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Leading for Sustainability in School-Community Partnerships

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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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Dr. Nannette Glenn, Dean of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies

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School of Educational Leadership

Leading for Sustainability in School-Community Partnerships

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

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by

Kimberly Renee Benavides

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Abstract

Schools receive support in the form of partnerships with organizations such as businesses, churches, and non-profits for many reasons, and such partnerships are beneficial to students and the school community. The purpose of this participatory qualitative study was to determine behaviors of elementary school principals that result in the sustainability of school-community partnerships beyond the initial year of implementation. Elementary school principals in an urban public school district in North Texas were interviewed along with leaders from their corresponding community partners to determine the role of the principal in school-community partnership work. Through an in-depth analysis of interview transcripts, the following four themes emerged: school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility. The results of this study indicate that principals who set a welcoming school culture, are visible and available to the community, communicate consistently using a variety of methods, and are flexible in response to changing needs of organizations and other stakeholders can positively impact the long-term sustainability of school-community partnerships.

Keywords: school-community partnership, leadership, qualitative participatory research, sustainability, principal

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Across the United States, community members work alongside school staff to support the education of young people. Recognition by the general public of the need for educational reform has resulted in a renewed and vested interest in the daily activities of schools by community organizations (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; Green, 2018). Increasingly, public school principals must skillfully address diverse challenges represented in urban school communities. To do this work, school leaders often reach out to agencies such as churches, non-profits, universities, and businesses for support and resources. The resulting partnerships exist to meet the needs of students and their families and support school reform efforts (Badgett, 2016; Mazerolle et al., 2017). Initiating, supporting, and maintaining successful school-community partnerships for the benefit of students is a core responsibility of school principals.

School systems are accountable for educating all students equitably, yet there is evidence that gaps in academic achievement continue to exist for children of color and in communities with high poverty rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Basic structures for survival and thriving such as access to transportation, healthcare, food, and adequate shelter (Green, 2018; Reina et al., 2014; Wheeler et al., 2018) are lacking in the communities where many underserved children live and attend school. Life stressors decrease the ability of children to focus on instruction and succeed in school in comparison to peers who do not experience similar disadvantages. The resulting gap in performance requires that urban districts and underachieving schools seek partnerships to address the inequities faced by the families they serve. Additional support for underperforming schools, in the form of assistance from churches, universities, businesses, and non-profits, has been shown to improve school culture and the learning environment (Valli et al., 2014; Wheeler et al., 2018). Academic achievement is positively

impacted through community support by minimizing inequities in resources through programs that offer resources including volunteers and funding (Kladifko, 2013; Reina et al., 2014).

The literature on school-community partnerships further shows that because struggling schools are often located in low-income neighborhoods, there is a need for reform efforts to be collaborative and connected to broad social problems (DeMatthews, 2018a; Myende, 2018) and to create spaces for families to learn about civic engagement (Auerbach, 2009; Casto, 2016; Hunter & Botchwey, 2017). Partnering with community organizations to coordinate academic and nonacademic services for students enables school leaders to minimize barriers to learning for at-risk students (Bates et al., 2019). The expectation that schools engage families and other stakeholders in educational endeavors, coupled with inequities in resources and student performance outcomes (Reina et al., 2014; Valli et al., 2014), has resulted in a wide range of partnership work between public schools and external organizations. Though the goals of each partnership vary in scope, the majority are aimed at improving outcomes for the children and families in the school community (Lee et al., 2016; Valli et al., 2014).

School-community partnerships take many forms and can be initiated at the school level or by outside organizations (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Wheeler et al., 2018). Short-term partnerships can include single events such as guest speakers, resources for school gardens and family nights, and school supply donations (Burt et al., 2018; Kladifko, 2013). Partnerships can also serve research and curriculum needs for university students and future educators (Chu et al., 2019; Goh et al., 2019; Gooden et al., 2011). Long-term partnerships often involve the coordination of services provided at low or no cost to schools and families such as medical care, after-school programming, job training, and mentorship (Casto, 2016; Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). At the most collaborative end of the spectrum of school-community

partnerships are full-service community schools in which the vast majority of resources families of poverty need are available at the school site or through programs hosted on campus (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Sanders, 2018). Community schools often work under very specific models for collaboration and with oversight from organizations focused on the structure of the partnership work (Reina et al., 2014; Sanders, 2018).

Regardless of the scope or type of school-community partnership, evidence shows that collaboration benefits students academically and socially with evidence of increases in attendance and decreases in behavior incidents (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009; Smith et al., 2016). Positive outcomes for adults have also been researched and include increases in parent engagement, improved reputations of schools and community organizations, and exposure to college for low-income families (Badgett, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). Leaders of urban public schools are responsible for the academic and social well-being of students, and when leaders leverage community support through partnerships, the likelihood of achievement increases. While studies exist with information about partnership benefits and program outcomes, little is known about leadership strategies that impact sustainability (Berryhill et al., 2016). Thus, there is a need for further research in the area of preparing school leaders (Gooden et al., 2011; Gray, 2018) to work with community partners in ways that sustain effective partnerships and the resulting benefits for students.

Principals are recognized as vital leaders of school reform efforts (Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2014; Myende, 2018; Wang, 2016) and school-community partnerships can serve as support of such reforms. However, some studies reveal that business and community leaders struggle to connect with school principals for reasons that include scheduling constraints, lack of interest on the part of the principal, and frequent changes in the responsibilities of personnel in urban

schools (Green, 2018; Sanders, 2014). Without approval and buy-in of school principals, partnerships are unlikely to be successfully implemented or sustained (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Sanders, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

Collaboration between public schools and community organizations positively impacts the learning environment and strengthens neighborhoods (Badgett, 2016; Valli et al., 2014). Partners provide vital resources to schools including volunteers, instructional materials, and supplemental funding to support campus goals (Badgett, 2016; Mazerolle et al., 2017). School-community partnerships are often initiated and driven by a single leader or teacher at the campus level (Casto, 2016; Green, 2018; Lee et al., 2016). Sustaining collaborative partnerships beyond the initial year of implementation requires principals to commit time to building relationships and communicating frequently with community organizations (Badgett, 2016; Casto, 2016; Dhillon, 2013; Hauseman et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Mazerolle et al., 2017).

School-community partnerships have primarily been studied to determine program impact and the perceived satisfaction of participants such as parents and business partners (Badgett, 2016; Berryhill et al., 2016). Factors including policy creation, district support, and trust are regularly identified as necessary components of successful partnership endeavors (Dhillon, 2013; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Green, 2018). Partnerships are likely to continue if the work is deemed mutually beneficial to both the school and the outside organization (Lee et al., 2016; Mozolic & Shuster, 2016), but further research is needed to determine leadership strategies that sustain successful school-community partnerships (Badgett, 2016; Casto, 2016; Green, 2018).

Collaboration between public schools and community organizations improves academic and social outcomes for students, families, and schools (Berryhill et al., 2016; Casto, 2016). However, when school-community partnerships are not sustained, benefits to students are interrupted. Failure to research leadership practices that effectively sustain school-community partnerships may result in a decrease in the number of long-term partners for schools and the resulting positive impact on students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this participatory research study was to explore common leadership practices of principals that result in sustained partnerships with community organizations. Participation from both principals and organizational leaders engaged in ongoing partnership work offered me a wide range of viewpoints about school leadership. Because collaboration is at the center of school-community partnerships, the methodology for this study was collaborative in nature and involved the participants as stakeholders in the process (Hacker, 2013).

A participatory approach to the study allowed leaders of community organizations and school principals to provide input about the information needed to explore common leadership practices of principals that result in sustained partnerships. Initially, I shared goals and proposed questions with all participants. In line with participatory research, questions for the interviews evolved based on feedback from participants. Utilizing semistructured, open-ended interviews, I then aimed to gain insight into the perceptions of leaders of community organizations and principals serving in urban Texas public schools engaged in partnership work (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The results of the research were shared with participants and to allow application to their work in enhancing school-community partnerships by defining a set of practical skills for use by campus principals in developing and sustaining community support.

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the perceived role of the principal in sustaining school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

RQ2: What behaviors by campus principals contribute to the long-term success of school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

Definition of Key Terms

Community organizations. Businesses, churches, universities, and non-profit organizations geographically near or within the city of a school site are considered community organizations (Reina et al., 2014; Wheeler et al., 2018).

Low-income. The term low-income refers to families living at or below the national poverty level. Students are identified as low-income for school reporting purposes when they qualify to receive federally funded free or reduced lunch (Green, 2018; Wheeler et al., 2018).

School-community partnership. Collaborative work, planning, or actions between schools and other institutions that are initiated to offer support to educational reform or goals are considered school-community partnerships (Casto, 2016; Chu et al., 2019). Partnerships can be long or short-term and may or may not be mutually beneficial to all parties.

Stakeholders. In the school setting and for the purposes of this study, stakeholders include parents, students, school staff, and the staff or members of entities partnered with schools (Green, 2018). Stakeholders can also include residents in a school's neighborhood whether or not they have children who attend school and anyone interested in the success of a campus.

Sustainability. Sustainability refers to partnership work lasting more than one year (Lee et al., 2016; Wheeler et al., 2018). For the purposes of the study, partnerships were considered sustainable if they have continued past 2 consecutive years.

Urban. The Texas Education Agency (2018) defines 11 types of school districts. Major urban school districts are those located within counties that have populations greater than 960,000 with at least 35% of their students identified as low-income. Additionally, the enrollment in urban districts must account for more than 70% of the students residing in the county. Partnerships at urban elementary schools in North Texas are the focus of this study.

Summary

When community organizations partner with public schools, resources and support are provided that schools may not otherwise be able to access. The scope of school-community partnerships varies from campus to campus, but studies show that community leaders view relationships with as vital to partnership work (Bulawa & Mhlauli, 2014; Wheeler et al., 2018). However, there is little specificity around the role of the principal in sustaining effective partnerships (Van Vooren, 2018). More information is needed to support campus principals in working with community partners so that partnership efforts can be sustained over many years. The aim of this study was to identify leadership behaviors that result in sustainability of school-community partnerships in urban schools.

In the following chapter, literature is reviewed for historical context and the relevance of current studies of leadership in school-community partnerships. The review of literature includes descriptions of various types of school partnerships and research available about each type. Benefits of partner work, positive impacts, and sustainability efforts are examined. Additionally, social capital theory and participatory research as they relate to networking relationships for school and community improvement are further examined in the context of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Leadership and responsibility are at the core of the principalship. School principals lead efforts around student achievement, staff professional development, policy implementation, and parent and community engagement. They are required to meet state and federal accountability expectations, follow budget regulations, and maintain campus safety (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Van Vooren, 2018). Principals assume many complex responsibilities, which often vary among campuses and district. School leaders make decisions for the improvement and functioning of schools based on what is known and observed about the school's needs and the community's resources (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013). Because the duties and daily tasks of principals evolve based on the needs of students and the school community, there is "no consensus about the roles and responsibilities of the principal" (Van Vooren, 2018, p. 49).

Over the past several decades, the challenge of school reform and the resulting need for school leaders to establish partnerships between schools and the community has become a prominent part of the principalship. Calls for action from local, state, and federal governments to reform schools and raise student achievement regularly implore business and community leaders to support schools so that the future workforce is well prepared. In *A Nation Accountable* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), the widely publicized update to the historic *A Nation at Risk* report of 1983, the importance of education, and thus, the need for stakeholder involvement, was made clear in the following statement:

> As many have noted, a number of critical factors determine a society's long-run prosperity, including respect for ownership, a relatively open market, and ambitious entrepreneurs. But human capital is one of the most important, and a strong education system is vital to the long-term cultivation of human capital. (p. 15)

Because principals are accountable for school success, academic and otherwise, maintaining partnerships that support the achievement of school goals also falls under the responsibility of the campus principal. The principal serves a vital and visible role as the central leader encouraging success in collaborative efforts between the school and the community (Auerbach, 2009; Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2018).

This chapter includes an analysis of current literature about school-community partnerships to set a framework for research into leadership practices that support sustainability of partnership work. Beginning with a brief explanation of education policy in the United States as it relates to the need for community involvement in public education beginning in the 1980s and moving to standardized testing and federal accountability systems of the 2000s, the emergence of school-community collaboration as a norm in education will be discussed (Sabochik, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Social capital theory will be defined and examined as the lens through which this research is conducted. The review of literature will be concluded with descriptions of common partnership models and a discussion of the outcomes of studies regarding school-community partnerships and the role of leaders in partnership work.

Education Policy

Public school systems in the United States educate all children, but vast inequities and achievement gaps exist for students of color and economically, disadvantaged youth across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), with a focus on civil rights in school systems, was enacted with the intent of providing access to quality education for all children. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published research indicating that public schools were not meeting the expectations of the U.S. and required reform. Children were not performing at the levels of their

peers in other countries, and the federal government called for support from business leaders and others not directly involved in education to help make changes that would impact the success of communities (Badgett, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 1983). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) increased accountability for schools, resulting in an abundance of public data about student performance in reading and mathematics. The new focus on published test results prompted collective action among business and community leaders that resulted in the establishment of many school-community partnerships and the desire by outside organizations to help local schools.

Data published in *A Nation Accountable* (U.S. Department of Education, 2008) confirmed only minor progress in education reform under the strict accountability measures of NCLB, and the need for collaboration between schools and community stakeholders was made clear as a necessity to improve outcomes for students. In December of 2015, the Department of Education enacted amendments to ESEA as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing No Child Left Behind (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), with a renewed focus on preparing children for success in college and careers (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The purpose for education reform transitioned from accountability to collaboration for student success under the new law, with state education agencies responsible for setting local guidelines for implementation by school districts. State education agencies were granted opportunities to create plans for how schools would meet ESSA requirements based on the needs of their students and communities. As a requirement under the law, states must engage stakeholders including business and education leaders, parents, elected officials, and others in all stages of ESSA implementation, including initial planning phases (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; U.S.

Department of Education, 2017). Succinctly, at the campus level, the realization of stakeholder collaboration and involvement for student success became the responsibility of school principals.

Research validated the benefits of partnerships between schools and community organizations (Badgett, 2016; Casto, 2016; DeMatthews, 2018b; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009), thus making community engagement an expectation for principals in most large urban districts. In compliance with state and federal law (DeMatthews, 2018b; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015), school board policies commonly require that principals provide community members and families ongoing opportunities to participate in school functions and decision-making. Expectations for collective decision-making are tied to federal funding requirements for transparency in communication and stakeholder collaboration (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). For example, regulations for the use of funds granted to schools under Title I, Part A based on poverty rates include stipulations for parental involvement programs (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). However, studies revealed that it is ultimately the leadership style of the principal that determined whether or not a school had a culture of successfully partnering with parents and other stakeholders (Jung & Sheldon, 2020; Myende, 2018).

Urban School Reform

Educators, business leaders, and local governments focused educational reform efforts mainly on urban areas as performance data indicated urban schools were not consistently closing academic achievement gaps (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Green, 2018; Miranda et al., 2018). To target instruction directly, many school partnerships were established with the professional development of faculty as the main goal (Cress et al., 2020; Goh et al., 2019). Examples include direct training for teachers and mentorship or leadership programs through universities (Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Curriculum, research, and classroom resources

have also been provided as school reform efforts through the support of school-community partnerships (Badgett, 2016; Berryhill et al., 2016; Valli et al., 2014).

In addition to academic needs, research showed a growing demand for parent engagement and family support in urban schools (Sanders, 2014), specifically in neighborhoods with high poverty rates. Often, there were underlying needs such as lack of food, adequate housing, and mental health resources that hindered academic achievement efforts of schools (Casto, 2016; Perkins, 2015). Community partners have offered solutions to problems facing urban neighborhoods (Casto, 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2016; Valli et al., 2014) so that directly improving educational outcomes could remain the focus of school staff. Prevalent in urban school districts, partnerships with local food banks, churches, and community centers provided access to necessary economic and social services for students and families.

School reform efforts expanded beyond campus walls to address more than curriculum and instruction. Issues affecting students in urban districts included low attendance rates and high numbers of disciplinary incidents, and such interruptions to educational access for students resulted in low performance (Mazerolle et al., 2017). Therefore, initiatives for increasing parent involvement, improving attendance, and decreasing disciplinary incidents have often been part of school turnaround (Bates et al., 2019; Mazerolle et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2016; Valli et al., 2014). Attendance and discipline partnerships have typically included mentorship programs for struggling students, incentives for improved attendance, parent training, and absence prevention measures through health services (Frankford et al., 2019; Mazerolle et al., 2017). Additionally, school-community partnerships have provided support for school reform through the addition of resources and personnel not funded by the school, thus relieving strain from the campus budget (Casto, 2016; Kladifko, 2013; Miranda et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Social capital theory refers to the leveraging of relationships and resources within one's social or professional network to benefit others (Ehlen et al., 2016; Green, 2018). This theory is applicable because influences from home, school, and the community interact to affect students, and leaders in each of these places can connect to best support children (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). When organizations such as schools, churches, and businesses work together and interact across their respective fields, the likelihood that they will successfully address community needs increases. Specifically, social capital can be described as the coordination of efforts for a common purpose or customer base (Gelderblom, 2018). Collaboration between networks of individuals or organizations with access to varied services and products leads to shared knowledge, extended outreach, and increased interaction between groups that may not have otherwise worked together. Groups geographically located both inside and outside of a community are considered social networks (Ehlen et al., 2016; Sanders et al., 2019). The resulting connections between otherwise unrelated social networks is referred to as bridging social capital (DeMatthews, 2018b; Green, 2018).

For the purposes of this study, the resources that school principals and organizational leaders accessed and leveraged for the benefit of school communities were evidence of social capital theory in action (Auerbach, 2009; Badgett, 2016; Ehlen et al., 2016). School-community partnerships in urban districts are purposed for addressing unsatisfied or undersatisfied needs of families, schools, and children. The school supplies and backpacks a local grocer donated or the mentorship and counsel a church congregation has offered to parents and children creates a bridge via the social network of the school between lacking and necessary resources. A common example of the mutually beneficial use of social capital to support schools can be seen when

universities have partnered with nearby K-12 public schools, improving teacher proficiency for schools and providing a means for ongoing research for colleges (Ball, 2014). In this way, connections, resources, and shared knowledge are examples of social capital (Ehlen et al., 2016; Green, 2018) leveraged by organizational leaders and principals to improve schools.

Urban public schools were widely considered in need of reform and support by outside agencies in order to address problems such as discipline and low achievement (Lusse et al., 2019; Miranda et al., 2018). Partnerships offer connections to services that may not have otherwise be available or accessible within the school community. Through the lens of the social capital theory, the campus principal serves as a liaison who has knowledge of the needs of families and the school and can network with community partners to find resources for addressing those needs (Valli et al., 2014). The development of relationships with stakeholders in the community surrounding the school requires the commitment of time on the part of the principal. However, this strategic building of social capital positions the school to "be equipped to receive support when it is offered" (Badgett, 2016, p. 90).

School-community partnerships are collaborative and largely relational by nature, so social capital theory is applicable throughout partnership endeavors. For example, partnerships between schools and agencies that offer parent training often increase civic engagement for families, thus increasing access to social capital and positive relationships for parents with community leaders (Auerbach, 2009; DeMatthews, 2018b). Mentorship programs offered by faith-based partners connect children with educated professionals from the community, creating relationships that can influence future decisions for students. Social capital as relationships for the benefit of schools and students takes place not only between principals and organizational leaders, but also with students (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2013; Gelderblom, 2018). If school-

community partnerships in urban school neighborhoods are sustained over time, the social networks created can have positive impacts on families and students.

It was important to note that schools varied widely based on many factors, and principals must collaborate with stakeholders to determine the most effective path to improvement for their particular campus (Miranda et al., 2018). Just as the needs of schools differed, so did the community organizations surrounding them. Through the development of social networks and relationships between leaders, the needs and resources of schools, churches, businesses, and non-profit organizations in a community can be aligned. This leveraging of social capital through effective school-community partnerships required mutually beneficial, supportive relationships between principals and organizational leaders to ensure the goals of partnerships were attained (Badgett, 2016; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Green, 2018).

Partnership Types

The types of partnerships that exist between public schools and external entities varied depending on the needs of individual campuses and the types of organizations in the surrounding community. Informal partnership work often consisted of supply drives, clothing or monetary donations, and other one-time events provided by community organizations to schools (Kladifko, 2013; Smith et al., 2016; Wheeler et al., 2018). Ongoing school-community partnerships represented several common categories based on the purpose of the work and the type of partnering organization. Common types of school-community partnerships were family-school partnerships, university-school partnerships, partnerships with organizations providing resources to the school community, full-service community schools, and faith-based school-community partnerships (Sanders, 2014). While this is not an exhaustive list of types of school-community

partnerships, the literature reviewed for the purpose of studying the role of the principal in partnership work was focused on these categories.

Family-School Partnerships

Partnerships between schools and community organizations exist to meet the needs of students and their families and to support school reform efforts (Badgett, 2016; Mazerolle et al., 2017). Often, professional development activities and classes for parents or school staff were a large part of the collaborative efforts between schools, businesses, and non-profit organizations. Courses offered with the goals of strengthening families and increasing civic engagement in neighborhoods positively impacted school culture and student achievement (Berryhill et al., 2016; DeMatthews, 2018a; Sanders, 2014). Topics for classes regularly included nutrition, parenting tips, homework help, and even English as a second language (ESL) support. Parent engagement initiatives commonly target underserved populations and may have provided community resources for families who speak languages other than English (Bryan & Henry, 2012).

Studies showed that professional and positive relationships between school leaders, teachers, and parents were beneficial to student success and well-being (Berryhill et al., 2016; Sanders, 2014), and formal procedures for parent engagement were more likely to benefit the school as a whole. Unfortunately, parent engagement with schools was often limited to teachers informing guardians of student progress, scheduled and scripted parent-teacher conferences, and student performances or awards ceremonies (DeMatthews, 2018a; Lusse et al., 2019). Creating opportunities for parents to take leadership roles on campus and within school districts clearly resulted in improved outcomes for children, and recent studies indicated that directly supporting the home environment could have an even greater impact on success (Lusse et al., 2019;

Myende, 2018; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Home visits and structured conferences that included the student in academic goal setting were additional and innovative ways schools were changing parent engagement to be more collaborative and less school directed (Lusse et al., 2019; Vesely et al., 2017).

Developing positive relationships with parents was an important variable in the success of school-family partnership endeavors (Lusse et al., 2019). As a direct point of contact with students and parents, teachers endeavored get to know the families of their students and communicated regularly about both positive and challenging school situations (Berryhill et al., 2016; Lusse et al., 2019; Vesely et al., 2017). Research showed that while the impact of this practice was clearly understood by principals and teachers, time for fostering relationships and the knowledge of how to successfully do so were lacking in many schools. It was important that educators focused on improving parent-teacher relationships, though, as one study found this to be the single most influential factor in successful school-family partnerships (Lusse et al., 2019).

Another vital part of school-family partnerships was the level of organization and planning schools put into events for families. In studies of parent engagement work, parents and teachers reported that poorly organized events were likely to have low attendance or resulted in a lack of interest in future events and collaboration (Lusse et al., 2019; Sanders, 2014). Including parents as leaders in determining the scope and topics of parent engagement events increased two-way communication between the school and home, which increased commitment from families to the academic goals of the school (Auerbach, 2009; Lusse et al., 2019; Sanders, 2018). Additionally, empowering parent leaders as role models for their community had been shown to improve overall parent engagement and student learning (Auerbach, 2009; Valli et al., 2014).

The coordination of family services like dental and medical care, job training, professional counseling, and computer or internet use was a benefit to schools by removing or lessening nonacademic barriers to education (Bates et al., 2019; Perkins, 2015). A partnering organization that offered job training to students or parents benefited from access to a well-prepared future work force (Lee et al., 2016; Perkins, 2015) once students reached employment age or completed school. Because services could be provided on campus at little to no cost to partners, the use of the school facilities and equipment was another benefit to organizations in this type of partnership. Allowing parents and families to access school facilities in the same way as a community center added a layer of convenience for stakeholders (Casto, 2016). If a school were geographically centered in the neighborhood and easily accessible to families, services were likely to be utilized because parents already had a familiarity with the building.

Parent engagement is an important responsibility of school principals, and many districts offered funding or personnel to support this work at the district level. District support of partnership initiatives improved the structure of programming, but some studies indicated leadership concerns when the principal was not directly involved with planning parent engagement events (Sanders, 2014; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Parent leaders reported that depending on the experience levels and leadership styles of school principals, the amount of collaboration between school and home could vary (Sanders, 2014). Changes in school leadership impacted the likelihood that well-established family-school partnerships would continue on a given campus, as the power dynamic of new leaders could be interrupted if relationships and roles were not negotiated (O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Parents and principals were expected to work together to establish trust and set common goals as leaders of family-school partnerships.

University-School Partnerships

Universities frequently partnered with nearby public schools to offer on-site training for university students and professional learning for practicing public school teachers (Hunter & Botchwey, 2017; Smith et al., 2016). Elementary students and their families benefited from school-university partnerships through increased exposure to college, field trip opportunities, mentorship, and academic tutorials (Mozolic & Shuster, 2016; Smith et al., 2016). The primary stakeholders in university-school partnerships, though, were teachers and university students through the sharing of expertise in lesson design and classroom management (Bates et al., 2019; Berryhill et al., 2016; Cress et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2016). The programs and accompanying research of school-university partnerships required buy-in and collaboration by the leaders of the partnering universities and public schools (Cress et al., 2020; Myende, 2018; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Support and engagement by school principals and university leaders improved the functioning of partnerships and ensured continued access to facilities, resources, and students (Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2014).

Elementary school students benefited from school-university partnerships in various ways. Academically, when university students collaborated with classroom teachers, new ideas were shared, and children in the classroom reaped the rewards of innovative lesson designs and pedagogy (Hunter & Botchwey, 2017). Elementary classroom teachers engaged in partnership work with universities had opportunities to increase their content knowledge and levels of education through leadership training (Cress et al., 2020; Gooden et al., 2011). Other benefits included exposure for elementary students to college life by attending on-site university field trips and increased interaction with college students (Smith et al., 2016).

Due to the prevalence of research at universities, there were multiple studies about the outcomes of particular school-university partnerships (Ball, 2014; Cress et al., 2020; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). However, some studies showed a disconnect between the goals of universities and those of public schools. Public school teachers and principals reported differences in experience, education, and intentions as possible barriers to broadening the scope of their partnerships with universities (Myende, 2018). Professors and other university leaders in the same partnerships reported extreme principal autonomy or lack of participation on the part of school leadership as barriers to continued collaboration (Berryhill et al., 2016; Cress et al., 2020; Myende, 2018; Smith et al., 2016). University partnerships often began as part of a course or student project, resulting in student leadership that changed each semester or year; therefore, staff at the university and school sites had to be well informed and dedicated to partnership work to impact sustainability. Power dynamics and differences in public school and university policies further complicated continued collaboration (Myende, 2018).

Partnerships for Resources

In low-income communities where resources were scarce, the lack of access to necessities interrupted learning for students. School partners have provided a variety of nonacademic services like food, job training, free or affordable medical care, and legal aid for families (Bates et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2016). Principal buy-in was often high for school-community partnerships that provided resources because of the one-time nature of the work. It was frequently the school that initiated this type of partnership by asking for funding or supplies from organizations (Kladifko, 2013; Sanders, 2014; Smith et al., 2016; Wheeler et al., 2018). Additionally, this type of partnership required little work from school staff because funds and personnel from the school were not typically required (Miranda et al., 2018). However, if not

intentionally sustained, partnerships that were initiated for the donation of resources were likely to dissolve quickly.

Services for students were regularly reported as a vital and often intangible resource provided through school-community partnerships. Affordable after-school programs and extra-curricular activities were not always available as part of school budgets or staffing, so partners like churches and non-profit organizations offered a way for schools to meet this type of need (Casto, 2016). Outdoor learning centers and school gardens were another common student service provided through partnerships with external organizations (Burt et al., 2018). Businesses donated building materials, funds for curriculum, and volunteers to initiate gardens and other spaces for students to learn outside of the classroom. These partners also provided experts to train school staff and guest speakers for student assemblies (Kladifko, 2013).

Research indicated a few common practices that result in improved satisfaction with school-community partnerships that provide resources from the perspective of business and organizational leaders. First, when principals showed transparency in communicating how donated funds were spent and resources allocated, business owners reported that they were likely to donate again (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Mazerolle et al., 2017). Second, the creation of collaborative groups of stakeholders with clearly defined roles for goal setting, action planning, and program monitoring served as a guide for organizational leaders to navigate partnership work and school policies (Berryhill et al., 2016; Frankford et al., 2019; Krumm & Curry, 2017). Finally, business and organizational leaders reported higher levels of satisfaction with school-community partnerships when there was a direct relationship and line of communication with the principal (Badgett, 2016; Myende, 2018).

Sustainability could be a concern in resource-based partnerships due to a lack of tangible or immediate benefit to organizations that offered the funding and supplies. For example, a grocery store that donated backpacks and supplies to families did not typically receive funds or direct advertising from the school. School principals and district staff working with school-community resource providers offset sustainability issues with social media campaigns and events that spotlighted school-community partners (Badgett, 2016). Positive communication and public gratitude on the part of receiving schools resulted in mutually beneficial relationships with organizations (Kladifko, 2013; Lee et al., 2016; Mazerolle et al., 2017), thus improving the likelihood that partnerships would continue beyond single donation events or drives.

Community Schools

Full-service community schools (FSCS) were a subset of public education campuses that represented the most comprehensive style of school-community partnerships. Community schools were campuses situated as neighborhood facilities for family needs that occurred outside the traditional realm of education (Sanders, 2018). Community schools were typically located within historically underserved communities near or directly in the center of the main neighborhood (Sanders, 2018). Some of the services provided by the partners of community schools included on-site dental, medical, and vaccination services, after hours childcare, and housing assistance (Sanders, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019). FSCS partnerships were unique in that services like health care, childcare, and legal aid were provided at school sites to all community members, not just students and parents (Sanders, 2018).

Because of the scope of services provided, full-service community schools required significant political and financial support to sustain partnership work (Sanders, 2018). Many FSCS locations have social workers specifically assigned to initiate and sustain partnerships with

organizations that provided services to families (Sanders et al., 2019). Studies indicated that while principals of full-service campuses sought community partners who offered support that was aligned to the needs of the school community, social workers communicated more directly with parents and student (Sanders et al., 2019). FSCS funding was provided by a combination of direct financial assistance from community partners and competitive grants at the federal, state, and local levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). To support the daily tasks of partnership work at community school locations, grant funds were used to hire staff who directly support community engagement (Sanders et al., 2019).

The role of the principal, in the case of a FSCS, was not to manage partnerships, but rather, to seek and support collaborative relationships that would bring needed resources to the neighborhood (Okilwa & Barnett, 2018; Sanders, 2018; Sanders et al., 2019). Trusting relationships had to be developed between school and community leaders in order to garner the political and financial support needed to sustain a thriving community school. Resources offered to families were likewise offered to anyone in the community, sometimes according to income or zip code (Sanders, 2018), and based on need, services offered may change over time. Churches, community centers, and non-profit organizations partnered with full-service schools and provided a variety of support including food pantries, job training, counseling, and language services (Sanders, 2018).

As with traditional public schools, principals of full-service community schools were responsible for academic achievement, attendance, and discipline on campus. Studies indicated that FSCS principals must proficiently navigate relational (Badgett, 2016) situations between staff and community partners, and one principal reported the importance of hiring faculty willing to receive constant input from external partners (Sanders, 2018). Building relational leadership

capacity in principals and teachers took time (Hauseman et al., 2017), but the trust developed was vital to the functioning of community schools. Particularly because some services were offered outside of school hours, the goals of all organizations involved in FSCS partnerships should be clearly understood and aligned.

Faith-Based School-Community Partnerships

Neighborhood churches are important cornerstones of many communities in the United States. In urban neighborhoods, churches and schools are often centrally located, making partnership work geographically feasible (Kaplowitz, 2015; Quezada, 2004). Often overlooked in school-community research (Henry et al., 2017), faith-based organizations were one of the most common partners of urban schools. Relationships with adults who could serve as positive role models (Henry et al., 2017) were a vital resource for children in high-poverty, urban areas. Church partnerships offered mentor programs for students who struggled with behavior, social-emotional functioning, and even academics. Most faith-based organizations followed already established programs for tutoring and mentoring students once a partnership with a school was established (Henry et al., 2017). A few studies even showed that academic outcomes on state assessments improved for low-income students during the years their urban schools participated in a structured partnership with nearby churches (Henry et al., 2017; McIntosh & Curry, 2020).

As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, students living in poverty could lack access to basic resources such as adequate food and housing. Faith-based institutions, through their congregations, had access to large numbers of people willing to volunteer time and expertise to help those in need (Henry et al., 2017; Kaplowitz, 2015; McIntosh & Curry, 2020; Quezada, 2004). The social and human capital that schools have accessed through faith-based partnerships (Kaplowitz, 2015) was great and varied. Students in urban schools who interacted

regularly with volunteers from faith-based partners had lower incidents of discipline, better engagement in school, and higher grades. Through school-church partnerships, students were likely to interact with adults who were educated and well connected to resources in their neighborhood. Church members sometimes filled relational needs for students and acted as role models and advocates for staying in school and the pursuit of postsecondary education (Henry et al., 2017; McIntosh & Curry, 2020).

Community outreach was normally part of the mission of faith-based institutions (Henry et al., 2017; Kaplowitz, 2015; McIntosh & Curry, 2020), so initiating partnerships between schools and neighborhood churches was common and made sense for church and school leaders. Furthermore, partnerships with faith-based institutions were widely recommended by experts in school-community partnership work (Henry et al., 2017; Kaplowitz, 2015). When partnered with public schools, faith-based partnerships did not directly engage in religious worship, and political leaders have even encouraged partnerships between urban public schools and faith-based institutions through the provision of federal funds to support the work (Henry et al., 2017). Although common and proven to be beneficial to students, parents have expressed some concerns about faith-based school-community involvement when families have differing religious beliefs than the partnering church. It was important for that school principals clearly provided families opportunities to choose whether their children participated in the programs offered by faith-based partners (Henry et al., 2017).

School Leadership

The reported responsibilities of school principals were vast and widely undefined, yet tasks minimally included student achievement, safety, staffing, budget, and family and community engagement (Casto, 2016; DeMatthews, 2018b; Van Vooren, 2018). Considering

differences between and among communities and the impact of those differences on the needs of individual campuses, the role of the campus leader in partnering with the community remained difficult to delineate. With the authority to make decisions about their schools, principal support was necessary for successfully initiating school-community partnerships (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Myende, 2018; Valli et al., 2014). For sustainability beyond the initial year of partnership work, relationships between the school and the partnering organization required cultivation, negotiated, and definition of roles so that leaders could effectively make decisions (Auerbach, 2009; Fehrer & Leos-Urbel, 2016; Sanders, 2018). Backing of partnership projects by the campus principal may have determined the continuation and eventual failure or success of the partnership.

Engaging the community was a reported requirement of school districts, and it was common for federal funding to include provisions for parent and family engagement. For example, Title I, Part A supplemental funding mandated that schools align spending in the areas of instruction for student achievement, professional development for teachers, and parent and family engagement (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Federal education funds through Title I were allocated to local education agencies based on the percentage of students enrolled who qualify as living at or below the national poverty level (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Urban schools were likely to qualify for this type of fund due to the financial circumstances of the families they serve. It then became the responsibility of school principals to allocate resources such as money and time to engagement efforts for families and community organizations under Title I regulations.

While school-community partnerships have shown to improve culture and student achievement, the time and effort required of principals is a challenge (Casto, 2016). Principals

reported that community partnership efforts were time consuming and required additional staff to adequately manage (Casto, 2016; DiMartino, 2014), yet in one study the actual amount of time leaders worked with the community was small compared to the time spent on administrative or other tasks (Van Vooren, 2018). Differences in the perspectives of organizational leaders on the responsibilities of principals with regards to partnership work existed as well. Some leaders reported a strong need for direct communication from principals (Auerbach, 2009; Epstein & Sheldon, 2016; Myende, 2018) while others stressed the importance of alternative staff dedicated to the school-community partnerships (Badgett, 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Sanders, 2014).

Relationships and communication between schools and external organizations were vital to the success of partnerships, and many business and organizational stakeholders reported a need to have direct support from the school principal throughout programming (Badgett, 2016; Lee et al., 2016). When leaders of partnering organizations reported a lack of communication or the perception of disinterest in school-community partnerships on the part of the principal, relationships and partnership outcomes were negatively impacted (Casto, 2016; Mozolic & Shuster, 2016; Myende, 2018). However, in an analysis of 50 school-community partnerships, researchers indicated that shared leadership of partner work should also have included the involvement of parents and community leaders to sustain the efforts through changes in campus leadership and personnel (Valli et al., 2014). Other studies revealed a connection between systematic and supportive relationships from the district and school board levels, including provisions for staff and other funding support, as factors that increased the likelihood that school-community partnerships would meet their intended goals (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Sanders, 2014; Valli et al., 2014).

It was clearly the responsibility of school leaders to schedule time for the cultivation of partnerships (Badgett, 2016; Casto, 2016; Sanders, 2018) through relationship building both inside and outside of the school community (Sanders et al., 2019). In one survey of 1,400 school principals, respondents reported workloads and time commitments increased with partnership work (Hauseman et al., 2017). Even with the additional demands for time, the majority of campus leaders considered school-community partnerships a necessary part of the principalship. Questions remained regarding specific practices that best support thriving partnerships, yet common themes emerging from research align with relationship building and included clear communication, shared leadership, and trust.

Beneficial Practices

Studies of school-community partnerships varied in scope and purpose. However, partnership work with positive outcomes had been linked to some common practices. Research indicated that the principal must promote or support the work of community partners in order for programs to flourish on campuses (Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2014, 2018). However, direct involvement by principals in partnership programs was viewed as difficult due to the number of responsibilities placed on school leaders (Van Vooren, 2018). To support principals, key personnel with experience in social work, community leadership, and parent engagement at both the district and campus level were often assigned to support school-community collaboration. The allocation of staff with assigned roles in school-community partnerships resulted in an increase in the number of partnerships a school could effectively manage (Green, 2018; Hauseman et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2019). Evidence also indicated that more partnerships existed when principals were held accountable for community outreach (Green, 2018; Reina et al., 2014; Sanders, 2014). Finally, research on school-community partnerships revealed the need

for alignment between the goals of schools and organizations in order for collaboration to succeed (Casto, 2016; Green, 2018; Mozolic & Shuster, 2016).

Personnel

When community engagement aligned with the goals and missions of school districts, school-community partnership projects were supported with funds, personnel, and training (Badgett, 2016; Sanders, 2014). Some districts had departments with duties specific to engaging and maintaining partners for campuses. In these districts, principals reported feeling supported with partnership efforts. Personnel were responsible, at both the district and campus levels, for managing partnerships and communicate with stakeholders, and frequently served as communications liaison for principals and partners in the initial phases of partnerships (Wheeler et al., 2018). At the elementary level, principals often had fewer noninstructional staff members, making district funds for school-community partnerships even more vital to sustainability (Van Vooren, 2018). When school-community partnerships were strategically established by departments with knowledge of the needs of schools and the resources of communities, the likelihood increased that work continued beyond one-time events and supply donations (Wheeler et al., 2018).

From the perspective of businesses partnering with schools, organizational leaders agreed that a best practice is to specify staff to take the lead of partnership and community outreach work (Lee et al., 2016). Leaders and partners of successful full-service community schools similarly related the importance of partnership coordinators whose role was to manage the volume of school-community partnership tasks that required timely and consistent attention (Sanders et al., 2019). At a more involved level, multiple studies indicated positive outcomes when partnerships follow predetermined protocols or were part of larger school-community

partnership coalitions such as the National Network of Partnership Schools (Sanders et al., 2019; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). When following established and researched models, school and organizational leaders were less likely to struggle with the relational and managerial aspects of school partnerships.

Power and Relationships

Principals, as campus leaders, had much autonomy for instruction, budget, personnel, and operations. Because of this, partnership work could easily fail without direct buy-in and support from the school principal (Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2014). While many school-community partnerships were established through relationships with a single teacher or other stakeholder with a connection to a church or business (Wheeler et al., 2018), it was responsibility of the principal to allocate time and communicate the importance of the work of partners to the school community (Hauseman et al., 2017; Sanders, 2018).

Power dynamics and differences in policies between public school systems and community partners such as universities, businesses, and faith-based institutions served as a barrier to sustainable school-community partnerships. Studies showed that identifying the roles and expectations of organizations and individuals involved in partnerships during initial phases of the work could prevent misunderstandings that hindered collaboration (Mozolic & Shuster, 2016). Common goals and shared decision making among the school and organizational leaders, while not simple, has been shown to be instrumental in successful partnerships (Casto, 2016; Green, 2018; Mazerolle et al., 2017; Myende, 2018). When knowledge and power were shared, leaders of both schools and partnering institutions were more likely to continue working together for the benefit of students and families.

Cultivating relationships between community stakeholders required time (Casto, 2016; Hauseman et al., 2017; Wheeler et al., 2018) and a relational skill set that school leaders were not directly taught through traditional principal training. While some research indicated best practices for leaders, there was no clear design for principals on how to build relationships for school-community partnerships (Sanders et al., 2019). Organizational leaders partnering with schools have reported that a lack of consistent and timely communication from principals and difficulties in meeting directly with principals as barriers to the continuation of partnerships (Hauseman et al., 2017; Sanders, 2014). Changes in leadership were common in public urban school systems, and this transition often impacted relationships needed to continue partnerships (Valli et al., 2014). Furthermore, there was a direct correlation between the participation and interest of the school principal in school-community partnerships and the positive impact on school climate and academic improvement (Valli et al., 2014).

Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

Sustainability of school-community partnerships beyond initial implementation and one-time events required that both the school and the partnering organization benefit from the work. Because partnerships often relied on volunteers, it was important that the partnership projects were viewed by organizations as meaningful and worth continuing (Mozolic & Shuster, 2016). Business leaders could benefit from school partnerships through social media posts and banners as forms of advertisement if school personnel intentionally focused efforts to recognize their partners (Badgett, 2016). For community organizations such as police departments, churches, and non-profit organizations, mutual benefits included shared goal setting, use of school facilities, improved community support, and displays of public gratitude (Kladifko, 2013; Mazerolle et al., 2017).

Through shared leadership and clear communication during planning phases of school-community partnerships, school principals and organizational leaders determined systems to ensure their collaboration was mutually beneficial (Myende, 2018). Research showed that participation in early planning and goal setting by the school principal and personnel from the partnering organization (Myende, 2018; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019) served to clarify the roles of each partner and prevented struggles over authority and autonomy (Sanders, 2014). Relationships that benefit all stakeholders in a school-community partnership required time and intentional effort to develop, and to be effective, were based on the perception of trust and mutual respect (Hauseman et al., 2017; Mazerolle et al., 2017).

Summary

Educational reform and changes in policy starting in the 1980s resulted in a call to action for businesses and community leaders to increase involvement in public education (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Sabochik, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Publicized accountability measures and standards-based assessments further amplified the need for involvement in schools by outside organizations through the opportunities such as funding and training for teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Federal education publications brought some of the inequities and needs of the public school system to the attention of business and community leaders. However, the details about how to effectively collaborate in ways that improve student achievement were left to schools and community organizations.

Current literature around school-community collaboration validated the benefits of school-community partnerships to students and families. Multiple researchers cited improvement in academic and social functioning for high-needs students when schools partnered with local business, universities, and churches (Casto, 2016; Hauseman et al., 2017; Okilwa & Barnett,

2018). Mentorship programs decreased disciplinary incidents and improved attendance for students (Henry et al., 2017; Mazerolle et al., 2017; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). Basic necessities for families provided through food banks, community organizations, and businesses like grocery stores improved the quality of life in high-poverty urban neighborhoods, which allowed students to focus on academic parts of school. Community partners also enhanced instruction by providing resources like school gardens and professional development for teachers (Burt et al., 2018; Hunter & Botchwey, 2017). There were different types of school-community partnerships to meet the varied needs of individual schools including structured, university-based professional learning (Berryhill et al., 2016; Cress et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2016), community resource fairs, and parent workshops (Chu et al., 2019; Sanders, 2014).

To consistently benefit from school-community partnerships, the research revealed the need for targeted leadership behaviors by principals to develop and maintain successful partnerships. However, the specific actions for principals to implement that resulted in successful partnership work were not clear. Common practices that positively impacted community partnership work in schools included shared goal setting, the development of trusting relationships between leaders, clear communication, and mutually beneficial partnerships (Badgett, 2016; Goh et al., 2019). One high-leverage practice was to hire staff at the campus or district level to support partnership endeavors. While this is supportive to campus leaders in working with school-community partnerships, partners consistently disclosed a preference for communicating directly with principals. Additionally, inevitable changes in staff negatively impacted the continuation of partnerships.

Along with beneficial practices for school-community partnerships were multiple barriers to the work. Many of the barriers indicated through this review of literature could be mitigated

by the school principal. For example, lack of communication directly from principals and perceptions of mistrust or disinterest (Sanders, 2014) were cited as reasons community organizations did not continue their partnerships with some schools (Myende, 2018). Therefore, it was vital that school principals were properly trained and supported to sustain school-community partnerships. In urban public schools, changes in campus leadership every few years were common, so relationships formed among community partners had to be reformed often (Green, 2018). Unfortunately, there was little research available that delineated how to sustain partnership efforts through leadership changes (Casto, 2016; Frankford et al., 2019; Green, 2018). Sustainability of partnerships depended on the leadership and communication styles of individual principals.

An abundance of school-community partnership research was program-specific and focused on the outcomes of individual partnerships with districts or schools. When universities partnered with schools, research after the first year of implementation was common so that informed decisions could be made about programming for future years (Ball, 2014; Cress et al., 2020). Additional partnership research took place as requirements for continued funding of partnership efforts or school-community partnership coalitions (Sanders et al., 2019). Organizations and businesses partnering with schools engaged in outcomes-based research to determine the impacts of their partnerships and whether program goals were met. The resulting research provided data that are program, organization, and school specific, but practices for principals and other leaders that inform the sustainability of partnership work overall were lacking.

Principals are legally required to uphold policy, and the majority of districts had policies in place that required community and family partnerships (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Valli et al.,

2014). In fact, federal law mandated that a percentage of Title I funds be spent on parent engagement (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Studies indicated some misalignment between state and district expectations of principals and the daily work reported by those in the role. Such discrepancies resulted in the need for increased specificity in defining the principalship so that appropriate professional development and support could be offered to aid in recruiting and keeping effective school leaders (Casto, 2016; Wheeler et al., 2018). A deficit existed in principal preparation programs with regards to school-community partnerships and a focus on the reality of the wide array of leadership skills needed to effectively run a school (Gray, 2018). The literature revealed that, as a requirement of the principalship, partnering with families and the community was a skill that was not expressly taught in most districts or preparation programs. The benefits of school-community partnerships for students and overall school functioning were well-documented, so it stands to reason that school principals should be better prepared to lead such work.

Common themes for success emerged from the research and included shared goal setting, negotiated power, clear communication, and mutually beneficial partnerships (Cress et al., 2020; Myende, 2018; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019; Sanders, 2018), yet questions remain about the nature of the work and specific actions that participants reported as most beneficial (Green, 2018; Hauseman et al., 2017). With an interest in the leadership behaviors that result in sustainability past initial implementation and through changes in school leadership, further study is warranted to determine what practices by school leaders fostered the sustainability of school-community partnerships. By seeking the experiences and thoughts of organizational and school leaders currently engaged in successful school-community partnerships about the role of the principal, the practices aligned with the emergent themes can be clarified. Furthermore, specific

actions by school leaders that positively impacted partner relations could be identified and shared with principals.

The next chapter contains a clear description of community-based participatory research (CBPR) as the methodology for this study. Chapter 3 includes the process for stakeholder collaboration and the shared development of interview questions. Final questions were adjusted based on the feedback from study participants. However, all interview questions and data analysis work were aligned to the problem of sustainability and answering the identified research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Relationships between public schools and community organizations enhance the learning environment for students. Research indicates positive results for students including academic gains, social and behavioral improvement when partnerships with the outside community are available (Badgett, 2016; Berryhill et al., 2016; Casto, 2016; Green, 2018). Such benefits are interrupted when schools and community organizations do not sustain partnership efforts. Failure to research leadership practices that effectively sustain school-community partnerships may result in a decrease in the number of long-term partners for schools and the resulting positive impact on students.

Specific leadership behaviors resulting in the sustainability of successful partnerships are undefined (Valli et al., 2014). From the school perspective, managing the relationships required for fostering school-community partnerships is time-intensive and mainly the responsibility of the principal (Badgett, 2016; Hauseman et al., 2017). Similarities exist among successful school-community partnerships including district level support for staffing and financial resources (Badgett, 2016; Lee et al., 2016). Effective and consistent communication between parties (Lee, et al., 2015; Mazerolle et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2014) and shared organizational goals (Casto, 2016) are also shown to sustain school-community partnerships. The implementation of best practices is inconsistent, though, resulting in varying levels of sustainability from school to school.

This chapter includes an explanation of qualitative participatory research as the methodology for this study, with school and organizational leaders as participants in the project. The research and interview questions are listed, and the interview questions, specifically, were subject to modifications as a result of the nature of participatory research (Dari et al., 2019;

Hacker, 2013). Finally, explanations of participants sampling, my role as the researcher, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations for the study are detailed in this chapter.

Research Design and Method

Qualitative research is used to analyze the experiences of individuals and groups to answer social questions and generate ideas for the improvement of practice (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Quantitative research, in contrast, is generally used to analyze numerical data and statistics (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). For example, if data were not readily available to identify campuses with sustained partnerships, then the initial phase of the research would have required a questionnaire to elicit information for identifying participants for individual and group interviews. For this study, the school district provided an initial list of qualifying schools. Therefore, in seeking information related to the research questions, qualitative design most appropriately aided me in understanding participant perspectives about leadership behaviors (Hacker, 2013; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) and their perceived influence on the sustainability of school-community partnerships.

Because principals and organizational leaders are integral to the success of school-community partnerships, there is value in their shared experiences and ideas. Participation in qualitative research and the analysis of the resulting data allows leaders to capitalize on relationships and identify common practices to sustain their work (Johnson et al., 2020). Qualitative research that involves participants in parts of the process other than interviews further expands the use of their expertise in determining outcomes research questions. The personal communication and experiences of school and organizational leaders serves as credible evidence in addressing research questions (Hacker, 2013).

Qualitative research involving participants directly impacted by the results of the study serves as an open dialogue for addressing shared problems (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). With the goal of improving sustainability in school-community partnerships, this qualitative study was conducted using a participatory research method that allowed input from all involved parties (Hacker, 2013). This collaborative method required flexibility and transparency on the parts of both the participants and me (Wallerstein et al., 2005). Initially, I shared evidence from the literature review, the identified problem, and proposed research questions with participants in an online setting. Participants provided feedback on interview questions to inform the research prior to interviews taking place (see Appendix D). Due to the iterative nature of the process, interview questions varied slightly from the original proposed set (Seobi & Wood, 2016). All participants were interviewed virtually through an online platform, and the coded results of interviews were shared with participants for additional feedback. This additional conversation served as collaborative analysis of data. By "engaging the beneficiaries of research in the research process itself," participants are likely to utilize the outcomes from the study to improve their practice (Hacker, 2013, p. 4).

The purpose of this participatory research study was to explore common leadership practices of principals that result in sustained partnerships with community organizations. Through the use of participatory research, experts in partnerships, leadership, and education worked together to analyze data and determine actionable solutions (Hacker, 2013; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Collaborative research and the resulting knowledge can positively impact school-community partnerships in their respective organizations and the surrounding community. The following research questions were answered through qualitative research and aligned to the

stated problem of practice. Furthermore, the questions maintained a focus on the theoretical framework (Roberts, 2020) of social capital theory (Badgett, 2016; Green, 2018).

RQ1: What is the perceived role of the principal in sustaining school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

RQ2: What behaviors by campus principals contribute to the long-term success of school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

In an effort to solidify collaborative practices and harness the expertise of practitioners who are successfully sustaining school-community partnerships, a qualitative participatory research design was used to answer the research questions. Due to the nature of participatory research as partnered research with participant engagement in the design phase (Hacker, 2013), there were additions to the proposed research questions based on the collective ideas and needs of the selected sample population (Wallerstein et al., 2005). The goal was that participants inform the research process and share in the analysis of data (Dari et al., 2019; Seobi & Wood, 2016).

Setting and Sample

Community involvement in urban education is common and often mandated by district leadership (Sabochik, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). To adequately study sustainable school partnerships from the viewpoints of the leaders directly involved in the work, I reviewed records indicating the longevity and number of partnerships between elementary schools and community organizations from the Community Engagement Department of one large North Texas school district of approximately 80 elementary campuses. From the partnership data, schools were identified with community partnerships that had been sustained for more than two consecutive years. The principals of these campuses were contacted by email

and phone (see Appendix A) and invited to participate in the study. Prospective participating principals were contacted up to 10 times, including personal school site visits as requested to provide additional information about the research and methodology. Organizational leaders were contacted in the same ways once principals agreed to participate. For each participating school, up to three partnering organizations were invited to be part of the research.

Limiting the sample to individuals with successful, sustained programs was determined to be beneficial in identifying characteristics that yield positive results in school engagement (McKenna & Millen, 2013; Puzio et al., 2015). Participants were further selected based on the willingness of both the school principal and their respective community partners to be part of the participant group (Myende, 2018; Roberts, 2020). If information from the school district had not been adequate to identify a sample of 10-15 participants, a qualitative questionnaire could have been used to select additional principals and organizational leaders to participate in the study (Seobi & Wood, 2016).

The final sample group consisted of 12 participants representing school populations that equitably reflect the demographics of the district and the overall community (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). School leaders were current campus principals of urban elementary schools in the identified district (see Appendix E). Community partnership participants were individuals with formal leadership roles in their respective organizations or in the partnership work specifically. After discussing current literature on leadership in school-community partnerships and presenting the problem of leadership for sustainability, I collaborated with participants to determine final research and interview questions around the actions of the principals that impact continued school-community partnerships (Hacker, 2013; Wallerstein et al., 2005).

Data Collection

The selection of participants was dependent upon the identification of schools with sustained partnerships. Because the intent of the research was to identify leadership practices that sustain partnership work in a large urban school district, the purposeful selection of school and organizational leaders involved in ongoing school-community partnerships was likely to result in data aligned to the research questions (Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). An email invitation to participate was sent to principals identified as having partnerships that lasting two or more consecutive years (see Appendix A). Principals who agreed to participate selected one or two leaders from their school-community partners to join the study (see Appendix B). I contacted organizational leaders by email and phone to explain the study and obtain their consent to participate. The final sample consisted of 12 individuals and was comprised of principals and representatives from at least one partnering organization per school. Participatory research required individuals contribute to the creation of interview questions that addressed the stated problem (Dari et al., 2019; Hacker, 2013; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), so current literature, the research questions, and proposed interview questions were shared prior to individual interviews taking place.

Between one and three meetings per participant were held. The meetings were recorded virtually using a video conferencing platform, and all meetings were transcribed. The initial meeting consisted of an explanation of the participatory research process, the research questions, and a review of the relevant literature. During this meeting, participants had an opportunity to provide feedback on interview questions. The revised interview questions were provided to all participants by email. Upon the completion of individual interviews, findings were shared with participants. All findings were shared in a way that individual answers were not directly

identifiable, and participants had an opportunity to provide insight and feedback on the patterns identified.

All participants were interviewed individually using a virtual interview platform, and audio was recorded for transcription and content analysis. Interview questions and protocols (see Appendix D) were sent prior to interviews. Leaders from partnerships of identified schools as well as the selected campus principals were individually interviewed, keeping the total number of interviewees between 10 and 15 (McKenna & Millen, 2013; Puzio et al., 2015). Individual interviews followed the interview questions collectively determined by participants and were semistructured. In qualitative research design, this type of interview offered consistency through common questions while allowing diverse experiences to be shared based on participant responses (Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Identifiable information was removed from transcripts through the use of pseudonyms for schools, organizations, and individuals (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

I conducted interviews with campus principals and partnership leaders until consistent themes emerged and a saturation point (Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) was reached. Each interview was transcribed verbatim with marginal notes of nonverbal attributes, such as head nods and pauses in conversation (Löfgren et al., 2013). Using the audio transcription feature for cloud recordings in the video conferencing platform, Zoom, interviews will be transcribed initially by artificial intelligence (AI) software (Zoom Help Center, 2020), and secondly by Transcription Puppy, a paid external transcription service, to ensure accuracy. Recorded interviews were be viewed multiple times for accuracy in transcription of both words and nonverbal cues (Leavy, 2017). In researching the impact of principal behaviors and leadership styles, interviews are a reliable method for gathering data (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Interviewees were given questions in advance, and follow-up questions were asked during interviews for the purpose of clarification or to gain additional information related to the research questions (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Krippendorff, 2004).

Data Analysis

I analyzed all transcripts from individual interviews independently. Patterns and emergent themes were shared with participants for insight and questions before findings were determined. I first read through all transcriptions with no coding. Interviews were then triple coded for common language and emergent themes related to the research questions (Krippendorff, 2004; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Open coding was used for the first of three passes to determine concepts that emerged or were aligned to the goals of the research (Leavy, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The codes that emerged were organized into categories and shared with the research participants by email. Providing emergent themes to participants after interviews creates transparency in the evaluation of data, thus increasing trustworthiness in the outcomes of the research.

Using content analysis, I identified behaviors of principals that impact the sustainability of school-community partnerships. Data were further coded for content, similarity, and detected emotion to determine alignment with social capital theory (Green, 2018). A final coding pass was conducted to categorize and label data into grouped leadership behaviors taking into careful consideration my position and experience in school leadership, possible familiarity with some participants, and the influence such experience may have had on coding and data analysis (Blair, 2015). Validity of responses was increased by considering the views of both school and organizational leaders. Data from all interviews were triangulated with studies related to the initial research questions and social capital theory (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The allowance for

feedback and questions from participants prior to findings being finalized, allowed for further triangulation of analysis.

Role of the Researcher

As a recent principal in the school district where the research was conducted, I was aware of my role as the researcher and as a possible familiar person to many of the participants (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). During initial meetings, I explained the purpose of both the study as a whole and the participatory nature of each scheduled meeting, keeping flexibility in questions and with the research agenda (Wallerstein et al., 2005). I did not interview community partners who had active involvement with the campus I served. Furthermore, during interviews, specific questions about individual leaders were not asked, rather, the interview questions designed by the participant group (Wallerstein et al., 2005) focused on general behaviors and actions by leaders and how those actions impact the sustainability of partnerships. While the sample size was small and limited to a single district, the use of participatory research added to the validity of the results of the study.

Findings were shared with participants for iteration and feedback. As the main researcher, I provided final analyses and outcomes to all participants. Due to their increased knowledge of principal leadership in sustaining school-community partnerships, findings could be immediately implemented to improve the collaborative work of participants.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in all parts of the research was voluntary, and all participants signed informed consent documents (see Appendix F). Although themes and findings were shared, only I had access to transcripts and audio/video recordings of interviews to protect the confidentiality of respondents' comments. All recordings and transcripts are stored online as password protected

files accessible only to me in compliance with university requirements. All printed documents including research notes and interview transcripts will be destroyed in accordance with the guidelines of Abilene Christian University. Final coded interview responses were shared in the analysis phase of the participatory research (Hacker, 2013) as broad data to show common responses and emergent themes. There was some risk anticipated in that leaders were asked to share their experiences and reflect on behaviors that contribute to sustainability of current, active partnerships. Pseudonyms were assigned to schools, organizations, and individuals to protect the identity of participants (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The inherent risk in providing honest and transparent responses was the perceived scrutiny of personal leadership abilities and practices. There was not an anticipated risk to the health of individuals as a result of their participation in the study. However, because the participants had an opportunity to see the resulting codes from interview transcripts (Ball, 2014), participants were aware of generalized answers to interview questions by the group.

Participatory research is collaborative by design, and the sample group had opportunities to in modify interview questions initially. After interviews, participants gave input into the analysis of data and coding of responses (Hacker, 2013). As a result, and because the sample size consisted of elementary campuses and partnering organizations in a single urban school district in North Texas, participants were likely to be familiar with or know one another. Precautions were taken to make sure the content of the research was focused on improvement and sustainability of partnership endeavors for the benefit of students. If at any time a participant chose to remove themselves from the study, they could do so without question or consequence.

Risks and Benefits

The amount of collaboration for participatory research requires that each selected principal and organizational leader commit to the completion of the project. The expectation for participants is that they actively participate in recorded meetings expected to be up to 90 minutes in length. At least one personal interview per participant was conducted and lasted up to an hour, depending on the depth and complexity of responses. Changes in campus or organizational leadership or the choice by a participant to discontinue their work in the study before all data were collected and analyzed could have impacted results, but this did not occur in this study. Because qualitative participatory research is a form of action research, the results from the study were communicated to those involved in school-community partnerships with the intent that they may directly benefit from new learning (Hacker, 2013). Research skills and experience may have increased for participants as they progressed through the processes of data analysis and sharing feedback (Hacker, 2013). There may have been benefits in knowledge gained and sustainability improvements for the partnerships of those involved in the study as they collaborated in the study to improve practice.

Risks to participants included the time commitments required for meetings, feedback, and interviews (Hacker, 2013). There was a risk that participants may commit time for work or family responsibilities to the research (Hacker, 2013). Because organizational leaders were recommended for participation by school principals, there was a risk of the lack of anonymity. Specifically, school principals and organizational leaders are expected to share experiences and ideas through participatory research. This leads to the possible concerns about what information about partnerships or leadership behaviors were shared (Hacker, 2013).

Assumptions

Public schools partner with community organizations in positive ways to support students and families. The study assumes that leaders selected to participate have adequate experience with school-community partnerships to delineate leadership actions and behaviors that affect their work. Another assumption of the research is that valid, honest responses were given during individual interviews. As part of participatory research, feedback from participants during initial and final meetings was requested (Hacker, 2013; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Therefore, I worked under the assumption that participants offered ideas, questions, and insight during all phases of the study. To improve cooperation, it was further assumed that principals and community leaders endeavored to sustain the partnerships between their schools and organizations for several years. While some organizations partnered with multiple campuses, personnel were assigned to directly work with principals at each school.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study was limited to one urban school district in North Texas. Additionally, because only elementary school principals were part of the study, partnership work with secondary campuses was not directly represented in the findings. Another limitation of this study was that organizational leaders were selected to participate based on the interest and recommendation of the school principal. This limitation had the potential to exclude representation of multiple types of school-community partnerships. Finally, the study was limited by the experiences of the participants in research. Because the selected method of qualitative participatory research requires collaboration for question selection and data analyses, the knowledge levels of participants with regards to research protocols could be an additional limiting factor (Dari et al., 2019).

The participant group was selected to include only leaders of schools and organizations who have partnered successfully for two or more consecutive years. This delimiter focused the research on sustainability rather than the initial or final phases of school-community partnerships. Additionally, because the research questions specifically targeted behaviors of principals, school leaders were defined as current campus principals for the purposes of participation in the study. Finally, the inclusion of leaders from organizations actively partnering with the selected schools as study participants created a situation in which experts are part of the research team (Auerbach, 2009; Hacker, 2013) while maintaining a connection to social capital theory as a framework for understanding the influence of relationships and leadership behaviors on school-community partnerships.

Summary

Through the use of qualitative participatory research, participants from a single urban school district and the surrounding community collaborated in the design of interview questions aimed at informing principal practice with regards to the sustainability of school-community partnerships. Coded interview transcripts were analyzed to determine commonalities among responses that represent behaviors of school principals directly attributing to the sustainability of partnerships, and the results were shared with the participant group. Because the participants and I worked collaboratively in the design of interview questions, data collection, and feedback on the analysis phase of the study, information gained was likely to be applied to actionably improve the work of both organizational and school leaders (Hacker, 2013; Wallerstein et al., 2005). As current research indicates, many school-community partnerships fade upon changes in leadership or school staff (Hauseman et al., 2017), and campus principals are not adequately prepared to sustain partnership work beyond the initial implementation years. Targeted inquiry

and the careful analysis of interview data will add to the literature on school-community partnerships in urban districts, thus enabling school and community leaders to better serve students and families.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the role of school principals in school-community partnerships by exploring common leadership practices of school leaders in sustained partnerships with community organizations. To better understand thriving school-community partnerships from the viewpoint of principals and community leaders, the aim was to conduct collaborative research with an identified group of participants whose partnerships have lasted more than 2 consecutive years. In this chapter, a description of the research process and findings from the study are presented.

Participant Selection

A group of principals were identified for potential participation by an informal list provided by the department of family and community partnerships in a single urban school district in North Texas. Through email, I was informed that there was not a comprehensive or up to date list of schools and their current partners. However, coordinators in the department shared the names of 10 schools with partnerships they knew to have been sustained more than two years. All principals from the initial list were sent the principal email (see Appendix A). One principal declined to participate, and three did not respond to multiple requests. Of the remaining six schools, one principal was new to the campus, meaning information about sustained partnerships would not be relevant to the study. As shown in Table 1, all participating principals had been in the role for at least two years. Five principals agreed to participate and provided contact information for their community partners.

From phone conversations (see Appendix C) and email communication with principals, nine leaders of corresponding school-community partnerships were identified for potential participation in the study. All nine organizational leaders were sent the partner email (see

Appendix B). Seven of the nine potential partners responded and agreed to participate in the study. One participant was not available for interviews but was given the opportunity to provide feedback on the interview questions and the study results as part of the participatory research process. Similar to principal participants and in alignment with the requirements for participation in the study (Table 1), all partners had been in their roles for a minimum of 2 years at the time of the interviews. To maintain anonymity, participants will be referenced as principals, partners, and by randomly assigned participant numbers 1–12.

Table 1

Participants by Years in Role

Years of experience	2–4 years	5–9 years	10 + years
Number of principals	1	2	2
Number of partners	1	2	4

The scope of partnerships at each school varied, and Table 2 shows the range of partnerships by type of organization and partnership work. Although the participant sample was comprised of active school-community partnerships, it is not representative of all partners from each identified school. Some partnerships were discussed by principals during individual interviews, but because some partnerships were new or had recent changes in leadership, not all corresponding organizations were invited to participate in the study. However, the partnerships in Table 2 are representative of all active school-community partnerships at the participating elementary schools at the time of the study. It should be noted that all schools represented in this study had participation from both the school principal and at least one leader from a partnering organization.

Table 2

School-Community Partnerships by Type of Organization and Scope of Work

Organization and scope of work	Church	Non-profit	Business/other
Total partnerships	5	7	3
Partners represented in study	4	4	1
Scope of support provided			
Student mentorship	4	2	0
Staff appreciation	5	1	3
Academic support	1	3	0
Financial/donations	5	2	2
Family support	5	2	1

Data Collection and Analysis

Collaborative research requires input from participants during all parts of the process including interview questions and information from a review of current research. Due to scheduling conflicts with participants from different schools and organizations, research questions were shared asynchronously, with each participant having access to questions prior to their scheduled interviews. Additionally, all participants were offered the opportunity to add additional information or new questions to the study prior to and during one-on-one interviews.

To determine initial interview questions and a focus for research, two research questions were posed:

RQ1: What is the perceived role of the principal in sustaining school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

RQ2: What behaviors by campus principals contribute to the long-term success of school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

Participants were given the option of in-person or virtual interviews, which were all recorded using the Zoom platform. Video recordings of interviews were sent electronically for transcriptions using Transcription Puppy. All transcripts were carefully read by me and compared to the audio recordings for accuracy prior to coding and analysis. Each transcript was coded sentence by sentence for themes, patterns, and common words or phrases (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

After an initial reading of each transcript for clarity and context, transcripts were triple coded for common language and emergent themes. Open coding was used for the first of three passes to determine concepts shared by participants. I recorded words and phrases that described the content of each section of as codes. During this pass, I recorded phrases and words that described the content of participant responses. The full list of initial codes is displayed in Figure 1. Codes are listed alphabetically, and all codes, regardless of frequency, are listed once. Some codes from the first pass are represented in the figure but not reported as key findings from the study because they were specific to one interview or did not answer the research questions. Common codes from the initial pass were categorized into themes as listed in Figure 2.

Figure 1

Comprehensive List of Codes From Initial Coding Pass

accessibility	continuation	funding	openness	relationships
adjust	culture	goals	organize time	responsiveness
ask for help	data sharing	good fit	outcomes	roles of staff
buy in	dedication	gratitude	outreach	say yes
changes in staff	email	guidance	ownership	school culture
check-ins	evaluation	involvement	phone call	site coordinator
collaboration	evolve	liaison	planning	systems
commitment	face of school	listening	point person	time
committees	family support	meetings	principal time	training
communication	face to face	long term	principal support	touchpoints
community	feedback	mentor	priority	trust
connection	flexibility	multi-agency	program	visibility
consistency	follow through	networks	proximity	volunteers

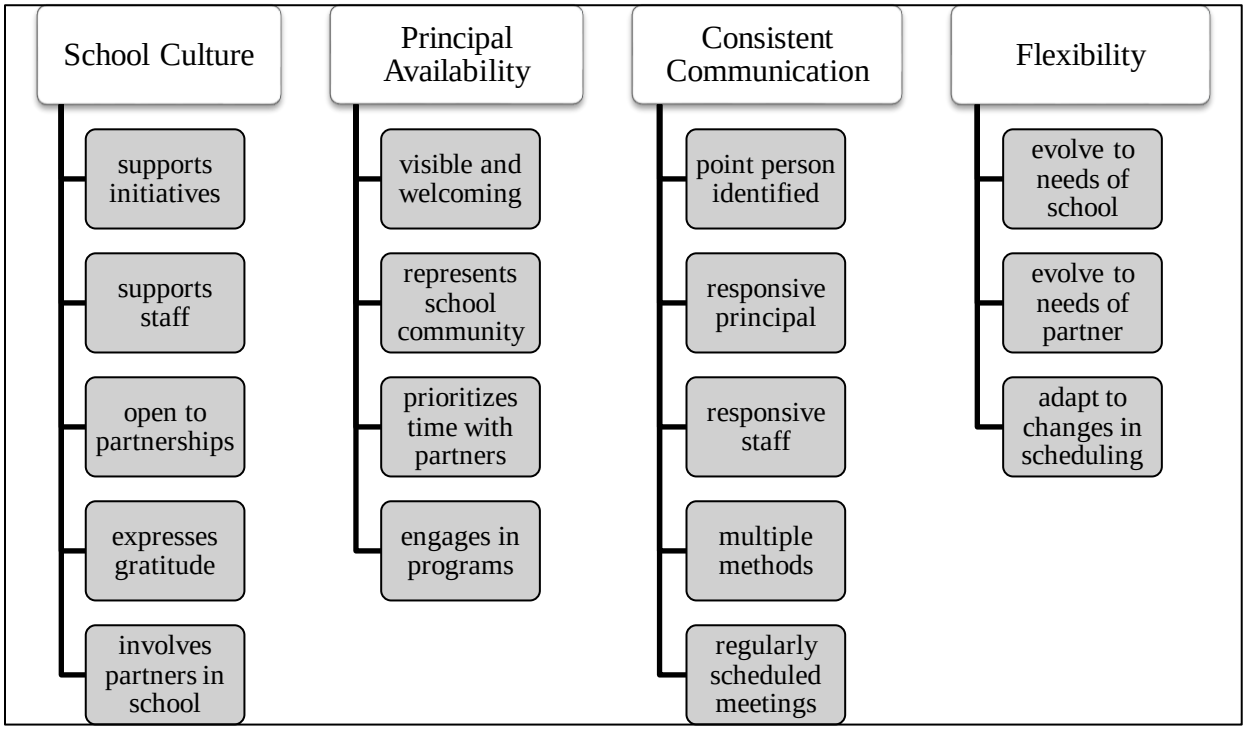
To prepare for the second coding pass, I re-read the comprehensive list of concepts recorded during initial coding so that the transcripts could be further analyzed for similarity and alignment to the theoretical framework. The focus of the second, closer pass was on specific behaviors of principals related to the research questions and social capital theory. From this coding pass, the four themes emerged: school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility. Figure 2 displays roles and behaviors of principals under each theme that contribute to the sustainability of school-community partnerships.

Finally, a third coding pass was conducted in which I highlighted specific phrases from interviews to support each theme and categorized notes from the first pass into the emergent themes from the second coding pass. Direct quotes by participants are shared as anecdotal evidence throughout Chapters 4 and 5. To further analyze the data, I recorded the frequency of responses under each of the four themes. This information is displayed in Figure 3.

After transcripts were coded, initial findings were again shared asynchronously via email and phone with participants. No additional data were shared. To maintain anonymity, participants were sent individual emails with interview questions, findings, and requests for additional feedback or information.

Figure 2

Behaviors of Principals in Sustained School-Community Partnerships



Summary of Findings

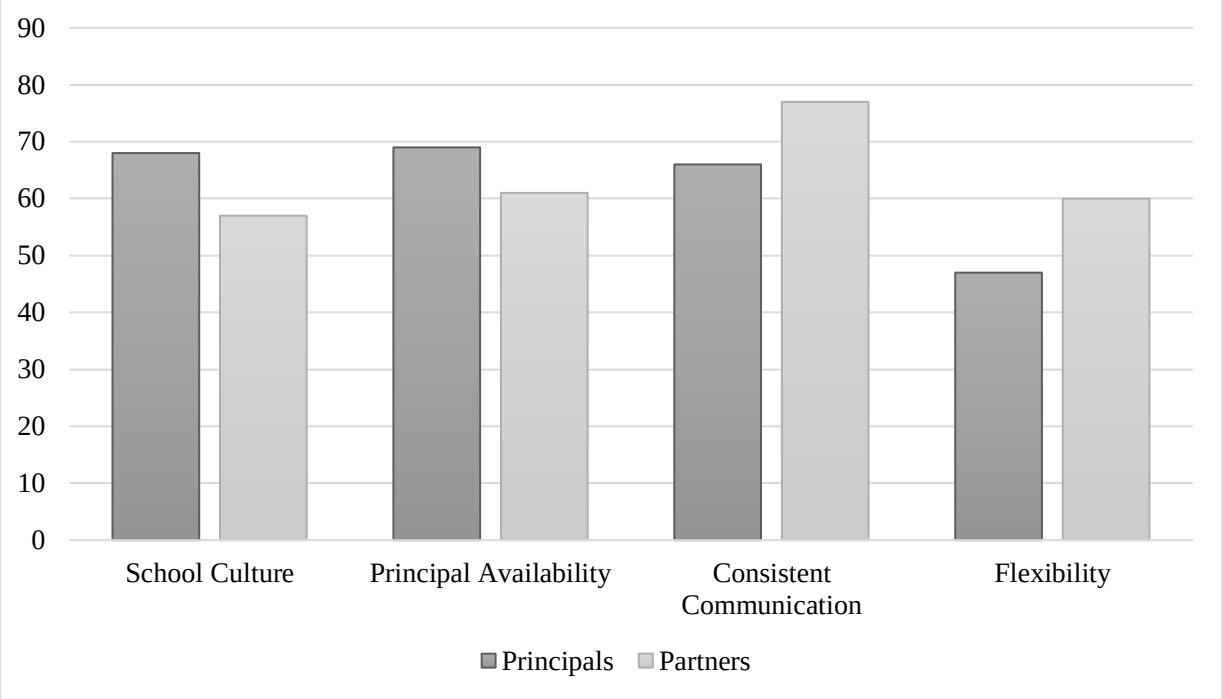
Individual interviews were conducted for each participant. Participants described the partnerships between the school and the organization and provided information about the leadership within the partnerships. Descriptions included the length of time for each school-community partnership, the programs and services provided, and the people involved. Question topics included goals of the partnerships, preferred methods of communication, and the sharing of leadership between schools and community organizations. Additionally, anecdotal evidence

about partnership successes were shared. Each participant was asked to discuss how partnerships could be improved and what practices are in place to ensure the work continues from year to year.

Common themes emerged across the responses from participants, and I reached a saturation point at which answers were similar from all respondents. Regarding direct impact on the principals' role in sustainability of school-community partnerships, school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility were the most common topics mentioned by participants. Figure 3 displays the overarching themes and the frequency of responses by principals and partners.

Figure 3

Responses From Interviews by Theme



Theme 1: School Culture

A school environment that is inviting and welcomes outside organizations was mentioned during multiple parts of interviews from both partners and principals. Specifically, participant 10, representing community partnerships stated, “it does make a difference. When the principal is inviting; when the principal is welcoming, then the partnership does want to continue.” The culture of the school is set by the principal. Partners shared that the difference in whether staff will work with and accept the partner and their programs or volunteers is based on how supportive of the work the principal is perceived to be. Participant 9 described the principal’s role in school culture as “making sure [teachers] are on board; the principal is the person who can communicate across the board with everyone on campus.” This same participant expressed that “without the principal’s support, [the partnership] cannot succeed.” The principal, through the prioritization of staff responsibilities and time, determines how much or how little involvement community organizations can have at a campus. In addition to the allocation of staff and time, the culture of a school can influence the level of access to students, families, and facilities an organization is granted. Partnerships thrive when “the whole school [has] some ownership of the program” or work of a school-community collaboration.

Gratitude and openness were frequently mentioned as important aspects of school culture for increasing the likelihood that community organizations would return to campuses for more than one year. Principals shared that their school communities showed thanks to partners regularly and in different ways including social media posts, cards from students, plaques of recognition, and gratitude videos. School leaders explained that teachers often came up with creative ways to thank partners and the involvement of students and staff in gratitude efforts further enhanced a positive school culture and improved the longevity of their partnerships.

Participant 3 summarized the impact of school culture on partnership sustainability as “making sure partners feel like they truly are a viable part of the school community.”

Theme 2: Principal Availability

During interviews, all participating principals shared the importance of making time for community partners. Partners, likewise, referenced principals as “the face of the campus.” While interviewees expressed that there is no expectation of the principal to be the main point of contact for partnerships, the data suggest it is vital that school leaders are visible on campus during partnership events and available for meetings. Principals shared that they make it a priority to know the names of the leaders and coordinators of partnering organizations and greet them when they are on campus. Participant 2, a school principal, expressed that scheduling time for face-to-face meetings with community partners “without interruptions so they know that their time is valued, and their interest is a gift” shows partners their support is important and impacts the school. Another principal, participant 3, reflected, “as the principal, it is key that you stay engaged and involved and have those touchpoints with the partners.”

In addition to simply being visible on campus, principals involved in sustained school-community partnerships engage deeply in the partner work and expect the same of partnering organizations. Three participating principals recognized the need to invite partners to join in official school meetings including membership on the required Site Based Decision Making (SBDM) committee for schools. Participant 1, a principal, stated that having “[partners] being a part of the site based [committee] has been very helpful” for campus improvement and to align the work of community partners with school goals. Partners mentioned that they felt more connected to the needs of the schools once they were invited to join campus based groups like SBDM and parent organizations. As shared by participant 6, when churches, non-profits, and

other organizations take part in decision making and goal setting at the campus level, collaboration increases, resulting in “good partnership[s] for the community and the school… all the way around.” The same participant expressed a desire “to spend more time at the school” and that when students see community and school leaders interacting, “it’s a positive influence for them.”

When asked how partnerships can be improved, principal availability was cited by organizational leaders as well as principals. Even participants involved in partnerships that had persisted more than 10 years shared that the work would be improved if principals committed more time to listening and engaging partners. Principals and partners alike noted the scheduling constraints of school leaders as a barrier to effective partnerships. Participant 11 expressed that even with “a lot of demands on their time, for [the partnerships] to be successful, everyone has to make that commitment to it being a priority.” Similarly, as participant 10 mentioned, “principals have a lot on their plate,” but the willingness of principals to make time for partners directly impacts the likelihood that existing partners will continue supporting schools.

Theme 3: Consistent Communication

Reliability in communication was mentioned in all interviews. Although communication methods varied from face-to-face meetings, text messages, phone calls, and emails, the consensus among participants was that ongoing and consistent communication was a key factor in the success and sustainability of school partnerships. Principals, specifically, discussed the need to honor time for meeting with leaders of partnering organizations. When asked how partnerships could be improved, more than half of the principals interviewed cited the need for more meetings. Participant 4 said, “I do not want to say I want to have more meetings, but I really think I should make more time for face-to-face meetings with [partner organization].”

Partners shared the importance of a point of contact assigned by the principal who can support logistics such as scheduling and access to the building, but most expressed that the principal should respond to communications in a timely manner in support of partnership initiatives and projects. All participants discussed the willingness of principals to communicate with partners regularly as key to sustainability.

There was a distinct need for two types of communication: official and casual. Official communications such as emails sent for invoices, schedules, and calendars were viewed as necessary with email as the preferred communication method. However, the importance of casual communication, which was referenced as "face time with the principal" and "showing up for events to support volunteers" was mentioned as vital to sustaining partner dedication and commitment to the campus. Two partners who worked with organizations supporting multiple campuses shared stories of principals who lost potential opportunities for school-community partnerships due to a lack of timely communication. Anecdotally, participant 10 explained that principals who do not respond to emails or are difficult to get in contact with are "known by community organizations for not wanting partners in their schools." While there is no way to determine factors impacting the timeliness of principal responses to partner requests, it was clear from the interviewees that responsiveness and open communication increases the likelihood that school-community partnerships will flourish on a campus."

Regularly scheduled meetings between principals and partners are a key component in consistent communication. While phone calls and texts were cited as useful in communicating changes and logistics, participants agreed that collaborative meetings are a necessary form of communication for school-community partnerships. Meeting at the beginning and end of the school year was shared as a minimum requirement while participant 5 referenced the need for

"systematic check-ins," and participant 11 stated that they "try to do a check in with the principal every couple of months just to see how things were going." Multiple organizations shared that in addition to meeting with principals, regularly scheduled meetings with other school staff are needed, depending on the goals of the partnership.

Theme 4: Flexibility

School-community partnerships are initiated for many reasons including student mentorship, staff appreciation, and academic support. As the needs and goals of organizations and campuses change, so do the partnerships they hold. During interviews, flexibility on the part of the school principal and leaders of partnering organizations was an important factor in year-to-year sustainability. Participant 11, the leader of a school-community partnership remarked, "partnerships have to evolve to meet the needs of the volunteers, and the principal at [school] has been willing to evolve what the partnership looks like." The participant further explained that community volunteers provide services for campuses through the organization, and with more volunteers working during the day, there became a need to offer service opportunities for outside of school hours and on Saturdays, requiring support and flexibility on the part of the school principal. In order for partnerships to thrive and be sustained past initial years, both the school and the partnering organization must be willing to discuss changes in needs and adjust accordingly.

Principals and partners mentioned the need to discuss changed goals and needs annually and change what is not working as an important component of flexibility. As participant 1 shared, it is important "to always come back and make sure there is a reporting element and a follow-up element to make sure the partnership is correctly working" so that "we [can] fine tune in order to improve what we are doing." When principals do not support change or are unwilling

to be flexible with the needs of organizations, partnerships shift schools to match their organizational goals. Loss of partnering organizations can result in a loss of programs and new partners for a campus.

Flexibility from school staff and organizational personnel was cited as important as well. For example, participant 8 shared the story of "a school that had a particularly challenging staff situation" and requested the partnering organization "adjust the plan for [the program] this year." The participant further shared that the willingness of their organization "to be flexible and fill in the gaps to keep a program going" resulted in successful implementation and a sustained partnership. Three partners had programs focused on working with particular grade levels, and all three mentioned a need for flexibility with schedule changes, field trips, state testing days, and other school events. While communication of changes was noted frequently, the willingness to be flexible and alter work, from both the school and the partner, was shown to be more important for year-to-year sustainability. The principal's role in flexibility was explained as one of support and giving authority to staff and partners to make decisions that benefit students. The willingness of schools and organizations to evolve with new goals was key in thriving school-community partnerships. Additionally, partners who utilize community volunteers as part of their programming explained flexibility as vital in recruitment and sustained volunteerism.

Theoretical Framework

As a framework for this study, social capital theory refers to the leveraging of relationships and resources within one's social or professional network to benefit others (Ehlen et al., 2016; Green, 2018). Throughout the interviews, participants made connections to organizations, volunteers, and partnerships other than their own, capitalizing on relationships and social networks to improve the services at each school. For example, participant 11 discussed an

upcoming project involving opening an on-site food pantry at the school. In alignment with social capital theory, the participant explained that the project "is a true partnership of multiple agencies to make it happen and to meet the needs [of families]." Principals consistently mentioned relationships and social networks as key reasons partnerships are initiated and remain on campuses, citing that organizations "do a wonderful job at reaching out." Participant 4 expressed that access to community resources through partnerships results in "increased trust and communication with families." In fact, multiple participants mentioned networking as a necessary skill in education to connect schools to communities and increase the impact of school-community partnership work. Several participants recognized the need to increase outreach and the use of social capital to deepen partnerships. Participant 8, an organizational leader said, "the principal may not fully realize the power that's present in that partnership they have access to."

Participants discussed future partnership plans and expansion projects for current partnerships through the lens of social capital and relationship building. Participant 6 shared that a local superintendent "organized the pastors and counselors and some of the social agencies in the area [to meet] quarterly" with the goal of making connections for schools so that resources would be available to meet the needs of families in the community. In addition to relationships between principals and organizational leaders, social and professional networks are important to ensure partners have enough volunteers to be successful at a school. One organization that provides mentors for students strategically selects site coordinators from their church partners "who already [have] a lot of relationships within the church so they can really partner with the ministers… and most effectively recruit mentors." This strategic use of social capital ensures access to human and other resources needed to run school-community partnerships consistently.

Students, staff, and families begin to see that organizations, churches, and "businesses are invested in our children and ultimately, they want to invest in the community."

Other Findings

Participants were asked to share how existing school-community partnerships could be improved, and areas of development fell mostly within the four themes. However, specific insights about shared goal setting were mentioned often. Partnering organizations were able to articulate the goals of their respective programs, but principals more regularly stated they "don't have actual goals for each partnership that we have thought about together." Furthermore, specific measures of success related to partnership goals fell mainly on the partners with principals sharing anecdotal evidence about visible changes to school culture resulting from partnership work. Participants agreed that discussing school goals and the vision of the principal helped determine some of the work they did with campuses.

While principals cited being uneasy in asking partners to "do more," partners expressed that "principals do not know that they can ask us for more than they do. [Principals] assume that we're only interested in what we do to engage regularly, but we actually, often, can provide more help." Partners expressed the desire for principals to divulge all the needs of the campus so that they could provide additional types of support or capitalize on their networks of resources and agencies to find other community organizations to fill in gaps. The principals interviewed discussed hesitation in "just taking, taking, taking," stating they "just couldn't ask any more of [their] partners." In contrast, organizational leaders overwhelmingly showed interest in doing more and making sure they were not "underutilized by the school, in terms of what partnerships really could be to support them." The challenge was further explained by one partner as a need for "some type of training or guide" for principals to build relationships with partners.

Summary

To study the role of school principals in sustaining school-community partnerships, collaborative research was designed wherein school and organizational leaders shared their experiences with successful, longstanding partnerships in one urban school district in North Texas. A group consisting of experienced principals and their corresponding school partners was provided questions and findings from current research prior to taking part in individual interviews. The results of the interviews revealed four main themes: school culture, principal availability, flexibility, and consistent communication. Specifically, a welcoming school culture where staff and leaders invite community organizations to the campus was cited as important for starting and sustaining partnerships. Principals who made themselves available for meetings and conversations with volunteers, parents, and the community were another important factor in the success of partnerships. Finally, a willingness by all participants to be flexible in partnership work and timely, consistent communication were cited as necessary for thriving, sustained school-community partnerships.

This chapter expanded upon four themes stemming from interviews with elementary principals and organizational leaders involved in ongoing school-community that impact the sustainability of their collaborative work. Consistent communication, availability of the principal, flexibility from schools and partners, and a welcoming school culture were cited most often in the study. Participants also expressed the need to improve shared goal setting and for schools to more deeply engage partners to meet the needs of school communities.

The next chapter includes a summary of the research methodology and a discussion of the key findings with respect to the research questions and existing literature. Practical implications

for principals and organizational leaders as well as limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will be presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this collaborative study was to identify practices by elementary school principals that impact the sustainability of school-community partnerships. After a brief overview of the study method, this chapter contains a summary of key findings related to the research questions and current literature, implications for school and organizational leaders, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

Current research on school-community partnerships clearly shows the importance of community involvement in public schools and the corresponding positive outcomes for students, families, and academic performance (Casto, 2016; Green, 2018). However, many schools are unable to sustain partnership efforts after the initial years of implementation and through changes in campus leadership. Principals, specifically, are responsible for partnerships yet have little to no formal training or clarification of expectations in this area (Van Vooren, 2018).

Qualitative research allows for an analysis of the lived experiences of participants (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) in order to gain insight into the topic of study. To better understand the role of principals in sustaining school-community partnerships, a qualitative, participatory study was designed with experienced school principals and leaders of organization they have successfully partnered with for more than 2 consecutive years. A participant sample was selected in collaboration with the Family and Community Engagement department in a large urban public school district in North Texas. The final participants group was comprised of five principals and seven partners, with partnerships sustained from 2 to more than 15 years. Research, questions, and findings were shared with participants to solicit collaboration and feedback.

In alignment with participatory research, participants were provided proposed interview questions and a summary of current research prior to their interviews. Additionally, participants had opportunities during interviews and after an initial analysis of data to offer further insight into the findings and implications for practice. Outcomes were shared with participants via email, and interviews were held both in person and virtually, using the Zoom platform. All interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed.

Findings and Connections to the Literature

During interviews, participants shared their experiences with successful partnerships with a focus on the role of the principal in sustaining the work. The research focused on the following two questions.

RQ1: What is the perceived role of the principal in sustaining school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

RQ2: What behaviors by campus principals contribute to the long-term success of school-community partnerships in a large urban school district in North Texas?

Research questions ranged from explanations of current partnership work to the perceived role of principals in sustaining partnerships. Participants additionally shared success stories from partnerships and areas for improvement. A comprehensive analysis of the transcripts revealed four themes: school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility.

School Culture

Principals set the expectations for school culture. School culture can be explained as the way the campus operates on a daily basis, and principals are responsible for setting expectations for the school environment. Principal and staff interactions with parents, students, and one

another impact the culture of the school. Participants shared that a welcoming school culture that was open to partnering with community organizations is important in sustaining partner work from year to year. While current literature reflects the need for principals to support school-community partnerships (Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2018), a welcoming campus culture is less specifically represented. Some studies indicate that a collaborative culture at the district level can increase the number of partnerships individual campuses have available (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Lee et al., 2016).

Principal Availability

Principal availability was described as both the visibility of the school leader and how much time was committed to partnership work. In alignment with current research, participants in this study revealed that school-community partnerships require additional time from principals (Casto, 2016), and leaders who did not commit time often lost partnerships or did not have sustained school-community partnerships for multiple years. In this and prior studies, school leaders expressed concern with the amount of time required for partnerships while acknowledging the importance of the work partners accomplish. Specifically, the results of this study indicate a willingness on the part of school leaders to increase their availability and time commitments in order to sustain school-community partnerships.

Consistent Communication

Both principals and partners expressed the need for consistency in communication and the importance of regular meetings to discuss partnership projects. The frequency and effectiveness of different methods of communication varied by organization and school, but ongoing and regular contact between partners and the school was the most common theme from interviews. Because participants in the study were selected from successfully sustained school-

community partnerships, most reported satisfaction with the current levels of communication from schools. In contrast, a lack of communication was found indicative of dissatisfaction with or disinterest in school-community partnerships (Myende, 2018).

Flexibility

The theme of flexibility was important to participants as a way to retain volunteers for partnering organizations and so that partnership work could be expanded or adapted to meet changing school needs. Partners discussed the need for flexibility more often than principals, but principals indicated that as school goals and priorities change, it is important that partnerships evolve. Studies of school community partnerships are often conducted to determine outcomes of programs or initial engagement strategies (Wheeler et al., 2018). The focus for this type of research is accountability and alignment (Green, 2018; Mozolic & Shuster, 2016). Therefore, without a focus on sustaining partnerships beyond the initial years of implementation, the current literature does not specifically mention flexibility.

Participants shared their experiences with successfully sustained school-community partnerships from the viewpoint of school principals and organizational leaders. Common themes emerged from interview transcripts, and the findings indicate that when schools welcome community collaboration, principals are visibly engaged, staff are responsive, flexible, and consistently communicate with organizations, partnerships are likely to thrive.

Implications for Practice

The results from this collaborative study offer insight into the behaviors of current principals whose schools benefit from successful collaborations. The findings can be applied to both principal preparation and the practices of acting principals. Experiences shared by successful school leaders can be used to support school districts in new principal training to

enhance school-community partnerships. For example, one participant shared that the results of this study could be offered as part of a guide given to principals at the start of new partnerships. Participating principals indicated that written guidance or a set of practices for maintaining partnerships would be beneficial for themselves and as a training option for aspiring school leaders.

Information shared from the viewpoint of organizational leaders provides insight into the needs of community partners when working with schools, thus lending insight for current and future principals to improve their practice in this area. Through the sharing of specific behaviors under the themes of school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility, districts leaders can more effectively support principals in their work with community partners. Finally, with the focus of the study was on the behaviors of principals, community organizations can utilize the findings to support their work through changes in school leadership.

Limitations of the Study

The sample for this study consisted of principals and partners from a single large urban public school district in North Texas. The school district communicated that they did not have a current or comprehensive list of school-community partners, so participants were invited to participate based on a list of names provided to me by district staff. While multiple types of organizations and partnerships were represented, the sample size of 12 participants limited the scope of experiences shared.

Future Research

Research on the role of the principal in sustaining school-community partnerships is limited. Many studies take place during the initial years of partnerships with a focus on initiating collaboration and measuring program outcomes. Additional research on the findings of this study

is needed to support practicing principals in maintaining long-term partnerships. For example, consistency in communication was a theme across all interviews, and research into the types of communication and the resulting impact on program sustainability would directly support leaders in working with partners. A quantitative analysis into the theme of principal availability could be used to determine the best practice for principals around time commitments required to successfully sustain school-community partnerships. The final two themes of school culture and flexibility related to external partnership work could be further analyzed from the perspective of teachers or parents.

In addition to large urban public school districts like the one in this study, school-community partnerships exist in almost all types of schools including public charter schools, rural and suburban independent school districts, and private schools. There are opportunities to replicate this study with different participant groups to determine if principals' behaviors or the perceptions of the role vary across districts and organizations. Research on the behaviors of principals in other districts or geographic areas would further add to the literature supporting the sustainability of school-community partnerships. It is also important to note that community engagement in schools is not limited to elementary campuses. The study of behaviors of secondary principals in thriving partnerships would be beneficial for school leaders and community partners. Finally, another area of research that would enhance this area of study is the behavior of campus leaders other than school principals whose work directly relates to school-community partnerships.

Summary and Conclusions

Accessing resources and relationships to improve schools is a necessary part of the principalship. By partnering with churches, businesses, non-profits, and other community

organizations, school leaders provide additional and often vital programming and support for students. While the current literature indicates a strong connection between partnership success and the support of campus principals (Myende, 2018; Sanders, 2018), it is clear that there are varying levels of success with school-community partnerships among schools. Additionally, some school principals are able to sustain partnerships for many years while others struggle to initiate and maintain school-community partners.

The findings from this study indicate there are four areas of focus for principals in sustaining successful partnerships. Specifically, the role of school principals in sustainable partnerships includes behaviors within the themes of school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility. During interviews, partners and principals clearly detailed actions including being available for meetings, consistently responding to emails or calls, showing a willingness to adapt, and actively engaging in the work of partnering organizations as ways to ensure school-community partnerships continue from year to year. With the knowledge gained from this study, principals and school district personnel can actively improve existing partnerships by reflecting on their actions within the four themes. Through the consideration of school culture, principal availability, consistent communication, and flexibility, along with continued research on the sustainability of school-community partnerships, principals will be better prepared to find and maintain the support schools need to be successful. Start text here. Begin this section with an introduction summary of the problem statement, purpose, method, and limitations of the study. Conclude the introduction with a brief overview of the content of the chapter and recommendations for application and future research.

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Appendix A: Principal Email

Principal [name],

I am writing to ask you to participate in a collaborative study about role of principals in sustaining school-community partnerships. Because your campus has successfully partnered with [name of partner organization] for more than 2 years, your experiences and ideas can help other principals with community partnership work.

Participation in this study will include an individual virtual interview and no more than three virtual group meetings to discuss interview questions, data, and research findings. Please feel free to contact me directly by email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions.

If you accept this invitation, a leader from the partnering organization will also be asked to join the study. Therefore, I respectfully request that you reply to this request by [date and time].

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Kimberly Benavides

Appendix B: Partner Email

[Name],

I am writing to ask you to participate in a collaborative study about the role of principals in sustaining school-community partnerships. Because your organization has successfully partnered with [name of school] for more than 2 years, Principal [name] recommended you as a participant in this study. Your experiences and ideas can help principals and organizational leaders with community partnership work.

Participants in this study will meet with the researcher a total of 4 times. All meetings will be held virtually. First, everyone will meet as a group for an introduction to the purpose of the study, then individual interviews will be conducted with each participant and the researcher. After individual interviews are complete, two additional focus group meetings will be held to analyze data and share findings. The expected time commitment is between 4 and 6 hours, dependent upon the length of each meeting. Please feel free to contact me directly by email or phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx with any questions.

I respectfully request that you reply to this request by [date and time].

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Kimberly Benavides

Appendix C: Phone Call Script

The script below can be used if there is not a response to email requests for participation.

Hello, [name]. How are you?

My name is Kimberly Benavides, and I am a doctoral student with Abilene Christian University, studying the sustainability of school-community partnerships. I recently sent you an email inviting you to be part of a research study about the role of leadership in school-community partnerships. Your school/organization has a history of successfully partnerships, and I would like to learn more about your experience in this area. Is this something you are interested in? [Pause for response].

The study I am proposing would require collaboration between principals and partnering organizations in three group meetings and one individual interview each. The total time commitment over the course of the study will be between 4 and 6 hours. Would you like to be part of this research? [If yes, discuss consent form and details from email].

What questions do you have for me? [answer questions]

Thank you, [name]. I look forward to learning more about your partnerships and your work.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Interviews will be conducted virtually using the Zoom video conference platform. Interviews will be recorded with permission from participants for the purpose of accurate transcription. Additional or follow up questions may be asked for clarification or to encourage conversation and sharing of information. Video and audio files will be maintained in a password protected device for three years then destroyed.

1. Describe the partnership between [school name] and [organization name].
2. To your knowledge, how long has the partnership been sustained? (What do you think has led to sustainability)?
3. What are the goals of the partnership?
4. How is leadership of the partnership work shared between [school name] and [organization name]?
5. What methods are used for communication between [school name] and [organization name]?
6. What practices are in place to keep the partnership continuing from year to year?
7. What do you think the role of the school principal is regarding this partnership?
8. Describe the successes of the partnership between [school name] and [organization]?
9. How can the partnership be improved?
10. What else would you like to share about the partnership?

Appendix E: IRB Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

August 25, 2021

Kimberly Benavides
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Kimberly,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Leading for Sustainability in School-Community Partnerships",

was approved by expedited review (Category 6 & 7) on 8/25/2021 (IRB # 21-088). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Appendix F: Informed Consent

Introduction: Leading for Sustainability in School-Community Partnerships

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: . Students and families directly benefit from ongoing school-community partnership work. This study is intended to identify practices by leaders that result in school-community partnerships being successfully sustained for two or more years.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend four virtual sessions with the researcher over the course of three months. Each visit is expected to take between 30 and 60 minutes. During the course of these virtual visits, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures: initial group meeting to discuss research goals and questions, one virtual individual interview, group meeting to analyze information gained, final group meeting to share results.
RISKS & BENEFITS: There are no expected risks to taking part in this research study. There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include networking opportunities with organizational and school leaders and the sharing of ideas for partnership work. The researcher cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by the removal of identifying information in interview transcripts and password protected storage of data.
The researchers cannot guarantee your confidentiality outside of this focus group. While the researchers will take measures to protect your identity and responses as outlined above, we cannot guarantee that other focus group participants will do the same. We encourage all participants to maintain the confidentiality of other participants in the group. The researchers request that you do not share any private information obtained during your participation or any other information that may identify the other participants unless you are legally required to do so. Participants are encouraged to consider the limitations of confidentiality in the focus group setting. Participation is voluntary. At any time, you may decide not to share information, or you may discontinue participating in the group altogether.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Kimberly Benavides and may be contacted at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Christie Bledsoe at xxxxxx@acu.edu. If you have concerns about this study or have

general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Dr. Roth may be reached at
(xxx) xxx-xxxx
xxxxxxxx@acu.edu
320 Hardin Administration Bldg., ACU Box 29103
Abilene, TX 79699

Additional Information

This study will require collaboration and the sharing of experiences among school and community leaders. A small group of approximately 10-12 participants will work together during the research.
Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

Consent Signature Section

All results will be shared with the participants in a group meeting.
Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

_____	_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____	_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date