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# Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools: A Mixed-Methods Study

Jae L. Strickland

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

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COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN URBAN, TITLE 1  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

by

Jae L. Strickland

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies  
(Educational Leadership & Higher Education)

Under the Supervision of Professor Marilyn L. Grady

Lincoln, Nebraska

October, 2016

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN URBAN, TITLE 1  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Jae L. Strickland, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2016

Advisor: Marilyn L. Grady

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools.

Fifty-one principals from the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States completed a 19-question on-line survey designed to explore community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. Of the 51 principals who completed the survey, 26 agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview.

The findings of the study suggest that community partnerships play an essential role in supporting Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. Finding community partners can be challenging. Principals who wish to engage community partners should identify the needs of the school prior to seeking community partners or implementing a community partnership program. Community partnerships came from businesses and corporations, faith organizations, or volunteers in the community. The partners primarily provided activities that were student-centered or school-centered. The activities that provided the greatest impact were student-centered activities that were focused on relationship building and promoting a greater understanding of life outside of the classroom.

## **Dedication**

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Hebrews 12:1

This body of work is dedicated to my mom, Linda. Thank you for being my constant. Thank you for loving me, supporting me, and believing in me, always. You are my champion. Thank you for running alongside me, even when the road was paved with challenges. I love you.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the loves of my life, Kate and Jake. You are my greatest achievement. You are my joy. You are my everything. It is my hope that this dissertation will be more than a study in your eyes. I pray that it will serve as a reminder of the importance of dreaming big dreams, believing in yourself, and knowing you can achieve anything. Whatever you do in life, do it with purpose, passion, and to glorify God. I believe in you. I love you.

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To my wonderful family and friends, thank you for patiently listening to me, loving me, and believing in me throughout this journey.

Finally and most importantly, thank you to my husband, Craig and my two children, Kate and Jake. Craig, thank you for all you do our family. You dedicate your life to providing for us and cultivating the gifts and talents of our children. I thank you and I love you. Kate, you amaze me. I pray you never lose your happy disposition and sweet spirit. You have accomplished so much in your young life and you're just getting started. Jake, your energetic and fun-loving personality is uplifting. God is going to great things in your life. You both inspire me. I love you, always.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Title 1 Schools have explored ways to involve community and engage partners to promote school growth and ensure student success. However, despite these efforts, urban schools continually underperform their counterparts in suburban and rural areas (Loveless, 2003). Although there is little debate about the need for active participation among communities and schools, there is much to be discovered about the types of partnerships and activities that exist in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools and the impact they have on the students, school, and community.

Community involvement in schools can be traced to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when families and community members had great influence on curriculum, scheduling, and hiring practices (Hands & Hubbard, 2011). Since then, connections among the home, school, and community have advanced, yet there is still a need to cultivate collaborative community partnerships in high-poverty schools. “Furthermore, as a part of whole-school reform, or in addition to it, schools are being asked to partner with students’ communities to mobilize the human and material resources needed for academic success” (Sanders & Harvey, 2002, p. 1345).

Educational researchers have advocated for community partners as a means for supporting students and improving schools (Hands, 2005). Now, with increased pressure to perform and limited resources to do so, education professionals in urban schools are recognizing that community partnership programs are necessary to foster school success.

**Personal Experience: A Principal in an Urban, Title 1 Elementary School**

In the summer of 2011, I accepted a position with Oklahoma City Public Schools serving as principal of a little known elementary school on the south side of town. Having spent my entire career working as a teacher in suburban districts, I embraced the opportunity to serve in a district where I knew I could make an immediate and meaningful impact. I also knew that I would be challenged in a way I had not been challenged in the past. Rutherford B. Hayes Elementary, also known as “Hayes,” is one of many high poverty schools in Oklahoma City, a large, urban school district comprised of more than 45,000 students, 89% of whom qualify for free or reduced lunches.

Like many high-poverty urban districts, Oklahoma City Public Schools serves mostly minority students who must overcome enormous odds to achieve academic success.

I first visited Hayes during the summer and my initial impressions left a lasting impact. The school was dark, disheveled, and uninviting. The halls of the main building were quiet and empty and a second grade classroom had metal bars that covered a small window in the classroom door. In addition to the main building, Hayes had portable structures and a dilapidated World War II barracks that housed several classrooms. I learned to be careful when walking through the barracks as the foundation was cracked and parts of the ceiling and floor were missing. The window units that cooled the rooms were often out of commission, which made for miserable learning conditions in the Oklahoma heat. I recall wondering how students were expected to be successful in a run-

down school. What motivated the teachers to work there? And why wasn't the community investing in their local neighborhood school?

The summer of 2011 went quickly and when teachers arrived I wasn't surprised to find that morale was low. Many teachers had worked at Hayes for years in less than favorable conditions, achievement scores were low, and I was the third principal in three consecutive years. As I interviewed each teacher, one-by-one, I discovered that the teachers were dedicated professionals, committed to advancing the educational outcomes of the students despite insurmountable odds, limited resources, and little to no community support. It was then that I realized we needed much more than data-driven instruction; we needed the community to provide additional support and maximize local resources to achieve increased student outcomes and whole school improvement.

### **Community Partnerships at Hayes Elementary**

Our community partnership efforts began with a whole school assessment, which helped us identify areas of need and the potential partners who could satisfy those needs. Ultimately, the community partners reflected seven categories: businesses/corporations; universities and educational institutions; government and military agencies; faith organizations; national service and volunteer organizations; cultural and recreational institutions; and individuals in the community. Partnership activities were identified as student-centered, family-centered, school-centered, and community-centered (Sanders, 2001).

### **Student-centered Activities**

The majority of our community partnership efforts were student-centered activities, designed to promote the social, emotional, academic, and behavioral success of the students within the school environment. Examples of student-centered activities at Hayes included a partnership with the Oklahoma City Police Athletic League (OKC PAL), which is “a juvenile crime prevention program that provides educational and athletic activities for all children, primarily those in high-risk neighborhoods” (Oklahoma City Police Athletic League, 2015). This program proved to be dually beneficial as it gave the students the opportunity to play after-school sports at no cost, while building relationships with Oklahoma City Police officers. Another student-centered partnership program initiated was Boy Scouts of America, whose mission is to “provide programs for young people that build character, train them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness (Scouting, 2015). Our Boy Scout chapter was offered after school and quickly gained popularity among students. The program was facilitated by a volunteer teacher and supported through a scouting leader from our local community.

Student engagement and academic growth were key elements in developing student-centered community partnerships. To satisfy this need, we implemented a gifted and talented program designed to promote creative thinking, leadership acumen, arts, and the overall academic ability of our students who qualified for accelerated instruction. A local engineering company supported the program by donating materials that enabled students to learn through hands-on, authentic learning experiences. Another academic-

based partnership program was accomplished through a Reading Buddy Program. This was the most successful program. It involved the collective effort of businesses, national service and volunteer organizations, faith organizations, government agencies, and individuals in the community. The program targeted low-performing second-grade students and paired them with weekly reading buddies. The reading buddy program accomplished three goals: students were given individualized reading and literacy instruction; students built positive relationships with mentors; and community partners were in the building every week, which dispelled many of the negative misconceptions they had about an Urban, Title 1 Elementary School.

Nutrition was a priority at Hayes. Since 96.3% of the student population qualified for free/reduced lunch, we were committed to eliminating food insecurity by providing free, accessible breakfast to all students. In a 2014 report, the Food Research and Action Center reported:

skipping breakfast and experiencing hunger impair children's ability to learn; eating breakfast at school helps improve children's academic performance; school breakfast improves student behavior and learning environments; Breakfast in the Classroom programs and programs offering breakfast free to all children in the cafeteria yield other positive results; beliefs about breakfast can influence participation in school breakfast; school breakfast can improve children's nutrition and protect against obesity. (Food Research & Action Center, 2014)

Breakfast in the Classroom was successful for our students and the benefits of the program made an immediate impact. Attendance rates increased and more students ate breakfast each day whether they were late for school or not. Instruction increased and teachers began using the added classroom time as an opportunity to engage students in

non-academic dialogue. We also experienced a decrease in student referrals and suspensions.

Health care was an issue among the students and parents at Hayes. Berliner (2009) noted that millions of children living in poverty are “covered by insurance policies that require large copayments or have limited coverage, discouraging those with such policies from seeking needed medical care or from purchasing needed medication” (p. 12). When students lack proper medical care, they miss school, which negatively effects student achievement and impedes school improvement efforts. To combat this issue, we partnered with a local university to provide free health screenings for students and families.

### **Family-centered Activities**

Parent involvement continues to be a challenge in urban schools for a variety of reasons. Parents often work hourly-wage jobs and cannot afford to be absent from work. Not showing up for work means less money for the family to pay bills, buy food, and other necessary items to live. For some, missing work could also mean losing your job. Parents may view school in a negative way due to past experiences, which causes them to be disinterested in supporting their student’s academic goals. Language barriers also prevent involvement for families. The majority of the students at Hayes were Hispanic. Many of their parents did not speak English, making them timid and unsure of their role as educational partners. As a strategy to increase parent involvement and support families as real partners, we incorporated parent classes during our Science, Math, Art, Reading, and Technology (SMART) Nights. By providing English classes and hands-on

early development instruction for parents with young children, we noted marked improvements in parent-school communication.

### **School-centered Activities**

We used every opportunity to create an atmosphere of pride for students and the school community. In an effort to engage students interested in art, bring in community leaders, and beautify the campus, we held an art gallery auction. Students from every grade level created original works of art and community leaders bid on the pieces. The monetary contributions paid for matting, framing, and a plaque for each piece, which lined the halls of the school. We also partnered with the Rutherford B. Hayes Presidential Center and requested photocopies of the late president. Once we received the photos, we created a mini-presidential library in the media center.

### **Community-centered Activities**

The benefits experienced from community partners went beyond student and school support. We enlisted partners who had the capacity to effect positive change in the school and in the neighborhood and larger community. In 2012, we began a campus beautification partnership with the Start Helping Impacted Neighborhoods Everywhere (SHINE) Foundation. The foundation used their resources to facilitate cleanup efforts around the school and in the neighborhood on a weekly basis. We also partnered with the local county commissioner who agreed to clean up graffiti when needed. The benefits of these partnerships were felt immediately and Hayes went from being a target for graffiti, to a clean, safe, aesthetically pleasing school.



One unexpected partnership came from The Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma. We facilitated a community workshop at school and assisted parents in establishing the Hayes Neighborhood Association, which met monthly in the media center. This partnership was especially meaningful for families who had lived in the neighborhood their entire lives. They began to feel empowered, not only as partners in their child's education, but also as leaders in the school and in the community.

### **Summary**

“A growing body of school improvement research suggests that engaging all members of the community, including community members and leaders, provides an essential foundation to successful school improvement efforts” (Ice, Thapa & Cohen, 2015, p. 9). My experiences at Hayes confirmed the need for this type of engagement in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. School leaders need to be informed of the benefits of community partnerships, the types of partners that exist, and the specific activities they engage in to support student success and school improvement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Effective school-community partnerships lead to student success. As such, Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools across the U.S. are being directed to engage community partners and develop community partnership programs. There is, however, a need to further understand the qualities of effective community partnership programs. More specifically, there is a need to understand who the community partners are in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools and the types of activities they provide to support student achievement and whole school improvement.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The central question was: What are the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

The sub-questions included:

- Who are the community partners in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?
- What types of activities do community partners provide for Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The conceptual framework for the study was derived from “Overlapping Spheres of Influence” developed by Joyce Epstein.

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence posits that students learn more when parents, educators, and others in the community work together to guide and support student learning and development. In this model, three contexts—home, school, and community—overlap with unique and combined influences on children through the interactions of parents, educators, community partners, and students across contexts. Each context “moves” closer or farther from the others as a result of external forces and internal actions. (Epstein, 2002, p. 65)

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were used:

**Community** – structures, institutions, and relationships that operate in the spaces community members occupy (Khalifa, 2012).

**Community Involvement** – the connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to directly or indirectly promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (Sanders, 2006).

**Community Partnership** – an agreement between one or more community members and the school. The agreement can be formal or informal (Cox-Peterson, 2010).

**Title 1** – a program that provides financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

**Urban Schools** – schools located in large, central cities (Jacob, 2007).

**Urban Area** – Urbanized area (UAs) of 50,000 or more people (Branch, n.d.).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

Since the late 1960's, community partnerships and their impact on student and school effectiveness have garnered national attention. More and more, urban school districts are engaging community partners in hopes of increasing student outcomes and achieving school improvement. This review includes four aspects of community partnerships identified in the literature. These aspects include: community partnership factors, types of partners and partnership activities, principal, teacher, and partner roles, and partnership benefits.

Community partnerships can be defined as “the connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students’ social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development” (Sanders, 2001, p. 20). Research has shown that with effective implementation, community individuals and organizations may contribute to school success, especially in urban education settings.

#### **Community Partnership Factors**

“A growing body of school improvement research suggests that engaging all members of the school community, including community members and leaders, provides an essential foundation to successful school improvement efforts” (Ice, Thapa, and Cohen, 2015, p. 1). Often, in order to successfully utilize partners, schools adopt a community partnership model that includes factors to guide the implementation process. Identifying factors of successful partnerships can assist schools that:

find themselves in the difficult position of being held accountable for initiating partnerships with students' families or communities without additional personnel or funds and without clear guidance and direction in establishing, maintaining, and evaluating partnerships. (Sanders & Harvey, 2002, p. 1345)

As school districts seek to implement partnership programs, it will be increasingly important for administrators to have current information about effective partnership practices and factors that contribute to the success of the partnership.

In a 2010 study, Anderson, Houser, and Howland explored how community partnerships could promote academic and socio-emotional success in four elementary schools in a large, urban school district in the Midwest. The research team identified four central factors in partnership effectiveness that addressed the educational, health, social, and psychological needs of low-income students. These factors included the following: importance of a flexible, supportive coordinator; adult buy-in and additional and continual training; a positive school climate and a child-centered philosophy shared among stakeholders; and wrap-around services including mental and behavioral supports. Study findings showed that implementing the partnership program yielded positive outcomes on student behavior as well as school satisfaction as a whole. Sanders and Harvey (2002) identified factors that supported the development and maintenance of effective school-community connections in a high-reform urban school district, located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Their qualitative study identified

four factors central to the school's successful connections with its community partners including: the school's commitment to learning; the principal's vision and support for partnerships; the school's reception and openness to community involvement; and the school's willingness to engage in two way communication with community partners. (p. 1353)

Further analysis revealed that schools need additional support for partnerships; staff members need continued professional development on engaging partners; and principals need support in “understanding the benefits of effective school-community collaborations, identifying potential partners and appropriate activities, and creating an environment that encourages collaboration” (Sanders & Harvey, 2002, p. 1367). Sanders, Sheldon, and Epstein (2005) sought to determine which “structures, tools, and guidelines influenced schools’ capacity to develop and maintain partnership programs that included activities for multiple types of involvement, focused on school goals for students’ learning, and were accessible to the families and communities of all students” (p. 24). Data was collected from 603 low socio-economic schools in all regions across the U.S. Results indicated that successful partnership schools have an engaged action team, support from stakeholders, encouragement from district and state educational leaders, and membership with a partnership affiliate such as the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). Results also showed that “schools that have been a NNPS member for 2 to 3 years did more to organize the basic steps in planning and conducting a partnership program than did schools in the first year of work with NNPS” (Sanders, Sheldon, & Epstein, 2005, p. 40). Hands (2005) examined the process of creating partnerships in two multicultural low-to-middle income schools in the Northeastern region of the United States. Semi-structured, open interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, support staff, and community members to better understand the experiences of the partnership program. Study participants concluded that meeting in person, communication, and a willingness to collaborate were key elements in crafting effective

partnerships. Bosma, Sieving, Ericson, Russ, Cavender, and Bonine (2010) examined elements of a partnership program between K-8 public schools, community agencies, and the University of Minnesota Prevention Center to implement a middle school service learning center. They found ten factors that fostered the success of the partnership program including: communication; shared decision-making; shared resources; expertise and credibility; sufficient time to develop and maintain relationships; champions and patron saints; being present; flexibility; a shared youth development orientation; and recognition of other partners' priorities.

### **Types of Community Partners and Partnership Activities**

A central function of implementing an effective partnership program is engaging specific community partners that are beneficial for students, families, teachers, and the larger school community. Understanding types of community partners and their function in the urban school setting is vital to creating a successful partnership program. Since no two schools are alike, "the array of community partnerships that each school ultimately achieves, therefore, will be different and should reflect its goals for students' learning and success" (Sanders, 2006, p. 32).

Sanders (2001) surveyed 443 NNPS elementary, middle, and high schools across the United States. Of those surveyed, 43% were school-wide Title 1 programs and 65% received some Title 1 funds. Survey participants identified ten major categories of partnerships: businesses/corporations; universities and educational institutions; government and military agencies; health care organizations; faith organizations; national service and volunteer organizations; senior citizens' organizations; cultural and

recreational institutions; other community-based organizations; and individuals in the community. Data analysis showed that “of the 817 school-community partnership activities reported, 366 or 45% involved one or more business partners” (Sanders, 2001, p.23). Additional results indicated:

seventy-seven (9%) of the reported school-community activities included universities, colleges, and other educational institutions, including neighboring schools. Health care organizations, including hospitals, mental health facilities, and health foundations were involved in 68 (8%) of the reported school-community activities. Government and military agencies were partners in 62 (8%) of the reported school-community activities. Examples of government and military agencies include fire and police departments, chambers of commerce, and other state and local agencies and departments. National service and volunteer organizations, including Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, AmeriCorps, Concerned Black Men, Inc., the Urban League, and Boys and Girls Clubs, were involved in 49 (6%) of the school-community partnership activities described by schools in the national network. Faith organizations such as churches, synagogues, and religious charities participated in 47 (6%) of the reported activities. Senior citizen organizations were involved in 25 (3%) of the 817 school-community activities reported. Zoos, libraries, recreational centers, museums, and other cultural and recreational institutions participated in 20 (2%) of the reported activities. Other community-based organizations, including sororities and fraternities, alumni organizations, neighborhood associations, and local service organizations were involved in 79 (10%) of the activities. Nineteen (2%) of the reported activities included individuals in the school community volunteering their time, energy, and talents. (p. 25)

Partnership activities were identified as:

- Student Centered – “provide direct services or goods to students, for example, student awards and incentives, scholarships, tutoring and mentoring programs, and job shadowing and other career focused activities.”
- Family Centered – “those that have parents or entire families as their primary focus. This category includes activities such as parenting workshops, GED and other adult education classes, parent/family counseling, and family fun and learning nights.”
- School Centered – “those that benefit the school as a whole, such as beautification projects or the donation of school equipment and materials, or activities that benefit the faculty, such as staff development and classroom assistance.”



- Community Centered – “have as their primary focus the community and its citizens, for example, charitable outreach, art and science exhibits, and community revitalization and beatification projects.” (p. 25)

Hands (2005) characterized community partners in the following ways: businesses in the for-profit sector, educational institutions, government, military, and health care facilities in the public sector, faith organizations, cultural groups, and recreational facilities in the non-profit sector. Other categories included community-based organizations and individuals in the community. Study participants noted “activities which met the needs of the students, or had the potential to do so, were those which were considered by the educators to be appropriate, valuable, and worth investing their time and energy to develop” (p. 70). Sanders and Harvey (2002) collected data on community partnerships during a 7-month period in a large urban school district. Results from the study yielded 10 documented community partners including:

1) a non-profit health organization; 2) a collaboration between a community-based initiative and a local church; 3) a health care facility; 4) a non-profit organization; 5) a suburban elementary school; 6) a health care company; 7) a local church; 8) a local convenience store; 9) a nursing home and rehabilitation center; and 10) a community member.” (Sanders and Harvey, 2002, pp. 1354-1357)

Community partnership activities identified in the study included four categories: student-centered, family-centered, school-centered, and community-centered. Ikepeze’s (2013) study of one expeditionary learning school (project-based learning school) found that community partnerships included local businesses, organizations, and area colleges. Activities resulting from these partnerships included speaking engagements, teaching and sharing information about specific professions, providing a financial literacy course, and supporting the school with grants and manpower. Sanders and Lewis (2005) examined

the motivations for community partnership development in three NNPS secondary schools with successful community partnership programs. Community partners identified in the study included “large and small businesses, cultural institutions, hospitals and other health care facilities, volunteer organizations, colleges and other educational institutions, and government agencies. Community partnership activities were student, family, school, and community focused” (p. 6). Specific partnership activities included:

- Student-focused partnership activities – “student scholarships, awards for service, tutoring and mentoring programs, mock interviews, and job-shadowing programs.”
- School-focused partnership activities – “events such as fundraising projects for school equipment and building improvements, and resulted in refreshments, chaperons, hall monitors, guest speakers, and other volunteers for school events.”
- Family-focused partnership activities – “workshops, and family incentives and awards.”
- Community-focused partnership activities – “co-sponsored cultural events, community health fairs, advertisements in monthly school newsletters, food drives, and other volunteer activities that benefited community members.” (p. 8)

Community partners identified in Hands’ (2010) study included community citizens, businesses, government offices, senior citizens’ organizations, and health care institutions. Partnership activities yielded the following:

- Material resources and social support – students had opportunities to learn to make costumes for a theatre company, as well as to learn a wide range of skills from hospitality and carpentry to event planning and coordination at a church-affiliated conference center.
- Financial support – community organizations provided funding to support and enhance the current curriculum and to build material resources such as technology equipment for the schools’ programs.
- The school’s reputation – community level perceptions of the school – educators were motivated to promote the schools by opening up the doors of

the school to the public, thereby improving the image of the school and public education in general. (p. 202)

### **Principal, Teacher, and Partner Roles**

To achieve maximum benefit from community partnership efforts, administrators, teachers, and community partners must work collaboratively to establish common goals and a clear understanding of the purpose of the partnership. This can be especially true during the implementation phase where community partners may have identified a school in their community they wish to partner with, but do not know how to establish the partnership (Anderson, Houser and Howland, 2010).

Villani (2004) sought to find elements of a successful learning community in an urban elementary school located in the Northeast. After conducting interviews with the principal, teachers, staff, and parents, it was determined that supportive leadership was the foundation for the success of the school. Study analysis revealed three specific leadership traits that contributed to a successful learning community including, dedicated and passionate role model; supportive, caring, and creates a family; and, sets high expectations. In another study, Auerbach (2009) explored ways effective administrators promote meaningful family engagement in high poverty schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. After conducting interviews with four administrators with 10-25 years experience, data analysis indicated that effective leaders “were not grounded in purely academic school-based agendas but rather in broader community-based agendas that empowered families” (p. 25). Each of the administrators knew their communities well and “took the time to learn about and profit from models of parent or school-community relations” (Auerbach, 2009, p. 27). Ishimaru (2013) sought to describe the

conditions and experiences that enabled principals to share leadership to improve student learning. Interviews and observations were conducted with principals at three schools in a large metropolitan area of California. Survey participants “described sharing leadership with parents for educating and initiating new community into the school culture” (p. 30). Respondents also demonstrated a shared concept of leadership, which “may begin to bridge the worlds of professional control and community interest” (p. 41). Hands (2005) found that principals, teachers, and community partners play important roles in effective partnership programs. Results determined “principals play a crucial role in paving the way for partnership development” (p. 79) and teachers and community members were key in crafting successful partnerships as they sought to find partners “based on their determination of their students’ and programs’ needs” (p. 63). Participants indicated that educators and community members met regularly to define the parameters of their partnerships and noted “it was essential for the community partners to have a vision of the benefits of partnering in order to enable the partnerships and their activities to be successfully established and maintained” (p. 79). Sanders and Harvey (2002) found that principal support for community involvement is a central factor in developing meaningful community connections; and, principals can support school improvement efforts by promoting school, family, and community collaboration. Epstein (2005) determined that leadership and teamwork were essential elements of a high-quality partnership program. Data obtained from Epstein’s case study on a low-performing Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) school in Connecticut showed that all stakeholders including teachers, principals, school staff, and community members worked collaboratively to plan,

implement, and evaluate school improvement and community involvement activities (Epstein, 2005). Khalifa (2012) examined the role of the principal on school-community relations and student outcomes by investigating the practices of principals who foster effective school-community relations that lead to student academic and social success. Data was collected during a two-year span from an urban alternative school with 100 students ranging from grades 8 to 12. Results showed that the principal built trust and rapport in the community, brought the community into the school, was a continued presence, supported school-community overlap, and had a strong commitment to student and community advocacy. Ikpeze (2013) investigated key aspects of an expeditionary learning school that promotes community engagement and student achievement in an urban district located in the northeastern part of the country. Results showed that strong leadership, effective teachers, and community engagement contribute to overall school success. Furthermore, study results suggested, “given committed teachers and leadership, as well as the right school reform model, the problems usually associated with urban schools such as high dropout rates, low achievement, and less student and family engagement with school could be drastically reduced or eliminated” (p. 455). Williams (2008) investigated the competencies that differentiated outstanding and typical urban principals” (p. 39). The study, drawn from 20 principals in a large Midwestern urban school district determined that outstanding principals referred to community partners, particularly local organizations/leaders and social service agencies more often than did typical principals (Williams, 2008). Study participants who were identified as “outstanding,” deliberately used teamwork and collaboration to promote group learning

and further school improvement efforts and had a “broader conceptualization of their external environment characterized by regular and evenly distributed interaction with the district/school bureaucracy, parents, and community partners” (p. 48). Sanders and Lewis (2005) found that strong communities were critical for strong schools and successful partnership leaders saw community partnership development important for enhancing the quality of the school. In a 2009 study, Gordon and Louis investigated how leadership style may affect principals’ openness to community involvement and if school leadership structures were related to student learning. Survey results indicated, “principal’s personal behaviors and attitudes about community and parent influence are strongly related to community and parent involvement in school decisions” (p. 21). Lazaridou and Iordanides (2011) investigated teachers’ opinions about what principals should do to increase school effectiveness. They found that “effective schools and principals emphasize and cultivate collaboration with members of the local community and members of other institutions” (p. 16). Hands (2010) explored the causal reasons educators cultivate community involvement in their schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and interview participants indicated, “the teachers cultivated the majority of the partnerships and they articulated the process for accessing resources and the rationale behind the relationships” (p. 198).

### **Partnership Benefits**

Community partnerships can support schools by providing supplemental resources that promote the success of students, the school, and the community at large. Khalifa (2012) conducted interviews with students who attended an urban alternative

high school with a strong community presence. Results from a senior exit survey showed that 88% of the students reported that academic coursework was “very important,” compared to only 67% of the students who attended a local county school. “Interviews with students demonstrated that the school principal was also able to positively impact their view of school and consequently their academic achievement” (p. 455). Students also experienced positive behavioral changes. Khalifa (2012) noted, “the students in this research, as well as their parents and teachers, unequivocally note that the attitudes of the children in this study became more positive” (p. 457). Furthermore, “the findings indicate that the principal’s close relationship with the community affirmed the students’ indigenous identities and allowed students to successfully integrate them with newfound academic identities” (Kalifa, 2012, p. 457). Epstein’s (2005) longitudinal study of a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Model school in an urban district found academic gains in math, reading, and writing during a three-year period. Specific data results revealed that math increased from 54% to 66%, reading increased from 38% to 45%, and writing scores increased from 21% to 43%. The school also reported a decrease in student suspensions. During the same three-year period, the CSR school went from 20 suspensions in one year to fewer than three. In another study, Sheldon and Epstein (2004) investigated whether community involvement activities could improve attendance rates for schools that were identified as having issues with “chronic absenteeism.” Findings included the following results: schools need to take a comprehensive approach to involve families and the community in ways that help students reduce chronic absenteeism; frequent and positive communication with parents about attendance is

needed to reduce chronic absenteeism; and, future studies need larger and comparative samples to improve knowledge of school practices for family and community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. Similarly, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) conducted a longitudinal study on improving attendance through community involvement. “This exploratory study suggests that elementary schools that are interested in improving or maintaining good attendance will benefit from taking a comprehensive approach that includes students, educators, parents, and community partners” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 315). Researchers found that “on average, schools with after-school programs reported an increase in attendance (0.3%)” and “schools with after-school programs reported a decrease in chronic absences (-4.2%)” (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). In 2007, Sheldon explored improving attendance with community partners and found similar results. The study, conducted in the state of Ohio, compared student attendance for schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) and traditional schools, not affiliated with a partnership program. “Analysis showed that schools working to implement school, family, and community partnerships improved student attendance an average of .5%, whereas in comparison schools, rates of student attendance declined slightly from 1 year to the next” (Sheldon, 2007, p. 267). In 2002, Sheldon and Epstein examined “the use of family and community involvement activities specifically designed to improve student behavior and to reduce the number of disciplinary actions taken by school officials” (p. 10). After analyzing data from 47 schools in 12 states, they found “the implementation of different types of family and community involvement activities was related to decreases in several disciplinary actions” and “schools that



improved the quality of their partnership programs from one year to the next reported that lower percentages of students were sent to the principals' offices, received in-school suspensions, and received detentions" (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002). Leonard (2011) conducted a historical case study in an urban high to learn about the up and down patterns of school improvement. Results showed that community partners can be beneficial to students identified as at-risk and "can also improve outcomes for students, and sometimes, turn around an entire school or steer a district in a new direction" (p. 1007). Study participants in Sanders and Lewis' (2005) study indicated that "community partnerships yielded many benefits, but the biggest benefit is that it has brought more of the community in" (p. 8). Gordon and Louis (2009) explored the relationship between shared leadership and student outcomes. Data revealed, "both parent/teacher shared leadership and teachers' perceptions of parent influence positively and significantly are associated with student math achievement" (p. 19). In another study, Hands (2010) found partnerships with community partners not only provided students with academic resources and additional learning opportunities, "but the liaisons directly involving students had additional social value" (p. 203). Additional results showed "partnerships also promoted an awareness of the need of community participation among the students" (p. 203). Several studies (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon, 2007; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2004; Sanders, Sheldon & Epstein, 2005; Sheldon, 2003; Epstein, 2005) identified community partnerships as a key element in the school improvement process.

## Summary

The literature underscores the need for schools to involve community partners in a meaningful way. Four main aspects of community partnerships were identified: community partnership factors; types of partners and partnership activities; principal, teacher, and partner roles; and, partnership benefits.

When implementing community partnership programs, school leaders should explore factors that may contribute to the success of the partnership. Factors may include: organizing and planning; open, two-way communication; and, a positive school climate with staff who embrace community partnerships as a means to support student and school improvement.

Types of partners and partnership activities vary from school-to-school and should represent the unique needs of each school. Common community partners fit into ten categories: businesses/corporations; universities and educational institutions; government and military agencies; health care organizations; faith organizations; national service and volunteer organizations; senior citizens' organizations; cultural and recreational institutions; other community-based organizations; and individuals in the community. Most partnership activities are reported to be student-centered, family-centered, school-centered, and community-centered.

Principals, teachers, and partners play critical roles in the success of community partnership programs. Highly effective programs elicit strong support from each of these stakeholders, as they are essential to the design, implementation, and future success of sustained partnership programs.

Community partnerships are implemented to support the success of the students, school, and community as a whole. Benefits may include increased academic achievement, improved behavior, increased attendance, and enhanced school and community climate.

Years of research indicate that “schools should identify community partners and partnership activities that will help them to achieve goals that support students’ learning and school improvement efforts” (Sanders, 2006, p. 32).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

A two-stage mixed methods approach was used to identify and describe the community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. This approach “combines the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) and is useful to those who wish to address complex problems that require multiple types of evidence. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated,

mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, mixed methods research involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (p. 5)

When using a mixed methods study, key components must be considered by the researcher including:

- collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data based on research questions;
- mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;
- gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);

- frames these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases of a program of study; and,
- combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study.

Since qualitative and quantitative research designs offer different perspectives, each has limitations. However, when researchers combine quantitative and qualitative data, they “provide a more complete understanding of the research problem than either approach by itself” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 8).

### **Research Study Design**

This mixed methods study followed an explanatory sequential design. The purpose of the explanatory mixed methods design was to use qualitative data to explain initial quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Considerations when using the design included:

- the researcher and the research problem were more quantitatively oriented;
- the researcher knew the important variables and had access to quantitative instruments for measuring the constructs of primary interest;
- the researcher had the ability to return to participants for a second round of qualitative data;
- the researcher had the time to conduct the research in two phases;
- the researcher had limited resources and needed a design in which only one type of data was being collected and analyzed at a time; and

- the researcher developed new questions based on quantitative results, and they could not be answered with quantitative data.

Explanatory research happens in two, distinct phases. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), “the first phase involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data. Based on a need to further understand the quantitative results, the researcher implements a second, qualitative phase that is designed to help explain the initial quantitative results” (p. 119). By using an explanatory sequential design, general information was obtained regarding the types of partnerships and activities that existed in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools as well as in-depth views about the qualities of the partnerships in each school. In the first, quantitative strand, a 19-question survey was used to identify who the community partners were, the types of activities that existed, and benefits the partnerships provided to Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. In the second, qualitative strand, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 of the 51 elementary principals who completed the surveys to further explain the initial quantitative findings. A narrative approach was used to interpret and explain the qualitative findings.

According to Creswell (2012), a narrative approach contains the following elements:

- narrative researchers collect stories from individuals and documents, and group conversations about individuals’ lived and told experiences;
- narrative stories tell of individual experiences and they may shed light on identities of individuals and how they see themselves;
- narrative stories are gathered through many different forms of data, such as through interviews that may be the primary form of data collection, but also

through observations, documents, pictures, and other sources of qualitative data;

- narrative stories often are heard and shaped by the researcher into a chronology, although they may not be told that way by participants;
- narrative stories are analyzed in a variety of ways;
- narrative stories often contain turning points;
- narrative stories occur within specific places or situations.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question of the study was: What are the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

The sub-questions included:

- Who are the community partners in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?
- What types of activities do community partners provide for Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

### **Quantitative Methods**

A two-stage mixed methods approach was used to identify and describe the community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. In the first phase of the study, elementary principals were invited to participate in an on-line survey, created with Qualtrics. The 19-question survey took less than ten minutes or less to complete. The survey explored community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools and provided numerical results concerning the following: participant's gender, participant's position in the school, the number of years the participant had worked in the position at

the school, the population of the school, the description of community partners in the school, the types of activities community partners provided in the school, the level of satisfaction with the community partnership programs in the school, the number of days community partners provided activities in the school, the ways in which community partnerships benefited the school, and participants' interest in being part of the second, qualitative phase of the study. The survey included four demographic items; one selection response item with responses arranged in a Likert scale containing responses of very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neutral, somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied; eight selection response items with responses arranged in a Likert scale containing responses of always, most of the time, about half of the time, sometimes, and never; three multiple-choice items; two selection response items allowed participants to select all items that applied; and one of the items was an open-ended question that allowed respondents to provide their full name, email address, and phone number if they were interested in participating in the second phase of the study (Appendix A).

### **Population and Sample**

The sampling design for phase one of the study was purposeful. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) purposeful sampling “means that researchers intentionally select (or recruit) participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored in the study” (p. 173). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explained that purposeful sampling leads to greater depth of information and Creswell (2012) noted that the process of purposeful sampling involves selecting individuals and sites because they can purposefully inform the researcher.



Subjects for the mixed methods study included elementary principals serving in urban school districts, located in the Southern and Midwestern region of the United States. Participants were selected according to the following criteria: principals had to be employed at an Urban, Title 1 Elementary School during the 2015-2016 school year; principals had to be employed at a school district where more than 50% of the students qualified for free and/or reduced lunch; principals had to be employed at a school district where the majority of the students were minority; and principals had to be employed at a school district that had a strong commitment to community partnerships as identified in their strategic or action plan.

Study participant email addresses were derived from school district websites. The principals received an email asking them to participate in a voluntary 19-question survey (Appendix B). One week after the initial email invitation was sent, a follow-up email invitation was sent to those who had yet to respond (Appendix C). In total, two hundred twenty-six elementary principals from urban school districts located in the Southern and Midwestern Region of the United States were invited to participate in the study. Of the 226 elementary principals, 51 (22%) completed the survey. Table 1 represents the participant sample from phase one.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Data was collected through a survey created with Qualtrics. The survey was designed to explore community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The survey was reviewed by a consultant at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Nebraska

Table 1

*Participants in Phase I of the Study (N = 51)*

		Number of Participants
Position	Elementary Principal, PK-K	0
	Elementary Principal, PK – 3	1
	Elementary Principal, PK – 5	14
	Elementary Principal, PK – 6	27
	Elementary Principal, PK – 7	0
	Elementary Principal, PK – 8	0
	Elementary Principal, K – 4	0
	Elementary Principal, K – 5	5
	Elementary Principal, K – 6	0
	Elementary Principal, 1 – 5	1
	Elementary Principal, 1 – 6	0
	Elementary Principal, 4 – 6	0
	Not Represented	2
	Gender	Male
Female		46
Prefer not to disclose		0
Years at Current School	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	5
	2-5 Years	34
	6-10 Years	9
	11-15 Years	1
	16-20 Years	0
	21+ Years	2
Population of Current School	Fewer than 100 Students	0
	101-200 Students	2
	201-300 Students	2
	301-400 Students	9
	401-500 Students	17
	501-600 Students	10
	601-700 Students	6
	701-800 Students	0
	801-900 Students	1
	901-1000 Students	1
More than 1000 Students	3	

Education and Research Center (NEAR) prior to distribution. Each principal was sent an email invitation to participate in the on-line survey.

To ensure survey data security, a Qualtrics account was created on a password-protected network. IP addresses associated with survey participants were not collected. Survey questions were close-ended and designed to explore community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. Twenty-six elementary principals who completed the survey indicated an interest in participating in the second phase of the study, the interview process.

### **Qualitative Methods**

A two-stage mixed methods approach was used to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. In the second, qualitative phase of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 elementary principals who indicated interest in participating in an interview process.

### **Population and Sample**

In phase one of the study, 51 (22%) elementary principals from the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States completed an on-line survey designed to explore community partners in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The principals were invited to participate in an interview and were asked to provide their name, email, and contact information if they were interested in participating in the second, qualitative phase of the study. Of the 51 elementary principals who completed the survey, 26 agreed to participate in phase two of the study. Principals who agreed to be interviewed via the survey, were sent an email inviting them to schedule an interview (Appendix D). Once a

time and location convenient to the participant was established, a reminder email was sent to each principal (Appendix E). Table 2 represents the sample of participants for phase two of the study.

Table 2

*Participants in Phase 2 of the Study (N = 26)*

		Number of Participants
Position	Elementary Principal, PK-K	0
	Elementary Principal, PK – 3	0
	Elementary Principal, PK – 5	8
	Elementary Principal, PK – 6	16
	Elementary Principal, PK – 7	0
	Elementary Principal, PK – 8	0
	Elementary Principal, K – 4	0
	Elementary Principal, K – 5	0
	Elementary Principal, K – 6	0
	Elementary Principal, 1 – 5	1
	Elementary Principal, 1 – 6	0
	Elementary Principal, 4 – 6	0
	Not Represented	1
	Gender	Male
Female		25
Prefer not to disclose		0
Years at Current School	1 <sup>st</sup> Year	2
	2-5 Years	18
	6-10 Years	4
	11-15 Years	1
	16-20 Years	0
	21+ Years	1
Population of Current School	Fewer than 100 Students	0
	101-200 Students	2
	201-300 Students	1
	301-400 Students	4
	401-500 Students	8
	501-600 Students	5
	601-700 Students	4
	701-800 Students	0
	801-900 Students	0
	901-1000 Students	1
More than 1000 Students	1	

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

Participants were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview that took no longer than 45 minutes to complete. Participants were asked open-ended questions using an 11-question interview protocol (Appendix F). Upon completion of the interviews, data was collected and themes were developed based on the participants' responses.

Participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix G) prior to the start of the interview. All interviews were recorded on a digital recording device, using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder. The digital recordings were transcribed by the primary investigator and a paid transcriptionist, who completed the CITI Limited Research Worker training in Human Protections (Appendix H). The transcriptionist also signed a Transcript Confidentiality Form (Appendix I). Once audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, participants were asked to review the transcripts for accuracy and approve the transcript or approve the transcript with revisions (Appendix J). Upon completion of the dissertation research, the audio recordings and transcripts will be locked in a fire-safe box for three years, then they will be destroyed.

### **Ethical Issues**

Prior to the start of the study, Institutional Review Board approval was granted through The University of Nebraska – Lincoln (Appendix K). Informed Consent was obtained from each interview participant prior to the start of the interview. Participants were notified that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the study.

There were no known risks associated with the study. Study participants were told that information obtained during the study that could identify them, their school, or their school district would be kept strictly confidential. Participants were notified that the findings of the study would be available to principals, school districts, and administrator preparation programs for their use. They were told that the findings of the study would contribute to a greater understanding of the engagement of community partners in schools and the development of community partnership programs.

### **Summary**

The purpose of Chapter Three was to describe the quantitative and qualitative methods used to explore the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The research design, data collection methods, and instrumentation used in the study were addressed. Ethical issues were discussed. The methodology employed in the study provided a strong foundation for exploration of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The central question was: What are the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

The sub-questions included:

- Who are the community partners in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?
- What types of activities do community partners provide for Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

#### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The study was an explanatory mixed-methods design. In the first phase, elementary principals were invited to participate in an on-line survey that measured community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The survey provided numerical results concerning the following: the survey participant's gender, the survey participant's position in the school, the number of years the participant had worked in the position at the school, the population of the school, the description of community partners in the school, the types of activities community partners provided in the school, the level of satisfaction with the community partnership programs, the number of days community partners provided activities in the school, the ways in which community partnerships benefited the school, and interest in participating in the second, qualitative phase of the study. The survey included four demographic items; one selection response item with responses arranged in a Likert scale contained responses of very satisfied, satisfied,

somewhat satisfied, neutral, somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied; eight selection response items with responses arranged in a Likert scale containing responses of always, most of the time, about half of the time, sometimes, and never; three multiple choice items; two selection response items allowed participants to select all items that applied; and one of the items was an open-ended question that allowed respondents to provide their full name, email address, and phone number if they were interested in participating in the second phase of the study.

Fifty-one elementary principals from the Southern and Midwestern region of the United States completed the 19-question survey.

Principals were asked to describe the community partners that supported the school program. Figure 1 indicated that 43 (84.31%) schools received partnership support from faith-based organizations. Forty-one (80.39%) schools partnered with businesses and corporations, and 34 (66.67%) principals described partnerships with individuals from the community. Twenty-three (45.10%) schools received support from volunteer organizations and university and educational institutions, and 17 (33.33%) engaged health care organizations as partners. Eleven (21.57%) principals reported partnerships with national service organizations. Ten (19.61%) principals indicated partnerships with recreational organizations. Eight (15.69%) schools received government agencies', senior citizen organizations', and cultural institutions' support. Two (3.92%) principals indicated they received assistance from military agencies.



Table 3

*Community Partners' Support of Schools (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Business and Corporations	80.39	41
Universities and Educational Institutions	45.10	23
Government Agencies	15.69	8
Military Agencies	3.92	2
Health Care Organizations	33.33	17
Faith-Based Organizations	84.31	43
National Service Organizations	21.57	11
Volunteer Service Organizations	45.10	23
Senior Citizen Organizations	15.69	8
Cultural Institutions	15.69	8
Recreational Institutions	19.61	10
Individuals from the Community	66.67	34
Total	100.00	51

In addition to partners that supported the school programs, participants described the activities that each partner provided to the school. Figure 2 arrays the activities provided by businesses and corporations. Student-centered activities were the focus of universities and educational institutions, government and military agencies, health-care organizations, faith-based organizations, national service and volunteer organizations, senior citizen organizations, recreational institutions, and individuals and other community-based organizations. Participants reported less participation from community partners that was focused on family-centered and community-centered activities.

Table 4

*Activities Community Partners Provide to Schools (N = 51)*

	Student-centered Activities		School-centered Activities		Family-centered Activities		Community-centered Activities		Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
Businesses and Corporations	77.27	34	81.82	36	40.91	18	34.09	15	44
Universities and Educational Institutions	80.77	21	53.85	14	19.23	5	19.23	5	26
Government Agency	81.82	9	45.45	5	27.27	3	45.45	5	11
Military Agency	100.00	2	50.00	1	50.00	1	50.00	1	2
Health Care Organizations	78.95	15	52.63	10	52.63	10	42.11	8	19
Faith Organizations	85.71	36	76.19	32	52.38	22	45.24	19	42
National Service and Volunteer Organizations	94.44	17	61.11	11	44.44	8	44.44	8	18
Senior Citizen Organizations	100.00	8	25.00	2	0.00	0	0.00	0	8
Cultural and Recreational Institutions	92.31	12	76.92	10	53.85	7	46.15	6	13
Other Community-Based Organizations	100.00	12	50.00	6	25.00	3	33.33	4	12
Individuals in the Community	97.14	34	65.71	23	40.00	14	34.29	12	35

The principals described their school's satisfaction with the community partnerships. Principals reported: 24 (47.06%) very satisfied; 16 (31.37%) satisfied; 7 (13.73%) somewhat satisfied; 2 (3.92%) neutral; 2 (3.92%) somewhat dissatisfied; and 0 (0.00%) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Figure 3 represents these responses.

Table 5

*Principals' Satisfaction with Community Partnerships in the School (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Very Satisfied	47.06	24
Satisfied	31.37	16
Somewhat Satisfied	13.73	7
Neutral	3.92	2
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3.92	2
Dissatisfied	0.00	0
Very Dissatisfied	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

The following questions pertained to the outcomes principals attributed to engaging community partners in the school. Principals were asked whether community partnerships increased student academic achievement. Fourteen (27.45%) principals indicated that community partnerships always increased student academic achievement; 27 (52.94%) principals indicated that community partnerships increased student academic achievement most of the time; 2 (3.92%) principals indicated that community partnerships increased student academic achievement about half the time; and,

8 (15.69%) principals indicated that community partnerships increased student academic achievement sometimes.

Principals surveyed responded to a question about community partnerships and increased student engagement. Seventeen (33.33%) principals indicated community partnerships always increased student engagement; 27 (52.94%) principals indicated community partnerships increased student engagement most of the time; 1 (1.96%) principal indicated community partnerships increased student engagement about half the time; and, 6 (11.76%) principals indicated community partnerships increased student engagement sometimes.

Principals' responses, related community partnerships and family engagement, were: 8 (15.69%) reported community partnerships always increased family engagement; 32 (62.75%) reported community partnerships increased family engagement most of the time; 4 (7.84%) reported that community partnerships increased family engagement about half the time; and, 7 (13.73%) reported that community partnerships increased family engagement sometimes.

Principals' survey responses, related to community partnerships and positive school perception, were: 20 (39.22%) reported community partnerships always increased positive school perception; 28 (54.90%) reported community partnerships increased positive school perception most of the time; 1 (1.96%) reported community partnerships increased positive school perception about half the time; and, 2 (3.92%) reported community partnerships increased positive school perception sometimes.

Principals' survey responses, related to community partnerships and attendance rates were: 5 (9.80%) reported community partnerships always increased attendance rates; 17 (33.33%) reported community partnerships increased attendance rates most of the time; 7 (13.73%) reported community partnerships increased attendance rates about half the time; 19 (37.25%) reported community partnerships increased attendance rates sometimes; and, 3 (5.88%) reported community partnerships never increased attendance rates.

Principals' survey responses, related to community partnerships as a means to increase teacher efficacy were: 8 (15.69%) reported community partnerships always increased teacher efficacy; 23 (45.10%) reported community partnerships increased teacher efficacy most of the time; 2 (3.92%) reported community partnerships increased teacher efficacy sometimes; and, 1 (1.96%) reported community partnerships never increased teacher efficacy.

Principals' survey responses related to community partnerships and student behavior were: 6 (11.76%) reported community partnerships always improved student behavior; 22 (43.14%) reported community partnerships improved student behavior most of the time; 6 (11.76%) reported community partnerships improved student behavior about half the time; 16 (31.37%) reported community partnerships improved student behavior sometimes; and 1 (1.96%) reported community partnerships never improved student behavior.

Principals' survey responses related to community partnerships and student outcomes were: 11 (21.57%) reported community partnerships always increased whole

school improvement; 25 (49.02%) reported community partnerships increased whole school improvement most of the time; 7 (13.73%) reported community partnerships increased whole school improvement about half the time; and, 8 (15.69%) reported community partnerships increased whole school improvement sometimes.

Survey responses are represented in Figures 4 through 11.

Table 6

*Community Partnerships and Increased Student Academic Achievement (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	27.45	14
Most of the time	52.94	27
About half the time	3.92	2
Sometimes	15.69	8
Never	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

Table 7

*Community Partnerships and Increased Student Engagement (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	33.33	17
Most of the time	52.94	27
About half the time	1.96	1
Sometimes	11.76	6
Never	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

Table 8

*Community Partnerships and Increased Family Engagement (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	15.69	8
Most of the time	62.75	32
About half the time	7.84	4
Sometimes	13.73	7
Never	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

Table 9

*Community Partnerships and Increased Positive Community Perceptions (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	39.22	20
Most of the time	54.90	28
About half the time	1.96	1
Sometimes	3.92	2
Never	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

Table 10

*Community Partnerships and Increased Attendance Rates (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	9.80	5
Most of the time	33.33	17
About half the time	13.73	7
Sometimes	37.25	19
Never	5.88	3
Total	100.00	51

Table 11

*Community Partnerships and Increased Teacher Efficacy (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	15.69	8
Most of the time	45.10	23
About half the time	3.92	2
Sometimes	33.33	1
Never	1.96	1
Total	100.00	51



Table 12

*Community Partnerships and Improved Student Behavior (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	11.76	6
Most of the time	43.14	22
About half the time	11.76	6
Sometimes	31.37	16
Never	1.96	1
Total	100.00	51

Table 13

*Community Partnerships and Increased Whole School Improvement (N = 51)*

	%	Count
Always	21.57	11
Most of the time	49.02	25
About half the time	13.73	7
Sometimes	15.69	8
Never	0.00	0
Total	100.00	51

Principals' survey responses related to days per week community partners provided activities in the schools were: 15 (29.41%) reported activities 1 day per week; 9 (17.65%) reported activities 2 days per week; 8 (15.69%) reported activities 3 days per week; 6 (11.76%) reported activities 4 days per week; and, 13 (25.49%) reported activities 5 days per week.

Principals' survey responses related to days per year community partners provided activities in the schools were: 19 (37.25%) reported activities 25 days per year; 10 (19.61%) reported activities 50 days per year; 3 (5.88%) reported activities 75 days per year; 1 (1.96%) reported activities 100 days per year; and, 18 (35.29%) reported activities more than 100 days per year. Figures 12 and 13 represent survey results related to days per week community partners provided activities in the schools and days per year community partners provided activities in the schools.

Table 14

*Days per Week Community Partners Provided Activities in the School (N = 51)*

	%	Count
1 Day per Week	29.41	15
2 Days per Week	17.65	9
3 Days per Week	15.69	8
4 Days per Week	11.76	6
5 Days Per Week	25.49	3
Total	100.00	51

Table 15

*Days per Week Community Partners Provided Activities in the School (N = 51)*

	%	Count
25 Day per Year	37.25	19
50 Days per Year	19.61	10
75 Days per Year	5.88	3
100 Days per Year	1.96	1
More than 100 Days per Year	35.29	18
Total	100.00	51

Of the 51 principals who completed the survey, 26 (50.9%) agreed to participate in the interviews.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

For the study, an explanatory mixed-methods design was used. In the second, qualitative strand, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 principals. An 11-question interview protocol was used to explore the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools.

Principals were asked open-ended questions and the interviews took no longer than 45 minutes to complete. Principals' responses were recorded, transcripts were analyzed, and memos were created to form broader categories of information such as codes and themes (Creswell, Plano and Clark, 2011). The data was hand coded and collected using an aggregate data approach. The themes and codes are represented in Appendix L. From the codes, five themes emerged. They were: identify needs, the

challenge of finding partners, building relationships and the positive impact on students, community partnerships improve positive school perception, and students benefit from life experiences.

### **Identify Needs**

The first theme was identify needs of the school. Elementary principals described the importance of recognizing needs when seeking community partners and implementing community partnership programs. Of the 26 principals interviewed, 17 described identifying needs as a foundational element to engaging community partners. One principal stated, “I would do a needs list...you start small but you do need a goal. You need to have a goal you’re going for...they need a picture of what they’re doing and how that’s helping.” Another principal noted,

we knew there were needs that needed to be met...whether it’s paying for a field trip, whether it’s copy paper, or our copier broke, the classroom needs books, or there is a new teacher who doesn’t have any supplies...so that was the first thought when I started working to build community partners was, “How can they support us?”

One principal explained, “Basically when I first came into the school, we just assessed all of the needs. I just had to share my vision, share what I believed were the greatest needs, and my plan for how to meet those needs. And, there were many people ready to help.” Another principal said, “You just have to go for it and base it off the survey for the needs... it’s just getting the word out there that we had some needs that needed to be filled.” One principal stated,

I took a look at the needs of our school, kind of a needs assessment, resources and people. We needed some more stuff and we needed more people to read with students. A lot of our community partners want to know, very specifically, what are the items, what are the times, who are the children, and what do they need?

An elementary principal explained the process of engaging community partners,

whatever our need is, we look for a partner to fill that need...we will go out of town and we will sit and write grants for whatever the need is...so it is just a list of whatever that need is...someone always steps up. Open the door, take some kids with you, and explain what the need is.

Another principal said, “I think I just want to raise an awareness of what our school needs because we need a lot more than just school supplies or backpacks.” One principal explained, “We sat down as a staff several years ago when I came and we made a needs assessment. And, we said, just pie in the sky...what’s anything you would ever need or want? Time? Money? Or, time and money? What does it take?” Another principal suggested that identifying needs was essential to the partnership plan. She stated,

we needed to kind of look at what, not only they could bring to us, but, what we could do for them...and so having a balance between helping us with curriculum...what can you do for us with that? What can you do for us with meeting basic needs of students...what can you do with meeting the morale needs of our staff...and then just bringing it all together in one cohesive plan.

The principals’ comments indicated that effective community partnership programs were based on specific needs. Once needs were identified, they could be communicated to potential partners and made part of the overall community partnership program.

### **The Challenge of Finding Community Partners**

The second theme was the challenge of finding community partners. The majority of principals interviewed found their community partnership experiences to be favorable; however, many expressed frustration with finding community partnerships. More specifically, 10 principals cited finding partners as a challenge to effective community partnership programs. One principal described her experience,

some of the challenges at first were just finding community partners. It can be difficult just to find them. My first year I would go out every Friday morning and I would just visit the businesses around the school and I would just introduce myself, you know, give them a letter of introduction, first of all, and then I would just stop by every month. And then, I got a bank. It took me about 6 months...or 6 stops...over there, but I eventually got this bank.

Another principal stated,

It takes a lot of my time. It takes a lot of time. There was no process of picking. You have to be a go-getter. You have to go get it. You can't sit back and let other people do it for you. It's something that the leader has to do. You have to do that. And I engage my teachers in it... I'm getting out there. They all have to get community sponsors...they know that's a requirement from me that they have to go out and seek out people.

One principal noted that finding partners was difficult because although her school was Title 1, there were schools with greater needs. She said,

I thought maybe why we don't have some big corporations that come, and it is kind of tricky, because we are a high performing school in our district and our free and reduced is about 53%, so it's not like we're like 99% or a totally poor school; and, a lot of partnerships...they look for the needy schools. Well, we have needs too. But, it seems like a lot of community people reach out to high poverty, low-performing schools.

Several principals indicated that finding a partner was difficult because their school was low performing, which might be a deterrent for community partners. One administrator stated,

aside from that random begging... some of the big donors are taken. And, they're taken literally by the schools that are in the closest proximity to their headquarters...and one of the schools that probably has one of the biggest donors not by proximity but because a lot of employees' kids go there. Which is fair, you want to help your kid's school. They have the least need with the biggest donor.

Another principal shared similar thoughts. She explained, "This is going to sound real negative, so please forgive me. Impoverished schools are not easy; and, I think

sometimes community adopters that are doing it to get their name out there don't want to be associated with a failing school." She went on to say,

I remember what it was like to have people want to do for us because they wanted their name associated with that high performing school. But, when you walk in and say, "Hi, I'm from an F school and 85% of my school is failing," and you know, that's overwhelming and their first thought is, "What do you want from me," you know?

Other principals explained that location made finding partners difficult. One participant stated,

we're kind of in a unique area of town that has a lot of industrial areas so there are not a lot of big corporations. It's a lot of very small one-owner businesses; and, there's also a lot of bars, and things like that. But, they just don't have the money to contribute; and, they don't have the people to contribute. So I basically started with one, the credit union up the street...went and met with them, and that led to another community partnership, so a lot of word-of-mouth.

Another principal said,

we have a very limited number of businesses that are actually here. And so we've had a hard time recruiting those corporate-type, business-type, sponsors that I would like to have on a regular basis. Somebody that I can go to and say, "You know, I need 2,000 bottles of water for an activity that we're going to do." And a lot of schools can go to their corporate sponsor and that's an easy thing, you know, they just do that. Haven't had that, and I would like to have that very much.

The elementary principals who participated communicated the difficulty in finding community partners for a variety of reasons. These reasons included location and school designation.

### **Building Relationships and the Positive Impact on Students**

The third theme that emerged from the data was building relationships with community partners has a positive impact on students. Principals discussed the importance of community partners as mentors and tutors. Fourteen of the 26 participants

explained that building relationships has a positive impact on students. One principal shared her experience. She said,

we have mentors. We also have tutors. We have a large group of boys that their dads are in prison; so, we have like 30 community members that are men that have taken on a mentee that they meet with weekly and they help with instruction, life skills...just having that self control and that self reflection while in school. They (came to a point) where they were not doing it just for themselves; they were doing it for their mentors. They do not want to disappoint them. I would even have kids say, I have an anger issue problem...after they started working with mentors and we started working with the steps, they would no longer say that. They would talk about the steps we had taught them and the mentors had reinforced to control that and then they felt that...after the training they never felt like they were a victim because of their circumstance. They felt like they can...they had control over their situation and before they felt powerless.

Another principal shared her perspective by stating, "...and then when you have a mentor, one or two people that come in...the kids, they value that and that is their special buddy...there's someone who cares about them that has the time, so there's just...it's very important." One participant explained,

I keep telling them that them seeing an adult that is doing something different and having a role model and just seeking a different perspective on life is worth them being here. I really liked the idea that we have 50 professionals here in this building, working with kids weekly, on a one-to-one basis. And man, they're working on reading, but they're also sharing experiences. And I think in the long-term that's going to be very productive. I think that's going to be eye-opening.

Another principal explained her belief that one-on-one contact is most beneficial for students. She said, "...the one-on-one...the tutoring to me. Yes, the financial help is wonderful but to make a difference in a child's life, that one-on-one contact helps sometimes with attendance – not always, but making the child feel more comfortable and confident in what they're doing." Yet another principal shared her perspectives by



stating, “The most productive really is the one-on-one tutoring because I feel any child can have another adult to show some love.” She went to say,

my opinion is that it’s kind of like that African fable...it takes a community to raise a child. I kind of feel that same kind of commitment. When you volunteer and help a school, you’re really helping to raise a child by volunteering, you know, coming to be a tutor, or mentor, even the one-time partnerships. Like, let’s just say someone volunteers to come help me for my super kids day, they run a booth for my kids like hula hoop or something, just a one-time commitment, but it takes all of us to help mold the next generation. And, even if your children are grown or even if your children or grandchildren are at a different school or a different school district, you still should be committed and you should still try to buy in to other schools and other children to help our whole community and our whole nation. And, everyone should have a stake in it. Help somebody’s kids, some place, at some school because it’s going to help our city, our state, and our whole nation because these kids are going to grow up thinking, well these people cared about me. I was poor. I was dirty. I maybe didn’t even smell good that day. Maybe our water was turned off; but, they still loved me and cared for me and when they grow up, they are going to want to help people.

Another principal described her experience, “Our biggest impact are our people. Things are great, but things aren’t what turn schools around and things aren’t what change kids’ lives. People are what change kids’ lives.” Another principal noted,

the ones that come and mentor the kids...they’ve built huge relationships. Sometimes it’s just a kid that needs to be out of the classroom for a little while, or a kid needs you to say, ok, do that next problem...not even help with the work, just help them stay on track. And then when those mentors come consistently, now they’re building trust that those kids don’t always have...So, it’s for the kids because they don’t have someone who’s always there, so, like our kindergarten kids, they read the Bob Books, and they have to read them so many times before they can move on to the next one. Well, there’s not always someone at home who will do that. Sometimes I think they read to the cafeteria people or the office people; but, they need that consistency and then they feel like someone cares about them, which gives them a little more confidence, which then helps them do better in school. So, really it’s a huge circle.

One principal said,

I think of benefits from a relationship standpoint is them recognizing the significance of organizations and businesses and what they can do for schools.

They also start building relationships with those people. Let's take our PALS for example, that's a community partner. They come in and our students know who the PAL officers are. And, they start to realize that, oh, this is an extension of the police organization and police aren't bad. Police can be helpful and they build relationships with them. And, hopefully that mentoring aspect gives them a positive influence in their life.

Another principal noted,

when I first meet with our reading buddies, you know, I tell them you may think it's thirty minutes of listening to a kid. What you don't realize is, it is an investment in a child's life that increases their personal value. You don't see it the way they see it. You see it as I am just taking a few minutes, maybe. They see it as somebody cares about me. And so, the perception is far, far greater, I think, then they understand.

Elementary principals who engage community partners have a strong belief that when students have the opportunity to build relationships with people, it positively impacts them.

### **Community Partnerships Improve Positive School Perception**

The fourth theme was community partnerships improve positive school perception. Of the 26 participants, eleven principals cited an increase in positive school perception since implementing a community partnership program. One principal stated, "I think that the more people that are in our schools positively, it lessens vandalism, it changes the concept of "well, teachers have a cushy job." She continued, "I just think the more people are in our buildings, the more transparent education is to everyone. And, I think partnerships develop out of that." Another participant said,

I want people in the community to see how fantastic my school is. How fantastic my children are. How hard our teachers work and then go back out into the community and talk about it and...yeah, all the things they bring to the school and they do for the school, that's fantastic for us and we couldn't do a lot of things without them and so we are very, very grateful for that. But for me, it's about, you know, working in a historically failing school in a very impoverished

community that a lot of people would have written off this neighborhood or considered our children disposable and now there's somebody out there going, "Those kids are well-behaved. That is the sweetest group of kids. That teacher works hard." And, say really fantastic things about our community within the city as a whole and it getting back to our children and someone saying, "Wow, I heard your class is really smart. You know your reading buddy that comes, he told me that you have the smartest class in the school", you know, and the esteem, the pride that it starts to build in the school, you can't replace that. Money doesn't buy that.

One principal stated,

I also think the bigger picture is to help them understand what teachers and educators are going through on a big spectrum, rather than just this isolated school but be a representation of all educators. So when they come in here, often times they think, "Oh, I'm going into this school, this is going to be rough" or "This is going to be dangerous" and they come in and they are refreshingly surprised. And I thought, "Oh, my goodness, this is a really nice school." And so that directly goes back to whatever organization they belong to, and other organizations, especially if there is social media, that our schools not only in this district but in this state, are very comfortable environments and good places to be for kids. It kind of helps with the big picture of education as well.

Another principal shared her experiences,

and, most of all we wanted the community to not see us as a south side eye sore. And we had been, historically, for the last 21 years. This had been the worst school. Our suspensions were 495 my first year, to last year, less than 20.

One principal noted,

I think the more the community is involved in the school, the better they look at the school, they think better of it. Support goes both ways. Another administrator noted, "I think it's very good for the community members to come into the school and see what good things are going on in our schools.

Insights shared by the principals underscore the importance of encouraging the active participation of community partnership programs and the need to invite partners to visit the school. By doing this, many negative misconceptions that exist about Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools can be dispelled.

### **Students Benefit from Life Experiences**

The fifth theme was engaging community partners in Urban, Title 1 Schools develops students far beyond the classroom. Of the 26 principals, eleven reported that students who engage with community partners benefit from real-life experiences. One principal shared her perspective,

We have a bunch of engineers from a company and getting to meet someone who is an engineer who works literally walking distance from where they go to school is amazing because most of our students, they don't know anyone who has gone to college except their teacher and their principal. So, meeting these people who work in their community that are businesses and working at businesses that are successful, I think that also pushes their desire to do better in school and work harder to achieve their goals. Test scores have steadily increased. I believe our community partners have... they play a big role in that. And, I also think it gives them a wider range of what they think they can do and what can happen in their life because college is really abstract to them. So, even seeing the owner of the oil changing business that, you know this guy may be a mechanic, which they make great money; but, just seeing that success. You know, especially for those kids that may really, really struggle in reading and math, but, if they work really hard, they can get through school. They can learn a skill. We talk to these kids about owning a business and setting the foundation for the generations to come. So, we talk a lot about giving back to the community that helped us.

Another principal was brought to tears when talking about the life experiences her students had experienced. She said, "...just continue to help the kids. See that it's not just about this little neighborhood. So many of them don't know what's across the river. So, just give them that. One principal noted, "It's about developing this child all the way around. I think having these outside activities. Having these other people interested besides just your mom, your teacher and you, just makes you grow and see there are things out there in the world." Another administrator stated, "You know, it's life skills that are the real key that I see that these kids can take with them." She said, "It's those life-long skills that I think are something that the kids can take with them and their

families become more involved.” One principal explained,

What I hope, that every child in this building gets to experience is something outside of the school, so that they can see that there’s more to life than just this little neighborhood here. Because when we go to the zoo every year, we have kids that have never been out of this little community. Yeah, they don’t have a car so, they’ve never been to the zoo.

Another principal said,

I think the biggest thing for...for my students, the west side is kind of self contained, it’s like a little place all on it’s own, so some of my kids have never been across the river so, so they’re able to meet different people in different walks of life and establish relationships with them. And, some of them will come and have lunch with the kids and spend time talking with them. That’s important. The relationship piece with the kids, that’s important. The more people you can involve in educating kids, the more educated they become and the more opportunity they see for themselves. So, that’s important. Especially when you work at a place like this, where the kids don’t have a lot of experiences.

Another principal stated, “So, I think it will be a sustainable kind of thing. So, when my kids...I’m talking about my kids at my school, they’ll say, I remember that, so I’m going to help a school. I’m going to help some kids that I don’t even know.” One principal said,

To expose our students to other people than those they see on a regular basis, just to show them that the world is wide open to them. That there are all kinds of possibilities and whatever dream they have for their life is a possibility and that everybody has different experiences and different ways that make them successful. So, there’s not really that cookie cutter way to do something, there are a variety of ways and whatever they want to do is possible if they just persevere.

The shared perspectives of the principals communicate the need for community partners to provide resources that go far beyond monetary donations. Many of the students who attend high-poverty schools lack the life experiences needed to be successful. Community partners play an essential role in developing students through their time and support.

### Summary

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative data that emerged from the study was presented. In the quantitative phase, fifty-one elementary principals from the Southern and Midwestern region of the U.S. completed a 19-question survey. The data provided the following results: the majority of partners were faith-based organizations, businesses and corporations, and individuals from the community; the majority of activities provided through partnership programs were student-centered and school-centered; schools were very satisfied with their community partnerships; community partnerships increased student academic achievement; community partnerships increased student engagement; community partnerships increased family engagement; community partnerships increased community perception; community partnerships increased attendance rates; community partnerships increase teacher efficacy; community partnerships increased student behavior; and, community partnerships increased whole school improvement.

In the qualitative phase, twenty-six principals participated in semi-structured interviews. Five themes emerged from the interviews: identify needs, the challenge of finding partners, building relationships and the positive impact on students, community partnerships improve positive school perception, and students benefit from life experiences.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Findings**

The purpose of the study was to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The central research question was:

- What are the qualities of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

The sub-questions were:

- Who are the community partners in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?
- What types of activities do community partners provide for Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools?

The findings of the study suggest that community partnerships play an essential role in supporting Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. Finding community partners can be challenging. Principals who wish to engage community partners should identify the needs of the school prior to seeking community partners or implementing a community partnership program. Community partnerships came from businesses and corporations, faith-based organizations, or volunteers in the community. The partners primarily provided activities that were student-centered or school-centered. The activities that provided the greatest impact were student-centered activities that were focused on relationship building and promoting a greater understanding of life outside of the classroom.

### **Recommendations**

The study findings may be beneficial to those who wish to create a community partnership program for a school. The findings may be particularly important for principals of Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools.

Specific recommendations include:

- Principals who wish to engage community partners or implement a community partnership program should identify a list of school needs. The creation of a needs assessment may be useful in this process.
- Principals who wish to engage community partners or implement a community partnership program should identify businesses and corporations, faith-based organizations, and volunteers in the local community as potential partners. Proximity to the school of these entities may be helpful in the recruitment process.
- Principals who wish to engage community partners or implement a community partnership program should seek opportunities for community partners to build relationships with students, staff, and families through their activities.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

- In addition to interviews, artifacts and observations of community partners in action in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools would be useful.



- Additional research on the subject of community partnerships could focus on an examination of perspectives of teachers and students about the partnerships.
- A study designed to trace the development of a community partnership from inception to completion of an academic school year would be informative.

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**APPENDIX A**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN URBAN, TITLE 1 ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOLS SURVEY**

## Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools

Q1 How would you best describe your position?

- Elementary Principal, PK-K (13)
  - Elementary Principal, PK-3 (1)
  - Elementary Principal, PK-5 (2)
  - Elementary Principal, PK-6 (3)
  - Elementary Principal, PK-7 (9)
  - Elementary Principal, PK-8 (12)
  - Elementary Principal, K-4 (4)
  - Elementary Principal, K-5 (5)
  - Elementary Principal, K-6 (6)
  - Elementary Principal, 1-5 (7)
  - Elementary Principal, 1-6 (8)
  - Elementary Principal, 4-6 (10)
  - If your position is not represented, please describe your position. (11)
- 

Q2 How would you identify your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- I prefer not to disclose. (3)

Q3 Including 2015-2016, how many years have you been in your position at your current school?

- 1st Year (1)
- 2-5 Years (2)
- 6-10 Years (3)
- 11-15 Years (4)
- 16-20 Years (5)
- 21+ Years (6)



Q4 What is the population of your school?

- Fewer than 100 Students (1)
- 101-200 Students (2)
- 201-300 Students (3)
- 301-400 Students (4)
- 401-500 Students (5)
- 501-600 Students (6)
- 601-700 Students (7)
- 701-800 Students (8)
- 801-900 Students (9)
- 901-1000 Students (10)
- More than 1000 Students (11)

Q5 How would you describe the community partners that support your school program?

Please select all that apply.

- Businesses/Corporations (1)
- Universities and Educational Institutions (2)
- Government Agencies (3)
- Military Agencies (11)
- Health Care Organizations (4)
- Faith-Based Organizations (5)
- National Service Organizations (6)
- Volunteer Organization (12)
- Senior Citizen Organizations (7)
- Cultural Institutions (8)
- Recreational Organizations (9)
- Individuals from the Community (10)

Q6 How would you describe the activities each partner provides to your school? Please select all that apply. Note: Student-centered activities include the following: student awards, student incentives, scholarships, student trips, tutors, mentors, job shadowing, and other services and products provided to students. Family-centered activities include the following: parent workshops, family fun nights, GED and other adult education classes, parent incentives and rewards, counseling and other forms of assistance. School-centered activities include the following: equipment and materials, beautification and repair, teacher incentives and rewards, funds for school events and programs, and office and classroom assistance. Community-centered activities include the following: community beautification, student exhibits and performances, charity and other outreach. Reference: Sanders, M. G. (Ed.). (2005). Building school-community partnerships: Collaboration for student success. Corwin Press.

	Student-Centered Activities (1)	School-Centered Activities (2)	Family-Centered Activities (3)	Community-Centered Activities (4)
Businesses and Corporations (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Universities and Educational Institutions (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government Agency (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Military Agency (11)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Care Organizations (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith Organizations (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Service and Volunteer Organizations (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Citizen Organizations (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural and Recreational Institutions (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Community-Based Organizations (9)				
Individuals in the Community (10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q7 How would you describe your level of satisfaction with your community partnerships?

- Very Satisfied (7)
- Satisfied (6)
- Somewhat Satisfied (5)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)
- Dissatisfied (2)
- Very Dissatisfied (1)

Q8 Community partnerships increase student academic achievement.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q9 Community partnerships increase student engagement.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q10 Community partnerships increase family engagement.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q11 Community partnerships increase positive community perception.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q12 Community partnerships increase attendance rates.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q13 Community partnerships increase teacher efficacy.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q14 Community partnerships improve student behavior.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q15 Community partnerships increase whole school improvement.

- Always (1)
- Most of the time (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Sometimes (4)
- Never (5)

Q16 Approximately how many days per week do community partners provide activities in your school?

- 1 Day Per Week (1)
- 2 Days Per Week (2)
- 3 Days Per Week (3)
- 4 Days Per Week (4)
- 5 Days Per Week (5)

Q17 Approximately how many days per year do community partners provide activities in your school?

- 25 Days Per Year (1)
- 50 Days Per Year (2)
- 75 Days Per Year (3)
- 100 Days Per Year (4)
- More than 100 Days Per Year (5)

Q18 Would you be willing to participate in an interview about community partnerships in your school?

- YES (1)
- NO (2)

Q19 If you would be willing to participate in an interview about community partnerships in your school, please include the following information.

Full Name (1)

Email Address (2)

Phone Number (3)

**APPENDIX B**

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Jae Strickland and I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The purpose of this email is to invite you to complete a 19-question survey regarding community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. The survey will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

The last two questions of the survey are optional and ask for your name and contact information if you are willing to participate in a follow up interview. Otherwise, your answers will remain anonymous.

There are no known risks or discomforts for participation. By participating in this survey you acknowledge that you are 19 years or older.

Although there are no direct benefits, the results of this study will contribute to a greater understanding of community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools.

You may ask any questions concerning this research at anytime by contacting Jae Strickland at 918-269-0439 or [jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com). You may also contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady at 402-472-0974 or [mgrady1@unl.edu](mailto:mgrady1@unl.edu). If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or [irb@unl.edu](mailto:irb@unl.edu).

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By clicking on the "I agree" link below, your consent to participate is implied. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

[I AGREE](#)

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the study. If you have any questions, please contact me by email or telephone.

Here is the link to the Qualtrics privacy policy or more information:

<http://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (402) 472-3726 / FAX  
(402) 472-4300

Sincerely,

Jae Strickland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
918-269-0439  
[jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

Marilyn L. Grady, Ph.D.  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
402-472-0974  
[mgrady1@unl.edu](mailto:mgrady1@unl.edu)



**APPENDIX C**

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPAT—FOLLOW-UP EMAIL**



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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Jae Strickland and I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You may have already received an email inviting you to participate in a brief 10-minute online survey regarding community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. If you have already completed the survey, thank you for your participation. If you have not completed the survey, please consider helping me with this important research.

The survey is 19 questions in length and your answers will remain anonymous. The last two questions of the survey are optional and ask for your name and contact information if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

Thank you for considering this request. If you have questions, please contact me by phone or email.

Here is the link to the survey:

[https://unleducation.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_6X1rDwbluebeB5H](https://unleducation.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_6X1rDwbluebeB5H)

Sincerely,

Jae Strickland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
918-269-0439  
[jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

Marilyn L. Grady, Ph.D.  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
402-472-0974  
[mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

**APPENDIX D**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE EMAIL**



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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Jae Strickland and you recently participated in an online survey about community partnerships in your school. In that survey you indicated your willingness to participate in a follow-up interview.

The follow-up interview will take about 45 minutes to complete and will be audio recorded. It will take place in a location and time of your choice.

I would like to schedule that interview with you. Do you have a time in the next two weeks that would work for you to meet with me?

Please send your response to me at [jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com).

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jae Strickland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
918-269-0439  
[jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

Marilyn L. Grady, Ph.D.  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
402-472-0974  
[mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

**APPENDIX E**

**PARTICIPANT FOLLOW UP TIME AND LOCATION EMAIL**



---

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Date

Dear Participant,

This email is to confirm the date, location, and time for the interview we scheduled regarding the community partnerships in your school.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. I look forward to meeting you. If this is no longer a convenient time for you, please contact me at [jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com) and we can arrange a more convenient time.

Sincerely,

Jae Strickland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
918-269-0439  
[jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

Marilyn L. Grady, Ph.D.  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
402-472-0974  
[mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

**APPENDIX F**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project Title: Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools

### **Interview Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview about community partnerships in your school. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview in order to accurately reflect your thoughts and observations. You may request that I stop recording at any time.

After our interview, I will create a transcription of the digital recording. Once I have created the transcript, I will ask you to review it. I will do this to be sure that I record your ideas accurately.

I am interested in hearing your thoughts about community partnerships in your school. Your insights will contribute to a greater understanding of the engagement of community partners in schools and the development of community partnership programs.

Your identity will remain anonymous and your participation and responses will remain confidential.

Are you ready to begin?

### **Interview Questions**

1. How do you define community partnerships?
2. What are the motivations or reasons for engaging community partners in your school?
3. What types of community partnerships exist in your school?



4. How did you decide on the types of community partnerships you have developed in your school?
5. Describe the process of engaging community partners in your school.
6. Describe the community partnership activities that occur in your school.
7. Describe the benefits the students and school have experienced through community partnerships.
8. Describe the challenges that you have experienced with community partnerships.
9. What do you hope to accomplish through the use of community partnerships in the school?
10. What advice would you give to others interested in engaging community partners?
11. Based on your experiences, which community partnerships have been the most productive for the students and the school?

**APPENDIX G**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### **Participant Informed Consent Form**

IRB# 15436

**Title:** Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe community partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a principal of a public school in a district that has a commitment to community partnerships.

**Procedures:**

You will be asked to participate in a 45-minute face-to-face interview. The face-to-face interview will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you. The interview will be audio recorded. Following transcription of the interview, a transcript will be sent to you for verification.

**Benefits:**

There are no direct benefits to you as a research participant. You will have the opportunity to share your perspectives in the study. The findings of this study will be available to principals, school districts, and administrator preparation programs for their use and will contribute to a greater understanding of the engagement of community partners in schools and the development of community partnership programs.

**Risks and/or Discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information obtained during this study, which could identify you, including your name, and school district, will be kept strictly confidential. The transcriptions will be downloaded, printed, and stored in a locked safe in the primary investigator's home for two years after the completion of the study. Audio recordings will be deleted once they have been transcribed. All information will be deleted from my computer. The information obtained in this study may be published in journals or presented at conferences, but the data will be reported as aggregated.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the

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(402) 472-4300

phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Yes, I give my permission to be audio recorded.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name and Phone Number of Investigator(s)**

Jae Strickland, Principal Investigator  
918-269-0439

Dr. Marilyn Grady, Secondary Investigator  
402-472-0974

**APPENDIX H**

**TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

**Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (name of transcriptionist) agree to hold all information contained on audio recorded tapes/and in interviews received from \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of PI), primary investigator for \_\_\_\_\_, (Name of the project) in confidence with regard to the individual and institutions involved in the research study. I understand that to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy.

I also certify that I have completed the CITI Limited Research Worker training in Human Research Protections.

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Transcriptionist  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Principle Investigator  
Date

**APPENDIX I**

**TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY FORM**



### Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Jae Strickland related to her doctoral study, Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Jae Strickland;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Jae Strickland in a complete and timely manner.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

-----  
 Transcriptionist Signature

-----  
 Date

-----  
 Researcher Signature

-----  
 Date



**APPENDIX J**

**TRANSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me regarding community partnerships in your school. Enclosed is a transcript of the interview. Once you have reviewed the transcript, please use this form to either approve the transcript as presented, or approve the transcript with the indicated recommendations.

Please return this form, along with any recommendations to me in one of the following ways:

- a) Email to [jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)
- b) US Mail – Jae Strickland, 7940 Katrina Lane, Lincoln, NE 68512

I appreciate your participation in the study.

Sincerely,

Jae Strickland  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
918-269-0439  
[jaestrickland@icloud.com](mailto:jaestrickland@icloud.com)

Marilyn L. Grady, Ph.D.  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
402-472-0974  
[mgradyl@unl.edu](mailto:mgradyl@unl.edu)

Transcript Approval

\_\_\_ I approve the transcript as presented.

\_\_\_ I approve the transcript with the enclosed recommendations.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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(402) 472-4300

**APPENDIX K**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD OFFICIAL APPROVAL LETTER**



## Official Approval Letter for IRB project #15436 - New Project Form

March 31, 2016

Jae Strickland  
Department of Educational Administration

Marilyn Grady  
Department of Educational Administration  
128 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20160315436EX  
Project ID: 15436  
Project Title: Community Partnerships in Urban, Title 1 Elementary Schools

Dear Jae:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project for the Protection of Human Subjects. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Exemption: 3/31/2016

- o Review conducted using exempt category 2 at 45 CFR 46.101
- o Funding: N/A

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,



Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



**APPENDIX L**

**QUALITATIVE CODES AND THEMES**

## QUALITATIVE CODES AND THEMES

<b>Theme 1: Identify Needs</b>
I would do the needs list.
(re: needs) You start small but you do need a goal...you can't just whatever. You need to have a goal you're going for...you need a picture of what they're doing and how that's helping.
Needs are met with the kids when the community is involved.
When we found out we were losing our art allocation...that was a new need for us.
I knew there were needs to be met, so I thought, "How can I get these needs met?"
You're dealing with students who have significant needs because of poverty.
Well, we have needs too.
(re: using the district needs assessment form) So, I will get back on and list some of our needs...it just takes time and...but it's better than me just going out to individuals.
I just had to share my vision, share the...what I believed were the greatest needs and, and my plan for how to meet those needs. And, there were many people ready to help.
Basically when I first came into the school we just assessed all of the needs.
All I have to do is put the needs out there and they jump on them.
Just make a list of your kids that needs shoes.
You just have to go for it and base it off the survey for the needs.
Uh, just people starting to you know, articulate the needs and we can get that out in the community.
So, it's just getting the word out there that we had some needs that needed to be filled.
I took a look at the needs of our school, kind of a needs assessment, um, resources and people.
We needed some more stuff and we needed more people to read with students.
And then usually a presentation of our needs.
Whatever our need is, we look for a partner to fill that need.
It's called home school association and they go...they find a need every year...a big need...
Every year they have called and said, what do you need?
The landfill gave us all these trees and our sign, so we just have to figure out what our needs are.
We took them by whatever need we had and we just...once one article hit the news...is all it took.
We will go out of town and we will sit and write grants for whatever the need is.
So, it is just a list of whatever that need is...someone always steps up.
Open the door, take some kids with you and explain what the need is.
But, I think all of them are equally as important because they fit a need.
We try to match up uh, the needs of the school.
The foundation puts out uh, a list of needs by schools and sometimes the responses are through that connection.
A lot of families that are uh, have connections and if they can't supply our needs they

reach out a little further in the community and bring in resources.
I think I just want to raise an awareness of what our school needs.
Those needs can be matched to what you want them to do.
We sat down as a staff several years ago when I came and we made a needs assessment.
We needed to kind of look at what not only they could bring to us but what we could do for them.
What can you do for us with meeting basic needs of students?
You know, they're paying for this...for the whole school or, whatever our needs are...stuff like that.
We have a twice a year meeting with them to kind of bring them up to speed with what's going on in our school, uh, what programs are going on, what our needs are.
We try to map out the year, what's going on and what our needs are with them in our first meeting.
You have to be specific about what you ask for, and knowing who to ask.
Community partners or corporations or organizations don't know what the needs are, so I have gone and asked as much as I have been offered.
<b>Theme 2: The Challenge of Finding Partners</b>
Some of the challenges at first was just finding community partners. It can be difficult just to find them.
And then I got a bank. It took me about 6 months...or 6 stops...over there, but I eventually got this bank.
(re: finding partners) It takes a lot of my time. It takes a lot of time. There was no process of picking.
(re: finding partners) You have to be a go-getter. You have to go get it. You can't sit back and let other people do it for you. It's something that the leader has to do. You have to do that. And I engage my teachers in it, I'm like, I'm getting out there, they all have to get community sponsors...they know that's a requirement from me that they have to go out and seek out people.
(re: finding partners) So, that's kind of a challenge. And then, reaching out. The time to reach out to people.
A lot of partnerships...they look for the needy schools. Well, we have needs too.
But, it seems like a lot of community people reach out to high poverty, low-performing schools.
(re: finding partners)...aside from that random begging...we have the largest district in the state, so some of the big donors are taken.
Impoverished schools are not easy, and I think sometimes community adopters that are doing it to get their name out there don't want to be associated with a failing school.
But, when you walk in and say hi, I'm from an F school and 85% of my school are failing and you know, that's overwhelming and their first thought is, what do you want from me, you know?
(re: finding partners) Um, but that's big challenge, just, you know, where we're located we are surrounded by freeway and then an industrial area.
(re: finding partners) We're kind of in a unique area of town that has a lot of industrial areas so there are not a lot of big corporations.

(re: finding partners) We have very limited number of businesses that are actually here. And so we've had a hard time recruiting those corporate type, business type, sponsors
(re: finding partners) We're over here and there are not...right where we live, there are no big businesses.
It's finding them and securing them and then keeping them active.
The biggest challenge is finding the community partners, securing the community partners and then keeping them active.
<b>Theme 3: Building Relationships and the Positive Impact on Students</b>
The kids, they value that and that is their special buddy...there's someone who cares about them that has the time, so there's just...it's very important.
We have mentors. We also have tutors.
They became to where they were not doing it just for themselves, they were doing it for their mentors. They do not want to disappoint them.
They felt like they can...they had control over their situation and before they felt powerless.
I keep telling them that them seeing an adult that is doing something different and having a role model and just seeking a different perspective on life is worth them being here.
I think in the long-term that's going to be very productive. I think that's going to be eye-opening.
The one on one...the tutoring to me. That one on one contact helps sometimes with attendance – not always, but making the child feel more comfortable and confident in what they're doing.
The most productive really is the one on one, uh, tutoring because I feel any child can have another adult to show some love.
My opinion is that it's kind of like that African fable...it takes a community to raise a child.
It's going to help our city, our state and our whole nation because these kids are going to grow up thinking, well these people cared about me.
In my personal school, I need people.
Things are great, but things aren't what turn schools around and things aren't what change kids lives. People are what change kids lives.
I just so firmly believe that it's not things, it's people. If it were things, then we would all buy that thing.
Our biggest impact are our people.
Obviously we want them to help the school academically, but really it's the relationship that is the most important.
The ones that come and mentor the kids...they've built huge relationships.
We rely on a community partners to bring resources in and to help with mentor and bring relationships that may be lacking for our kids.
They also start building relationships with those people.
(re: relationships with volunteers) provided kind of an inspiration for them because kids start talking about they want to do when they grow up, on a deeper level.
I think knowing that people care about them is a huge piece.



Reading partners has been huge.
Reading partners and reaching out and having the opportunity to have people come in has been a huge impact.
It's to develop those deep relationships.
These people give up their time and feel that they truly made a difference in the life of the child.
All of our partners and other entities in the community do reading partners.
They actually come tutor kids in reading.
They have a positive role model in their life.
They're able to meet different people in different walks of life and establish relationships with them.
I think having those activities built around engagement and relationships really does help.
<b>Theme 4: Community Partnerships Improve Positive School Perception</b>
We all have brightness in our school, too.
I just hope it can do something to change the way the community looks at the school and it already has.
They way that they're actually proud of the school finally and the neighborhoods proud of it.
The more people are in our buildings, the more transparent education is to everyone and I think partnerships develop out of that.
I want people in the community to see how fantastic my school is.
They come in and they are refreshingly surprised.
We wanted the community to not see us as a south side eye sore.
Just putting the word out there and making sure everyone knows.
I think the more the community is involved in the school, the better they look at the school.
I think it's very good for the community members to come into the school and see what good things are going in our schools.
It's great to invite them in.
Publicizing yourself and inviting people in to see what's going on.
<b>Theme 5: Students Benefit from Life Experiences</b>
And you know, setting the foundation for the generations to come. So, we talk a lot about giving back to the community that helped us.
Just continue to help the kids see that it's not just about this little neighborhood. So many of them don't know what's across the river. So, just give them that.
You know, it's life skills that is real key that I see that these kids can take with them.
It's those life-long skills that I think is something that the kids can take with them and their families become more involved.
They can see that there's more to life than just this little neighborhood here.
Some of my kids have never been across the river.
The kids don't have a lot of experiences.
They'll say, I remember that so I'm going to help a school, I'm going to help some kids that I don't even know.

Whatever dream they have for their life is a possibility and that everybody has different experiences and different ways that make them successful.