; Student, Family, and/or Community Members)
 - > Guidance (e.g. Full-Time Counselors, Part-Time Counselors; High or Low Student:Counselor Ratio)
 - > Mental Health Services (e.g. Full or Partial Services; Hub; Student, Family, and/or Community Members)
- What are the top programs and services?
 - > Rank Food
 - > Rank Health Care
 - > Rank Guidance
- Does the school require more or less socio-economic programs and services, or is its current level of support adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

Community Engagement

- What opportunities does the school offer to engage the community at-large?
 - > Courses (e.g. Language, Vocational) > Festivals (e.g. Music, Food) > Farmers Market
- What are the top three opportunities?
 - > Rank
- Does the school require more or less community-focused opportunities, or is its current level of offerings adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

3. Impacts

Academics

- Would you say that there is a general level of satisfaction (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) with the academic support services?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)
- What specific impacts have the programs and services yielded?
 - > Students (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Parents (Social)

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

- Would you say that there is a general level of satisfaction (administrators, teachers, students, and parents) with the programs and services?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)
- What specific impacts have the programs and services yielded?
 - > Students (Social, Academic, and/or Mental/Physical Health)
 - > Parents (Social and/or Mental/Physical Health)

Community Engagement

- Would you say that there is a general level of satisfaction (administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members) with the programs and services?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)

- What specific impacts have the programs and services yielded?
 - > Students (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Parents (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Community Members (Social and/or Academic)

- Have the programs and services helped to improve the socio-economic rates and reduce the violence rates of the neighborhood?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Which Programs and Services
 - > How (e.g. Engage the Community, Help Establish Sense of Community/Ownership; Offer Opportunity to Discuss Problems, Serve as Conduit – Form Neighborhood Alliance)

INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP FRAMEWORKS: COMMUNITY MEMBERS

2. Implementation Strategy

Community Engagement

- What opportunities does the school offer to engage the community at-large?
 - > Courses (e.g. Language, Vocational) > Festivals (e.g. Music, Food) > Farmers Market
- What are the top three opportunities?
 - > Rank
- Does the school require more or less community-focused opportunities, or is its current level of offerings adequate?
 - > More/Less/ Current

3. Impacts

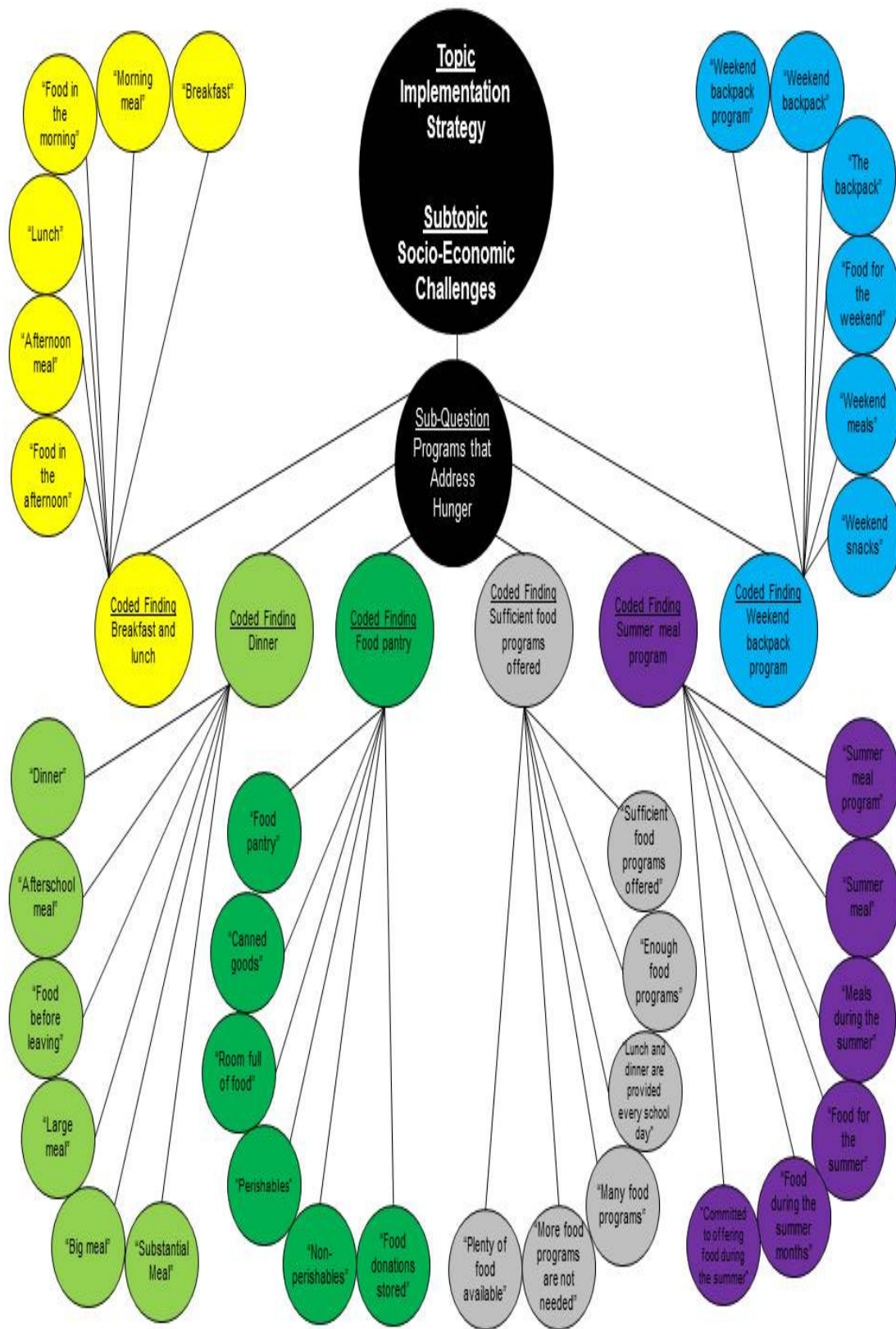
Community Engagement

- Would you say that there is a general level of satisfaction (administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members) with the programs and services?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Elaborate (e.g. Certain Groups Satisfied, Satisfied with Certain Services, Greatest Missing Piece)
- What specific impacts have the programs and services yielded?
 - > Students (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Parents (Social and/or Academic)
 - > Community Members (Social and/or Academic)
- Have the programs and services helped to improve the socio-economic rates and reduce the violence rates of the neighborhood?
 - > Yes/No
 - > Which Programs and Services
 - > How (e.g. Engage the Community, Help Establish Sense of Community/Ownership; Offer Opportunity to Discuss Problems, Serve as Conduit – Form Neighborhood Alliance)

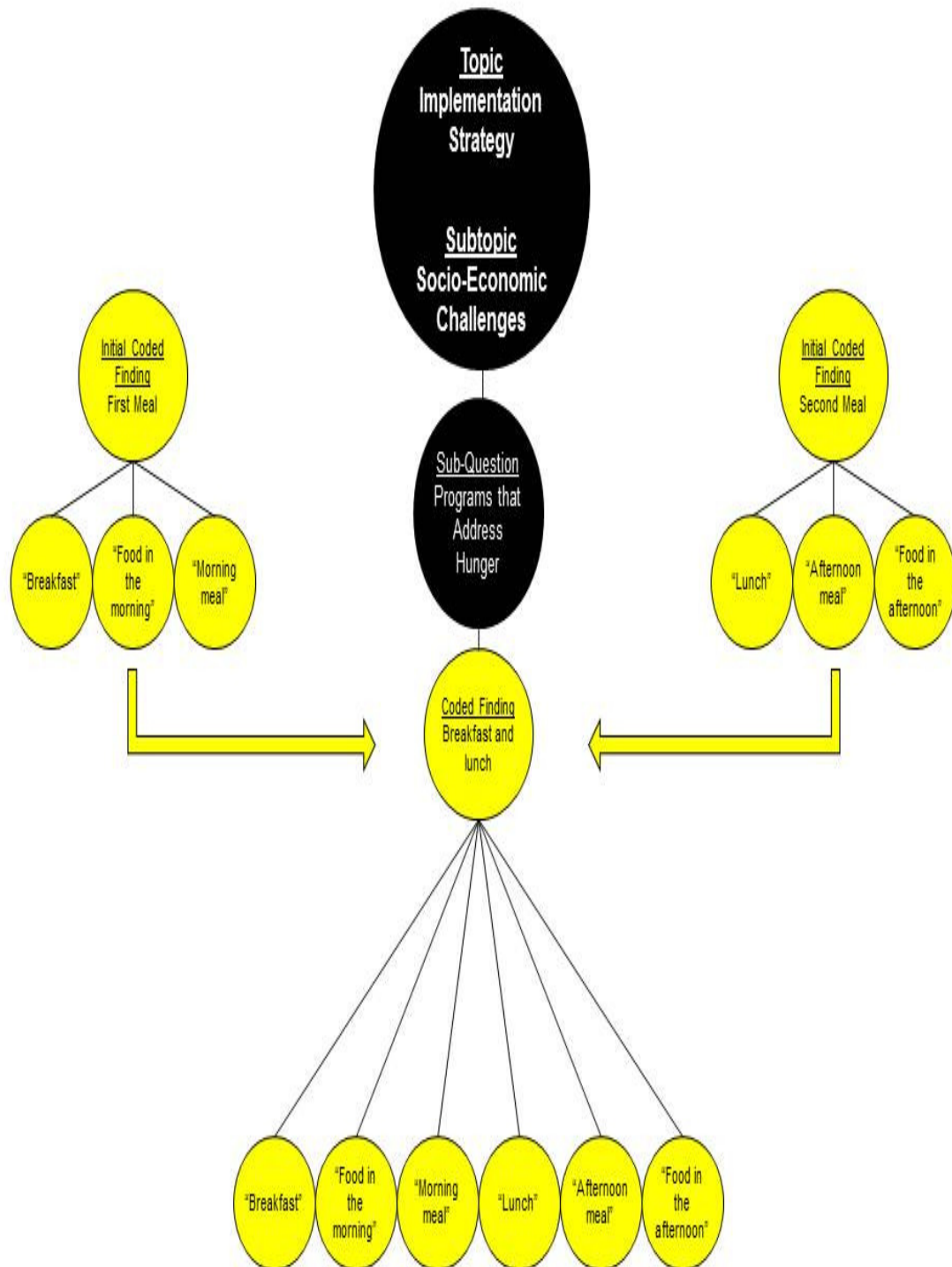
APPENDIX 2:

AN EXAMPLE OF THEMATIC CODING OF A TRANSCRIPTION – STRIPE CODING AND BY HAND

Name The administration understands the very real, everyday challenges that our students confront, particularly when it comes to access to food. Oftentimes, if students don't eat here, they don't eat at all. That's the sad truth. A lot of programs are offered, and I mean a lot. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided every school day, including half-days. On Fridays, kids get food for the weekend from the Weekend Backpack Program. Furthermore, if families need more food, they can visit our food pantry.  <i>Picture: Food Pantry</i> During the summer vacation months, kids still have access to food. Students receive three meals and two snacks a day from the summer meal program. Our food pantry is also open during the summer.  <i>Document: Summer Meal Program</i> In spite of the need being so great, I think this school does a good job of meeting it.	
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An Example of a Reduction in Coded Findings Due to Theme Consolidation and Refocusing



Name of School: _____ Name of Interviewee: _____ Status of Interviewee: _____	
Transcription	Coded Findings and Notes
RESEARCHER: What programs does the school offer to address HUNGER? (i.e. based on a sub-question) <u>(NAME OF INTERVIEWEE):</u> The administration understands the very real, everyday challenges that our students confront, particularly when it comes to access to food. Oftentimes, if students don't eat here, they don't eat at all. That's the sad truth. A lot of programs are offered, and I mean a lot. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are provided every school day, including half-days. On Fridays, kids get food for the weekend from the Weekend Backpack Program. Furthermore, if families need more food, they can visit our food pantry. During the summer vacation months, kids still have access to food. Students receive three meals and two snacks a day from the summer meal program. Our food pantry is also open during the summer. In spite of the need being so great, I think this school does a good job of meeting it.	"Break and lunch" "Dinner" "Sufficient food programs offered" "Weekend backpack program" "Food pantry" "Summer meal program" "Food program" (2nd, THIS question) "Sufficient food programs offered" (2nd, THIS question)
<u>Key</u> • "Breakfast and lunch" • "Weekend backpack program" • "Food pantry" • "Dinner" • "Summer meal program" • "Sufficient food programs offered"	

APPENDIX 3:

PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEYS

SURVEY: PARENTS									
Personal Information									
<u>Gender:</u> Male Female									
<u>Age:</u> 15 – 20 21 – 25 26 – 30 31 – 35 36 – 40 41 – 45 46 – 50 51 – 55 56 – 60 61+									
<u>Status:</u> Married Partner Single Divorced									
<u>Is English your first language?:</u> Yes No									
<u>Are you currently working?:</u> Yes No									
<u>Household Income:</u> Less than \$25,000 \$25,000 – \$50,000 \$50,001 – \$75,000 \$75,001 – \$100,000 100,000+									
<u>Number of Children in Household:</u> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+									
<u>Number of Children Attending this School:</u> 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+									
<u>Years Living in the School Neighborhood – Round Up:</u> Don't Live Around School 1 – 2 3 – 4 5 – 6 7 – 8 9 – 10 11+									
<u>Years Involved with this School – Round Up:</u> 1 – 2 3 – 4 5 – 6 7 – 8 9 – 10 11+									
<u>Average Number of Times per Month at the School – Include Picking-Up Child/Children:</u> Less than 1 1 – 3 4 – 6 7 – 9 10 – 12 13 – 15 16+									
Academics									
1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The ACADEMIC TUTORS do a good job of caring for the students?									
1	2	3	4	5					
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)					

2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **ACADEMIC TUTORS** do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

3. How good is the **ACADEMIC TUTORING PROGRAM** at keeping the students interested in school?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

4. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **ACADEMIC TUTORING PROGRAM**?

A	B	C	D	F
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5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **SCHOOL** does a good job of caring for and protecting the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **SCHOOL** does a good job of building the confidence level of the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

7. How good is the **SCHOOL** at keeping the students interested in school?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

8. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **SCHOOL**?

A	B	C	D	F
---	---	---	---	---

The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **HEALTH CLINIC** does a good job of making the students feel cared for?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

10. How good is the **HEALTH CLINIC** at treating ailments that would otherwise cause the students to miss or skip school?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

11. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **HEALTH CLINIC**?

A	B	C	D	F
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- - - - - - - - - -

12. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE** does a good job of caring for the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

13. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE** does a good job of building the confidence level of the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

14. How good is the **MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE** at keeping the students interested in school?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

15. How good is the **MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE** at helping the students address issues that would otherwise cause them to miss or skip school?

1 2 3 4 5
(Not Very Good) (Average) (Very Good)

16. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE**?

A B C D F

- - - - - - - - -

17. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The school does a very good job of addressing **STUDENT HUNGER**.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly Disagree) (Neutral) (Strongly Agree)

18. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **FOOD PROGRAM** helps the students focus on school.

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly Disagree) (Neutral) (Strongly Agree)

19. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **FOOD PROGRAM (which may consist of a daily breakfast, lunch, snack, and weekend backpack program)**?

A B C D F

Community Engagement

20. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?

1	2	3	4	5
(Strongly Disagree)		(Neutral)		(Strongly Agree)

21. How good are the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** at keeping the students interested in school?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

22. How helpful are the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** at bringing people from the school and community together?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Helpful)		(Average)		(Very Helpful)

23. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)**?

A	B	C	D	F
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- - - - - - - - - -

24. How good are the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** at helping the mature community members acquire skills?

1	2	3	4	5
(Not Very Good)		(Average)		(Very Good)

25. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** do a good job of building the confidence level of the **mature community member participants**?

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly Disagree) (Neutral) (Strongly Agree)

26. How successful are the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** at yielding at least one **significant** academic achievement for the **mature community member participants**. The achievement may include helping the participants earn a GED, prepare for enrollment in community college, pass an English language national exam for citizenship, or develop conversation-level English language skills.

1 2 3 4 5
(Not Very Successful) (It's Ok) (Very Successful)

27. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)**?

A B C D F

SURVEY: COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Personal Information

Gender: Male Female

Age:

15 – 20 21 – 25 26 – 30 31 – 35 36 – 40 41 – 45 46 – 50 51 – 55 56 – 60
61+

Status: Married Partner Single Divorced

Is English your first language?: Yes No

Are you currently working?: Yes No

Household Income:

Less than \$25,000 \$25,000 – \$50,000 \$50,001 – \$75,000 \$75,001 – \$100,000 \$100,000+

Do you have at least one child CURRENTLY attending this school? Yes No

If you answered “YES” to the question above, how many of your children currently attend this school?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

Years Living in the School Neighborhood – Round Up

Don’t Live Around School 1 – 2 3 – 4 5 – 6 7 – 8 9 – 10 11+

Years Involved with this School – Round Up: 1 – 2 3 – 4 5 – 6 7 – 8 9 – 10 11+

Average Number of Times per Month at the School:

Less than 1 1 – 3 4 – 6 7 – 9 10 – 12 13+

Community Engagement

1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly Disagree) (Neutral) (Strongly Agree)

2. How good are the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** at keeping the students interested in school?

1 2 3 4 5
(Not Very Good) (Average) (Very Good)

3. How helpful are the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)** at bringing people from the school and community together?

1 2 3 4 5
(Not Very Helpful) (Average) (Very Helpful)

4. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)**?

A B C D F

- - - - - - - - -

5. How good are the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** at helping the mature community members acquire skills?

1 2 3 4 5
(Not Very Good) (Average) (Very Good)

6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** do a good job of building the confidence level of the mature community member participants?

1 2 3 4 5
(Strongly Disagree) (Neutral) (Strongly Agree)

7. How successful are the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)** at yielding at least one **significant** academic achievement for the **mature community member participants**. The achievement may include helping the participants earn a GED, prepare for enrollment in community college, pass an English language national exam for citizenship, or develop conversation-level English language skills.

1 2 3 4 5
 (Not Very Successful) (It's Ok) (Very Successful)

8. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the **COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)**?

A B C D F

APPENDIX 4:
TABLES FOR PARENT AND COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEY
DATA

SURVEYS			
TYPE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL			
PARTICIPANT GROUP: PARENTS			
Research Question	Administered Question	Number of Participants	Mean Response
ACADEMICS			
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the ACADEMIC SUPPORT services?	1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The ACADEMIC TUTORS do a good job of caring for the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The ACADEMIC TUTORS do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	3. How good is the ACADEMIC TUTORING PROGRAM at keeping the students interested in school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good

	4. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the ACADEMIC TUTORING PROGRAM?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the SCHOOL?	5. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The SCHOOL does a good job of caring for and protecting the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The SCHOOL does a good job of building the confidence level of the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	7. How good is the SCHOOL at keeping the students interested in school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	8. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the SCHOOL?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES THAT THE STUDENTS CONFRONT

How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the PHYSICAL HEALTH services?	9. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The HEALTH CLINIC does a good job of making the students feel cared for?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	10. How good is the HEALTH CLINIC at treating ailments that would otherwise cause the students to miss or skip school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	11. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the HEALTH CLINIC?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the MENTAL HEALTH services?	12. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE does a good job of caring for the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	13. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE does a good job of building the confidence level of the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree

	14. How good is the MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE at keeping the students interested in school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	15. How good is the MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE at helping the students address issues that would otherwise cause them to miss or skip school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	16. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the programs targeting HUNGER?	17. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The school does a very good job of addressing STUDENT HUNGER.		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	18. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The FOOD PROGRAM helps the students focus on school.		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree

	19. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the FOOD PROGRAM (which may consist of a daily breakfast, lunch, snack, and weekend backpack program)?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT			
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the social opportunities that attempt to engage the COMMUNITY AT-LARGE?	20. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	21. How good are the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) at keeping the students interested in school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	22. How helpful are the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) at bringing people from the school and community together?		1: Not Very Helpful 3: Average 5: Very Helpful

	23. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL programs?	24. How good are the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) at helping the mature community members acquire skills?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	25. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) do a good job of building the confidence level of the mature community member participants?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree

	26. How successful are the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) at yielding at least one significant academic achievement for the mature community member participants. The achievement may include helping the participants earn a GED, prepare for enrollment in community college, pass an English language national exam for citizenship, or develop conversation-level English language skills.		1: Not Very Successful 3: It's Ok 5: Very Successful
	27. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A

SURVEYS			
TYPE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL			
PARTICIPANT GROUP: COMMUNITY MEMBERS			
Research Question	Administered Question	Number of Participants	Mean Response
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT			
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the social opportunities that attempt to engage the COMMUNITY AT-LARGE?	1. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) do a good job of building the confidence level of the students?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree
	2. How good are the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) at keeping the students interested in school?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	3. How helpful are the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals) at bringing people from the school and community together?		1: Not Very Helpful 3: Average 5: Very Helpful

	4. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EVENTS (for example, student plays and cultural festivals)?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A
How satisfied are individuals with the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL programs?	5. How good are the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) at helping the mature community members acquire skills?		1: Not Very Good 3: Average 5: Very Good
	6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following sentence: The COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) do a good job of building the confidence level of the mature community member participants?		1: Strongly Disagree 3: Neutral 5: Strongly Agree

	7. How successful are the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops) at yielding at least one significant academic achievement for the mature community member participants. The achievement may include helping the participants earn a GED, prepare for enrollment in community college, pass an English language national exam for citizenship, or develop conversation-level English language skills.		1: Not Very Successful 3: It's Ok 5: Very Successful
	8. Which letter grade would you give the overall quality of the COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (for example, ESL courses and workshops)?		1: F 2: D 3: C 4: B 5: A

APPENDIX 5:
DATA COLLECTION TABLE FOR ON-SITE OBSERVATIONS

NAME OF SCHOOL						
Facility	Program(s) and Service(s)	Manager(s) ✓		Open/ Closed/ Not Offered	State of Operation (E.g. Used Regularly or Rarely)	Comment (E.g. Too Small to Support Demand)
		CS Director	CS Director +			
Academic Tutoring Classroom(s)						
Physical Health Office						
Mental Health Office						
Oral Health Office						
Vision Clinic						
Cafeteria						
Food Pantry						

Clothing Closet						
Gymnasium and Schoolyard						
Community Members' Lounge						
Community Members' Classroom(s)						
Community Members' Meeting Area						
Internet Zone						
Other						

APPENDIX 6:
DATA COLLECTION TABLE FOR DOCUMENTS

NAME OF SCHOOL			
Document	Yes ✓	Topic Area: Aims and Motivations, Implementation Strategy, or Impacts	Extracted Themes
Online Profile		Aims and Motivations	
Program Pamphlets		Aims and Motivations	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students		Aims and Motivations	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members		Aims and Motivations	

Online Profile		Implementation Strategy	
Program Pamphlets		Implementation Strategy	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students		Implementation Strategy	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members		Implementation Strategy	
School Calendar for the Students		Implementation Strategy	
Calendar for the Community Members		Implementation Strategy	

Online Profile		Impacts	
Program Pamphlets		Impacts	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students		Impacts	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members		Impacts	
State-Level Academic Evaluations		Impacts	
Other Academic Evaluations		Impacts	
Other			

APPENDIX 7:
AN EXAMPLE OF CODED DATA FROM OBSERVATIONS

NAME OF SCHOOL						
Facility	Program(s) and Service(s)	Manager(s) ✓		Open/ Closed/ Not Offered	State of Operation (E.g. Used Regularly or Rarely)	Comment (E.g. Too Small to Support Demand)
		CS Director	CS Director +			
Academic Tutoring Classroom(s)	• Academic tutoring (during school) • Academic tutoring (after school)	✓	✓	Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Physical Health Office	• Physical health services • Health fair			Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Mental Health Office	• Mental health services			Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Oral Health Office	• Dental services			Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Vision Clinic	• Eye services					
Cafeteria	• Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Weekend backpack program	✓	✓	Open	Used daily	
Food Pantry				Not Offered		
Clothing Closet				Not Offered		

Gymnasium and Schoolyard	• Sports league • Theater program	✓	✓	Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Community Members' Lounge				Open	Used daily	Supply and demand are equal
Community Members' Classroom(s)	• GED program • ESL courses • Workshops	✓	✓	Open	Used weekly	Supply and demand are equal
Community Members' Meeting Area				Open	Used weekly	Supply and demand are equal
Internet Zone				Not Offered		
Other						

APPENDIX 8:
AN EXAMPLE OF CODED DATA FROM DOCUMENTS

NAME OF SCHOOL			
Document	Yes ✓	Topic Area: Aims and Motivations, Implementation Strategy, or Impacts	Extracted Themes
Online Profile	✓	Aims and Motivations	· Goal is to offer a practical curriculum · Prepare the students for high school
Program Pamphlets	✓	Aims and Motivations	· Goal of the on-site academic tutors is to help the students succeed · Goal of the counselors is to help the students overcome academic and non-academic challenges · Aim of the food programs is to prevent student hunger and help the students focus on school, not food
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students	✓	Aims and Motivations	· District Office is concerned about the well-being of the students · Practical curriculum is designed to mirror the world we live in · Subject matter tutoring is available to all students, and it has shown to improve test scores · Encourage students to enroll in tutoring
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members	✓	Aims and Motivations	· Events and courses are meant to bring the community together · To meet demand, more community courses have been added

Online Profile		Implementation Strategy	
Program Pamphlets	✓	Implementation Strategy	· Tutoring for subject matters (students) · Tutoring for high school entrance exams (students) · GRE and ESL courses (community)
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students		Implementation Strategy	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members		Implementation Strategy	
School Calendar for Students	✓	Implementation Strategy	· Tutoring for subject matters · Tutoring for high school entrance exams · A variety of community events
Calendar for the Community Members	✓	Implementation Strategy	· GRE and ESL courses · A variety of community events

Online Profile		Impacts	
Program Pamphlets		Impacts	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Parents and Students		Impacts	
Letters from the School District and/or School to the Community Members		Impacts	
State-Level Academic Evaluations	✓	Impacts	· Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above Year-One: Year-Two: Year-Three: Year-Four: Year-Five: · English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above Year-One: Year-Two: Year-Three: Year-Four: Year-Five:
Other Academic Evaluations		Impacts	
Other			

APPENDIX 9:

AN OUTLINE OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROFILE

NAME OF SCHOOL
1. Aims and Motivations
a. Academics
<u>What are the goals of the curricula?</u> ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable): ☐ Interviews with Administrators: ☐ Interviews with Teachers: ☐ Interviews with Counselors: ☐ Documents: ■ Codes (s): ▪
<u>Why did the school select these goals?</u> ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable): ☐ Interviews with Administrators: ☐ Interviews with Teachers: ☐ Interviews with Counselors: ☐ Documents: ■ Codes (s): ▪

What are the goals of the academic tutoring service?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☒ Codes (s):
 -

Why did the school select these goals?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☒ Codes (s):
 -

b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

What are the overall goals of the programs and services that seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- Codes (s):
 -

Why does the school seek to address the socio-economic challenges that the students confront?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- Codes (s):
 -

c. Community Engagement

What are the general goals of the opportunities that attempt to engage the community?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- Codes (s):
 -

Why does the school attempt to engage the community?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- Codes (s):
 -

2. Implementation Strategy

a. Academics

Does the school adopt a standard curriculum or craft a unique one independently?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school address ACADEMIC TUTORING?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Who manages the academic tutoring service?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school fund/sustain the academic tutoring service?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Does the service have sufficient staff members, and does it meet demand?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

How does the school address PHYSICAL HEALTH?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school fund/sustain the physical health services?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Who manages the physical health services?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Do the physical health services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school address MENTAL HEALTH?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school fund/sustain the mental health services?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Who manages the mental health services?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Do the mental health services have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school address HUNGER?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school fund/sustain the programs targeting hunger?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Who manages the programs targeting hunger?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Do the programs targeting hunger have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

c. Community Engagement

What opportunities does the school offer to engage the COMMUNITY AT-LARGE?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent and a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents and Community Members:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How does the school fund/sustain opportunities that engage the community at-large?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Who manages the opportunities that engage the community at-large?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent and a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents and Community Members:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

Do the community engagement opportunities have sufficient staff members, and do they meet demand?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent and a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents and Community Members:
- ☐ Documents:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

3. Impacts

a. Academics

What academic performance results and overall percentile ranks did the schools achieve over the past five academic years?

- ☐ Interview with Director of Model (Where Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Documents:
- Codes (s):
 -

Has academic performance improved year after year, over the past five academic years?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Documents:

■ Codes (s):

▪

Does the school possess favorable 'academic-related' elements?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Interview with a Parent:

☐ Focus Groups with Parents:

☐ Parent Surveys:

☐ Observations:

■ Codes (s):

▪

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the courses had on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements, such as confidence levels?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Interview with a Parent:

☐ Focus Groups with Parents:

☐ Parent Surveys:

☐ Observations:

■ Codes (s):

▪

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, has the tutoring program had on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements, such as confidence levels?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Interview with a Parent:

☐ Focus Groups with Parents:

☐ Parent Surveys:

☐ Observations:

■ Codes (s):

▪

b. The Socio-Economic Challenges that the Students Confront

Does the school possess favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements?

- ☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Parent Surveys:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the physical health services had on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements?

- ☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Parent Surveys:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the mental health services had on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Interview with a Parent:

☐ Focus Groups with Parents:

☐ Parent Surveys:

☐ Observations:

■ Codes (s):

▪

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the food programs had on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements?

☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):

☐ Interviews with Administrators:

☐ Interviews with Teachers:

☐ Interviews with Counselors:

☐ Interview with a Parent:

☐ Focus Groups with Parents:

☐ Parent Surveys:

☐ Observations:

■ Codes (s):

▪

c. Community Engagement

Does the school possess favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements?

- ☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Interview with a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Community Members:
- ☐ Parent Surveys:
- ☐ Community Member Surveys:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the community engagement programs had on students and other community members?

- ☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Interview with a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Community Members:
- ☐ Parent Surveys:
- ☐ Community Member Surveys:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

How much of a positive impact, on a scale from weak to strong, have the adult community educational programs had on mature community members?

- ☐ Director of Model (If Applicable):
- ☐ Interviews with Administrators:
- ☐ Interviews with Teachers:
- ☐ Interviews with Counselors:
- ☐ Interview with a Parent:
- ☐ Interview with a Community Member:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Parents:
- ☐ Focus Groups with Community Members:
- ☐ Parent Surveys:
- ☐ Community Member Surveys:
- ☐ Observations:
- Codes (s):
 -

APPENDIX 10:

**TABLE OUTLINING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE IDEAL,
THEORETICAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND THE ENVIRONMENT
OF A STUDENT**

IDEAL THEORETICAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL	
Microsystem	
1. Community School	
To what extent do the community school programs and services within the schools address the academic, socio-economic, and social needs of the students, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s): •	
Are these programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s): •	
2. Home	
To what extent do the families address the economic, emotional, academic, and social needs of the students, while acknowledging their environmental context and characteristics? Code(s): •	
3. Community Organizations	
To what extent do the community organization programs and services within the organization address the academic, socio-economic, and social needs of the students, while acknowledging their environmental context and characteristics? Code(s): •	

Are these programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time?

Code(s):

-

4. Places of Worship

To what extent do the places of worship programs and services within the organization address the academic, socio-economic, and social needs of the students, while acknowledging their environmental context and characteristics?

Code(s):

-

Are these programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time?

Code(s):

-

5. Peer Groups

To what extent do the peer groups offer constructive environments to the students, while acknowledging their environmental context and characteristics?

Code(s):

-

To what extent do these peer groups meet on a regular basis over extended periods of time?

Code(s):

-

Mesosystem
1. Community School ↔ Homes
How far does the community school go to construct prosperous, cohesive relationships with the families of the students, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s):
What do the relationships yield? Code(s):
2. Community School ↔ Community Organizations
How far does the community school go to establish joint programs and services with community organizations, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s):
How are the relationships and joint programs/services managed? Code(s):
Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s):
What do the relationships yield? Code(s):

3. Community School ↔ Peer Groups

How far does the community school go to establish joint programs and services with peer groups, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students?

Code(s):

-

How are the relationships and joint programs/services managed?

Code(s):

-

Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time?

Code(s):

-

What do the relationships yield?

Code(s):

-

4. Community School ↔ Places of Worship

How far does the community school go to establish joint programs and services with places of worship, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students?

Code(s):

-

How are the relationships and joint programs/services managed?

Code(s):

-

Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time?

Code(s):

-

What do the relationships yield? Code(s): •
5. Other Relationships
Homes ↔ Community Organizations Code(s): •
Homes ↔ Peer Groups Code(s): •
Homes ↔ Places of Worship Code(s): •
Community Organizations ↔ Peer Groups Code(s): •
Community Organizations ↔ Places of Worship Code(s): •

Exosystem
1. Community School ↔ School Committees
How far does the community school go to establish strong relationships with school committees, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s): •
How is each relationship managed? Code(s): •
Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s): •
What do the relationships yield? Code(s): •
2. Community School ↔ Universities
How far does the community school go to establish strong relationships with universities, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s): •
How is each relationship managed? Code(s): •
Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s): •

What do the relationships yield? Code(s): •
3. Community School ↔ Foundations
How far does the community school go to establish strong relationships with foundations, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s): •
How is each relationship managed? Code(s): •
Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s): •
What do the relationships yield? Code(s): •
4. Community School ↔ Parents' Employers
How far does the community school go to establish strong relationships with the parents' employers, while acknowledging the environmental context and characteristics of the students? Code(s): •
How is each relationship managed? Code(s): •
Are the joint programs and services offered on a regular basis over extended periods of time? Code(s): •

What do the relationships yield? Code(s): •
5. Other Relationships
Homes ↔ Universities Code(s): •
Homes ↔ Foundations Code(s): •
Homes ↔ Parents' Employers Code(s): •
Community Organizations ↔ School Committees Code(s): •
Community Organizations ↔ Universities Code(s): •
Community Organizations ↔ Foundations Code(s): •
Peer Groups ↔ School Committees Code(s): •
Peer Groups ↔ Universities Code(s): •

Peer Groups ↔ Foundations Code(s): •
Places of Worship ↔ Universities Code(s): •
Places of Worship ↔ Foundations Code(s): •

Macrosystem
1. Community School → Poverty
How much does the community school impact poverty? Code(s): •
How is it done? Code(s): •
2. Community School → Racism
Does the community school impact racism? Code(s): •
How is it done? Code(s): •
3. Community School → Political Culture
How much does the community school impact the political culture? Code(s): •
How is it done? Code(s): •
4. Community School → Pop Culture
How much does the community school impact pop culture? Code(s): •
How is it done? Code(s): •

APPENDIX 11:

The Oak National Community School:

Trying to Stabilize an Economically Thumped Rural Community with the Support of a Fairly Introverted National Headquarters

The Oak National Community School, surrounded by farms and grazing land, has been operating as a community school since roughly 2010. Its national headquarters, by design, is not dynamically involved in the day-to-day operations of the community school, but provides the school with moderate strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support.

1 Demographics: Hard working agriculturists who recently took a hard economic hit

The Oak National Community School is a grade K – 12 school that averages 1,200 students per year. The county the school belongs to boasts a population of approximately 20,000 residents, and over 95% of this population is White and native English-speaking. The majority of this population is linked to the agriculture industry, which dominates the local economy. In general, study participants often referred to the county as “tightknit,” “modest,” and a “small town”. Farms, farming equipment, crops, livestock, and local shops paint the landscape. This charming rural portrait, however, also includes a large population of adults and children who are confronting a variety of socio-economic challenges.

Up until the early 2000s, this rural county, which rests about a 90-minute car ride away from the closest city, had a robust agriculture industry that made up a significant portion of the local economy. Local dairy, vegetable, and wheat farmers earned steady incomes by selling products to a range of buyers. Some of these farmers even sold products to local poultry farmers, who, in return, sold their poultry directly to a national food company, which had a processing and packaging facility in the county. This national food company also helped the local economy by employing a significant number of residents. At the time, life was good. However, the economic situation of the county – along with surrounding counties – quickly changed with the financial crisis of 2007 – 2008. During this time, prices for certain products declined and the food company made the decision to close its local facility. This had a devastating impact on the community. The reality was that a significant portion of the residents were no longer earning steady paychecks, thus negatively impacting the quality of life of adults, as much as children, in the community.

According to many school officials and community members, the high professional concentration in agriculture and the modest number of higher education and trade program graduates made it difficult for the county to prosper from 2007 to 2012. These individuals commonly estimated that, during these years, 75% of the local community members were connected, in one way or another, to the agriculture industry and that less than 50% of the local adult community members possessed an advanced degree or trade certification. Many school administrators and community members, furthermore, specifically cited these two statistics as primary factors behind many adults becoming chronically unemployed, the median family income in the county being below \$30,000, when the national average was over 25% higher, and local drug use and crime rates each increasing noticeably. Concurrently, during this time, at the school, the free and reduced lunch rate was approximately 80% and students were regularly arriving with untreated illnesses, hungry,

and emotionally unstable, all of which, reportedly, impacted their academic performance in a negative manner. The community school director (Oak, P3), reflecting on the time period, stated, *“It was as though we were living in a different place... This was never a wealthy or poor area... [Name of county] was known as a place you wanted to raise a family... Things changed... It was rough on many people”*.

By 2014, the socio-economic situation of the community had somewhat improved, despite the number of local community members connected to the agriculture industry and the number of higher education and trade school graduates staying consistent. The median family income in the county increased to above \$32,000, and the free and reduced lunch rate fell slightly to 75%.

2 History of the School: If the county will not address local challenges, the school will

The Oak National Community School has been operating as a community school out of a recently constructed modern, colorful, inviting building since its first day as a community school. A school-university partnership united this rural, then traditional public school, which had been in operation for over 20 years before the alliance, with a university that is a leading expert on the community school concept. The Oak National Community School primarily sought the union because it wanted to address historical academic and socio-economic challenges and an onset of newer academic and socio-economic challenges it believed were tied to a local economic downturn. Furthermore, the school pursued the partnership because it was having difficulty engaging the community. Accordingly, from over 1,000 miles away, the university partner (i.e. the “national headquarters” or simply the “headquarters”) agreed to provide the Oak National Community School with management training on the community school concept, limited funding for an on-site position, programs, and services, and guidance on securing additional funding. The relationship between the school and its national headquarters was not designed to involve daily communication between the two entities, rather, monthly communication between the two occurs.

The Oak National Community School has a community school office that is dedicated to academics, socio-economic challenges, and community engagement. Both a community school director and an assistant community school director oversee many of the student- and community-focused programs and services from this office. The national headquarters funds a portion of the community school director salary, while the school funds the balance and the entire assistant community school director salary. Additional funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, the national headquarters, a major local donor, and smaller, local donors help cover other program costs. These funds, which total over an estimated \$500,000 annually, do not cover all the costs, leading to a strong dependency on volunteers and the forgoing of some programs. The school hopes to increase future funding by having a professional grant writer apply for more grants; however, currently, it cannot afford the cost of the position. With limited personnel on-site dedicated to community school programs and services, the average day of the community school director is extremely busy. The director oversees many academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services. Furthermore, throughout a typical day, the director updates the school administrators on progress, setbacks, and upcoming events, speaks to partnering local organizations, ranging from a church to a food bank, and spends time with students, parents and community members. The individual is constantly engaging people who are both providing support and receiving it and is regularly evaluating the quality of the support. The director believes that having at least one

additional staff member in the community school office would help with the management of the programs and services.

Since its inception as a community school, the Oak National Community School has been dedicated to expanding its offerings and making them more accessible to students and other community members. Currently, students can easily schedule an on-site academic tutoring session, physical health appointment, and mental health appointment. And a unique feature of the school is that community members also have access to the health clinic. Additionally, food programs provide both students and community members with access to meals throughout the year, workshops offer community members the opportunity to learn general, interpersonal, and family life skills, and community events provide students with access to sporting and theater clubs. To socially bring the community together, many free sporting events, performances, and casual gatherings take place throughout the year. A significant concern about the programs and services the school offers, however, is that the adult education programs do not teach participants many employable skills, like welding. Despite this omission, which is largely due to a lack of funding, the school has many well-staffed, well-funded, and accessible programs and services that are reflective of local needs.

The community school has earned the respect of its university partner and local residents. Both groups are pleased with the ability of administrators to develop and manage programs and services capable of helping improve academic student performance and some welfare markers tied to both students and community members. Additionally, the school has been celebrated by local politicians and local nonprofit organizations for restoring a sense of community in a town that was once low on unity. No longer are individuals forced to confront academic and socio-economic challenges alone, and long gone are the days where only 100 community members would attend a significant community event. The school and the community want to help their people. Many community members, however, have criticized the school for not offering sufficient adult education programs. Administrators acknowledge this concern, and they hope to offer these types of programs once funding becomes available. Furthermore, participants regularly discussed their hope that more community members embrace the school, and, reciprocally, that the school do more to welcome as many locals as possible.

3 School Culture: No thrills, it is about being practical and effective

It was rare to hear administrators, teachers, parents, or other community members at the Oak National Community School mention the phrase “community school,” although the school is undoubtedly a community school. Instead, when these individuals described their school, they regularly discussed the three specific areas behind the phrase “community school,” which include academics, socio-economics, and community engagement, without actually stating the phrase. In essence, study participants gave the impression that the Oak National Community School is a traditional public school that focuses on academics, socio-economics, and community engagement due to local circumstances, not because a well-respected university recommended it or because being a community school is becoming ever more popular due to policy trends in the U.S. The impression given is that the Oak National Community School is a community school because it is a practical and effective response to its context. That is a primary reason why there is no great celebration of the abstract community school concept; instead, there is simply a great utilitarian respect for specific elements of the concept that help address local challenges.

The Oak National Community School values solutions that address real-life challenges community members are confronting. The school recognizes that many

community members have historically faced a variety of academic, socio-economic, and community-based challenges without significant support, and the school wants to change this by offering valuable opportunities and support. Accordingly, administrators and teachers openly welcome students, parents, and other community members into the school. Specifically, students are encouraged to take advantage of the tutoring service, physical health services, and mental health services. Also, parents and other community members are invited to visit the food pantry, schedule an appointment at the health clinic, and take part in workshops. Furthermore, all the community members are encouraged to enjoy community events, which range from theater performances to sporting competitions. The principal (Oak, P2), in describing the culture of the school, stated *“I try to get behind practical strategies that solve issues that are real... There is no need to be wasting time, because all of us have plenty to do... Being efficient is important”*. A parent (Oak, P8) of a student also made similar comments about the culture of the school, stating, *“Not here. There are no parties about us being a community school... [Name of community school director] uses money for meaningful stuff... [name of community school director] is all about making that money help people as much as possible... When she sees a problem, she puts money into a simple solution”*.

4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles, a test-centered credo, and a stand-by-you attitude

This section concentrates on the goals and motivations associated with the curriculum, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Oak National Community School. The aims and motivations of the school are generally linked to traditional community school principles. These traditional principles revolve around a dedication to offering a strong curriculum, addressing socio-economic challenges, and investing in the community at-large. Additionally, though, the school also possesses an academic aim and a socio-economic aim that are not common among community schools. The academic aim encompasses a strong focus on preparing students for standardized exams, and the socio-economic aim involves providing all community members with many essentials, including access to the health clinic. Overall, despite the aims and motivations of the Oak National Community School being predominately tied to traditional community school principles, the aims and motivations of the school are locally-based. They are reflective of historically poor academic performance, a weak local economy, and the potential of students and community members.

The curriculum of the Oak National Community School mainly aims to offer students valuable lessons and to prepare them for standardized exams. These two academic aims are primarily motivated by the belief that both are extremely important and that both can lead students to future opportunities.

4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum can mean future options for students

Administrators and teachers of the Oak National Community School made clear that a primary aim of the school is to offer students a challenging, diverse, engaging curriculum. This aim is motivated by the belief that this type of curriculum can mean the difference between a student having many academic and professional options or having only local

agriculture-based opportunities in the future. Teachers were particularly adamant about this point. One teacher (Oak, P4) stated:

If our classes don't draw them in, we're fighting an uphill battle that we will probably without a doubt lose... It can't be avoided. Student engagement is always being talked about... History doesn't lie... Schools that don't offer classes that push students usually end up having graduates who take any job they can find... Most likely it's in agriculture... If a student likes the ag business, that's great... I don't want any of my students to be pushed into something because of not getting a good education.

Parent and community member interviewees, in particular, were content with this academic aim and motivation. One parent (Oak, P9) stated, *"I am so happy his teachers are always trying to pique his interest... My husband always tells her, 'Classes should be hard'... I tell her that she's lucky [name of principal] is thinking about her future"*.

4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because filling in the correct bubbles matters, both today and tomorrow

The Oak National Community School is dedicated to the distinct academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams, by concentrating on content knowledge and test-taking skills. Teachers and academic tutors focus on this aim throughout the entire academic year, not only during 'testing months'. This academic aim, like the previous one, seems motivated by the belief that concentrating on standardized exams can offer students significant opportunities in the immediate and distant future. Specifically, on a few occasions, administrators and teachers discussed how the aim is motivated each year by students who are comfortable with standardized exams receiving many college acceptances and scholarships. The principal (Oak, P2) stated, *"Having students succeed on standardized exams is all about empowering them... The thought of these kids being able to choose from three or four different colleges and having a scholarship waiting for them keeps me going... That image makes us stick to our test prep schedule even when we may not want to"*. Overall, parents (Oak, P10 & P11) were generally supportive of this aim, with many making positive comments, such as *"It's a wise move"* and *"excited about the possibilities"*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Oak National Community School aim to support both students and other community members. This aim is chiefly motivated by the belief that the efforts are both moral and logical.

4.3 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development and provide both students and other community members with many essentials, because it is both moral and logical

Rather than ignore local socio-economic challenges, the Oak National Community School faces them head on. The school aims to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede the academic progress and social development of students and, additionally, aims to offer other community members access to certain essentials, such as food and health care. This unique aim significantly expands the scope of the school. The main motivations behind this demanding aim include the following: (1) a moral obligation and the school being in a position to help, (2) the view that socio-economic challenges can

impede academic performance and self-confidence, and (3) the belief that it is a great investment. Participants regularly commended the school administrators and teachers for having socio-economic aims and motivations that are specific to their particular community, not generic ones. Specifically, these individuals were largely pleased that the school acknowledges the weak local economy and has focused on aiding individuals affected by it. The community school director (Oak, P3) stated:

We have resources and relationships, and we're here to offer support. We're concerned about them [students and other community]. So, we make it clear that [the name of the school] is here to help anyone around here with necessities... It's especially for the person who isn't making enough money or is out of work... When you talk with others from here, you will hear how they feel that helping is right... We want to see results. Having year-round food services and a [health] office that is open to everyone makes sense. Because they improve the place where students are spending the majority of their time... Not having [socio-economic] programs means that some of them [students] would come to school sick and hungry. That's obviously not going to benefit them. It really would hurt them.

Statements by the national director confirmed these aims and motivations, particularly the aim of providing both students and parents with essentials, which the latter may not be able to afford due to unemployment or underemployment.

The community engagement opportunities of the Oak National Community School aim to unite the community and offer valuable experiences. This ambition is motivated by the earnest view that the school and community are one and that the school is capable of supporting the community.

4.4 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so

The Oak National Community School takes community engagement extremely seriously. The school has the community engagement aim of creating a sense of community, exposing students to the arts, cultures, and sports, and providing community members with support and real opportunities. In essence, staff members want the school to be viewed as a school and community center. Participants frequently stated that this aim is honestly and truly motivated by the broad view that a school and its community are one and that a school is required to help its community if it is in a position to do so.

Despite the aim and motivations appearing somewhat trite, teachers and counselors, in particular, keenly explained how both are true and specific to the school. They talked about how the majority of the administrators and teachers sought out this particular school because of its view on school and community and its interpretation of community service. A counselor (Oak, P7) stated:

I'd have to say that it is more about exposing people to worthwhile experiences... These are things that, down the road, may lead to parents learning new [parenting] skills or a student majoring in comparative literature... Programs are not put on the schedule so we can say, 'We offer that, check'... The schedule [of offerings] is well put together. I'm not trying to be poetic, but the list [of offerings] says a lot about the community.

Additionally, parents regularly discussed how administrators, teachers, and staff members do not treat community engagement as an annoyance and how they recognize that some parents depend on the events for reasonably priced entertainment. One parent (Oak, P12) stated, *“You can tell that they [school staff] want to be there... It’s not an aggravated ‘oh I have to be there’ attitude... He [principal] arrives first and leaves last. His heart is in this place... A fun event is an alternative to an expensive night at the movies for lots of us”*.

Overall, it was particularly surprising to see how conscious the Oak National Community School is about the economic situation of the community.

4.5 Surprising: Significant attention given to the delicate local economy

The aims and motivations of the Oak National Community School show that the school is well aware of the difficult economic situations many community members are confronting. The school does not ignore this reality. Accordingly, to assist many of these individuals, the school, in particular, offers all community members – not only students – access to a food pantry, its health clinic, and low-cost events and opportunities, among other things.

5 Implementation Strategies: A school board prescribed curriculum and many well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand

This section focuses on the identification of the curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services of the Oak National Community School. Furthermore, in regard to the programs and services, their level of funding and staffing and their ability to meet demand are examined. Specifically, the implementation strategies of the school include a curriculum that was prescribed by the local school board. Additionally, the strategies include many well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand (See Table 34).

**Table 34. Oak National Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 180 students, 15% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 720 students, 60% participation rate) (Over approx. 2,000 other community members)
Mental Health Services	No	No	No (Approx. 120 students, 10% participation rate)
Food Programs	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 1,080 students, 90% participation rate)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 720 students, 60% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 1,080 students, 90% participation rate) (Approx. 4,500 community members)
GED Program	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 20 community members)
ESL Courses	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 30 community members)
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 150 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

Many study participants, however, regularly cited three concerns regarding the strategies. Specifically, these individuals showed unease over the curriculum not being sufficiently engaging or tailored, the mental health office not meeting demand, due to not having enough counselors, and the adult education component not meeting demand, as a result of there not being sufficient opportunities.

As indicated before, many study participants, particularly parents, often discussed how the curriculum is not sufficiently engaging or tailored. These individuals, however, commended the school for offering a well-managed academic tutoring service.

5.1 Academics: School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored

The Oak National Community School uses a standard curriculum prescribed by the local school board. Administrators and teachers regularly used words such as “common” and “standard” to describe this practice. Furthermore, administrators, in particular, discussed how adopting the curriculum is wise because the school board comprehensively researched the curriculum before approving it and because the curriculum can be adapted by teachers. More than half of the parent interviewees, however, expressed concerns over the curriculum not being selected or sufficiently tailored by the administrators and teachers of the school. These parents felt that, to better engage the students, the current curriculum, or a newly adopted curriculum, needs to be more hands-on and leverage local resources better. Many of these parents suggested that the curriculum draw more on the agricultural resources the town possesses. Specifically, they believe having lessons that include a hands-on component tied to agriculture – a topic the majority of the students are knowledgeable about – will keep the students interested and engaged. One parent (Oak, P13) stated, *“It’s not about it [curriculum] being horrible. This is more about the potential that could be unlocked. If they [teachers] bring farming and the curriculum together, that’s a winning combination... They [students] know about farming and everything that comes with it... I think it would be an easy way to talk about math and science, without boring them”*. Interestingly, concerns such as this one draw into question the academic aim that the curriculum be “engaging” (See Section 4.1).

5.2 Academics: A well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand

Study participants portrayed the tutoring service of the Oak National Community School as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand for sessions. Many of them, with large cheek-to-cheek smiles, even described the service, which is open every school day during school hours and is used by an estimated 180 students (15% of the student population), as one of the best elements of the school. To support this extensive program, funds from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and volunteers are utilized. According to a few interviewees, this combination has shown to be complementary. One teacher (Oak, P5) stated, *“The full-time tutors that are paid bring consistency and volunteers bring with them an extra bit of excitement”*. The tutoring service is actively managed by the community school director and the assistant community school director. These two individuals, both of which were commonly celebrated by participants for their dedication, were observed regularly interacting with the tutors and the student participants. One parent (Oak, P14) stated, *“[Name of community school director] will make it work. That’s her reputation... Anyone who needs tutoring gets it”*. The six tutors were also favorably described by study participants. Interviewees commonly characterized them as knowledgeable, dedicated, and easily accessible. Accessibility was quite remarkable. Teachers, parents, and students are all able to book regular weekly tutoring sessions without trouble. The tutors gave the impression that they would rather be busy tutoring students than be unoccupied. Furthermore, the tutors displayed a commitment to the academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams, with one tutor (Oak, P22) stating, *“Test prep is common... I’m fine with going over question after question”*.

The Oak National Community School is strongly committed to addressing the socio-economic challenges that the students confront. Overall, the school offers its students access to many well-managed on-site programs and services that focus on physical health, mental health, and food security. However, the mental health office received significant criticism for not meeting student demand.

5.3 Socio-Economic: Well-funded and well-staffed physical health services and food programs that meet demand, but concerns surround the mental health services

The Oak National Community School was frequently described by study participants as offering many well-funded and well-staffed physical health and food programs and services that meet demand; however, the description of the mental health services was far less favorable. All of the socio-economic programs and services are overseen by the community school director and the assistant community school director. Study participants only had positive things to say about their management styles. There was no wavering on this topic. One parent (Oak, P10) stated, *“How amazing is it that she knows every detail about everything... The expectations she proposed were high. They were reached because she guides them [staff]... You will never see [name of community school director] talking down to anyone”*.

The recently constructed, on-site, freestanding physical health clinic, which is visited by over 720 of the students (60% of the student population) and over 2,000 other community members, clearly operates like a full-scale traditional health clinic. The community school director discussed how this is primarily due to significant funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and a local foundation. Upon entering the clinic, a reception desk with a health care administrator and a revolving group of nurses welcomes patients, whom include both students and adult community members. After a short wait time, patients were regularly seen entering fully-equipped patient rooms, where doctors later met with them. In addition to offering primary care services, the clinic hosts themed health fairs, including one on Flu shots. To further support community members, the clinic has relationships with off-site dental offices and an off-site vision clinic. Overall, study participants frequently described the clinic as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand.

The food programs were also regularly described by participants as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. The community school director discussed how providing an array of food programs is possible in large part due to funding from both the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and a local foundation and food contributions from a local religious organization. The extensive food programs and services at the school include breakfast and lunch, a weekend backpack program, a summer meal program, and a food pantry, and together, they serve approximately 1,080 students (90% of the student population). It must be noted that the school deliberately does not offer students dinner to encourage families to eat the meal together. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that the food pantry, like the health clinic, is open to both students and adult community members.

The mental health office, on the contrary, has been facing challenges with funding, staffing, and demand. Study participants regularly depicted the office as doing as much as it could with its rather limited resources, but, ultimately, being unable to meet student demand, which is about 120 students, or 10% of the student population. Many administrators and teachers alike agreed that more funding would allow the school to hire another mental health professional, thus improving accessibility for students. Furthermore, many of them discussed how the school hopes to address this challenge once funding becomes available.

The dedication of the Oak National Community School to socio-economic challenges should not be ignored due to a mental health office that is confronting a few particular challenges. Overall, the vast number of socio-economic programs and services offered and, for the most part, their cogent management supports the dedication of the school to its stated aim of addressing local socio-economic challenges (See Section 4.3). Nevertheless, the issue with the mental health office shows a disconnect between the stated aim and the implementation strategy.

The school staff and community members of the Oak National Community School consistently described the community engagement opportunities of the school as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. According to many of these study participants, however, a weakness surrounding these opportunities is that not enough adult education opportunities are offered, even though demand exists.

5.4 Community Engagement: A long list of well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunity that meet demand, although more adult education opportunities are wanted

Study participants, overall, had positive views of the community engagement implementation strategies of the Oak National Community School, despite there being a concern related to the number of adult education opportunities offered. Participants generally believe the school, which is consistently open until 8:00 PM, frequently offers both students and community members a significant number of well-funded and well-staffed opportunities that meet demand (See Appendix 12). Students can participate in clubs, sports leagues, and a variety of athletic activities, while parents can participate in a GED program, ESL courses, and a range of workshops. Additionally, the community comes together regularly for performances, sporting events, and themed community events. It is estimated that almost 1,100 students (over 90% of the student population) and approximately 4,500 adults participate in community engagement opportunities each year. To provide all of these opportunities, the community school director primarily draws on significant funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant and the support of local volunteers. A parent (Oak, P14) stated, *“You’ll see a huge emphasis on building a sense of community... Keeping all of us together is important. Events are going on during the whole year... It’s nice that students and older people are able to participate in all the different events... My kids love the basketball league... Yeah, workshops on family life are good”*. Observations of some of the community programs and events, including sporting events and a Thanksgiving holiday gathering, confirmed that the events are well-attended, well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible. Attendees generally seemed content, and none were witnessed being excluded or articulating significant grievances. Even with all the positive views of the opportunities, many participants expressed concerns over the adult education programs. Specifically, many of them want to see more adult education opportunities offering employable skills, such as vocational skills and/or craft skills like sewing, because they believe the demand exists. This concern is particularly surprising given that the school aims to offer community members enriching experiences and given that many adult community members could prosper from acquiring additional employable skills (See Section 4.4).

It was surprising to see a disconnect between a few of the stated aims and their corresponding implementation strategies.

5.5 Surprising: Stated aims and implementation strategies not always synchronized

There are three particular instances where a stated aim is not consistent with an implementation strategy. One stated aim is to have an “engaging” curriculum; however, study participants consistently discussed how drawing more on agriculture could make the curriculum more engaging. Another stated aim is to address socio-economic challenges; yet, participants regularly cited a lack of mental health counselors. Lastly, a stated aim of the school is to offer adult community members access to enriching experiences; however, many study participants believe an insufficient number of these types of opportunities exist.

6 Impacts: Largely moderate academic performance results and percentile ranks, but mixed positive impacts perceived

This section concentrates on impacts related to academics, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Oak National Community School. Over a recent five-year academic period, the Math and English proficiency rates of the school were consistently below countywide averages; although, during this time period, these rates did average 60% and 65%, respectively. Additionally, during this five-year time span, the overall performance percentile rank average was below the 50% mark. Participant views regarding the school possessing positive ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, though, were more favorable and consistent. Participants largely agree that the school possesses these elements. As for impact levels, study participants consistently described the courses and tutoring program of the school as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, but only having had a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements, such as confidence levels. As for the socio-economic programs and services, specifically, the physical health services and the food programs were frequently described by participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as treatment rates. Yet, the mental health services were regularly described by participants as having had a moderate positive impact on the three elements. Lastly, the community engagement opportunities were generally described as having had a strong positive impact on a diverse set of elements for both students and adult community members, despite concerns over a lack of adult education opportunities. Even with all the positive views shared by participants, the Oak National Community School has some weaknesses pertaining to academics, socio-economics, and community engagement.

The Oak National Community School earned five-year Math and English proficiency averages that were below the countywide averages and a five-year, overall performance percentile rank average below the halfway point (See Table 35).

**Table 35. Oak National Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Percentile Ranks**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Percentile Rank
Year-One (Most Distant)	50% – 59%	50% – 59%	20% – 29%
Year-Two	60% – 69%	60% – 69%	30% – 39%
Year-Three	60% – 69%	60% – 69%	30% – 39%
Year-Four	60% – 69%	70% – 79%	40% – 49%
Year-Five (Most Recent)	60% – 69%	70% – 79%	40% – 49%
All Five Years	60% (Countywide: 75%)	65% (Countywide: 85%)	35%
<u>Key</u> Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

Interestingly, despite the Math and English proficiency rates being below the countywide rates and the overall percentile ranks being below the halfway mark, study participants repeatedly described the courses and tutoring program as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance. Additionally, participants regularly described both the courses and tutoring program as having had a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements (See Table 36).

6.1 Academics: The Math and English proficiency averages were both above the halfway mark, but the percentile rank average was not as strong

The Oak National Community School, over a recent five-year academic period, averaged 60% of students at grade level or above in Math (countywide average was 75%), 65% of students at grade level or above in English (countywide average was 85%), and an overall performance percentile rank of 35%. Specifically, in terms of Math, first, the school had 50% – 59% of students at grade level or above, then the rate rose for the two subsequent years to between 60% – 69%, then the rate dropped while continuing to be between 60% – 69%, and lastly, the rate increased, while again being between 60% – 69%. This up-down-up pattern did not prevent the school from increasing its Math grade level or above rate by ten percent between year-one and year-five. In terms of English, the school first had 50% – 59% of students at grade level or above, then the rate increased to 60% – 69% for the two subsequent years, and then it further increased during years four and five to 70% – 79%. This up-level-up pattern helped increase the percentage of students at grade level or above in English over 20% between year-one and year-five. As for the overall percentile rank of the school, it began at between 20% – 29%, then for two years it was between 30% – 39%, and then for the most recent two years it was between 40% – 49%. The consistently improving overall percentile ranks of the school increased 15% between year-one and year-five. In the end, when looking at year-one and year-five figures, the Oak National Community School demonstrated an ability to not only improve its Math and English proficiency rates and overall percentile rank, but also revealed an ability to maintain the increases. Although the school did not meet the countywide Math and English averages, it did surpass the 50% marks by 10% and 15%, respectively.

No gender, race, or ethnicity performed significantly better or worse than its counterpart, during the five-year academic period. A few teachers, however, identified ‘males’ as a subgroup that has been informally monitored over the past few years. In particular, one teacher (Oak, P6) stated, *“The boys’ scores are checked out closely, definitely more than the girls... They’re [administrators] worried that small percentile difference can turn into noticeable differences... It is all informal... I’m not even sure if it’s been brought up to everyone [all teachers and parents]”*.

6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements

Despite the Oak National Community School, over a recent five-year period, averaging moderate academic performance results that did not surpass countywide averages, study participants consistently described the courses and tutoring program as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance and, furthermore, a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements, such as confidence levels. These individuals commonly discussed how, overall, even though there are questions about the curriculum not leveraging the agriculture knowledgebase of the county, they value the quality of the curriculum and the tutoring program. Accordingly, participants largely focused on positive elements. For example, many participants discussed how there is a chance the percentile rank of the school could have been lower had it not adopted the community school concept, which emphasizes academics. Additionally, many participants discussed how academic improvements can take many years. One parent (Oak, P11) stated, *“I know them [teachers] well... Scores will show all the hard work teachers are putting in everyday... No one should be complaining about the courses... As tough as it is, you have to be patient”*. Participants, however, were slightly less positive about the ‘academic-related’ impacts the courses and

tutoring program have yielded for students. There was a common view that both the courses and tutoring program have had a moderate positive impact on the attendance rate and the disruptive incident rate. Additionally, there was a general yearning by participants for the courses and tutors to do more in terms of student interest and confidence levels. The motive was commonly tied to the modest socio-economic environment of the town. Participants want the courses and tutors to keep students interested and motivated to prevent them from adopting the view that they are destined for poverty.

Study participants consistently celebrated impacts the physical health services and food programs yielded, but had mixed feeling about those produced by the mental health services (See Table 36).

6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services and food programs reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, while the mental health services seemingly have had a moderate positive impact on the three types of elements

Study participants from the Oak National Community School commonly described the physical health services and food programs as having had strong positive impacts on various student outcomes, but portrayed the mental health services as having had moderate positive impacts. Specifically, these individuals commonly described the physical health services and food programs as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance and the following ‘academic-related’ elements, while the mental health services had a modest positive impact on them:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Additionally, participants commonly described the physical health services and food programs as each having had strong positive impacts on two of the following ‘non-academic-related’ elements, whereas the mental health services have had a modest positive impact on two of them:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student and Family Hunger Rates (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

A few participant comments about the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs, in particular, offer an illustrative description of the common view held by the majority of the participants. One parent (Oak, P8), during a discussion about the health clinic, stated:

A school this size is going to have a few kids show up each week with something [illness] that should have been checked-out by a doctor, but wasn’t, for whatever reason... Nothing good can come from that... He [student] is going to feel lousy, and his work probably won’t be good... If it were to go on [untreated] he would probably act up and maybe get suspended... It’s not an issue here because they do a good job of making the office [clinic] an important part of the school.

Another parent (Oak, P12) had similar thoughts about the food programs, stating:

Keeping them on a schedule is key... You can see their concentration drop when they haven't had anything [to eat]. That's why it's good that everything [breakfast, lunch, and late snack] is provided at the same time everyday... That is a huge part of why this place is peaceful.

Lastly, the common view that the mental health services had moderate, not strong, positive impacts on 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements is illustrated by a parent (Oak, P13), who stated:

I think if the counselors spent more time with them [students] they could do more. But there are barely enough of them for one weekly meeting... You will hear of someone [student] who is having trouble here and there. It's not that rare... I can't help but think that if the kid could talk with a professional [counselor] once every few days, that would help... I'm not the only one who thinks this.

Informal observations of the students by the researcher during field visits seemed to confirm some of the findings. None of the students, for example, appeared to be disinterested or disruptive due to an untreated physical ailment or hunger.

Study participants also regularly acknowledged that the community engagement opportunities have had strong positive impacts on a variety of elements; however, many of these individuals also frequently cited weaknesses associated with the opportunities (See Table 36).

6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had strong positive impacts, but more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

The community engagement programs of the Oak National Community School were described by many study participants as having had relatively strong positive impacts on both students and community members, despite there being three weaknesses. These participants generally had favorable things to say about the programs, which range from sports leagues to adult education workshops. Accordingly, participants commonly stated, in particular, that the programs have had a strong positive impact on the following areas for students:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

Discussions with parents about a community event, which was largely organized by students, offers an exemplary illustration of how community events have had a strong positive impact on students. One parent (Oak, P9) stated:

It is in no way only about students exercising and learning about sportsmanship. That's how it was when I went to school, but it's not like that here... Nothing is what it seems. I say that in the best possible way. We look at games as chances to build up the kids and give us a reason to all hangout with one another... They [students] spend months planning the day... The food, entertainment, invitations, the events, posters. The teachers do not take that responsibility on entirely. The kids are right there with them helping with whatever needs to be done... You will see youngsters jumping around

and talking with teachers and grandmothers about all sorts of stuff... That's altogether healthy.

Study participants also regularly stated that the adult education programs have had a strong positive impact on the following areas for adult community members:

- Content Knowledge (e.g. workshops)
- Analytical Skills (e.g. workshops)
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

Interviewees frequently talked about, in particular, how the workshops have exposed participants to new views, made participants think critically, and, to a certain extent, helped participants become more employable. A regular participant (Oak, P15) of the workshops stated:

That one [workshop] had much to do with relationships: the relationship with a spouse, in-laws, kids, friends, and family. I had never learned about that in so much detail... I guess I felt better, because it's helpful to know... That workshop [the second workshop] was about repairing things that can break around the house... Learning directly from an expert is the way to go. They were prepared and made me feel comfortable when I tried working on it... I'm a manager at [company name], a company not far from here, and it appreciates guys being independent, so picking up a new set of skills should pay off big.

Even with all the strong positive impact levels on a variety of elements, study participants commonly brought up three concerns. Specifically, participants believe more can be done to bring the community closer together, engage a greater number of community members, and teach more employable skills, like fabricating and welding.

It is surprising that the Oak National Community School did not surpass the five-year countywide Math and English proficiency averages or the 50% mark for the five-year overall percentile rank, despite, in particular, its significant investment in the academic tutoring program and the socio-economic programs and services.

6.5 Surprising: Vast investments in academic and socio-economic programs and services did not produce breakout academic performance results

The Oak National Community School achieved a five-year Math at grade level or above average that was 15% lower than the countywide average, a five-year English at grade level or above average that was 20% lower than the countywide average, and a five-year overall percentile rank that was 15% below the 50% mark, even though the school, in particular, invested heavily in academic and socio-economic programs and services over the five-year period.

7 Summary

The Oak National Community School possesses both strengths and weaknesses in terms of aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and community engagement. The school has done well in crafting aims and motivations that are reflective of the community. Specifically, the stated aims acknowledge traditional community school principles and, additionally, prioritize preparing students for standardized exams and offering all community members access to select essentials, such as food and health care. A review of the execution of the aims, however, uncovered implementation strategies that received mixed reviews from many study participants. The academic tutoring program, physical health services, and food programs were all commonly described as being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. The mental health office, though, was commonly criticized for having insufficient counselors available, and the community engagement component was frequently referred to as not offering sufficient adult education opportunities. Accordingly, both were commonly criticized for not meeting demand. Like the implementation strategies, the impacts of the school were inconsistent. The school was perceived as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. However, in terms of academic performance, the school did not exceed the five-year countywide Math and English at grade level or above averages or the 50 percentile for five-year overall performance rank. Its courses and tutoring program, though, were commonly described by participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance and a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements. As for the socio-economic offerings, participants generally described the physical health services and food programs as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. The mental health office, however, was frequently regarded as having had a moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Lastly, the community engagement opportunities were largely described by study participants as having had a strong positive impact on a variety of elements, despite many participants sharing concerns over modest community union, moderate participation rates, and limited adult education opportunities.

The Oak National Community School comes close to resembling the ideal image of a community school, as described by the Coalition for Community Schools, but, in the end, does not perfectly accomplish this undertaking. Its largely moderate academic performance and community engagement issues are significant reasons behind the shortcoming.

Table 36. Summary of Oak National Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 5	Weak rural economy that is a 90-min. drive from a strong, central economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 60% (75%) 5-Year English Average: 65% (85%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 35%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$500,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · Headquarters · Substantial Private Funding · Small grants	Largely white population with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Limited additional support from the headquarters		Locally-based aims and motivations Weak economic state acknowledged	Many well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible programs and services However, more mental health professionals encouraged	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong and moderate positive impacts on academic performance Strong and moderate positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong and moderate positive impacts on ‘non-academic-related’ elements <u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults, but more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

APPENDIX 12:

**NORMAL DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION FOR EACH OF THE
SIX COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

	Normal Days of Operation	Normal Hours of Operation
Isabella National Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 10:00PM (Mon. – Fri.) 9:30AM – 10:00PM (Sat. & Sun.)
Oak National Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 8:00PM (Mon. – Fri.) 10:00AM – 7:00PM (Sat. & Sun.)
Stewart Local Federation Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 7:30PM (Mon. – Fri.) 10:30AM – 6:30PM (Sat. & Sun.)
Gardner Local Federation Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 6:30PM (Mon. – Fri.) 10:30AM – 6:00PM (Sat. & Sun.)
Fenway Independent Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 8:00PM (Mon. – Fri.) 10:00AM – 7:00PM (Sat. & Sun.)
Teak Independent Community School	Monday – Sunday	7:30AM – 10:00PM (Mon. – Fri.) 9:30AM – 10:00PM (Sat. & Sun.)

APPENDIX 13:

The Gardner Local Federation Community School: A Member of a University-Managed Community School Federation, but Moderate Staff Member Disinterest Exists

The Gardner Local Federation Community School, located in a socio-economically disadvantaged area of a major U.S. city, became a community school by 2010 after joining a university-managed community school federation. The federation, which is managed by a local university, currently includes a total of five public community schools, all located in the same city. The university manages the day-to-day upper management operations of the community school federation and provides the school with day-to-day general advice, strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support. Interestingly, despite the Gardner Local Federation Community School being an incontestable member of the community school local federation, many interviewees regrettably admitted that a significant portion of the school staff, chiefly teachers, is apathetic about the community school initiative. This indifference is reported to derive from individuals having reservations about the value of the community school concept and from their belief that many socio-economic and community engagement programs and services are poorly funded and staffed and do not meet demand. Accordingly, this disinterested population largely acts as though the school is a traditional public school that narrowly concentrates on academics, rather than a community school that focuses on academics, the socio-economic challenges that the students confront, and community engagement.

1 Demographics: An African American/Black population that is struggling

The Gardner Local Federation Community School is a kindergarten through grade eight school that averages 600 students per year. The school is located in a major U.S. city that has an African American/Black population upwards of 50% and a Hispanic/Latino population above 10%. In 2013, city-wide, the average median household income was about \$35,000 and the unemployment rate was about 10%, while the national median household income at the time was \$52,250 and the unemployment rate was slightly below 7.5% (Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2015; Noss, 2014). The crime rate of the city is also a point of concern, with many local and national newspaper articles ranking it in the top 15 most dangerous U.S. cities. These and other city-wide averages, however, do not accurately portray particular sections of the city, some of which have averages above the medians, while others possess averages below the medians. For example, the city center possesses strong educational, financial, legal, and medical industries, a large population of residents and employees with advanced degrees or trade skills, and low levels of crime. The center also possesses a strong tourist industry that draws visitors from around the world to its historic landmarks, sporting events, and restaurants. One study participant described the center as being “*full of rich people*” and another described it as being “*really safe*”. However, the section of the city where the Gardner LF Community School is located, which is about a 10-minute bus ride out of the city center, is split between, on one side, neighborhoods that resemble those of the city center and, on the other side, neighborhoods that possess a weak local economy, a low number of residents with advanced degrees or trade skills, and high levels of crime. Study participants frequently discussed how two

neighboring universities and an adjacent research hospital, all located a few blocks apart, are largely responsible for the disparity. One local resident (Gardner, P17) explained:

And around [name of university] and [name of university], basically, it's obvious that life is nice and comfy, and that shouldn't be a big surprise to you. It's all owned by the schools... \$40,000 tuition means it has to be kept up... Tons of nurses and doctors work there... Campus police and cops are always driving around... Yeah, you can walk a few blocks from them [universities and hospital] and see the same... Rich people want nice apartments, so landlords have been updating places so they can charge more. They are really expensive... Ten blocks away? Oh, the change smacks you hard, like you cannot imagine.

A 20-minute walk from the two universities and the hospital to the Gardner LF Community School confirmed this statement.

The particular area where the Gardner LF Community School resides is somewhat rundown and ridden with a range of socio-economic challenges. Abandoned buildings, vacant lots, and graffiti were regularly observed. Local residents, which are roughly 80% African American/Black and 5% Hispanic/Latino, faced an array of more pressing problems, though. Specifically, the lack of higher education degrees and trade skills has had a punishing impact on the government assistance rate, unemployment rate, and household incomes. School administrators and teachers frequently estimated that 25% of community members, including parents of students, possess an associate's degree (two-year college degree), a college degree, or trade certificate, 85% of them receive some form of government assistance, and upwards of 20% of them are unemployed. Additionally, these interviewees commonly estimated the average annual median household income of both parents and other local community members to be between \$20,000 and \$25,000. Many interviewees, ranging from teachers to community members, even tied the poor economic situation of the community to a dynamic gang and drug culture. *"Gangs are in [section of city], and you have to get as being life... The police fight them off, but they're still everywhere... They're [gangs] making money like you don't even know,"* stated one parent (Gardner, P9). Another parent (Gardner, P10) stated, *"Everyday I'm trying to keep them off the streets as much as possible, because I don't want anything bad to happen to them... A kid can be minding his own business and get shot"*.

Like adult community members in the area, the student population of the school, which averages 80% African American/Black and 5% Hispanic/Latino, also confronts a collection of personal challenges. In 2014, 90% of the students received free or reduced lunch, 20% were categorized as students with disabilities, and 12% were classified as ESL. Additionally, in 2013, both the Math and English at grade level or above rates for third graders were over 20% below the district average.

2 History of the School: Same old building with a few new gleaming programs and services

After serving as a traditional public school for over 80 years, the Gardner traditional school developed into the Gardner Local Federation Community School in 2010 with the support of a university-sponsored community school program. A local university recruited the Gardner traditional school to join its community school federation – which now consists of five community schools in the same city – primarily due to its historically poor academic performance, high student poverty rate, high student incident rate, and elevated local crime rate. One longtime resident (Gardner, P18), while describing the school before its transition,

stated, *"We knew they were going to a crummy school, yeah, you knew... A lot got into crime, because they had the attitude that teachers don't care, so why should I?... It was destroying kid's dreams for years"*. Additionally, the Gardner LF Community School was selected because of the eminent unemployment rate of the neighborhood and the lack of school-community cohesion. The university felt that these diverse school- and community-based challenges could be addressed by expanding the scope of the school to include academics, socio-economics, and community engagement.

Since becoming a community school, the Gardner LF Community School has invested in programs and services for students, parents, and other community members. The school maintains the belief that local challenges can be addressed if a school studies them and then supports the appropriate combination of programs and services. Accordingly, students have access to an academic tutoring program, nurse's office, off-site physical health, dental, and vision care offices, an on-site mental health office, and enrichment programs and events. Study participants, however, frequently voiced concerns related to these offerings. Many of them, for example, questioned the commitment of the school to specific programs, the staffing level of some services, and the frequency of some programs and services. Despite these worries, the school also offers a collection of opportunities geared towards parents and other community members. These local individuals are invited to attend a variety of workshops, which cover topics related to family and employment, and an assortment of events, including student performances and ethnic festivals. However, study participants also commonly cited concerns over many of these programs and services, which generally pertained to frequency and number of offerings. One teacher (Gardner, P4) stated, *"They shouldn't be calling it a failure. It's a good start, and it needs some work... It's still in the pilot phase"*.

The overall management and funding of the Gardner LF Community School revolves around a partnership between the school, school board, and university. This union is particularly valuable because it unites a collection of individuals who each possess distinct skills and have access to particular funding sources. In terms of management, school administrators supervise the curriculum, courses, scheduling, and general management of the school, while district personnel principally monitor academic-related and non-academic-related factors of the school from the central office. Additionally, the community school director and the assistant community school director, both employees of the university, oversee the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services from a sprawling room in the school. In terms of funding, the school draws on district funding to pay for expense traditionally associated with a public school. Additionally, in a joint effort, the school, using 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding, and the university fund the academic tutoring service and the socio-economic and community engagement programs and service. The university also funds the salaries of the community school director and the assistant community school director. Inclusively, the annual funding for non-traditional community school programs and services is estimated to surpass \$250,000.

Since becoming a community school, the Gardner LF Community School has struggled to achieve substantial results for both students and other community members; although, considerable support from the community subsists. Study participants regularly recognized the scale of the challenge the school has undertaken and cited that improvements may be realized slowly. However, there were many participants who were less sympathetic. These individuals frequently contended that, by now, at the very least, the commitment of the school to community school principles should not be in question, academic growth should be consistent, proper staffing levels should be in place, stronger school-community unity should exist, and more adult education opportunities should be offered.

3 School Culture: Traditional public school culture versus community school culture

On the surface, the Gardner Local Federation Community School appears to be a community school: it is visibly branded with the phrase “community school;” the university-partner is a formidable force in the community school movement; and, many of its school posters describe an assortment of on-site academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services. However, beyond this attention-grabbing exterior, there exists a constant struggle between school staff members who avidly support the community school principles and those who do not. Many pro-community school staff members of the school discussed how this tension has made it particularly challenging to create a holistic, supportive culture that reaches the potential of the school. One teacher (Gardner, P5) stated, *“Some [school staffers] won’t tell students that obviously need one-on-one help to sign up for tutoring, even though it is right there for the taking, and it’s free... Same thing with our medical partnerships that were not easy to get... Not a peep comes out of their mouth... Sometimes I wonder if they’re purposefully fighting against us”*. Furthermore, many of these pro-community school staff members passionately argued that the apathetic attitude of some fellow staffers has had a negative impact on student, parent, and community member participation rates. One teacher (Gardner, P6) stated:

Parents and guardians sometimes look at me in awe when I tell them everything that’s happening at their child’s school, during parent-teacher conferences... It makes no sense because they had meetings with other teachers before me who didn’t talk to them about why we’re a community school... There’s no way they [community members] all know they are invited to workshops.

Despite many of the pro-community school staff members displaying frustration over the situation, the majority of them discussed how they believe that staff members who do not passionately support the community school concept are not driven by malice. Specifically, they discussed how many are indifferent as a result of not being particularly interested in the community school approach and/or as a result of being frustrated with the general quality of the socio-economic and community engagement programs and services.

4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles meet a test-centered credo

The stated goals of the curriculum, the socio-economic offerings, and the community engagement opportunities of the Gardner Local Federation Community School are depicted in this section. Furthermore, the motivations associated with these goals are also described. The stated aims and motivations of the school are predominantly linked to traditional community school principles, which include a dedication to providing a sound curriculum, addressing socio-economic challenges, engaging the community at-large, and establishing a range of opportunities. Additionally, the school also has the added academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams, which somewhat separates it from other community schools. Despite the aims and motivations of the Gardner LF Community School being largely reflective of traditional community school principles, its aims and motivations are predominantly based on the needs of its community. They clearly acknowledge many local characteristics, such as historically poor academic performance, a weak local economy, and a vibrant gang and drug culture.

It should be noted that although many study participants acknowledged a division between ‘staff members in support of the community school concept’ and ‘staff members indifferent about the community school concept,’ participant responses were consistent.

Meaning, there was a consensus surrounding the aims and motivations of the school, but some choose to support them while others did not.

The Gardner Local Federation Community School aims to have the curriculum offer strong lessons and prepare students for standardized exams. These two aims are largely motivated by the view that administrators and teachers believe both are vital for students.

4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is absolutely essential

Study participants at the Gardner Local Federation Community School consistently discussed how the primary academic aim of the school is to provide students with a diverse curriculum that both challenges and engages. This aim is driven by the somber view that a poorly designed curriculum could nudge some students towards the vibrant local gang and drug culture or a life of abject poverty. Teachers, in particular, frequently discussed how the curriculum can have a significant impact on the type of life many of the students will live in the future. One teacher (Gardner, P5) stated, *“I bump into them [former students] randomly... Pains me to know some got caught up in drugs because they were twiddling their thumbs in boredom... We can’t say we didn’t know, now honestly... That curriculum has to hold their attention if it’s going to be beneficial”*. Many of the parents interviewed were pleased with both the academic aim and motivation. In particular, a significant portion of these interviewees were content that the school is focused on the quality of the curriculum and understands what is at stake. One parent (Gardner, P11) stated, *“Parents I know are really happy... The principal said classes are hard and that classes will get him into a good high school... Teachers do it [engage students] because they know if kids drop out because they can’t keep up, it could ruin their life”*.

4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because filling in the correct bubbles matters, both today and tomorrow

The Gardner Local Federation Community School has the academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams, because it believes it is essential for every student to be comfortable with this type of exam. Administrators and teachers often discussed how possessing test-taking skills can determine whether or not a student attends a good high school or college, receives a scholarship, and is successful in college and in his or her chosen career. Furthermore, many of these individuals even discussed how possessing test-taking skills can reduce the possibility of students entering local gangs or the drug trade. A teacher (Gardner, P7) stated, *“That gets a lot of negative attention from kid’s parents who do not know the whole story... I’m honest with everyone when I talk to them, because some don’t know the facts... Failing them [standardized tests] can close doors. It’s harsh, but it’s true... Some have definitely gotten into selling drugs because of it”*.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School aim to target cutting challenges that have the potential to hurt students academically and emotionally. This aim is largely driven by the position that the work is both moral and logical.

4.3 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical

Upon becoming a community school, the Gardner Local Federation Community School, under the guidance of the university, established the socio-economic aim of having programs and services address pernicious socio-economic challenges that have the ability to stunt the academic progress and social development of students. This university-recommended aim, which primarily focuses on addressing poor access to physical health care, mental health support, and food, was chiefly motivated by the following: (1) a moral duty and the capability of the school, (2) the position that socio-economic challenges can hurt students both academically and emotionally, and (3) the view that it is a great investment of time and money. Study participants, particularly parents and other community members, consistently praised the school for possessing socio-economic aims and motivations that are locally-influenced. Specifically, many parents were thankful that socio-economic challenges common to their community are no longer being ignored by the school. A community member (Gardner, P19) stated, *“Finally already, someone decides not to punish innocent kids that have already been through enough... It was about time that schools do something to make this stuff history... It’s good for our people they decided to do this, instead of being like the budget isn’t big enough”*.

The Gardner Local Federation Community School aims to offer community members an assortment of social and educational afterschool and weekend activities. This aim is largely motivated by the commitment of the school to the community and the view that the school is capable of realizing the aim.

4.4 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so

The Gardner Local Federation Community School is committed to engaging the entire community, not only students. The school does not want to be viewed as a public school that solely serves students seven hours a day, five days a week. Instead, it aims to be a public school that doubles as a community center, with hours of operation going late into the evening. This aim leads the school to organize social community events, such as festivals, and educational opportunities, like family life workshops, throughout the academic year. The motivation for this aim humbly derives from its belief that a school and community are one and the same, and thus both should support each other. Additionally, the aim stems from the view that a school with resources, such as those of the Gardner LF Community School, should support a broad range of community members. The community school director (Gardner, P3) stated, *“We’re wanting sports and clubs to be a part of their lives, something they can easily access without having to worry about fees... We should be supporting adults. Just because they are older doesn’t make them any less important... There are a bunch of people who could do the same, but they don’t want to... It would be wrong for us to be like that”*.

Overall, it was surprising to hear school staff members speak openly about local challenges related to violence, gangs, and drugs.

4.5 Surprising: Local violent, gang, drug culture was consistently acknowledged

It was common for school administrators and teachers to discuss local challenges that revolve around violence, gangs, and drugs. Never did it feel as though these interviewees were attempting to ignore or whitewash local challenges. Many teachers even discussed how this open, honest attitude about local challenges was prominent during the establishment of the community school and its aims.

5 Implementation Strategies: A school board prescribed curriculum and not many well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand in sight

In this section, the curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School are identified. Also, the funding and staffing levels of the programs and services and their ability to meet demand are reviewed (See Table 37).

**Table 37. Gardner Local Federation Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 150 students, 25% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	No	No (On-Site) Yes (Off-Site)	No (Approx. 150 students, 25% participation rate)
Mental Health Services	No	No	No (Approx. 100 students, 17% participation rate)
Food Programs	No	Yes	No (Approx. 600 students, 100% participation rate)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 200 students, 33% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	No (Approx. 250 students, 42% participation rate) (Approx. 500 community members)
GED Program	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered
ESL Courses	Not Offered	Not Offered	Not Offered
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 80 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

In terms of the academic implementation strategies, the school offers a school board prescribed curriculum – not one specifically selected by its administrators and teachers – and provides a well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand. The socio-economic and community engagement implementation strategies, however, were aggressively criticized by a substantial portion of the study participants, particularly

teachers, parents, and other community members. Specifically, in terms of the socio-economic programs and services, the physical health services and mental health services were commonly described as being poorly funded and weakly staffed and as not meeting demand, while the food programs were generally described as being poorly funded and not meeting demand. Conversely, the existing community engagement programs and services were frequently described by study participants as being well-funded and well-staffed and, for the most part, meeting demand, although more community events and adult education offerings are desired.

Findings surrounding the academic implementation strategies of the Gardner Local Federation Community School depict a school that possesses a school board prescribed curriculum, which received some criticism from study participants, and a well-managed academic tutoring program, which earned significant praise from study participants.

5.1 Academics: School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored

The Gardner Local Federation Community School uses a curriculum that was recommended by the local school board, but controversy surrounds this decision. School administrator and teacher interviewees at the school generally supported the decision to use the school board prescribed curriculum, and many of them discussed how this is a generally accepted practice among public schools in the city. Furthermore, many of these interviewees supported the decision by citing that curriculum experts at the university never questioned the quality of the curriculum or encouraged the school to seek an independent curriculum. A few school administrators and teachers, though, did acknowledge that some charter schools – which this community school is not – do elect to adopt their own independent curriculum. Many parents, and particularly those familiar with charter schools, vocalized the greatest discontent over the decision to adopt a school board prescribed curriculum, rather than one selected by administrators and teachers from the Gardner LF Community School. These parents frequently argued that a curriculum selected by school administrators and teachers would be more in tune with specific characteristics and needs of students at this particular school. Specifically, many parents contended that the curriculum of the school should draw more heavily on the African American/Black culture of 80% of the student population and promote a more hands-on approach to learning. One parent (Gardner, P12) stated, *“At his [other child] school [a charter school] it’s way different. They try to be like a private school that does whatever the teachers think is right for kids... They have their own curriculum... Teachers know the kids, so they think they need to make that decision... It should be like that here”*. Another parent (Gardner, P13) said, *“You can tell it’s a generic curriculum that was probably bought on sale... Them kids would be more interested if it talked about things they’re comfortable with... Of course it should emphasize their culture... A lot of them are hyper. They need those activities that let them move... None of that is happening that I know of”*.

5.2 Academics: A well-funded and well-staffed academic tutoring service that meets demand – thanks in large part to college tutors from the university

Study participants continuously praised the academic tutoring service of the Gardner Local Federation Community School for being well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. Participants rarely uttered a negative word about the service, which serves approximately

150 students (25% of the student population). Instead, they frequently made flattering remarks about it, such as “should get an ‘A’” and “is as sweet as candy”. Like many other community schools, the Gardner LF Community School largely funds its academic tutoring service using funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant. Furthermore, like many other community schools, this service is overseen by a community school director and an assistant community school director. However, the size and backgrounds of the tutoring staff is what separates it from other community schools, and makes it truly special. On any given week, over 20 college students, hailing from the university that oversees the community school federation, are available to meet with students afterschool. Together, the tutors and students work on homework assignments, prepare for standardized exams, and take intermittent, fun-filled breaks. Teachers and parents, in particular, frequently discussed how these young tutors, who are majoring in subjects ranging from History to Engineering, are intelligent, relatable, and energetic. One parent (Gardner, P14) stated, *“It was for sure a smart idea to have them [college students] volunteer... Their ages aren’t that far off. College kids understand them a little better than teachers... Tutors I think like being here... There’s no shortage of them”*. Observations of afterschool tutoring sessions confirmed there was a group of easily accessible tutors. On a few occasions, two tutors were even seen working with an engaged student, as a result of there being an excess of available tutors.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School, however, were viewed far less favorably than the academic tutoring service by study participants.

5.3 Socio-Economic: General unease surrounds the implementation strategies of the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs

A noticeable disagreement existed over the funding and staffing levels of the socio-economic programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School and their ability to meet demand. Irrespective of this disagreement, though, it is evident that the school offers students access to a collection of socio-economic programs and services that are managed by the community school director. Physical health services, used by approximately 150 students (25% of the student population), include checkups and emergency care, and are provided through an on-site nurse’s office, off-site health clinic, off-site dental office, and off-site vision clinic. Mental health services, used by an estimated 100 students (17% of the student population), include weekly sessions that are available at the on-site mental health office. And the food programs, which serve all 600 students, offer breakfast, lunch, and a snack daily. In terms of the contention, though, on one side, a few resilient administrators and teachers passionately contend that these programs and services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. Specifically, they commonly discussed how the physical health services can help address a range of health-related matters, including emergencies and serious illnesses; the mental health services offer students weekly therapy sessions; and, the food programs provide students with food throughout the school day. On the other side, however, an overpowering number of teachers, parents, and community members avidly disagreed. These individuals frequently argued that, largely due to poor funding and staffing levels, the physical health services and the mental health services do not meet student demand. One teacher (Gardner, P7) stated, *“Someone should have the job of scheduling appointments with offices and arranging transportation... No, the nurse has to do it. And, she doesn’t usually get to it, because of everything else... Long*

story short, like usual, nothing happens... Not one of the kids gets regular meetings with a counselor. Counseling lands on us, too". Additionally, these individuals frequently argued that poor funding levels have led to an uninspired, mediocre food program that also does not meet student demand. Another frustrated teacher (Gardner, P4) stated, *"How they get away with saying we have a 'great' [meal] plan blows my mind... The food is unhealthy... A backpack program is a far dream... Dinner is not going to happen probably ever... We can't even give them an honest breakfast... I doubt we'll see that summer [food] program coming around anytime soon... It's absolutely shameful"*. Interestingly, many teachers critical of the quality of the socio-economic programs discussed how their dissatisfaction has led them to ignore some of the programs, primarily to prevent themselves and their students from becoming irritated and frustrated. The observations largely confirmed the position of the frustrated teachers, parents, and community members. A cogent system connecting students and physical health providers was not observed; the mental health office, with two counselors, seemed ill equipped; and, the quality and number of daily meals and snacks appeared to resemble those of a traditional public school that is not particularly focused on aiming to address socio-economic challenges.

The challenges pertaining to funding and staffing levels and meeting demand draw into question the dedication of the Gardner LF Community School to its aim of addressing local socio-economic challenges (See Section 4.3).

Controversy also surrounded the community engagement opportunities of the Gardner Local Federation Community School.

5.4 Community Engagement: Well-funded and well-staffed offerings that meet demand, although many more community events and adult education offerings are wanted

Study participants agreed that the existing community engagement offerings at the Gardner Local Federation Community School are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand; however, there was contention over the number of community engagement offerings that should be offered, with many administrators arguing that a sufficient number is currently offered, whereas many teachers, parents, and community members disagreed.

Notwithstanding the discord, study participants agreed that this extended-day school encourages students to participate in an array of well-funded, well-staffed, and accessible clubs, sports leagues, and athletic activities, while adults are invited to take part in four well-managed, on-site family- and skill-oriented workshops (See Appendix 12).

Additionally, participants agreed that both students and adults occasionally – not frequently – come together for significant, well-organized performances, sporting events, and themed community events. It is estimated that 300 students (50% of the student population) and more than 500 adult community members participate in at least one community engagement activity each year. In regard to the division, a few school administrators, including the community school director, contended that a significant number of community engagement opportunities presently exist. The community school director (Gardner, P3) stated, *"We are probably in the top 5% of schools in [name of city] that invest in community activities... More might be available in the future, I won't say no, but I think we are offering plenty"*. On the other side of the dispute stand an overwhelming number of teachers, parents, and other community members. These individuals frequently discussed how more community engagement opportunities should be offered. In particular, they contended that adult education should become a greater priority, particularly given that many community

members do not possess advanced degrees or trade skills and as a result of the high unemployment rate of the neighborhood. Accordingly, individuals frequently suggested that a GED program and vocational courses be offered at the school. An extremely frustrated community member (Gardner, P20) stated, “*Patting themselves on the back for offering sports and a party here and there?... He [community school director] rather work on easy things... Older people get the chance to go to a few tired things that should have been put to bed a long time ago... Meaningful would be a job training rotation. HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] is a good choice*”. It was rather unforeseen that the Gardner LF Community School would not clearly plan on expanding its adult education offerings, since it has the stated aim of offering community members access to enriching experiences and because doing so could significantly improve the socio-economic position of the participants (See Section 4.4).

Surprisingly, it is evident that a disconnect between some of the stated aims and the implementation strategies exists.

5.5 Surprising: Stated aims and implementation strategies not always synchronized

Socio-economic and community engagement offerings that are plagued with poor funding and weak staffing levels, along with not meeting demand, draw into question the commitment of the Gardner Local Federation Community School to its stated aims of addressing socio-economic and community engagement challenges, such as healthcare access and adult enrichment.

6 Impacts: Mostly moderate ‘academic performance results’ and perceived impact levels

Impacts associated with the academics, the socio-economic programs and services, and the community engagement opportunities of the Gardner Local Federation Community School are examined in this section. In terms of academics, over a recent five-year period, the school achieved mostly moderate Math and English proficiency rates and overall performance ranks. Specifically, during each of the five academic years, the school did not have more than 50% of students at grade level or above in Math or English. Furthermore, an annual city-wide evaluation conducted by the local school board ranked the school below the 50th percentile mark for overall performance each of the five years. Despite the poor academic and overall performance results, the school improved its Math proficiency rate and percentile rank between year-one and year-five. Outside of academic performance results, the Gardner LF Community School is perceived as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. As for positive impact levels, the courses and tutoring program did not garner stellar reviews. Study participants consistently described each as having had a moderate positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, such as the attendance rate. Similarly, in terms of the socio-economic programs and services, the physical health services, mental health services, and food programs were each generally viewed by study participants as having had a moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Lastly, the community engagement opportunities were consistently described by study participants as having had moderate positive impacts on students, parents, and other community members. Study participants generally felt that these

offerings did not strongly unite or engage the community at-large or offer sufficient adult education opportunities, such as HVAC or plumbing courses.

Over a recent five-year period, the Gardner Local Federation Community School averaged 35% of students at grade level or above in Math and English, while the citywide averages were 50% and 45%, respectively. Additionally, during this time span, the school averaged an overall performance rank in the 30 percentile, among schools in its city (See Table 38).

**Table 38. Gardner Local Federation Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Percentile Ranks**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Percentile Rank
Year-One (Most Distant)	20% – 29%	30% – 39%	20% – 29%
Year-Two	40% – 49%	30% – 39%	30% – 39%
Year-Three	40% – 49%	40% – 49%	30% – 39%
Year-Four	20% – 29%	30% – 39%	40% – 49%
Year-Five (Most Recent)	30% – 39%	30% – 39%	30% – 39%
All Five Years	35% (Citywide: 50%)	35% (Citywide: 45%)	30%
<u>Key</u> Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

The courses and the tutoring program also received moderate reviews (See Table 39).

6.1 Academics: Mostly moderate ‘academic performance results’

Even though the Gardner Local Federation Community School demonstrated the ability to increase its percentage of students at grade level or above in Math between year-one and year-five and increase its overall performance percentile rank during this same time period, the school was still in a weak to moderate academic position throughout the five-year span. Study participants, including administrators and teachers, and school documents confirmed

that during year one, 20–29% of students were at grade level or above in Math, then, the percentage increased the two subsequent years while being in the 40–49% range, next, in year-four, the percentage dropped down to 20–29%, and finally, during year-five, it improved to 30–39%. The up-down-up pattern resulted in a five-year average of 35%, while the citywide average was 15% higher. As for the English proficiency rates, during years one and two, 30–39% of students were at grade level or above in English, then, during year-three, the rate increased to 40–49%, next, during year-four, it dropped to 30–39%, and finally, during year-five, it dropped to a lower average than the previous year, but remained within the 30–39% range. This up-down pattern resulted in the school achieving a five-year average of 35%, while the citywide average was 10% stronger. Study participants and school documents also confirmed that, beginning in year-one and ending in year-five, the yearly percentile rank of the school followed the following order: 20–29% (year one), 30–39% (year two), 30–39% (year three), 40–49% (year four), and 30–39% (year five). Accordingly, the school did not exceed the 50th percentile mark during any of the five years. In the end, the five-year overall percentile rank was 30%.

A closer examination of the data displayed that female students consistently outperformed male students during the five-year time period. School administrators and teachers regularly discussed how local neighborhood dynamics, including high rates of single parent homes and robust gang activity, have helped place male students in a particularly vulnerable position. One concerned teacher (Gardner, P6) stated, *“Being at [name of local university] for four years taught me about how things really operate... A lot of the boys are raised by a grandparent or one parent... Yes, they are torn between what they see at school and what’s happening in the neighborhood... If he sees his ‘role models’ in gangs, stealing and making money from drugs, he’s going to follow... It’s so tough to get them back once they start. That’s a huge challenge”*.

6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements

In addition to achieving mostly moderate ‘academic performance results’ during a recent five-year span, study participants consistently perceived the courses and tutoring program of the Gardner Local Federation Community School as having had moderate positive impact levels on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements. In terms of academic performance, participants, particularly parents, consistently discussed how the curriculum could have a stronger positive impact on report card grades and test scores if it drew more on African American culture and promoted a more engaging, hands-on approach. Additionally, participants steadily discussed how the tutoring program could also have a stronger positive impact on academic performance if student tutors received more training and were clearly instructed that raising scores is a priority and, furthermore, if paid tutors, rather than volunteers, were added to the staff. One parent (Gardner, P15) stated, *“Kids from [name of university] aren’t paid, but they work hard, but you can’t think they’re as good as teachers... Not having any training says that they can’t be as good as possible... Running some training would help them be able to tutor better I think”*. Furthermore, the same parent went on to state, *“We should all want curriculums everywhere to have parts they know and like... A shared one, like what we have, won’t work... Grades and students suffer, and as a mom you know... Teachers must get away from reading out of the book and doing assignments that are hurdles that only stress them out”*. In a similar tone, many study participants also continuously discussed how the courses and tutoring program have had a moderate positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements. In particular, a limited number of teachers and many parents frequently discussed how a curriculum that better engages

students could help improve the attendance rate and the disruptive incident rate, which are both slightly worse than the city averages. Additionally, interestingly, study participants, for the most part, consistently discussed how courses and the tutoring program could do more to interest students.

The impact levels yielded by the socio-economic programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School were also commonly described as being mediocre by study participants (See Table 39).

6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs reportedly have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Despite some disagreement over whether or not the socio-economic programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School are well-funded, well-staffed, and able to meet demand, the collective belief among study participants was that these programs and services have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Study participants consistently discussed how the socio-economic programs and services have not reached their full potential in terms of impacts. While discussing this topic, some of these individuals made gentle statements, such as, *“They’re good people that’ll get better as they get more comfortable with the community school way of doing things,”* while others made bolder statements, such as, *“He [administrator] is lying if he fights and says they can’t do better”*. Notwithstanding the level of gentleness or boldness of the statements, study participants consistently agreed that the socio-economic programs and services of the school have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance and on the following ‘academic-related’ elements:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Additionally, these participants commonly talked about how the socio-economic programs and services have also had a moderate positive impact on the following ‘non-academic-related’ elements:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student and Family Hunger Rates (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

Many study participants, including administrators, teachers, and parents, spent significant time discussing the topic of ‘staff member dedication to the community school concept’. The divide between those dedicated to the concept and those indifferent was commonly cited as a main reason behind the moderate impact levels. One teacher (Gardner, P5) stated, *“Half ignore the idea entirely... For whatever purpose... The other half is enrolling boys and girls in services... Less than 40% [of students] use all the services that are available to them... No doubt it should be 90% or 100”*. Additionally, many teachers and parents argued that the moderate positive impact levels are largely due to poor funding and staffing levels.

Like the socio-economic programs and services, the impact levels of the community engagement opportunities were also generally described by study participants as being mediocre (See Table 39).

6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had moderate positive impacts, and more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

Although many study participants described the community engagement offerings of the Gardner Local Federation Community School as being largely well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand, they also described these opportunities as having had a moderate positive impact on participants. The overwhelming majority of these individuals cited a lack of attention to impacts as the primary culprit. One teacher (Gardner, P6) stated, *“Behind the scenes, countless people from [name of university] and here are just really trying hard to get all the different parts of a community school going... What we’re doing isn’t being quality checked every month... It’s definitely a reason why we’re not seeing the best results”*. In particular, study participants frequently discussed how this lapse has led to the community engagement opportunities, such as performances and themed-events, having had only a moderate positive impact on the following areas for both students and adults:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

Additionally, participants discussed how not intensely focusing on impacts has meant that adult-focused community engagement opportunities, such as family-oriented workshops, have also only had a moderate positive impact on the following areas:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

Beyond solely acknowledging the shortcomings of the community engagement opportunities, participants were largely willing to offer productive suggestions that could help improve the level of impact of the opportunities. Participants consistently suggested that both the school and university regularly survey participants about quality, that the school focus more attention on bringing community members into the school, and that the school offer more adult education programs, which are largely in-demand.

The generally appreciative attitude of parents and other community members for the community school was somewhat surprising.

6.5 Surprising: Immense appreciation from parents and other community members, despite moderate positive impact levels

Parents and community members, in spite of acknowledging moderate positive impacts levels, were largely grateful for the Gardner Local Federation Community School. Conversations with study participants consistently revealed that the positive attitude was linked to a historical, deep-rooted sentiment of feeling ignored by the local government. One community member (Gardner, P21) summarized the situation by stating, *“I know, my friends know, my parents know, and it’s no secret... It is not winning awards for being*

number one... It's healing deep wounds and making us have a better relationship with teachers and people in government".

7 Summary

The Gardner Local Federation Community School became a community school after joining a university-managed local federation, which currently consists of five community schools, all located in the same city. Since becoming a community school, the Gardner LF Community School has consistently been lauded by practitioners and local government officials for its commitment to academics, socio-economics, and community engagement; however, an internal struggle between some administrators and teachers within the school, questionable implementation strategies, and moderate positive impact levels challenge many optimistic sentiments surrounding the school. Specifically, the aims and motivations of the school were not drawn into question by the study participants. These individuals were largely pleased that the school possesses traditional community school aims and motivations and the less common aim of preparing students for standardized exams. This combination, along with the school openly acknowledging the local gang and drug culture of the neighborhood, has helped the school offer aims and motivations that are largely locally-based, according to participants. The implementation strategies, however, are far more controversial. On one side, administrators, for the most part, consistently contended that the curriculum is strong and that the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. On the other side, though, an immense number of teachers, parents, and community members believe that the curriculum needs to be more engaging and relatable and that a substantial number of the programs and services are poorly-funded, poorly-staffed, and/or unable to meet demand. It seems reasonable to conclude that the latter view is accurate given the number of participants arguing the point and based on observations. Despite the weak implementation strategies, study participants, overall, did not aggressively criticize the 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements of the school or the impact levels associated with the programs and services. In general, these individuals found the academic, socio-economic, and community offerings to have been linked to a variety of favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements and to have had a moderate – not weak – positive impact level on students, parents, and other community members.

Presently, the Gardner Local Federation Community School does not embody all the characteristics of the ideal community school, as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools. However, the Gardner LF Community School possesses a reasonably strong framework that could potentially improve from moderate investments. Investing more time and resources, for instance, on the curriculum, socio-economic offerings, unity and engagement efforts, adult education opportunities, and evaluations could help the school meet the ideal image of a community school.

Table 39. Summary of Gardner Local Federation Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 5	Weak local economy that is a 10-min. bus ride from a strong economy	Traditional aims & focus on standardized exams	School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 5-Year Math Average: 35% (50%) 5-Year English Average: 35% (45%) 5-Year Average Percentile Rank: 30%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$250,000 + (est.) · 21st Century · University partner · Small grants	Large African America population and small Hispanic population, both of which possess moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements	Many programs and services However, more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on 'academic-related' elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Considerable added support from a large group of college student volunteers who attend the university-partner		Locally-based aims and motivations, which acknowledge gang and drug culture	Uneasiness over the staffing and funding levels of the majority of the programs and services, and apprehension over their ability to meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance Moderate positive impact on 'academic-related' elements Moderate positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements
				<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students Moderate positive impact on adults – more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

APPENDIX 14:

The Teak Independent Community School: A Resilient School without Big Financial Backing, But its Band of Individuals are Dedicated to Community School Principles and try to Make its Modest Funding go Far – with the aid of Partners

The Teak Independent Community School, which averages over 500 kindergarten through grade eight students per year, has been operating as a community school since roughly 2010. The school developed from a traditional school into a community school largely due to the efforts of a small group of school district personnel and school administrators who wanted to see ‘progress’ and ‘change’. Since the establishment of the Teak Independent Community School, school administrators have managed the day-to-day operations of the community school, while school district administrators have provided the community school with added strategic guidance, general advice, and financial support. The school does not take direction from a national headquarters or a community school network. In terms of academic performance over a recent five-year period, the ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency rates (i.e. year-two through year-five) were not unanimously stronger than the ‘traditional school tenure’ proficiency rates (i.e. year-one). Instead, the ‘community school tenure’ had a stronger Math proficiency average, and the ‘traditional school tenure’ had a stronger English proficiency average. Nevertheless, the Teak Independent Community School is perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements and, furthermore, as having programs and services that have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

1 Demographics: A large working-class Hispanic population

The Teak Independent Community School is located in a historic town that was once home to an ever-growing population, dominant mills and manufacturers, and exceptional wealth, but over the past fifty years, crushing economic shifts have significantly hurt this once thriving town. Currently, the size of the population is modest, resting at fewer than 50,000 residents, few dominant companies reside in the old town, low- to moderate-skill jobs dominate the rather quivering market, and regal wealth is rare. Additionally, the community is currently facing a drug epidemic and a moderate surge in crime, both of which are reportedly linked to gangs and theft. The facts translate into easily visible signs of economic devastation. It is not difficult to spot derelict factories and buildings, along with unkempt, overgrown lots, around the town. The economic position of the town is undeniably in a state of disorder, and many residents are worried. The annual median household income of the town is about \$32,000, while the national annual median household income is more than \$15,000 higher, and over 25% of local community members are under the poverty line. Interestingly, along with an economic shift, the makeup of the population also shifted over the past half century. Today, Hispanics account for roughly 50% of the population and African Americans account for about 5%, when historically their figures were noticeably lower.

Despite the economic figures of the town being poor, the economic figures of households associated with the Teak Independent Community School are reported to be even worse. Administrators and teachers estimate the annual median household income for households associated with the Teak Independent Community School to be between \$25,000 and \$30,000 and the poverty rate of this population to be over 30%. These study participants regularly credited this harsh reality to a poor local employment market, less than 25% of parents and other community members possessing a college degree, associate's degree, or trade certification, and the local drug epidemic.

Many students at the Teak Independent Community School confront both economic and academic challenges. Over 95% of students receive free or reduced lunch, almost half of the students are English Language Learners (ELL), and over 20% of the students are classified as special needs. Additionally, the Math and English proficiency rates of the school have not surpassed 29% during a recent five-year period, while town-wide proficiency averages have done so on occasion.

2 History of the School: Limited stacks of funding dollars, but tons of perseverance

The humble origins of the Teak Independent Community School can be traced back to a cadre consisting of a few local school board administrators and a few Teak Independent Community School administrators in 2007. These individuals felt that many unaddressed local challenges, commonly tied to academics, socio-economics, and community engagement, were stunting the academic and social development of local students. They saw, for example, poor access to additional academic support, weak access to healthcare and food, and limited enrichment opportunities as factors that could lead students to drop out and/or face significant emotional stress. Furthermore, members of the cadre felt that addressing socio-economic and community-based challenges could help adult community members form a stronger sense of community, create sturdier families, and advance professionally. After researching possible strategies, the community school concept was identified and subsequently supported by the local superintendent of public schools.

Due in large part to limited supplementary funding, not all of the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School are located on-site. The school, however, has been able to overcome funding challenges by utilizing off-site partners when 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding and private donations are not enough. Currently, on-site, students have access to academic tutoring, a nurse's office, a mental health office, a comprehensive, academic-year food program, and a variety of community engagement opportunities. Furthermore, students have access to a referral system, which is linked to an off-site physical health clinic, off-site dental office, and off-site optometrist office. Parents and other community members also have access to offerings at the school. Adults can enroll in a GED program, ESL classes, and workshops. Additionally, community members of all ages can come together for performances, entertainment events, and cultural gatherings. Despite there being many available offerings, a few particular areas of weakness were frequently identified. Administrators, teachers, and parents consistently discussed how having more academic tutors, on-site physical health professionals, and on-site mental health counselors would benefit the students. Furthermore, parents believe adding a summer meal program would benefit students. Parents also asserted that expanding the adult education offerings would improve the lives of families and strengthen the community.

The reputation of the Teak Independent Community School is strong. Administrators, teachers, parents, and other community members are pleased with the values of the school and its ability to take action. Furthermore, parents and other community members, in particular, generally feel that the school is sincerely trying to support the community and its members. Despite all the positive sentiments, study participants, from administrators to community members, frequently acknowledged that the school possesses areas of weakness tied to funding, on-site offerings, staffing, community unity and engagement, and adult education.

3 School Culture: Welcome, offer, and support all community members

The culture of the Teak Independent Community School is quite clear and widely acknowledged: care for students and community members by welcoming them into the school, by offering them access to valuable lessons and resources, and by striving to do as much as possible for them. This culture, which stands on pillars of respect and kindness, was acknowledged by all the study participants. *“No way is it traditional, but I wish what we’re doing becomes traditional in the future... I invite them here [community members to the school] every chance I get, wherever I am... I know people from [name of town] can benefit from what we have to give... We do it more out of love. I care for them like my own son and brother,”* stated a teacher (Teak, P4). Parents and community members were also well aware of the compassionate culture. During discussions, they often used the words “caring,” “welcoming,” “encouraging,” and “committed” to describe the culture of the school, which they deeply value and, in some cases, depend on. A parent (Teak, P9) described the school culture by discussing her personal experiences, stating:

I depend on them [school staff] more. I’m a single mom... I don’t get sick days, and I can get fired like if I leave early or need a day off to bring my kids to the doctors... They [school staff] are so kind... I keep his teachers and principal close on what’s happening, because it makes me feel better, and they want to know, so they can help... I always feel that I can come in and talk.

Observations of the school appeared to support the described benevolent school culture. Members of the school staff were often seen compassionately engaging with parents and other community members throughout the day. Additionally, the school staff was regularly seen inviting community members of all ages to take part in school offerings, from ESL courses to community gatherings. Furthermore, the school was frequently open late at night, which speaks to the commitment of the school to the community (See Appendix 12).

4 Aims and Motivations: Community school principles meet a desire for excitement and a get-it-done posture

Aims and motivations linked to the curriculum, socio-economic programs and services, and community engagement opportunities of the Teak Independent Community School are explored in this section. The school, undoubtedly, possesses many aims and motivations that are grounded in traditional community school principles, which emphasize offering a strong curriculum, addressing socio-economic challenges, and supporting the community at-large. The Teak Independent Community School, however, also possesses an

additional stated aim and an added motivation. Specifically, the school has the supplementary goal of using the curriculum to excite students about learning. Furthermore, the school, somewhat uniquely, is motivated by the harsh reality that no other local organization comprehensively addresses the socio-economic challenges students are confronting. Possessing both aims and motivations that are grounded in traditional community school principles, in addition to maintaining local aims and motivations that are less common among community schools, allows the Teak Independent Community School to possess a collection of traditional and locally-based aims and motivations that are representative of its students and community.

The Teak Independent Community School strives to offer a diverse, engaging curriculum that challenges and excites students, while not obsessing over standardized exams. These academic aims are largely motivated by the belief that a strong curriculum is essential for students and the view that offering a natural learning environment encourages lifelong learning.

4.1 Academics: Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is absolutely essential

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School frequently described the ‘traditional school years’ as lacking ambitious academic goals and galvanizing motivations. Those days, however, have come and gone, according to participants. Study participants regularly described the Teak Independent Community School of today as having the set goal of offering a curriculum that is challenging, diverse, and engaging. Furthermore, they described the school as being roused by the view that a demanding curriculum will greatly define whether or not students are prepared for high school and college and if they have a chance of overcoming socio-economic challenges in the future. A school administrator stated (Teak, P25):

The goals, during those years, didn’t have meaning... That needed to be gone... I want the conclusion that it [curriculum] is making them study to get honors, but they can get it... We have teachers using different styles... Classes make them work hard. That’s how they’ll get to college... Listen to feedback from the PTA. The goals match what they want from us.

A teacher (Teak, P4) also cited a new, rejuvenated school attitude, stating “*The passive attitude is gone. See the smile on my face*”. And a parent (Teak, P10) stated, “*There wasn’t an urge to be [name of state] best school. That’s dangerous, because kids are hurt... I think they’re more owning the expectations... We were there. Finally they listened to what we need out of it*”. Interestingly, parents, in particular, also commonly discussed feeling overjoyed about the school possessing an academic goal and motivation that reflects their personal values.

4.2 Academics: Curriculum is to promote student achievement, while not becoming consumed by standardized exams, because creating a natural learning environment promotes lifelong learning

School administrators and teachers at the Teak Independent Community School frequently expressed serious concerns over the value of emphasizing standardized testing results to the degree that it undermines the natural curiosity and self-confidence of students. These study participants acknowledged that testing has a place in the education system and can support

the academic and social development of students. However, conversely, they also discussed how an extensive testing culture can threaten the academic and social development of students, leading some to withdraw from school, to become disinterested in academic exploration, and to feel substandard. To realize the benefits of standardized testing, while attempting to eschew its drawbacks, the school aims to promote an environment that values strong standardized testing scores but does not obsess over them. *“Putting ten-year-olds through a month of test prep and a long test is not worth whatever you think you might get out of it... Kids get taken away from their routine. They are scared into believing that if they don’t do well they’re nothing... I think testing like that is going to damage at least 10% of a class,”* stated a teacher (Teak, P5). Another teacher (Teak, P6) stated, *“Don’t throw every test away... The conversations about testing need to change... I tell students that becoming more comfortable with multiple choice tests can be beneficial... I wouldn’t make them feel horrible inside about their scores”*. Parents, for the most part, were largely pleased with the stance of the school on academic achievement. In particular, many of them expressed how the standpoint acknowledges that almost half of the student population is ELL and struggles with this type of exam. One parent (Teak, P11) stated, *“They [students] always deserve to be protected... Actually, even more so, when they do not have the best handle of English... Here they know kids can’t be attacked if they don’t get a 90”*.

4.3 Academics: Curriculum is to excite students about learning, because a good curriculum can have serious positive impacts

The Teak Independent Community School believes that students who are excited about learning will excel academically and, thus, improve their odds of leaving socio-economic challenges behind as adults. Study participants frequently discussed how, since becoming a community school, the school has set the goal of getting students excited about their courses, the topics being covered in classes, and school projects. According to these participants, as odd as it may sound, the school sincerely strives to have classes make students feel thrilled about learning. *“You’re thinking, ‘But why?’... I’ve heard it before from visitors,”* stated a teacher (Teak, P7). Beyond the crowd of skeptics, however, lays a passionate network of school administrators, counselors, and teachers who are truly dedicated to this ambitious aim, explained a few administrators and teachers. One teacher (Teak, P6) in particular stated:

When you spend days with them, it’s not hard to get a pretty good picture of their lives... I have a few students who are the nicest. They don’t want to come to school half asleep, but they can’t do anything about it. They are in charge of watching their brothers and sisters, while their mom and dad work the nightshift... If you don’t have the goal of jolting him up with great lesson plans, his home life and the material are going to put him in a deep sleep... He will probably face academic trouble... A lot of them are exhausted from their home lives... Wanting them to be excited hopefully helps them overcome stresses in their lives.

Parents who were interviewed strongly supported the goal. In particular, they were delighted that it is locally-based and intended to support students.

The stated aims of the socio-economic programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School also strive to address challenges that could derail the academic and/or social development of a student. Interestingly, these aims are motivated by morality, logic, and the vacancy of comprehensive, local organizations willing to take on the challenges.

4.4 Socio-Economic: Programs and services are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical and because no other local organization comprehensively addresses these types of challenges

Conversations about the socio-economic programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School frequently addressed topics such as ‘encouraging academic and social development,’ ‘being moral and logical,’ and ‘filling a resource void’. Study participants commonly described the Teak Independent Community School as possessing the genuine goal of addressing socio-economic challenges, such as poor access to healthcare and food, which are believed, by the school, to possess the ability to derail the academic careers of students and impede their social development. Delving beyond comments such as “It’s the right thing to do” and “We have to,” it becomes evident that morality and logic motivate the school to address local socio-economic challenges. *“I don’t know how a person can argue that kids who are at school sick, when they should be at home getting better, are fine... My conscience says ‘no way, we need to do something about it,’”* stated a teacher (Teak, P5). Beyond the somewhat ideological motivations, though, the school is also driven by the reality that no other organizations in the community are comprehensively addressing socio-economic challenges. *“There was no place in [name of town] for them to go... Now this school is where they can go for help,”* stated an administrator (Teak, P25). Parents and other community members who were interviewed were also largely positive about the aims and motivations, which they commonly described as “local” and “right”. A few parents even discussed how the aims and motivations give insight into the soul and ideals of the school and community.

In addition to possessing academic and socio-economic aims, the Teak Independent Community School also has the stated community engagement aim of not only uniting students and enriching their lives, but also doing this for adult community members. This desire is largely driven by the view that a school and community must help one another, particularly when one is capable of supporting the other.

4.5 Community Engagement: Occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School regularly stressed that the community engagement aims and motivations of the school drastically transformed and positively developed once the school became a community school. Before adopting the community school approach, during the traditional school days, the school was commonly portrayed as being mildly interested in afterschool activities for students and faintly interested in activities for adults and the community at-large. *“I didn’t walk here thinking they [school staff] were bad people... All the schools had the same mentality... Rushing in to schedule a carnival wasn’t an idea about five years ago... Amazing how lucky we are that change happened so fast,”* stated a community member (Teak, P17). The days when

the Teak Independent Community School did not possess expansive community engagement aims have passed. Today, the school has the stated aim of engaging both students and adult community members by offering them enriching experiences. For example, students have the opportunity to enroll in athletic- and art-related afterschool opportunities; adults can sign up for a GED program, ESL classes, and workshops; and, community members of all ages can unite for art productions and cultural events. Motivating this expanded aim is largely a result of the school believing that a school needs to take care of its community and, conversely, a community needs to care for its school. Additionally, the school is motivated by the view that a school with means should, without question, support its community. *“I volunteer my time to help because that is where [the community] my kids spend more than half of their life... It’s not fantasy to think that we are all connected. Schools do not operate in isolation... Helping a grandmother is the same as helping her granddaughter,”* stated a teacher (Teak, P5). Parents and other community members were tremendously supportive of the newly found, expansive community engagement aims and its motivations, because, in particular, it is logical and reflective of local needs.

Perhaps surprisingly, the lack of substantial financial backing from a foundation or corporation did not seem to have prevented the Teak Independent Community School from formulating significant school aims.

4.6 Interesting: A community school with limited funding organically developed serious expectations of itself

The evidence collected from interviews and documents suggests that the level of aspiration of the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement aims of the Teak Independent Community School were not defined by the level of funding the school secured. A few administrators and teachers discussed how creativity and local partnerships can sometimes deliver more value than a substantial grant.

5 Implementation Strategies: A school board prescribed curriculum and a mixed bag of funding and staffing levels and offerings meeting demand – off-site partnerships are helpful, though

The curriculum and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School are discussed in this section. Specifically, the designer of the curriculum is identified, and the funding and staffing levels of the offerings and their ability to meet student demand are examined. Overall, the Teak Independent Community School implements a school board prescribed curriculum, while also providing some well-funded and well-staffed programs and services that meet demand and some programs and services that do not (See Table 40).

**Table 40. Teak Independent Community School:
Academic, Socio-Economic, and Community Engagement Programs and Services**

Programs and Services	Well-Funded	Well-Staffed	Meet Demand
Academic Tutoring	No	No	No (Approx. 100 students, 20% participation rate)
Physical Health Services	No	No (On-Site)	Yes (Approx. 100 students, 20% participation rate)
		Yes (Off-Site)	
Mental Health Services	No	No (On-Site)	Yes (Approx. 75 students, 15% participation rate)
		Yes (Off-Site)	
Food Programs	No	Yes	No (Approx. 500 students, 100% participation rate)
Clubs, Sports Leagues, and Athletic Activities	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 325 students, 65% participation rate)
Community Gatherings	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 450 students, 90% participation rate) (Approx. 1,500 community members)
GED Program	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 20 community members)
ESL Courses	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 40 community members)
Workshops for Adults	Yes	Yes	Yes (Approx. 150 community members)
Trade and/or Advanced Craft Programs	Not Offered	Not Offered	No

Three of the most common issues identified by study participants included the curriculum not being sufficiently engaging or tailored, the socio-economic programs and services not addressing challenges pertaining to funding, staffing, and demand, and the adult education opportunities not being able to meet demand, due to a lack of opportunities. However, it should be noted, having weakly funded and poorly staffed physical health and mental health services did not seem to prevent each of these offerings from meeting demand. This was largely due to the school relying on off-site partners that did not charge the school for the services. Having the option to send students to a private off-site physical health clinic and a private off-site mental health office greatly aided the school.

Study participants, particularly parents, often commented on the school board prescribed curriculum not being entirely engaging or sufficiently tailored. Additionally, participants also commonly articulated concern over the funding and staffing levels of the academic tutoring service and its ability to meet demand.

5.1 Academics: School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored

School administrators and teachers confirmed that the Teak Independent Community School employs a school board prescribed curriculum, but concerns regarding its level of engagement and personalization surfaced during interviews, particularly with parents. For the most part, school administrators and teachers marginalized the possibility of the school adopting its own individual curriculum. Arguments against this type of curriculum frequently included, one, the measure is ‘uncommon’ and, two, a personalized school board prescribed curriculum should rival an independent curriculum. A school administrator (Teak, P26) stated:

There might be some teachers that want us to pick it [independent curriculum]... But that has not been anything we are planning to organize... It [curriculum] is a set of books that have to be shaped by teachers who read them... Teachers here are busy... I rather they do that than have the stress about being responsible for helping us buy a curriculum... We’re not taught how to get a look at all the possible curriculums... Do I need to meet with sales people?

Parents who were interviewed largely sympathized with the stance of the school. These parents, however, generally could not help themselves from respectfully disagreeing with the school. It was common to hear parents question ‘why the curriculum does not draw more students in,’ ‘why more relatable elements are not leveraged by the curriculum, including Latin culture, pop culture, and sports,’ ‘why the textbooks are not more attention-grabbing,’ and ‘why all the teachers are not pushing a more project-based curriculum, which should captivate more students’. “*Kids are on the internet for hours looking up the same searches... They [teachers] should ask kids what they’re searching on the internet. Make that at least a small part of the day... An analysis of a football game helps... Kids in my family have fun when they are playing sports... That tells me that teachers should not sit them in a seat all day,*” stated a parent (Teak, P12). Interestingly, a few teachers agreed with this position. One teacher (Teak, P7) stated, “*Homemade is usually always better than something that comes from a factory... They [parents] have an opinion that should start a debate... There is definitely a reason why some schools go through the trouble of making their own*”. Additionally, it is interesting that a potential disconnect exists between the

stated academic aim of engaging students and the academic implementation strategy of the school (See Section 4.1).

5.2 Academics: An academic tutoring service that is not well-funded or well-staffed and falls slightly short of meeting demand

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School commonly affirmed that the academic tutoring service, which serves approximately 100 students (20% of the student population), requires additional funding and tutors if it is to meet a student demand that marginally surpasses current tutor availability. The community school director, who oversees the service, candidly discussed how, overall, poor funding has had a trickle-down effect: a lack of funding leads to a lack of tutors, which results in demand not being met. In particular, she discussed how 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding could not be stretched any further to cover the cost of even an additional tutor. To somewhat remedy the situation, however, she has turned to volunteers, who range from teaching students at a local college to community members. Although this economical measure has helped increase the number of tutoring sessions, requests for sessions still slightly eclipse session availability. The community school director (Teak, P3) stated:

I did what I could to get more tutors last year, but I think I can come up with a strategy that's stronger... There are those students who do not, like, absolutely need a tutor, but they could get a lot from having a tutor. Right now, they do not get anything... I want to fix that, because being on a really bad track should never be a qualification... Find a grant that could help.

Parents, regrettably, on a regular basis, agreed with the portrait the community school director presented. However, parents also commonly defended the tutoring service and put their criticisms into context. For example one parent (Teak, P13) stated, *"Hearing 'no' can be disappointing for a parent. There is a process... No, there are people available. There isn't plenty... They [parents] blame the city more than the school"*. Interestingly, a few of the parents who were interviewed also confirmed that tutors, during sessions, support the academic aim of not emphasizing standardized exams (See Section 4.2).

Collectively, the socio-economic programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School, like its academic tutoring service, also confront challenges pertaining to funding, staffing, and ability to meet demand.

5.3 Socio-Economic: Concerns loom over the poorly funded and sparsely staffed physical health and mental health services that meet demand and the well-staffed, yet poorly funded food programs that do not meet demand

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School, overall, did not deny that the implementation strategies of the socio-economic programs and services can be deemed as inconsistent and weak at first glance. To them, this is a reasonable basic conclusion. However, participants, who ranged from school administrators to parents, largely felt that an in-depth analysis of these implementation strategies provides a different perspective. They often discussed how at the center of the analysis must rest the view that 'the school, due to reasonable circumstances (i.e. a modest operating budget for socio-economic offerings), confronts unavoidable obstacles (i.e. insufficient funding and weak on-site staffing levels), but implements shrewd strategies to overcome the difficulties when possible (i.e. a few off-site partnerships)'.

Study participants commonly explained that, yes, undeniably, the Teak Independent Community School does not have sufficient funding to outright pay all the costs associated with a comprehensive physical health clinic, an extensive mental health office, and broad food program. Accordingly, the Teak Independent Community School does not possess a well-funded on-site physical health clinic (currently serves 100 students, 20% of the student population), a well-funded on-site mental health office (currently supports 75 students, 15% of the student population), or well-funded food programs (currently serving all 500 students). Furthermore, the physical health clinic and the mental health office each currently require at least one additional office administrator and two additional health professionals, according to some study participants. On a positive note, though, participants asserted that the food programs are well-staffed. *“The 21st Century grant allowed us to get started, but we needed more funding right away to be a community school... Food and donations come in... We had to become partners with organizations we knew and trusted... It was just obvious to all,”* stated the community school director (Teak, P3), who oversees the socio-economic offerings.

Despite hardships pertaining to funding and on-site staffing levels, study participants, particularly parents, often maintained that student demand is met more times than not, as a result of valuable off-site partnerships. For example, the on-site physical health services revolve around a poorly funded and weakly staffed nurse’s office. On-site at the school, this service does not possess the capacity to offer a comprehensive preventative program or to address somewhat significant illnesses. However, the school has off-site partners that can address these challenges, in addition to providing students with dental and vision care. Similarly, the on-site mental health office is poorly funded and weakly staffed. Counselors at the school struggle to meet appointment requests. However, the school has the ability to recommend students to off-site therapists, thus reducing stress on the school. The food programs are in a slightly different position. Students have access to breakfast, lunch, and dinner, a weekend backpack program, and a food pantry. However, the school has not been able to offer a summer food program due to lack of funding and not being able to find a partner. As a result, study participants commonly felt that the food program does not currently meet student demand, but would if a summer food program were offered.

In all, some might argue that the socio-economic implementation strategies of the Teak Independent Community School support the aim of the school to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to derail the academic and social development of students (See Section 4.4). Moreover, though, it would seem challenging to argue against the commitment of the school to its socio-economic aim if the school were to begin offering a summer food program.

The community engagement implementation strategies of the Teak Independent Community School fared better than the academic and socio-economic implementation strategies of the school, in terms of staffing and funding levels and ability to meet demand. Additionally, though, it must be noted that concerns were often expressed about there being insufficient adult education opportunities.

5.4 Community Engagement: Many well-funded and well-staffed community engagement opportunities that meet demand, although more adult education offerings are wanted

The community engagement implementation strategies of the Teak Independent Community School, in general, do not possess the weaknesses shared by the academic and socio-economic implementation strategies, according to study participants. The community engagement implementation strategies, however, were commonly described by participants as possessing the unique issue of not offering sufficient adult education opportunities. Nevertheless, members of the school staff, parents, and other community members constantly depicted the school as offering a range of community engagement opportunities that are well-funded and well-staffed and, for the most part, meet demand. Students participate in clubs, sports leagues, and a variety of athletic activities. Parents and other community members are also provided with opportunities. Adults enroll in the GED program, take ESL courses, and register for family-life workshops. Additionally, community members of all ages frequently come together at the school for performances, sporting events, and themed community events. Overall, it is estimated that 450 students (90% of the student population) and more than 1,500 adults participate in the community-focused opportunities each year. To support the diverse offerings, the community school director, who oversees the management of all the community engagement opportunities, primarily relies on 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding and volunteers. A teacher (Teak, P7) at the school stated:

Reactions have been really positive... Their parents work all they can. Getting to activities is really hard... Afternoons and weekends are not always free... They [parents] don't want them [kids] doing bad things with classmates in town... The school will be full of friends and parents who are responsible for kids that have parents that couldn't attend... Getting their family involved is imperative. They think being a community is important to their kids' education... Everyone is excited we are making it better every chance we can.

Observations of afterschool activities, particularly of a holiday gathering, seemed to confirm that the offerings are well-funded, well-staffed, and meet demand, and also appeared to show that they are caring, joyful events. School staff members, students, parents, and other community members were all seen together talking, laughing, and supporting one another. With all the satisfaction, though, it was frequently made clear by parents, in particular, that more adult education opportunities are required. One parent (Teak, P14) stated, "*Me and the kids could be here until 7:00 PM... That would be convenient... They do their homework, eat, and play soccer. I'll learn about technology to get a job*". Interestingly, the concern could draw into question the commitment of the Teak Independent Community School to its aim of offering enriching experiences to community members (See Section 4.5).

Surprisingly, the academic implementation strategy of the Teak Independent Community School may not support an academic aim of the school.

5.5 Surprising: Stated aim and implementation strategy not always synchronized

The Teak Independent Community School possesses the academic aim of offering a curriculum that engages students; however, study participants have contended that the school board prescribed curriculum could do more to engage students (See Section 4.1).

6 Impacts: Weak academic results, but strong positive impacts perceived from the courses and the academic, socio-economic, and community engagement offerings

In this section, academic, socio-economic, and community engagement impacts of the Teak Independent Community School are examined. In terms of academic performance, the school did not achieve exceptional results or consistent yearly improvements over a recent five-year period. Specifically, the school never had more than 30% of students at grade level or above in either Math or English during this five-year time period. Furthermore, during this time span, the school did not earn an overall percentile rank above the 10 percentile mark. Interestingly, though, data gathered on the school allowed for conclusions to be drawn on differences between its ‘traditional school results,’ which account for year-one, and its ‘community school results,’ which account for year-two through year-five (See Table 41). In the end, the ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages (accounting for year-two through year-five) did not always surpass the ‘traditional school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages – the Math average did but the English average did not.

Despite the overall poor academic performance, study participants generally shared positive views about the ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements and the positive impact levels associated with the courses, the academic tutoring service, and the socio-economic and community engagement offerings of the school. Participants commonly discussed how they believe the school possesses a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, the courses and all of the offerings, for the most part, were consistently described by study participants as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements for students. Additionally, the community engagement offerings were steadily described by participants as having had a strong positive impact on the lives of parents and other community members. However, concerns over the community engagement offerings not unifying the community enough and these offerings not including workforce-focused adult education opportunities, such as a site engineer program or metalwork program, regularly surfaced during interviews.

During the four-year ‘community school tenure’ (year-two through year-five), the Teak Independent Community School earned a Math proficiency average of 20%, while the town-wide average was 25%, and an English proficiency average of 15%, while the town-wide average was 30%. Furthermore, during this time period, the school earned an overall percentile rank average slightly below 10% (See Table 41).

**Table 41. Teak Independent Community School:
Math and English Proficiency Rates and Percentile Ranks**

Academic Years	Math: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	English: Percentage of Students At Grade Level or Above	Overall Percentile Rank
Year-One: Traditional (Most Distant)	10% – 19%	10% – 19%	1% – 9%
Year-Two: Community	10% – 19%	20% – 29%	1% – 9%
Year-Three: Community	10% – 19%	10% – 19%	1% – 9%
Year-Four: Community	20% – 29%	10% – 19%	1% – 9%
Year-Five: Community (Most Recent)	20% – 29%	10% – 19%	1% – 9%
Traditional (One Year)	10% – 19% (Town-wide: 20%)	15% – 19% (Town-wide: 30%)	1% – 9%
Community (Four Years)	20% (Town-wide: 25%)	15% (Town-wide: 30%)	9%
All Five Years	15% (Town-wide: 25%)	20% (Town-wide: 30%)	9%
<u>Key</u> Green Highlighting: Highest average between ‘traditional school tenure’ and ‘community school tenure’ Weak: 1% – 29% Moderate: 30% – 69% Strong: 70% – 99%			

The courses and tutoring service, on the other hand, earned more positive reviews (See Table 42).

6.1 Academics: Weak Math and English proficiency rates and overall percentile ranks

During the five-year time period, the ‘traditional school tenure’ (year-one), and the ‘community school tenure’ (year-two through year-five), the Teak Independent Community School did not realize exceptional Math and English proficiency rates or superb overall percentile ranks. Specifically, during the five-year timespan, in regard to Math proficiency rates, the school had 10% – 19% of students at grade level or above during year-one through year-three, and then the rate increased to 20% – 29% during year-four and year-five. This flat-up pattern resulted in a five-year average of 15%, which was 10% below the town-wide average. As for the English proficiency rates, similarly, they also were in the 10% – 29% range. During year-one, 10% – 19% of students were at grade level or above in English, next, during year-two, the rate increased to 20% – 29%, then lastly, during year-three through year-five, the rate rested at 10% – 19%. Although the ranges in Table 41 visually display an up-down pattern, the English proficiency rates were basically flat between year-one and year-five. This led the school to achieve a five-year English proficiency rate average of 20%, which was 10% below the town-wide average. Interestingly, the overall percentile rank of the school was steady all five years. Between year-one and year-five, the school earned percentile ranks of 1% – 9%, resulting in a five-year average percentile rank of 9%. In the end, between year-one and year-five, the Teak Independent Community School improved its Math proficiency rate by over 5%, lost almost 5% of its English proficiency rate, and maintained an overall percentile rank that did not transcend the 10 percentile mark.

An examination of the ‘traditional school tenure’ Math and English proficiency rates (year-one) and the ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages (year-two through year-five) also yielded an interesting finding: a draw. During the ‘traditional school tenure,’ a stronger English proficiency rate was attained (i.e. 15% – 19% versus 15%). However, during the ‘community school tenure,’ a stronger Math proficiency average was attained (i.e. 20% versus 10 – 19%). In the end, nevertheless, all the proficiency rates are somewhat in the same region.

Discussions with school administrators and teachers, in particular, about the data revealed that the high concentration of ESL students, in their opinion, has made it particularly difficult for the Teak Independent Community School – along with other local public schools – to achieve better academic results. One teacher discussed how ESL student populations upwards of 40% to 50% are not uncommon in the area.

6.2 Academics: Courses and tutoring program reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School avidly argued that the courses and tutoring program, unquestionably, have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements, such as interest levels. This was even despite the majority of these same participants arguing that the curriculum could be more engaging, the academic tutoring program requires greater funding and staffing to meet demand, and the recent Math and English proficiency rates are low. The seemingly faulty conclusion (i.e. unengaging curriculum and poorly operated tutoring service, which are linked to weak Math and English proficiency rates, have reportedly had strong positive impacts), however, was thoroughly clarified by participants who used encouraging words, such as “appreciate,” “patience,” and “understanding”. These participants are aware of the flaws the school possesses. They recognize the curriculum and tutoring program should be stronger and the proficiency rates should be higher. However, they passionately believe that these challenges should not erase the notable progress the school has made in terms of

school culture, social behavior, and affective outcomes for students since becoming a community school. The participants, overwhelmingly, were set on the view that the courses and tutoring program have had strong positive impacts on academic performance and the following ‘academic-related’ elements:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Interviewees were also genuinely fixed on the belief that stronger positive impacts, particularly in terms of Math and English proficiency rates, will come in time. In particular, parents continuously discussed how they have seen classes, which appear to improve each year, help students achieve better grades and, almost more importantly, adopt better attitudes about learning and their self-worth. One parent (Teak, P15) stated, *“That is preparing them for high school... Fighting is down... Boys are worried about assignments”*. As a whole, study participants largely did not doubt that the courses and tutoring program have had a strong positive impact on a variety of elements related to the well-being of students.

The socio-economic programs and services of the Teak Independent Community School were also reported to have had a strong positive impact on a broad set of elements (See Table 42).

6.3 Socio-Economic: Physical health services, mental health services, and food programs reportedly have had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Study participants from the Teak Independent Community School commonly enjoyed discussing how the socio-economic programs and services of the school have strongly helped yield an array of positive, meaningful impacts for students. These participants, who ranged from members of the school staff to community members, frequently emphasized that the impacts, which touch both academic and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, are diverse and worthy of acclaim. *“They are getting the peace every child deserves... I don’t think anyone is hungry at school anymore... A sick student sees a doctor that day... A big change in how he [son of interviewee/student] feels about himself happened. He is very confident... His grades are better this year,”* stated a passionate parent (Teak, P16). Specifically, it was common for interviewees, like this parent, to discuss in detail how the socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and the following ‘academic-related’ elements:

- Interest Levels
- Concentration Levels
- Confidence Levels
- Attendance Rate
- Disruptive Incident Rate

Interviewees were keenly aware of naysayers who doubt, for example, that school-based access to a health clinic can help students achieve better grades and assist with elevating interest levels. The disbelief, however, did not seem to deter the study participants. These individuals, instead, largely felt that it was their obligation to educate others about the favorable ‘academic-related’ outcomes that can result from socio-economic programs and

services. *“We tell people that don’t have kids at the school the problems community schools can fix... I told her [friend that has children enrolled at another public school] that I was surprised when I started seeing the benefits... Maybe she didn’t believe me, but I kept telling her,”* stated a parent (Teak, P12). Additionally, study participants were also enthusiastic about discussing how the socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on the following ‘non-academic-related’ elements, which are commonly associated with the offerings:

- Physical Health Treatment Rate (Only Physical Health Services)
- Mental Health Treatment Rate (Only Mental Health Services)
- Student Hunger Rate (Only Food Programs)
- Family Cohesion

Parent interviewees, in particular, continuously asserted that the school has done exceptionally well at removing obstacles that historically prevented students from accessing much needed socio-economic support. In the end, all the extensive conversations about the impacts the socio-economic programs and services have yielded commonly led to one central conclusion: The socio-economic programs and services have had a strong positive impact on mind and body.

In a similar fashion, the community engagement opportunities of the Teak Independent Community School also were deemed to have had strong positive impacts on a range of elements. However, study participants acknowledged a few weaknesses (See Table 42).

6.4 Community Engagement: Opportunities for the community reportedly have had strong positive impacts, but more unity, engagement, and adult education programs are wanted

The community engagement opportunities of the Teak Independent Community School were consistently described by study participants as having yielded strong positive impacts, despite three primary weaknesses perpetually being acknowledged. A sense of sincere pride and joy exuded from participants as they described the offerings and their impacts. They genuinely felt that the community engagement opportunities, which include clubs for students, workshops for adults, and community gatherings for all, have had a strong positive impact on the following areas for attendees:

- Content Knowledge
- Analytical Skills
- Social Skills
- Physical Health

Observations of a themed community gathering at the school particularly supported the view. Students were seen playing and conversing with one another, while their abundant smiles and roaring laughter filled the room. Pure joy was in the air. These students were also involved in performances that required them to learn about historical figures, music composition, and singing. These performances also taught adults about the same subjects and invoked conversations between themselves and with the students. Parents and other community members, furthermore, commonly discussed how the adult education opportunities, which include ESL courses, a GED program, and family-life workshops, have had a strong positive impact on the following areas:

- Content Knowledge (e.g. workshops)
- Analytical Skills (e.g. GED program)
- Skills Commonly Associated with High School (e.g. GED program)
- Language Skills (e.g. ESL courses)
- Confidence Levels
- Employability

Parents and other community members were extremely enthusiastic about discussing how these elements translate into personal advancements. One parent (Teak, P10) stated:

I had to go back and talk to her [hiring manager]. The paper said you need a GED, which I didn't have... I didn't get the job, but she told me to come back when I graduate... I enrolled in the program I think two months later... Yes, I got it [the job]... Having a GED helped... I want to register for college classes in business.

Despite all the positive feedback, parents and other community members could not help but frequently highlight how the community engagement offerings need to have a stronger positive impact on school-community union, community member engagement, and workforce-focused preparation.

Interestingly, the Teak Independent Community School began to achieve noteworthy improvements in years four and five in Math, two years after becoming a community school.

6.5 Interesting: Notable academic improvements achieved in years four and five in Math

After rather steady Math proficiency rates between years one and three, the Teak Independent Community School saw improvements in years four and five. The result was Math proficiency rates that each stood more than 5% above the year-one rate. Study participants consistently felt that the achievement could be the beginning of an upward trend.

7 Summary

Roughly five years ago, the Teak Independent Community School, without the support of a celebrated foundation and void of extensive financial backing, set out to address community-based challenges that threatened the well-being of students and the community. Members of the school staff, looking back, commonly described the efforts to-date as taxing and fraught with challenges. However, their determination and thrift helped them accomplish many of their primary objectives, making the journey forward less daunting. Today, the school maintains a collection of traditional community school aims and motivations that are augmented by those that are more locally-based, which include aiming to carefully use standardized exams, striving to get students excited about learning, and being motivated by the strong possibility that if the school does not act, a challenge may go unaddressed. In terms of acting on the stated aims, the school has implementation strategies in place. However, many of these strategies are laden with poor funding and staffing levels. Interestingly, despite these weaknesses, the school has been able to meet demand for many of the programs and services. This success is largely a result of the school

mobilizing volunteers and establishing strategic partnerships with off-site providers. Nevertheless, there is still an unmet demand for academic tutors, a summer food program, and workforce-focused adult education programs. As for impacts, overall, the school did not achieve remarkable academic results over the five-year period, and town-wide averages were not commonly exceeded. Nevertheless, the 'traditional school tenure' English proficiency rate (year-one) was stronger than that of its counterpart. However, conversely, the 'community school tenure' Math proficiency average (year-two through year-five) was stronger than that of its counterpart. In the end, it can be argued that the 'traditional versus community school tenure competition over proficiency rates' yielded a draw. On a more positive note, participants perceived the school as possessing a collection of favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements. Also on a positive note, the reported levels of impact are strongly favorable, according to study participants, despite the poor levels of funding and staffing, the unmet demand, and the weak academic results. Study participants, from school administrators to parents and other community members, are largely proud of what the school has accomplished. They value the outcomes that have been achieved by the tutors, the health professionals, and the community engagement staff members and volunteers. Without a doubt, though, there is a desire for stronger academic outcomes, a greater sense of unity, more engagement, and the introduction of a workforce-focused adult education program.

The Teak Independent Community School does not match the ideal image of a community school, as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools. Issues pertaining to the availability of programs and services, academic performance, unity, and adult education opportunities are at the center of the shortcoming. However, the school could reach the ideal image in the future.

Table 42. Summary of Teak Independent Community School Findings

General Information	Local Economy and Community Members	Aims and Motivations	Strategies	Impacts
<u>Years as a CS</u> 4	Weak rural economy that is a 45-min. drive from a strong, central economy	Traditional aims & excite students Not consumed by standardized testing	School board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored	<u>Performance</u> 4-Year Math Average: 20% (25%) 4-Year English Average: 15% (30%) 4-Year Average Percentile Rank: 9%
<u>Annual Budget & Primary Sources</u> \$200,000 (est.) · 21st Century · Partnerships · Small grants · Private donations	Largely Hispanic population with moderate formal education	Motivated by genuine, local elements, including an offerings void	Many programs and services However, a summer food program and more adult education opportunities desired	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements
<u>Num. of CS Staff Members on Site</u> 2 Support from the school board		Locally-based aims and motivations Weak economic state acknowledged	Funding and on-site staffing are challenges, but off-site partners help the school meet demand more often than not	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ elements Strong positive impact on ‘non-academic-related’ elements
				<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students Strong positive impact on adults, but more workforce trained graduates wanted, etc.

APPENDIX 15:

FINDINGS FROM THE CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS ‘WITHIN’ THE THREE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODELS

A cross-case analysis was conducted ‘within’ each of the three community school models. The first section concentrates on the national model; the second section focuses on the local federation model; and, the third section concentrates on the independent model.

1 The National Model

This section includes the identification of characteristics resulting from the cross-case analysis ‘within’ the national model. Generally speaking, the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School possess locally-based aims and motivations, maintain strong implementation strategies, average moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and are perceived as embodying favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, the community school-focused offerings of each school are generally viewed as having had primarily strong positive impacts on academic performance, moderate and strong positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements, and primarily strong positive impacts on ‘non-academic-related’ elements (See Table 43).

Table 43. National Model: Characteristics

Isabella National Community School (Urban)		
Aims and Motivations	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because these exams matters, today and tomorrow Little mention of gang & drug issues	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 5-Yr. Math Average: 40% (65%) 5-Yr. English Average: 20% (50%) 5-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 45% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Mental health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements perceived Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students perceived Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Oak National Community School (Rural)		
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum can mean options - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because these exams matter, today and tomorrow Regular mention of weak economy	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 5-Yr. Math Average: 60% (75%) 5-Yr. English Average: 65% (85%) 5-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 35% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development and provide both students and other community members with many essentials, because it is both moral and logical	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Mental health services are not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> - All offerings except for the mental health services have had a strong positive impact on academic performance and 'academic-related' elements - All offerings except for the mental health services have had a strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements - Mental health services have had a moderate positive impact on the elements
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students perceived Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99% (): District Avg.		

Although the two national model schools share many similarities, comparatively speaking, differences between the two schools – though sometimes arguably small – exist (See Table 44).

Table 44. National Model: Strongest School within Specific Areas and a Summary

	Isabella National Community School	Oak National Community School	Summary of Model
Aims and Motivations	Grounded in traditional community school principles Could be more locally-based	✓ Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Largely locally-based
Implementation Strategies	✓ Many offerings Well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand	Many offerings Largely well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand	Many offerings Predominately well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand
Achieved 'Academic Performance Results' (Average)	Weak to moderate	✓ Moderate	Primarily moderate
Perceived as Possessing Favorable 'Academic-Related' and 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements (i.e. 'non-academic performance' elements)	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Possesses favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	✓ Strong	Moderate and strong (Slightly more strong, comparatively)	Primarily strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels 'Academic-Related' Elements	✓ Moderate and strong	Moderate and strong (Slightly more moderate, comparatively)	Moderate and strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements	✓ Strong	Largely strong (Faintly moderate)	Primarily Strong

The Isabella National Community School possesses implementation strategies and perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, 'non-academic-related' elements that are stronger than those of the Oak National

Community School. However, the Oak National Community School possesses aims and motivations that are more locally-based and achieved ‘academic performance results’ that are stronger than those of its counterpart. Both schools, though, are synonymous with favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements. Findings such as these, which are narrowly based on the identification of characteristics pertaining to one of the three areas (aims and motivation, implementation strategies, and impacts), helped identify interrelated themes across the three areas. These interconnected findings also largely suggest that the two national model schools are more similar than dissimilar.

The aims and motivations of the two national model schools rival each other, although two differences separate these schools.

1.1 Aims and Motivations: Arguably more similar than dissimilar

The stated aims and motivations of the Isabella National Community School and those of the Oak National Community School closely resemble one another; however, the latter school possesses an academic aim that is more locally-based and an additional socio-economic aim, thus dividing the two schools. In terms of similarities, for the most part, both of these national model schools maintain locally-based aims and motivations that are grounded in traditional community school principles and are shaped by local needs. Accordingly, the two schools strive to offer a strong curriculum, address socio-economic challenges that possess the ability to impede academic progress and social development, and engage the community at-large through a variety of offerings. Furthermore, the aims of both schools are largely motivated by a desire to prepare students for the immediate and distant future, driven by the view that the work is moral and logical, encouraged by the belief that the school and community are one, and pushed by the genuine view that the school can help improve the lives of students and other community members. The similarities, however, do not stop here. Interestingly, both of these schools also possess a stated aim that is generally considered to be outside the realm of traditional community school principles. The two schools, unapologetically, have the aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams.

Beyond the similarities revolving around traditional community school principles and the desire to thoroughly prepare students for standardized exams, two relatively important differences between the two schools exist. On one side rests the Isabella National Community School. It has aims that are largely locally-based; however, oddly, its academic aims do not acknowledge the rampant gang and drug challenges surrounding the school. Furthermore, the school does not possess the socio-economic aim of aiding both students and adult community members, despite both groups being viewed as requiring support. On the other side lays the Oak National Community School. Its academic aims are influenced by the poor economy that surrounds the school, among other local challenges. This school acknowledges the difficult economic situation of the community and wants to help students escape it. Furthermore, the socio-economic aim of the school includes aiding both students and adult community members. This school does not ignore the socio-economic challenges adult community members confront.

It could be argued that, overall, the aims and motivations of the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School are more similar than dissimilar. Both of their aims and motivations are largely influenced by community school principles and local needs. Furthermore, the two schools share the stated aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams.

The implementation strategies of the two national model schools, like their aims and motivations, also closely rival one another, despite some differences separating the two schools.

1.2 Implementation Strategies: Again, arguably more similar than dissimilar

The implementation strategies of the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School closely parallel one another, but a mental health office at the latter school, which is confronting challenges, divides them. These two national model schools possess similar academic implementation strategies. In particular, both schools use a school board prescribed curriculum, which could be more engaging and tailored. On a more positive note, both of the schools offer an academic tutoring service that is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the schools are largely similar. Specifically, both schools offer a plethora of socio-economic programs and services, and, moreover, the physical health services and food programs of each school are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. The community engagement implementation strategies of the schools are also similar – based on ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ offered. Both schools offer a range of well-funded and well-staffed opportunities that meet demand. Interestingly, though, both schools also share a shortcoming. Neither school offers adult workforce training programs, despite the belief by participants from both schools that these types of opportunities, which focus on trades and/or craft skills, should be available at their school.

The most notable difference between the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School pertains to a socio-economic offering. The Isabella National Community School offers mental health services that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. The Oak National Community School does not. The mental health services of this school are poorly funded, which prevents it from having sufficient staff members, and, in turn, does not allow it to meet student demand. Study participants from the school consistently discussed how more funding could address the weakness.

In the end, despite a contrasting difference between the two mental health services, the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School are more similar than dissimilar. Both schools offer a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored; both schools, for the most part, offer a collection of well-funded and well-staffed academic, socio-economic, and community engagement programs and services that meet demand; and, neither one of the schools offers workforce training programs, which study participants feel should be made available.

Possessing similar aims and motivations and implementation strategies did not lead the two national model community schools to achieve similar ‘academic performance results’.

1.3 Achieved Impacts: Oak achieved stronger overall ‘academic performance results’ – moderate averages for Oak versus weak and moderate averages for Isabella

The Math and English ‘academic performance results’ of the Oak National Community School (i.e. five-year Math and English proficiency averages) are the strongest among the two national model schools. Specifically, this school achieved the following ‘academic performance results’: a five-year Math proficiency average of 60% and a five-year English proficiency average of 65%. The school also achieved a five-year percentile rank average of 35%. The Isabella National Community School, on the other hand, did not do as well

overall. The school achieved the following results: a five-year Math proficiency average of 40%, a five-year English proficiency average of 20%, and a five-year percentile rank average of 45%. Accordingly, the five-year Math and English proficiency averages of the Oak National Community School were 20% and 45% stronger, respectively, than those of the Isabella National Community School. However, the percentile rank average of the Isabella National Community School was 10% higher than the percentile rank average of its counterpart, which is rather striking – weaker academic results, yet stronger percentile rank. This reflects the relative nature of the use of percentile ranks as a measure, because the position of the school is relative to that of other schools in the local area.

Despite possessing dissimilar achieved ‘academic performance results,’ the two schools are perceived as possessing a similar collection of positive ‘non-academic performance’ elements, along with three specific less favorable elements.

1.4 ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements: Both schools perceived as possessing these favorable elements – but, still, more is wanted

The Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School are each perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as high student interest levels and low disruptive rates, and favorable ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong family cohesion levels. Accordingly, the two schools are synonymous with favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements. Notably, though, study participants commonly discussed how their school should focus greater attention on school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities.

In the end, when comparing the ‘academic performance results’ of the model against its ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, the findings appear to reveal that the national model community school approach is stronger in the area of ‘non-academic performance’ than in the area of ‘academic performance’.

Similarly, the two schools align rather closely in terms of the perceived positive impact levels their offerings have had on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

1.5 Perceived Impacts: Perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements of each school are arguably more similar than dissimilar

Offerings of the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School were perceived as having had primarily strong positive impact levels on academic performance (i.e. level of positive impact the courses, tutoring program, and socio-economic offerings have had on academic performance), moderate and strong positive impact levels on ‘academic-related’ elements (i.e. level of positive impact the courses, tutoring program, and socio-economic offerings have had on ‘academic-related’ elements), and largely strong positive impact levels on ‘non-academic-related’ elements (i.e. level of positive impact the socio-economic and community engagement offerings have had on ‘non-academic-related’ elements).

It should be acknowledged that despite both national model community schools only achieving primarily moderate ‘academic performance results,’ participants from each school

still perceived elements of the community school concept as having had a primarily strong positive impact on academic performance. This shows that although the community schools are not synonymous with strong ‘academic performance results,’ they are still viewed as supporting students academically. Furthermore, the fact that participants from the two schools perceived the community school concept as having had a primarily strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – and believe the schools are synonymous with strong ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – proposes that the schools are viewed as being committed to a holistic approach, which is at the very center of the community school concept. This might serve as a warning to practitioners and academics. A community school can still be viewed as being largely committed to the community school concept even if it achieves moderate academic results.

Transitioning from an independent examination of the three areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) to a review along the three areas provides information on how they interact with one another.

1.6 Relationship among Three Areas: Disconnects between academic aims and academic implementation strategies commonly linked to moderate ‘academic performance averages’ – i.e. disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are not linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’

The Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School both possess academic aims that are not entirely supported by their academic implementation strategies. These disconnected aims and implementation strategies are commonly associated with moderate ‘academic performance averages’ (See Table 45).

Table 45. Relationship among Three Areas: Focus on ‘Achieved’ Impacts

Isabella National Community School			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average weak and moderate
Oak National Community School			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average moderate
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%			

The disconnected academic aims and implementation strategies of the Isabella National Community School are linked to weak and moderate ‘academic performance averages,’ while the disconnected academic aims and implementation strategies of the Oak National Community School are linked to moderate ‘academic performance averages’.

1.7 Relationship among Three Areas: Disconnects between aims and implementation strategies commonly linked to the perception that offerings have had a moderate to strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies sometimes linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts

Both the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School largely possess aims that are not entirely supported by their implementation strategies (See Table 46).

Table 46. Relationship among Three Areas: Focus on ‘Perceived’ Impacts

Isabella National Community School			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development	Supports	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Programs and services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students and adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Oak National Community School			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development and provide both students and other community members with many essentials	Does not Support	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Programs and services range from well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand to not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students and adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%			

In two out of three instances, the stated aims of the Isabella National Community School were not fully supported by the implementation strategies of the school. It is worth noting that the one time an aim and an implementation strategy were found to be in unison (i.e. socio-economic) the perceived impact was strong and positive. However, when an aim was not in unison with its implementation strategy (i.e. academic and community engagement), the perceived impact levels were split between moderate and strong (i.e. academic) and strong (i.e. community engagement).

In all three instances, the aims of the Oak National Community School were not entirely supported by the implementation strategies of the school. In two of these instances, moderate and strong positive impacts were perceived (i.e. academic and socio-economic). However, in one of the three instances (i.e. community engagement), strong positive impacts were perceived.

In the end, it can be concluded that these two national model schools generally possess aims that are not entirely in unison with their implementations strategies and have perceived positive impacts that range between moderate and strong. Interestingly, the two schools show that having inharmonious aims and implementation strategies does not eliminate the possibility of achieving ‘perceived strong positive impacts’. Furthermore, interestingly, these two schools show that the one time an aim and implementation strategy were in accordance, they were associated with ‘perceived strong positive impacts’ (i.e. Isabella, socio-economic).

1.8 Relationship between Academic Aim and Impact: The academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams did not guarantee strong ‘academic performance results’

Both the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School maintain the stated academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams. However, even with this aim, the former school averaged weak to moderate ‘academic performance results,’ while the latter school averaged moderate ‘academic performance results’. Accordingly, both of these national model schools demonstrate that having the academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams does not necessarily mean the school will achieve strong academic results.

1.9 Relationship between the Headquarters and the Aims: Both headquarters strongly helped to form aims

The national headquarters of the Isabella National Community School is ‘actively involved’ in the day-to-day operations of the community school and provides the school with substantial strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support, while the national headquarters of the Oak National Community School, by design, is ‘not dynamically involved’ in the day-to-day operations of the school and provides the school with moderate strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support. Irrespective of the level of involvement, strategic guidance, financial support, and non-financial support, each headquarters was commonly described by study participants as having aided their school in crafting locally-based aims.

1.10 Relationship between the Principal and Community School Director Duo and the Budget Size and Number of Offerings: A knowledgeable, dedicated duo from each school potentially was able to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings

Study participants from the Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School consistently discussed how the principal and the community school director formed a strong team that is knowledgeable about school administration and community school management. Furthermore, participants from each school consistently drew attention to how these two characteristics were seen to have had a strong positive impact on their school. Specifically, these characteristics reportedly helped the schools

secure substantial community school funding and aided them in providing extensive offerings.

1.11 Relationship between Budget Size and Areas: Larger budget for community school-related expenses potentially linked to stronger implementation strategies and stronger positive impact levels perceived

In terms of the Isabella National Community School (\$750,000 budget, estimated) and the Oak National Community School (\$500,000 budget, estimated), a larger budget for community school expenses appeared to facilitate stronger implementation strategies, which, overall, were better-funded and better-staffed and were viewed as better able to meet demand. Additionally, in terms of these two schools, a larger budget for community school expenses also appeared to be linked to stronger perceived positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. For example, according to some study participants, the mental health services of the Oak National Community School would have been able to increase its positive impact level from moderate to strong had the budget for community school expenses been greater.

In terms of these two schools, it appears that a larger budget is not necessarily linked to stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’.

1.12 Relationship between Setting (Urban and Rural) and Three Areas: The aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts do not appear to be strongly impacted by the setting of the school

An examination of the settings of the Isabella National Community School (urban) and the Oak National Community School (rural) did not appear to identify any noteworthy link between the setting and any of the three areas. For example, it was questioned if the Isabella National Community School, which is located in an urban area with considerable adult workforce training opportunities, would experience less community member demand for workforce training programs than the Oak National Community School, which is located in a rural area with limited adult workforce training opportunities. Both schools, however, experienced high levels of demand for adult workforce training opportunities.

The findings that resulted from the cross-case analysis ‘within’ the national model were used to establish overall characteristics of this model. However, it must be noted that this summary is only based on two cases, so it cannot be generalized to all national model community schools.

1.13 Summary

The Isabella National Community School and the Oak National Community School possess more similarities than differences in terms of stated aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts, but differences between the two schools exist. Nevertheless, the national model, as it pertains to these two community school cases, can be summarized as follows:

Independent Findings

- Largely possesses local aims and motivations based on traditional community school principles, while also having the rather uncommon community school aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams
- Primarily uses implementation strategies that are viewed as well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand
- Provides a high level of socio-economic and community engagement offerings
- Sways between addressing the socio-economic needs of both students and adults and addressing solely the socio-economic needs of students
- Averages mainly moderate ‘academic performance results’
- Seems to possess many favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Potentially could benefit from more school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities
- Appears that the community school approach, overall, has had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements over ‘academic performance results’
- Seems that offerings have had moderate to strong positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Possesses ‘perceived’ impacts that are more favorable than its ‘achieved’ performance results (measured by test results)

Interrelated Findings

- Possesses disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are largely associated with moderate ‘academic performance averages’ – i.e. disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are not linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’
- Possesses mostly disconnected aims and implementation strategies that are commonly linked to the perception from participants that offerings have had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies sometimes does not remove the perception from participants that the offerings have had strong positive impacts
- Possesses the stated academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams, but averaged primarily moderate ‘academic performance results’

- Potentially possesses headquarters that can help craft locally-based aims, irrespective of input level
- Potentially uses a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director partnership to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings
- Appears to secure a larger budget for community school-related expenses to help it maintain stronger implementation strategies
- Seems to show that a larger budget size is linked to the study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, as a whole
- Indicates that a larger budget size is not necessarily linked to stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’
- Appears not to allow the setting (urban or rural) to have a strong impact on the three areas

In short, based on these two schools, the national model can be summarized as largely possessing locally-based aims and motivations, investing substantial resources in a variety of offerings that extend beyond those of traditional schools, executing strong implementation strategies, averaging mostly moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, offerings of the model are perceived as having had moderate and strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. In the end, though, when it comes to all the impacts, the national model appears to have had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements, which are based on study respondents, as opposed to ‘academic performance results’.

Based on the summary of the national model community school characteristics – which does not serve as a general description of all national model community schools or the model as a whole – this particular portrayal does not meet all the features of an ideal community school, as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools. Stronger ‘academic performance results,’ for example, would strengthen the characterization, thus propelling it closer to the ideal image of a community school, which is intended to promote improvements in academic outcomes. Furthermore, focusing greater attention on school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities would be beneficial.

2 The Local Federation Model

Characteristics that were identified during the cross-case analysis of the Stewart Local Federation (LF) Community School and the Gardner Local Federation (LF) Community School are discussed in this section. Broadly speaking, these local federation model schools, collectively, possess locally-based aims and motivations, average weak to moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and are perceived as embodying favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, the community school-focused offerings of each school are viewed as having had a primarily moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. A stark divide, however, exists in terms of implementation strategies. The Stewart LF Community School possesses generally strong implementation strategies, which are well-funded, are able to meet demand, and fully utilize off-site physical health partnerships, while the Gardner LF Community School possesses generally weak implementation strategies, which face challenges around funding, staffing, meeting demand, and utilizing off-site physical health partnerships (See Table 47).

Table 47. Local Federation Model: Characteristics

Stewart Local Federation Community School (Urban)		
Aims and Motivations	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because these exams matter, today and tomorrow - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble, because it can save students - Local challenges acknowledged	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 5-Yr. Math Average: 5% (15%) 5-Yr. English Average: 10% (20%) 5-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 10% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance perceived Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical and no other local organization comprehensively does it	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and meet demand, but not well-staffed - Mental health services are well-funded and meet demand, but not well-staffed - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements perceived Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one, it is in a position to do so, and it must push itself	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students perceived Moderate positive impact on adults perceived – more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Gardner Local Federation Community School (Urban)		
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams, because these exams matters, today and tomorrow - Gang and drug culture acknowledged	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 5-Yr. Math Average: 35% (50%) 5-Yr. English Average: 35% (45%) 5-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 30% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance perceived Moderate positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Moderate level of offerings - Physical health services not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand - Mental health services not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand - Food programs are not well-funded or able to meet demand, but well-staffed	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance perceived Moderate positive impact on 'academic-related' elements perceived Moderate positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so	<u>Community Engagement</u> Limited offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students perceived Moderate positive impact on adults perceived – more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99% (): District Avg.		

Within the generalization, however, there are some specific noticeable differences between the two local federation model schools (See Table 48).

Table 48. Local Federation Model: Strongest School within Specific Areas and a Summary

	Stewart Local Federation Community School	Gardner Local Federation Community School	Summary of Model
Aims and Motivations	 Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Slightly less locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based
Implementation Strategies	 Many offerings Largely well-funded and able to meet demand, but not well-staffed	Moderate level of offerings Challenges concerning funding, staffing, and meeting demand	Moderate to many offerings Divided
Achieved 'Academic Performance Results' (Average)	Weak	 Moderate	Weak and moderate
Perceived as Possessing Favorable 'Academic-Related' and 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements (i.e. 'non-academic performance' elements)	 Yes	 Yes	Possesses favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	 Moderate and strong	Moderate	Primarily moderate
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Academic-Related' Elements	 Moderate and strong	Moderate	Primarily moderate
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on 'Non-Academic-Related' Elements	 Moderate and strong	Moderate	Primarily moderate

The Stewart LF Community School possesses more locally-based aims and motivations and stronger implementation strategies than the Gardner LF Community School. These strengths, however, did not result in the Stewart LF Community School achieving stronger across-the-board, positive impacts. Instead, the two schools are divided in terms of impacts.

The Gardner LF Community School, with its less locally-based aims and motivations and troubled implementation strategies, averaged stronger 'academic performance results'. However, the Stewart LF Community School, with its more locally-based aims and motivations and more extensive implementation strategies, has offerings that are perceived by participants as having had stronger positive impact levels on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements. Despite these comparative differences, both schools are considered to possess favorable 'academic-related' and 'non-academic-related' elements.

Interestingly, interrelated findings across the three areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) also showed that, despite some differences, both of these local federation model community schools share many similarities.

The two local federation model schools maintain a foundation of similar locally-based aims and motivations. The Stewart Local Federation Community School, however, possesses an additional locally-based aim and three added locally-based motivations.

2.1 Aims and Motivations: Broadly similar, but Stewart maintains an additional aim and a few added motivations beyond those of its counterpart

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School possess a similar foundation of aims and motivations; however, beyond this foundation, the Stewart LF Community School has an additional locally-based aim and a few added locally-based motivations that the Gardner LF Community School does not have. Both of these local federation model schools hold many stated aims that are in-line with traditional community school principles. Accordingly, the two schools strive to offer a curriculum that is strong, socio-economic programs and services that address local challenges, and community engagement opportunities that unite and enrich the lives of community members. Furthermore, the schools maintain a common basis of motivations. Both schools are of the view that a strong curriculum is essential and both are driven by morality and logic. They also share the belief that the school and community are one and the view that a capable school must act to address inequality and need. Additionally, these two local federation model schools maintain an aim and motivation that are rather uncommon among community schools. Both of the schools aim to rigorously prepare students for standardized exams, because they believe strong exam scores can positively impact the future life of a student.

Despite all the shared aims and motivations, the Stewart LF Community School possesses one additional aim and three added motivations that the Gardner LF Community School does not. The additional aim and one of the added motivations entail that the school strive to have a curriculum that keeps students out of trouble, which can commonly involve gang and drug activity, because, plainly stated, the aim is perceived as having the potential to save the lives of students. As for the other two additional motivations, the school is driven by the reality that no other local organization is comprehensively addressing local socio-economic challenges, and it is also driven by the feeling that a school should do everything in its power to help students and other community members.

Overall, both the Stewart LF Community School and the Gardner LF Community School possess locally-based aims and motivations that are largely similar. These aims and motivations respect traditional community school principles and promote the rather uncommon community school desire of focusing on standardized exams. However, the additional aim and added motivations of the Stewart LF Community School divide the two

schools. In particular, the additional aim and motivations, which, arguably, could apply to both schools, give the impression that the Stewart LF Community School possesses aims and motivations that are slightly more locally-based than those of its counterpart – although those of the Gardner LF Community School are still fairly locally-based.

In addition to the Stewart Local Federation Community School possessing stated aims and motivations that are more locally-based than those of the Gardner Local Federation Community School, the Stewart Local Federation Community School also maintains implementation strategies that are stronger than those of the Gardner Local Federation Community School.

2.2 Implementation Strategies: Both schools possess some weaknesses, but Stewart is stronger

The implementation strategies of the Stewart Local Federation Community School possess limited weaknesses, whereas the implementation strategies of the Gardner Local Federation Community School possess extensive weaknesses. Specifically, the academic implementation strategies of both schools are equivalent. Each school is described as implementing a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored and offering an academic tutoring service that is well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand. The socio-economic implementation strategies, however, divide the two schools. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the Stewart LF Community School are generally reported to be strong. The school offers many socio-economic programs and services. Moreover, it offers on-site and off-site physical health services and on-site mental health services that are well-funded and meet demand and food programs that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. However, the on-site physical health services and on-site mental health services of the school face staffing challenges. The socio-economic implementation strategies of the Gardner LF Community School, on the other hand, are ridden with challenges. In addition to only offering a moderate level of socio-economic programs and services, the on-site physical health services and on-site mental health services are not well-funded or well-staffed and are not able to meet demand. These types of challenges have reportedly led to the underutilization of the off-site physical health services (i.e. few off-site physical health appointments are made for students due to low on-site staffing levels). As for its food programs, despite being well-staffed, they are not well-funded or able to meet demand. In terms of the community engagement implementation strategies, the Stewart LF Community School continues to show noticeable strength. The school offers many community engagement opportunities that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. The Gardner LF Community School offers only limited community engagement offerings, but they too are seen as well-funded and well-staffed and meeting demand. Interestingly, neither school offers any adult workforce training programs.

Despite both the Stewart LF Community School and the Gardner LF Community School confronting their share of challenges revolving around implementation strategies, the Stewart LF Community School possesses a stronger set of implementation strategies. The Stewart LF Community School offers a wide range of well-funded programs and services that meet demand and fully utilizes its off-site partners who provide physical health services. However, the school confronts challenges pertaining to its curriculum, staffing levels, and there being no workforce training programs. As for the Gardner LF Community School, it offers only a limited number of programs and services that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. Many of its offerings, instead, are poorly funded and staffed

and unable to meet demand, and its off-site physical health services partnerships are not fully utilized. Furthermore, this school, like the Stewart LF Community School, confronts challenges regarding the curriculum offered and there being no workforce training programs, despite significant community interest.

The more locally-based aims and motivations and stronger implementation strategies of the Stewart Local Federation Community School did not result in the school achieving stronger ‘academic performance results’ than the Gardner Local Federation Community School.

2.3 Achieved Impacts: Rather surprisingly, Gardner averaged stronger ‘academic performance results’ – moderate results for Gardner versus weak results for Stewart

Between the two local federation model schools, the Gardner Local Federation Community School achieved stronger ‘academic performance results’ (i.e. five-year Math and English proficiency averages and a five-year percentile rank average). This school achieved the following ‘academic performance results’: a five-year Math proficiency average of 35%, a five-year English proficiency average of 35%, and a five-year average percentile rank of 30%. The averages of the Stewart Local Federation Community School, on the other hand, did not surpass 10%. The Stewart LF Community School achieved the following results: a five-year Math proficiency average of 5%, a five-year English proficiency average of 10%, and a five-year average percentile rank of 10%. Thus, the five-year Math and English proficiency averages and the five-year average percentile rank of the Gardner LF Community School were 30%, 25%, and 20% higher than those of the Stewart LF Community School, respectively.

Although the Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School did not achieve similar ‘academic performance results,’ the two schools are viewed as possessing a comparable collection of favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements, along with three specific less favorable elements.

2.4 ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements: Both schools perceived as possessing these favorable elements – but, still, more is wanted

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School are each perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as high student interest levels, and favorable ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong family cohesion levels. As a result, the two schools are viewed as being synonymous with possessing favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements. Markedly, though, participants from both schools believe more attention should be placed on school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities.

In the end, when placing the ‘academic performance results’ of the model juxtaposed to its ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, the model appears to demonstrate greater strength in the area of ‘non-academic performance’ than in the area of ‘academic performance’.

Despite the Gardner Local Federation Community School achieving stronger ‘academic performance results’ and the two schools being viewed as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, the Stewart Local Federation Community School was perceived as having had stronger positive impact levels.

2.5 Perceived Impacts: Stewart was perceived as having had a stronger positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – moderate to strong for Stewart versus moderate for Gardner

Programs and services of the Stewart Local Federation Community School were perceived as having had moderate and strong positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, while programs and services of the Gardner Local Federation Community School were strictly perceived as having had moderate positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Specifically, in terms of perceived positive impact levels, the biggest difference between these two local federation model schools pertains to socio-economic offerings. The socio-economic offerings of the Stewart LF Community School were viewed as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, whereas the socio-economic offerings of the Gardner LF Community School were solely viewed as having had moderate positive impacts on these elements. Study participants from the Gardner LF Community School consistently claimed that this result was largely due to weak community school ‘buy-in’ by the school staff and a lack of funding.

The findings presented here produce some new insight into the model. Even though the local federation model, as a whole, averaged weak and moderate ‘academic performance results,’ participants still viewed programs and services of the schools as having had a primarily moderate positive impact on academic performance. Accordingly, it could be concluded that although the two schools are not synonymous with strong academic performance, they are viewed, to some extent, as supporting students academically.

Changing from an analysis of individual areas to a review along the three areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) offers insight on how the three areas seem to interact with one another.

2.6 Relationship among Three Areas: Disconnects between academic aims and academic implementation strategies linked to weak and moderate ‘academic performance averages’ – i.e. disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are not linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School hold academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are not in agreement. Neither of these disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies is associated with strong ‘academic performance averages’ (See Table 49).

Table 49. Relationship among Three Areas: Focus on ‘Achieved’ Impacts

Stewart Local Federation Community School			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average weak
Gardner Local Federation Community School			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average moderate
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%		

The disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies of the Stewart Local Federation Community School are associated with weak ‘academic performance averages,’ while the disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies of the Gardner Local Federation Community School are associated with moderate ‘academic performance averages’.

2.7 Relationship among Three Areas: Disconnects between aims and implementation strategies primarily linked to the perception that offerings have had a moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies can be linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts, although uncommon

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School each possess aims and implementation strategies that do not align (See Table 50).

Table 50. Relationship among Three Areas: Focus on ‘Perceived’ Impacts

Stewart Local Federation Community School			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development	Does not Support	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical and mental health services are well-funded and meet demand, but not well-staffed - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students and adults perceived – more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Gardner Local Federation Community School			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to prepare students for standardized exams	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Moderate positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development	Does not Support	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Moderate level of offerings - Physical and mental health services are not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand - Food programs are not well-funded or able to meet demand, but are well-staffed	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Limited offerings – more wanted - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Moderate positive impact on students and adults perceived – more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%		

All three times, the aims and implementation strategies of the Stewart Local Federation Community School were not in unison. During two of these instances (i.e. academic and community engagement), it was perceived that the offerings have had a moderate positive impact. During the other instance (i.e. socio-economic), though, it was believed that the offerings have had a strong positive impact.

As for the Gardner Local Federation Community School, during all three instances (academic, socio-economic, and community engagement), its aims and implementation strategies were not in unison. During all of these times, the aims and strategies were linked to the perception that the offerings have had a moderate positive impact.

These two local federation model schools solely possess aims and implementation strategies that are disconnected. For these two schools, disconnected aims and implementation strategies are most likely linked to the perception that offerings have had a moderate positive impact. However, the Stewart Local Federation Community School shows that aims and implementation strategies that are not in agreement (i.e. socio-economic) can be associated with the perception that offerings have had a strong positive impact.

2.8 Relationship between Academic Aim and Impact: The academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams did not guarantee strong ‘academic performance results’

Both the Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School possess the stated academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams; however, neither school achieved strong Math or English proficiency averages over a recent five-year period. The Gardner LF Community School achieved a five-year Math proficiency average of 35% and a five-year English proficiency average of 35%. The Stewart LF Community School achieved weaker results. The school achieved a five-year Math proficiency average of 5% and a five-year English proficiency average of 10%. For these two schools, having the stated academic aim of preparing students for standardized exams does not appear to have helped the student body achieve strong ‘academic performance results’.

2.9 Relationship between the School Board and University Partners and the Aims: Both partners strongly helped form aims

The Stewart Local Federation Community School belongs to a school board-managed local federation, while the Gardner Local Federation Community School belongs to a university-managed local federation. Both types of local federations appear to have had an equally positive impact on the construction of the aims of each community school. Study participants from both community schools commonly discussed how the local federation that oversees their respective school was instrumental in crafting its locally-based aims. Moreover, participants frequently described the local federation as guiding the school staff through the process of developing aims that reflect local needs.

2.10 Relationship between the Principal and Community School Director Duo and the Budget Size and Number of Offerings: Having a knowledgeable, dedicated duo may help the school secure substantial funding and, also, help it provide extensive offerings

Study participants from the Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School, overall, held rather contrasting views on the quality of their respective principal and community school director team. Participants from the Stewart LF Community School largely felt that their principal and community school director are knowledgeable about school leadership and community school principles. Furthermore, these participants commonly discussed how they believed both the principal and the community school director are dedicated to the diverse aims of the school. As for results, participants generally concluded that these favorable characteristics have strongly aided the school in securing substantial funding and helped it provide extensive offerings. However, the views at the Gardner LF Community School were less favorable. Study participants from the Gardner LF Community School regularly expressed concerns over the principal and community school director duo being neither well-versed on nor entirely dedicated to the community school concept. These participants commonly linked these unfavorable characteristics to the issue of insufficient funding and lack of socio-economic and community engagement offerings. A few participants openly discussed how they felt that a more knowledgeable and dedicated principal and community school director duo would be able to secure greater funding and provide more extensive offerings.

Collectively, the overarching sentiments of study participants from both local federation model schools support the conclusion that a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo can help secure substantial funding and aid in providing extensive offerings.

2.11 Relationship between Budget Size and Areas: Larger budget for community school-related expenses potentially linked to stronger implementation strategies and the perception of stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

When comparing the Stewart Local Federation Community School (\$300,000 budget, estimated) with the Gardner Local Federation Community School (\$250,000 budget, estimated), it appears that a larger budget for community school-related expenses could be linked to stronger implementation strategies, consisting, overall, of better-funded offerings that are better able to meet demand. Furthermore, a larger budget potentially is associated with the perception of offerings having had stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. For example, study participants from the Gardner LF Community School consistently discussed how more funding would have allowed the socio-economic opportunities to have had a stronger positive impact on ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements.

Based on these two schools, it appears that a larger budget is not connected to stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’. The Stewart LF Community School possesses the larger budget, but averaged only weak ‘academic performance results,’ while its counterpart averaged moderate ‘academic performance results’.

The cross-case analysis ‘within’ the local federation model was used to establish general characteristics of the model. The description does not account for all local federation model schools.

2.12 Summary

The Stewart Local Federation Community School and the Gardner Local Federation Community School share many similar characteristics, but, also, possess various distinctive characteristics. In terms of similarities, the aims and motivations and impacts of the two schools, overall, are relatively comparable – although not identical. The implementation strategies of the two schools, however, do not share significant common ground. Nevertheless, taking into consideration both the similarities and differences of the two schools, the local federation model, as it applies to these specific schools, arguably, can be summarized as follows:

Independent Findings

- Largely possesses local aims and motivations based on traditional community school principles, while also having the rather uncommon community school aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams
- Divided on implementation strategies – offerings that are well-funded and able to meet demand and off-site partnerships that are fully utilized versus offerings that are poorly funded and not able to meet demand and off-site partnerships that are underutilized
- Divided on level of socio-economic and community engagement offerings – high level versus limited to moderate level
- Solely focuses on addressing the socio-economic needs of students
- Averages weak to moderate ‘academic performance results’
- Perceived as possessing many favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Potentially could benefit from more school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities
- Appears that the community school approach, overall, has had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements over ‘academic performance results’
- Primarily garners the view that offerings have had moderate positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Possesses ‘perceived’ impacts that are more positive than its ‘achieved’ performance results

Interrelated Findings

- Possesses disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are linked to weak and moderate ‘academic performance averages’ – i.e. disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are not linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’
- Possesses disconnected aims and implementation strategies that are predominately linked to the perception that the offerings have had moderate positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies can be linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts, although uncommon

- Possesses the stated academic aim of rigorously preparing students for standardized exams, but averaged weak and moderate ‘academic performance results’
- Potentially uses local federation to help craft locally-based aims, irrespective of the input level of the federation
- Potentially uses a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings
- Appears to display that a larger budget size for community school-related expenses is linked to stronger implementation strategies and to the study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, as a whole
- Appears to show that a larger budget size is not linked to stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’

In short, given the findings from the two cases, the local federation model can be summarized as predominately possessing locally-based aims and motivations, investing resources in a moderate to high level of offerings beyond those of traditional schools, varying in implementation strategies, averaging weak to moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and being perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, programs and services of the model are viewed as having had primarily moderate positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. In the end, in terms of all the impacts, it appears the local federation model has had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements over ‘academic performance results’.

The characterization of the local federation model – which does not serve as a general portrayal of all local federation model community schools or the model as a whole – does not meet all the features of the ideal community school, as depicted by the Coalition for Community Schools. Improvements would be needed to bring this model closer to the classification, such as, for example, embodying stronger implementation strategies, achieving stronger ‘academic performance results,’ and offering adult workforce training opportunities.

3 The Independent Model

Findings that resulted from the cross-case analysis of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School are discussed in this section. Generally speaking, together, these two independent model schools adopted locally-based aims and motivations, averaged weak to moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and were perceived as possessing a variety of favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, programs and services of the schools were viewed as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. A rather noticeable difference, however, appears to involve the implementation strategies of the schools. The Fenway Independent Community School possesses implementation strategies that are largely well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand, while the Teak Independent Community School possesses strategies that are largely poorly funded and staffed, but, nevertheless, are seen as mostly being able to meet demand – mainly due to its off-site physical and mental health partnerships (See Table 51).

Table 51. Independent Model: Characteristics

Fenway Independent Community School (Urban)		
Aims and Motivations	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams, because a natural learning environment helps - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble, because it can save students - Local challenges acknowledged	<u>Academic</u> - Tailored curriculum is engaging - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 3-Yr. Math Average: 45% (65%) 3-Yr. English Average: 45% (65%) 3-Yr. Average Rating Score: 5 – 6 <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address challenges that have the potential to impede academic and social development and provide both students and other residents with essentials, because it is moral and logical, politicians demanded it, and no other local organization comprehensively does it	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Mental health services are well-funded and meet demand, but not well-staffed - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed, but do not meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements perceived Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one, it is in a position to do so, and politicians demanded it	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students perceived Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Teak Independent Community School (Rural)		
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging, because a good curriculum is essential - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams, because a natural learning environment helps - Curriculum is to excite students - save - Local challenges acknowledged	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> 4-Yr. Math Average: 20% (25%) 4-Yr. English Average: 15% (30%) 4-Yr. Average Percentile Rank: 9% <u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on other 'academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development, because it is both moral and logical and no other local organization comprehensively does it	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services not well-funded or well-staffed, but able to meet demand - Mental health services not well-funded or well-staffed, but able to meet demand - Food programs are not well-funded or able to meet demand, but well-staffed	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on academic performance perceived Strong positive impact on 'academic-related' elements perceived Strong positive impact on 'non-academic-related' elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences, because the school and community are one and the school is in a position to do so	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students perceived Strong positive impact on adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99% (): District Avg		

In terms of the three areas, a comparison of the two independent model schools shows that, despite the two schools predominately sharing characteristics, the Fenway Independent Community School arguably is stronger than the Teak Independent Community School (See Table 52).

Table 52. Independent Model: Strongest School within Specific Areas and a Summary

	Fenway Independent Community School	Teak Independent Community School	Summary of Model
Aims and Motivations	 Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	 Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based	Grounded in traditional community school principles Locally-based
Implementation Strategies	 Many offerings Largely well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand	Many offerings Largely able to meet demand, but faces funding and staffing challenges	Many offerings Somewhat divided on funding and staffing levels, but mostly able to meet demand
Achieved ‘Academic Performance Results’ (Average)	 Moderate	Weak	Weak and moderate
Perceived as Possessing Favorable ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements (i.e. ‘non-academic performance’ elements)	 Yes	 Yes	Possesses favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on Academic Performance	 Strong	 Strong	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Academic-Related’ Elements	 Strong	 Strong	Strong
Perceived Positive Impact Levels on ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements	 Strong	 Strong	Strong

Specifically, the Fenway Independent Community School is stronger than its counterpart in the areas of implementation strategies and achieved ‘academic performance results’. The interrelated findings along the three areas also show that, although the two schools possess some differences, they share many similarities.

The independent model community schools maintain a basis of similar locally-based aims and motivations. Additionally, though, the Fenway Independent Community School possesses two added aims and an additional motivation, and the Teak Independent Community School maintains an added aim.

3.1 Aims and Motivations: Local and based on community school principles, and arguably more similar than dissimilar

The stated aims and motivations of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School, overall, closely align; however, three additional aims and one added motivation distinguish the schools. The aims and motivations shared by the two schools are locally-based and revolve around traditional community school principles. Accordingly, in terms of stated aims, both schools strive to offer a strong curriculum, promote student achievement – without aggressively concentrating on standardized exams – , address socio-economic challenges, and engage the community at-large. Furthermore, comparably, these aims are motivated by the belief that preparing students for the future is essential, helping form lifelong learners is important, and a sound curriculum can save students. Additionally, the aims are motivated by the view that doing this type of work is both moral and logical, addressing a resource void is essential, helping the community is the same as aiding the school, and being a school that is capable of helping the community requires action.

The added aims and additional motivation that are not shared by both schools also are locally-based and revolve around community school principles. Specifically, the Fenway Independent Community School possesses the added stated aims of keeping students out of trouble and addressing socio-economic challenges that both students and other community members confront. Additionally, the demands of local politicians are said to have motivated a few of the aims of the school. These two added aims and the additional motivation largely reflect the poor economic environment of the community and its historical gang and drug problem. Plainly stated, school staff members, along with local politicians, argue that they want to provide both students and adult community members with support that will help them advance. As for the Teak Independent Community School, it has the rather unique, yet locally-based stated aim of having a curriculum that excites students. The school claims that it confronts local gang and drug challenges, and it hopes to prevent students from becoming involved with either challenge by striving to get them excited and enthused about school.

The aims and motivations of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School appear more similar than dissimilar. Despite some additional aims and an added motivation, the bulk of the aims and motivations are shared by both schools. Furthermore, both schools share the characteristic of possessing only locally-based aims and motivations that are linked to community school principles.

Despite the two independent model schools possessing rather comparable aims and motivations, their implementation strategies are not equivalent.

3.2 Implementation Strategies: Fairly divided, with the Fenway possessing stronger strategies

The implementation strategies of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School, overall, are not comparable, but some commonalities exist between their socio-economic and community engagement implementation strategies – but not their academic implementation strategies. The academic implementation strategies of the two schools are dissimilar. On one side rests the Fenway Independent Community School, which possesses a tailored curriculum that is seen as engaging and an academic tutoring program that is reported to be well-funded and well-staffed and that meets demand. On the other side, however, lays the Teak Independent Community School, which has a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored and an academic tutoring service that is not well-funded or well-staffed and is perceived as unable to meet demand. In terms of socio-economic implementation strategies, the Fenway Independent Community School also displays strength in this area, while the Teak Independent Community School exhibits weakness in this area. The Fenway Independent Community School offers many socio-economic programs and services that are mostly well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand. Although, it must be noted that the mental health services of the school are not well-staffed, and its food programs do not meet demand. The Teak Independent Community School possesses these same two challenges and a few additional ones. Specifically, the socio-economic implementation strategies of the school are not well-funded. However, in spite of possessing poorly funded on-site physical and mental health services, the school was able to meet demand for these two services by relying on off-site partners. After all the differences that exist between the two schools, their community engagement implementation strategies are broadly equivalent. Both schools offer many community engagement offerings that are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand. Both schools also share the same weakness. These two schools do not offer adult workforce training programs, despite significant interest.

In the end, overall, despite sharing some similar traits, the implementation strategies of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School are dissimilar. The Fenway Independent Community School possesses an engaging, tailored curriculum, and the majority of its offerings are well-staffed and well-funded and able to meet demand. The Teak Independent Community School, however, possesses a school board prescribed curriculum that could be more engaging and tailored, and a considerable portion of its offerings are not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand. Similarities between the two schools exist, though. For example, both schools provide many socio-economic and community engagement offerings that largely meet demand, and neither one of the schools offers adult workforce training programs.

The Fenway Independent Community School, with its locally-based aims and motivations and strong implementation strategies, averaged moderate ‘academic performance results,’ while the Teak Independent Community School, with its locally-based aims and motivations and challenged implementation strategies, averaged weak ‘academic performance results’.

3.3 Achieved Impacts: Fenway averaged stronger ‘academic performance results’ – moderate results for Fenway versus weak results for Teak

The academic performance averages of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School are not equivalent; however, the schools are in harmony in terms of their ‘community school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages not being across the board stronger than their ‘traditional school tenure’ Math and English proficiency averages. The ‘academic performance results’ of the Fenway Independent Community School were the strongest between the two independent model community schools. The school achieved the following results: a 3-year Math proficiency average of 45%, a 3-year English proficiency average of 45%, and a 3-year average rating score of 5 – 6. The Teak Independent Community School achieved results that were weaker. This school had a 4-year Math proficiency average of 20%, a 4-year English proficiency average of 15%, and a 4-year average percentile rank of 9%. Thus, the Fenway Independent Community School achieved Math and English proficiency averages that were 25% and 30% stronger, respectively, than those of the Teak Independent Community School. Furthermore, the average rating score of the Fenway Independent Community School was noticeably stronger than the average percentile rank of the Teak Independent Community School.

Despite differences in proficiency averages and school rating/ranking, the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School, over the recent five-year period, were in unison in terms of the ‘community school tenure’ proficiency averages only being stronger than the ‘traditional school tenure’ proficiency averages half of the time. In terms of the Fenway Independent Community School averages over the two tenures, the Math proficiency average of the school was strongest during the ‘traditional school tenure,’ and the English proficiency average of the school was strongest during the ‘community school tenure’. In terms of the Teak Independent Community School averages over the two tenures, though, the Math proficiency average of the school was strongest during the ‘community school tenure,’ and the English proficiency average of the school was strongest during the ‘traditional school tenure’.

Although the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School did not achieve similar ‘academic performance results,’ both schools are viewed as possessing a similar collection of favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements, in addition to three specific less favorable elements.

3.4 ‘Academic-Related’ and ‘Non-Academic-Related’ Elements: Both schools perceived as possessing these favorable elements – but, still, more is wanted

The Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School are each perceived as possessing favorable ‘academic-related’ elements, such as high student interest levels, and favorable ‘non-academic-related’ elements, such as strong family cohesion levels. Accordingly, both schools are viewed as being synonymous with favorable ‘non-academic performance’ elements. It should also be acknowledged, though, that participants from both schools commonly discussed how their school should focus greater attention on school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities.

In the end, when placing the ‘academic performance results’ of the model against its ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, the model appears to display greater strength in the area of ‘non-academic performance’ than in the area of ‘academic performance’.

The Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School also share a similarity related to the perceived positive impact levels of their programs and services.

3.5 Perceived Impacts: Programs and services of both schools were perceived as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

Programs and services of the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School were viewed by study participants as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Thus, for each school, the courses and tutoring program were perceived as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance and ‘academic-related’ elements; the socio-economic offerings were viewed as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements; and the community engagement offerings were perceived as having had a strong positive impact on a range of elements.

The findings presented here are particularly informative. The weak and moderate ‘academic performance results’ the independent model averaged did not prevent study participants from concluding that programs and services of the schools have had a strong positive impact on academic performance. Accordingly, it could be argued that despite the schools not being synonymous with strong ‘academic performance results,’ they are viewed, to some extent, as supporting students academically.

Moving from an examination of findings exclusive to one of the three areas (aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts) to an examination of findings along the three areas provides valuable information about interrelated findings.

3.6 Relationship among Three Areas: Academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are in unison are linked to stronger ‘academic performance averages’ – and neither connected nor disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’

The Fenway Independent Community School possesses academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are in unison, and these complementary aims and implementation strategies are associated with moderate ‘academic performance averages’. The Teak Independent Community School, however, possesses academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are not in unison, and these less well-aligned aims and implementation strategies are associated with weak ‘academic performance averages’ (See Table 53).

Table 53. Relationship between Three Areas: Focus on ‘Achieved’ Impacts

Fenway Independent Community School (Urban)			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble	Supports	<u>Academic</u> - Tailored curriculum is engaging - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average moderate
Teak Independent Community School (Rural)			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams - Curriculum is to excite students	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand	<u>Academic Performance Results</u> Average weak
Key	Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%		

Based on these two schools, it appears that academic aims and academic implementation strategies that complement one another tend to be associated with stronger ‘academic performance averages’.

3.7 Relationship among Three Areas: Both connected and disconnected aims and implementation strategies are associated with the perception that offerings have had a strong positive impact – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts

The Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School each possesses aims and implementation strategies that generally are not in accordance with one another (See Table 54).

Table 54. Relationship among Three Areas: Focus on ‘Perceived’ Impacts

Fenway Independent Community School (Urban)			
Aims	Support	Implementation Strategies	Impacts
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams - Curriculum is to keep students out of trouble	Supports	<u>Academic</u> - Tailored curriculum is engaging - Academic tutoring service is well-funded and well-staffed and meets demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address challenges that have the potential to impede academic and social development and provide both students and other residents with essentials	Does not Support	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical health services are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand - Mental health services are well-funded and meet demand, but not well-staffed - Food programs are well-funded and well-staffed, but do not meet demand	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students and adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Teak Independent Community School (Rural)			
<u>Academic</u> - Curriculum is to be challenging, diverse, and engaging - Curriculum is to promote achievement, but not focus on standardized exams - Curriculum is to excite students	Does not Support	<u>Academic</u> - School board prescribed curriculum could be more engaging and tailored - Academic tutoring service is not well-funded or well-staffed or able to meet demand	<u>Courses and Tutoring</u> Strong positive impacts on ‘academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Socio-Economic</u> Offerings are to address socio-economic challenges that have the potential to impede academic progress and social development	Does not Support	<u>Socio-Economic</u> Many offerings - Physical and mental health services are not well-funded or well-staffed, but able to meet demand - Food programs are not well-funded or able to meet demand, but are well-staffed	<u>Socio-Economic Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements perceived
<u>Community Engagement</u> Community-based occasions and classes are to unite community members and offer enriching experiences	Does not Support	<u>Community Engagement</u> Many offerings - Community engagement opportunities are well-funded and well-staffed and meet demand No workforce training programs	<u>Community Offerings</u> Strong positive impact on students and adults perceived, but more unity, engagement, and workforce trained graduates wanted
Key Font: Negative/Weak/1% – 29% Font: Moderate/30% – 69% Font: Positive/Strong/70% – 99%			

The aims and implementation strategies of the Fenway Independent Community School did not align in two of the three areas. Irrespective of the aims and implementation strategies aligning, the perceived impact was always strong and positive.

The story about the Teak Independent Community School is rather similar. The aims and implementation strategies of this school did not align on three separate instances. However, this did not prevent study participants from perceiving that programs and services of the school have had strong and positive impacts.

Collectively, these two independent model schools possess aims and implementation strategies that did not align five of the six instances studied. The disconnected aims and implementation strategies, however, did not prevent study participants from believing that the offerings have had strong positive impacts on academic performance, 'academic-related' elements, and 'non-academic-related' elements.

3.8 Relationship between Academic Aim and Impact: Minimal attention on standardized exams did not guarantee weak 'academic performance results'

Neither the Fenway Independent Community School nor the Teak Independent Community School maintains the stated academic aim of heavily concentrating time and resources on promoting student performance on standardized exams. The former school averaged moderate 'academic performance results,' whereas the latter school averaged weak 'academic performance results'. Based on these two schools, it appears that the aim of focusing only limited attention on standardized exams could impede the achievement of strong 'academic performance results' – but does not guarantee weak 'academic performance results'.

3.9 Relationship between School Staff and the Aims: Both school staffs strongly helped to form aims

Without a national headquarters or a local federation, both the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School heavily relied on their school staff to develop the aims of the school. Study participants, ranging from school administrators to community members, commonly discussed how this process was lengthy and involved the community. Furthermore, for the most part, the wide range of participants were pleased that the final set of aims was locally-based and reflective of their particular community. Participants from both schools expressed feeling satisfied about not having a national headquarters or local federation involved in the process.

3.10 Relationship between Curriculum Style and Impacts: Tailored curriculum linked to stronger achieved 'academic performance results'

The Fenway Independent Community School possesses a tailored curriculum that was crafted by its school administrators, teachers, and counselors, unlike the Teak Independent Community School, which possesses a school board prescribed curriculum. The tailored curriculum of the Fenway Independent Community School is associated with moderate achieved 'academic performance results,' whereas the school board prescribed curriculum of the Teak Independent Community School is associated with weak achieved 'academic performance results'. Parent study participants from the Teak Independent Community School commonly expressed the opinion that a more tailored curriculum could improve 'academic performance results'.

3.11 Relationship between the Principal and Community School Director Duo and the Budget Size and Number of Offerings: A knowledgeable, dedicated duo from each school potentially was able to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings

The Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School were each commonly described by study participants as possessing a knowledgeable and dedicated principal and community school director. Participants from both schools did not seem to waiver on this view. Additionally, study participants believed these characteristics helped yield favorable outcomes for their school. Specifically, the characteristics were regularly linked to the school possessing a sizeable community school budget and, furthermore, the school being able to offer an extensive range of offerings.

3.12 Relationship between Budget Size and Areas: Larger budget for community school-related expenses potentially linked to stronger implementation strategies and stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’ – but not the perception of stronger positive impact levels on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements

In regard to the Fenway Independent Community School (\$350,000 budget, estimated) and the Teak Independent Community School (\$200,000 budget, estimated), it appears that the budget size for community school-related expenses may be linked to stronger implementation strategies and stronger achieved ‘academic performance results’. The Fenway Independent Community School has a budget that is noticeably larger than the budget of its counterpart. Its implementation strategies are better-funded and better-staffed and are better able to meet demand than the Teak Independent Community School. Additionally, the moderate achieved ‘academic performance results’ of the Fenway Independent Community School are stronger than the weak achieved ‘academic performance results’ of the Teak Independent Community School.

Nevertheless, a larger budget for community school-related expenses is not linked to study participants perceiving programs and services as having had stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Programs and services of both the Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School were viewed as having had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements, despite not possessing the same budget.

3.13 Relationship between Setting (Urban and Rural) and Three Areas: The aims and motivations, implementation strategies, and impacts do not appear to be strongly impacted by the setting of the school

An investigation of the interaction between the settings of the independent model schools (urban and rural) and the three areas did not uncover any links between the setting and the three areas. It appears that neither the Fenway Independent Community School (urban) nor the Teak Independent Community School (rural) experienced, for example, any particular advantages or disadvantages pertaining to the three areas as a result of their setting.

The cross-case analysis ‘within’ the independent model was used to establish general characteristics maintained by the model. The summary, however, does not speak for all independent model community schools.

3.14 Summary

The Fenway Independent Community School and the Teak Independent Community School share many common characteristics in the areas of aims and motivations and impacts; however, the two schools are divided in terms of implementation strategies. A summary of the model, as it applies specifically to these two schools, is as follows:

Independent Findings

- Largely possesses local aims and motivations based on traditional community school principles, and does not aim to rigorously prepare students for standardized exams
- Divided on implementation strategies – offerings that are largely well-funded and well-staffed and able to meet demand versus offerings that commonly include challenges pertaining to funding, staffing, and meeting demand
- Maintains off-site partnerships that are fully-utilized – Teak Independent Community School
- Consistently offers high levels of socio-economic and community engagement offerings
- Varies between addressing the socio-economic needs of both students and adults and addressing solely the socio-economic needs of students
- Averages weak to moderate ‘academic performance results’
- Shows that ‘community school tenure’ results are not always stronger than ‘traditional school tenure’ results
- Perceived as possessing many favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Potentially could benefit from more school-community unity, community member engagement, and workforce training opportunities
- Appears that the community school approach, overall, has had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements over ‘academic performance results’
- Garners the view that offerings have had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Possesses ‘perceived’ impacts that are more favorable than its ‘achieved’ performance results

Interrelated Findings

- Possesses one set of academic aims and academic implementation strategies that are in unison and are linked to stronger ‘academic performance averages’ than the disconnected set – and neither connected nor disconnected academic aims and academic implementation strategies are linked to strong ‘academic performance averages’
- Possesses mostly disconnected aims and implementation strategies that are all linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements – i.e. disconnected aims and implementation strategies linked to the perception that the offerings have had strong positive impacts

- Possesses the stated academic aim of not intensely focusing on standardized exams, and it did not guarantee weak ‘academic performance results’
- Potentially uses school staff to help craft locally-based aims
- Displays that a tailored curriculum is linked to stronger ‘academic performance results’ – Fenway Independent Community School
- Potentially uses a knowledgeable, dedicated principal and community school director duo to help secure substantial funding and provide extensive offerings
- Suggests that a larger budget size for community school-related expenses is linked to stronger implementation strategies and achieved ‘academic performance results’
- Appears not to display a relationship between larger budget size and study participants perceiving stronger positive impacts on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements
- Suggests no association between the setting (urban or rural) and the three areas

In short, based on the findings from the two schools, the independent model can be described as possessing locally-based aims and motivations, investing in a range of offerings beyond those of traditional schools, applying moderate to strong implementation strategies, averaging weak to moderate ‘academic performance results,’ and being perceived as having favorable ‘academic-related’ and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. Furthermore, programs and services of the model are viewed as having had a strong positive impact on academic performance, ‘academic-related’ elements, and ‘non-academic-related’ elements. In the end, in terms of all the impacts, it appears that the independent model had a stronger positive impact on ‘non-academic performance’ elements than on ‘academic performance results’.

The description of the independent model – which does not serve as a characterization of all independent model community schools or the entire model – does not possess all the characteristics of the ideal community school, as described by the Coalition for Community Schools. It appears, though, that the independent model would embody more of the ideal characteristics by strengthening its implementation strategies, improving its ‘academic performance results,’ and focusing more on community union and adult education opportunities.

