Connecting Schools To Neighborhood Revitalization:

Lawrence Pesch
Marquette University

CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION:
THE CASE OF THE MAPLE HEIGHTS
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

By

Lawrence P. Pesch

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ABSTRACT
CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION:
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This case study focuses on the way a neighborhood association connects schools to broad change in an urban neighborhood of a large Midwestern city. The first section provides a review of the literature on community involvement in school and neighborhood reform. It reviews the historical origins of the current school-community relationship, the reasons behind the movement to increase community involvement, the diversity of understandings about the nature of community participation, the processes used to improve the capacity of both the school and the community to act as effective partners, and the different programs organizations use to participate in the school improvement process.

The second section is a qualitative case study on the programs and processes the neighborhood association uses to revitalize one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. Believing strongly in the need to think holistically about neighborhood improvement, the neighborhood association engages a diversity of stakeholders in creating a comprehensive plan to address social and physical conditions. The plan encompasses the areas of academic achievement, housing, healthy eating, commercial development, crime, health and wellness, jobs, and family and youth.

Local schools are active participants in creating the holistic plan for broad revitalization. The neighborhood association considers schools an on-going partner in carrying out initiatives tied to academic achievement. Building a higher level school-community relationship challenges historical traditions of school resistance to meaningful involvement with community groups working to improve schools. The study focuses on the way the neighborhood association works to connect two public schools to the academic achievement piece of the comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plan.

This study finds high levels of school participation in the process of plan creation, but patterns of school behavior and current demands on time continue to be obstacles to on-going participation in neighborhood association-led change. The study also finds that neighborhood association-led initiatives in areas outside the four walls of the school have improved surrounding conditions, but these improvements have not yet significantly impacted the performance of neighborhood public schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood Effects Theory

This is a case study about the potential of local mobilization to create an environment within which an urban community—including neighborhood schools—can experience renewal, revitalization, and improved achievement. Social isolated, alienated from institutions, and marginalized by politicians and structures that are ostensibly designed to represent their interests (Noguera, 2002), urban communities are in varying states of crisis. Commonly referred to as the outcome of "neighborhood effects" (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley, 2002), the belief is that the realities facing urban communities, including poverty, social isolation, school underperformance, crime, unemployment, and poor health care, have created seemingly insurmountable social and physical obstacles to community growth, opportunity, and success.

In order to overcome the powerful effects of these negative conditions, theorists like Jean Anyon (1997) are calling on groups who consider themselves part of these very urban communities to lead the movement to change local conditions that affect performance across a broad spectrum of areas—especially school performance. Community-based organizations, non-profits, churches, businesses, political agencies, and schools with roots in the local community are organizations that community relations theorists believe have a stake in improving the neighborhood in which people live, work, and socialize. An important piece of this broader reform approach, then, is the

recognition that these organizations can be viable participants in addressing the conditions that affect attitudes, behaviors, and actions of residents in their local communities.

While school improvement has been a highly visible issue facing urban areas, public schools themselves have largely disconnected themselves from the school of thought that links neighborhood conditions and school performance. The public school tradition has been one of historical isolation from the broader community in which it is located (Tyack, 1974). As impoverished urban schools struggle with low levels of student achievement, a number of theorists (Anderson, 1998; Anyon, 1995, 2005; Baum, 2003; Comer, 1997; Cutler, 2000; Dryfoos, 2003, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Keith, 1996; Rothstein, 2006; Sanders, 2001, 2003, 2009; Sarason, 1990; Schutz, 2006; Warren 1996, 2005, 2011; Warren and Mapp, 2011; Wilson, 1996) are looking outside the school building for solutions to the problems and challenges faced by these schools.

Arguing that school performance can be partially explained by the influence that external realities and conditions have on student attitudes and behaviors, these theorists are looking at educational reform as part of a broader effort to change economic, political, and social conditions in the communities within which these schools are located. As Mark Warren (2011) stated, "sustained progress in school reform may require moving beyond the 'four walls of schools' to engage the participation of parents and residents of low-income communities directly into the reform process" (p. 485). Moreover, with the rise of charter and choice schools, the need for public schools to seriously consider creative reform ideas is perhaps greater than ever (see Buddin, 2012).

The Historical Tradition of School-Community Relations

Tyack's (1974) history of the establishment of the common school paradigm during the early 20th century offered an excellent explanation for the historical rise of the ongoing disconnect between the school and the surrounding community. Although the idea of universal public education was designed to prepare the community to support the growing republic, the values and beliefs of early common school architects created a structure that largely isolated schools from the surrounding community. These early proponents of the model that has largely dominated education since the early 1900s had no "faith in the system of boilermakers, carpenters, painters, to take a hand in management of our public schools" (Tyack, p. 155). At that time, school officials increasingly advocated structural changes that would give them more power" (p. 77) and school professionalization, bureaucratization, and centralization are fundamental parts of an organizational structure that combined with a set of beliefs would determine both the level and nature of community involvement.

While the movement to increase school-community partnerships and external involvement is growing across American cities, schools have traditionally defined and guided the relationship. In her work on school-community partnerships, Catherine Hands (2010) concluded that partnerships are most often "initiated by school personnel to promote student needs" (p.192) while Mavis Sanders (2009) found that the establishment of the partnership was dependent on the "willingness of schools to collaborate with families and community groups" (p. 1698). The traditional school culture has created a mindset that change occurs primarily within the four walls of the school building,

separated from the outside by what Jean Anyon (1995) refers to as an "impermeable membrane" (p. 12) that symbolizes the inability of educators to see the connection between external conditions and student performance.

Despite the historical alienation between school and community, we also know that schools have served as natural locations for community building. John Dewey (1980) wrote that humans "are held together because they are working along common lines, in a common spirit, and with common aims" (p. 10), and schools, if properly constructed, are places that have the potential to reinforce those common interests assembled on behalf of common interests, whether it is PTA meetings, athletic events, or school plays. Joyce Dryfoos (2002) wrote that the public school building has "always been a place to locate a whole array of programs that bring the community into the school" (p. 395). Once that happens, Jerome Morris (1999) argued that "schools create and sustain communal bonds with families" (p. 585).

Tied to the school-community relationship building process is the connection—based on location and common interests centered on the children who attend the school—of the neighborhood to the school. Theresa Cohen-Vogel, Ellen Goldring, and Claire Smekar (2010) saw neighborhoods as a "social and cultural web linking families and children to a set of norms, routines, and traditions values, beliefs, and behaviors" (p. 53). The point is that the school and the local neighborhood have a natural connection, based on shared interests, values, and beliefs.

High profile reform efforts subtly conveyed the degree to which the gulf between school and community had opened. *A Nation At Risk* (1983), for instance, sounded the alarm on student performance and preparation to compete globally, but its

recommendations for improved student achievement did not include anything remotely

revolutionary in terms of recognition that the community could be a viable reform

partner. Specifically, *A Nation At Risk* was an example of a reform effort guided by a

belief that "increasing standards would naturally result in increased educational

attainment" (Noblit, Groves, Jennings, Patterson, 2001, p. 9); moreover, they argued in

order for that to happen, education would continue to be carried out by professionals in

relative isolation from the broader community and within the same structure,

organization, and value system established at the turn of the century. Thus, given the

powerful hold that tradition had over the thinking about student performance, school

structure, and teacher roles, community in this reform movement was primarily limited to

asking parents to "support and encourage their children to make the most of their talents"

(Noblit, Groves, Jennings, Patterson, 2001, p. 6).

Aaron Schutz (2006) summarized the way the dominant paradigm has constructed

behavior when he wrote:

> Despite its potential benefits, however, educators and education scholars
> generally hold very limited visions of the community–school relationship. We
> seem to have decided that only efforts that emerge from inside schools are
> relevant to education research and policy, leaving examinations of community-
> based efforts to others, for the most part. As my review indicates, however,
> school-based efforts appear to be quite limited in their capacity for sustaining rich
> local relationships. Even the few urban schools that do seek richer interactions are
> hampered by underlying distrust and fear, bureaucratic immobility, and a severe
> lack of resources. (p. 727)

Focusing his analysis on public schools, Schutz believed that the powerful

influence of tradition meant schools had neither the mindset nor structures capable of

facilitating meaningful community engagement in a constructive change process. Warren

(2011) echoed this belief when he said that "traditional school reform ignores issues of

power" because it has a monopoly-like hold on structure and organization. Given the power of the traditional school structure and culture to both limit and control the parameters of change, the reforms contained in *A Nation At Risk* were actually rather predictable responses to what was considered a crisis of educational performance.

A number of factors have contributed to the growing disconnect between schools and neighborhoods. Tyack (1974) talked about the professionalization of schools and how that culture began to erode the common bonds between school and community. School boards replaced grass roots, local involvement. Teachers considered parents more of an obstacle than a partner in educating children. Seeing schools as adversaries and lacking the capacity necessary for meaningful engagement with schools, the community also contributed to the growing disconnect between home and school. Jean Anyon (2005) would also argue that economic conditions and political apathy in urban settings further contributed to the breakdown of the school-neighborhood relationship. Despite proximity and mutual interests, then, schools and surrounding communities had become strangers to each other.

Much of the discussion about reconnecting community to schools centers on the belief that the traditional school paradigm can no longer meet the needs of urban school. In Thomas Kuhn (1962) seminal work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he defined a paradigm as one that could "provide solutions to a community of practitioners" (p. x), but when Jean Anyon (2005) called for a new paradigm of education, it was clearly based on her belief that the current paradigm was no longer capable of providing solutions to the needs of urban schools. An important part of Anyon's call for a new paradigm included a call for greater community engagement to influence the conditions that were

affecting student performance. These conditions included not only addressing educational practices and inadequate buildings, but incorporating housing, wages, transportation, health care, and jobs into the discussion about ways to positively impact school performance.

No longer treated as bystanders in the educational process, Anyon's paradigm required a community prepared to use their political and social power to address the external issues largely ignored by the traditional educational establishment. Indeed, much of the school-community literature draw a distinction between the two, but the reality is that going forward theorists like Anyon will argue that real change will occur when school and community are not understood to be separate from each other in terms of realities that create behavior and affect performance.

The Role of the Neighborhood Association in Community Revitalization and School Improvement

In his history of neighborhood-based movements, Robert Halpern (1995) wrote that "neighborhood initiatives often provide the most holistic, if not always coherent problem solving in their particular era. They (locally initiated changes) have been distinct in their understanding of economic, social, and political concerns as linked" (p. 11). In Robert Fisher's (1984) history of neighborhood organizing, he concluded that "conditions at the local level directly spawn and nurture neighborhood organizing projects" (p. 159). As organizations with deep roots in the local community and a history of activism, neighborhood associations have been an important part of the fabric of these communities and have become more and more active as organizers and leaders of grass

roots neighborhood change. While these organizations have traditionally focused their energies on improving housing, health care, economic conditions, and public safety, we are now starting to see more neighborhood associations working to coherently incorporate education into their overall plan for neighborhood revitalization.

With the rise of powerful neighborhood associations like Chicago's Logan Square Neighborhood Association (Warren, 2011) and New York's Harlem Children's Zone (Tough, 2008), there is growing recognition that neighborhood associations want to play a leading role in holistic neighborhood change and that movement encompasses schools as well. Credible local players with deep-seated local knowledge and an activist mindset, these organizations are working in both indirect and direct ways to connect schools to broad neighborhood improvement initiatives.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago has developed strong partnerships with many schools within its geographic boundaries. Due to moving from the "traditional model of involvement, in which parents support school needs, to a model of engagement" (Warren, Hong, Rubin, and Uy, 2009, p. 2230), Logan Square has created a school-based parent mentoring program. Likewise, the Harlem Children's Zone, a powerful Bronx-based neighborhood association that is a national model for broad reform planning, has three charter schools under its direct administrative control and an approach based on a cradle-to-career organizational mindset. Community attitudes towards schools in these neighborhoods are improving, as are student test scores, graduation rates, and college acceptances (Warren, 2011; Tough, 2008).

The general assumption of school-community theorist is that the community needs to be an actively engaged in community renewal. The rise of neighborhood

associations as a potential leader in creating programs that contribute to urban school improvement may be somewhat tied to the successes Logan Square and the Harlem Children's Zone have had in contributing to improved achievement in its neighborhood schools', but it is also based on the fact that neighborhood associations with deep roots in the local community have developed trust and credibility. Given their roots in the community, neighborhood associations have a really unique understanding of local conditions and local challenges. In terms of local knowledge, power, and control, neighborhood associations are well positioned to lead movements that address the realities facing urban communities (Duhart, 2007).

Case Study. Connecting Schools to Neighborhood Revitalization: The Case of the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association

The Maple Heights Neighborhood Association. Located in a high poverty, predominately African American neighborhood of Bridge Harbor, a large Midwestern city of 603,000 residents, the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association (MHNA) has been leading a broad effort at neighborhood revitalization in a 110 block radius. (Note: All names associated with this case study have been changed.) Founded in 2002, the MHNA has been a highly visible, highly respected, local leader in the Maple Heights area of Bridge Harbor.

In 2008 the MNHA created a comprehensive "Neighborhood Revitalization Plan" to guide neighborhood revitalization initiatives (Zeiman, 2009). The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan encompassed eight categories: 1) Academic Achievement, 2) Youth and Families, 3) Lifelong Learning, 4) Housing, 5) Economic Development, 6) Public

Safety, 7) Health and Wellness, and, 8) Healthy Food. All eight parts of this plan can be understood as interconnected parts of an overall plan to address the conditions facing the Maple Heights residents. The role of the neighborhood association in school improvement, then, can be understood as both indirect—housing, economic development, public safety, health and wellness, and healthy eating—and more direct—community learning programs, adult education, parent leadership—programs tied to academic achievement, youth and families, and lifelong learning.

In his work on the history of neighborhood organizing on behalf of change, Robert Fisher (1984) pointed out that the "fundamental goal in neighborhood organizing is to change the conditions which keep them poor and powerless. Neighborhood organizing is often fueled by a conviction that people must take action themselves to realize their aspirations" (p. xxiii). With its local knowledge and high levels of trust, the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association offers us an important research opportunity for studying how a rather small, local neighborhood association that has clearly stated its intention to lead a broad effort at neighborhood improvement works indirectly and directly to improve public school performance.

Indirect involvement is understood to be programs that are part of the traditional role a neighborhood association has played in working on behalf of economic, political, and social initiatives designed to improve the community attitudes and environment. Direct involvement is understood as programs and processes that the neighborhood association is implementing in order to specifically prepare the external community for meaningful participation in schools. These two strategic approaches to revitalization

intend to produce a duality of impact that transitions from external (neighborhood) to internal (schools) improvement.

Maple Heights Neighborhood Schools. Although the study originates with the active role of the neighborhood association, the duality of impact means that how the school behaves as a partner in both the new relationship and as a target of reform initiatives is an important part of the overall study. There are two neighborhood public schools, the 9-12 Main Street High School and the k-8 Spring Creek Community School, which will be part of this study. Both are located in the Maple Heights neighborhood, both were closed down due to poor student performance, and both have recently been reopened as schools with an orientation towards high levels of external involvement. The Main Street High School is the only high school within the Maple Heights geographic boundaries and has been identified by the MHNA as a school it wants to work with the Bridge Harbor School District to "transform" (Pabst, 2010).

The Spring Creek Community School (SCCS) is the first Comer-based community school in the district. An important part of the Comer approach is the establishment of an active and meaningful parent and community role in both the culture and governance of the school (Noblit, Malloy, Malloy, 2001). This study will explore the relationship and connections between the MHNA and these two schools, as well as identifying and assessing school-based outcomes that are linked to neighborhood association programs.

The reality is that the two schools in the Maple Heights neighborhood were shuttered due to the inability of the traditional school paradigm to produce acceptable student achievement. External involvement at the level envisioned by the local

neighborhood society represents a huge challenge to the traditional paradigm and the corresponding belief in its value to provide the viable structures to improve urban student performance. The decision to seek out different structures, orientations, and greatly broaden participation to improve student achievement offers us an opportunity to study this alternative paradigm in its early stages of development. Lastly, I am looking at schools with different student populations so the lessons here will be based on the experiences across two age groups of students. The question to be explored is how a neighborhood association works to connect schools to its broad plan for neighborhood revitalizations, and, in addition, how it responds to the challenges it faces in getting schools mobilized on behalf of its plan.

"Authentic Participation" as a Participatory Ideal

Because the common school tradition has not historically included a meaningful role for the community, terms like involvement, participation, engagement, partnerships, or collaboration have not normally been included in studies that assess the effectiveness of reform approaches. This omission reflects the deep-seated values and beliefs of the traditional public school culture and structure, and its (meaningful community involvement) absence from the discussion about school improvement is in the eyes of some theorists, part of the reason for the underperformance of urban school. Even structures that have been enacted in order to ensure the voice of the community—school boards for instance—are represented have largely failed in its state purpose (Noguera, 2002).

As noted above, I have listed a variety of concepts to describe the school-community relationship. Though concepts such as involvement, partnership, and interaction indicate some level of community involvement, it is important to distinguish between these types of interaction as they reflect relational expectations, responsibilities, and corresponding degrees of respect. If we contemplate a more predominant role for community—specifically a neighborhood association—in leading the reform effort, the quality of participation by external groups is an important indicator of a successful relationship.

Too often the literature treats all forms of involvement at similar levels when they can clearly mean different things to different relationships. It is critical to distinguish between these descriptions of involvement because theorists base much of their work on what they expect from both the community and the school in terms of level of participation and the corresponding expectations associated with these levels. In order to guard against reductionist thinking about external involvement, I agree with Aaron Schutz (2006) when he wrote "Gary Anderson captures best what I was looking for" (p. 694) when Anderson (1988) characterized an environment where schools and communities were engaged in rational, democratic discourse about the issues facing schools and society as "authentic participation when it includes relevant stakeholders and creates relatively safe, structured spaces for multiple voices to be heard" (p. 575).

Anderson's (1998) conception of authentic participation was achievement of the highest state of involvement because it meant that concerned groups were not merely interacting with each other, but actively engaging with each other in matters of shared interest. Authentic participation is essentially the outcome of an educational process

designed to prepare the community for new roles and responsibilities. As Anderson stated, the "ultimate ends" of participation will be a "more democratic citizenry and, in educational terms, more equal levels of student achievement and improved social and academic outcomes for all students (p. 575).

In their work on school-community relations, for example, Mark Warren et al., (2009) wrote, "we employ the term *engagement*, rather than *involvement* (their italics), precisely to emphasize a more active and powerful role for parents in schools" (p. 221). For them, engagement reflects a higher level of relational interaction and a relationship based on respect for each other's capacity to engage. Warren thought parents could be viable educational leaders in creating a community with a much higher state of preparedness and involvement in larger issues facing schools, such as school funding and building needs. While this study understands community to be much broader than merely parents, it does recognize that engagement is a higher level of participation and requires more sophisticated training and educating than does involvement.

In fact, Anderson's (1998) authentic participation requires a profound amount of faith in the grass roots sensibilities and local knowledge of groups previously marginalized by the values, beliefs, and structure of the dominant paradigm. Because neighborhood associations are historically grass roots, independent organizations whose mission is focused almost solely on local issues (Fisher, 1984), for this study they are treated as perhaps the highest level of authenticity in terms of their commitment to local issues and their stake in community revitalization.

However, authentic participation—as opposed to the credibility of authenticity based on local commitment—is a type of relational behavior that is tied to the outcome of

a process of preparation that all groups undergo. Because their credibility is based on their local commitment, the neighborhood association is an authentic participant; how they create a culture and structures that encourages the rise of authentic participation among a diversity of community groups is one of the challenges they face. Identifying and describing the educational process that will be used to develop authentic participation is an important part of the overall case study.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

Anyon (2005) wrote that when "community organizations are engaged in school reform, energy could be created that would propel outward into the community and deeper into the school," (p. 13). She was envisioning an energy that a mobilized community could bring to the fight for educational and social justice. In this context, community engagement was understood to be more than purely educational in its purpose. In addition to its support role in education, a mobilized community could exert political pressure on decision makers to address low wages, substandard housing, and inadequate health care—factors Anyon thought helped explain educational performance. Moreover, her vision was more than community as the proverbial "shot in the arm;" it was a movement on the scale of the Civil Rights or the anti-Vietnam era protests. For Anyon, the challenge was that serious and the existing paradigm that inadequate.

The Harlem Children's Zone and the Logan Square Neighborhood Association have generated quite a bit of interest—and excitement—in the potential of neighborhood associations to exert greater control over school improvement. Although both have experienced success, the MHNA-public school relationship is different than both of those

examples because it is a neighborhood association that is incorporating public school improvement into a broad reform plan. Given the historical role played by neighborhood associations in local affairs, this organization represents the transition to perhaps the highest state of external involvement in school improvement. A highly credible, grass roots organization, it has huge potential to coherently prepare the community to be a more effective participant in both the community and in the local schools. Does the MHNA have the organizational capacity to break down the culture of isolation and bureaucracy that have shielded public schools from meaningful external participation? In an era of rising alternative to traditional reform solutions limited by the power of the dominant paradigm, how will public schools respond?

As a rising outside leader of a reform approach, whether or not a neighborhood association is capable of challenging the current paradigm is at the heart of this study. Any discussion that starts by talking about paradigmatic shifts and changes is taking seriously the depth of change that is being contemplated. By studying how a neighborhood association works to broadly improve the local community, I hope to contribute to the existing knowledge based of school-community relations by looking closely at the way these two organizations work to reconceptualize not only their relationship, but to think differently about the ways that public school improvement can occur. I will use the literature review to more fully develop the concepts and ideas that have been discussed in this introduction in order to develop a methodological approach to studying how a neighborhood association can create and develop new attitudes, behaviors, and conditions in an urban neighborhood that will contribute to improved school performance and achievement.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part I.   Capacity Building

At the outset, it is important to note that the idea of meaningful neighborhood association participation in school reform is a huge expansion of the current conceptualization of community in the literature. There is a large group of well-known school-community theorists who contend that an active community, mainly understood to be parents, should be prepared to support school-led efforts to focus on student performance (Baum, 2004; Dryfoos, 2002, 2005; Epstein, 1995; Epstein and Salinas, 2004; Epstein and Sanders, 2006; Sanders, 2001, 2003, 2009: Sanders and Harvey, 2002).

Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas (2004) best represented the thinking of this group of theorists when they wrote that the development of community involvement programs was based on a "laserlike focus on student learning and success" (p. 14), and an adequately prepared community would be part of a reform effort aimed at addressing low performance on standardized test and overall academic performance of urban students. While this is clearly a more meaningful role than the traditional bake sale volunteer, it sees the reemergence of community as predominately parents engaged as individuals who are largely expected to support school-directed student educational needs. It neither assumes Anderson's (1998) authentic participation nor reaches the meaningful engagement of Warren.

Contrast this conceptualization with another group of theorists who see a

mobilized community supporting not only student performance and school needs, but also prepared to challenge broader external conditions that have affected the behavior of urban neighborhoods in general (Anderson, 1998; Anyon, 1997, 2005, 2005; Keith, 1996; Rothstein, 2004; Schutz, 2006; Warren, 1996, 2005, 2011, Warren, et al., 2009). Educational theorist Jean Anyon (2005) summarized this argument when she wrote that "educational policy as historically conceived has not been adequate to the task of increasing urban school achievement to acceptable levels" (p. 66) because urban school reform was neither linked to broader social, economic, and political conditions and policies nor included an engaged external community, including not only parents, but businesses, politicians, non-profits, and churches. In this conception of community, the internal network of school relationships (administrators, faculty, students, and parents) was joined by an external community (churches, businesses, community-based organizations) also meaningfully engaged in the movement for school and community improvement.

In fact, Anyon (2005) argued that one of the reasons school strategies aimed at improving student achievement since the early 1900s have failed is because reform was carried out in relative isolation from the community and systematically ignored community conditions that greatly influenced student behavior and performance. As part of her broad plan aimed at creating conditions leading to student and community improvements, Anyon (1997) argued that a commitment to re-energize a largely marginalized community was a central part of an approach to creating a new way of influencing school improvement. Not unlike the Civil Rights movement or the massive anti-Vietnam War protests, Anyon saw an active mobilization of community as part of a

powerful social movement for change.

For Anyon, the call to action reflected a faith in the grass roots sensibility of the American people to mobilize when faced with unacceptable conditions and results. As she stated in *Radical Possibilities* (2005), "human agency is paramount" (p. 130) in thinking about the way to organize for change and she believed that the same spirit of activism associated with historical periods of injustice (Civil Rights, Vietnam) would manifest in response to what she considered to be educational injustice for students in marginalized urban school districts.

In his work on grass roots organizing, Soo Hong (2007) pointed out that "urban schools have grown increasingly distant from the families and communities they serve, leaving these schools as isolated institutions unable to communicate effectively with students and their families" (p. 271). In a study of neighborhood engagement in schools, Mark Warren (2005) concluded that since the early 20th century, urban schools have "lost the close connection to neighborhoods" (p. 133-134). An important part of the argument underlying greater community involvement in urban schools is the belief that an engaged community can contribute to improvements in school achievement and socioeconomic conditions in general.

Suburban schools and their surrounding communities are not normally included in the literature on the growing phenomenon of community mobilization in schools (see White & Wehlage, 1995; Bruce & Quane, 2009, et al.). It is generally assumed suburban families have enough social, political, and economic capital to protect and further the educational interests of their children. Good test scores, opportunities to attend college, well-paying jobs are taken-for-granted expectations in suburban schools. An important

part of the thinking about community mobilization in urban schools is related to a belief

that these outcomes should also be taken-for-granted outcomes in urban schools.

The reality, though, is the obstacles in urban areas are significant. Thus, the

movement to encourage school-community connections in urban areas is a response to

the both urban school performances and urban neighborhood conditions (Schutz, 2006).

Much of the thinking about neighborhood effects theory—the idea that behavior is

created by conditions within which people live and move—centers around social,

political, and economic realities and their effect on the attitudes and behaviors of local

residents. Jonathan Kozol (1992) described the affect that political and economic neglect

had on six urban public school districts. William Julius Wilson (1987, 1996) contended

that the loss of jobs in the central city has had a profoundly negative effect on the social

behaviors in urban neighborhoods. John Ogbu (1978) argued that the failure of education

to create opportunities has profoundly alienated Blacks in urban areas and created

negative messages about the value of education.

Whether the origins of these attitudes and behaviors are social-, race-, or class-

based, or some combination, greater community involvement in leading the change

process reflects the growing belief that there is a connection between external conditions,

levels of community support, and school performance (Rankin and Quane, 2000). Ralph

Sampson, Jeffrey Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley (2002) believed that

neighborhood effects theory demanded greater social connection between, for instance,

churches and schools to explain attitudes and behaviors.

While there are different theories about the basis of disintegration and isolation,

the point is that urban conditions en masse has greatly fragmented the neighborhoods in

which people live and that reality has profoundly impacted their attitudes and behaviors. In confronting the effects of neighborhood conditions on the creation of social reality in urban areas, historian Jerome Morris (1999) argued student improvement in African-American schools in the post-Brown versus Board of Education era "will need to take place in the context of strong community influence" (p. 586) as a way to counter the collective negative socialization that surrounding conditions have created. He based this argument partially on the Black historical tradition of strong community support for education that he thought could be rediscovered by the current Black community. The key, he suggested, was to address conditions in the neighborhoods through not only economic change, but through spiritual and cultural renewal that could occur when there was strong community mobilization. He believed it required common agreement between schools, community organizations, local non-profits, churches, and businesses on a plan for wide-scale educational and societal renewal.

Somewhat counter-intuitive to the tradition of professionalization of the dominant paradigm, educational theorist Novella Keith (1996) accurately captured the spirit underlying this way of thinking when she wrote school reform should "strive for involvement that is amateur/outside" (p. 260). What she meant was that amateur/outside perspective would bring a new perspective, knowledge, and energy to the challenges—and potential solutions—facing underperforming schools. Because the roots of change are based on the combination of local knowledge and local conditions, these outsiders bring an authentic knowledge and credibility to the reform movement. It reflected a profound faith—not unlike Anyon—in the sensibilities of the local community to be a constructive participant in change; and it is this faith that underlies the rationale of

theorists who think this a plausible reform approach. Tyack (1974) pointed out that an important reason for the turn to professional educators was the provincialism and localism of the community; the effectiveness of new localism will be tied to a well-conceived process of learning that prepares the amateurs to meaningfully participate in the activities and structures created to handle their expanding roles.

Well-known school-community relations theorist Mark Warren (2005) echoed this idea when he wrote that the surrounding community had cultural and social assets that could be mobilized on behalf of the school, but these assets have been marginalized by the dominant school paradigm that has framed school behavior since the early 20th century. Warren wrote that "community-based organizations can help bring the cultural and social assets of communities into schools and foster meaningful partnerships between schools and families" (p. 135). Power relationships forged by the traditional educational paradigm and protected by the educational bureaucracy could be challenged by a community that was prepared to participate in the process of school improvement. Warren (2010) called this "relational power, the power to get things done collectively" (p. 138), which was based on the belief that collective unity could challenge the unequal conditions creating poor student performance. A unified community will be mobilized to exert pressure on both the school and political system in order to get their needs met.

For this study, the construction of relational power, then, is intimately tied to the larger question of a neighborhood association's ability to increase the capacity of its community members to engage in the kind of meaningful behavior necessary to contribute to the movement to improve.   As noted in the introduction, although school-community theorists generally demonstrate enthusiasm for the idea of greater community

involvement, how they comprehend the idea of meaningful engagement varies greatly from theorist to theorist. Involvement ranges from the traditional volunteer activity such as the bake sale coordinator to PTA representative to formal member of the school governance board, and it is important to distinguish between these various conceptions of engagement as they really are quite different in their potential meaning and impact.

Is the bake sale coordinator's involvement any less meaningful than the community member who, for instance, serves on the governance council of the school? The answer is "probably yes" because authentic participation—safe, equal, meaningful dialogue and input by all stakeholders on shared educational interests—is premised on a belief that the external community can bring something new to the discussion. However, the dominant paradigm has largely defined the role the external community can play in schools.

Much like the wide ranging conceptions about the levels of community participation, the definition of community as an external group involved in schools means different things to different theorists. Within that general term are two decidedly different conceptualizations of community: 1) Community narrowly defined as mainly parents and families of students, and, 2) Community more broadly constructed to include not only parents, but any external group which could be mobilized as part of the movement.

Joy Dryfoos (2003, 2005), a leading advocate of expanded community participation, focuses primarily on the way parents and families can more responsibly work with schools on behalf of students. Contrast Dryfoos' more narrow definition with, for instance, Jean Anyon (2005) who argues that an energetic and engaged community

includes not only parents, but the input and support of an external community (churches, businesses, social service agencies, non-profits, government officials) who would be meaningful participants in the movement to improve schools. This narrow-broad dichotomy is an important distinction as it affects the way groups are prepared to enter into the new relationship.

In terms of the growing amount of literature on the school-community phenomenon, I believe it can be separated and analyzed as two distinctly different parts of the overall body of literature. "Types of Preparation" is primarily focused on the idea of educational preparation and will analyze the learning process that schools and community organizations are implementing in order to increase their capacity to more constructively work with each other. It focuses on the content and process of learning that prepares educators, parents, and the broader community for a more meaningful level of engagement with each other. "Structures and Services" is primarily focused on structural changes and describes the school-community organizational structures and services that are being constructed, modified, and implemented in order to handle the pressures associated with the emergence of community involvement in schools. These structures and organizations include community schools, community-based organizations (CBO's) that offer out-of-school-time programs, and school-led after school enrichments.

Whether it is traditional volunteer activities like bake-sale coordinator or playing a role in school governance, both require some degree of capacity building in order to effectively fulfill the demands associated with the role. Warren's (2010) relational power as a description of the way both groups interact is the outcome of a process that gives rise to new attitudes, knowledge, and actions. While he (Warren) is primarily interested in

collective relational power, interaction at any level is based on the belief that both the school and community will be participants in a new relationship determined by changes in attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions they have toward each other.

In this context, the literature has clearly articulated three types of learning designed to strengthen the relational capacity, or power, of the two groups to understand, respect, and work each other: 1) Learning that improves the *educational capital* of the community, mainly parents, to support the educational needs of their children, 2) Learning that strengthens the *social capital* of community groups so they can engage collectively with schools, and, 3) Learning that increase the *community assets capital* of educators so they are able to more fully accept, respect, appreciate, and welcome the community into a more authentic relationship aimed at school improvement. If community involvement at more meaningful levels than bake sale coordinator is going to happen, learning processes that address these three types of capital needs to be in place. At this time I want to more fully define these three types of capacity building and more fully explain both the theory and reality behind the need for capacity building to occur as part of the movement to involve community in school improvement.

Preparing to Participate

Educational Capital. In a report on school-community relationships in New York City schools, Kavitha Mediratta and Norman Fruchter (2003) concluded that teachers "have their own norms and assumptions about the capacities of students' families and what they can contribute to student success" (p. 15). In believing there were very few parents prepared to support their classroom activities, teachers neither expected,

nor welcomed, parent involvement.

The idea of educational capital building as a piece of a community involvement strategy is based on the belief that the parents need to be better prepared to partner with schools on behalf of student performance. According to Pat Hulesbosch and Linda Logan (1999), a principle challenge to greater community involvement is the preconceived attitudes educators have about the capability of community to be a viable partner in "the positive growth of children. In parent-school partnerships, the actual relationships between families and schools often reflect distrust in families' abilities and commitment to education. This is especially true in the inner city and in schools with economically poor students who are African-American or recent immigrants" (p. 34).

Some of the more notable school-community theorists, Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas (2004), Joyce Dryfoos (2002, 2005), and Mavis Sanders (2001), consider academic support the primary goal of community involvement. Indeed, Epstein and Salinas (2004) talked about the need to design programs that had a "laserlike focus on student learning and success" (p. 14).   With educational support as the rationale for involvement, in a quantitative study of 443 schools across the country, Sanders (2001) found that 70% were conducting school-community educational programming and 60% of the programs were considered student centered, or predominately interested in providing courses and activities that would increase the ability of parents to help with such things as student homework, overcoming language barriers, or increasing comfort levels when, for instance, students were using computers for school work.

Reyes Quezeda (2003) detailed eight Bell Award programs designed and implemented in urban districts across California. With parent involvement an important

criteria across all the winning programs, these schools used such approaches as home visits build a knowledge base that addressed parent preparedness to engage with the schools on behalf of their student's academic needs. Noting the high levels of Latino and Hispanic families, six of the winning programs included ESL and adult literacy classes specifically designed to help students improve their reading and English. The winning schools all described an improved school climate—which they connected to an increased parental presence in their schools—as well as increases in students' academic achievement and higher student attendance.

Linwood Cousins, Rosalyn Mickelson, Brian Williams, and Anne Velsco (2008) did a study of a Charlotte-based math/science program that included a parent workshop component as part of a deliberate plan to increase parent involvement in their child's math and science learning. Offering workshops in a variety of accessible locations, parents "engaged in hands-on math and science activities and participated in role playing designed to equip them for effectively managing their children's educational careers." In addition to raising test scores in math, the researchers found that the Charlotte-based math/science program decreased the cultural and social gap between the school and the community. Community members indicated better attitudes toward the school and toward their community in general.

This finding indicates that although the primary motivation for educational, capital-building programs may be educational support, researchers have also found these programs also have a residual impact on the attitudes and behaviors of community members toward their neighborhood. In their study of parents involvement programs in an urban community school in California, Julie O'Donnell, Sandra Kirkner, and Nancy

Meyer-Adams (2008) found that meaningful after-school, evening, and weekend programs for community members had a positive effect on student achievement because community members were prepared for the "shared responsibility" (p. 160) in their child's education. They also found that programs provided parents with a sense of empowerment and a self-confidence moving them from a narrow focus on their child's academic needs to a larger appreciation for the ways they could engage with the broader community on challenges facing the community, including safety and neighborhood beautification. Thus, in addition to improving their child's educational achievement, O'Donnell, et al., concluded this school "provided learning and involvement opportunities that help parents to make a difference in the lives of their communities, as well" (p. 161).

Christine Villani and Douglas Atkins (2004) echoed this finding when they wrote that the connection between community and education raised levels of consciousness about conditions in the neighborhood and their potential to positively contribute to improving these conditions. Atkins and Villani found community-based education created "community cohesiveness" (p. 40), the rise of collective attitudes and behaviors that contributed to a stronger, more unified community, as well as improvements in school performance. Student attendance increased and test scores were beginning to move upward.

Despite some successes, however, Aaron Schutz (2006) contended that programs designed primarily to improve the individual parents' capacity to support the education of their children did not fundamentally change the school-community relationship. While increased collective strength may have been a coincidental outcome of programs aimed at

strengthening the educational capacity of the individual, Schutz believes these programs

do not authentically prepare the community for higher levels of involvement in schools

because the structure and organization reflect the school's cultural predilection towards

isolation and disdain of outsiders. The relationship between home and school continues to

be dominated by the school and the traditional culture, structure, and organization of

schools remain relatively unchanged and therefore ineffective. The fact that schools see

parents and the community as largely ineffective represents a huge obstacle to

community participation.

     Schutz (2006) is among a number of school-community theorists who want to see

a community that is capable of fundamentally challenging the traditional dominance the

school has over structure and organization. If the goal of community engagement is tied

to a belief in their ability to contribute to school improvement, Schutz believes it requires

an educational approach that increases the collective unity--and therefor power—of the

community to participate in the education of their children. The power that results from

connecting socially is commonly referred to as "social capital." The next section will

more fully develop the concept of social capital as it relates to school-community

relationship building.

     Social Capital. If educational capital is primarily focused on the individual

community member, social capital is concerned with the way community members

connect with each other in their collective relationship to the school. In terms of working

definitions, Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan (2000) wrote that social capital was

"the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively" (p. 226), while Warren, et

al., (2010) believed social capital was a "resource that inheres in the relationships

between people, allowing them to act collectively to achieve agreed-upon ends" (p. 2211-2212). Kevin Leyden (2003) wrote that social capital was the "social networks and interactions that inspire trust and reciprocity among citizens" (p. 1546). Daniel Brisson and Charles Usher (2005) defined social capital as the "network of trusting relationships that exist in a community for community members and creates benefits for community members" (p. 644).

Angela Valenzuela (1999) wrote that social capital emphasizes "networks of trust and solidarity among actors wishing to attain goals that cannot be individually attained (p. 21) and this collective unity translates into power. She also notes that social capital is derived from the "non-rationalistic, emotional commitments among individuals who are embedded in supportive networks" (p. 27). Indeed, the famous sociologist Amatai Etzioni wrote that faith in social capital was based on a belief in the power of the "reinvention of the spirit of community" (in Riley, 2008, p. 312) to be part of unified mobilization effort for change.

Given conditions in impoverished urban areas, the need to increase social capital is essential. Janice Hiroata and Lauren Jacobs (2003), for instance, have identified high levels of social capital as an essential part of marginalized groups' preparedness to become more active and involved in challenging conditions in schools and the surrounding communities. Saying that even in the "poorest neighborhoods there exists strengths and capacities to be tapped," (p. 255), Jean Anyon (2005) wrote that "the existence of active residents in poverty neighborhoods belies the stereotype of a passive, unconcerned population" (p. 120). The development of social capital in neighborhoods considered "high risk, needy, or vulnerable" (Cohen-Vogel, Goldring, and Smerkar,

2010, p. 53) represents a way for these fragmented communities to rediscover the power

that results from cohesion and unity. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) characterized social

capital as an "asset, one that can be called on in a crisis and leveraged for material gain"

(p. 226).

In her book *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of*

Caring, Angela Valenzuela (1999) talked about the way school structures and cultures

have created social "decapitalization" (p. 29) in certain schools. She talks about, for

instance, the way tracking in schools have created exclusionary behaviors among

students. The sense of cohesion and unity that is part of social capital has been disrupted

by school policies, as well as a school culture where these kinds of programs overwhelm

a caring environment. In his work on the history of neighborhoods initiatives to address

poverty, Robert Halpern (1995) believes poverty, inequality, and segregation have

created what he calls the "difference dilemma" (p. 230), which is not only the real

difference in economic, political, social, and educational realities between urban and

suburban areas, but difference in behavior that have resulted from exposure to these

conditions. Marginalized groups are also characterized by an attitude of exclusion and

this attitude is a real obstacle to the kind of collective mobilization that is needed for real

change.

These theorists point out the value of collective, unified action as part of a

movement to change conditions in urban neighborhoods. What is needed, then, are

learning programs that target the sources of this exclusionary attitude. One of the

important intentions of social capital building programs is to create learning that

reconnects community members in ways that allow them to rediscover their collective

strength. Given that inequality in resources and power have caused this fragmented state, Warren (2005) argued that it was essential that urban communities participate in programs that specifically address current levels of social capital. Warren believed high levels of social capital gave rise to relational power parents and the community needed to challenge the conditions that created and perpetuated inequality. Relational power translated to collective unity, and that unity allowed previously marginalized groups to constructively confront conditions and realities that had produced underperformance in schools. One of the keys to tapping into the collective passions of groups appears to be the ability to create learning processes and experiences that strengthened the bonds between them.

When the Coleman Study (1967) concluded that school underperformance in high poverty neighborhoods could be explained by weak community norms and low levels of trust, and not inadequate facilities and economic disparities, it put the focus for change on the importance of human relationships found in these communities. Concluding that "social capital was absolutely essential to a strong community," (p. S101), Coleman wrote that reforms should focus on building relations that strengthened collective behavior, arguing that groups within which there "is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust are able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without trustworthiness and trust" (p. S101). High levels of social capital create energy and unity that translates into collective action on behalf of school improvement.

Social capital, then, is a behavior that can be at least partially constructed—or deconstructed—by addressing conditions and realities in neighborhoods because, after all, it is these very conditions that have created behavior. Because the premise of social

capital is rooted in social relationships, the first step in building social capital is to create

opportunities for communities to reconnect. Keith (1996) emphasized the importance of

grass roots, informal, democratic activities that acted to connect and unify the

community. She talked about how community fairs, neighborhood walks, and town hall-

like public reports on the state of the neighborhood allowed the community to "be

nourished from its own base" (p. 257).

Kevin Leyden (2003) studied the way neighborhoods created walkable areas to

enable or encourage social ties and community connections. In a similar study,

researchers Robert Sampson, Jeffrey Morenoff and Thomas Gannon-Rowley (2002)

synthesized data on 40 urban social capital-building programs aimed at transforming

neighborhoods. They found neighborhood community gardens, play areas, and the

creation of green space were having the desired effect of reuniting urban communities

and concluded these programs created the following attitudes and corresponding

behaviors:

> The willingness of residents to intervene on behalf of children may depend, in
> larger part, on conditions of mutual trust and shared expectations among
> residents. One is unlikely to intervene in a neighborhood context where the rules
> are unclear and people mistrust or fear one another. (p. 457)

In a later study, Coleman (1987) tied the building of social capital to a dominant

value system that bound groups together and was strengthened by what William Cutler

(2000) argued was open and honest communication between home and school. Coleman

attributed the successful performance of Catholic schools to the existence of a value

system that unified participants. The building of a relationship between the two groups

was based on the power of ideas to exert control over actions and behaviors and

agreement between two disparate groups about the fundamental truth of these ideas to produce action.

However, for both Coleman (1987) and Cutler (2000), the school remains primarily responsible for creating high levels of social capital among the community—understood here as parents who are suffering from the negative effects of social isolation. As Cutler wrote, "Coleman maintained that school could increase the social capital of their communities by strengthening both parent-teacher and parent-parent relationships" (p. 197). The real challenge is for educational theorists to transition away from thinking of the school as the dominant (only) partner in creating social capital and move towards community-based organizations as a source of social capital building. Neighborhood-based institutions are certainly capable of organizing more formal community learning programs that build social capital in neighborhoods.

In response to the poor educational conditions faced by Blacks in the Mississippi Delta areas, the Mississippi Educational Working Group (MEWG), for instance, implemented a variety of programs which provided leadership training to its local community members and then helped place them on neighborhood planning boards that worked with schools (Lambright, 2001). These home grown leaders drafted legislation, sat on educational boards, and built political relationships with key politicians. They also implemented an extensive communications network with the local community, which became an important source of education and information about the state of Black education in this area. Nsombi Lambright (2001) found MEWG was an important part of a process that changed Black community behavior from one of "isolation and powerlessness to one where there was common ground on which they could work

together and that unity enabled them to have "collective impact" (p. 11) in challenging the combination of political and educational neglect in this region.

The Southeastern Taskforce (SET), a Baltimore based local CBO employed a grass-roots approach to social capital building that included door-to-door education of the neighborhood, as well as the mobilization of churches, community groups, and neighborhood leaders in developing a neighborhood revitalization agenda that included a great deal of community engagement (Gray and Wheeldreyer, 2001). According to Richard Gray and Laura Wheeldreyer (2001), SET established a Church Outreach group that provided easy-to-understand information that contributed to the development of common understanding among the immigrant population. Lastly, and perhaps most important for the collective dimension so important to social capital, SET organized parent meetings that enabled parents to gather and share their school-related concerns and because teachers and administrators respected SET, attendance by these two groups was usually quite high.

What both SET and MEWG did was organize social capital building around issues that were determined by the very community in which they lived and worked. They then built structures that would provide the community with forums allowing them to constructively participate with schools. The structure became part of the process for not only building social capital, but for ensuring the plan had brought input and buy-in from previously marginalized groups. It also increased the educational capital of parents and community participants.

While these are examples of local, grass roots, organized activities that can increase levels of social capital, in his work on urban neighborhoods, theorist William

Julius Wilson (1997) discussed the way economic conditions affected what he called the neighborhood's social organization, which he defined as "the extent to which residents of a neighborhood are able to maintain effective social control and realize their common goals" (p. 20). In his study of Chicago urban neighborhoods, Wilson argued that high levels of joblessness led to low levels of social organization, which affected "friendship ties, the degree of social cohesion, the level of resident participation in formal and informal voluntary association, the density and stability of formal organizations, and the nature of informal social control" (p. 20).

What we have is a contrast in the origins of collective behavior, then, with Wilson's (1997) social organization primarily determined by economic conditions and Coleman's social capital created through "*relations* (his italics) among people" (S100-101). Indeed, Wilson's argument was that social organization as a behavior could be explained by neighborhood economic conditions whereas Coleman believed that social capital actually created human capital necessary for economic activity. Coleman resisted the economic determinism that characterized Wilson's work. Jean Anyon (1995, 1997, and 2005) also realized that economic conditions influenced community behavior, but she described in great detail the impact social, political, cultural and educational policies had in creating neighborhood behavior. Health care, housing, political neglect and fair wages were among a number of factors that influenced social behavior. All needed to be addresses as part of a broad approach to creating conditions that would allow the community to behave differently.

However, Anyon (2005) also talked about the important role that churches, schools, and non-profits could play in creating learning conditions that could reenergize

and reconnect the community. For Anyon, the origins of social capital were found in the structures, policies, learning, and institutions that worked in unison to create a mobilized community well-prepared to mobilize on behalf of social, educational, economic, and political justice. High levels of social capital were created by programs held in these institutions and this led to what she called "movement building," which characterized the behavior of a group that was unified and mobilized by a just cause. Movement building was the powerful action of collective energy.

Warren's (2010) relational power had much in common with movement building because it was the behavioral outcome of a community prepared to engage on behalf of policies that affected education. Social capital and relational power enable communities to reconnect on the basis of common interests and the strength and confidence it needs to exert pressure on schools and politicians. In this context, social capital, like educational capital, is a source of energy that enables the community to think and behave differently. Although an important contrast between the two is that educational capital building ties action to the individual and social capital aims to strengths the collective will, both correctly identify the importance of new learning processes that create a community capable of constructively engaging on behalf of school improvement.

Ultimately, though, the principle challenge, as pointed out by Julie White and Gary Wehlage (1995) was simply that "social capital is difficult to build." (p. 34). Echoing this thought, Robert Sampson, Jeffrey Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley (2002) said one of challenges facing social capital as part of a reform strategy was developing a suitable set of criteria to measure the effectiveness of these programs to actually change neighborhood behavior. Warren recognized the difficulty of assessing

the impact of social capital when he wrote that signs of improvement in Logan Square neighborhood schools were partially based on anecdotal evidence. Spirit and will do not necessarily lend themselves to quantifiable evaluation for their effectiveness, but social capital theorists certainly believe the existence of these qualities can impact school improvement.

Up to this point, the discussion has focused on learning that addresses the individual and collective capacity of the community to assume a new role in the school-community relationship. However, an important obstacle to school-community relationship building remains the culture of schools. Educational capital and social capital focus primarily on changing the behaviors of the external community, but we know schools also have powerful values and attitudes that have exerted control over the behavior of teachers and administrators.

It is precisely these values, beliefs and traditions that Schutz argues are deep-seated obstacles to increasing community engagement in school reform. Addressing these attitudes is an important part of the overall goal of effective community involvement. There are a number of theorists who contend that traditional pre-service training programs and coursework do not adequately prepare the school meaningful community involvement in school improvement. Indeed, Mavis Sanders (2009) argues the responsibility for the creation of effective partnerships rests largely with the "knowledge and capacity" (p. 1696) teachers and administrators must have in order to achieve this new relationship. She is among a number of theorists who are suggesting changes in the content of learning in order to increase the capacity of educators to appreciate the community as a partner in the educational process.

By creating learning that values the community's assets, this type of learning process aims to change the school behavior from one of isolation and distrust to one that is more open, respectful, and receptive to external involvement. I use the term "community assets capital" to describe the acquisition of new attitudes and knowledge that educators need to confidently, empathetically, and respectfully engage with families and the community. Community assets capital building is the third type of learning theorist describe when they talk about an overall plan for school-community engagement.

Community Assets Capital. In his extensive work on community involvement in schools, Aaron Schutz (2006) pointed out that faculty in high poverty schools held "deficit oriented views of their central city students and communities" (p. 700), and Lionel Brown and Kelvin Beckett (2007) found high levels of "mutual defensiveness and distrust" (p. 9) in urban schools where there were large numbers of White middle class teachers and disadvantaged African American or poor students. In a report on school-community relationships in New York City schools, Kavitha Mediratta and Norman Fruchter (2003) concluded the school's professional culture created distance between them and parents.

In response, Lora Cohen-Vogel, et al., (2010) wrote that "those who prepare and develop teachers and administrators should work to build the capacity of future educators to identify and partner effectively with potential community actors" (p. 73) by including learning that explores these deeply embedded values, beliefs, and attitudes. Leading community relations theorists Joyce Epstein and Mavis Sander (2006) have argued 21st century schools need active and meaningful community involvement, but the deep historical roots of the traditional school-community relationship had shaped the content

of teachers and administrators training programs. They wrote that "teachers and

administrators are educated to think of themselves as individual leaders of classrooms,

schools, or districts, with little attention to the importance of teamwork and

collaborations with parents, community partners, and others interested in students'

success in school" (p. 81). In an analysis of teacher education programs in 22 states, they

noted that only nine programs had "even one required course on family involvement" (p.

84). While they noted that there was evidence of progress in this area, it was usually

initiated by individual professors, reflecting the lack of agreement about the importance

of this type of learning. Sanders and Epstein recommended that schools and colleges of

education include meaningful coursework, training, and experiences directly tied to

improving their parent and community involvement skills.

In a national survey of over 400 university education leadership programs,

researchers Christine Villani and Linda Lyman (2002) discovered that universities offer

limited coursework in poverty studies and social justice learning, two areas intimately

tied to the realities facing urban communities. While Epstein and Sanders (2006) were

looking at teacher training coursework in parent relations, Villani and Lyman also

correctly identified the need to provide students with coursework that would raise their

consciousness about the real conditions facing urban communities. As part of pre-service

preparation, courses in urban studies, race, sociology, and political economy needed to be

required parts of a learning process that forced students to more critically explore their

existing understanding about race and poverty.

In addition to coursework, there are a number of theorists who simply believe

what is really needed are more substantive field experiences and practicums that expose

teachers to realities facing urban community. Lisa Delpit (1996) suggested teacher

education include both bringing community members into university classrooms to tell

prospective teachers about their concerns, as well as requiring teachers to attend

community gatherings in order to acquire "first-hand knowledge" (p. 179) of community

realities. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that the lack of understanding about the

culture of urban—mainly Black—students became an "excuse for why they (teachers)

could not be successful with some students" (p.105), and what was needed were more

field experiences that enabled them to overcome what she called the predilection to

"dump all manner of behavior into a catchall they (teachers) call culture" (p. 105). She

talked about having prospective teachers see students outside the classroom, in

community and neighborhood centers, on sports teams, and in after-school activities,

settings where teachers might actually see different behaviors.

　　　　Ladson-Billings (2006) recognized that teachers who come from a middle class

upbringing, still the largest population of potential teachers, have not really been exposed

to need a diversity of learning experiences that will teach them more about the

communities in which some will eventually teach, and at the same time force them to

explore their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Based on her work as an

anthropologist, she sees the potential of field experiences to make them more "careful

observers of culture, both in the communities in which they will teach and in themselves

(p. 109). Field work becomes an authentic approach to better prepare new teachers to

work with students—and one would assume parents—in urban schools.

　　　　While the above is addresses shortcomings in pre-service programs, on-going

professional development of faculties and staffs also needs to be part of the thinking

about training to prepare for engagement with the community. In a study of ethnically and racially diverse Washington Elementary School in San Francisco, Laura Abrams and Jewelle Taylor Gibbs (2000) described the struggles this faculty had implementing community involvement programs. Although the faculty and administration at Washington School agreed up front that community involvement in school improvement was a good idea, once it came time to move to action, the researcher found the faculty remained mired in thinking about the community as low-level participants—limited to the bake sale volunteer as it were.

At the same time, the community had been led to believe it would be viewed as "equal partners in decisions about philosophy, curriculum, support services, and other key component" (p. 89) and this type of community involvement was a highly publicized part of a school improvement plan. The failure to create a more equal school culture acted to reinforce negative impact on community attitudes toward the school. In the absence of a well-developed plan to provide the faculty with the community assets capital it would need to accept more active and engaged community, Abrams and Gibbs (2000) correctly concluded that acceptance of community at this level of involvement resulted in a failed effort at community involvement.

Ernesto Cortes (1996) echoed this idea when he said "if James Coleman is right at all in his analysis of what he calls 'social capital,' in determining the capacity of schools to succeed, we are going to have to work on developing the capacity of teachers, administrators, principals, and other school personnel to allow for the engagement of parents and other community people" (p. 8). What is especially important in this observation is that Cortes places the onus on schools for creating conditions that

recognize the potential of social capital to contribute to school and community improvement. The challenge is that his observation means that schools continue to control the rules of parent and community involvement. Part of the potential of social capital—or Warren's (2010) relational power—is that it implies a high degree of community capacity to force engagement. Nonetheless, the point is that social, educational, and community assets capital are the outcomes of a coherent process where all groups are working simultaneously on behalf of the same goal.

In terms of an effective school process, contrast the Washington School's absence of a coherent plan with the approach used by Methuen Public Schools (MPS). After declaring a belief in the value of community involvement, Michaela Colombo (2004) detailed the construction and implementation of programs that were specifically designed to prepare faculty for greater involvement of ESL parents in their child's educational needs. Based on an assessment of local conditions, the school district developed a three-year plan focusing on increasing teacher awareness of "culturally and linguistically diverse families" (p. 50). Because language was a barrier to ESL parents understanding school expectations, teachers often viewed parents as incapable of support.

In response the district offered teachers in-services and coursework in ESL, literacy, and multiculturalism in order to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity. Teachers then *led* (my italics) a variety of activities that engaged the family in student learning said that they helped decrease the level of frustration they felt toward ESL parents. In the first year of the program, 35 of the 100 teachers at Methuen teachers participated and 90% spoke positively about the way the program changed their perception of community's willingness to support student learning. According to

Colombo (2004), the district was anticipating 80 teachers in the subsequent year's program.

In addition to coherently organized programs aiming to increase community assets capital, some schools have a culture and historical tradition that acts to create an expectation for faculty behavior. In his study of an urban school in St. Louis, Jerome Morris (1999) partially explained Fairmont School's in St. Louis' thriving school-community relationship by recognizing the importance of a highly stable and veteran faculty that either lived in, or had roots in, the neighborhood. The school was well known for its communal bonds and this veteran staff, 80% of them African American in a school with a 100% African American student population, served as excellent role models for the new teachers entering the school.

School leadership was also solidly supportive of a viable parent presence. The principal of the school modeled a welcoming, highly visible behavior that permeated the school culture. Morris (1999) stated that Fairmont's reputation as a school with a thriving community presence was borne out by "jam packed attendance" (p. 591) at PTA meetings, a thriving parent volunteer program, and "Meet the Teacher Night" nights whose times had to eventually be readjusted in order to accommodate all the parents. Morris also found that generations of families have attended Fairmont, a tangible example of the loyalty that it (Fairmont) has earned in the community. Lastly, the school had some of the best test scores in the St. Louis public school district.

In the case of both Fairmont and Washington, researchers found that the school administrators played a key role in either enhancing or inhibiting community involvement. The administrator at Fairmont clearly stated community involvement was a

priority and led by example when it came to creating a welcoming environment. According to Morris (1999), the veteran principal moved comfortably among the parents and the broader community. On the other hand, the Washington administrator did not clearly articulate the community role and conveyed messages that contributed to an uneven, contentious relationship with a community interested in higher levels of involvement.

In her case study of an urban elementary school in Newark that had a 98% minority population and a broad socioeconomic diversity, Christine Villani (2005) detailed the actions of a principal responsible for establishing a thriving school-community environment. She established an advisory council that included parents, organized teacher in-services around the theme of broad community engagement, and even became a member of the local chapter of the Lions' Club. Based on interview data, Villani found that both parents and faculty had high levels of respect for each other and that both pointed to the role of the school leader in establishing and nurturing this culture. Additionally, she also noted that academic achievement measured by state scores from 1999-2001 showed that students at Newfield School performed above the district average and met state averages in reading, writing, and mathematics and students in grades one and two had consistently scored first in the school district in both reading and math.

Recognizing the need for formal and informal exposure to the external community, Lora Cohen, et al., (2010) detailed the programs and attitudes of the principal at Deer Creek School, a school with 30 % of its residents living in poverty, and with high numbers of drug, domestic violence, and weapons arrests: He said:

We walk the neighborhoods, we have town meetings, we invite them [families]

in, we have grandparent's day, we have parent-teacher conferences. We try to get them here in the building as much as possible. If they can't get here, we'll go to them. Sometimes we'll just get in the car and go to a neighborhood just to let them know, hey, we are concerned about your kids. We're here to do what we can to help you. (p. 68).

Although the Cohen (2010) study did not provide data on the affect these programs had on student performance in Deer Creek School, the researchers did suggest that teacher and administrator training should include field experiences in non-profit centers and actual home visits. Additionally, they recommended administrators be required to write community partnering plans.

Sometimes, however, creating an environment that welcomes community involvement is the result of a combination of local knowledge and, for lack of a better description, common sense and administrative intuition. Tyack (1974) wrote about Leonard Covello, who in 1930 became the first principal of Benjamin Franklin High School, a school in the Bronx that counted over 25 ethnic groups in its neighborhood. In his autobiography, Covello (1970) wrote it was then natural task of the school to reach out to the surrounding community.

In response to that belief, Covello put into place a systematic approach to building a strong school-community relationship. Some of the approaches were fairly simple, such as his ability to naturally build relationships by virtue of his Italian immigrant status and by living in close proximity to the school. However, he also established more sophisticated programs, such as the Community Advisory Council, a cross section of civic groups, social service agencies, businesses and prominent citizens where the community was brought into the school for weekly meetings, PTA meetings held in different languages, English language classes for adults, and school plays done in

English, Spanish, and Italian.

These examples reflect what Lionel Brown and Kelvin Beckett (2007) meant when they wrote that "important measures of educational leadership is the ability of urban principals to facilitate communication between ethnic and socioeconomic groups who are involved in school to different extents and in different ways" (p. 8). On this same issue, Peter Gertz (2003) wrote that "leaders who lack experience with collaborative efforts or communication skills find it difficult" (p. 34) to create partnerships. When Joe Murphy (2002) wrote administrative training needed to be re-cultured, he identified the need for learning that prepared administrators to create a more "open system in which access and voice are heard" (p. 188). Murphy, of course, was talking about the power of the administrator to create school cultures receptive to the kind of open, sharing environment that would enable all kinds of collaborations.

Linearity and Hierarchy in Educational, Social, and Community Assets Capital

Meaningful community involvement in schools, which we know means different things to different theorists, nonetheless at anything above the most minimal level, represents a significant challenge to the tradition and history of the school-community relationship. Preparation is tied to the attitudes, values, and beliefs which have created the intellectual boundaries that control participation. Educational, social, and community assets capital capacity building reflect the need for learning that prepares both groups to engage with each other and to think differently about the relationship. These types of learning programs are essential if school and community are going to effectively partner and collaborate on behalf of school improvement.

Theorists have identified a number of ways that preparation occurs, including formal coursework, field experience, school-organized community learning, grass roots community activities, and formal community-based programs. What the literature has clearly demonstrates is that there may not be agreement on the scope and depth of community involvement, but both schools and community-based organizations are beginning to recognize that collaboration has potential to impact student performance. However, case studies have pointed out that success is uneven and contextual, which can be at least partially attributed to the absence of a plan which includes an educational program designed to prepare community and school to collaborate.

Professional-Internal. In addition, there are two ways to explain the pattern of thinking about constructing a learning process that prepares both groups for the new relationship. The first approach is largely led by professional educators who create programs carried out primarily inside the traditional school building. When Epstein and Salinas identify the laser-like focus on student learning as the goal of school-community programming, they subtlety reinforce the tradition of school control over the rules of engagement. Schools are primarily responsible for what happens inside the four walls and if getting community involved helps schools improve test scores, raise grades, increase attendance, and improve graduation rates, schools are potentially open to letting them in.

However, I am not convinced that there is radical change in the way schools conceptualize their relationship to the external community. There is still an unequal relationship marginalizes participation by the community. The school controls the process, content, and scope of community involvement in schools. There is community participation in the school-community dichotomy, but the community is not actively encouraged to play a meaningful role in the partnership. This is an important distinction when the goal is authentic participation. Chart1 describes the hierarchical, top-down,

linear flow of school-directed capacity building.

Diagram 1
Professional-Internal

Educational Capital

Community Assets Capital

Social Capital

Amateur-External. External involvement is based on a fundamentally different set of values and beliefs about the way to strengthen the school-community relationship. External involvement sees school improvement part of a broader movement to address issues of poverty and inequality facing urban neighborhood and develops a plan and process on the basis of these connections and this way of thinking. When Anyon talks about propelling the community deeper into schools, it means outsiders are viable participants and potential leaders in not only school-based activities, but neighborhood revitalization projects. Novella Keith's call for change that is amateur, outside, and democratic identifies the strengths of community to bring new sources of wisdom and learning to the movement. It also conveys an attitude of respect for the diversity of sources that can contribute to improvement. Social capital gives the community the strength it needs to engage as relational equals. Diagram 2 describes the grass roots, bottom up, and linear flow of community-directed change.

Diagram 2
Amateur-External

Community Assets Capital

Educational Capital

Social Capital

      Connecting the Three Types of Capital. When Novella Keith (1996) stated

school "partnerships with parents and community members tend to cast them

(community) in the role of service recipients and willing supporters of school practice, as

the objects of change rather than as change agents" (p. 241), what it meant was that the

linearity of the process meant one group was seen as an object in the change process.

While a bottom up process of change is an indication that the external community is

prepared to play a more meaningful role in school improvement, the problem with both

of these approaches is the linear, hierarchical way of thinking continues to act as a barrier

to connecting all three. Each construct inhibits the transition from old ways of thinking

about relationships and partnerships. Each continues to marginalize the energy that can

result from authentic collaboration and engagement.

      In her work on school-community collaboration, Catherine Hands (2010) argued

that collaborative thinking needed to transition from based on hierarchical, closed

systems thinking to one that was open and nonhierarchical. When theorist B.H. Banthay

talked about the "bidirectionality" (in Hands, 191-192) of influence between two groups,

he was transitioning from linear to circular thinking about the change process. The

implication was the need to recognize the shared basis of partnership building, one where

both sides are equally engaged in constructing the conditions for engagement. It also

redefines rules of control in the relationship building process.

Diagram 3
School-Community Relationship Building
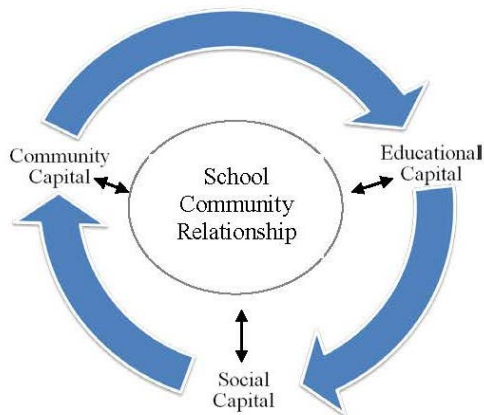
I based the School-Community Relationship Building concept (Diagram 3) on not

only Banthay's bidirectionality, but also on the way Peter Senge (1990) envisioned the

change process. Senge defined the change process as a rather constant movement of

interrelated factors that were connected by the identification of shared interests and

common goals. Where Diagram 3 differs from the other two is it does not recognize

primary control by one group (linear), but attempts to convey the message that capital

capacity building is the dynamic interaction of educational, social, and community

learning. Neither group is seen as the object of change, but all are viewed as equal

participants in a meaningful learning process that revolves around community relationship building. In fact, the goal, in this case school improvement, becomes the primary controlling factor, and learning processes are developed in response to this goal.

White and Wehlage (1995) concluded that collaboration between school and community fosters "networks of interdependency with the larger community" (p. 35). Based on the literature, a principle problem with traditional change strategies is that they do not see the different capacity building programs as connected parts of a systematic change approach. The narrow focus on student outcomes by noted theorists like Epstein, Sanders, and Dryfoos, reduced the learning process created to grow the capacity of new participants and therefore greatly limited the way the community could bring new energy and commitment to social, political, educational and economic change.

Critical theorists like Keith (1996), Anyon (1995, 1997, 2005), and Warren (1996, 2005, 2011) see social capital building as a way to challenge the unequal power and control that schools have vis-à-vis the parents and broader community. Additionally, by connecting social capital to both educational and community asset capital building, parents and the community become more equal and viable participants in change. Lastly, organizational theorists like Murphy (2002, 2010) see the need for school leaders to be equipped with skills and values that enable them to create a more open environment, but administrative commitment can suffer in the absence of clearly defined goals for community involvement. Given the absence of coherent connections between the three types of capital, power and control continue to exert strong, albeit subtle, control over the process and continue to marginalize groups who should be part of the reform process.

Part I. Conclusion

For the case study, I will study the behavior of two groups whose very existence and identity were created by different values and beliefs. The Maple Heights Neighborhood Association has deep roots in the community it serves and its credibility as a leader is based on its grass roots connection to the neighborhood it serves. Although both the Main Street High School and Spring Creek Community School are schools with historical roots in the neighborhood, the rather isolated nature of their relationship to the community is influenced by their school culture and history. The public school tradition exerts great influence over the quality of their external orientation.

Ultimately, then, the programs and processes that the neighborhood association is implementing is influenced by the power of a rather different history and tradition, the common school system that took root in the early 20th century and has become the dominate school organization paradigm. The case study will look at the way these two different organizations, linked by location but culturally and historically disconnected, overcome some of their own prior patterns of behavior in order work in a collaborative, constructive, equal way.

The relational behaviors of both organizations are based on the underlying values and beliefs that give meaning to organizational identity and what we have are two groups whose organizational behavior has been largely shaped by the history and tradition of drastically different value systems. However, if both the neighborhood association and the schools can agree on goals, they can put into place programs and plans that will help them reconceptualize their relationship. It will test the capacity of each organization to

think differently about their potential partner—and about themselves. Beliefs and values that determine behavior will need to change if these two groups are going to achieve a level of authentic acceptance of new partners. Looking to uncover the process implemented in order to transform relational attitudes and behaviors will be an important part of the study.

Part II. Structures and Services

Corresponding with new behaviors, schools and community-based organizations (CBO's) and neighborhood associations are also looking at the capability of existing organizational structures to accommodate the growing pressures associated with community engagement in programs that will improve conditions in both the surrounding neighborhoods and schools. Because there are new demands and responsibilities, all groups are expanding services and changing structures. Services are understood as primarily the programs groups are offering the community, while structures refer to the physical changes constructed in response to expanded roles and responsibilities. Services and structures are clearly different from capacity building because they are the physical changes occurring in both schools and external organizations. The second part of the literature review will: 1) Develop the different school and community structures being constructed to handle community involvement, and, 2) Detail the programs and services schools and community-based organizations are offering.

Services and structures are tied to organizational responsibility. In terms of a strategic framework for analysis, I will assign the literature to one of four categories: 1) School control, 2) Community schools, 3) Community-based organization (CBO)

educational support, and, 4) Neighborhood association-led revitalization.

The school control model is characterized by school use of existing structures to deliver a potentially broad range of programs. The community schools model houses an expanded number of services and service providers under one central structure—the traditional school building. In addition to providing education during the normal school day, community schools usually include health clinics, dental offices, physical activities, and other social service agencies under the school roof. The CBO educational support model is largely differentiated from school control on the basis of changes over control. In the CBO educational support model, educational services originate in community organizations and are carried out predominately within CBO structures. Lastly, neighborhood association-led revitalization is characterized by strong community control and leadership over issues that impact the community, including, but not limited to, school performance. Education is considered part of the broader movement to improve social and economic conditions in the neighborhood. The next part of this literature review will more fully describe the similarities and differences between these four models.

Anne Henderson (2007) wrote community involvement in its narrow historical application was mainly understood to be parents "spending most of their time organizing bake sales or school fairs, if involved at all" (p. 15). These four categories are based on the fact that bake sale coordinator is the most basic kind of involvement. While it (bake sale coordinator) is a form of involvement, one of the primary motivations behind authentic community involvement, whether it is more individualistic or collective, is the belief that improvement is based on greater participation. These new structures are being

created in response to a belief that community involvement is important. As the second

part of the literature on the phenomenon of school-community engagement, this section

will describe the different ways both groups are building or modifying structures in order

to deliver the services that build community engagement capacity or, in the specific case

of community schools, radically expand the traditional structure to incorporate non-

educational services and service providers.

School Control Model. The school control model is characterized by high

degrees of school control over the development, administration, organization, and

staffing of community involvement programs. With No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

exerting pressure, Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas (2004) found schools were becoming

receptive to the idea the community could contribute to student improvement. In a

summary report on school-community partnerships, Joyce Epstein (2007) cited a number

of studies that she said "confirmed that when families become involved, more students

earn higher grades in English, math, improve their reading scores, complete more course

credits, set higher aspirations, have better attendance, come to class more prepared to

learn, and have fewer behavioral problems" (p. 18).

In terms of the types of services schools offer, Epstein (2007) described the

National Network of Partnership Schools' (NNPS) work with over 1000 schools to

implement partnership programs. NNPS programs were not limited to traditional

academic enrichments, but were designed to improve attitudes and behaviors in what

might be considered support areas, including: 1) Parenting, 2) Communicating, 3)

Volunteering, 4) Learning at home, 5) Decision-making, and, 6) Collaborating with the

community. Programs included workshops and course work in academic areas such as

math, science, computer training, ESL, and reading, but also provided classes in such areas as parenting skills and leadership training. Schools staff these programs and use the school building to deliver these programs after the normal school day ends.

In terms of managing these programs, a number of schools and districts are establishing a formal staff position to handle the administrative responsibilities associated with increasing community engagement. According to Joy Dryfoos (2002), the person is someone who works alongside the school administration to "oversee the delivery of an array of support services" (p. 394). As part of its plan for community involvement, the School-Community Connection, a national project premised on the belief that a mobilized community could be a valuable educational partner (Thompson, 1995), considers the establishment of a full-time community education director part of its overall plan to increase community involvement. Dryfoos has argued that this kind of position is essential to the organizational demands associated with community programs.

A large district in Florida, for instance, moved one of its veteran teachers to the director of community programs. Over time, these outreach programs gained such a reputation for success that outside groups began to seek participation in what were originally only available to school families. Believing that the "presence of parents can transform the culture of the school" (Lightfoot in Davies, 1991, p. 376), the Ellis School in Boston established the parent center (Davies, 191), designed to accommodate the physical presence of parents in the school. The center was staffed by two paid coordinators who organized a variety of activities that improved communication between the school and the home. In its first year, over 150 of the schools 350 parents reported using the parent center for academic and emotional reasons. Parents reported feeling

more positive about the school and their children's education because the school had created a welcoming place for them. Both of these studies pointed to the staff position as part of the reason for the effectiveness of community outreach programs.

With its tight control over the programs and services provided by the school, the school control model reflects the traditional response of the school. The school recognizes the potential of community engagement at a level beyond that of traditional volunteer, but its pattern of behavior reflects the penchant for school control over the scope of community involvement. Aaron Schutz (2006) summarized this school of thought when he wrote:

> When Epstein and her colleagues turn to discussions of "community," however, their perspectives narrow. For example, the "community" is not really included in Epstein's (2001) discussions of "two-way communication" and participation in decision making—she focuses, instead, almost entirely on parents. And when she does speak about communities, she stresses, instead, the resources that they can provide to schools and the ways that communities can either reinforce "school and family goals for student learning and success" or redirect "students away from school or family goals" (Epstein, 2001, p. 475). In other words, communities are helpful to schools when they support the school's mission and harmful when they resist or criticize the mission in some way.

While the first model largely sees the school as the primary control partner, the community school model houses a variety of educational and non-educational services within the traditional school building. In addition to normal school services and activities, the community school structure is designed to ensure better accessibility to health care, social services, and recreational activities by bringing these rather non-traditional groups—and the services they provide—into the school building. The principle idea behind the community school concept is the belief that student performance is influenced by both educational and non-educational factors. By providing

students with a variety of services that are located in the school building, the community school greatly alters the traditional school structure. However, as will be reviewed in the next section, control and collaboration between school and non-school services can be uneven and unpredictable. The next section will describe in greater detail the community school structure and the scope of services provided within the traditional school building.

Community School Model. The community school model as an organizational strategy was designed to incorporate a variety of services normally separate from traditional educational structure, but seen as increasingly influential in their impact on student achievement. Joyce Dryfoos (2002) said that "fragmented and often inaccessible programs for children and families" (p. 396), mainly good health care, were adversely affecting student performance. In response, health care, social services, recreational activities, and educational enrichment were all brought into the traditional school building to ensure students had access to a full range of services.

Dryfoos (2002) referred to it as "one-stop" (p. 397) structure for ensuring that students received adequate support. Mark Warren (2005) called this the "service approach" (p. 139) to school reform because it offered a full range of centrally located services to students who might otherwise not have access to them. Recognizing the relationship between academic and health factors in student performance, academic and outside agencies would be housed in the same school building and charged with ensuring that the whole student is cared for in one location.

The community school model is based on the belief that combining the best educational practices with a wide range of in-house health and social services would best support the physical, social and emotional well-being of the students. Civic

organizations, government departments, businesses, churches, social agencies, youth

development organizations and health clinics were all potential community school

participants.   Martin Blank (2004) said community schools were organized to be "centers

of the community, open all day, every day, and weekends" and "seen as neighborhood

hubs" (p. 62) that offered a natural location where a diversity of services could be housed.

In addition to an expansion of services, Joyce Dryfoos (2002) saw the community school

as one that is "operating in a public school building, is open to students, families and the

community, before during and after school, seven days a week, all year long" (p. 394).

Dawn Anderson-Butcher, Gwyn Stetler, and Theresa Midle (2006) wrote that "full

service and other community school models open school doors into the evening and

weekend hours" (p. 156).

However, one of the challenges theorists have identified with this model is that

there are disparate groups being asked to collaborate with each other on behalf of a

common outcome. Novella Keith (1996) identified the fundamental tension inherent in

this reform model when she wrote that "although reformers agree local participation

(families, community) is desirable, factors such as culturally established roles and

professional ethos" (p. 245) were obstacles to opening schools to community. In her

extensive work on community schools, Atelia Melaville (2002; 2006) wrote that

community schools were comprised of a loose association of groups who had the same

goals, but different cultures of behavior and this culture influence how they interacted

with each other. Dryfoos (1998, 2002) noted that school personnel felt threatened by

these outsiders and were generally resistant to sharing their classroom and their building

with outside groups. Dryfoos also wrote that service providers were generally ill-

prepared for how schools work.

In their study of health care clinics located in community schools, Mark Swerdlik, Glenn Reeder, and Jayne Bucy (1999) found cultural norms and rules/regulations governing, for instance, health care confidentiality, were significant obstacles for health care providers as well as school personnel. They found that despite the rationale for locating health services in schools—convenient access—"many school-based clinics are isolate from educational service" (p. 73). They wrote that "different systems, including health, social services, and education, have their own established formal and informal power structures, training issues, and cultures," (p. 74) and these differences were real barriers to establishing a basis for understanding. They talked about the need to "negotiate roles and responsibilities before professionals from different backgrounds can work together" (p. 77-78) and also noted that teachers need to be included in this learning process.

In her work on community schools, Dryfoos (2002) noted that the need for open communication was "fundamental to the success of community schools" (p. 398). Starting from the premise it was essential to clearly define roles and responsibilities in the community school, Dryfoos argued the key was the creation of an organizational structure and process where best academic practices were working in partnership with parents, neighborhood groups, and health and social service agencies. While schools were primarily responsible for a high quality education and outside agencies were responsible for "everything else (p. 396), in order for effective collaboration, she recommended community schools have a staff person whose primary responsibility is to organize all communications, programs, and practices between school and non-school

groups.

John Spry Community School (Berg**,** Melaville, and Blank 2006), in Chicago,

Illinois, was a typical example of a community school. It was open late into the evening

and on weekends. Educators, families, community volunteers, business, health and social

service agencies, and youth development organizations were all under one roof; these

groups worked in relative unison to address broad based school-community challenges.

By being enthusiastic about community, Berg, et al., found that the school principal

played a key role in creating the environment for thriving engagement and cross-services

communication. Indeed, Carlos Azcoitia, the principal of Spry Community School in

Chicago, considered it his responsibility to build "relational trust" to lay the foundation

for academic achievement (p. 19). Eventually Spry students, families, and the larger

community came to know it as a second home that both welcomed and reached out to the

larger community. Spry had a 98% attendance rate, and every student in its 2006

graduating class was accepted to college.

In her study of Newark public schools, Jean Anyon (1997) detailed the impact of

de-industrialization and political neglect on the city of Newark and how that impacted the

Newark Public School system. Loss of jobs, a shrinking tax base, white flight, poverty,

isolation, crime, and political apathy were all factors that had helped create one of the

most underperforming urban school districts in the United States. In his case study of

one Newark school, the Quitman Street School, Mark Warren (2005) described how

Quitman turned to the community school model in an almost last ditch effort to address

the drastic state of education in this neighborhood school. Quitman was the "poorest of

the poor," (p. 141) and the decision to construct a community school was directly related

to the need to change the way the school was structured and organized.

The first step was to introduce an extended school day, after school homework help, and provide a variety of academic and extracurricular programs/enrichments. Then, in response to the fact that Quitman students did not have access to adequate health care, community organizations provided the resources to establish a full-service health clinic that students could visit during the school day. After the educators left the building, the city recreation department ran an athletic program well into the night. Eventually, Quitman School became the physical and social hub of the neighborhood.

In terms of behavior, though, due to a history of neglect and a feeling of "being burned before" (Warren, 2005, p. 10), both the school and the community were initially resistant to working together. Warren identified the role played by school leaders in building cross-organizational communication that eventually led to high levels of integration between the two groups. Over time, though, both groups rallied around the belief that the structure could handle the broad range of services and there were signs of success. However, despite the fact Quitman "demonstrated a more personal, caring community for children and their families" (p. 144), student improvement measured by test scores was uneven, with some results trending higher, but others remaining below state averages. What the Quitman experience did was restore a sense of respect for the viability of the neighborhood school. However, given the state of education in this school, substantive respect will require consistent and long term improvements in performance.

Comer Schools. While the community school model includes some fairly significant changes to the organizational structure, the literature has shown that housing a

variety of services under one roof does not naturally ensure cohesion and success. Community schools face uneven accomplishment of intended purposes because there is not a well-defined process for sharing, and leadership commitment over the integration of services is not clearly delineated. Although the school structure now houses a variety of services under its roof, location alone does not ensure effective communication, collaboration, and sharing between the school and community service providers.

As a potential reform strategy, the community school recognizes that student performance is influenced by a number of factors; but in the absence of a coherent organizational plan to encourage collaboration, community schools will continue to be unevenly effective in accomplishing its goal. However, as an approach to school organization that includes many of the community school pieces, the School Development Program (SDP), a school organizational model developed by Dr. James Comer (1997) in the mid-1960s, offers an interesting example of a model that seems to taken into consideration the many moving parts associated with meaningful community engagement in schools.

Specifically constructed with minority and disadvantaged students in mind, Comer Schools strive for a caring school culture and recognize the importance of family and community engagement in creating this kind of school culture and environment. In recognition, Comer Schools have a well-developed system of beliefs and a support structure designed to handle the pressures associated with outside involvement. While the traditional community school can be plagued by an absence of clarity, Comer Schools have a well-developed structure that encompasses services, governance, leadership responsibilities, and roles.

The Comer approach recognizes the complexity of "rallying the village" (Noblit and Jennings. 2001, p. 41); Comer is an all-encompassing model for meaningful mobilization of faculty, administration, parents, and the surrounding community. Paula Groves summarized Comer when she wrote:

> Comer was not only a structural framework that governs the organization of the school, but the ideology that allow diversity issues and other student needs to be address. SDP's child centered philosophies permeate the school. Comer philosophy undergrids the attitudes of the staff, drives change, propels team decisions, and steers classroom instruction. (p. 27)

The successful Comer model usually has a leader who is committed to establishing a school that respects meaningful community participation. In his study of Comer schools, George Noblit (2001) wrote that the "power of the principal is critical to SDP implementation" (p. 121). In their qualitative study of a predominately minority school located in "the urban flatlands" (p. 51), Paula Groves and Sofia Villenas (2001) traced the school's transformation from a low achieving school to one that fostered academic excellence to the energetic leadership of the Comer School principal.

In addition to a clearly defined role for principals, the faculty knows they are expected to engage with families and the broader community. In a study of strategies to engage parents in a predominately African American, low-income Comer School in Bowling Green, David Dupper and John Poertner (1997) talked about how school representatives used home visits to gather information to construct parent involvement programs. These included adult education courses and exercise classes, as well as a once-a-month "Family Breakfast Club" (p. 418). As a result, the Bowling Green schools were achieving higher test scores, a 97% attendance rate, and an increase in the number of parents coming into the school.

Lastly, Comer Schools include a formal three-part governance structures designed to ensure that there is broad family and community participation in the construction of a plan to support "students' total development" (Sanacore, 2000). The establishment of a formal structure meant that Comer faculty, administrators, and parents have relatively equal voice in some of the really important issues facing the school. It also provides Comer Schools with a structure that works as a practical training apparatus for developing community leaders. Whereas many school-community programs provide classes in leadership training, Comer Schools used the formal governance structure as an authentic learning process that put people in real leadership situations.

Interestingly, in his study of Comer School governance structures, William Cutler (2000) pointed out, though, that parents did not "need to be in charge; they merely wanted to be included in school governance without compromising the principal's authority or involved with activities that did not threaten the teacher's domain" and were primarily interested in counteracting the "depersonalization of social relations" (pg. 197). Parents were using real life situations to learn valuable leadership skills. In addition to being engaged with the school on issues of mutual importance, Comer families were developing personal relationships with the school staff. Moreover, if properly designed, the threat associated with external participation seems to be negated by the Comer governance structure. The major challenge for Comer Schools is, as Cutler points out, thinking differently about the role community will play in Comer Schools.

While Comer Schools are often considered part of the community school literature, there are important distinctions between Comer and other community schools. We can generally identify five differences: 1) Comer Schools have developed a strong

philosophical rationale for greater community involvement, 2) Comer Schools clearly encourage an expansion of the roles and responsibilities of community, 3) Comer Schools have structures in place designed to handle meaningful community participation, 4) the Comer School principal is charged with creating and nurturing the collaborative environment and culture, and, 5) Comer Schools have an educational program that prepares both the school and the community for higher levels of engagement.

Comer Schools combine informal practices and formal structures to create the conditions for achieving Gary Anderson's (1998) definition of authentic participation—"relevant stakeholders and relatively safe, structured spaces for multiple voices to be heard" (p. 575). Indeed, Villenas and Groves (2001) found that authentic participation made one Comer School the "pride of the community and the center for community advocacy" (p. 54).

Comer Schools are a fairly unique school approach that challenges both the structure and behavioral attitudes of the traditional common school. Chet Bowers (1986) has written about the need for a learning process that brings to the surface the deeply embedded values and beliefs that create social reality and explain behavior and the exploration of existing attitudes about the way schools should behave. Creating this kind of learning environment is the key to transitioning to a Comer school. The Spring Creek Community School will be confronting many of the most powerful and sacred public school traditions as part of the establishment of a new culture and organization.

As a newly established Comer community school, it will take some time for the Spring Creek Community School (SCCS) to change its behavior in order to welcome meaningful family and community participation. One of the keys here is how effectively

the Comer principal at SCCS creates a learning environment that allows all potential

collaborators the opportunity to explore both old and new patterns of behavior. A second

part will be how much the Comer model allows for external involvement in the

preparation process. Even though success of Comer schools is tied to its recognition that

meaningful family and community involvement are essential parts of the overall plan, the

literature has shown the school remains the dominant partner in preparing external

participants for engagement in Comer Schools.

The community-based organization (CBO) educational model begins the

transitions away from the school as primary leader and the traditional school building as

the physical and social location of community enrichment programs to one where

preparation for participation in order to improve student achievement is led by outside

groups. These groups, mainly CBO's and youth-serving agencies, may or may not need

to use the existing school structure as a location for services. Enrichments are no longer

designed, implemented, and administered solely by schools, but originate in CBO's that

use their own organization, structure and personnel to deliver these programs. This next

section describes the services and structure of community-based organization educational

support.

Community-Based Organization (CBO) Educational Support Model. Among

the reasons for the rise of CBO educational support is the realization that outside

organizations have the potential and resources to contribute to the movement for better

student performance. Janice Hirota and Lauren Jacobs (2003) captured the thinking

behind this approach when they wrote that "school reform that focused on creating

change within schools has not taken into account the need to engage many groups with an

interest in education" (p. 13). They believed that "active and meaningful participation of broad constituencies is essential for relevant, effective, equitable and sustainable reform" (p. 14). They argued that meaningful involvement of CBO's in providing academic, social, and cultural programs needed to be part of the reform plan.

John Kretzman and John McKnight (1993) echoed this thought when they talked about the potential of CBO's to more fully develop community assets. These declarations reflected a belief that external organization could provide enrichment programs specifically designed for families and community members. (Note that there are an ever increasing number of private companies offering academic enrichments— Kumon tutoring services, Sylvan test prep, Kaplan, etc.— whose for profit status exempts them from this discussion.)

As CBO's respond to the needs of students in urban schools, the perception of some of these organizations as recreation centers limited to physical activities is undergoing significant change. CBO's are responding to student achievement by expanding their organizational offerings to include more programs in educational enrichments and community-strengthening programs. CBO educational support programs are mainly out-of-school time enrichments because they are run fairly independent of the traditional school structure and occur after the school day is over.

Although many of the programs are meant to compliment the school curriculum and classroom lessons, the programs are largely developed, administered, and taught by CBO staff. This does not mean there is no dialogue between schools and CBO's, but a number of studies (Mediratta, 2001, 2007; Zimmer and Mediratta, 2003; Mediratta and Fruchter, 2003) have found that the level of coordination and collaboration can be quite

uneven, a reality Richard Gray and Laura Wheeldreyer (2001) tied to issues of control based on traditional role identity (Gray and Wheeldreyer, 2001).

One of the more prominent national CBO's, the Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC) has synthesized programs into five core areas: 1) Character and leadership development, 2) Education and career development, 3) Health and life skills, 4) The arts, and, 5) Sports, fitness and recreation (Fredericks, Hackett, and Bregman, 2010). In a survey of youth who used BGC, they found the availability of educational support was the third most cited reason students attended BGC and in their analysis of patterns of attendance, Bregman, et al., also found kids were looking for OST activities. They also discovered sports and recreational activities were not the primary reason kids attended BGC, but that the nontraditional setting and social environment were motivating factors to participation.

The national organization then allows the local branches a great deal of flexibility in working with the community. The Milwaukee Boys and Girls Club, for instance, has established extensive partnerships with Milwaukee area public, charter and private schools and the BGC delivers a variety of programs in literacy, character building, and recreational activities to over 35,000 members (Boys and Girls Club, 2013). These programs are carried out in B&G buildings, as well as at the specific schools.

All it takes to see how deep the commitment of the YMCA into supporting education is to look at the broad number of programs being offered by local branches (Hartman, Watson, Kantorek, 2001) that are specifically constructed to address student achievement. In a study done on a YMCA in a predominately Latino area of Los Angeles, researchers Julie O'Donnell, Sandra Kirkner, and Nancy Meyer (2008) detailed the structure and programs of OST activities that were created in response to the needs of

families and students in local schools. After seeking input from the local school and a variety of neighborhood community agencies, the Y established parenting and ESL classes that were specifically designed outreach strategies intent on increasing the capacity of parents to meaningfully interact with the staff in their child's school. They also offered after-school tutoring in English and math for neighborhood students. While this Y also continued to offer physical and social activities, in response to community educational needs, it was transforming from the old perception of glorified gym to one that was capable of providing the community with a diversity of services.

The New York City Beacon, named so because their founders considered them "lighted schoolhouses," were designed to provide youth and adults with a diversity of activities, including homework and tutoring, literacy programs, ESL programs, cultural activities, vocational activities, and physical recreation activities (Kleinbard, 2005, Dryfoos, 2002). These activities were developed across disciplines and included input from "police precincts, community schools, planning boards, government agencies, as well as religious and business organizations" (p. 29). The Beacons were well-organized and provided a coherent framework for organizing OST enrichments and supports. Beacon staffers were challenged to provide students with adult role models, caring relationships, a sense of belonging, and a safe environment; neighborhood CBO's also incorporated the Beacon program in their own buildings. As of 2005, over 80 CBO's were operating Beacon programs, and 140,000 young people and family were participating in Beacon activities.

In an evaluation of Beacon effectiveness commissioned by the Youth Development Institute of New York City (Warren, Feist, & Nevarez, 2002), researchers

used surveys, interviews, and observations to gather data on the attitudes of Beacon participants. While youth, parents, and the larger community provided highly favorable feedback about the Beacon programs and staff, researchers also found that the one area where Beacons seemed to struggle was in building a strong connection between the school and the Beacons. According to Warren et al., Beacons worked to "make school staff aware of their presence and what they offer children, but only a relatively small proportion of school staff felt informed about the Beacons in their building, and an even smaller group had participated in Beacon activities" (p. 10).

This lack of communication across organizations represents a principle challenge to CBO-school collaboration. However, there are studies showing that it is not an insurmountable obstacle, but requires good leadership and in-depth knowledge of local conditions and behaviors. In a study of Baltimore neighborhood engagement in school improvement, researchers Richard Gray and Laura Wheeldreyer (2001) detailed the strategic process that locally-based Southeast Education Taskforce (SET) used in order to create effective collaborations between diverse groups. Based on its knowledge of local conditions, SET knew the school leader was a key link in building a positive school-community relationship and it set out to forge "alliances between the community and key decision-makers in schools, particularly the principal" (p. 15). By working with schools, rather than confronting them, SET was able to get educators connected to the neighborhood in a broad reform effort that eventually generated some positive results for Baltimore public schools

Elsewhere, the Alliance Organizing Project (AOP) was a Philadelphia community initiative that included parent leadership training programs as part of its initiatives to help

parents improve their skills and knowledge so they could support schools. In Chris Brown's (2003) case study of AOP, he initially found "most principals anticipated that AOP would be confrontational and disruptive, and some associated AOP with previous community-control efforts that they believed sought to disempower education professionals" (p. 14). Brown, however, reported that because AOP focused on programs that constructively prepared parents and the community with the training and resources they needed to act responsibly in representing parent interests at their children's schools, initial school resistance to working with AOP eventually transitioned to one of respect and appreciation for its role. He concluded by noting that AOP "is now recognized as a major player in school reform" (p. 15). The success of SET and AOP's was based on: 1) Its knowledge of local conditions, 2) Its organizational flexibility, and 3) Leaderships that had the skills to forge trust between the organizations.

The fact both local and national CBO's have buildings and branches in low-income neighborhoods means they are potentially less alienating and, therefore, more empathetic partners (Fredricks, Hackett, Bergman, 2010; White and Wehlage, (1995). Jenny Tripses and Lori Scroggs (2009) studied a grass-roots collaborative effort between a local church congregation and a high poverty elementary school in Chicago. Essentially adopting the school, the congregation organized, funded, and ran a variety of academic enrichment programs, a soccer league, a children's choir, holiday parties, and neighborhood beautification drives. Over 250 church volunteers were involved in programs devised in collaboration with the school. At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, the school was designated as an Illinois Spotlight School, defined as high-poverty, high-performing schools who are beating the "achievement gap" (p. 79).

Additionally, although the church role was considered an important part of the school's improvement, one church volunteer remarked that working with the school has "been a gift! We get a lot more out of it than anyone else" (p. 86).

The key pieces of this collaboration were the natural connection between the two groups, school personnel open to external involvement, a diversity of programs—many of them quite simple in their organization—developed through a collaborative process of communication between church and school, and the spirituality that guided the participants. Based on their findings, Jenny Tripses and Lori Scroggs (2009) made the following conclusion:

> What we did not anticipate, but came to appreciate, was the benefit of the collaboration to all stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, volunteers from the congregation, and program leaders. Based upon shared values of working together to improve the well-being of the students, as well as extraordinary leadership coupled with exquisite attention to detail, this collaboration has resulted in performance beyond all expectations. (p. 94).

While the community-led educational support model is different from the school control model because the community is assuming a more prominent leadership role in creating and administering services, both models are connected by the recognition that community can be a valuable partner. Control is essentially flipped, but both models share a common focus on providing students with academic, moral, and spiritual support. Success is at least partially tied to strong local knowledge, an expansion of service offerings, and skilled leaders who are able to build collaboration. With the rise of more active--and powerful--neighborhood associations, we are beginning to see the next step in the gradual transition from strong school control to strong community involvement over the relationship. Moreover, school control and CBO educational support remained

primarily focused on improving student achievement; more powerful neighborhood

associations like Chicago's Logan Square Neighborhood Association and the Bronx

Harlem Children's Zone are engaging in a range of reform efforts that include local

educational performance in their overall plan to revitalize the local community.

What distinguishes these types of organizations from other CBO's is that they are

oriented to connect academic performance to broader influences, such as issues of equity,

race, housing, poverty, transportation, and jobs (Wilson 1997, Rothstein 2006, White,

1987; Lyman and Villani, 2002, Anyon, 1997). Indeed, when Jean Anyon (2005) wrote

that "whenever possible, link educational issues to community issues regarding jobs,

housing, transportation, and investment" (p. 184), she was talking about the need to

include these factors in the construction of a reform plan aimed at school improvement.

It is this broader orientation that has been responsible for the rise of neighborhood

association. Further, because it has roots in the economic, educational, cultural, and

political realities of its local community, it has a rather unique approach to school change

and one that warrants separate treatment as a school-community engagement model.

Both school control and CBO educational support are tied to traditional ways to

go about school improvement. Whether it is inside or outside the four walls of the school

building, school performance is ultimately determined by what goes on inside the school

and the classroom. While there are a limited number of high profile neighborhood

associations leading the broad effort of connecting neighborhood revitalization and

educational improvement, their rise as credible actors with a decidedly different way to

think about change means the neighborhood association-led revitalization model warrants

inclusion as another, albeit radically different, school-community model of school

improvement. Moreover, because the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association (MHNA) has declared its intention to be a high profile, local leader of neighborhood and school improvement, it is important to more fully develop the neighborhood association-led revitalization model as its own approach to school improvement.

Neighborhood Association-Led Revitalization Model. When Jean Anyon (2005) called for a new educational paradigm, an important part of this new paradigm was her conception of the way we traditionally comprehend community. For many school-community theorists, community is largely limited to teachers, administrators, and parents. Anyon saw community as not only parents, but surrounding churches, businesses, social service agencies, non-profits, and politicians who she thought needed to be mobilized on behalf of a large-scale plan for social, cultural, educational, and economic change. Because these groups also shared an interest in student performance, they, too, had a stake in education. However, their involvement—and potential power— was largely overlooked or undervalued. When adequately prepared for mobilization, these groups could bring energy and commitment to the issues facing education and society in general.

As we learned from Tyack (1974), from the outset, the common school movement was premised on the belief that the business of education was best left to the experts. Anyon's new paradigm of thinking about educational change was based on the argument that grass roots organizations should be involved in developing strategies aimed at addressing unequal economic, political, and social conditions in urban neighborhoods. Because neighborhood associations had historically included these issues in their organizational plan for improvement, they were positioned to bridge the gap in thinking

about ways to improve student performance. Although rising levels of frustration with educational achievement in urban schools have certainly generated a number of reform movements, a paradigm that included greater community involvement has quite possibly reached its apex in the neighborhood association-led revitalization model.

Although much of the thinking about community involvement focuses on the potential of human agency engage on behalf of positive change, in a time of tight budgets, community groups are also poised to bring needed financial resources to schools (Hands, 2010). For instance, in a study of Atlanta businesses, Diane Hoff (2002) found they were willing to commit time and money to schools, but wanted more meaningful involvement in the process. Traditionally asked to provide free tickets to the ballgame or student recognition certificates, these businesses were frustrated by the lack of school communication and leadership in creating a process that could lead to more meaningful input. If schools can create a culture that conveys collaborative appreciation, external groups and funders in general could bring previously untapped financial resources to urban schools that are stretch to the limit.

That said, the potential of neighborhood involvement is linked to the belief that grass roots mobilization brings energy and commitment to the challenges facing urban schools—attitudes that have been marginalized by history and current conditions. Mark Warren (2005) referred to an approach that emphasized high levels of community-based collaboration and leadership in the school-community relationship as the "organizing model" (p. 139). In the organizing model, community groups—mainly understood to be highly influential neighborhood associations—were organizing and structuring programs that clearly prepared the community member to assume active leadership to change

conditions in schools and neighborhoods. He wrote "when community organizing groups collaborate with public schools, they take their emphasis on building power for social and political change into the school itself through processes of relationship building, leadership development, and public action" (p. 152). In the organizing model, the community-based organizations are engaged in a variety of activities that build the social capital and relational power of families and the neighborhood in general so these groups can be active, viable participants in a movement for educational, economic, political, and social justice.

Warren (2001, 2005, and 2011) based the organizing model on his extensive work with The Logan Square Neighborhood Association, a south side Chicago neighborhood association that has become a major presence in that area's revitalization. Logan Square began as a neighborhood association looking at ways to improve economic conditions in the neighborhood, but eventually began to connect economic, political, social, cultural, and education programs into a broad strategy that would positively impact the neighborhood. According to Warren, Logan Square has been responsible for opening community learning centers, creating workplace training programs, helping attract more affordable housing to Logan Square, fostering economic development, planting neighborhood gardens, and implementing a number of community safety programs.

While these types of initiatives are traditionally under the auspices of the neighborhood associations, according to Warren (2005, 2011), in the early 1990s Logan Square became more interested in school performance. Beginning with successful efforts to pressure politicians into providing funds for school expansion, Logan Square soon organized programs that addressed the capacity of parents to be effective participant

issues facing local schools. In 2005, Logan Square's establishment of the Parent Mentor program enabled parents to become "public leaders in their schools" (Warren, 2005, p. 154). With the goal of active participation and decision making in the schools, parent workshops on a variety of educational and social issues were conducted on a regular basis. Warren traced the establishment of community learning centers, GED programs, citizenship classes, and a literacy ambassador program to the effectiveness of the Parent Mentor programs. As a result of these initiatives, Warren found teachers at Logan Square neighborhood schools were responding positively toward a more visible and active parent presence in schools, with one principal reporting that 95% of teachers have "taken a liking to parents" (p. 157).

Positive attitudes between parents and schools have translated to improvements in the Logan Square neighborhood schools' student performance. Math and reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills at Logan Square Neighborhood Association-affiliated schools have been steadily rising, disciplinary referrals are going down, and attendance is increasing across all schools. Although Warren (2005) does not attribute these numbers solely to Logan Square programs, in a survey of teachers at Logan Square Neighborhood Association-affiliated, 71% tied improved discipline to the parent mentor program and the presence of parents in the schools. The success of Logan Square Neighborhood Association—affiliated schools has attracted over $1 million a year in funding from foundations and government agencies, money that goes directly to learning centers and other school-directed programs.

What we have seen from the Logan Square experience is a neighborhood association that has transitioned from one that exerted indirect influence on school

performance, through economic, political, and social changes to the surrounding neighborhood, to one that is designing and implementing programs directly influencing the structure, organization—and ultimately—the performance of schools in its geographic area. It is expanding the traditional scope of neighborhood association activities to include a program that directly supports neighborhood schools. Because Logan Square does not have any public or charter schools under its direct control, it has had to implement a relationship building process under which two relative strangers begin to work in collaboration on issues of mutual importance. Given that these are two independent organizations, Logan Square constructed a program that created high levels of trust between parents and the schools. Moreover, through exposure to each other in meaningful roles, both groups recognize the value of collaboration.

Like Logan Square, the Harlem Children's Zone also has a diversity of services and structures focused on improving neighborhood conditions. Originally started in the early 1990s as a one-block pilot project, today the Harlem Children's Zone encompasses 200 blocks and serves over 10,000 children and 7,400 adults (Steele, 2009). The Harlem Children's Zone has its own Family Support Centers, health clinics, Beacon learning centers, 39 block associations, tenant associations, economic development offices, and job skills programs. All programs reflect the well-defined mission of Harlem Children's Zone and are operated out of a central CBO that employs over 400 people and is led by its founder, Geoffrey Canada (Austin, Lemon, Leer, 2005). The Harlem Children's Zone has become a national model for holistic neighborhood revitalization.

Unlike Logan Square, the Harlem Children's Zone not only has some educational programs at work in schools, it also founded and runs its own schools, starting from early

childhood and running all the way through high school. Its educational approach includes extended school days, after school enrichments, weekend tutoring, linguistic development, college counseling, health/nutrition, and a wide range of pre-kindergarten programs. Adult programs include classes and workshops in adult literacy, teen pregnancy/parenting, job training, nutrition, substance abuse, tax preparation, and computer literacy. These programs are run out of Harlem Children's Zone buildings and are guided by a cradle-to-career mindset, providing structure and socialization for children from birth through college graduation, as well as a variety of adult programs that aim to improve the neighborhood.

Student attending the three Promise Academy charter schools are taught to think of college as the principle goal of their education. In order to prepare students to compete to attend college, the Harlem Children's Zone has longer school days and an almost year-round network of support for its students. It has a college counseling center that also provides meaningful guidance to its students. In 2011, 90% of the Promise Academy students were accepted into colleges and the class received over $6 million in scholarships. The Harlem Children's Zone holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization was adopted by the Obama Administration as the model for its Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, a federal program that provides significant support for non-profits to build "a complete continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center" (DOE, 2013).

Although Logan Square and Harlem Children's Zone are both neighborhood associations, there are great variations in the way each organization works for school

improvement. Harlem Children's Zone's tight control over the structure and organization of its broad neighborhood services, including the fact that it has its own charter schools, affects how it understands the idea of collaboration so important to Warren's organizing model. Harlem Children's Zone's programs are clearly addressing the individual needs of community members, but lack the collective element that characterizes Logan Square emphasis on building relational power. The organizing model Warren has developed to explain Logan Square behavior sees the school-neighborhood relationship as a collaborative undertaking, an important part of Warren's organizing model is a coherent program of social capital building creating the relational power that external groups need to be equal, respected partners in schools. While school improvement is the goal of neighborhood-school collaboration, it is also implementing a learning process that enables both groups to be authentic participants in realizing this goal.

Harlem Children's Zone, on the other hand, is a powerful local organization with broad control over a myriad of services. It tightly controls and determines the rules and behaviors of community participation. Earlier in this paper I referenced Novella Keith's (1996) belief that schools traditionally view parents and community members as "service recipients" (p. 241); while Harlem Children's Zone is not school, its structure, organization, and behavior reflects an attitude that both the school and the community are recipients of the Harlem Children's Zone services. Its approach to strengthening community for active, engaged participation in schools is based on a belief that a college degree is the best way to create opportunity and engagement. There are some fundamental differences in the scope of school involvement by these two neighborhood associations. One of the interesting challenges facing the MHNA as it builds a school-

community approach is recognizing their own limitations in creating programs that support school improvement.

In the neighborhood association-led revitalization model, the Harlem Children's Zone is perhaps the most extreme example of a powerful community-based association directly controlling what happens within its geographic boundaries. In 2011 and 2012, the MHNA leadership submitted grant proposals to the Promise Neighborhoods funding organization. Because these grants are holistic in their intention to address neighborhood conditions linked to school improvement, this means the question of whether the Harlem Children's Zone can be, or should be, emulated in terms of scope and depth of control (Whitehurst and Croft, 2010) will be an interesting part of the case study. The Harlem Children's Zone has such a depth of control over programs and that level of control introduces an interesting dynamic into the study of MHNA involvement in school reform. Although this study is not evaluating the specific effectiveness of the Harlem Children's Zone, as an organizational approach that other neighborhood associations are looking to emulate, its influence on the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association will be part of the study.

The tradition of neighborhood association activism is rooted in addressing economic, social, economic, and political inequality (Fisher, 1984). These associations have a rich history of organizing and mobilizing people and resources to address conditions facing urban communities. With the expansion of neighborhood associations programs to include some that directly address community participation in schools, we are seeing a significant shift in the traditional orientation of this type of community-based organization. Programs aimed at addressing issues of poverty, employment, social

services, and health aim to change the conditions that surround schools. If we see that type of change as indirectly affecting schools, we also see examples of neighborhood association programming that is designed to directly address the preparation of families and community to actively participant in their local schools. These can range from parent mentor and adult enrichment programs to starting their own schools as part of a holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization. This indirect-direct combination of programs to support school improvement reflects the expansion of neighborhood association responsibilities. How the MHNA creates and administers both indirect and direct programs will be an important part of this case study.

Four School-Community Involvement Models-A Summary

As a way to organize the literature on the four models of school-community interaction, I developed the School-Community Structure Typology (Diagram 4). There are four types of school-community involvement: 1) School control, 2) Community Schools, 3) Community-based Organization (CBO) Educational Support, and, 4) Neighborhood Association-Led Community Revitalization. I have identified four factors that have in common: 1) Location, 2) Program construction, 3) Organization and structure, and, 4) Implementation. I will define each one of these factors in order to apply each to the four types of school-community involvement types.

In addition to these factors, I also designed the typology to convey the fact that structures and services are intimately tied to control and responsibility. Using structure and program delivery to define the parameters of control, there are essentially three focal points of control: 1) School, 2 School-Community, and, 3) Community. Control is

designed as a continuum that starts with the school as the more powerful partner in the

relationship and transitions to one where community has assumed some level of control

over the programs that are being developed to support schools. In between those two

points is school-community, which signifies shared responsibility over structure and

services. I included an internal-external dichotomy on the continuum because those two

words accurately describe whether programs are located primarily inside the four walls of

the school building (internal) or outside the traditional school building (external).

Diagram 4
School-Community Structure Typology

Shared Structural Factors Location Program Initiation Organization Implementation	School-Community Control Continuum		
	SCHOOL (Internal)	SCHOOL Community	COMMUNITY School	COMMUNITY (External)
Model				
School-Led Outreach	Location Program Initiation Organization Implementation			
Community Schools	Location	Program Initiation Organization Implementation	Program Initiation Organization Implementation	
Community Based Educational Support	Location		Location Program Initiation Organization Implementation	
Community Based Neighborhood Revitalization	Location			Location Program Initiation Organization Implementation

Factor I: Location. "Location" means simply the physical location where

programs and services are carried out. The school building is a natural location for

programs being established in response to school-community interaction; all four models

use the school building, albeit to varying degrees. The community-school model, for

instance, locates all school and non-school services in the traditional school building, whereas CBO educational support programs are housed in both the school building and in their own centers. There is also pragmatic realization that empty school buildings can be used by CBO's for after-school activities. In the case of one highly successful school-community collaboration in a New Jersey elementary school, the school allowed the CBO to use the building to conduct after-school programs rent free (Villani, 2004). For the diversity of services and activities, community schools use the school building from early in the day until late at night. As we saw with community schools, though, physical location does not guarantee effective cross-organizational communication. What we do know from the literature is when a school opens its doors to community programming, it has generally created positive attitudes and behaviors.

Factor II: Program Construction. The second shared factor in the structural typology is "Program Construction."   If location is the physical setting, program construction is based on responsibility for establishing a program. The literature clearly provided examples of both schools and community-based organization assuming responsibility and leadership for programs that address community preparedness to engage. In the first section of the literature review, I discussed social, educational, and community assets capital and while there are differences in the desired outcome of these three types of capacity building programs, both the school and the CBO's are heavily involved in capacity building. In addition, the community school structure, with its delineation of educational and non-educational services, means programs are being constructed by both groups in the same building.

Factor III: Organization and Structure. The third factor shared by all four models is "Organization and Structure." Organization and structure are based on the ways both the school and the community are expanding their organizational scope and structures in response to the demands associated with community involvement in school improvement. Schools and CBO's are initiating new programs and traditional identities—the YMCA as the rec center, for instance—are being altered by the expanded number of programs being created and administered in these building. Perhaps the most radical example of this factor is the way the Comer approach is reconceptualizing the traditional school structure and organization. Establishing a governance structure that includes meaningful community participation, for instance, is one piece of a comprehensive plan that accounts for expanded community involvement.

Factor IV: Implementation. Implementation is the culminating fourth factor in the school-community relationship building process. Implementation relates to responsibility for putting programs into action. Although schools have historically considered themselves primarily responsible for the scope and content of community involvement programs, CBO's have become more actively engaged in initiating and then implementing school-community programs. In the case of community schools, programs are being created simultaneously on behalf of student achievement. Generally construction and implementation go together; we also know in situations where there are high levels of collaboration, the implementation of initiatives can be shared by the school and the CBO—as in the case of the Logan Square-neighborhood school relationship.

The problem with all typologies is they try to neatly assign factors to categories; but, as we know, high levels of school-community engagement challenge traditional lines

of authority and control. Generally, the typology reflects the belief that the school

control and neighborhood association-led revitalization models more clearly delineate

duties and responsibilities. While schools have traditionally viewed themselves as the

collaborative leader, with the excitement surrounding the Harlem Children's Zone as a

national model, we are seeing external organizations assuming a powerful role in creating

collaboration. All four models are based on the belief that an engaged community can

contribute to school improvement. We also know historically embedded patterns of

behavior greatly influence how this relationship unfolds. Even the community school

model, ostensibly a structure designed to bridge the internal-external dichotomy, can be

adversely affected by traditional lines of power and control. While nothing is as simple

or clear as suggested by the typology, it does allow us to organize the literature into a

coherent framework.

Literature Review Conclusion

A number of themes have emerged from the literature on the school-community

engagement phenomenon. Perhaps the most important is that there are two parts to the

school-community engagement literature: 1) The human capacity to meaningful

involvement is being addressed by a process that addresses levels of social, educational,

and community assets capital, and, 2) Structures and services are being implemented to

handle to expanding participation by outside groups. While the literature on school-

community engagement is expanding and contains a diversity of theories about the most

effective way to mobilize outside groups, an important lesson is that the two parts need to

be connected in order to create conditions for successful engagement. In the absence of

structures and organizations designed to guide outside involvement, careful preparation of external groups to engage as either individuals or as a collective might not produce the desired effect. A carefully constructed learning process that prepares groups for engagement needs both formal structures and an informal environment for these groups.

A second important finding from the literature is there are great variations in the way theorists define and envision meaningful community participation. Some of the more notable school-community theorists, such as Epstein (1995), Dryfoos (2002, 2005), and Sanders (2001, 2003, 2009), largely see community—mainly parents—engaged as individuals on behalf of educational improvement. Improving individual student performance is the first step in a process that will eventually impact the larger community. Additionally, while their orientation is different from schools, CBO's like the Harlem Children's Zone and Logan Square see a link between education and broader neighborhood revitalization. In that context, community's role, though valuable, remains limited to supporting the needs of the existing educational system. While the reemergence of community in school reform is important, its behavior actually reinforces the existing common school paradigm by reducing the significance of the community as an equal in the partnership.

Contrast that way of thinking with theorists such as Warren (2002, 2005, 2009, 2011), Keith (1996), Anyon (1995, 1997, 2005), Schutz (2006), Comer (1997) and Anderson (1996), who envision a community more collectively active and engaged in not only school improvement, but community revitalization in general. For these theorists, community is understood to be far broader than parents and includes schools, neighbors, non-profits, churches, and businesses—any group that has roots in the local

neighborhood and is committed to seeing its community grow and thrive. In the case of Logan Square, for instance, programs that are preparing families to be leaders in the schools are also creating leaders in the neighborhood. These theorists see these external groups as equal participants in a reform movement incorporating education into an overall plan for change. For these theorists, the community is challenged to play a more meaningful role in helping to accomplish that plan.

The third theme is the important role leadership plays in creating conditions conducive to community involvement. Collaboration challenges the existing culture of schools, but school leaders who recognize the value of collaboration are creating a process that builds a culture of collaboration and openness. The literature showed examples where school-community programs that did not achieve the desired results were usually due to the absence of either a coherent plan or committed leadership. School leaders had to not only value external involvement, but also be intimately involved in creating a plan to prepare faculty and staff for a different relationship with parents and other community members.

The last theme is the importance of local knowledge in creating a strong relationship between the two groups. An understanding of the reality of local conditions simply cannot be underestimated when talking about a process of relationship building that is tied to local needs. The literature provided a number of examples where strategies were successfully designed on the basis of local understanding. Legitimacy and credibility are intimately tied to factors such as trust, familiarity, and knowledge. Local organizations—or national organizations who give their local branches freedom and flexibility—are better positioned to build strong partnerships with schools. Novella Keith

(1996) wrote "genuine educational reform requires new links to be built between schools and communities, links that are informed by an understanding of broad socioeconomic trends, as well as the local culture, history, and social dynamics" (p. 256).

All of these themes are based on the subtle ways the existing school paradigm exerts control over the way theorists understand the scope and depth of community involvement in school. While the idea of greater community involvement sounds radical when compared to its traditional role of community in schools, the reality is many of the programs continue to reinforce a hierarchy of school control and community subservience. The school remains the dominant partner and the potential of community growth remains largely dependent on what the school deems necessary for its purposes. Sanders, Dryfoos, and Epstein are proposing what looks to be fairly significant changes in the way we organize schools, but the reality is that behavior remains largely defined by tradition and actually makes their constructs rather safe and cautious.

However, because power and control remain largely in the hands of the school, these theorists have not been able to escape the "intellectual straitjacket" (Lin, 1979) of the traditional paradigm. Given the absence of community in schools, its involvement at any level is a healthy development, but there is nothing terribly radical about their conception of community involvement. Because roles and behaviors are rather predictable and groups clearly know their place in the hierarchy, the works of Dryfoos, Epstein et al. actually protect the existing paradigm.

Theorists like Anyon, Warren, Keith, et al., differ from their more cautious community involvement colleagues in their belief that community participation fundamentally challenges the power and control of roles that have been defined and

protected by the traditional school paradigm. While the distinction between theorists may seem subtle, the reality is there are significant differences in the way community is conceptualized. If for over a century schools have been operating under essentially the same structure, one with fairly well-defined roles and responsibilities, these theorists are presenting a radically different way of organizing education. For radical theorists like Anyon and Anderson, the hierarchy is being challenged by one where the community emerges as an authentically viable participant. It is this equality—based on a sense of respect that has been developed through a process that strengthens the capacity of participants—that represents one of the fundamental challenges to the common school paradigm. By breaking up the bureaucratic isolation and professional dominance of the educational system, they believe a vibrant, valued community can help with urban school improvement.

The second part of this approach to change is the idea that school improvement is linked to improvements in the external surroundings. These surroundings create attitudes and behaviors that affect school performance. The literature has provided examples of schools, community-based organizations, and neighborhood associations that have engaged in a diversity of innovative strategies that address the neighborhood conditions that affect school improvement.

Indeed, an active, emboldened MHNA is challenging a powerful public school paradigm that has not necessarily recognized the potential of outside forces to collaborate more authentically on behalf of school performance. There are three parts to this process of participation: 1) Empower organizations and groups not typically considered part of the educational establishment to create new conditions, 2) Accept the value of an

approach that indirectly and directly addresses factors determining behavior and influence performance, and, 3) Develop an evaluation piece accurately assessing the different approaches theorists have proposed for broad reform.

Among the ways we judge successful urban school improvement are rising test scores, increased attendance, decreased behavioral referrals, higher graduation rates, and an increasing number of students attending colleges. However, neighborhood associations and other CBO's are addressing local conditions such as crime, housing, economic activity, and health care as part of a plan to improve the environment and conditions in which schools are located. Connecting improvements in attitudes and performance to changes in the external environment is a challenge.

Warren (2005) pointed out the success of Logan Square has been based on what he referred to as a combination of anecdotal information and hard test score data. The anecdotal information is tied to feedback provided by community members who speak to the power of local conditions to determine behavior. It is difficult to tie outcomes to changes in the surroundings, but these changes in the quality of the neighborhood need to be recognized for their power to influence performance. What is needed, then, is a methodological approach that gathers data which adequately describe the different ways neighborhood associations are addressing local conditions and then exploring how different attitudes and behaviors are contributing to outcomes and performance. The next section will describe the construction of a methodology that accurately incorporates qualitative and quantitative changes in the neighborhood, both of which explain performance and achievement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In order to make a contribution to the existing literature on school-community engagement, I believe the best methodological approach is one that can accurately describe the dynamic interaction between two groups whose identity and purpose are descended from decidedly different traditions. Although both the neighborhood association and the school are seeing the need for some kind of relationship, the history and organizational development of both groups largely determines the quantity and quality of collaboration towards this goal. I like what Deborah Britzman (1995) meant when she wrote "ethnography promises to give voice to those people previously silenced by the research apparatus" (p. 152). I want to hear from those people and groups that have been largely marginalized by the traditional common school paradigm. An important part of this study is to hear the voice of the neighborhood association in their effort to support neighborhood schools.

The underlying assumption in this case study is people create the conditions and structures for community involvement; a qualitative study, then, offers a suitable approach to describe the way participants understand each other—and themselves—as they attempt to work together to implement a different way of achieving school reform. In their explanation of critical ethnography as a research methodology, Douglas Foley and Angela Valenzuela (2005) talked about how a small number of critical ethnographer were doing research on "progressive social movements and community-based reforms" that focus on the relationship between "powerful institutions and disenfranchised

citizens" (p. 220). I think this statement is highly descriptive of the school-community relational dichotomy. Schools are the powerful institutions and disenfranchised citizens are the community that has been largely ignored in looking at ways to improve school performance.

In the early 1990s, the Harlem Children's Zone began as a one block revitalization effort in one of New York's poorest neighborhoods. Today, led by its charismatic executive director, Geoffrey Canada, the Harlem Children's Zone has become a national model for neighborhood revitalization. While the Harlem Children's Zone experience has created both interest and excitement for the potential of neighborhood associations to assist in school improvement, my initial interest in this reform strategy was generated by the Logan Square Neighborhood Association role in the revitalization of the Logan Square neighborhood on Chicago's near south side. Logan Square has undergone large-scale economic and social revitalization. Logan Square has played an important role in this renewal. As a highly influential, local organization that has established strong collaborations with many public and private schools in its geographic area, the Logan Square has also earned a national reputation for positively leading neighborhood renewal. Now with both the Harlem Children's Zone and the Logan Square serving as models for neighborhood association leadership, it is clear that school improvement strategies can also originate outside the four walls of the school building.

Site Selection

In a 2010 data search, I read an article in a local newspaper describing a Midwest-

based neighborhood association that declared its intention to establish a Harlem Children's Zone -like structure in their neighborhood (Pabst, 2010). According to the Executive Director of the neighborhood association, the intention was to "build the infrastructure for an effort similar to the Harlem Children's Zone" in order to address the realities facing its community. In doing further research, I also found that neighborhood public schools were incorporated into their overall reform plan.

The combination of a neighborhood association with an intention to build a Harlem Children's Zone -like structure, with its high level of control over local conditions, and its intention to include public schools in its reform plan means that this neighborhood association is interested in some combination of Harlem Children's Zone and Logan Square programming. However, location, size, and history lend to uniqueness and that means this is another opportunity to expand the literature on the role a neighborhood association can play in school improvement. Before I begin a description of this research site, please note the name of the city, the neighborhood association, schools, and all informants have been changed.

Within Bridge Harbor, a large Midwestern city of over 603,000 residents with an underperforming public school system, the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association (MHNA) has declared its intention to lead a broad effort at economic, social, and educational improvement for its local residents. Founded in 2002, the MHNA covers a 30 block radius neighborhood in a section of Bridge Harbor once considered so dangerous police advised people to "stay out of the neighborhood, even during the day" (Maple Heights, 2010).

Bridge Harbor was once a thriving manufacturing town, but between 1997 and

2008 manufacturing jobs fell by 38%. This loss of blue collar jobs hit Black males especially hard. In 2008, Black male joblessness in the Bridge Harbor metro area was among the highest in large Midwestern cities, with almost 50% of Black males between the ages of 16-64 unemployed. Additionally, 36% of African American families in Bridge Harbor live below the poverty level (U.S. Census, 2010) among cities with a population over 250,000, in 2010 Bridge Harbor ranked the fourth poorest in the nation (Larsen, 2011). In 2003 Bridge Harbor ranked fourth worst among the 25 largest cities for percent of total births to teens under 20 (Rast, 2010). While teen pregnancy rates have dropped over the past two years, teen pregnancy in Bridge Harbor remains among the highest in the United States.

Maple Heights is a neighborhood that is among the poorest in Bridge Harbor. In fact, its two zip codes are the poorest in the city (US Census, American Fact Finder, 2007-2011). In a neighborhood that is 93% African American, in 2010, 48% of the Maple Heights residents were living below the poverty level, 25% were unemployed, and 45% did not graduate from high school (Maple Heights, 2010). Additionally, only 36% of residents owned their own house and as of 2010 nearly one-third of houses in Maple Heights were vacant (Larsen, 2011).

The public school system in Bridge Harbor is badly underperforming. A 2010 report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported reading scores for 18 large school districts and Bridge Harbor ranked next to last for Black 4th graders (NAEP, 2010). Overall, Black 4th grade reading scores for the entire state trailed those of their racial peers in every other state and the District of Columbia. Only 33% of the state's 4th graders scored at a level considered proficient or advanced by the test; the rest scored at a

basic level or lower (NAEP, 2010). In 2010, 59% of Blacks statewide graduated from a four year high school (State DPI, 2011), but as of 2008, only 10% of Bridge Harbor's Black population had a four year college degree (Rast, 2010).

Student standardized test performance at public schools in the Maple Heights neighborhood are among the lowest in the city. In 2008, students in Maple Heights elementary schools scored 19 points below the district average in reading and 17 points below district average in math. Only 12% of 10th graders achieved proficiency in math. The state recently developed a report card on schools and the four Maple Heights public schools were all placed in the lowest category.

Since the early 2000s Maple Heights has received large amounts of public and private money as part of a large-scale neighborhood revitalization effort. The MHNA has been empowered to supervise the distribution of federal WHEDA dollars to build 165 homes and rehab another 221 homes. There have also been an extensive number of uninhabitable homes razed in a deliberate effort to create green space, walkable neighborhoods, and neighborhood gardens (Larsen, 2011). This was part of a deliberate strategy to not only provide better housing, but to remove potential eye sores and improve attitudes associated with pride of home ownership. Additionally, as part of a $50 million privately funded neighborhood initiative launched in 2008 to address the declining conditions in certain Bridge Harbor neighborhoods, the MHNA was one of the first two urban neighborhood associations to receive a large neighborhood revitalization grant.

In response to that grant, the MNHA created a comprehensive "Neighborhood Revitalization Plan" to guide neighborhood revitalization initiatives (Zeiman, 2009). The

Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was broken down into eight categories: 1) Academic Achievement, 2) Youth and Families, 3) Lifelong Learning, 4) Housing, 5) Economic development, 6) Public Safety, 7) Health and Wellness, and, 8) Healthy food. The eight categories of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan form the blueprint and framework for the MHNA approach to addressing the conditions and realities of Maple Heights. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan represents the holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization, with the understanding that external (neighborhood) and internal (school) conditions are connected in their influence on behavior and performance.

In 2011, the Bridge Harbor Public School district consolidated two low performing Maple Heights neighborhood schools into the Spring Creek Community School (SCCS). The 428 student SCCS, the district's first Comer community school, has an on-site health clinic, a dental center, and a social services center as part of its overall structure. The Main Street High School (MSHS) was closed in 2006 due to poor performance and reopened in 2011 with 400 students. One of the oldest public high schools in the state, it has reopened as a school dedicated to encourage parents/guardians to engage with the school on behalf of students. Both these schools are Maple Height neighborhood schools and are located in close proximity to the MHNA offices. Additionally, both schools have been restructured and reoriented to include greater external outreach. It is for those reasons these two schools will be primary site locations for the school side of the relational study.

Methodological Framework

Because the question here is how a neighborhood association indirectly and

directly works to improve local public schools, I believe there are four primary goals of

the data collection process:

1) Acquire data that describes neighborhood association relationship building

    process with community and school groups.

2) Acquire data on the programs and structures that are specifically created and

    implemented to address neighborhood and school conditions that determine

    performance.

3) Acquire data on neighborhood and school performance.

4) Use this data to draw conclusions about the connection between neighborhood

    association engagement and community (including schools) change.

I will rely heavily on the eight points of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in

order to organize and frame the methodology. Looking at the eight categories of the

plan, I believe they can be separated by indirect or direct involvement in schools.

Academic achievement, for instance, seems to be the one category that implies

neighborhood-based programs directly targeting schools. The other seven categories of

reform might be considered the indirect ways the MHNA is improving the external

conditions that determine behavior and impact performance. I intend to compile data on

the kinds of programs the MHNA is creating to address all eight points of the

Neighborhood Revitalization Plan and then break them down in a direct-indirect

dichotomy.

Because this approach to change is tied to a process of relationship building based

on the creation of new attitude and behaviors, I will code the data on the basis of the three

types of capital identified in the literature as part of the school-community relationship

building process. All three capital building programs require different learning processes that construct varying levels of preparation designed to ensure meaningful relational building and improved performance. As we saw in the literature, social and educational capital capacities are primarily associated with external group behavior in school; community assets capital is tied to the recognition that the community is a potential source of strength that schools need to access as part of a school improvement plan. All three types of capital are important parts of a coherent approach to community and school improvement because all three capitals prepare individuals and groups for engagement.

In addition, I am especially interested in the way the MHNA leads the creation and development of authentic participation by previously marginalized groups. Because of its position as a highly credible local leader, MHNA has most likely achieved a level of authentic participation, but the larger issue is what an organization is doing to create conditions for other stakeholders to be engaged as valuable partners in both constructing and carrying out this plan. This piece of the research is intimately tied to the idea the way control manifests itself in other potential reform movements. Authentic participation as an ideal assumes that control is shared by the very stakeholders who have their roots in the exact neighborhood where they are carrying out the revitalization effort. Collecting data that addresses the organizational capacity of the MHNA to create a process and meaningful engagement is an important goal in the overall data collection process.

In addition to the qualitative data collection methods, I will also access a variety of quantitative data about the changing neighborhood. Data on crime, housing, economic activity, and healthy living—the non-school metrics—will be combined with test score, attendance patterns, disciplinary referrals, graduation rates—school metrics—in order to

draw some conclusions about the connection between MHNA effort at neighborhood revitalization and school improvement. To do this, it is important to develop a data collection plan that accurately captures qualitative and quantitative data—the anecdotal and hard evidence dichotomy that Warren referenced when he talked about the challenges of evaluation. With the goal of detailing a process that moves this from a model for reform to an actual practice, I will now describe the three parts of the data collection process that will provide me with the best information I need in order to make some conclusions about the relationship between programs and outcomes/changes in the local community.

Principle Informants. Because this study originates from outside the school, my informant strategy begins with an identification of the key individuals in the MHNA-school relationship. Based on preliminary discussions with people who are quite familiar with the MHNA structure and goals, I have selected four primary informants:

1. Ms. Eileen Neal, the principle MHNA school liaison and the Neighborhood and Schools Initiative staff person who has been primarily responsible for writing the Promise Neighborhood grants and overseeing the Academic Achievement piece of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP).

2. Dr. Reed, the Spring Creek Community School principal and Mr. McJones, the Main Street High School principal.

3. Tommy Barnes, MHNA Health Program Coordinator.

As the primary leader of the neighborhood association's educational initiative, I will begin by conducting up to five one hour interviews with Eileen. Although my goal is to conduct up to three one-hour interviews with the school leaders and Tommy Barnes, I

intend to use a snowball effect to identify other informants who need to be part of the construction of a relational web. As stated above, I will be expanding the informant pool on the basis of emerging data from my interviews with those three informants and will select other informant, i.e., teachers, parents, community members, CBO leaders, and students, who are best positioned to provide clarity and authentic data. All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will also submit the final ethnographic manuscript to Eileen to ensure accuracy and correct interpretations.

Listed below are some of the interview questions I will use.

1. What kinds of programs are being developed in response to the establishment of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan?

2. How does neighborhood involvement affect traditional school roles and responsibility?

2. Describe ways each organization is building social, educational, and community assets capital.

3. Do you think the external environment and surroundings affects attitudes and behaviors of residents and families?

4. How has the neighborhood changed due to the MHNA presence and programs?

5. How does the MHNA work with schools?

6. Are you noticing attitudinal and behavior changes in the schools?

7. Can you connect these changes to neighborhood association programs?

8. How are you evaluating programs?

Observation. Observation is an important part of the data collection process because I am looking for demonstrations of behaviors, attitudes, and actions that reflect the capacity building that community and school groups have been undergoing as a result of MHNA programs and initiatives. Group settings and group activities are locations where I can observe these behaviors in action. The MHNA sponsors many community and school events, including community reports meetings, neighborhood walks, gardening activities, and summer youth programs; I will be observing up to five MHNA-sponsored events. Attendance patterns, content of material presented, and behaviors—spirit, cohesion, and trust—are observable behaviors I will be looking for when attending these events. For accuracy, I will also audio tape and transcribe these events. In addition to formal meetings like Reports to the Community, I will be especially interested in observing less formal events—neighborhood walks—that will be valuable observation opportunities.

I will code using the three capitals, social, educational, and community assets, to identify patterns of behavior useful to this study. I will transcribe all events to provide accuracy and collect minutes from the formal meetings. Where necessary, I will ask the principle informants to clarify observation-related questions. I will also be looking for emerging data from these observations to generate additional opportunities for data collection.

In terms of observation, the following are some guides for data collection.

1. What is the level and quality of interaction between the two groups? In what verbal and non-verbal ways are community and schools demonstrating greater levels of social, educational, and community

assets capital? What is the tone at these events? Is there a connection

between the quality of dialogue and neighborhood association-led

educational programs?

2. Who is attending these events? Are faculty and administration

voluntarily attending events? What is the make-up of community

participants of these events? Has it changed over the past few years?

Is community largely understood to be parents or is the neighborhood

association able to broaden the definition of community participation?

How do attendance patterns of both groups encourage or discourage

greater community involvement?

Artifacts. Both the school and the neighborhood association are generating a

variety of artifacts to increase their own visibility and to articulate their role and goals in

the relationship building process. My primary guide to the selection of appropriate

artifacts is tied to the MHNA-school relationship building process. I am specifically

interested in artifacts that provide us with information on MHNA-led activities, events,

and programs that are focused on creating an authentic community participation in the

school. Artifacts can include flyers, articles, reports, programs, meeting minutes, and

plans generated by both the neighborhood association and the school. Again, I will use

the three types of capitals to organize and code the data.

Here are some of the questions I will use in evaluating the appropriateness of

artifact to contribute to the body of data.

1. In what ways are artifacts specifically targeting capital building? Do

the artifacts contain information that indicates an interest in school-

community relationship building?

2. Do formal documents (proposals, neighborhood improvement plans)

include specific language on school-community relationship building?

3. What artifacts that reflect the relationship between public schools and

the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association are available for

collection? What do they indicate about the quality of the

relationship?

4. How effective are these artifacts as educational or marketing pieces?

Outcomes

Ultimately the question to be answered is: How do the new attitudes, behaviors,

and conditions being created by the MHNA affect the local public schools? The data I

collect needs to be able to allow me to accurately judge the effectiveness of the programs

and plans being implemented by the MHNA. While student test scores and school

performance data are the most obvious ways to evaluate schools, linking school

performance and community involvement is so new that making any conclusions about

the relationship is problematic. It would be a good idea to consider a more longitudinal

study of the relationship between test scores and school-community collaboration, but

that is beyond the scope of this study.

It is also important to remember this study is interested in the effect of broad

neighborhood revitalization on qualitative and quantitative changes in both the

neighborhood and the schools. Thus, statistical data will include both indirect and direct

outcomes related to the neighborhood association programs. By indirect, I mean to draw

some conclusions about the relationship between neighborhood association programs and

crime, housing values, economic activity, and other types of external (non-school)

outcomes. Direct is understood to be looking at the relationship between neighborhood

association programs and school-based data. Because an important part of this study is

the relationship between process and outcomes, it is critical to acquire data on both of

those areas. The contribution of outside organizations to school improvement is

explained by both direct and indirect initiatives; data collection needs to encompass both

sides of this reform approach.

Conclusion

Authentic community participation in school improvement represents a serious

challenge to the traditional common school paradigm that has guided school behavior

since early 20$^{\text{th}}$ century. The fundamental premise underlying community engagement

theory is that what happens inside the four walls of the school is influenced by external

conditions and surroundings. Addressing these conditions will improve student

performance. The history of autonomy in schools is tied to a belief in the value of

professional preparation and leadership over classrooms and schools, with minimal

outside interference or recognition that external factors exert influence over behavior and

performance. Educational history since the early 1900s is a story of reforms controlled,

shaped, or thwarted by the powerful forces of the traditional paradigm and its underlying

set of beliefs and values. Community mobilization in general and more specifically

neighborhood association-led mobilization as reform strategies will unfold as a direct

challenge to what historian Lin Yu-Sheng referred to as the "intellectual straitjacket"

(Lin, 1979) that a long-standing traditional paradigm exerts over behavior.

For our concerns, the rise of an effective alternative school paradigm is tied to the way new groups work to create and develop a different set or ideas, values, and beliefs that then become the basis for paradigmatic change. Kuhn noted a paradigm's continued value as a determinant of behavior is tied to its continued ability to produce acceptable, reasonable, and relatively acceptable results. The results, though, are somewhat dependent on a well-developed process and preparation that to a certain extent changes the rules. As an important part of an alternative paradigm, meaningful community participation in school improvement represents a radical theory for change because it puts great trust—and a fair degree of control—in people and groups who have been historically marginalized by a myriad of factors. It also means the inevitable messiness and chaos (and energy) that occurs when the goal is engagement and collaboration among a diversity of groups and organizations.

In his book, *Rebuilding the Inner City: A History of Neighborhood Initiatives to Address Poverty in the United States* (1995), Robert Halpern concluded that though neighborhood initiatives seem so "new each time," they continue to follow "well-worn paths and face longstanding obstacles" (p. 233). Poverty, disinterest, an absence of resources, control conflict, and fragmentation are some obstacles Halpern believes have plagued urban reform efforts. Given these obstacles, Halpern concluded "they (urban communities have had no choice but to rely on their own efforts to counter the effects of their exclusion—to make something good of marginality" (p. 12).

Even though Halpern argued that neighborhood initiated reform movements offered little chance for long term improvement, as a strategy for change he did conclude

that there "is a certain transformative value in mobilization and collective action" (p. 233). The problem, as Halpern sees it, is basing a change strategy on the very group that has been socialized to marginality by the conditions and realties that have created the difference dilemma. If the MHNA is able to successfully lead holistic reform in Maple Heights, the objective will be to look at the process and programs they implemented. Identifying the reasons they were able to turn marginalization around represents the value of this study. It may be the MHNA does it in a way that challenges Halpern's conclusion.

The MHNA intends to address both the physical and social realities that have created reality and behavior in Maple Heights. In that context, I am especially interested in studying the process and programs the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association has created to address these neighborhood conditions. The theory of community-led holistic revitalization has its roots in the argument that the current paradigm has some fundamental flaws. The question is whether or not a neighborhood association has the capacity to address all those pieces not part of the current paradigmatic approach in order to create and develop programs and processes that can change attitudes, behaviors, conditions, and then link these changes to school performance. The irony is that while the study focuses on a small geographic area in one urban community, the theory of neighborhood association-led reform has the potential to provide big lessons for urban areas throughout the United States.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY

Introduction

On one of the first warm days of the spring, I traveled down to Maple Heights, an urban neighborhood on the near north side of Bridge Harbor, to meet with Tommy Barnes, a staff member of the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association (MHNA). (All names and locations have been changed.) Since the early 2000s, the MHNA has been actively leading the effort to revitalize the Maple Heights neighborhood. As Health Program Coordinator, Tommy is responsible for a variety of MHNA initiatives as part of the movement to improve physical and social health and wellness in Maple Heights.

The meeting with Tommy was related to my interest in learning about the way the MHNA was working to improve the Maple Heights neighborhood. As a community-based organization working on change, I wanted to evaluate the MHNA's efforts in the context of four parts of a reform strategy: 1) A strong belief that we cannot ignore the influence external factors (jobs, housing, poverty, health, crime, family) have on student/school performance, 2) Interest in studying the ways community-based organizations that have been largely focusing on these external factors can also contribute to school reform, 3) The opportunity to evaluate the capacity of a grass root organization to address holistically all these factors as part of a broad movement to revitalize the urban neighborhood where kids live, and, 4) Draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of

a strategy that mobilizes outside organizations to address and improve neighborhood-level conditions as part of a school-improvement plan.

The fact that Tommy and I were meeting at a busy coffee shop in the middle of Maple Heights was not something to be taken for granted. After all, as recent as the late 1990s, Tommy told me Maple Heights was considered so dangerous that the police told people to "stay out of Maple Heights, even during the day." However, on that day I observed a successful home grown business in action. In fact, it had added a full kitchen a few years earlier. It was filled with local residents who were enjoying good food and good fellowship, and generating some significant economic activity at the same time.

The Founding of the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association

The Maple Heights Neighborhood. At one time Maple Heights was one of Bridge Harbor's healthiest neighborhoods. In the immediate post-war era, there were good jobs, healthy commerce, and strong public schools; beginning in the 1970s, Maple Heights began a downward spiral, not unlike other industrial cities across the upper Midwest. By the 1990s, Maple Heights historians Cheryl Ajirotutu, Daniel Musickant, and Lucia Lozano (2010) described Maple Heights as a neighborhood of "boarded houses, others in awful disrepair, and trash-filled vacant lots where good homes used to be."

Businesses like the coffee shop have been part of a revitalization movement that begun in the early 2000's, a revitalization that corresponded with the return of one of its native daughters. Susan Anderson certainly knew something about the good days of Maple Heights. After growing up in Maple Heights, Mrs. Anderson left for a successful

career as a neighborhood organizer in New York. When she returned to Maple Heights

in the late 1990s, she barely recognized her childhood neighborhood. It was at that time

she began to think about creating a neighborhood organization that would lead a

movement to change Maple Heights.

   According to the 2000 US census data, of the 26 zip codes in the city of Bridge

Harbor, the two zip codes that encompass Maple Heights ranked 1st and 2nd in lowest

median incomes. Table 1 includes the range of median incomes across the entire city of

Bridge Harbor. The first two median incomes are the zip codes that cover Maple Heights

and they clearly indicate Maple Heights is the poorest neighborhood in Bridge Harbor.

The conditions described by Ajirotutu et. al. in Maple Heights were at least partially

attributed to the economic state of that neighborhood.

Table 1
Median Income by Zip Code: Maple Heights vs. Bridge Harbor, 2000
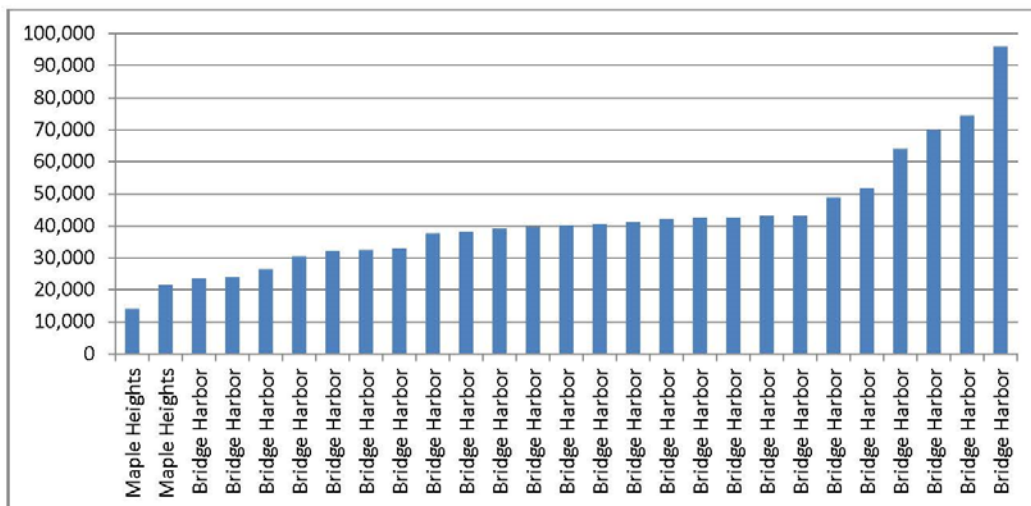
(U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000)

Maple Heights Neighborhood Association Leadership. During a small group

meeting with a number of people, Mrs. Anderson recalled an early encounter she had

with a resident around the time she was thinking about starting what would become the

Maple Heights Neighborhood Association. Mrs. Anderson remembered telling one of the

Maple Heights residents at the time, "I was going to transform the community. I was

going to start at 17th and Main Street. My friend told me that three police captains said

'whatever you do in your initiatives, don't go to 17th and Main Street.'" Undeterred, in

2000, Mrs. Anderson and her husband Danny founded the Maple Heights Neighborhood

Association (MHNA). They located the MHNA neighborhood house at that very 17th

and Main Street corner, in a home once occupied by drug dealers.

Despite the economic realities of the neighborhood, Mrs. Anderson told me that

an important reason behind the establishment of the MHNA was the residents who lived

in this impoverished neighborhood. They provided her with hope that Maple Heights

was not lost:

> When we talked to our residents back then we found out that work mattered, jobs
> mattered, businesses mattered, and our health and welfare mattered, good food
> mattered. Our aims were to create jobs and pathways to success, to make healthy
> choices, to spur economic development by and with residents in our
> neighborhood, to strengthen social cohesion and connections, to set sustainable
> design standards for commercial and resident properties. We were going to be an
> asset-based organization that believed in finding aggressive solutions to serious
> problems in the neighborhood.

This residential feedback became part of a way of thinking about how to change

conditions in Maple Heights. Rather than starting what Maple Height did not have, Mrs.

Anderson deliberately chose to start her movement with a message of optimism about the

potential of the community:

We are solution driven, we are yes people, we are an asset-based organization. The data reports that the Maple Heights Zip Codes have the lowest social and economic conditions in Bridge Harbor. Does it feel like that when you come in here?"

Outsiders have been socialized to think of Maple Heights in a far different way than that of Mrs. Anderson, the MHNA and other residents of Maple Heights who see assets and potential in these tough conditions. I experienced some of these negative perceptions when I told people I was conducting research in Maple Height. Indeed, I was once asked if I valued my life! However, the more time I spent in Maple Heights, the more times I was exposed to her consistent message of hope, I began to see examples of assets all over Maple Heights. Whether it was a packed coffee shop or a block of newly renovated homes, there were tangible signs of change. I attributed this movement making to the MHNA's message.

In 2000, then, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson started the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association, at the very location deemed too dangerous to enter. As the Director of Environmental Stewardship, Mr. Anderson focuses on a variety of initiatives, including housing, neighborhood gardens, and harvesting good food. Mr. Anderson keeps bees at the Neighborhood House, and the honey he harvests and sells is a Maple Heights staple. I have rarely heard him say anything at neighborhood events, as he prefers a friendly wave to the crowd.

Although humble and understated in style, Mrs. Anderson is the more visible leader and spokesperson for the MHNA. It was during our first meeting that I got as sense of her style. While I did not know her personally, I had done enough preliminary research to know she was the de facto leader of the MHNA. I wanted to ask her

permission to do my case study on the role of a neighborhood association in school improvement in Maple Heights and with the MHNA.

We met at a diner in Maple Heights and throughout the course of our initial meeting, it seemed as though everyone in the diner stopped to say hello and convey best wishes. (I even overheard the cooks pointing her out.) Yet, as we talked, I did not sense one ounce of vanity or self-promotion. She was too kind to say it that day, but I sensed she was not that interested in taking time to participate in a study. She is a doer, but ultimately agreed to my request. While this is not a study in leadership, that initial meeting made a lasting impression on me.

As the Director of Programs, Mrs. Anderson has overseen the creation of organization culture and philosophy that has guided the MHNA since its beginning. One of the first initiatives Mrs. Anderson implemented was the daily walks through Maple Heights. In their history of Maple Heights, Ajirotutu, Musickant, Lozano (2010) wrote that Mrs. Anderson "started taking daily exercise walks in the neighborhood, waving, calling out to residents peeking out from behind their window curtains, isolated by fear. Over time, others …men, women, children… joined the walks, and talked of what they could do to recapture their neighborhood the way it "used to be." As more and more joined her, they began to build a sense of collective strength and unity based on their dedication to Maple Heights. Anyone who has met Mrs. Anderson can certainly picture her calling out to people to join her.

To a certain extent, these walks were a grass roots strategy aimed at re-energizing, rebuilding, and reconnecting the human spirit that had been isolated by the local realities of poverty and neglect. The walks remain a weekly activity that anyone can join. I've

participated in two summer walks and concluded afterwards that they were a physical

activity aimed at improving the social capital of the community. Tommy confirmed my

conclusion when he talked about the real value of the walk.

> Susan, she goes on walks, she walks the neighborhood. She still connects to
> everybody in the block, she leads a neighborhood walks, she is still connecting. I
> might be trying to coordinate a meeting with her and she might be like "oh, I can't
> I've got a meeting with the resident today." One minute she's meeting with the
> CEO of a hospital, the next minute she is with the resident; in many ways that
> residents are more important to her.

Tommy pauses and then concludes proudly "that is just the way it is."

(Note: I want to point out that aside from Mrs. Anderson, I am using all names in

the exact way they have been introduced to me. Although Mrs. Anderson has told me

innumerable times to call her Susan, I have deliberately refrained from referring to her as

Susan as a sign of respect. This is in no way a slight to the other participants in this

study. I merely want to point out this subtle, but important distinction and the rationale

behind it.)

MHNA Organizational Purpose, Principles, and Culture

Purpose. The rise of neighborhood associations across the United States was

traditionally tied to reform movements in areas such as jobs, fair wages, housing, political

activism, commerce, and crime (Fisher, 1985; Halpern, 1995). Neighborhood

associations like those in union towns like Chicago, for instance, were part of an activist

tradition focusing on protecting residents from broad issues related to civil rights, unfair

labor practices, and housing inequities (Boyte, 1980; Fisher, 1984; Halpern, 1995).

These associations understood the needs of local residents and advocated on behalf of

those local interests. There were actively engaged in protecting the rights of residents who lived and worked in these areas and were also focused on maintaining unity and social cohesion in their communities.

The MHNA, however, was established not to strengthen or protect the interests of specific groups within the neighborhood as much as to address physical and social conditions in a neighborhood that had suffered from economic, social, and spiritual neglect. I originally met Emily at one of the first public community events and soon discovered that in addition to being a senior member of the MHNA staff, Emily has a deep historical knowledge of the organization. Regarding the focus of the MHNA in those early years, Emily told me:

> When Maple Heights was started, the mission was to sustain an economically diverse community through civic engagement, environmental stewardship, and venues of prosperity. So two of those initial strategies of getting into all three of those areas were around housing and urban agriculture, so both of those areas are sort of like foundations for the way Maple Heights started.

Even with a narrow focus, the early MHNA was not in a position to create and administer its own programs. In order to get around the reality of an organization with limited resources, the MHNA developed a set of principles and values to attract partners for their reform movement.

Convening. Because it did not have the organizational capacity to create and implement its own programs, the MHNA relied heavily on identifying and building partnerships with groups and organizations that are an appropriate match for the needs of Maple Heights. Early in its existence, it became what Emily called a "convening" organization:

In all of these, our role has been around convening groups and identifying sort of

catalytic initiatives. As a neighborhood association, we look to convene and facilitate these larger initiatives. We do offer a little bit, but not too many direct programs. But the invitation to serve as a convener in a much larger area is to then develop a process that brings various groups together and map out the quality-of-life plan. It's not that we control everything but we are really interested in helping others who are in control.

This organizational approach to partnership building continues to be an important part of the MHNA tradition. However, as the organization has matured and grown, the MHNA combines its role as convener with its local knowledge and credibility to more effectively utilize resources and implement initiatives that fit the needs of Maple Heights. Emily described the way the MHNA works with its partners:

> When we connect with a partner, we talk about 'okay if you're going to work in the Maple Heights area towards this piece here, we are willing to collaborate with you, but we want to have some conditions in place.' And so we ask that they provide a specific team targeted to Maple Heights because we feel like it will be more effective to have individuals with whom we can establish relationships, who eventually know the neighborhood, know the community, and get to know the families. So we set up things in Maple Heights where the individuals who are working with this program in terms of the provider are now learning about the schools in the area, different resources in the area, so there is a system in place where they come into the community and are meeting different entities, they have a full understanding what's going on in the community. So it's asking a lot of healthcare and education institutions who talk about community engagement quite a bit to come to our table on wellness and education, but to think of themselves not just at a programmatic level, but as a true partner in neighborhood revitalization.

Emily then detailed how the MHNA put this approach into practice when it partnered with one of the larger universities in the state to collect data on the health of Maple Heights residents:

> Here is this awesome partner who has this great capacity, who would love to come here and work on a neighborhood level." We said, 'we see real value, we want to begin to collect, evaluate, and measure impact.' But it's very important to us that our neighbors are involved, so they changed their methodology. For the first time, they hired three community neighbors from Maple Heights; they worked side-by-side with the staff to go door-to-door in our neighborhood. They

found that they got a much higher participation rate because they had a community member with them so now they use that model across the state.

Using this approach, the MHNA and its health partner now have the baseline numbers of several hundred community members and will continue to test those residents over a five year period to evaluate the effectiveness of health and wellness initiatives occurring in Maple Heights.

Convening as an organizational principle is based on carefully matching the needs of Maple Heights with the services of external partners. The process maximized the capacity of both partners, but the convening attitude created the conditions in which both could realize their joint goal. The successful outcome was due to the development of a partnership based on equality and respect for the knowledge of each group. Convening balances the need for control with the reality of limited organizational capacity.

Connections. When Emily and I first met, we talked extensively about an educational reform strategy that recognized the potential of external factors to influence school behavior. I framed my interest in exploring the theory that external factors outside the four walls of the school building need to be addressed as part of a movement to improve schools. Emily told me that approach "resonated" with her because the MHNA was founded on the premise that there is a connection between external factors and school performance:

> We look at it from a neighborhood level. Look at all the different factors that are influencing performance. Access to jobs, economic opportunity, good education, healthy food, retail commerce, what kind of commerce do you have here, what is your social cohesion in context. Those are, in my estimate, more influential for outcomes for any given person or family. What happens inside the schools is absolutely critical, but in this context, external factors are also very significant to the education, educational outcomes of the kids.

One person who became a valuable source of knowledge during my six months in Maple Heights was Jack, a retired business executive who has become one of the MHNA's most trusted advisors. I met Jack during a MHNA neighborhood clean-up event. We were working side-by-side clearing debris from a lot that would become one of the biggest neighborhood gardens in Maple Heights. During our initial meeting, we both agreed that moving large tree stumps may have been a stretch of our "volunteer" capabilities.

Jack may have had a successful career in the finance world, but his belief that educational performance could not be simply attributed to what happened inside the four walls of the school building sounded like something written by Jean Anyon or William Julius Wilson:

> You know I got involved in economic development for the very reason that I think the challenges we have in the inner-city are multifaceted. And there are so many challenges in the neighborhood and it isn't just, you can't just focus on early childhood education and think all the other problems are going to be solved. I mean, you can't just work on education, you can't just work on housing, you have to work on all of them. Instead of just kind of doing education Bridge Harbor wide, let's focus on the neighborhood.

Abundance. In one of my early meetings with Mrs. Anderson, she described the MHNA as an "organization that believes in abundance, we move towards abundance." How can they talk about abundance in an area of extreme poverty? I soon found out the idea of abundance, like neighborhood assets, is an important part of a powerful organizational orientation and message that allows the MHNA to see potential where others see hopelessness. Ultimately, the culture of the MHNA was created and shaped by the reality of limited resources and a two person leadership team that was optimistic about the potential within the neighborhood.

This idea of neighborhood abundance was a message I heard regularly in discussions with staff or at community meetings. Early in our first meeting, Emily referenced the idea of abundance that I had heard so often in meetings with Mrs. Anderson. Emily talked about how "if you really are committed to it, it's really possible to focus on the abundance approach, not the competitive approach. We really subscribe to the abundance idea, that within our community we are not in a competitive place."

Abundance is a counter narrative to the impoverished neighborhood that many consider Maple Heights. In specific reference to the neighborhood gardens, extensive fruit orchards, and committed people, Tommy told me how Maple Heights is full of abundance:

> I think that's the most powerful, having that frame of abundance, having that frame that we have strengths, we have assets. There's a lot happening here, there are good things. There are a lot of resources in the neighborhood. We have a long way to go with a lot to work, so having that frame of mind is incredibly important.

MHNA Organizational Structure

Organizational Chart. As an idea, abundance is a source of motivation and action for the staff members and volunteers who work on behalf of MHNA initiatives. Combined with the other principles, it serves as the foundation for the organization. Over the years the Andersons have built an organizational structure to support MHNA programs and initiatives. Today there are two formal volunteer arms of the MHNA that provide a great deal of free support and guidance to the MHNA staff: A six person Board of Directors and an Advisory Board.

As residents, Board members have a deep credibility and understanding of the realities facing Maple Heights. Board members are highly visible at community events and often serve as break out session coordinators. I've also met all six during neighborhood walks, were I listened as they detailed the many changes happening in Maple Heights. I also noted that they had some of the nicest houses in Maple Heights.

I thought Tommy captured the persuasive power of local knowledge and local commitment best when he described the make-up of the MHNA:

> It's not just the connection to the neighborhood, it's that Maple Heights Neighborhood Association is the neighborhood. 100% of our Board of Directors are residents of Maple Heights, they live in the neighborhood so they know what is coming and going. If that's not engagement it's huge. It's beyond engagement. It's about authentic. It's what makes this a really viable revitalization strategy. Just strong roots in the neighborhood, the importance of staying rooted in the people of the neighborhood who live there. Every project we have, we have someone from the neighborhood, strong ties to the neighborhood, working on it and that is very powerful. Keeps things real, what's happening in the neighborhood.

Jack, a member of the Advisory Board, is heavily involved in areas related to jobs and financial matters. As mentioned, Jack took early retirement after a successful career in finance and brings both a pragmatic acumen and a wealth of connections to the greater Bridge Harbor business community. As we will see later in the study, Jack provides a kind of knowledge that is extremely valuable to a local non-profit; the fact that he is retired means he devotes a significant amount of time to the MHNA.

Jack is often at the side of Mrs. Anderson during important events, and it is apparent to me he is one of her trusted advisors. During one of our meetings, we started talking about the source of Mrs. Anderson's ability to mobilize (perhaps inspire is a better word) people. I referred to it as charismatic humility, a rather nebulous term that

meant little to Jack. I could tell by his reaction he did not care much for the idea of charismatic humility. He explained to me, "Susan has credibility and stature in the community, a quiet presence, very soft-spoken person. When she talks, people listen, and it's because of her track record." Jack was not interested in over-thinking it.

Financial Structure. Starting as a two person operation heavily dependent on identifying and mobilizing external partners, in its early years, the major source of financial support came from federal and local government support for urban renewal programs, as well as the support of private foundations and corporations. According to Emily, the MHNA only encompassed thirty blocks and most of its energies were focuses on housing and environmental stewardship.

It had neither a big staff nor a large budget.   However, its early successes in those two core areas attracted the attention of some of Bridge Harbor's largest private foundations. A director of a wealthy foundation talked about why they decided to provide significant yearly support to the MHNA:

> We made our first grant Walnut Way in in 2005. I think it was for $10,000. Because our strategy is to try to capitalize on existing movements, it was so evident sitting and listening to her (Mrs. Anderson) that this was an organic community or economic activity and it was an easy decision to start a relationship. Too often organizations become fortresses in the neighborhood, there is no interaction, and what's happening doesn't integrate into the neighborhood. In the case of the MHNA, the specifics are not the important part; it was more about investing in a relationship and that's the key. Details, we know are going to be worked out along the way.   For Susan it is not just the investigation into all the problems that should identified but she also tells the story and that's really important. So we invest in chefs, not restaurants, and you cannot find a better chef than Susan.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP)

Emily specifically referenced the early program focuses of the MHNA, and many of these programs followed in the tradition of other neighborhood associations across the United States. The MHNA was following in the tradition of neighborhood association behavior; were it to remain primarily focused on areas of housing and environmental stewardship, the MHNA would have filled a needed niche in the neighborhood.

However, in 2008, as part of a $50 million block of money earmarked to improve Bridge Harbor neighborhoods, the MHNA was one of two associations chosen to receive the first major grant from a high profile Bridge Harbor philanthropic foundation. The philanthropist who started the foundation grew up in Maple Heights and he, much like Mrs. Anderson, remembered a far different neighborhood. The motivation behind the establishment of this $50 million pool of money was to rebuild neighborhoods across Bridge Harbor, starting with his own childhood neighborhood.

The MHNA was awarded a four-year, $1.25 million grant (Larsen, 2011). As part of the agreement to participate in this grant, the MHNA agreed to expand from 30 to 110 blocks. Diagram 5 shows the expansion of the Maple Heights geographic boundaries as a result of the grant. Emily, who was on the MHNA staff both pre- and post-grant, told me the grant represented a "significant organizational shift in the neighborhood association. We were doing some great stuff in our little neighborhood. The grant money required us to change." Jack, the key MHNA volunteer, talked about how the MHNA had at one time been "a nice little outfit, a nice little hidden neighborhood secret going about its own way, changing the neighborhood one house at a time, one block at a time." Now that it

would be an important part of a highly publicized movement to address Bridge Harbor

neighborhoods, Emily noted Maple Heights no longer had the option of operating as a

"hidden little secret."

Diagram 5
Maple Heights Geographic Boundaries, Pre- and Post-2008

The MHNA began to think more broadly and holistically about the way they

could construct and implement a diversity of programs that would be part of a

comprehensive plan to revitalize the neighborhood. Emily told me how discussions

revolved around defining the idea of a "quality of life" for the people of Maple Heights

and then identifying those factors that impact the quality of life. It required a transition in

organizational behavior, not so much in the commitment to Maple Heights, but how as an

organization they needed to think about the "interconnection between the various pieces

of a plan that could address the quality of life in Maple Heights."

The challenge to build a comprehensive plan for neighborhood revitalization was

made easier by the MHNA's convening culture and a local credibility based on its

knowledge and understanding of current conditions. Over a nine-month period, the

MHNA built a process that "involved hundreds of people and scores of organizations in

creating a shared vision for improving the social, economic, and physical conditions in

Maple Heights" (Larsen, 2011). The resulting Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was

based on the input of all participants and reflected the local knowledge and local needs of

Maple Heights. The NRP encompassed eight interconnected parts for improving the

quality of life in Maple Heights: 1) Academic Achievement, 2) Youth and Families, 3)

Lifelong Learning, 4) Housing, 5) Commercial Corridors, 6) Public Safety, 7) Health and

Wellness, and, 8) Healthy Food (Diagram 6).

Diagram 6
Eight Point Maple Heights Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP)
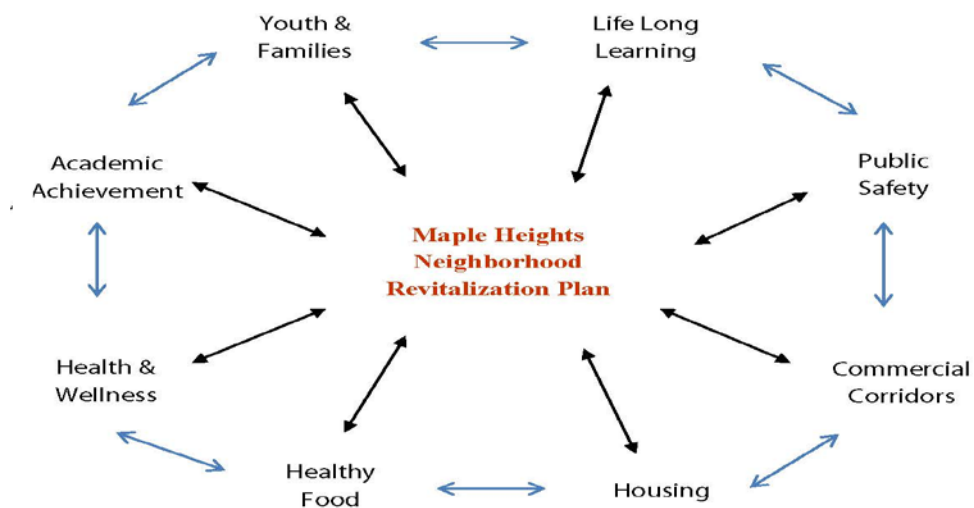
Schools in Maple Heights were participants in the creation of the NRP because an important part of the thinking behind the creation of this program was that school achievement was connected to the other areas of the plan. This holistic approach to change in the neighborhood represented a substantive movement toward the reform approach argued by theorists like Jean Anyon (1995, 2005) when she argued that powerful external factors (those outside the four walls of the school building) affected school performance. Through a process of authentic participation, the stakeholders of Maple Heights identified eight pieces of an overall approach to change, with academic achievement one of those pieces.

What made this plan so different, and led me to select Maple Heights as an appropriate location for a study on the ways a neighborhood association could contribute to public school improvement in an urban neighborhood, was that academic achievement was such a prevalent part of the NRP. Although schools were connected to the neighborhood on the basis of location, as a target for reform, schools were not a traditional focus of inclusion in a neighborhood association reform movement. Fisher's excellent history of neighborhood association activism, for instance, contained not one reference to schools. Additionally, as we saw in the literature, school history and culture has acted as an obstacle to meaningful community involvement.   With neither the school nor the community showing much interest in collaborating, I considered the inclusion of schools in the NRP to be a bold declaration of intention that the MHNA was going to try something quite different in terms of normal school reform approaches.

Motivated to revitalize the neighborhood, the Maple Heights Neighborhood Steering Committee mobilized a diversity of stakeholders, including local residents, non-

profit leaders, business owners, young people, and educators, who participated in

creating—and approving—the final document.   The process included public listening

sessions, eight working groups focused on creating a sub-plan for each initiative, and two

public viewing exercises that culminated in approval of the plan (Maple Heights

Revitalization Plan, 2009). As a testament to the concept of authentic participation, there

were very few times in my six months in Maple Heights where the person I was talking

with was unfamiliar with the NRP. There certainly seemed to be a sense of widespread

ownership over the plan, a reflection of a process that encouraged widespread

participation in the creation of the overall plan for neighborhood revitalization.

Part 1. Academic Achievement: Direct Program Support for Schools

The NRP was an eight point plan for the holistic revitalization of Maple Heights;

it did not contain specifics about how these different initiatives were going to happen.

The MHNA was responsible for constructing a strategy and identifying potential partners

with whom it would collaborate in order to accomplish each of the plan initiatives. The

NRP may have been a holistic plan for revitalization, but Sharon Larsen (2011) wrote that

it was "worth noting that education topped the list of neighbors' concerns identified

during planning." For the residents, then, "academic achievement" was perhaps the first

among equals. Although the MHNA leadership and staff had experience in a number of

the NRP initiatives, academic achievement and involvement with schools in general had

not been part of its activity in Maple Heights.

Authentic Participation in Creating Academic Achievement Programs. Given

my interest in neighborhood association involvement in school improvement, Mrs.

Anderson recommended I invite Ms. Eileen Neal, to participate in the study.   Eileen was

a community participant in the NRP process, a past principal in one of the Maple Heights

schools, an alumnus of Main Street High School, and the current program director for the

academic achievement piece of the overall NRP. During our first meeting, Eileen

provided a history of the role the MHNA played in the process that led to the creation of

the NRP:

> The MHNA was instrumental in pulling people together. It was specifically the
> MHNA who took the lead on bringing people together in the community,
> organizations together, and saying collectively we can focus on the neighborhood.
> They did all the legwork, talked to all the residents, surveyed the business
> representatives, included schools, all of that as a result of that background work
> these were the eight areas that panned out as the priority for people in this
> neighborhood. They had the most local knowledge and they were very good at
> bringing other people to the table to be engaged and involved in the process. And
> so around the table you have residents in the neighborhood, you have public
> people who work for different public entities, so there's just an array of people
> who are at the table who have a common focus around this one entity called
> Maple Heights. The MHNA was the driver behind this process.

Specifically pointing out that schools did not have a great track record of

engagement with community-based organizations, I asked Eileen to describe the school

participation in the process of creating the NRP. According to Eileen, the tradition of

school isolation was not a deterrent to their inclusion in the NRP process; in preliminary

discussions about participation, people simply concluded that any plan for neighborhood

revitalization had to include schools:

> We needed schools at the table. Part of the process was they (MHNA) reached
> out to all the school leaders that were in Maple Heights. Initially, we also got the
> school leaders to come together and have conversation and dialogue about
> academics in Maple Heights which was huge because we had a combination of
> public schools, charter schools, and private schools. We had school leaders come
> together.   To get all those people come to the table was huge.

Eileen talked about how in the immediate post-NRP, most of the discussion

occurred within the Maple Heights Student Achievement Coalition (MHSAC), a "grass roots" organizational structure designed as that place where schools and non-school entities could meet regularly to talk about ways to collectively address the academic achievement piece of the NRP.

The MHSAC was the structure where different community and school organizations would come together to discuss the issues facing Maple Heights schools. Eileen described the way the MHSAC worked in its early years:

> The MHSAC was this community, grass-roots type effort that involved different committee entities, schools entities, and partners both inside and outside Maple Heights. Through the MHSAC, the various groups would come together on a monthly basis to take inventory of what's going on so it could start to look at duplication or gaps in programs aimed at achieving the goals and outcomes. More important, is just being able to say what's our collective goal and outcome. I can sit here and come up with a program and a plan and say this is wonderful, but if they don't have buy-in, it still won't happen. And so for me it was important that they help orchestrate what that looks like as opposed to me saying, "we would like you to do this." The MHSAC provided that place where we could meet and discuss.

Beyond the fact the MHSAC was a forum for meeting, once the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was complete, the academic achievement piece did not have any formal structure for organizing plans to achieve this initiative. Perhaps due to their unfamiliarity with schools and education, the MHNA decided the academic achievement piece warranted a separate entity to oversee work in this area. According to Eileen:

> The MHNA pushed for an entity that would stand alone and focus on the neighborhood because the reality was the people who came together in the initial meeting had jobs to do, running schools or running youth-serving agencies etc. so there needed to be another entity in place that was going to work towards the coalition, identifying some goals and outcomes and kind of keeping the group moving and keeping the focus on overall academic outcomes for the kids in Maple Heights.

The Neighborhood and Schools Initiative (NSI)

In 2011, the Neighborhood and Schools Initiative (NSI) was established to be that guiding force behind the creation and implementation of a plan to address community involvement in academic achievement in Maple Heights. It would continue to use the MHSAC as the primary forum for bringing the different school and non-school entities, but the NSI would be responsible for overseeing the academic achievement piece of the plan. Eileen, with her extensive knowledge of Maple Heights and her experience as a past principal in Maple Heights, was appointed program director of the NSI.

It was interesting to me that the MHNA did not keep academic achievement under its NRP umbrella, but Eileen indicated the decision to separate academic achievement came primarily from the MHNA leadership. Although the NSI was set up as an independent organization focusing on academic achievement, Eileen talked about how the MHNA intended to stay connected to the academic achievement piece of the NRP:

> For the startup of NSI, it was critical to have the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association at the table because of their historical background. Maple Heights helped launch NSI; they were committed to it working. They were very good at bringing other people to the table to be engaged and involved in the process.

As a tangible sign of continued engagement, Mrs. Anderson was the first NSI Board President and initial funding for NSI was provided by the same philanthropic organization that provided the large neighborhood grant to the MHNA.

The decision to create the NSI also put in place a formal structure that acted to separate academic achievement, the primary educational piece of the NRP, from the rest of the plan. As noted by Eileen, the MHNA would have a relationship with the NSI, but the NSI was largely an independent entity charged with leading the movement to address

academic achievement in Maple Heights schools and the neighborhood. Although there

was a connection, the NSI was going to be largely responsible for the academic

achievement piece of the NRP; the other seven parts of the plan would remain under the

MHNA organizational umbrella. Diagram 7 delineates the split in organizational

responsibilities, but also reflects the connection between the two entities.

Together, the two separate entities, the MHNA and the NSI, would be responsible

for creating and organizing programs within each of the NRP areas. As noted above, the

NSI would use the MHSAC as the primary structure for encouraging a process of

collaboration and dialogue for bringing the various educational and non-educational

groups together on behalf of academic achievement.

Diagram 7
Neighborhood Revitalization Plan (NRP) Responsibility Structure
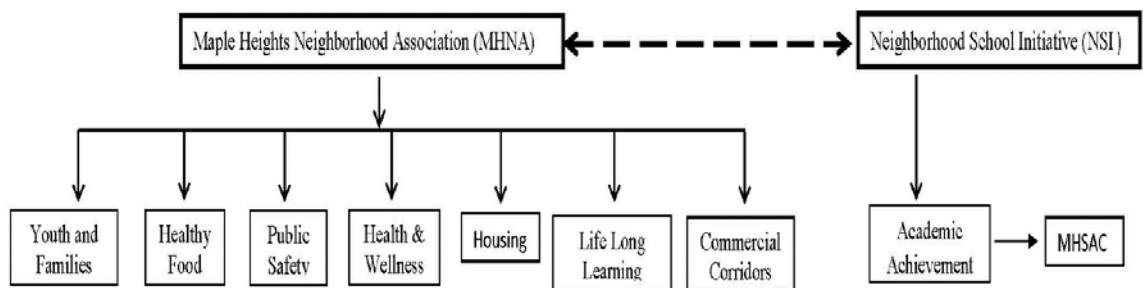
Neighborhood and Schools Initiative (NSI) Academic Achievement Programs

The Knowledge Bowl. Working with the different school and non-school

members of the MHSAC, the NSI has created two programs designed to encourage

academic achievement among Maple Heights neighborhood schools. The Knowledge

Bowl was established in the first year of the MHSAC's existence, and it recently held its

third annual competition. The rationale for the academic competition was explained to me

by Dr. Reed, the principal of Spring Creek Community School:

> One of the reasons for the academic competition was that it would send a
> decidedly different message to both the students and the neighborhood in general.
> In an area where sports dominated, it was refreshing to see an academic
> competition for our students. Our students were excited for the opportunity to
> demonstrate their academic knowledge.

As the NSI program director who coordinated the discussion about what the

schools in Maple Heights could do in response to the academic achievement initiative,

Eileen also touched on some of the same points identified by Dr. Reed when she talked

about the rationale for the Knowledge Bowl:

> The Knowledge Bowl was a collective activity, one where all the schools were
> working together on one thing, that anyone could work on it, focus on, and then to
> also create a culture across the organizations, across schools, and with the kids
> and the families that it was okay to be smart, was cool to be smart. We were
> going to showcase the academic success of the kids just like we showcased the
> athletic success of kids. The schools were really supportive of this program. They
> were at all the meetings and were really involved in creating the idea. I think what
> was really interesting with the Knowledge Bowl; there was certain
> competitiveness, a competitive piece of the administrators to be honest. It was that
> competitive piece. They don't want their school to not be a part of it and they
> want to beat the other schools.

Combining two low-performing schools into one did not necessarily bode well for

the Spring Creek Community School team, or probably strike fear in the high performing

charters, but, as Eileen remembered so well, the low performing school ended up winning

the first-ever Knowledge Bowl. She told me how "I remember the first year, one of the

public schools won, and it shocked a charter school. They were absolutely shocked." Ms.

Pat, the parent coordinator at the victorious Spring Creek Community School, reflected

on the way the Knowledge Bowl affected the school:

We won the trophy the first year. Winning was a great thing because it made our school shine, it became a positive for our school. If you go in the office there is like a four foot trophy in there The Knowledge Bowl just pulls it out of our kids. As individuals, we got kids with fantastic grades. The Knowledge Bowl takes our kids as individuals. It's not noticed because they want to do everything in a whole.

Over its three years, the Knowledge Bowl has become perhaps the most high-profile NSI-led program for the schools and students of Maple Heights. In a neighborhood where the public schools are under extreme scrutiny, an academic competition sends a powerful message about the importance of academic achievement. This year's competition was held on a Saturday in May and included five schools and almost 100 really loud, enthusiastic, students. Consisting of math and spelling competitions for students in grades three, four, and five, students were graded individually. Then, individual scores were combined to make up school team scores. At the conclusion of the academic test portion, students, parents, and school representatives reassembled in the cafeteria for the awards competition. All students were recognized for participation; and when they announced individual winners, I noted each school had at least one individual winner. While this year's winning teams all came from one of the charter schools in Maple Heights, it did not seem to dull the enthusiasm of the other schools.

I attended the competition, and as an educator who has been both organizer and participant in these kinds of events, the minute I entered the cafeteria where everyone was assembling, it brought back memories of just how valuable these activities are for schools. In addition to students, there were large number of parents, school representatives, and volunteers spread throughout the cafeteria. The level of school pride was discernible, with cheers erupting during the introduction of each school. When

speaking about this year's competition, Eileen talked proudly about the strides that have

been made:

> We've doubled the number or participants. We are light years ahead just in terms of the school readiness. Like all of the teams are identified, kids identified all the schools have paid the fees to participate. Team representatives of the schools have been meeting on a monthly basis, so the difference in terms of commitment is definitely apparent this year. Now we are getting requests from schools outside of Maple Heights to participate, so that's a good thing.

Reflecting on the original thinking about the value of an academic competition, a

record number of participants and the high level of energy and excitement across all the

schools would indicate the Knowledge Bowl is a success for the students of Maple

Heights and for the NSI as well. However, despite its growth, Eileen is realistic about its

overall impact on neighborhood schools. Even with the plan to add an additional grade

every year, it remains largely limited to a small number of students at the elementary

level. Nonetheless, as a program specifically created as part of the academic

achievement piece of the NRP, the Knowledge Bowl has become a valuable symbol of

the academic achievement piece of the NRP. As one of the organizers announced during

the awards ceremony, the Knowledge Bowl was "something positive occurring in the

neighborhood."

Early Childhood Provider Educational Support Program. Other programs

considered in the context of the academic achievement piece have struggled to reach the

level of collective participation enjoyed by the Knowledge Bowl. For a few months, the

discussion was centered on building a college-going culture in Maple Heights. However,

Eileen told me the fairly drastic decline in the attendance of K-12 schools in the MHSAC

has somewhat stalled that discussion.

Ironically, the absence of schools has actually been a positive in that it forced Eileen and the MHNA Board to look outside K-12 schools for other ways to think about addressing academic achievement in Maple Heights. As a group, they decided to look at building programs that supported early childhood learning in Maple Heights:

> One of the things we talked about focusing on is early childhood because it's a starting point and looking at what impacts can be made and where we have current gaps around early childhood because there is so much conversation around the kids' school readiness. K-5 kindergarten program kids were coming in historically not ready for kindergarten and so we decided to look at that in terms of the 0-5 population. Ultimately what happens to kids at birth, how does it impact their education and outcome?

Once the decision to focus on early childhood was made, Eileen reached out to independent Maple Heights childcare providers to more fully assess the issues facing them and survey their level of interest in organizing a learning cohort. The NSI specifically targeted stand alone, in-home family providers with the lowest Young Star (state rating system for all childcare providers) for potential participation in an educational program designed to improve the quality of their services. In her data gathering, Eileen identified 14 independent providers in Maple Heights, serving over 250 kids with a two-star rating (out of five). After talking with all 14 providers, seven agreed to participate in the program and one more joined later.

Starting with the question "okay, what professional development areas do you collectively need?" and then connecting that fact-finding exercise to evaluations provided by the Young Star rating system, the NSI identified partners who had the capacity to address these needs.   Eileen described the educational process and her role in identifying resources who could deliver services that would meet the needs of these providers:

> I do not deliver the resources; I've reached out to entities that work with providers

and are connecting them to our cohort. If, for example, they have common gaps in curriculum in the classroom and classroom area which correlates to them understanding being able to implement the curriculum of the State Early Learning Standards that the state has in place, so let's say they've had training but do not know how to implement that, then I've reached out to entities who have expertise in this area and they work with these providers.

Although the program is less than one year old, Eileen is seeing some positive outcomes and is able to connect those outcomes to some of the work the NSI and its partners are engaging in with the early childhood providers:

We are getting some successes, some gains. Five of the cohort members have completed training in the Ages & Stages Developmental Screening, two of the cohort group providers have moved from a two to a three star rating, five of the providers have agreed to explore using a common curriculum, and the cohort providers have all registered for an accreditation workshop. Additionally, family providers participated in a business practice training program provided by one of the partner groups.

In terms of structure and process, the NSI has the same kind of control over this early childhood program as it has over the Knowledge Bowl. Eileen has been largely responsible for organizing and planning both programs. In addition to support in curriculum areas, Eileen has mobilized external partners to work with her cohort in business practices, reading, and special education. The big challenge is funding, but due to these outcomes, the NSI has secured enough money to continue to the program though the end of 2013.

Obstacles to Community Involvement in Academic Achievement

Process of Participation. Although there are differences between the two programs in terms of creation and implementation, the success of both the Knowledge Bowl and the early childhood program can be partially explained by the broad

participation of diverse groups in creating and implementing the programs. Schools were in agreement on the rationale for the starting an academic competition and that translated to enthusiastic commitment for the program; the early childhood initiative was developed through a process of collaboration between the NSI and the early childhood educators. The NSI was responsible for the programs. In order to actually carry out both programs, Eileen identified and mobilized a variety of partners who had the expertise to address different pieces of the overall program.

What was troubling, though, was that the early childhood program actually started because the Maple Heights K-12 schools have been gradually disengaging from the MHSAC and the collective spirit of planning academic achievement piece in general. There are six schools in the Maple Heights geographic area (two K-8 public schools, two K-8 charter schools, one public high school, and one choice high school). Their participation in the MHSAC has always been voluntary and while that structure was quite active in the period immediately following the creation of the NRP, Eileen told me their participation has been decreasing at an alarming rate.

School Disengagement: Administrators. I attended three MHSAC meeting, from January, 2013 to April, 2013. Given Eileen's description of the MHSAC, I was looking forward to hearing schools talk in greater detail about school-community partnerships. I also thought it would be a convenient way to meet the two principals from Spring Creek and Main Street Schools. I was both surprised and concerned by the absence of schools at the primary structure though communication occurred.

While community-based organizations and youth-serving agencies, including the local Boys and Girls Club, Children's Hospital, and the YMCA, as well as people from

three of the best Maple Heights-based youth-serving agencies (Action Elite, Children First, Family Academics) were at the first meeting, only one school was present, a charter school hosting the meeting. At the next two meetings, no schools attended. At the conclusion of the second meeting, Eileen, who ran the meetings, publicly recognized decreasing school participation when she stated "since we have a consistent lack of school presence, it doesn't make sense to organize it strictly around the best time for schools to attend!"

Over the course of my time with Eileen, it was apparent to me that the MHSAC was an important part of the planning process. In our first interview, she referenced the MHSAC eight times. In subsequent interviews the number of references decreased, perhaps a reflection of the dwindling attendance rate of schools at the meeting. I know she was concerned about the ramification of their absence, but she also recognized the current educational environment, one where standardized test score performance exerts huge pressures on schools, presented a huge obstacle to sustained collaboration:

> Community engagement isn't necessarily a priority when we are in a culture of test scores and student behaviors and there's so much other stuff that takes priority. Schools are not responding to initiatives that are coming from outside schools and the reason might be that schools and teachers are just too busy with other things, especially with the push to improve test scores.

For eight years Mr. Smith was the principal of one of two Maple Heights elementary schools that eventually merged to create Spring Creek Community School. In the course of my search for more Maple Heights school leadership voice in this study, we got to know each other during my visit to another school. As a past public school principal with eight years of experience in Maple Heights, he provided me with some insight into the challenges of urban school leadership and how that shapes choices about

programs and partnerships:

> I think the rule of thumb in a public school is to always go inside first. You have a dozen things on your plate, there are literally 10 to 12 things on a principal's plate at a district school so the lowest priority is to go make connections outside of the school, in the neighborhood, within the community. There is a reluctance to go outward. I need to stay within the shell of what I need to get to know here first before I go external. Frankly, as long as schools are waiting for neighborhood associations to come in and fix the neighborhood so that, therefore, they can educate the kids, it is not going to happen.

In addition to her role as program director for the NSI, Eileen was also a principal of a charter school in Maple Heights. She also recognized that external outreach was another demand on a school administrator's time and therefore another obstacle to participation in the MHSAC:

> They have a lot on their plate, and I understand it, having been a principal, I understand how much stuff is on your plate and so it is just a matter of prioritizing. And I get that this isn't necessarily a priority when we are in a culture of test scores and student behaviors, and there's so much other stuff that takes priority; and even though they know having a college-going culture is a priority, just not an immediate priority. And so I would say it's not an immediate priority that to be a collective college-bound culture because Charter A has its college-bound culture, Charter B has a college-bound culture, each of the public schools have their version of the college going culture so it's not an immediate priority to collectively come together. Problem is I think there are things to be learned from the broader community, but there is still this notion that we don't have anything to bring, anything of value, to the table. As long as test scores continue to dominate the way we judge school success and until we can start to point to community involvement as a proven way to improve student achievement as measured by these outcomes, school leadership will continue to place community engagement at the lower end of the priority ladder.

If Maple Heights is going to go forward on programs that have this cradle-to-career theme, Eileen had some practical suggestions for reengaging schools:

> I would be happy if we could just get them (schools) to give me a designee, like a designee who could come to the table and represent each of the schools to make some decisions, not major decisions, but had some authority to make some decisions at the table. So, for example, each school sends a designee to the table so we could have a conversation around the idea of what does should cradle-to-

career look like and what would that look like at the parent level, at the student level, and at the school level, and then what or how could we, what things would need to be in place and how could we implement those things in multiple stages. I'd be happy with that.

It brings up an interesting question in the context of the challenges Eileen and the MHSAC are facing regarding school participation. Why is the Knowledge Bowl growing at the same time school participation in the MHSAC is decreasing? Eileen told me one important reason:

> I'm not dealing directly with the administrators. I have a representative from each of the schools. That person is the primary contact and attends all the meetings and planning sessions. As a lesson for planning future academic achievement pieces, the fact that the principals are playing a supportive role in this program, as opposed to a lead role, is a plausible reason for its growth. They (principals) were actively engaged in the process of creating the Knowledge Bowl, but once it was established, responsibility for the actual event was in the hands of staff members. They have been great.

School Disengagement: Teachers. Ms. Brig is a teacher at the Spring Creek Community School. I met her when she and 30 of her 8th grade students were on a field trip to one of the local universities. I was having trouble connecting with the principal of Spring Creek Community School, and I was looking at other potential informants who could give voice to the school's reality. I observed Ms. Brig engaging with her students, many of whom had never been on a college campus, in an earnest, authentic way, encouraging them to speak up and ask questions; her behavior during the discussion persuaded me to approach her immediately following the formal presentation and request her participation. After explaining I was researching neighborhood association and community involvement in school reform, with absolutely no hesitation, Ms. Brig agreed to participate.

The definition of community can be narrow (parents) or broad (parents, residents,

neighborhood stakeholders, businesses, churches, etc.) in the literature; in my meetings

with Ms. Brig she understood community as primarily parents. Thus, when Ms. Brig and

I talked about the idea that the external community had become more and more isolated

from schools, she contended parents were not prepared to be effective partners in

educating kids and created feelings of distrust and animosity:

> Some parents have their own inferiority complex when it comes to the education system. So the programs are there, but some of the adults in the community are too damage to take advantage of them and so it falls on the students to take advantage of them or the children to take advantage of them.   Schools cannot count on parents to be part of the educational process. 85% of the time there is no follow through.

I got to know Joey, a citizenship teacher at Main Street High School, during an

all-day community event sponsored by the MHNA. I learned Joey was not only a teacher

at Main Street, but a resident of Maple Heights. Much like my request to Ms. Brig, I had

been having trouble connecting with Main Street High School. Joey had a background in

urban studies; for that reason my research focus was of great interest to him.

We met initially in his classroom at Main Street. Much like Ms. Brig, he talked

understood parents as community and then pointed out how parent behavior created a

backlash against the spirit of community involvement, which I took to mean parent

support for teachers:

> Most urban teachers know there's an important connection to the community.   It would be crazy to think teachers don't realize the importance of involvement, of involving the community, of involving the family, but it's just tough, it's really tough. I think the problem is there is a certain sense of hopelessness, that there is not a lot you can do about it. You can make one million phone calls to parents, but ultimately there are a lot of barriers getting in the way.   Then, when they are asked to participate in school, they're not bringing them in at an equal level, it is top-down, where it's often the jobs parents are allowed to do are subordinate roles and that shouldn't be the case. They should be brought in as equals. So they feel as if they're contributing some meaning, something of importance.

As both a student and educator in Maple Heights, I suspected Eileen has experienced some of the same parent behavior. I asked her about this negative attitude as an important piece of the school rejection of community involvement:

> I can completely understand that educator's perspective because in education we're quick to do the family doesn't care, parents don't care thing. In my experiences, that's just not true. It may appear like that on the surface but in nine cases out of ten, the parents really do want what's best for the kid. Now they may not be equipped to provide them with the best or know how to navigate so that their child gets the best, but they care, it matters and so I understand. No matter how much you may want your child to get a good education it's not your top priority when you are trying to figure out how to feed, how to clothe, how to keep the lights on, how to keep the gas on and, if you have a job, getting to and from the job.

Comparing Attitudes

What Eileen and the two educators are pointing out are some of the challenges that have been created in Maple Heights due to the effects of poverty. What is interesting is juxtaposing the two relational orientations and attitudes of the school and the community people when both are considering mobilization of partners on behalf of change. Poverty has created conditions that can be real obstacles to collaboration, but the two different entities have chosen to confront the realities associated with poverty from very different orientations.

The schools, competitive and isolationist, have a lack of recognition for the potential of the community to contribute to change. The neighborhood association, open and welcoming, believes the community has "assets" and "abundance" that can contribute to the movement to improve academic achievement in Maple Heights. These contrasting attitudes are subtle barriers to greater school-community engagement. I will

discuss ways to reduce the gap in attitudes in Chapter 5.

The Influence of the Harlem Children's Zone

When Eileen and I first met, the discussion about the academic achievement piece was intimately connected to the idea of "cradle-to-career," essentially a comprehensive plan for guiding the education of youth from birth to age 25. As the leader of the academic achievement piece of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Eileen provided talked about the idea of cradle-to-career and its connection to the Harlem Children's Zone, the Bronx-based community organization that had been an important inspiration behind the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.:

> Right, right the cradle-to-career that's right out of the Harlem Children's Zone literature, that's their mantra, that's the language that everyone is adopting. What it means for NSI, in particular the work in Maple Heights, is keeping on what happens with children from birth to post high school. That's really what it is, what that means is to start thinking about education and what happens to kids at birth, how does it impact their subsequent education and how do you build a program that ensures a quality education through college.

To support its cradle-to-career initiative, the Harlem Children's Zone has built a large organization that included its own charter schools, counseling centers, youth-serving agencies, health services, and an extensive network of family support programs. With a $75 million budget, 300 staff members, and direct control over a number of programs and services—including complete day-to-day control over three charter schools—the Harlem Children's Zone had built an extensive organization and structure.

In contrast to the Harlem Children's Zone operation, the NSI is a one person organization. Building that kind of support structure in Maple Heights is currently unfeasible. Eileen described the difference between the two organizations:

We really can't be like the Harlem Children's Zone, we don't have control over every school, youth-serving agencies, health care. We have never been in a position to administer anything more than a limited number of programs. The Harlem Children's Zone is a machine, it's a well-oiled machine—and well-financed. We (MHNA), on the other hand, we operate on a shoestring. Everything everyone does is just in-kind and motivated by their own personal commitment and organizational commitment to work towards a better Maple Heights.

Promise Grant Defeat. Additionally, the Harlem Children's Zone was the inspiration for the Promise Neighborhood Grant program, a federally-sponsored program designed to provide resources to help non-profits who wanted to work more directly with schools. Part of the Obama Administrations Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, the pool of promise money available to non-profits was around $200 million; and in both 2011 and 2012 the MHNA and its partner the NSI submitted grant request of approximately $500,000 (Department of Education, 2010; Larsen, 2011). Both times the MHNA was denied grant money.

As part of her responsibilities as the Program Director of the NSI, Eileen was heavily involved in the preparation of these grants. The second defeat occurred in the fall of 2012, corresponding with both the start of my interviews with Eileen and the decline in participation of schools in the MHSAC and the academic achievement initiative:

It was interesting to note how school behavior seemed to change with the second promise neighborhood grant defeat. There was this potential pot of money on the table that people collectively felt that they would have access to if that grant happened. Well it didn't happen. And so for an entity like NSI to be in place and I don't have resources that I can go out to each of the schools and say we can give you X in terms of dollars, to be very honest, very specific, they're not necessarily going to run to the table for nonfinancial benefit when everybody is strapped with how do I increase my monetary resources at my school.

The more Eileen and I talked about the promise grant proposal, the more it became apparent to me that the promise grant money was an important piece of the

planning and the amount devoted to preparing these grants took time from building and strengthening relationships with the schools. In retrospect, Eileen felt everyone was "too focused on this pie-in-the-sky that we would get this promise neighborhood grant."

However, the promise grant defeat seems to have impacted the NSI more than other community-based organizations and youth serving agencies that are actively involved with Maple Heights schools. When I asked Dr. Reed, the Spring Creek principal, about community involvement in schools, he talked about how community partnerships offered "positive opportunities for his students. We want to pursue outside opportunities and partnerships with community groups." He did not sound like a principal who had turned his back on community involvement.

Much of the discussion has focused on declining school involvement in the MHSAC, but perhaps the NSI has made some strategic errors by focusing too much on bringing the Harlem Children's Zone model and thinking into Maple Heights. All the time spent on the Promise Neighborhood grant may have slowed the focus and momentum for collectively addressing academic achievement in Maple Heights.

Non-NSI School-Community Programs

The more data I compiled on schools and community-based groups in Maple Heights, the more I discovered that there are an extensive number of externally-based support programs currently in place and supporting Maple Heights schools. Over the course of six months, I became quite familiar with a number of community-based organizations and youth serving agencies that were specifically focused on Maple Heights school. Because I had limited my school focus to two Maple Heights public

schools the Spring Creek Community School and the Main Street High School, I looked

for information on community programs that were occurring specifically connected to

those two schools. While I suspect these community programs are at work in other

Maple Heights schools, I have deliberately limited my analysis to those two schools.

Spring Creek is the first public community school in Bridge Harbor that has a

health center located in the building, a dental clinic that provides weekly checkups, and

social service agencies that provide a variety of counseling services for students and

parents. Students and families have access to these services. The school has a thriving

parent center that offers the entire Maple Heights community, not just parents of Spring

Street students, services in a variety of areas, including free use of computers, résumé

writing, job search workshops, parent coffees, and, perhaps most important, "a place

where people can just come and visit." Additionally, "Children First," the local CBO, has

created a program called HIP (Having Involved Parents) that directly addresses the role

of parents in educating their children.

At one time the Main Street High School was one of Bridge Harbor's best

schools; after years of decline and a failed attempt at implementing the small schools

model (Meier, 2002), the school re-opened in 2011 as a traditional high school. Despite

its problems, Main Street has a rich tradition and occupies an emotional place in the

hearts of the Maple Heights community. In recognizing the re-opening of the school,

Mrs. Anderson clearly stated that it was important for all of Maple Heights, not just the

MHNA, to work to make Main Street the hub of the neighborhood.

In fact, during my first meeting with Mrs. Anderson, she spoke quite highly about

the way the new leader of Main Street understood the historical importance of Main

Street as a symbol of Maple Height's rich past. She pointed out that "Mr. McJones (Main Street Principal) gets that, he gets that one of the things is connections of the school and how they see it as important in the neighborhood." Mrs. Anderson told me that soon after Main Street reopened in 2011, Mr. McJones, the principal, called to invite her to visit Main Street. Since then she has been regular visitor.

Indeed, both Main Street and the MHNA are working to re-establish the primacy of Main Street as a community gathering place, the hub of the neighborhood. I thought Eileen provided an excellent conceptualization of the school as a community hub:

> The hub idea means the building goes beyond my child attends school here. Whether your child attends school here or not, you value this location, this building, because it's offering something to the neighborhood, the community at large. So much of the historical roots of the neighborhood center back to Main Street, and so people are very wedded to the history of Main Street. I sit here as an alumni of the school and so I understand the community's connection to the school. The principal is working on growing the student population so there is all of this historical stuff that goes along to people's identity in terms of their connection of the school and how they see it as important in the neighborhood.

In its two years of existence, Main Street has demonstrated through its actions a desire to be both a hub and to establish partnerships with various organizations. Parent nights, social events, family literacy nights, after-school rec programs, and athletic contests are all back now. Main Street recently announced the establishment of a nursing program partnership with one of the local universities, as well as partnerships in urban planning and art with other universities. As a symbol of the school pride, they also have a very active alumni association, and Eileen is a proud, card carrying member of that alumni association.

Generally the literature on school-community collaboration portrays the schools as the primary obstacle to collaboration, but there are community programs happening

both inside and outside the four walls of the school building. There are a number of individual collaborations happening; in fact, the real challenge may be that schools and non-school entities are being asked to work collectively on academic achievement. Later in this study, I will discuss the idea of "silo" in Maple Heights, a phenomenon that speaks directly to the challenges of collaboration among community-based organizations. Collaboration as a behavior is perhaps a challenge across many organizations, not just schools. In Maple Heights, the sheer volume of organizations being asked to work together differentiates their experience from other studies.

Many of these programs assume some level of partnership and collaboration. While the Harlem Children's Zone's may have been a model for school-community partnerships, its level of organizational control over educational and social services cannot be duplicated in Maple Heights. Eileen recognized the challenge of emulating the Harlem Children's Zone when she said "actually the Harlem Children's Zone way is the easier way. The control is top-down and really that's appealing!" What Eileen was pointing out was programs primarily originate outside the four walls of both Spring Creek and Main Street are going to be effectively implemented if they have a process of communication and relationship-building that recognize the complexity of control. Creating the conditions in which the partnerships can grow is a challenge for both the community-based organizations and the schools.

Community-Based Challenges to Collective Action

Cross-Organizational Understanding. Most of the discussion thus far has focused on the ways schools have been engaging (or not) with non-school entities in

creating programs aimed at strengthening academic achievement in Maple Heights.

As the first MHSAC meeting I attended, Eileen, who was responsible for setting the

agenda, introduced the idea of building a college going culture. It sounded like this

concept had been introduced at a previous meeting, but with only one school in

attendance, everyone recognized it was a topic that would require school input.

Nonetheless, the discussion that ensued among the non-school attendees was fascinating

for what it said about shared understanding among non-school groups that are based in

Maple Heights.

One of the youth-serving agencies at the meeting, Education Now, founded in

2000 as an after-school service for Maple Heights students, quickly endorsed the idea of a

building a college-going culture. Given its academic focus, to have in place a program

that delivers messages reinforcing the value of a college education across Maple Heights

would work in unison with Education Now's academic support programs.   While they

already had their own college-going culture program, to have more groups mobilized on

behalf of this message would be "of great help to our organization."

Action Elite, another Maple Heights youth-serving agency was founded in 1980

to serve at-risk young Black males.   A regular attendee at MHSAC meetings, Action

Elite is committed to exploring collective programming in Maple Heights. In

commenting about the idea of a college going culture, however, the Action Elite

representative talked about how the kids in their building are "high-risk factors. We want

to bring them back in, keep them out of jail. Right now our students are not thinking

about college."

Ms. Jo, who runs Family Academics, an after-school tutorial, GED services,

family literacy, and adult enrichment programs (sewing, art classes) in Maple Height, is also a regular participant in the MHSAC. Ms. Jo has a long history in Maple Heights and works with a diversity of students and adults who have had uneven educational success. Many of her students are trying to work their way back into the mainstream school. When discussing the college-going culture, she pointed out that it is not uncommon for her to "work with students who had never been exposed to an adult who had graduated from high school or held a job. I am not sure how we work that into this program, but my student population is a reality in Maple Heights."

The point is neither of these two organizations was opposed to the idea of building a collective college going culture in Maple Heights, but both reflected how the organization's purpose, identity, and experience shapes how they interpret academic achievement in Maple Heights. That knowledge influences the content and quality of their input. Eileen told me how these preliminary conversations have been valuable, but she also admitted that "nothing will go forward with it because I am really wrestling with how to re-engage the school entities."

Silos. During a university-sponsored conference on character and education there was a panel discussion following the keynote speaker. One of the panelists, Steve the executive director of Children First, a locally-based family and youth-serving agency with a long history of engagement in Maple Heights—including training and staffing the parent centers—talked about the challenges facing Bridge Harbor schools:

> We need to break down some of the silos we are working with here in
> Bridge Harbor. I know we are moving the needle, we are doing better, but
> certainly some of the agencies that are excellent at social media or
> gardening or sports programs, let's leverage that, let's get kids to the
> program, where we know it works. We don't all need to be a one-stop

shop, but let's make sure we are continuing to work together because that is how we are going to most effectively leverage our resources.

While a culture of school isolation is often cited as an obstacle to school-community partnering, Steve's reference of silos points out that organizational realities can exert pressure on the level of collaboration and sharing across CBO's and youth-serving agencies. The silo mindset implies that CBO's are not above putting their own self-interest first and then shifting focus to thinking about the collective good. Competition for resources to support program influences choices and acts as an obstacle to the collective approach that has differentiated the Maple Heights approach to neighborhood change. Silo-thinking was a phenomenon that did not appear in much of the literature, but its existence in Maple Heights is problematic because of this collective element.

When I asked Eileen specifically about Steve's comments regarding silos, she first recognized the truth of his statement and then talked about how silos are the tied to organizational realities related to the need for resources:

> I think the issue is that people still continue to work in silos instead of collaborating in terms of resources. Even amongst the youth-serving agencies, I think sometimes they view each other as competition, and so if you have that mindset of competition, then you do not necessarily reach out because you're afraid that someone is going to take your idea or whoever you are trying to tap for resources, they are trying to tap for resources and so I'm going to get less resources. Part of what happens in many communities, not just Maple Heights, but Bridge Harbor in general, you have multiple entities working on the same thing so there's duplication happening and you are not maximizing resources. And so by not collaborating, it hinders us sometimes, in terms of our outcomes.

The problem here, though, is that it is really hard for an organization to necessarily put collective thinking above organizational needs. Action Elite has an excellent reputation across Maple Heights and is a regular participant in the MHSAC. It

is doing a lot of good things for African American males. An important reason for its success is its emphasis on physical activity. In order to fulfill its mission, Action Elite is conducting a fundraising campaign to address needs at it Maple Heights building, including a new gym. There are five gyms located within close proximity of the Action Elite building, but because physical activity is essential to the Action Elite mission, it is difficult to criticize it for wanting its own gym. At a recent MHNA-sponsored community meeting, the director of Action Elite admitted the fundraising has been difficult.

The Maple Heights Neighborhood Association's 110 block radius encompasses commercial and residential properties. Diagram 8 is a map that shows ten locations of organizations that are specifically referenced in this case study.   All these organizations are within the borders of the Maple Heights neighborhood and all are within close proximity of each other. However, there is little sharing of facilities or partnering on programs.

Diagram 8
Maple Heights Schools and Community Locations

1. Maple Heights Neighborhood Association

2. Main Street High School

3. Spring Creek Community School

4. Maple Heights Coffee Shop

5. Family Academics

6. YMCA

7. Children First

8. Neighborhood and Schools Initiative

9. Action Elite

The missed opportunities to collaborate can become a source of frustration when one thinks about the realities of organizational capacity and limited resources. Eileen described a recent experience with a staff person at Children First, the organization whose leader first talked about silos:

> Yesterday I went to a meeting at the Children First youth-serving family agency. They are planning this Literacy Summit for next month. So they invited me to participate in the planning process after they were several weeks into the planning and so I attended the first meeting. And so when they were going through things that still need to be done, who has these resources, which has those resources, I was able to name resources and contacts. Then we had a conversation afterwards about how if I had known they were doing this, we could've linked the Knowledge Bowl and the Literacy Summit, shared resources, and ultimately had better outcomes and touched more people. So now two weeks from the date they

are going to have their event, two weeks later we have the Knowledge Bowl and I'm trying to tap into the exact same resources. And so by not collaborating, it hinders us sometimes, in terms of our outcomes.

The problem is attempting to assess how much better it would have been had there been collaboration between the two organizations. The recently held Knowledge Bowl had record participation and high levels of enthusiasm. I did not attend the Children First event, but its strong connection to the neighborhood increases the potential for a successful event. To a certain extent, then, the more successful each event, the less likely organizations are going to be about asking "what if." Would collaboration have significantly improved the events? The inability to think about "reaching out and connecting" may be a symptom of silo-thinking, but neither of these programs seemed to be adversely affected. I suspect that until there are no resources to do either event, both will do minimal collaborating.

Moreover, sometimes collaboration can be seen as either a convenience or a necessity, depending on the organization. The Harlem Children's Zone, with its $75 million budget, 300 staff members, and three schools, is going to collaborate on its own terms. In Paul Tough's (2008) account of the Zone's school, he talked about how frustration with public schools was part of the reason they founded their own charter schools. They went from having to collaborate to controlling their own schools—and they had the resources to do it their way.

According to Eileen, the NSI, however, is its programs and covering all other operations for "less than 100 grand. We operate on a shoestring." It does not have the resources to control anything beyond those limited number of programs. It needs

partners. In fact, early in our discussions, Eileen pointed out how the financial limitations

of the NSI defined her approach to getting schools and external groups together:

> Everything that everyone does is just in-kind and their own personal and organizational commitment to work towards a better Lindsay Heights. I don't go to schools and provide direct service or youth serving agencies provide direct support. My role really is, I would describe it as a dot connector, I connect the dots. I don't make decisions about programs, like I say I help connect the dots.

> **Breaking Down Silos.** Steve pointed to the existence of silo thinking in Maple

Heights, but Eileen talked about how the NSI's orientation and mission actually work on

behalf of breaking down the barriers associated with silo-thinking:

> Organizations are tapping into me because they know if I come to the table, I'm going to share information. I'm not taking anything from them, and I'll provide assistance on some level, won't necessarily be monetary assistance. Either I will provide time or I'll help identify other resources, those types of things. Where people have been invited to come and talk about the possibility of collaborating, there's been good response. So that says to me that people are open to it. People just don't necessarily, we've just not necessarily figured out how to make that a smooth action in a smooth way. Getting people to commit to building on stuff you have strengths and perhaps letting go of stuff that is not strength that you have, but might be strength of another. That means some tough conversations about who does what the best, what's the best outcomes in these areas, and then helping people to get to a different place.

While Eileen also admitted that right now it is her "wrestle to figure out how to

engage" groups in the MHSAC, it may be that the NSI simply lacks the organizational

capacity to re-energize that structure. The MHNA, on the other hand, remains actively

engaged in a variety of structures that bring different groups together on behalf of Maple

Heights.

One structure that has become an institution in Maple Heights is the "The

Community Ideas Forum," a monthly meeting that brings together a diversity of

community-based organizations, churches, schools, youth-serving agencies, the

government, and the police department to discuss, share, and update each other on

programs and initiatives. I have attended three meeting and all have been "standing room

only," a positive sign for the legitimacy and credibility of this structure as a forum for

communicating and sharing.

As a neighborhood stakeholder, the MHNA is a participant in the Community

Ideas Forum, but it does not run the meetings or create the agenda. The MHNA is an

equal partner with other community-based groups who attend the meeting and get the

floor when it is their time to talk. Additionally, the Community Ideas Forum is not a

place where programs are created, but it is a safe structure for communicating and

strengthening.   There are agenda items, reports from various community organizations,

and then a time for any neighborhood announcements regarding upcoming events or

special activities. The important point, though, is that every meeting is packed with

community members, indicating this forum is seen as very useful as a way to keep

everyone informed.

The Neighborhood Wellness Group is a MHNA-created structure that focuses

specifically on NRP initiatives tied to health and wellness, healthy eating, and youth and

family initiatives. Comprised of representative from local clinics, hospitals, wellness

centers, and food pantries, the Neighborhood Wellness Group meets monthly to discuss

issues of health and wellness in Maple Heights. Emily, the MHNA staff member who

spent her first seven years coordinating this group, described the make-up of this group:

> In 2006, we convened what we call the Neighborhood Wellness Group.
> We have over 20 community partners. They range from the free health
> clinic to churches to the YMCA to the Boys and Girls Club to Great
> Harvest to Julie's Garden. There's sort of a whole range of folks who are
> all dedicated to improving health and wellness in Maple Heights. We

work collectively on a few different goals which have evolved over time. One is improving access to healthy food; another is improving opportunities for safe physical activity, including access to health and wellness services. We found the Neighborhood Wellness Group to be an effective structure for building programs. In some ways the Maple Heights Student Achievement Collaborative (MHSAC) is similar to the Wellness Group in a sense that it brings together a lot of partners who are doing their own important work.

Because the MHNA has chosen to separate the academic achievement piece of the NRP, schools are not included in the Neighborhood Wellness Group. With the decline of the MHSAC as that forum where academic achievement programs are constructed, it would be good for organizers of both these other forums to make a concerted effort to encourage schools to attend. Designed specifically to encourage communication across Maple Heights-based organizations and with a lot of credibility, schools should be part of the meetings. I have not seen schools at any of the Ideas meetings.

Organizing Community Involvement in Schools

Even though schools are currently detaching themselves from the MHSAC and other structures that facilitate collective participation, there is still a tremendous volume of community-based programs directed at supporting schools. Most of the support is one-to-one, meaning an individual CBO or youth-serving agency provides direct program support to one or more schools. There are at least 20 CBO's/youth-serving agencies and over 40 faith-based organizations working in various ways on behalf of school and neighborhood revitalization. Additional willing partners include Bridge Harbor universities, city government departments, the Bridge Harbor school district, health/medical establishments, and commercial businesses. Based on those numbers, the

perception of those who know little about Maple Heights may be that it is an impoverished urban area with very little happening to solve its problems, but that is simply inaccurate and erroneous.

Many of these organizations are conducting programs that directly support schools, but the structure of the programs and the level of involvement vary greatly based on the specific programs designed and administered by each organization. Some programs happen during the normal school day and provide daily support (parent center staffing, classroom aides), while others occur after-school (recreational activities, tutoring, GED, family nights). Some programs do not occur on a regular basis (parent morning coffees, literacy nights, parent-teacher conferences). Lastly, some take place in the school building, while others are externally located.

Though I am not familiar with all the organizations that are at work in Maple Heights, I have gotten to know a number of them through MHSAC meetings, in talking with participants in this studying, or by the inevitable outcome of spending six months in Maple Heights. In order to organize the level of involvement in some kind of a coherent construct, I took a number of organizations with which I am familiar and created a visual diagram to delineate the volume of support these organizations are providing for both the Main Street High School and the Spring Creek Community School.

To create an accurate characterization, I used a variety of criteria to assess the level of support these external organizations are providing the two schools: 1) Is the organization providing services on a daily basis or are they special events, 2) Are the services located inside or outside the school building, 3) Are the services academic or non-academic (physical, emotional, health, social), and, 4) Are the programs inside or

outside the school building. A thick line indicates a high level of fairly steady—daily in many instances—involvement in school support and a thin line means the organization's involvement is minimal.

To further differentiate the type of support, a solid line indicates the organization is providing mainly academic service and a dotted line means the organization is providing what might be considered non-academic support. Academic support is broadly understood to be programs in areas such as literacy, tutoring, and GED preparation. Non-academic would include after-school recreation, meals, family fun nights, health, and job training.

At the outset, it is important to state that Diagram 9 is not meant as an evaluation of effectiveness. These partners provide a variety of support to Spring Creek, some low and some high. Indeed, the once-a-year activity may be low volume, but may have high impact. A yearly clothing drive, for instance, means kids come to school properly clothed. Although evaluation of the overall effectiveness of each of these organization's school support programs is beyond the scope of this study, Diagram 9 organizes the amount of activity into a coherent framework that accurately conveys the fact that Maple Heights is the recipient of many programs and services.

Diagram 9
Community-Based School Support: Level and Type
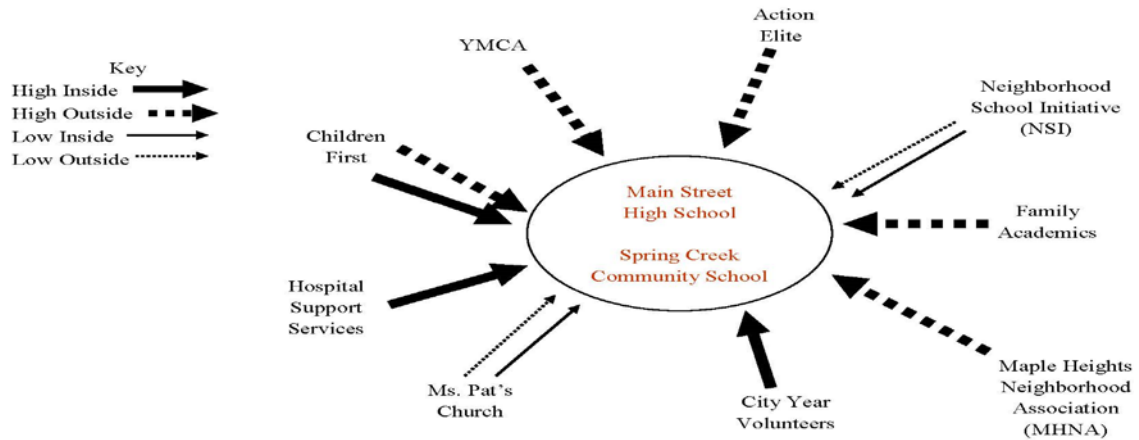
In specific reference to the Diagram 9, Children First, for instance, trains and staffs the volunteers who work in the parent centers in Maple Heights schools. The parents are essentially full-time staff members who work inside the school on a daily basis. Additionally, Children First runs a large number of family literacy programs both inside and outside the school and actually provides high levels of high academic and high non-academic support. Given its sustained, high level of involvement both inside and outside the four walls of the school, I have assigned it high inside and high outside.

Action Elite, on the other hand, provides support that is located primarily outside the school building and almost entirely after-school; therefore its sustained volume of programs (music programs, athletic competitions, sports leagues) is quite high and originate outside the normal academic day and in a non-school building, I have assigned a rating of high outside to its school support efforts.

As Maple Height's first community school, Spring Creek Community School has

a variety of organizations providing services during the normal school day. Ms. Pat, who

is trained by Children First and then placed in the Spring Creek parent center, talked

about the diversity of community-based services available to Spring Creek:

> Spring Creek has a health center here too. There's a nurse from the local hospital and she gets a lot of the health stuff done. We also have Smart Smile to come out do dental work. Our nurses hooked up some families with a dentist because it's hard to get a dentist. We have a doctor come in once a week.

> City Year kids, they are good. They are here every day. They put kids in a circle in the morning, chanting, they are like cheerleaders, they start the school days, as goofy as it is, students respond to it. Parents send kids out the door on a bad note, City Year greets them at the bus, start chanting, start off on a great note, starting fresh, get another chance.

> Our church has been partnering with Maple Creek (prior school) for years and they still partner when it became Spring Creek. They do different things like, our church gives hats and gloves and staff appreciation day, they give me supplies to bring to school to give to the kids if they need supplies. My church also has a food pantry and a clothing bank. Then our church is going to have a day where everyone gets free glasses, the Dominican center, which is part of our church, is going to have a glasses day.

Currently the NSI has two programs in Maple Heights, one inside the K-8 schools

and one outside the general K-12 system. As a program that requires school

participation, the Knowledge Bowl is an interesting mix of internal and external

collaboration. The Knowledge Bowl may be a once-a-year event, but it does ask schools

and students to make a sustained commitment to the process of preparation for the

competition, not unlike that of an athletic team. The NSI organizes the Knowledge Bowl

and the teachers are responsible for providing and preparing the participants. It is this

commitment that makes the program valuable; but outside of this once-a-year event, the

NSI does not have a sustained support presence in K-12 schools. Combined with the fact

that its other program does not involve K-12 schools at all and the result is two grades

(inside and outside) of low involvement.

School Performance

The decision to separate the academic achievement piece from the rest of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan has disrupted the connections that had been an important part of the thinking behind the plan creation. The Neighborhood and Schools Initiative had some big ideas for creating academic achievement programs in Maple Heights; reality associated with funding limitations and staff capacity, combined with traditional school obstacles to sustained collaboration, have presented a significant challenge to its goal of supporting improved school performance.

Two of the bigger Maple Heights public schools the Main Street High School and the Spring Creek Community School, are important parts of the neighborhood. As a result of poor performance, both are newly reorganized schools—still in their infancy— and that reality makes it difficult to draw any substantive conclusions the effectiveness of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan on these schools. However, public schools in Bridge Harbor are under intense scrutiny to improve now. In 2011, the State Department of Public Instruction began issuing "report cards" on state public schools; in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Main Street High School (27.8) and Spring Creek Community School (52.5) received overall scores that placed them in the "Fails to Meet Expectations" Category (Table 2). In the 2012-2013 school year, the Spring Creek Community School (52.5) exceeded the overall Bridge Harbor District Report Card, but, like its two schools, the Bridge Harbor District as a whole is in the "Fails to Meet Expectations" category. Additionally, Main Street High School (27.5) is significantly

below the district average and currently among the lowest public high schools in Bridge

Harbor.

Table 2
School and District Report Cards. 2011-2012
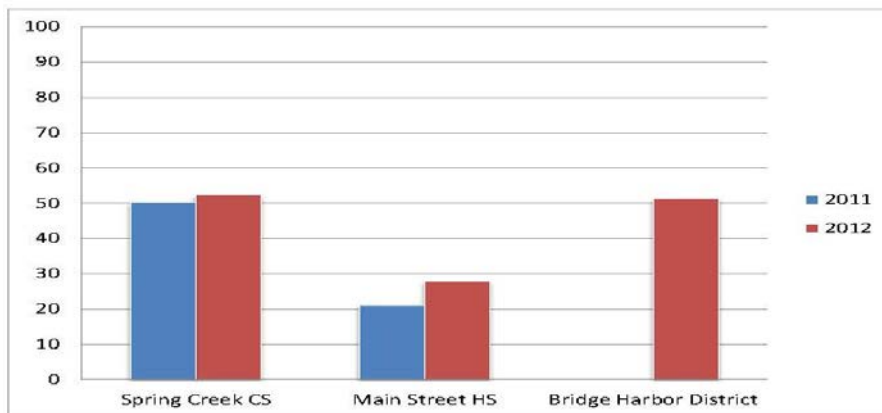
(Department of Public Instruction, 2013)

According to these report cards, both schools are failing to meet even the most

minimum expectations. Each has demonstrated some improvement from year one to

year two, but the gains are not enough to move them into a new category. Like many

urban school districts, there is a variety of discussions about what to do with

underperforming schools. Even though they are newly opened schools, they have very

little latitude. The school performance of these two schools--as measured by the state

report card system—makes them candidates for even more restructuring, or possibly for

closing. It is an era of impatience for poor public school performance.

Yet, if one can look past the numbers, there are those indicators that things are

starting to change at both of these schools. I worked side-by-side with six students from

Main Street High School, and I was thoroughly impressed with their attitude and

behaviors that day. As a participant observer that day, I saw the qualitative counter narrative to test scores and other data that has become so persuasive in today's educational environment. Unfortunately, we are not conditioned to look at these individual signs of success as a sign that the school is experiencing some successes.

When I asked Ms. Pat, the parent coordinator at Spring Creek, to talk about the newly reorganized Spring Creek Community School, she pointed out some non-test score indicators showing things are changing:

> We have more students, we do have quite a few students. I live right up the street from the school and I see a lot of the kids walking up the street to school. We are getting bigger turnouts for parent events, it's getting better. We had a resource night a few days ago. Lot of people came. We had 60 families sign up. Average family is at least two kids. We put stuff together to encourage people to come out. Parent-teacher conferences are really well attended now. I know one of our big project last year was when we redid the playground, we had parents come out, painting with your kids. In the summer, they have baseball, kickball, soccer. We are working on trying to bring soccer back here.

In addition to these qualitative changes in attitudes, Spring Creek has completed some of its reorganization as Bridge Harbor's first community school. According to Ms. Pat, the local hospital provides a full-time nurse, social worker, psychologist, and speech therapist. Additionally, the "smart smile" dentist comes out twice a month and even provides free dental care to those who are uninsured or underinsured. In addition, the parent center hosts twice monthly "parent coffee hours." One of the coffees is a time to "chit chat, talk, and vent;" the other is with the Principal. At the more formal coffee, the topics include the budget, student testing, and "just how well the school has been going."

In just one year, Main Street increased from 328 to 426 students, including those six new freshmen who spent an entire afternoon doing neighborhood service work with me. Although growth is a positive indicator that students and parents are giving Main

Street a chance, Joey, the Citizenship teacher at Main Street, has noticed a corresponding

change in both the make-up and the quality of the student body:

> What I do see is a change in the school to a certain extent. You have people that
> are coming back to Main Street, wanting to send their kids here. You have alums
> sending their kids back, you have professionals sending their kids back. We have
> our problems with our freshman class, but we've a pretty solid group of freshmen
> that came in this year. Very intelligent, very motivated in a lot of cases, not all,
> but I think that speaks to it. I think that that's a part of it, the sense that the school
> is back and that can certainly lift up the community.

If Joey is right, those professionals who have the educational capital to make

choices about where to attend are starting to give Main Street an opportunity. However,

these are also the same parents who are most influenced by test score data. Again, school

performance does not have the luxury of patience.

Given its tradition as a key part of the community, Main Street has been working

hard to re-establish itself as a valuable community partner. Eileen's early childhood

program is also made possible because Main Street opened its building for the all-day

training sessions free of charge:

> To open a building up on a Saturday and allow us to be there which meant
> someone has to be there all day and they don't charge us a dime, those
> relationships make a huge difference. And it's not a training that their staff
> benefited from, it is training for childcare providers that are not affiliated with
> their school in any way, shape, or form but because they are part of the
> collaborative, they understand the big picture.

Main Street also opens its building to after-school recreational activities.

Additionally, Main Street High School also has one of the larger GED programs in Maple

Heights and opened its own Parent Center in fall 2013. The center supports families in

the neighborhood by offering job training and other programs.

There are many positive signs of movement in both Spring Creek and Main

Street. Neither is behaving like an underperforming school. Nonetheless, we know the

public associates test scores with good school. Eileen, the NSI program director and

primary liaison between the schools and academic achievement piece of the

Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, summarized the simple reality associated with

community involvement in school improvement in the current educational environment:

> As long as test scores continue to dominate the way we judge school success and
> until we can start to point to community involvement as a proven way to improve
> student achievement as measure by these outcomes, school leadership will
> continue to place community engagement at the lower end of the priority ladder.

Part II. MHNA Programs: Indirect Impact on School Improvement

The MHNA has developed a comprehensive plan for neighborhood revitalization

and the goals of the plan are far-ranging and include the improvement of student

performance in neighborhood schools. We saw in this first section that direct

involvement with schools on behalf of academic achievement and educational

improvement in general has been a challenge to the Maple Heights Neighborhood

Association and its educational arm, The Neighborhood and Schools Initiative.

Educators have not always been prepared to see the connection between good eye

sight, healthy eating, good housing, jobs, safe neighborhoods and school improvement.

To theorists like Jean Anyon (1997, 2005) and Mark Warren (2005, 2011) improvements

in these areas are essential parts of a comprehensive reform plan to impact school

performance. These are the areas the in which the MHNA has experience and these are

the indirect ways the MHNA is working to change Maple Heights. These programs and

activities originate outside the four walls of the school building; the objective here is to

provide the information needed to make some conclusions about their potential to impact

behavior and performance inside the four walls.

MHNA Support for Schools. When I asked Ms. Pat, the Spring Creek parent

coordinator about NSI activity in her school, she was unfamiliar with that organization.

She was, however, familiar with the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association and spoke

about the different ways the MHNA has addressed conditions surrounding Spring Creek

Community School.

> I know these working with on helping get our traffic light back on Spring Street.
> Helping pass out a petition for people to sign so we could get that light. Made it
> safer for the kids. They help with a variety of things around here. We got these
> houses put up over here, makes a neighborhood look nice. There are two on my
> block, which I live between Spring and Main Street, and between Spring and Elm
> Streets. There are three on the same side of the church that's by Maple Heights
> and then in behind the put total of five houses so it makes it look nice. They put a
> bunch of gardens where there were vacant lots. Kids love those gardens in the
> summer. They make it look good over here, where we live.

Ms. Pat's response really spoke to the dichotomy between direct and indirect

support for academic achievement in Maple Heights. Aside from the Knowledge Bowl,

which Ms. Pat said was a great thing for her school, what she really knew about the

MHNA was its impact on neighborhood conditions. When the MHNA decided to

separate the academic achievement piece from the rest of its programs, its support for

school improvement became less evident. The big challenge is that people are not

necessarily conditioned to connect external conditions and factors to internal school

performance. It has simply not been part of the mainstream thinking about improving

schools.

Neighborhood Effects in Maple Heights. At the first report to the community

event I attended, Mr. Dean, one of the Maple Heights Block Watch Captains, asked

people to raise their hand if "you have heard ever heard gunshots on your block?" Most

of the hands in the room immediately went up. Poverty, dangerous surroundings,

inadequate housing, an absence of role models, I thought about the powerful effect the

sum of these experiences have on the development of attitudes and behavior in the

community. I also thought it unfair for me, an outsider, to diminish the significance these

experiences have on the construction of student, family, and community attitudes and

behavior. How could these types of experiences not affect student performance?

Yet, I could not forget what the principal of a high performing charter in Maple

Heights said when I asked him about the influence of these realities on the behavior of his

students. "As long as schools are waiting for neighborhood associations to come in and

fix the neighborhood so that therefore they can educate the kids, it is not going to

happen." In order to more explore the ramification of a theory that recognized the

influence of external factors on student attitudes and performance, I asked other Maple

Heights educators to talk about the connection between neighborhood and behavior.

It was my first question for Dr. Reed, the Principal at Spring Creek Community

School (SSCS), a newly reorganized K-8 Maple Heights school. He talked about the

broad range of challenges facing students in his school.

> I believe that neighborhood conditions such as socio-economic, housing,
> employment including peoples' expectations of each other, greatly influence
> student attitudes about themselves, their aspirations, their decision making, and
> their performance in all facets of life. It is their reality and we have to respect its
> influence.

Joey, the citizenship teacher at Main Street High School, works at a school that

has been right in the middle of Maple Heights' historical highs and lows. He hesitated

before providing an explanation that was both introspective and realistic:

> That's a difficult question. I always wonder. I always say this to my friends, to my more conservative friends who wonder why I want teach in an urban setting. I wonder what I have done if I had grown up in the city and if I lived in these neighborhoods. I was a good student in high school but I wasn't a great student, so like would I have been able to overcome some of the obstacles. So I guess to answer the question yea, I think there's a huge correlation between the areas they grow up in and, I mean, I don't want to say the expectations, but it's just tough when not everyone around you has college aspirations. It's tough when you don't have those role models everywhere, and I mean certainly the appearance of the neighborhood isn't a help either. I mean the neighborhood doesn't look great, so yeah I think it definitely contributes to some of the problems that they have in school.

Although Ms. Brig, a teacher in the Spring Creek Community School, only lives a few minutes from Maple Heights and taught in a school just north of Maple Heights, she described the neighborhood that surrounds Spring Creek and how she believes it has affected students in Spring Creek:

> So I say my move from Park School, which was right on Park Street, maybe ten minutes from Maple Heights, to my new place at Spring Creek Community School, there is complete difference in the culture. My students in Maple Heights are harder and my interpretation so far in two years is that I believe that the neighborhood, that area that they're coming into my classroom from every day, I feel that it's very hardened. It is a different neighborhood, and I had to start to think about the significance. From what I see, I think it's fewer homeowners, fewer families. At the corner store I hear people say "I am a fugitive friendly landlord." What does that mean? There are masses of young males, African-American males, just hanging out in there, hanging outside of there. I am a schoolteacher, I walk out of there, they do not know me from Jack, I could be a undercover police officer and they are like "I got this, I got that" in ways that I do not see in my neighborhood. And so you think about my young student, so he walks out from the school, walks down this block, and is walking past a group of people behaving like this. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? So now that that fire is gone and you come to me as the teacher and I'm trying to excite you like that again and it's a little harder.

I asked Eileen, a past principal of a high performing Maple Height charter school and alum of Main Street, if researchers like me were merely using neighborhood

conditions as an excuse for poor student and school performance:

> Now from the perspective of, does poverty, crime, and those things, all of those things impact the neighborhood. The quality of housing, all of that sends a message to children about their value. There's no way you can sugarcoat it. It sends a message to children about their value. The condition that your school is in sends a message to kids about how much you value them or don't value them. So a neighborhood does impact, I think a child's perspective on their value and so when I was in charge of Renaissance School, one of the things that I had a huge argument with my board about the condition of the building we were in. I was like, you can't tell me that children coming into a building where water was dripping from the ceiling when it rains, the bathrooms are in deplorable condition, you can just look at the building and see that it needs improvement. You can't tell me that were trying to teach the kids that we care about them, that we tell them they matter, they are not looking at the same things that we see and say to themselves, even if they can't articulate it out loud. That they're not somehow saying "no you really don't care because if you did we wouldn't be coming into the classroom with the window that's broken and it hasn't been fixed all winter."

The other problem, according to Eileen, is that poverty a powerful determinant of

behavior:

> Many families in Maple Heights are just in survival mode, day-to-day survival mode. No matter how much you may want your child to get a good education it's not your top priority when you are trying to figure out how to feed, how to clothe, how to keep the lights on, how to keep the gas on. When you are just trying to navigate, it's a very different type of mindset.

Mr. Doug is a Maple Heights resident and an educational aide in one of the local

schools. I got to know him during my discussions with people in the MHNA. He was

described as "incredibly connected within the community—invested here and invested in

the community." Because I wanted to know more about the realities of being a resident of

Maple Heights, I met with Mr. Doug. During our first meeting, I asked him to describe

the neighborhood:

> Poverty has become the norm, or extreme poverty has become a norm, that's horrible. Like you never have the chance to really live outside of your means. Or sometimes you don't even have the means to survive and that's not a good thing.

For both Eileen and Mr. Doug, poverty is real; While the charter school principal resisted using the neighborhood as any kind of an excuse, none of these other people were making excuses either. The fact that they are all living and working in Maple Heights means they are committed to Maple Heights.   They were, however, pointing out the realities of the neighborhood. I though Jack summarized it best when he assessed the effects of poverty on the neighborhood. Conditions in Maple Heights created an environment where "people in poverty have been robbed of their human dignity and their human spirit. So a lot of people are there without hope, they are jaded, they don't believe."

The MHNA was created in response to the realities of poverty and neglect. The first section of the case study focused on the academic achievement piece and direct school-level programs; this section will be primarily concerned with programs and processes that originate at the neighborhood-level and are seen as indirect in its relationship to schools. The MHNA has a large number of programs and processes at work on behalf of Neighborhood revitalization and I am going to organize the data by breaking down the different parts of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Each part of the plan has different influences and affects. Housing, for instance, is a specific plan initiative that has broad impact on the physical and social conditions in the neighborhood. I'll discuss each part of the plan in the context of its influence on both other parts of the plan, as well as on attitudes and behaviors that act to revitalize the spirit of the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan: Non-Academic Initiatives

Housing. Housing is one of the eight parts of the Neighborhood Revitalization

Plan and, as Emily pointed out earlier, housing goes deep into the MHNA's historical

roots:

> The initial MHNA strategies were around housing and urban agriculture, so both
> of those areas are sort of like foundations for the way Maple Heights started.
> Then, as the work grew into the NRP, it was clear in the beginning that all these
> ideas were connected to the quality of life in this neighborhood, but housing and
> urban agriculture were the two areas that Maple Heights in some ways goes very
> deep.

The early years of the MHNA were a good time to be into the housing

revitalization movement. There were huge amounts of federal, state, and local money

available to address woeful housing conditions. In a 10-year period (1998-2008), over

$20 million was invested in Maple Heights, allowing for the construction of 159 new

homes, the rehabilitation of 221 houses, and the razing of 129 houses (City of Bridge

Harbor,2012; NRP, 2011). The MHNA was designated the leading local partner in

managing the distribution of these resources; and it mobilized local developers, lending

institutions, and builders to join in the movement to improve housing conditions in Maple

Heights.

The housing movement was largely coordinated by MHNA founder Danny

Anderson. He not only oversaw the mobilization of a diversity of partners to collaborate

on projects, including developers, politicians, and bankers, he also assembled and trained

Maple Heights men and neighbors—the Constructors' Group—to build and rehab houses.

Emily described Danny's role in those early years:

> Danny's philosophy, his approach to it stemmed from purchasing homes that were

dilapidated, scheduled to be razed, but then he worked to restore them. But then he also took it as an opportunity to engage men and neighbors in the restoration process. So over the years going from one single house, his personal home, Maple Heights began to grow the infrastructure. One of the first Constructors' Group building projects was located at the corner lot of 17th and Spring Street—the very spot deemed too dangerous by police to enter. At one time a drug house scheduled to be demolished, the house was acquired by the MHNA and renovated by the Constructors' Group. We are sitting in that house right now.

Jack, the MHNA advisor whose main focus is jobs creations and the revitalization of the commercial corridor, pointed out "The foreclosed property thinking was a beautiful way to create jobs for people and at the same time make the neighborhood better." The housing program created a variety of developments, including a number of mixed-use properties that provided nice apartments and office/business space. In 2005, for instance, the city, in partnership with the MHNA, created the Maple Circle Subdivision—a 29 unit housing development with lots available at prices way below market value. In 2007, a local partner built a mixed-use property with an assessed value at over $3.5 million, the largest single development in Maple Heights.

In addition, banks, a coffee shop (later expanded to a full breakfast restaurant), a juice kitchen, gas stations, grocery stores, an auto parts store, and a barbershop were among the small businesses that came to Maple Heights during that time. Both the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club opened branches in Maple Heights and became neighborhood anchor institutions. The YMCA branch, newly built in 2002, is a phenomenal building and an authentic hub of activity. It is also home of one of Bridge Harbor's high-performing charter schools.

The changes in housing also had a profoundly positive impact on attitudes and behaviors. During one of my neighborhood walks through Maple Heights, I noticed there

were houses—and yards—the equal of any in the suburbs. Impeccably well-kept and spacious, these properties delivered a strong contrast to the conditions that outsiders see when merely traveling through an urban area like Maple Heights. On some blocks, every house had been rehabbed and the yards were beautifully maintained. I asked one resident about a particularly impressive house, and she proceeded to tell me it was her house! The pride in her voice was discernible. I thought Jack captured perfectly what I observed and heard that day:

> I believe that a bunch of people owning homes on a block changes that block. People start to think about their home; they think about the neighborhood, they think about the block differently when they own a home.

In 1998, the year when the housing initiatives began, the average value of a house in Maple Heights was around $23,800. By the end of 2008, that average value had risen to $68,700. Even through one of the worst housing crises in the history of the United States, the values have held fairly steady. The 2012 median value of all properties within the Maple Heights geographic boundaries was $58,000 (See Table 3).

Table 3
Maple Heights Housing Values, 1999-2012
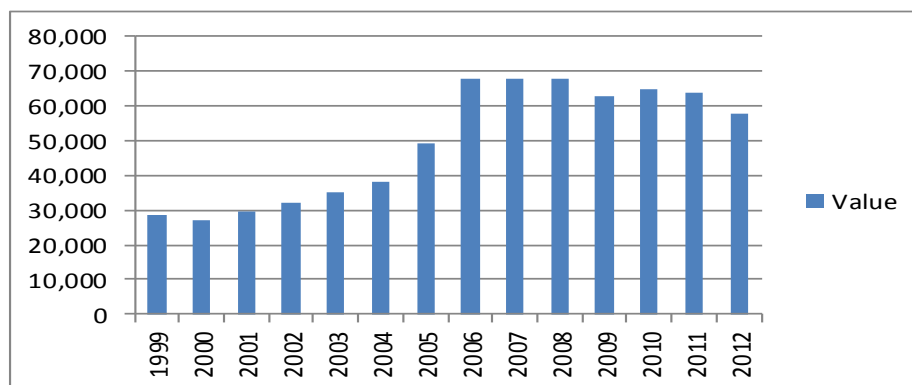
(City of Bridge Harbor, Master Property Record, retrieved from
www.city.bridgeharbor.gov/DownloadTabularData3496.htm)

Emily also noted how changes in housing values had an impact not only on the

physical appearance, but also began to change the socio-economic make-up of the

neighborhood:

> What this brought, particularly on Spring Street, was a lot of middle-class black families and working-class families. You have much more economic diversity now within this community, which is an interesting if you're interested or focused on gentrification. Gentrification is almost always talked about in terms of white affluent families beginning to encroach or move-in on areas of low income and areas of color. In this case it's bringing in diversity within the African-American community so that housing, I think, was significant in helping to set that diversity.

Eileen, the program director at NSI, also talked about how those physical changes

had a positive impact on the attitudes of kids in the neighborhood:

> As I walked through the neighborhood, some differences in terms of the quality of what the homes look like, the maintenance, businesses, business fronts look like, all those things, the kids saw improvement, and they saw value. I mean kids were seeing improvements happening and it sent a message to kids about their value. They started to develop a sense of hope 'oh this doesn't have to be, this isn't the way things have to be. Pride in home ownership can be transformative in terms of its impact across a neighborhood.

Jack also talked about the transformative power of home ownership on the way

people feel about their neighborhood:

> I believe that bunch of people owning homes on a block changes that block. People start to think about their home, they think about the neighborhood, they think about the block differently when they own a home, as opposed to just being a temporary renter.

Diagram 10
Housing Programs: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
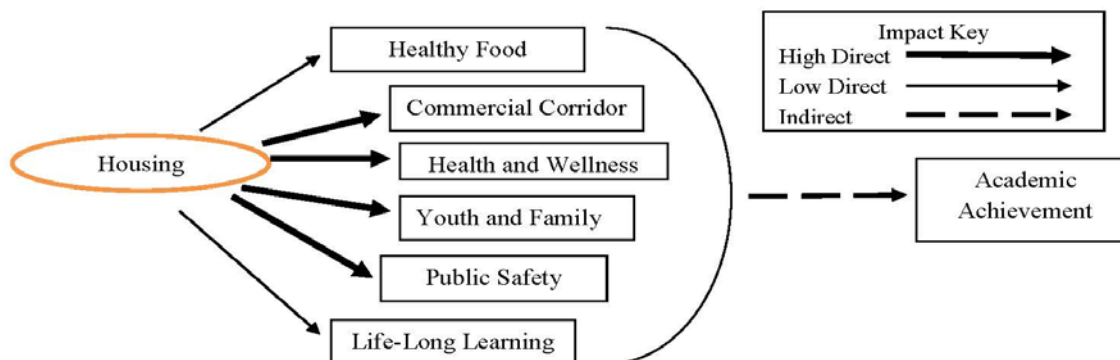
The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is a holistic approach to change; Diagram 10 reflects the high, direct impact housing had on other parts of the plan, especially the Commercial Corridor, Public Safety, Youth and Family, and Health and Wellness. Additionally, Diagram 10 conveys the message that improvements in housing indirectly—that is occurring outside the four walls of the school—impacts academic achievement improving the neighborhood conditions.

Indeed, recognizing the diversity of ways that home ownership positively impacts neighborhood attitudes and behaviors, the city of Bridge Harbor recently announced a new series of housing initiatives, including forgivable and low-interest loans, targeting urban neighborhoods, including Maple Heights.

Healthy Food. The MHNA included healthy eating in its NRP because the simple reality facing urban areas like Maple Heights is that residents do not eat well. Whether it is due to an absence of access to good food, a lack of knowledge about healthy eating, or the cost of healthy food, Maple Heights has a variety of food-related health challenges.

Emily, whose background in public health led her to the MHNA, described the neighborhood and the way the healthy food initiative affects other areas of the NRP:

> Most urban communities, including ours, are saturated with nutrition-related health disparities, including higher rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer. Contributing to these disparities is a lack of access to fresh food in our neighborhood. Because where I sit, I want good health outcomes, I want to lower rates of diabetes. We need to have a well-educated population with access to income who can drive those health outcomes. So if you want a kid who is focused in class, they have to have health, they have to have food, they have to have nutrition. We look at it from a neighborhood level. Look at all the different factors that are influencing nutrition. Access to jobs, economic opportunity, good education, healthy food, retail commerce what kind of commerce do you have here, what is your social cohesion in context. Those are, in my estimate, more influential for outcomes than any given person or family. What happens in the schools absolute critical but in this context, external factors are also very significant to the education, the educational outcomes of the kids. So if you want a kid who is focused in class, they have to have health, they have to have food, they have to have nutrition.

To improve health in Maple Heights, the MHNA has been following a two-prong strategy of educating residents about proper nutrition and working to improve the infrastructure that will be needed to support the demand for healthy food. Referred to as the "Corner Stores" initiative, Emily described the way the MHNA is mobilizing partners on behalf of the different parts of the initiative:

> We have a partnership with the medical college, city health department, and then all of our community partners and we are currently working with four corner stores to bring fresh produce into those four stores. We helped stores get the equipment that they need, new coolers or other pieces and then help them market the opportunity. That is also partnered with Julie's Garden because Julie's Garden produce is then sold to the corner stores. Then, for education, we are partnering with just a plethora of groups in schools and churches.

Mari Jo, the MHNA staff person coordinating the Corner Store initiative, told me how the stores were simply not prepared to support the demands associated with the access piece of the initiative:

Because residents were slow to buy these items, stores had to throw away produce because they did not have the infrastructure to support the initiative. The city health inspector was fining corner stores for health violations because the stores could not adequately refrigerate fresh produce and vegetable because they did not have proper coolers. Stores were forced to either lose money on the produce or get fined. They were trying to support the healthy eating initiative, but were being fined because they did not have the facilities to support the new initiative! So the first thing we did was help stores get the equipment that they needed, new coolers.

In fact, the local knowledge possessed by the MHNA enabled it to work as a bridge to the city inspector who was fining these stores because they did not have the equipment to properly refrigerate the fruit and vegetables. A city health official admitted, "We would not be at this point if it were not for Maple Heights. We needed that local connection, people that are in the local community." Mari Jo summarized the challenge to improving eating as the "collective efforts of residents, store owners, and community partners."

Ms. Pat, the parent coordinator at Spring Creek Community School and a lifelong resident of Maple Heights, has noticed a positive change in her local grocery store. "They make it look good over here, where we live. We have a new person in the corner store, and he stocks a lot of good food, kind of like when I was a child." Ultimately, though, these corner stores are in the business of selling their food. The biggest challenge facing the corner store initiative is getting residents to buy fruits and vegetables. At the most recent report to the community residents heard from the owners of the four corner stores about the simple reality of supply and demand. The store owners talked about how they were committed to the corner store initiative so much that they were deliberately selling the products at greatly reduced prices in order to make them an attractive option. They also admitted they were not making much money.

Lastly, the healthy food initiative has recognized the need to measure the effectiveness of this plan. Emily described a newly developed partnership with one of the larger universities that will gather data to measure health in Maple Heights:

> We partnered with a university to collect data on factors related to health and wellness, in Maple Heights. We now have a baseline evaluation of several hundred community members. We will be able to measure five years down the road, this actually will allow us to measure health outcomes, educational outcomes, and incremental outcomes.

Neighborhood gardens are not a specific area of the NRP, but it is interesting to see how urban gardens in Maple Heights have also been part of the message of assets and abundance that the neighborhood provides its residents. The razing of 129 houses in Maple Heights presented the MHNA with the natural space it needed to plant gardens. As houses were razed in Maple Heights, residents (assets) worked with the MHNA to clear the lots, plant seeds, and even harvest some of the crops (abundance). Not every vacant lot had a garden, but many blocks had at least one and many had multiple gardens. Additionally, there were urban fruit orchards planted throughout the neighborhood and over 40 rain gardens were created in conjunction with a plan to control storm water.

The sheer volume of gardens, along with a stated intention to use these gardens as natural classrooms, propelled the MHNA to develop a partnership with Growth Power, an urban farming co-operative that started plating gardens in Bridge Harbor. . Given that the MHNA was a relatively small organization, Tommy, the MHNA staffer who does a lot of work with community gardens, told me how the creation of an effective partnership with Growing Partner "helped us advance our growing and gardening program every year." Through the rise of neighborhood gardens, the MHNA was able to partner with Growth Power to create programs using the gardens as an outdoor classroom to teach a

variety of real world skills and generate some understanding—and excitement—about the

potential of these gardens to produce healthy food for the neighborhood.

Students were a big part of the educational programs developed in connection

with the gardens. Mr. Doug, the educational aide in one of the local schools and a Maple

Heights resident, recounted how the MHNA used these gardens as a classroom for the

students in his school:

> The MHNA opened up the kitchens so that when my children at our school
> harvested vegetables we could go over there and clean them, sort them, and cook
> potatoes. So that was a great experience to have because now children were
> taking responsibility from the point where you learned to till the earth, you
> planted the seed, cultivated the seed actually gaining nourishment from it. How
> often does a child get to see a process from the start to finish?

Students began to understand they were stewards of their environment, an

important part of the overall MHNA plan for Maple Heights revitalization. The MHNA

created a 4-H program for Maple Heights students that opened up opportunities for

educational and leadership training. Tommy described the different parts of the program:

> In the summer our teen interns were hired to do what we called our 'gardens to
> market program.' They helped plant, harvest and sell at the farmers market. All
> that money went back into the youth programs, all the money went back in the
> funding the gardens that were run by the by the young people, by the 4-H
> program. We gave leadership training to open a bank account. These students
> learned about health, nutrition, and financial responsibility. It's a space for the
> youth program for kids in terms of working in the garden, learning about food and
> learning how to be entrepreneurs, and learning how to manage their money.

Today, Tommy refers to the program as "bursting." Over the years there have

been on average 10-15 students involved as summer interns and the 4H programs

regularly draw 20-25 kids to the monthly meetings.

Like the housing initiative, the large-scale introduction of urban agriculture also

generated some neighborhood-level economic activity. Emily described the way the

gardens provided the products, cheaply I may add:

> You took vacant properties and turned them into productive properties, that's environmental stewardship. Then harvesting and having produce to sell was economic development. Started in 2003, the Great Harvest Food Center was created in response to the availability of fresh produce and fruit and its Saturday Farmers Market is the largest in the city, generating over $1 million in yearly sales.

The gardens have also been providing healthy food products to local grocery stores—at a price far below what it would normally cost. In 2006, Julie's Garden was built next to one of the local schools and at two acres it was (and still is) one of the largest urban gardens in Bridge Harbor. Located next to an elementary school, it became a convenient outdoor classroom for the students.

When I asked Mr. Doug about the influence of these gardens, he eloquently spoke about the powerful way a garden can transmit a message of hope:

> This is like, how do you say it, if you build it they will come. Just to put a garden in the middle of the neighborhood was unheard of. I mean that's like asking me, 'do sunlight make you feel better?' Who wants to come home to a dust bowl, when you can come home to a garden? And, as you improve the neighborhood, you give the children hope, you give them something to look forward, to give them a little norm. 'So like 'umm this is what I always want to be surrounded by. I do not want to be surrounded by broken glass and trash down the street. I want to be surrounded by tulips and roses, birdfeeders and pretty birds in the front yard and neighborhood gardens where I can say we get food from.

Diagram 11
Healthy Food Programs: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
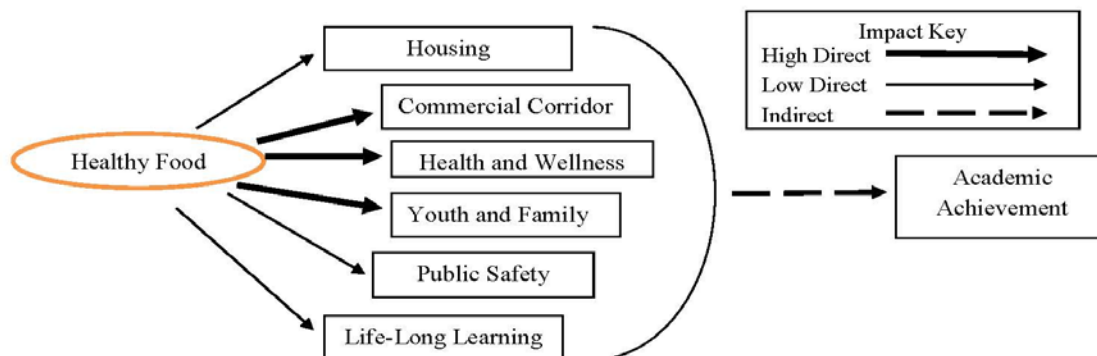
In terms of high direct impact, Diagram 11 reflects the fact that the Healthy Food

generated a great deal of economic activity in Maple Heights; it also reflects what Mr.

Doug, Tommy, and others point out is a high, positive, impact on the attitudes of the

residents and students. The MHNA beliefs better eating habits are another way to

indirectly (outside the four walls of the school) impact academic achievement in Maple

Heights.

Health and Wellness. While the Healthy Food initiative focuses primarily on the

way access to good food positively impacts physical healthy, Health and Wellness is

distinguished by its clear focus on mental and social health of Maple Heights residents.

When talking about various programs created and implemented by the MHNA, Emily

also pointed out that "We focus on sort of a social cohesion and strengthening the social

fabric of the community; we believe this is very instrumental in the health of the

community." In their work on improving healthy in Maple Heights, Emily talked about it

was a "principle or value of the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association" to design

programs that included a process for building and strengthening strong social bonds and

relationships. Referring to the outcome of this process as "social cohesion," it became

apparent that social cohesion could be used interchangeably with the concept of social

capital developed by James Coleman (1967, 1988).

In 2006, a grass roots structure called the Maple Heights Neighborhood Health

Partnership was established by the MHNA to work collectively on programs tied to

healthy living and health and wellness. Better eating habits, access to healthy food, more

physical activity, and better health care are all part of the discussion about a healthy

Maple Heights.   However, both Emily and Tommy also talked about how the

partnerships included a focus on building social cohesion into every program design.

Emily mentioned how every program needed to have a social cohesion element to it:

> Whenever we think about doing a program, we weave in opportunities to bring neighbors together to integrate them, to have that social connection. So they go to healthy food initiative a physical activity initiative; you think about 'how do we also strengthen the social cohesion.'

When the MHNA was approached by "Girls on the Run," a national running

program aimed at addressing physical health of young girls in the urban neighborhood,

Emily described how the MHNA worked to expand the program into a combo physical-

social activity for Maple Heights.   Emily described how the MHNA mobilized not just

young girls—the primary focus of "Girls on the Run"—but families and residents to

participate in the program:

> After getting five organizations and schools to participate in the Girls on the Run national program, we recruited residents to engage with the young participants in the first ever 5k run through the neighborhood. We had a great day. These five organizations, all independent, came together and they were running through the neighborhood promoting physical activity. Volunteers were parents, but we also had neighbors who ran as part of a team. You think about how we took a physical activity initiative and we also strengthen the social cohesion.

Not that long ago, these streets were declared too dangerous to enter. Now, they are holding a 5k run through the neighborhood.

Tommy has been involved in programs that were designed to address health issues facing African American males. Starting in 2011, over an 18 month period, he worked with the Men's Healthy Living Council, an MHNA-led group composed of 12 Maple Heights African American males. Thinking of health and wellness as primarily a physical activity, the organizers of the study first gave all the participants passes to the local YMCA. They then combined that healthy physical activity with weekly healthy dinners; the idea was in order to encourage better eating habits in order to impact physical health.

However, it was during these dinners that participants began to discover how "isolated," "closed," and "invisible" they had become. Good food became an excuse to gather, but what these men began to rediscover was the connection between social interaction and mental and physical health. Tommy described the transformation that occurred over those 18 months:

> What started as monthly dinners turned into something far more powerful. They identified that it is not just about physical health, it's about mental health, well-being, and social connections. So when you have that panel, that forum, you see that space, it's like, wow, men come together, talk and socialize, which is really opposite to the thinking that I am a 'strong man, I'm alone, I'm supposed be an island.' You know it's not true. So have this space created and you go, 'I didn't even know I needed this until I was a part of it.' People want to be socially connected.

As part of the study, the entire 18-month experience was filmed and turned into a documentary which premiered in Maple Heights in March, 2013. Premier night included the actual film, a panel discussion, and a long question and answer session. During the panel discussion, the men talked about they had rediscovered the importance of social

interaction. All the participants have a job and every one of them talked about being good role models and good fathers. They also talked about the negative influences their children face on a daily basis. When the formal event ended, people mingled and talked for over an hour. In reflecting on the event, Tommy recalled how "we had people coming in off the street come in and they were like "wow" something positive, thanks for doing this, it's really great to see this happening in our neighborhood."

As one of the audience members that night, I learned a lot about the trials and tribulations facing residents of Maple Heights. Ultimately, the message I heard was no different than that of any other father or parent. They want the same thing for their kids and their neighborhood that I want for my kids and my neighborhood. It is the kind of message that all outsiders should experience. It was a good night for Maple Heights; it was a better night for me.

The MHNA also has a diversity of other events specifically designed as social-cohesion building activities. Community report nights, neighborhood clean-up days, monthly neighborhood workshops, and healthy neighborhood nights are ways for the residents of Maple Heights to connect with each other. Food and drinks are served at almost all these events. In 2000 the MHNA held their first Harvest Day Community Block party, welcoming over 700 people to Maple Heights. Music, games, educational booths, food, and drinks are all part of the Harvest Day festival. This event continues to be the largest one day neighborhood gathering in Maple Heights. Even with rain this year, the event drew over 400 people.

Additionally, venues like the local gardens and the Harvest Food Market serve as examples of the physical and social re-emergence of the community. Tommy described

the social value of the gardens for the residents:

> It is using the gardens as a space for healthy eating, but it's also a space for people to walk down the street and go 'wow, you have a really beautiful neighborhood.' People, they wanted to spend the time, they wanted to bring their family there, to go through the gardens, they wanted to become part of it. What have you noticed about the gardens at Maple Heights? What don't they have around them? Fences. There are no fences. If it's a neighborhood resident walking up in and they would like a peach, they can have it. It's their food. It's their neighborhood.

The neighborhood gardens gave rise to the Harvest Food Market, Bridge Harbor's largest farmers market and the place to go for fresh produce and the MHNA's famous honey. Four times a week during the summer months, the Harvest Food Market welcomes people from throughout Bridge Harbor. During my first visit to the Harvest Food Market, I was taken aback by the size of the crowed, the racial diversity, the number of vendors, all the activities, and how safe I felt. During my visits to the market, it had the feel of an old fashioned carnival. Again, after attending the Harvest Food Market, it seemed hard to believe that 15 years earlier people were told to stay away from Maple Height.

The MHNA believes strongly in addressing and improving the social spirit and cohesion of the neighborhood, but the organization knows it is difficult to measure levels of cohesion. Tommy talked about the different ways they evaluate social cohesion:

> Small indicators like that are really simple, but incredibly powerful. Sometimes we get new people, sometimes the same people. At a program we had last week first-time attendees received a free fruit tree that we show them how to plant properly. We had 25 people show up, the best attendance we've had. The first year we had 10 people, this year we had 25. And we have neighbor nights, the harvest day festival, we have anywhere from 500 to 700 people attend the harvest festival. There's the healthy neighborhood celebration, that the health alliance that is put on at Julie's Garden. We have huge turnouts at these events. We have the committee meetings, report to the community, where about 75-100 people attend. Anytime we have a new project or program you know we have 20 spaces available, we have 30 or 40 requests for people wanting to be involved, it's an

indicator that we need to keep doing this.

Ultimately, the MHNA believes high levels of social cohesion are important to a

healthy neighborhood. Tommy, for one, believes social cohesion is creating a healthier

neighborhood:

> I think one of the reasons Maple Heights is becoming a healthy neighborhood is because we are encouraging more social connections. Those social connections lead to positive energy something accepting, something authentic. Like what happens right after an event, we have our people here around after the event. Are they rushing out are they hanging out, mingling and talking 20 or 30 minutes after the event is actually over, that happens a lot. I just facilitated a meeting and people were hanging out and I had to say 'okay time to go, time to turn the lights off,' people were still here; that's a good indicator that something is happening, connections are being made.

Diagram 12
Health and Wellness Programs: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
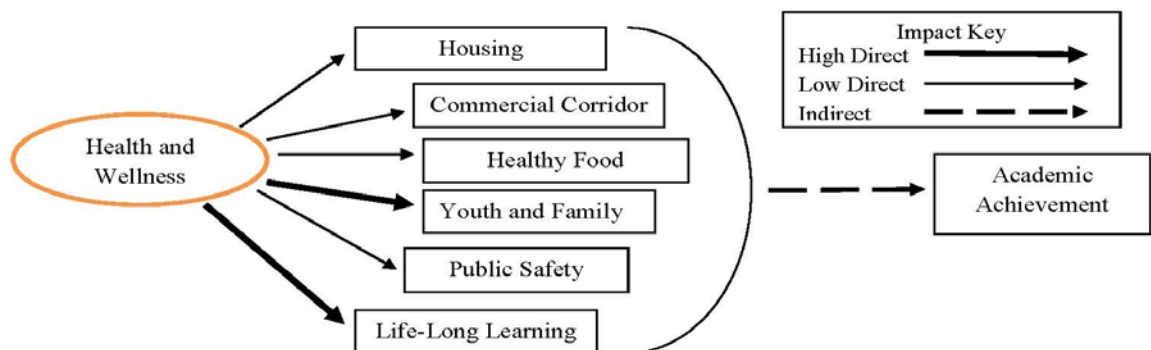
Given its emphasis on social and emotional health, as well as its potential to

connect the neighborhood socially, Diagram 12 reflects the belief that Health and

Wellness has a really important impact on families and learning. Through process that

combine physical and social change, Health and Wellness primarily addresses the quality

of relationships inside Maple Heights. In many ways, it captures one of the MHNA's core

value—people with assets—and then puts into place a process for rediscovering those assets. For the MHNA, a healthy spirit is a powerful part of a revitalization movement, one that the MHNA inevitably believes indirectly impacts academic achievement.

Life-Long Learning. Much of the discussion in this section focuses on the way education and learning happens outside the four walls of the school building. In an era permeated by pressure to deliver good test scores, it is difficult for schools to see the potential of external learning experiences to positively impact student attitudes and behaviors. However, when we look at ways the MHNA encourages life-long learning, we start to see that it does not take time away from the traditional approaches to improving test scores. Life-long learning opportunities generally do not occur during class time or in the school building. They can, however, improve the attitudes that contribute to student performance.

I met Joey, a Citizenship teacher at Main Street High School, at a Saturday neighborhood lift up event sponsored by the MHNA. As I stood in the check in line, I overheard a volunteer assigning the Main Street High School group to a specific location. I had been having great difficulty connecting with the principal of Main Street High School, so I thought this might be an opportunity to connect with Main Street. I remember setting out, by myself, down one of the streets that had been deemed too dangerous to walk 15 years ago, in the hopes of running into students from Main Street. In the interest of transparency, those days entered my mind, but that concern said more about me than about Maple Heights.

I found the students and their teacher carrying bags of garbage they had collected to one of the dumpsters. Sensing an opportunity, I joined their group and ended up

spending an entire afternoon working side-by-side with Joey, their Citizenship teacher, and six of his students on a project to clear a large corner lot of debris, garbage, stumps, old clothing, and other objects. Miserable may not accurately capture some of the conditions in which we found ourselves, as well as some of the interesting discoveries we made. In my own mind, I kept thinking "When are these kids going to leave?" To their credit, they not only stayed the entire afternoon, they really dug in (literally) on the project.

There was lots of friendly banter among the students—social capital building as it were—and I suspect that may have made the experience a little less onerous, but there were also some serious questions and observations generated by their participation. One of the girls pointed to the trash in the backyard of a neighboring house and told me that it was "the worst house on my block. I wish we could do something about it because it is ruining our street."   I told her she had the power to make something happen with that house, starting with a visit to the MHNA neighborhood house where they have "lots of experience working to improve houses like that one."

The current Main Street High School is only two years old and all six of these students were completing their freshman year. When I asked about their school, they all talked quite highly of it. When I asked about their principal's reputation as a tough leader, they gave the typical "whew" and then agreed he was a pretty good guy. One said Mr. McJones (the Principal) was "everywhere" and "sees everything" in the building. An energetic leader is normally a positive sign for the future of the school.

With the experience of that day still fresh in both of our minds, Joey and I met at Main Street High School. Joey was finishing his second year at Main Street and had been

in the Bridge Harbor public system for five years. The school had gone through a

turbulent period and recent restructuring aside, current student achievement data created

some negative perceptions about the viability of Main Street. Those students, though,

provided a strong counter narrative to the perception created by the school performance

data. On that Saturday, they were not students at one of the lowest performing schools in

Bridge Harbor—with the commensurate stigma attached to that reality—they were just a

bunch of kids giving up a Saturday for their neighborhood.

I wanted to know if the Saturday experience had any effect on the students, so my

first question for Joey was "You had six kids there, did they say anything afterwards;

what was the feedback?" He responded

> From the two girls that were there, there was excitement. I mean, I think for
> them, especially one of the girls, I did not have the greatest relationship. I'd been
> having problems with her in class and she came back on Monday and she was
> talking and she was excited and she's doing better, I mean it's only been a few
> days, but she's been more cooperative in class because it was empowering I'm
> sure. It was something, I'm sure she realized that she was getting a grade and she
> realized she was helping out and it affected the way she behaved in class and she
> was willing to working in class. I do think it was kind of a big deal for her, she
> got the connection. The guys there, they were quieter, but you could tell even
> they felt good about what they had done over the weekend.

In terms of connecting this activity to his citizenship class, Joey pointed out that

this activity presented him with an opportunity to engage with his students in a learning

experience outside the traditional classroom setting. He talked about how a non-

traditional learning activity ended up being more than just a day of service:

> This (community clean up) was a perfect opportunity because it was something
> that was already planned, that I knew about, it was close, it was in the
> neighborhood so for the neighborhood kids it was really neat. The six were all
> neighborhood kids. You get that sense of empowerment from doing something
> that you know is benefiting not only yourself but also people in your community.
> It is something that's contagious.   And the impact on education would be

significant because you have people looking out for everybody in the neighborhood, you have people talking about concerns they had. Because again it is a big deal when they have experiences where they feel like they are making a difference, even it's not for pay and even if it's just a day every month or two.

Mr. Doug, the Maple Heights resident and educational aide in one of the local schools, described the way the MHNA used the gardens to teach students a variety of skills and attitudes, as well as using nature to create some excitement around learning in general:

> Maple Heights had a very interesting relationship with my school. We were one of the partners there. At one point they had a garden that we are part of it over there. They opened up the kitchens so that when we harvested vegetables we could go over there and clean them, sort and cook tomatoes. So now children are taking responsibility for their livelihood from the beginning to the end, from the point where you learned to till the earth, you plant the seed, cultivate the seed, actually gaining nourishment from it. So other than educational, you're actually eating food now. So yeah, I think that was wonderful example of a partnership. If you start to put more processes in front of the children. And they can see things from start to finish, to have a better understanding of the subject matter so that was very key.

Ms. Brig, the Spring Creek Community School teacher who grew up in the pre-MHNA Maple Heights, talked about the value of MHNA-sponsored neighborhood events and activities:

> I see students excited, working on a program to clean up the neighborhood where they get T-shirts and barbecue hot dogs. You know they did that arts thing this summer where the good arts programs were located in different parts of Maple Heights, I think those types of things, where you just create more and more imprints of positivity and excitement and happiness so that children start to remember what that feels like.

What is especially interesting in these observations is the unforced way service acts to create enthusiasm for learning. The key, according to Ms. Brig, is sustainability:

> Creating a more positive community environment is something that you need to do on a regular basis, not just an occasional service activity the week before school, but if you can find the funds, have a Saturday, cool day, when there's

water balloons and hot dogs, rebuilding rapport where these kids have something to look forward to, but not just every now and then but a lot. Community groups and community partners need to set up things that kids don't get to see, create more happy days, more happy days for these kids. So I think what the smaller community groups could do is infused the community with happiness, with laughter. You can't do it with just one annual drive in the neighborhood.

Diagram 13
Life-Long Learning Programs: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
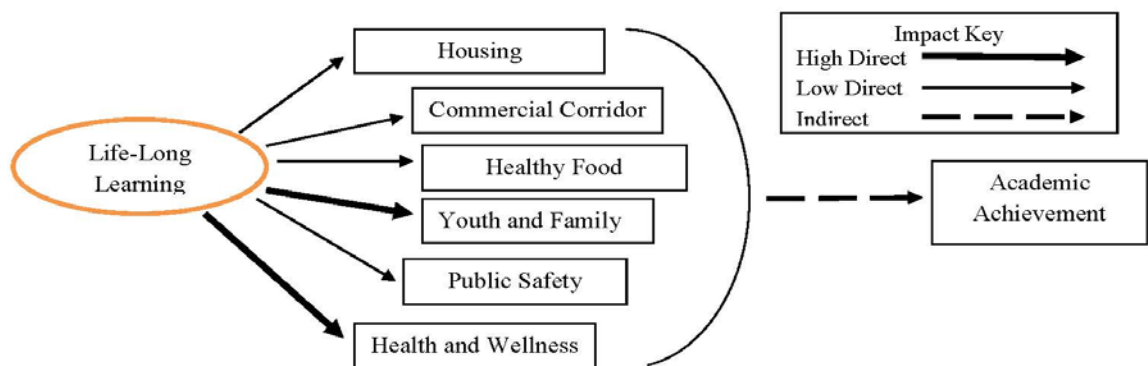
Life-Long Learning can be understood as formal course work, adult education classes, and academic enrichments; the types of learning described in this section are less formal and more organic in their design. Because Life-Long Learning, with its theme of service, is based on the mobilization of people, Diagram 13 reflects the fact that its highest impact is on Youth and Families, as well as its connection to improving Health and Wellness in general.

Processes and programs use the potential assets in the community to support academic achievement. The non-traditional setting for many of the MHNA-led life-long learning activities is part of the reason these programs are successful. Learning occurs outside the four walls; the content of learning is not controlled by the schools. Therefore, though indirect, life-long learning has the potential to strongly impact academic

achievement in Maple Heights.

Commercial Corridor. I met Jack a number of times over the six months I spent in Maple Heights. A successful career in the business world allowed Jack to take early retirement; he was "going take six months, not do anything, not commit to anything, because I have watched people who had retired start saying yes to everything." That was before he met Susan Anderson. As he joked, "Once Sharon gets hold of you, it is hard to get out, hard to say no."

Jack is not the normal Maple Heights volunteer. He acknowledged some of his friends questioned his post-retirement interest:

> I had never heard of Maple Heights. First of all, the whole community organization is a new world for me. I'd never been involved in this type of activity never been involved in an organization like Maple Heights before. I come from the suburbs not pretending that I've walked in anybody's shoes who has grown up in the Maple Heights neighborhood. My friend say, 'aren't you afraid' and I say 'no.' I mean, have you ever been ever been down, have you ever met anyone from Maple Heights? They just don't have a clue as to the wonderful people that are in this neighborhood, the wonderful things are going on. These are people just like you and me, they care about their lives, they care about the family, they care about health. They care about safety. We live in a world where people in the suburbs, all they know about the central city is what they read in the paper, all bad news. 'It's all drugs and killings and murders you know,' but they've never set foot there. You and I are doing work here, bringing people together.

One of the hurdles Jack has encountered is the deep disconnect in understanding between central city community-based organizations like the MHNA and the Bridge Harbor business community. He told me one of his goals is to bridge the gap between the two entities:

> Nonprofits and business people think differently. There's a huge disconnect between the business community and nonprofits like Maple Heights, nonprofits in general in the inner-city. I don't think the business communities have become engaged with nonprofits and so part of my mission, if you will, is to talk about trying to work in economic initiatives and development, create jobs for motivated,

hard to employ people. But it's also seeing if I can't get the business community engaged. I kind of want to prove that business done in the right way can be a good thing for the central city, good for the central city of creating businesses that are housed and are owned there and are for-profit businesses. And if they are successful, that will create profit that will stay in the neighborhood and kind of accrue to the people that work there as opposed to some outside shareholder.

The more we talked, the more it became obvious to me that Jack, a veritable outsider when he started working with the MHNA, understood the underlying rationale behind the theory of community-based involvement as well as any insider--and, perhaps, better than a certain researcher:

> I was intrigued by the MHNA and their work, their neighborhood approach in their quality of life. Their neighborhood approach resonated with me. They get it. You know I got involved in economic development for that very reason that I think the challenges we have in the inner-city are multifaceted. And there are so many challenges in the neighborhood and it isn't just, you can't just focus on early childhood education and think all the other problems are going to be solved. I mean, you can't just work on education, you can't just work on housing, you have to work on all of them. Instead of just kind of doing education Bridge Harbor wide, let's focus on the neighborhood.

Basing on models in other cities and starting from the premise that there are assets and strengths in Maple Heights (abundance!), the strategy Jack is implementing begins by identifying anchor institutions, large organizations like hospitals, banks, schools, and government buildings, that are "deeply embedded" in both the city and Maple Heights. He then encourages them to direct more of their purchasing dollars to local businesses and to businesses in the central city. The strategy is based on the combination of economic power and the persuasiveness of staying local:

> These anchor institutions are already spending around $2.5 billion a year collectively. Not much of it is being spent locally and they don't even track what is spent locally. We meet with the anchors and find out where there is local demand. What we want to do is match a need with a local business. It's a ground-up movement, not a top-down and it's based on the idea of businesses collaborating, bringing businesses into the community together.

The second part of the process is actually creating local businesses that can meet the needs of these anchor institutions. Patterned after the Evergreen model started in Cleveland, Jack said the MHNA is looking where there are "opportunities that we can grow businesses that could meet the needs of these anchor institutions, incubating (starting) their own local businesses to meet needs of anchors."   Because the MHNA already had so much going on in the area of urban agricultural and landscaping, one of the first businesses the MHNA helped create was Greenway Landscaping:

> Everybody has landscaping need and these anchors were using landscape firms from the suburbs to do their stuff, we pitched them on using this central city business to do some of their landscaping. In the past year we have landed one contract with a local hospital and hopefully have another one coming. Greenway Landscaping is kind of our first success story.

Greenway has five Maple Heights residents on the payroll and recently advertised for another employee.   However, Jack knows even small gains are hard to come by; and for that reason he has adopted a deliberate approach to jobs in Maple Heights. In fact, he made a really interesting point about job training programs, one that runs counter to normal thinking about job training:

> We just want to start small and prove that it works. We can always grow from there. One thing I don't want to do is what everybody else does, promise them a job and not be able to deliver it. What we really need to do is have success because you know people have been disappointed way too often with another government training program. They go, they do all this work and then there's no job at the end of it so they go on, they get trained all that stuff and so they just end up disappointed. We don't want to get too many people because we have to have the jobs available.

Reversing years of neglect is not going to happen overnight. While recognizing that the two Maple Heights zip codes are the poorest n Maple Heights, Mrs. Anderson often asks "does it feel like that when you come in here?" The question reflects her

optimistic spirit, but despite the rise in housing values and the gradual revitalization of

the commercial corridor, household income levels continue to grow at a slow pace.

When comparing income levels from 2000 to 2012, Table 4 shows minimal average

household income increases in both zip code areas. Additionally, both zip codes still

have significant percentages of households that are under the poverty level. 42% of

households in Zip Code 1 remain under the poverty level, the same percentage as in

2000; Zip Code 2 has seen a rise in the poverty level, going from 35% in 2000 to 44% in

2010.

Table 4
Maple Heights Average Household Income, 2000 vs. 2012
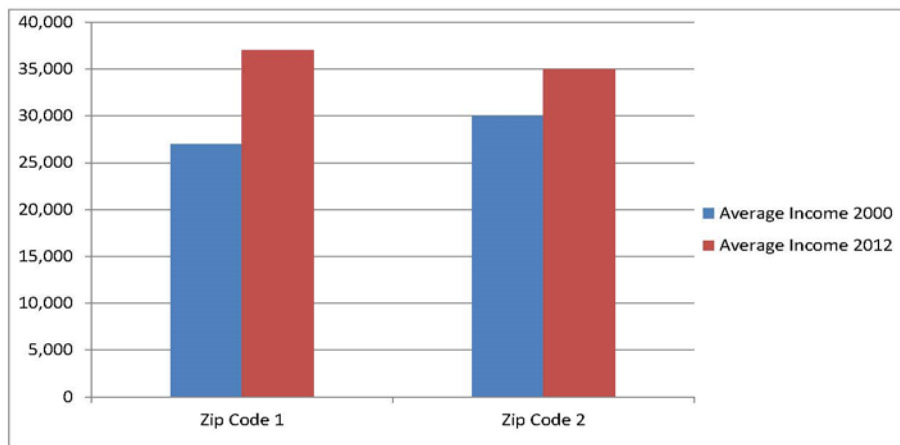
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; 2008-2012 American Community Survey)

Jobs and job creation are heavily connected to the development of the commercial

corridor because they generate economic activity and create businesses. I saw this

approach in action when I visited the coffee shop with Tommy. The place was packed

with people! Additionally, jobs also strengthen the family, reduce crime, and create

demand for good housing. Diagram 14 reflects the belief that jobs and commercial activity have a high impact across almost all parts of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, and, inevitably, a strong indirect impact on academic achievement.

Raising income and reducing poverty is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the residents of Maple Heights. Probably more than any other area, economic realities in Maple Heights will require the mobilization of a diversity of partners, public and private, to create decent-paying jobs. The small gains reflect the reality of a neighborhood that had been neglected for decades.

Diagram 14
Commercial Corridor and Jobs Program: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
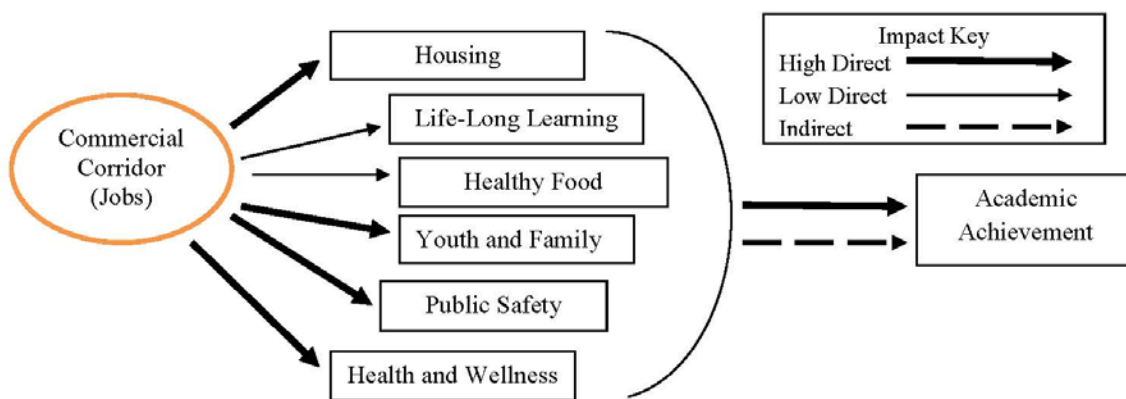
The combination of good jobs and good schools is essential for Maple Heights going forward. One could argue, as both William Julius Wilson (1996) and Jack do, that jobs and commercial corridor revitalization have a profound impact on both physical and social conditions in the neighborhood. Wilson argued persuasively about the influence work has on creating positive attitudes, values, and behaviors. These behaviors

inevitably impact academic achievement; Wilson, I suspect, would argue jobs are the one area where there is direct impact on academic achievement. The connection between jobs and academic achievement cannot be overstated for its importance to the future health of Maple Heights.

Public Safety. Physically observable change such as newly renovated houses, new storefronts, or well-tailored lawns certainly influence the spirit of the neighborhood. That impacts behavior; however, easy evaluation of the connection between physical and social change is elusive. All we have to do to assess the power of crime and criminal actions on the attitudes and behaviors of a neighborhood is remember the state of Maple Heights in the pre-MHNA period. While there are many reasons for the rise of crime in urban neighborhoods, to a certain extent, crime as an act can devastate the spirit of a neighborhood. Crime steals not only tangible items, but social hope from the residents.

Taking the neighborhood back has been one of the primary goals of the MHNA, but the approach to reducing crime has focused on the connection between mobilized residents and physical conditions. In discussing the strategy for public safety, Emily, the MHNA staffer who was involved in creating the NRP, talked about the way the MHNA connects physical appearances to changes in attitudes and behaviors:

> Maple Heights approach to public safety often times focuses more on improving the environment and then seeing the ramifications on public safety. We take vacant lots and transform them into production gardens. That changes the feel of the block and the safety of the block.

The first time I encountered Dean was at a spring, 2012 report to the community. The next time I saw Dean was a fall, 2012 community meeting. In between, I saw him at the Community Ideas Forum, the Harvest Fest, and at the film premiere. Every time I see

him, he is talking about his neighborhood.

In his role as block watch captain and Maple Heights resident, Dean has delivered

a consistently enthusiastic message that emphasizes educating and mobilizing the

residents to take control of the neighborhood's physical appearance in order to improve

public safety.   According to Dean:

> First get the residents educated about neighborhood responsibility. They are the centerpiece of all of it. We had to establish partnerships and alliances with many of the residents and organizations. So we want to focus on educating the citizen and identifying, creating an opportunity where we are going to go on a field trip, look at the entire neighborhood and how we can revitalize the entire area.

At a recent meeting, Dean paused during his presentation and announced

forcefully "You can't keep tearing them down, you have to pretty them up!"   He

regularly organizes and leads neighborhood tours through Maple Heights. During those

tours, the residents see first-hand the conditions being addressed and the trouble spots

needing attention. At one community meeting where he reviewed all the programs and

initiatives being implemented, Dean pointed out how resident involvement is the first and

most important piece of the overall strategy:

> I have not said anything about crime fighting because first and foremost, it is not just about the police department. When we got into it, we knew residents were key. People have a general idea when to call the police, but who do you call when you have some other issue. We say lighting is an issue, vacant property is an issue—board ups, houses in disrepair. This could be something as simple as getting someone to cut the grass in a vacant lot.

While the strategy is based on grass roots community engagement and

participation, police are a supportive and highly visible partner in improving public safety

in Maple Heights.   I have seen them at every MHNA event, as well as at every one of the

monthly Community Ideas Group meetings. Not only are police in attendance at these

public events, they always address the audience. Whether to encourage the Block Watch activities or announce police-sponsored initiative's such as the hot spot program, they are quite supportive of the neighborhood-based approach. They also do bike and walking patrols in Maple Heights, part of their relationship building approach to reducing crime. They recently held a program on gang behavior for Maple Heights parents at Main Street High School. It was standing-room only.

Since 2005, the Bridge Harbor Police Department has compiled public safety data across 18 neighborhoods; Maple Heights is one of the geographic areas for which there is accurate data. Based on this report, the Maple Heights Group A offenses (assault, theft, criminal damage robbery, sex offenses, and homicide) in total have decreased from a high of 2,076 in 2008 to its low of 1,570 in 2012 (Table 5). Assault and theft comprise the largest percentage of criminal activity. Homicides in Maple Heights, the one criminal activity that makes the nightly news, had a high of 11 in 2005 and a low of two in 2010. There were four homicides inside the Maple Heights geographic borders in 2012.

Table 5
Maple Heights Crime Statistics, 2005-2012
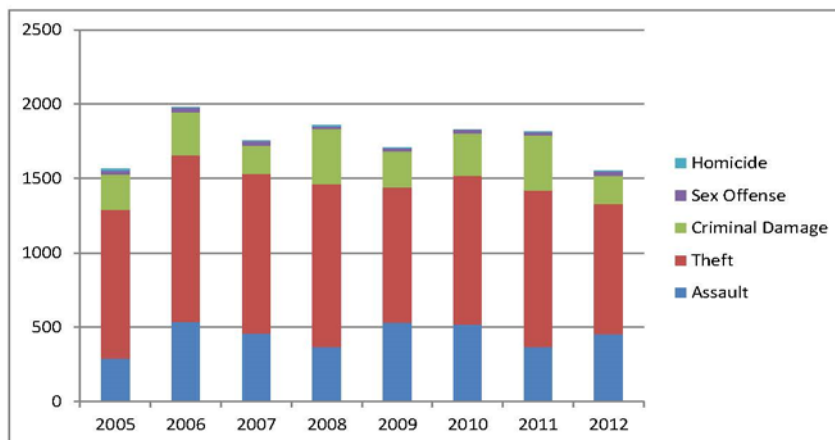
(City of Bridge Harbor, Neighborhood Strategic Planning Statistics, 2013, retrieved from
http://itmdapps.bridgeharbor.gov/publicApplication_SR/neighborhood/index.jsp)

In an era of job loss and economic downturn, it is a positive that crime rates in

Maple Heights—and Bridge Harbor in general—have held steady and even went down in

2012. Dean often cites this data as an indicator neighborhood block watch programs, in

conjunction with other initiatives, are having an impact in Maple Heights. It validates the

belief that educating and empowering residents to take control of their neighborhood is

an important part of an overall strategy for revitalizing a neighborhood. More

importantly, a safer neighborhood has the potential to improve attitudes toward academic

achievement in general, attract more business, and create a living environment.

Diagram 15
Public Safety Programs: Impact on Neighborhood Revitalization
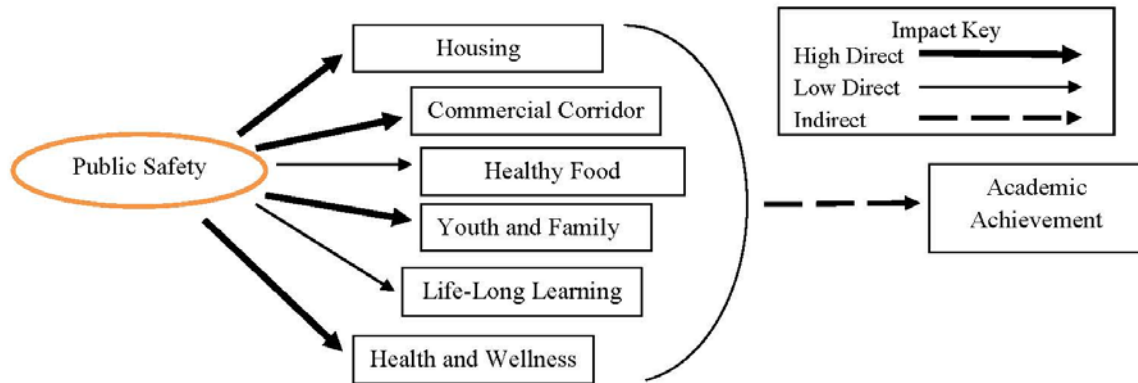
Public Safety as an initiative relies on the mobilization of different resources (assets!) within Maple Heights. These assets are primarily understood to be the residents and other partners who must be engaged in a movement to increase safety. Additionally, it is heavy on educating the residents about ways to address safety in Maple Heights. Like other parts of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Public Safety (Diagram 15) directly affects a number of other revitalization areas, some more physical (housing and Commercial Corridor) and some more social (Health and Wellness and Youth and Family).

As a neighborhood effect, it would be unfair to reduce the powerful effect safety has on the attitudes and behaviors of students. For outsiders, it may be difficult to comprehend not feeling safe on the way to school, but it is a reality for the students who live in Maple Heights. A safe neighborhood should not be taken for granted. Maple Heights is making some strides, but it still has work to do in creating a neighborhood that contributes to this growth, rather than acts as an obstacle.

Overall Program Effectiveness

Evaluating MHNA programs is something the organization is just beginning to include when it designs a new initiative. Emily admitted the MHNA was struggling with the transition to thinking more concretely about the whole idea collecting data in order to draw some conclusions about program effectiveness. Emily described some of the ways the MHNA is building this piece:

> We have begun or are beginning to use more pre- and post-survey across programs, really small numbers. For instance, the health alliance has this large program called neighbor to neighbor which was around cooking and biking and gardening and all the participants did a pre-and post-survey around these questions of self and community efficacy and we found that you know there again small numbers that we would see significant difference by the end of the time in being able help resolve. And do we have questions that try to begin to get at 'I feel like I can make a difference in my life.' 'I feel like I have goals,' 'I think of gaining confidence' and then questions around the community. So it's self-reported, but questions begin to get at the issues. We are starting to do those things at the program level. There is an enormous amount of pressure or accountability to say next year we want to see hard outcomes and we want to put in place the right systems to measure. We recognize that if you have not put those systems in place you miss being able to measure.

Right now data on crime, housing, economic activity, school performance, and the health of residents are readily available to the MHNA; they rely on that data for guidance and reassurance that their programs are contributing to positive change. Emily talked about what she is seeing in Maple Heights:

> You see the levels of crime statistics are going down, the number of home ownership is going up, the value of homes is increasing, those are definitely signs of progress, blocks that you can now walk that you could not walk down, but it is definitely progress. Although SES in Maple Heights continues to be among the lowest in Maple Heights, we see more middle class families are moving into Maple Heights and sending their kids to Maple Heights schools.

Tommy pointed out how the physical changes have produced a renewed interest

in Maple Heights:

> What Maple Heights is doing is making this a place of investment. People, they want to spend the time that they want to bring their family here, to go through the gardens, they want to spend money here, they want the peaches, they want to buy honey, they want to become part of it. They want to become a partner, they want to shop here. With the renovation of homes, they want to buy a home there, raise a family there bringing that investment back so that's taps into sustainability, into health, into strong families, and so much more. It changes the perspective, changes the narrative, it changes the perspective on a neighborhood that has been disinvested for so many years.

Case Study Summary and Analysis

The data in Maple Heights reflects the fact there is positive movement in some areas of neighborhood revitalization; other outcomes indicate progress remains, as Jack said "slow." The sheer volume of programs and partnerships in the seven areas that remained under the MHNA organizational umbrella may not have led to a complete transformation of Maple Heights, but these programs have been part of a movement of physical and social transformation. There is in place a coherent plan to address these areas as part of a holistic plan to revitalize Maple Heights.

There are two distinct parts to this case study. The first part focused primarily on programs that are designed to more directly impact what happens inside the four walls of the school building. The second part focused on programs that are more indirect in their impact on schools and take place primarily outside the four walls of the school building. The duality of involvement uncovered some fundamental differences in the way the school and the MHNA conceptualize the reasons for school-community engagement. I am going to conclude the case study by comparing and contrasting the school and community orientations in order to offer some suggestions for re-starting and re-

energizing both the relationship and the school connection to the Neighborhood

Revitalization Plan.

The MHNA and Schools: Bridging the Gap in Understanding

    MHNA Thinking. The trust the MHNA has in its philosophy and process is not a

rejection of the need to measure for outcomes. It is a reflection of the faith they have in

the process and approach they use to lead neighborhood change. It starts with the

philosophical ideals that permeate the organization. The people of Maple Heights are

"assets," there are an "abundance" of resources available to both the MHNA and other

groups, and the MHNA works to "convene" other groups who want to better Maple

Heights.

    These tenets have built a culture of organizational optimism about human will and

human spirit; the MHNA never misses an opportunity to deliver this message. Emily

captured the essence of their organizational thinking:

> We believe in the value of the work that we are doing and the values behind that
> work. If the process is sound, the results will be good. So we believe in a
> philosophy and that guides our behaviors.

    Part of the problem with the MHNA philosophy is it does not fit nicely into

neighborhood effects theory. Neighborhood effects postulates that there is something

fundamentally wrong with the neighborhood. The neighborhood is an obstacle to

improvement. While the MHNA recognizes the need to address conditions, they see the

neighborhood as a source of strength, not an obstacle to change. Its values and beliefs

stand neighborhood effects theory on its head. The combination of trust in the process,

belief in the values that underlie that process, and optimism about the inherent potential

of the neighborhood are really interesting variations on the effects of neighborhood conditions.

School Thinking. "As long as schools are waiting for neighborhood associations to come in and fix the neighborhood so that, therefore, they can educate the kids, it is not going to happen. We find ourselves acting as a school and a neighborhood association, in a sense, as well." The words of that charter school principle beg the question: What is this educator expecting from the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association?

This particular educator seems to understand the nature of community support from a rather limited educational conception of what it takes to improve schools; right now that means finding ways to improve test scores. If it does not explicitly and directly help raise those scores, external involvement is merely another obstacle to focusing on raising these scores. He seems uninterested in knowing or exploring the non-traditional ways the external community—in this case a neighborhood association—can support schools.

Additionally, the charter school principal does not want to engage in excuse making and perceives neighborhood effects as a convenient excuse for poor performance. That principal's "no-excuses" message is one we are hearing from more and more urban schools that are focusing their energies on raising test scores and getting kids into colleges. There is certainly nothing wrong with those goals. The conditions that have created poverty are an easy blame for the performance of students and some educators simply do not want that to be part of their dialogue. These educators too often transmit a subtle message of disdain for an approach that recognizes the need to address outside conditions.

Juxtapose this no-excuses message of the charter school principal with Dr. Reed's comments (p. 176) recognizing the influence of external conditions on school behavior and student performance. While not indicating overemphasizing the neighborhood as an explanation for performance, Dr. Reed indicates a respect for the influence of external conditions. Could the difference in attitudes be a reflection of the public versus charter school mindset in general? The debate about community involvement is playing out in an increasingly market driven educational environment and that reality has the potential to influence choices. I believe the question of public versus charter school attitudes about neighborhood effects in general warrants further research and study.

While that may be the case in the messages provided by some community groups, the interesting point here is the MHNA does not use the neighborhood conditions as an excuse for poor student performance either. In fact, when they talk about abundance and assets, to a certain extent they fundamentally challenge the reasoning behind the theory of neighborhood effects. Rather than seeing the neighborhood as a deficit, the neighborhood is an asset that needs to be utilized.

The only difference is the MHNA recognizes neighborhood revitalization as a piece of an overall reform strategy; the orientation to change is premised on using the very assets that are found in the neighborhood. An important MHNA role is to engage these assets as part of the movement to improve all parts of the neighborhood.

Additionally, the school tradition of isolation has perpetuated an orientation that finds it hard to see all the potential in the neighborhood. Teachers see parents not as assets, but as obstacles to student achievement. The environment is not one of abundance, but rather competition where there are clear winners and losers. Lastly,

school leadership does not have the time to evaluate the potential of outside involvement as part of a long-term approach to improvement. In many ways, the school environment and set of values that give it meaning are the antithesis of the MHNA's orientation. Bridging that gap is an essential part of the movement to re-energize the school-MHNA relationship. In Chapter 5, I will offer some recommendations for how that can happen.

Case Study Conclusion

If, as Thomas Kuhn (1962) argues, ideas serve as the foundation of paradigm construction, then schools and the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association are two very different paradigms. We have seen the powerful influence these ideas have exerted on school behavior—the rejection of an on-going school-community relationship with the NSI—despite its (the NSI) interest in creating collective support for the academic needs of students.

Additionally, we have seen a neighborhood association separate its school-focused initiatives from the rest of its holistic plan for neighborhood revitalization. By separating academic achievement, it to a certain extent unknowingly implemented a structure that isolated schools even further from their neighborhood. The powerful school paradigm has largely marginalized the MHNA as an important participant in school reform. First and foremost, the values and beliefs of the MHNA—its voice as an optimistic leader of neighborhood revitalization—has been muted by school culture and attitudes. A neighborhood full of "abundance" and "assets" is not mobilized as part of the movement to improve schools. The neighborhood assets, the people who live and

work in Maple Heights for instance, have been cut out of meaningful participation in

supporting school improvement.

In his excellent work on the community involvement in school reform, Aaron

Schutz (2006) provided a sound suggestion for the role of the MHNA going forward in

Maple Heights when he wrote:

> If we know that urban schools lack significant capacities for reaching out to the world beyond their doors and fences, then it makes sense to seek community-based approaches that might reach into urban schools. The most promising efforts to bring local neighborhoods and urban schools together emerge from communities, not from schools. Only groups external to schools seem able to consistently provide contexts where community members can develop relatively independent perspectives and action projects that allow them to interact with schools as relative equals. We must learn to engage schools from the outside, not just from the inside. (p. 716, 726).

Schutz has identified the fact that schools simply do not have the organizational

capacity to lead a partnership-building process; the MHNA, however, knows how to lead

collaboration and has programs that can be useful to school improvement. Because the

MHNA knows *how and why* (my italics) to collaborate, it needs to take responsibility for

educating schools to the value of neighborhood involvement and bridging that gap

between the school and the community paradigms. This means building an educational

process that recognizes the limited capacity of schools to be a meaningful contributor.

Schutz is telling external groups they need to lead this engagement process.

The MHNA—and especially its leadership—is equipped with the values,

knowledge, credibility, and experience to reenergize the relationship. We saw it in action

when the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan was created. We saw how the MHNA was

able to mobilize other health-care partners to participate in a data collection plan unique

to Maple Heights to address the health of its residents. Right now, we are not seeing

these kinds of experiences in the MHNA-school relationship. With its organizational

principles as the foundation for relationship-building, the neighborhood association has to

re-exert its role as neighborhood leader in order to reconnect schools to its initiatives.

Lastly, while the MHNA is an organization with an aversion to competition, it

will have to aggressively compete to get its voice heard in the schools. Otherwise the

powerful school culture will continue to shape and influence the level of engagement. If

the MHNA truly wants a meaningful relationship with its neighborhood schools, it needs

to take the lead in constructing that relationship. In Chapter 5, I will offer some

suggestions for how the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association can build and

strengthen its role as a meaningful partner in supporting school reform, as well as detail

some future plans for the neighborhood association.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Findings

The key question explored in the case study is how a specific a neighborhood association could contribute to school improvement in its neighborhood. As a result of the data, it became apparent the MHNA's approach to supporting school improvement could be explained as a duality of involvement. The first part of the duality is focused on programs that are direct in their relational impact on the neighborhood schools. Understood as more academic in nature, these types of programs take place inside the four walls of the school building and are specifically created to address academic achievement in Maple Heights. The Knowledge Bowl is the one program created through the work of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.

The other part of the duality focuses on programs that are not traditionally understood as directly connected to school performance. Taking place largely outside the traditional school building, these programs are aimed at addressing the neighborhood conditions surrounding the student and residents of Maple Heights. Crime, housing, healthy eating, and jobs are among the programs designed to impact schools from outside the four walls.

In her work on the school-community relationship, Jean Anyon (1995) described the inside/outside duality as an "impermeable membrane" (p. 66). In terms of evaluating the success the MHNA has had in breaking down this impermeability, I will begin by

discussing the outside part of the duality.

      The Outside Part. Since 2002, the MHNA has had a history of experience addressing the conditions in the neighborhood. What started as a small organization focusing on housing and environmental issues has expanded to a holistic plan for broad revitalization.   Through a process of authentic participation, the MHNA created a plan for neighborhood revitalization and then mobilized a network of non-school organizations to partner on behalf of the entire plan. As a result of programs and partnerships, the MHNA has made some gains in improving a neighborhood neglected for many years. While all involved recognize there is still much work to be done, Maple Heights has experienced some successes outside the four walls of the school building.

      The Inside Part. In its attempts to support schools by creating programs directly connected to academic achievement, in this study I have discovered Anyon's impermeable membrane exists in Maple Heights. While it may not be completely impermeable, the MHNA has simply not been able to enjoy the same sustained level of authentic participation by schools in its holistic plan. Although it is too early to draw any major conclusions about the impact on school performance in the newly structured Main Street and Spring Creek schools, the inability to connect these schools to the holistic plan largely negates the collective wisdom, energy, and support theorists believe community can contribute to school reform.

      The strength of the MHNA is tied to its ability to understand its own organizational capacity and identity. Unfortunately, when it comes to schools, it has to a certain extent forgotten to follow its fundamental values and beliefs in order to address the academic achievement piece of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The result is a

rather isolated and fragmented approach, one more reflective of school culture than

MHNA's culture. In order to re-energize the neighborhood association-school

connection, it is important for the MHNA to focus its energies in those areas with which

it has experience and success. The next section will provide a framework to guide its

decisions about effective ways to utilize its resources on behalf of school and

neighborhood reform.

Educational, Community Assets, and Social Capital

In the literature review, I organized community educational programs designed to

address levels of community involvement preparation into three distinct categories: 1)

Learning that improves the *educational capital* of the community, mainly parents, to

support the educational needs of their children, 2) Learning that strengthens the *social*

capital of community groups so they can engage collectively with schools, and, 3)

Learning that increases the *community assets capital* of educators so they are able to

more fully accept, respect, appreciate, and welcome the community into a more authentic

relationship aimed at school improvement. These three categories offer the MHNA a

useful framework for effectively supporting Maple Heights schools. We know no group

has the organizational capacity to address all three parts of capital building so it is

important to evaluate the strengths of each group and then match those strengths to

appropriate capital building programs.

Diagram 16 reminds us of the three parts of capital building; I added in

parentheses the group, either the local schools or MHNA, which will be primarily

responsible for creating learning programs and processes within the specific category. As

a way to organize and maximize their efforts going forward, breaking it into these three

categories represents a guide for ensuring a focused, effective strategy. If both groups

start to think about organizing the overall effort by first breaking capital into these three

categories and then connecting their efforts later, I think the result will be a more unified

and coherent movement to achieve the goal of community involvement and support for

schools. Moreover, it is a realistic response to the demands put on the organizational

capacity of each group.

Diagram 16
The Three Types of Capital
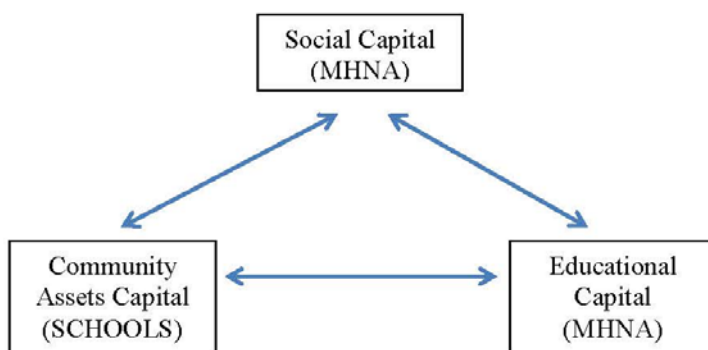
School Responsibility. Schools should focus their efforts primarily on programs

that address the community assets capital piece. These programs strengthen the capacity

of the schools to work confidently and respectfully with community partners. It is

unrealistic to believe the MHNA has the organizational capacity to create and lead

programs that strengthen the community assets capital of teachers, school administrators,

and school district leaders. Primary responsibility for this piece of the preparation puzzle

needs to come from inside the four walls of the school building.

The lack of willingness to participate can be attributed to 1) An historical aversion to community participation, and, 2) An absence of pre-service or on-going preparation to changing attitudes and behaviors about community involvement. The literature (Arnett, 1999; Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006; Brown, & Beckett, 2007; Covello, 1970; Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hands, 2010; Lightfoot, 1981; Morris, 1999; Murphy, 2002; Sanders, 2009) repeatedly pointed out how school leadership can reverse this anti-community culture. For many theorists, committed leadership is the most important part of the school-community involvement plan.

Therefore, if community involvement is to have any chance of success, the entire Bridge Harbor district needs to get behind the movement to build educational programs that lead to greater understanding and appreciation for involving community in meaningful ways. School leaders need to see community involvement as an important part of the overall plan to improve schools. In particular, the district superintendent has to recognize the value of community involvement. If the superintendent, together with the building principals, declares community involvement a priority and then puts together a coherent plan for realizing this priority, the chances for success increase greatly.

In their extensive work on educational preparation, Lynn Lyman and Christine Villani (2002) talk about the inadequacy of teacher and administrator preparation in dealing with the external community. They suggested a myriad of changes in the way we prepare teachers to engage the community on their behalf. There are a number of local Bridge Harbor universities that are committed to the kind of urban study programs Villani and Lyman think essential to preparing schools to better understand and work with schools. These universities have resources and expertise to support the development of a

program targeting K-12 school attitudes and behaviors about community involvement. Taking advantage of university research and resources is an important part of an effective plan to involve community.

Until there is unified school recognition that community involvement is a valuable part of a school reform strategy, researchers like me will continue to experience disappointment with the attitudes and behaviors of school leadership toward the topic of community involvement. I was deeply surprised—and extremely disappointed—by the lack of response by the two Maple Heights building principals to my invitation to participate. Despite repeated attempts, I was unable to get the building principals of Main Street High School and Spring Creek Community School to participate. Although I was able to get other school informants to provide authentic data, the absence of both Dr. Reed and Mr. McJones sends a certain message about their attitudes toward learning about external involvement. Mr. McJones, for instance, did not even give me the courtesy of a response.

The lack of participation by schools may be attributed to time constraints and test score pressures, but it is a troubling statement about the lack of interest in merely exploring community involvement, especially with an outside researcher who has no agenda other than to learn more about the school perspective on community involvement. Again, this message of disinterest can be addressed by a district-wide edict about receptivity to opportunities to explore community participation, as well as to the value of community in general.

Despite the fact that we know schools do not necessarily understand—and therefore appreciate—meaningful community involvement, too often studies conclude by

saying community involvement failed because the school turned its back on the relationship. In connecting the behavior of Maple Heights to the literature, they merely demonstrated many of the same patterns of behavior as other schools. Thus, if we want sustained school participation, the process needs to focus on improving their knowledge to engage by mobilizing resources that can then be part of a structured program of educational assets capital building. Part of the way this can happen is by simply recognizing the limitations of schools to engage.

MHNA Responsibility. While a number of theorists (Kleinbard, 2005; Medriatta and Fruchter, 2001; Medriatta 2003, 2007; Schutz, 2006; Hulesbosch and Logan, 1999) argue schools are the primary obstacle to greater community involvement, I believe the MHNA has also made some strategic mistakes in its approach to building an active presence in addressing academic achievement in Maple Heights. In its desire to emulate the Harlem Children's Zone model, the MHNA has to a certain extent followed a set of principles and a process that is not reflective of its history and tradition. The result is an approach to addressing school performance that marginalizes the strengths of the MHNA.

Much like the thinking behind schools focusing on community assets capital building, the best utilization of MHNA resources and experience is to focus on social and educational capital building. Strong levels of social capital will inevitably transfer to more confidence in the area of educational capital. When James Coleman (1967) wrote "social capital was absolutely essential to a strong community," (p. S101), he was identifying the important relationship between unity and power. Urban neighborhoods are fragmented, isolated, and distrustful places and Coleman correctly identified the need to rebuild trust and trustworthiness as part of a movement to strengthen the capacity of

the community for collective action on behalf of their needs. It puts an enormous amount of faith in human will and fits in nicely with the MHNA approach in general.

The goal is to strengthen the collective resolve of the community to be active, constructive partners in school reform. In her extensive work on community involvement, Jean Anyon (2005) reflects a deep-seated faith in the grass roots sensibilities of the community to, as she refers to it, engage in movement making on behalf of issues of equity and justice. Anyon pointed out how American citizens mobilized in opposition to the Vietnam War; they had an awareness the war was simply wrong and mobilized in opposition to it. I know Anyon believes current urban education performance is a Vietnam-like disaster for the families of these underperforming schools. Anyon has always appreciated the less formal, more grass roots ways to demand change. Because education is failing in their neighborhood, they (the community) must be prepared to respond.

In that context, the MHNA needs to take the lead in implementing a learning process that continues to bring the neighborhood together. Whether it is through formal processes like the one used to create the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan or more informal ones like neighborhood walks, the MHNA has to continue focusing its efforts to rebuild relationships across the neighborhood. It has a diversity of programs that build social capital; continuing to focus its efforts in these areas remains a MHNA priority.

The other responsibility and focus are addressing levels of educational capital in Maple Heights. This is an ideal opportunity to use its ability as a convening organization to mobilize assets throughout the neighborhood. The problem is the MHNA has been slow to develop and build partnerships in areas related to educational capital, a result of

their detaching the academic piece—and its participation—from the holistic plan.

There are a number of local organizations who offer literacy, ESL, tutoring, GED, or other academic support programs—programs that fall into the "laser-like" focus on academic support favored by community involvement theorists like Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas (2004), as well as other school-as-leader-of community involvement theorists like Mavis Sanders (2001, 2003, 2009). These organizations have the capacity to provide services and programs currently not available through the MHNA. However, as they identify and build partnerships, the MHNA can begin to see how to fit its programs into these other programs. The Children First neighborhood literacy night, for instance, could also include literacy on healthy eating, public safety vigilance, and health and wellness, the areas in which the MHNA has experience and knowledge.

The MHNA is positioned to be an ideal partner because the MHNA is the primary organization in Maple Heights focusing holistically on those seven non-academic areas. The point is for the MHNA to focus on those areas in which it has resources, experience, and success. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is so large that it has the potential to stretch the capacity of the MHNA, especially in the academic achievement area. In terms of realistically being able to impact school reform, the MHNA needs to focus on social and educational capital building when thinking about this piece of the plan. With those two parts guiding MHNA behavior, I think the MHNA can assume a more effective position in participating in school reform going forward.

The MHNA Role in School Improvement

While 2008 was a seminal year in the history of the MHNA, it also raised the level of expectations and expanded the areas of involvement. It put a lot of pressure on an organization that had some successes in a small number of areas. However, the MHNA can accomplish its goals if it has in place a framework that focuses decisions about programs to those areas where the MHNA has the necessary capacity to meet its objectives.

Within the limitations created by these three parts of capital building, then, the MHNA should not wait for schools to give it permission to build community involvement in Maple Heights. Recognizing the limitations of schools as a partner, it is important for the MHNA to assume an active, focused, leadership role in building a partnership that can effectively support school improvement by making choices in areas of social and educational capital building.

The challenge of engaging schools going forward, then, is two-fold: 1) Getting schools to see the value of programs not traditionally seen as part of educational reform, and, 2) Getting the school community to actually participate in these programs. In order to meet the challenge of engaging schools in the MHNA revitalization plan, the MHNA needs to draw on its strengths in three areas: 1) MHNA Leadership, 2) MHNA Process, and, 3) MHNA Programs. They have a proven track record of success in all three areas and my recommendations going forward lean heavily on these successes.

This next section will describe ways these three parts provide a framework for how the MHNA can be an effective leader in a movement that reconnects schools to the

programs and initiatives in the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, as well as to the

neighborhood in general.

Leadership

      Reconnect the MHNA to Academic Achievement. The MHNA leadership is

one of its most important strengths. When the MHNA achieved the ideal of authentic

participation as defined by Gary Anderson (1998), it was partially due to the role the

leadership played in creating conditions of respect and equality. Mobilizing the

stakeholders in a way that allowed all of them equal voice in creating the plan sent a

message about the value of their voice in determining their future.

      An important reason for this authentic participation is the behavior of the MHNA

leadership. When it created the NSI, it disconnected the academic achievement piece

from the other parts of the NRP. What has been lost, to a certain extent, is the role the

MHNA and its leadership plays in energizing the community. I suggest the MHNA

brings the NSI and academic achievement back under its organizational leadership. The

organization is strong, financially stable, and has a staff of highly motivated and

committed people.

      The MHNA is blessed with a leader who has charisma and credibility throughout

the neighborhood and the city in general. She is a very successful leader, but right now

she has been somewhat marginalized by the separation of academic achievement from the

MHNA, and that means the values and beliefs have also been somewhat lost. The

MHNA and its leadership need to again be the catalyst to re-energizing the process of

movement making. In reassuming leadership for academic achievement, the MHNA can

then create an educational process that teaches schools about the various ways it can support their needs.

A function of the MHNA is to be an educator of educators. This means an on-going process that educates school leaders about the potential of its indirect programs to impact school performance. Knowing the limitations of schools, the MHNA staff has to make it easy for the school leaders to participate in this educational process. Prying administrators out of their buildings is a huge obstacle; the MHNA needs to be flexible in how it works with schools. Don't expect the school leaders to work around the MHNA schedule. Lastly, the MHNA might need to consider starting first with individual schools and then transitioning to collective engagement.

The MHNA is the one organization that has the credibility, experience, and values to organize the different groups to unified action for Maple Heights. It has catalytic programs in healthy eating, public safety, commercial development, housing, and health and wellness; if effectively communicated inside schools, these programs can be the foundation for supporting improvements in academic achievement in Maple Heights. The MHNA has demonstrated the capacity to deliver these programs to the residents of Maple Heights. It needs to transfer that delivery system to the schools of Maple Heights.

Recently, an interesting debate about local control and local leadership broke out in the rather public op-ed page of the local newspaper. On one side were supporters of a new Bridge Harbor non-profit, Upward Bridge Harbor, and on the other side were opponents of this newly formed organization—the local, grass roots leaders of neighborhood-based community organizations and youth-serving agencies who live and work in their neighborhoods. The article focused on the debate about who had the

knowledge and legitimacy to lead change in the neighborhoods. I was not surprised to read the local grass roots organizations were highly critical of this new organization.

Upward Bridge Harbor is a new non-profit CBO with money, stature in the community, and a professional staff. The latest contribution of a business community concerned about Bridge Harbor schools, its goal is to address education city-wide. It is adopting some of the same Harlem Children's Zone language—cradle-to-career—that the MHNA and the NSI are using in addressing academic achievement in Maple Heights.

While Upward's founding and intentions are positive, the grass roots organizations have been disappointed in the establishment of another outside organization. The problem is when outsiders start an organization with the same purpose as those already in existence—no matter how well-intentioned—it speaks loudly to attitudes about who has the most capacity to lead urban change. The continued rise and reliance on top-down, outsider organizations like Upward Bridge to act as an urban neighborhood problem solver sends powerful messages about who has the capacity to lead the reform movement.

Generally, this case study values locally-based organizations because they possess what Novella Keith (1996) calls the "amateur-outsider" knowledge necessary to equip them with a unique understanding based on living and working in their neighborhood. The decision by the City of Bridge Harbor to partner heavily with the MHNA in its early housing initiatives is an excellent example of the need to trust—and use—local leadership. The success of that early housing initiative has led the city to launch another renovation and building initiative, again relying on local guidance to ensure the program maximizes resources.

Speaking from experience, it took me many months to transition from outsider to insider (and it is still a work in progress). Through increased visibility and participation in many MHNA-sponsored events and activities, I earned trust and, I hope, a little respect. Nonetheless, I remain dependent on the intimate knowledge and insight that one gets by living and working in Maple Heights. That kind of commitment serves as the foundation for credibility, respect, and knowledge. It seems like an obvious statement of fact, but organizations like Upward Bridge Harbor deliver a subtle message about capacity and capability.

The size of the Upward Bridge Harbor staff and budget means resources are being siphoned from local organizations already operating at the neighborhood level of change. Duplication results in a competition for resources; here is a potential pot of money that could be more effectively appropriated to those organizations with the local knowledge to ensure effective use of the money. I know organizations like Upward Bridge Harbor are working to support locally-led reform, but initial analysis indicates it is merely duplicating other efforts and usurping badly needed resources. While well-intentioned, these high profile, outside organizations warrant greater study for their effect on locally-led initiatives.

Somewhat tied to concerns about the rise of outside organization is the absence of discussion about the participation of local faith-based organizations in MHNA-led programs. There are a large number of churches in Maple Heights, and it would be smart for the MHNA leadership to look at ways to engage with those entities on behalf of school and neighborhood change. Unlike Upward Bridge Harbor, these are local organizations with a great deal of knowledge about the realities of Maple Heights.

Mobilizing local churches is an essential part of an overall strategy to support schools.

Process

      Preserving Authentic Participation. An important part of its role in neighborhood leadership is to continue relying on the values that are at the core of authentic participation—equal voice, stakeholder involvement, local knowledge. The *value* of learning to collaborate is part of what makes the MHNA an effective neighborhood leader. This process it uses needs to be framed by these values and beliefs; they give it credibility and legitimacy that translates to good leadership and good learning.

      Ultimately, these values and beliefs are the chief sources of MHNA power and control. If ideas lead to action, then these are the ideas that explain MHNA behavior and effectiveness. They are the avenue by which the community continues to rediscover its voice for activism. They help community engage in movement making. The process will be effectively enhanced by a continued reliance on these values and beliefs.

      In his work on the ideal of authentic participation, Gary Anderson (1998) correctly wrote that "habits of authentic participation give voice to subordinate groups; authentic participation conceives of participation as important for the development of the individual, important for the creation of democratic institutions, and important as a means to increase learning outcomes" (p. 594-595). Anderson noted the complexity of his concept when he wrote "the notion of authentic participation is perhaps more of an ideal to work toward than a reality that can be socially engineered" (p. 595).

Anderson also wrote "authenticity, then, is concerned with both an authentic process and an authentic product" (p. 576). The goal now is to transition from authentic participation in creating the plan to authentic participation in carrying out the plan. The MHNA is at a point where whether it is healthy eating or public safety, authentic participation is now focused on getting people to actually engage in the specifics of the programs.

The MHNA has a unique set of values, beliefs, and attitudes; these ideas have guided the creation of its organizational structure and many of its programs and partnerships. Yet, it made a decision to emulate the Harlem Children's Zone model for educational improvement. Adopting the Harlem Children's Zone model created pressure to create an infrastructure, a set of values, and a corresponding process that were actually quite foreign to the MHNA.

If the MHNA is really committed to the Harlem Children's Zone's approach to controlling the educational parameters and rules of behavior, it should probably consider starting its own schools. That removes the messiness around issues of control because it essentially returns the MHNA to the types of behaviors associated with the professional-internal dichotomy I described in the literature section (page 48). Control is top-down and the rules of outside participation are determined by the organization. However, this solution merely perpetuates the marginalization of the community as a viable school partner.

A better solution is recommitting to the values and beliefs which created the process of authentic participation that characterized the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. This plan at its core is a reflection of the MHNA respect for the assets that lie in

the neighborhood and a belief in the value of broad participation. Authentic participation is the organic, home grown action based on knowledge of the real conditions facing local residents. The people who participated in creating the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, for instance, have a unique understanding and ownership over their neighborhood, including the schools. Their assets lie in their knowledge about the real needs of their community and the energy and commitment they bring to addressing realities and conditions.

Organizational values and beliefs serve as the foundation for the creation of an educational process that prepares the community to effectively contribute to the plan for change. As a "convening organization," the MHNA is providing a model in which organizations and stakeholders can participate. In this way the MHNA reduces the effects of marginalization that Halpern (1995) envisioned when contemplating an active role when a historically ill-prepared group is put in charge.

When looking at the process it has used in addressing academic achievement, it seems the MHNA has to a certain extent overlooked its identity and values. Rather than using its role as community leader to build partnerships both inside and outside schools, it has disconnected itself from the academic achievement piece. To a certain extent, it is imperative the MHNA return to its core values and beliefs when thinking about how it can best serve the needs of residents and schools.

The Importance of Communication. Joey, the Main Street Citizenship teacher, talked about the impact the community clean-up day of service had on his six students, but had he not gotten an invite in his home mailbox, he would have missed this authentic service opportunity. As a non-traditional way to connect to MHNA-led programs, it is an

activity that positively impacted his students. The MHNA has a number of coherent, organized programs that need to be disseminated to the school community. Thinking about how to implement a creative and effective communication process should be a primary focus of the MHNA.

In terms of a practical suggestion, then, it is essential for the MHNA to improve its process of communicating with the schools on behalf of its programs. It needs to put in place a process of communication that ensures schools are well aware of MHNA programs happening in the community.   In one of our meetings, Tommy talked about how the MHNA goes "door-to-door" to inform citizens about certain programs; this kind of grass roots communication approach needs to be applied to schools. Even in an age of social media, the old fashioned flyer is still a viable way to deliver a message.

One time I asked Tommy to tell me the plan for showing the Men's Healthy Living Council film to schools; he said they did not have a plan for getting it into the schools. Here is this authentic learning experience, 18 months in the making and with a diversity of valuable messages about what it means to be healthy, and there is no plan to get kids to experience it. To a certain extent the film is hostage to the disconnection between the school and the MHNA. If there is an effective communication process, I suspect the film's content would be available to schools.

The MHNA also could look at existing school structures as ways to spread the word about the different programs it is operating in the neighborhood. The parent centers are already in place, and this structure has become a credible place for organizing and facilitating community participation. The parent center at Spring Creek Community School is thriving; Main Street just opened one this fall. I suspect parent centers

coordinators would be willing partners in educating parents and the broader community in some of the non-academic neighborhood initiatives.

Borrowing from the literature, we know parent centers are an important piece of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association success in supporting schools in its neighborhood (Warren, 2011). The parent centers in Maple Heights are already in place, and this structure has become a credible place for organizing and facilitating community participation. Parents value and trust the parent centers. As the MHNA creates a coherent, organized program of messages and services for the schools—and the neighborhood as well—it can use the parent centers to disseminate information and facilitate education of Maple Heights parents.

It is the responsibility of the MHNA, therefore, to get schools re-engaged by communicating more creatively and effectively about these programs. The programs are in existence; now is the time to mobilize participation across the entire neighborhood, especially inside schools. Last year, there were six students at the neighborhood clean-up day; it would be great to have 60 students at next year's neighborhood clean-up day. That can only happen if people are aware of the program.

Balancing Collective and Individual. In the body of literature on community involvement, one of the major differences between the MHNA and other community-led involvement experiences is the collective nature of the MHNA's approach. Most of the literature on the school-community phenomenon describes a one-to-one school-community partnership—one community-based organization engaging with one school. Because the MHNA is oriented to the entire neighborhood, it is an organization working collectively with organizations across the entire neighborhood—the schools, other

community-based organizations, businesses, politicians, churches. Its entire orientation is to the broad community, including multiple schools, community-based organizations, and youth serving agencies, as well as the residents—the genuine stakeholders—of Maple Heights.

An important finding of this study is just how difficult it is to lead this collective effort. To essentially control the collective behavior of the various entities is a huge challenge and brings to the forefront the dynamic of control. As an organization, the MHNA may have to pay more attention to balancing this individual-collective dynamic. The suggestion is to start rebuilding individual relationships while always keeping in mind that the ultimate goal is to convene these groups collectively. Before tackling collective action, the MHNA can begin by understanding the needs of individual organization and then building programs and structures that respect both differences and similarities. Success with individual partnerships can build momentum for re-engaging on a more collective level.

Programs

Focusing on Parents as Community. One of the principle challenges in school-community literature is the wide variations in what theorists see as "community" in community involvement in schools. Due to its historical development and position in the neighborhood, the MHNA has a broad definition of community that includes pretty much anyone living or working in Maple Heights. As we saw in both the literature and the case study, many educators primarily understand the community as composed of parents and students. Even though my ideal definition of community is broadly conceptualized to

include not only families, but also the broader external community that can be mobilized on behalf of school reform, I think one of the lessons going forward is the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan should focus more of its educational process on students and families.

When discussing all the activity occurring in Maple Heights, Eileen told me bringing more programs and partners "could be a nightmare because there is already so much going on around here." If the NSI, an organization that prides itself on collaboration, is feeling overwhelmed, one can only imagine how schools are feeling. Stop thinking about adding more programs; focus on existing programs and structures. Programs in Healthy Eating, Health and Wellness, and Youth and Family could target the parents of students. How connected, for instance, are parent to the healthy food corner store initiative? Have parents been part of the educational process that is so important to this initiative? The MHNA needs to make parents a priority recipient of its programs.

Literacy Day. As we have seen, the MHNA does not currently have the capacity to introduce and organize academic achievement programs on the scale of the Harlem Children's Zone. Its notable victory is bringing schools together to create a program; since then it has not been able to get schools to engage in any sustained collaboration. Currently, the Knowledge Bowl is the only academic achievement-related program happening in Maple Heights and its structure reflects the climate of competition between and among schools in the neighborhood. While the Knowledge Bowl is a good program, it does not challenge their (schools) existing patterns of behavior.

It also runs counter to the MHNA's organizational culture of collaboration. The MHNA has a unique way of looking at its neighborhood, and its collaborative spirit needs to meld with the competitive atmosphere that characterizes the Knowledge Bowl. To

bridge the gap in the two ways of thinking about the message of academic achievement, the MHNA should consider turning the Knowledge Bowl into Literacy Day, a one day, neighborhood event that celebrates literacy in Maple Heights. It means redefining literacy to include not only the traditional ways we understand literacy, but literacy education in areas of health and wellness, healthy eating, public safety, and service. Given pressures on time, the idea is to expand on an event that already has great credibility and is part of the academic calendar.

Not unlike the Knowledge Bowl itself, the MHNA would be responsible for organizing Literacy Day. As a MHNA-sponsored event, it would not be overly dependent on school involvement in planning and executing. It would mean bringing a diversity of direct and indirect partners together; we know there is a diversity of partners who could easily participate in this day. Reinforcing its identity as the neighborhood hub, hold the event in Main Street High School.

These kinds of events need to be seen as celebrating academic achievement. The real key is to look at ways to build on existing events by mobilizing Maple Heights partners who are already doing these types of activities on an individual basis. It is an easy way to bring the various groups together and also means more effective use of resources.

Resisting Silo Behavior. If organized effectively, a Literacy Day celebration can provide a structure for bringing groups together. Local organizations generally have the best intentions when they get involved, but one of the major challenges facing Maple Heights community-based groups is the tendency to work in silos. The manifestation of silo behavior, especially when it is tied to the traditional way we think about solving

problems of educational performance, inevitably means creating programs that may either stretch the capacity of the organization or duplicate programs being effectively implemented by other organizations.

If it wants to combat silo behavior, what the MHNA needs to do is resist the inclination to respond to academic achievement by creating initiatives already in existence in Maple Heights. Moreover, schools inevitably want to be leaders in addressing student performance inside the four walls of the school building. An overriding theme in this section is to remain focused on areas with which it has experience and success. The transition from a small 30 block neighborhood association to one responsible for the broad revitalization of a 110 block area has challenged the capacity of the MHNA. At times, that has negatively influenced some of the choices the MHNA has made to address academic achievement.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, 2014. In terms of lessons moving forward, then, where the MHNA can be most effective is to stay focused on those areas where it has the organizational capacity to effectively organize and deliver services. In this context, it should not stray too far from the seven non-academic pieces of the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. The MHNA has the plan and organizational capacity to positively impact schools if it stays focused on areas with which it has a history of success and uses its status to leverage relationships. Diagram 17 reminds us that it has seven indirect programs influencing the attitudes, behaviors, and performance of students and schools. These are the areas where the MHNA has the most programs and the most success.

Actually, Diagram 17 is designed to convey a subtle change to the orientation of

the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. Academic achievement is now at the center of the

holistic approach to neighborhood revitalization. It conveys the contention that non-

traditional factors can impact academic achievement.

Diagram 17
Neighborhood Revitalization Plan: Impact on Academic Achievement
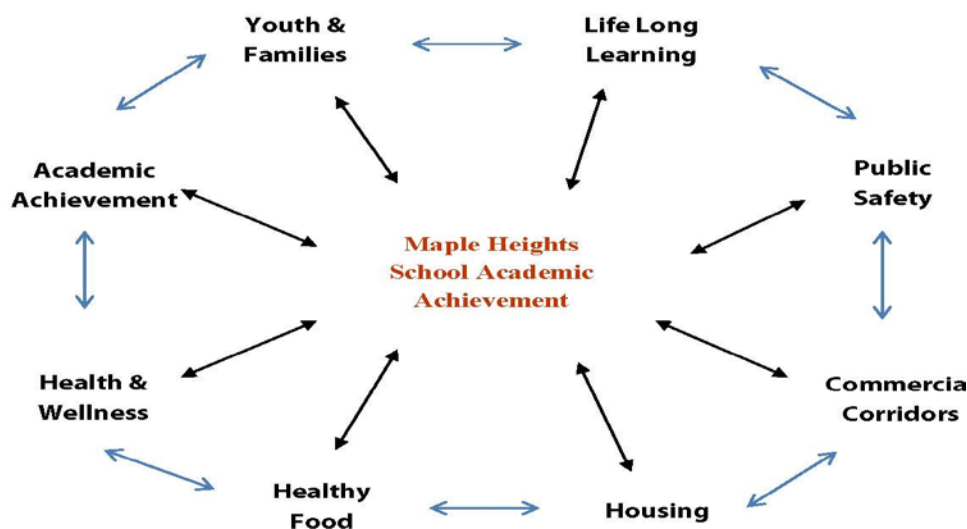
Ironically, then, Diagram 17 also sends a message that the way to impact

academic achievement is not to add more programs, but to clearly connect existing

programs to schools. When thinking about the role community can play in contributing

to neighborhood school reform, Jean Anyon (2005) pointed out "even modest financial

and social supports for poor families enable the children to achieve at higher levels in

school" (p. 83). Whether it is at Anyon's macro federal policy level or the MHNA's

micro neighborhood level, the key word here is "modest" because community

involvement offers support for schools, but even the best plan for community involvement needs other supports working in conjunction with it.

Emergent Question: Competing Models

The Harlem Children's Zone versus the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association. Throughout this case study I have made it a point to compare and contrast the Harlem Children's Zone with the MHNA. Although the MHNA declared its intention to build an HCZ-like structure in Maple Heights, I have concluded that aside from the fact that both have a holistic change plan targeting a defined geographic area, the MHNA approach has very little in common with that used by the Harlem Children's Zone. What has emerged is two distinctly different options for creating processes and programs for implementing an approach to school and neighborhood change.

The Harlem Children's Zone has responded to conditions in its neighborhood by creating and implementing a program that includes schools and non-school services under its organizational umbrella. Its approach is top-down, professionally administered, and tightly controlled. The HCZ-founded charter schools are important parts of their overall plan for changing the neighborhood and those schools have achieved some impressive results in areas that matter a great deal to an interested public, student test scores, attendance rates, and college acceptances. For a myriad of reasons, including those scores, it has become a national model for holistic neighborhood change.

The MHNA, on the other hand, has been part of a grass roots effort that created a holistic plan for the neighborhood. Once the plan was finalized, the MHNA assumed a major role in creating relationships and partnerships with organizations both inside and

outside Maple Heights that would be part of the movement to meet the plan's initiatives.

Schools are among the organizations involved in the holistic plan for neighborhood

change; like all potential partners, though, they are largely independent of the MHNA

and, therefore, outside direct MHNA control. Public schools within the geographic

boundaries of the MHNA are still badly underperforming and are in danger of either

restructuring or closing.

The primary goal of the HCZ's charter schools is to prepare its students for

college and career. The HCZ determined this goal and although an in-depth analysis of

the specific structures and approach used inside the school is beyond the scope of this

study, its outcomes indicate the HCZ schools are achieving their goal. On the basis of

school performance as measured by test scores, attendance, and college acceptances, the

Harlem Children's Zone has delivered some impressive results.

The MHNA goal is to improve academic achievement in its neighborhood

schools, but it is not positioned to determine any specific school achievement goals. It

does not have any level of control over schools. Through its processes and programs, the

MHNA is working to create conditions conducive to academic achievement by working

with residents committed to improving their entire neighborhood. These outcome are

time consuming and exceedingly difficult to measure.

With its professional organization and large staff, the HCZ could conceivably

detach itself from the neighborhood and still run school services and programs in order to

achieve its goals. Given the organizational limitations, the MHNA is simply not

positioned to control the day-to-day operations of the schools. Control is based on

relationships with its residents, service providers, and schools—authentic neighborhood

stakeholders. These two very different orientations greatly affect the way each operates in the neighborhood.

To declare, as the MHNA did, an interest in creating an HCZ-like structure in Maple Heights in the absence of a realistic evaluation of its viability as a model to emulate indicates: 1) How persuasive the HCZ model is, and, 2) Organizations do not know enough about alternative models or approaches. Although the two models are not competitors in the traditional sense of the word, the reality of alternatives offers an ideal opportunity for the university research community to get involved by providing community-based organizations with the information and support they need to make the best decision for their neighborhood.

In an era of diminishing resources, as well as a public looking for quick fixes and the big solution, organizations do not have the luxury of time to make wrong decisions about how best to accomplish its goals. Serious academic research is one way to support decision-making; consulting and advising are other ways. An active, engaged university community needs to be available to these organizations. Had that kind of resource been available to the MHNA, I suspect there would have been more discussion about the appropriateness of the Harlem Children's Zone model for Maple Heights.

Conclusion: The Need for a Convening Organization

To a certain extent patterns of behavior are explained by the level of control schools, non-profits, the political system, businesses, and the MHNA have enjoyed over their programs and their worlds. Schools continue to control and guard what happens inside the four walls, neighborhood non-profits continue to think first about their

programs, government has their sphere, the business community has their entities, and even the MHNA to a certain extent sees the Neighborhood Revitalization Plan as under its organizational control. The influence that silo-like control has over the behavior of these organizations is a reality not likely to wither away any time soon.

Within neighborhoods across urban areas, there are more and more organizations like the MHNA, taking a broad, holistic approach to neighborhood change. It means bringing together a diversity of potential contributors—and agendas—to the plan. What we learned in this case study is how difficult it is for these groups to give up control over their programs. Given that reality, the absence of an organization that can bring groups together in an authentic spirit of participation and collaboration will continue to frustrate the reform movement.

Therefore, if the lessons of this case study afford one suggestion for the MHNA going forward, it would be to consider its role as a convening organization of utmost importance to the future of the Maple Heights holistic reform movement. There is no one Harlem Children's Zone-like organization with the capacity to implement and control all pieces of a holistic plan for Maple Heights. There is, however, a diversity of organizations with programs working on behalf of Maple Heights. These different entities in Maple Heights have strengths and weaknesses. If this holistic approach is going to be effective in Maple Heights, the MHNA is going to have to bring these groups together on behalf of a coherent, sustained movement.

Although it performs many roles and responsibilities, convening is the one service no other organization has the capacity to deliver. Given its local knowledge and understanding, combined with its history and values, the MHNA is the one organization

uniquely suited to perform this essential function in Maple Heights. The ability to convene organizations and groups, while subtle and under-appreciated in an environment looking for the big solution, is essential to the future of Maple Heights revitalization.

Lastly, convening cannot stop at the entrance to the school building. Generally, non-profits, health providers, youth serving agencies, government, and other community-based organizations have an orientation to collaboration. Schools, however, remain a fairly closed organization. They cannot be allowed to continue operating in relative isolation from the rest of the movement to revitalize Maple Heights. Getting them mobilized is an enormous challenge, but the MHNA has the capacity to accomplish this challenge.

In perhaps its most ambitious response to creating a structure to support and encourage collaboration, the MHNA recently announced plans to build the Healthy Living Commons, a $6 million, 45,000 square foot mixed-use development that will create what Tommy calls "a healthy living campus for the neighborhood." By far the largest financial undertaking in the history of the MHNA, the Healthy Living Commons will provide space for organizations and groups wanting to collaborate on behalf of Maple Heights.

Mrs. Anderson sees the groups and organizations "that land in the Healthy Living Commons will be of like mind around something, you know, their missions will be aligned in terms of working with the community." While the idea of school as a neighborhood hub is often mentioned as an important piece of the reconceptualization of the school-community relationship, Tommy talked about how the Healthy Living Commons could function as a focal point and gathering place for the residents of Maple

Heights. He describes the vision MHNA has for the Healthy Living Commons:

> It will be a central hub where it's easy to be healthy, easy to connect with people, it's easy to find some something that you need, it's easy to connect socially. It's built out of this idea 'let's really make this hub central to this campus, people can go to, but then trickle out and connect to the rest of the neighborhood.' It's about starting in one single spot and growing things out. Growing this is like a vessel, like an artery from the heart, so the Commons is the heart.

Intended to be part of the commercial development of Maple Heights, the building will provide physical and social space for the partners and residents who are committed to Maple Heights. Located right in the center of the Maple Heights commercial corridor, Jack talked about "the transformation impact of having a building like this, what it looks like now and what it can become, and what it will do to the commercial corridor."

At a community event announcing the Healthy Living Commons project, residents reflected on both the past and future of Maple Heights. One of the residents spoke about the significance of both this building and the people who will give the building its meaning and action:

> I grew up not too far from Susan, my little sister and Susan was best friends, so I guess to me, this whole thing is transformational, but it's also a reinvigoration of the community that I grew up in.   This community, that's why Susan so vested in it, but when I say that, because we know what this place can be, we know what it was, so part of it for me is the reinvigoration of the community.   I want people to know that it is going back to the path I used to see. Sitting on a porch with a handful of people in the midst of really bad stuff and having them focus away from that that bad stuff and have them say 'we will take care that.' I do know one thing. If it's gonna happen at all in Bridge Harbor, it's gonna happen here in Maple Heights.

Ultimately, resident, teachers, administrators, politicians, business, non-profits, faith-based organizations, and universities need to be collectively engaged in a process and plan specifically created to address the realities of Maple Heights. Mobilization of all

assets and resources in the absence of an ethic of mutual respect, a sound process of preparation, and a shared commitment to the future has led many well-intentioned reformers to conclude that the community is merely an impediment to effective urban change. However, if done right, community can be an important part of the movement to revitalize urban neighborhoods, including that one entity truly capable of creating pride, spirit, and unity—the neighborhood school.

Epilogue

In early October, tragedy struck the Maple Heights Neighborhood Association when a fire destroyed most of its neighborhood house--the very house located at the center of what was once a neighborhood so ridden with crime that it was deemed too dangerous for people to enter. Over the years, the neighborhood house has become a powerful symbol of permanence and commitment to the revitalization of Maple Heights. Three days after the fire, I saw Mrs. Andrews at the annual Harvest Fest. Despite the fact that the fire occurred earlier in the week, the Harvest Fest went on as planned—right in front of the neighborhood house.

After I expressed my sorrow at the loss of the house, Mrs. Andrews, with her usual smile and in her quiet way, admitted it was a "loss, a tragedy, and we are sad. But, in our lives we all face obstacles, setbacks, and challenges. It does not stop us, it does not deter us. We keep moving forward." I was not surprised by her answer. The MHNA will continue to move forward by staying in Maple Heights.

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