

EXPLORATION OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IN COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS

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The Sage Colleges  
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership

Dedicated to my sons, Ahmani and Nicholas.

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## **Abstract**

The intention of this qualitative study is to explore the leadership practices that public school principals have employed to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools. The researcher interviewed twelve principals in New York State from elementary schools defined as a community school by the Children's Aid Society. Community schools selected for this study provide students and families with expanded learning opportunities, full-service supports for students, including access to primary and mental health professionals and services, and family and community engagement opportunities. In particular, the researcher focused on exploring principals' leadership practices, the impact of poverty on learning, community school structures, supports and services, and turnaround leadership.

In order to achieve the purpose of this qualitative study, the following research questions were asked: 1) How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools? 2) To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)? 3) What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS? 4) To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?

This study utilized one-on-one interviews to examine the implementation of the CCSS in elementary schools. The main findings of this study revealed: There are factors that make it challenging for students living in poverty to learn. According to principals, physical and mental health partnerships were important in meeting the social-emotional and physical needs of students, so they are ready to learn. In addition, principals believe that family and community engagement is important in helping all students learn.

The interviews in this study revealed changes with instructional practices aimed to meet the goals of the CCSS, which occurred through the use of embedded professional development in the form of coaching. In addition, the community school strategy was utilized by principals in this study to improve student achievement by meeting the academic and nonacademic needs of students. Principals in this study concluded that supports and services provided to students, families and the community are important enough to sustain over a long period of time.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Abstract.....	6
List of Tables.....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	12
Purpose Statement.....	12
Statement of the Problem.....	13
Background.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Significance of Research.....	16
Definitions of Terms.....	16
Limitations and Delimitations.....	19
Chapter Summary.....	20
Chapter 2: Review of Literature.....	22
Effects of Poverty.....	22
Community Schools.....	32
Common Core State Standards.....	46
Turnaround Leadership.....	49
Chapter Summary.....	56
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	57
Population and Sample.....	58
Instrumentation.....	59



Data Collection.....	59
Reliability and Validity.....	61
Data Analysis.....	62
Research Bias.....	63
Chapter Summary.....	63
Chapter 4: Data Analysis.....	65
Participants.....	65
Research Question One.....	68
Research Question Two.....	76
Research Question Three.....	80
Research Question Four.....	90
Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	99
Research Question One:.....	99
Research Question Two:.....	103
Research Question Three:.....	105
Research Question Four:.....	107
Recommendations for Principals and System Leaders.....	109
Recommendations for Future Research.....	110
Final Comments.....	111
References.....	113
Appendix A:.....	125
Appendix B:.....	128
Appendix C:.....	130

Appendix D:.....	132
Appendix E:.....	133
Appendix F:.....	135
Appendix G:.....	136

## List of Tables

Table 1:.....	66
Table 2:.....	67

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The intention of this qualitative study is to explore the leadership practices that public school principals have employed to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools. The researcher interviewed twelve principals in New York State from elementary schools defined as a community school. Community schools selected for this study provide students and families with expanded learning opportunities, full-service supports for students including access to primary and mental health professionals and services, and family and community engagement opportunities. In particular, the researcher focused on exploring principals' leadership practices, the impact of poverty on learning, community school structures, supports and services, and turnaround leadership.

This chapter introduces the study and provides some background information on the experiences of students living in poverty and community schools. The research problem and questions that will guide this study will also be reviewed. Finally, the significance of the study, definitions of the terms used, limitations and delimitations will be explained.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the leadership practices public school elementary principals employed in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. Principals from selected elementary schools in New York State that met the definition of a community school were interviewed. This study also explored how poverty affects the implementation of the CCSS. In addition, the extent of the impact of services and supports and the turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals in the implementation of the CCSS was also explored.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The current reality is that too many students are graduating high school unprepared to achieve success in college or the workplace (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). Cultivating an environment where the expectations for teaching and learning promote excellence for each student is a nationwide challenge. Among individuals ages 16 to 24, four percent of whites were high school dropouts, compared to eight percent of blacks and 13 percent of Latinos as of 2012 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2014), these percentages reflect 16- through 24-year-olds who are not enrolled in school and have not earned a high school diploma or an equivalency credential. Moreover, only 65 percent of low-income students graduate from high school as compared with 91 percent of their peers from middle and upper-income families (Steinber and Almeida, 2008).

Researchers have argued that poverty and the social issues related to it have a negative impact on student achievement (Payne, 2009; Noguera, 2003; Rothstein, 2004). Consequently, communities with a large population of low-income families need to be able to rely on their schools to not only provide a quality education to every child, but to also serve as the hub for varied support services for children and their families to learn and grow. Community schools help to bring together multiple agencies, parents, community members, students and educators as partners within the school to help remove obstacles to student learning (The Children's Aid Society, 2011).

Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, and Luppescu (2006) assert that some people fear that raising the standards for students with poor academic skills may cause them to become disengaged and this could lead to students dropping out of school. However, during these times

of reform and accountability, Sebring et al. state "...that the press toward higher academic standards be accompanied by ample social support to sustain students in their more difficult undertakings" is especially important (p. 13). As a result of the increased rigor in the CCSS and increased accountability measures school districts are facing to ensure that all students are learning at high levels, school districts with high populations of students experiencing poverty are looking for ways to support their students in meeting the rigorous standards (Sebring et al., 2006).

## **Background**

Students living in poor neighborhoods and attending high needs, urban school settings face considerable social, economic, and academic challenges. Some of these challenges include high levels of poverty, lack of adequate social interactions, lack of primary and mental health services, exposure to violence, high mobility, lack of before-school, after-school, and/or summer expanded learning opportunities (Jensen, 2009; Berliner, 2010). Outside School Factors (OSFs), which negatively affect student learning include low birth weight, parental drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse, and food insecurity. These OSFs make the job of teaching and learning more difficult (Berliner, 2010). The achievement gap that exists between low-income students and high-income students is symptomatic of the inequities of access to quality academic, social, and health resources (Rothstein, 2008). These inequities put students from low-income families at a disadvantage as they face many risk factors that preclude them from obtaining the necessary skills for school readiness (Reardon, 2013).

The community school strategy is being used to offer an array of academic, health, and family supports in conjunction with those services already offered by the school system as a

result of many students in high needs communities and schools facing academic, economic, and social conditions that adversely impact teaching and learning, (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005). The goal of community school models is to mitigate the effects of poverty, so all students have access to the needed resources and supports to be successful (Coalition of Community Schools, 2005).

### **Research Questions**

In order to achieve the purpose of this qualitative study, the following research questions explore the effects of poverty, and the community school model and turnaround leadership practices applied in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools.

1. How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools?
2. To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?
3. What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS?
4. To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?

### **Significance of Research**

This study intends to inform the practice of leaders of elementary community schools whose students are being prepared for college or career readiness. There is limited research in

the area of principal leadership practices and the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. This research study may provide findings which will inform district and building leaders about the types of leadership practices, professional development, partnerships, and systems that will lead to a more effective implementation of the CCSS. Additionally, the findings of this study will provide an understanding of the infrastructure and supports that are associated with designing and implementing a community school as a strategy to overcome some of the social, economic, and academic challenges that students, families, and schools face in poor communities.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions of terms will be used throughout the study and are provided for the reader in an effort to establish a common language of the content discussed in this study.

*Community Schools:* The community school model is a strategy educational institutions utilize to combine the best educational practices with a range of health and social services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and socially prepared to learn. For the purposes of this study, all community schools shared the following elements:

- Expanded learning opportunities designed to enrich the learning environment for students and their families;
- A full range of health, mental health and social services designed to promote children's well-being and remove barriers to learning;
- Partnerships that demonstrate collaboration with the local community, by engaging families and other community stakeholders (The Children's Aid Society, 2011).



*Common Core State Standards (CCSS):* The Common Core State Standards are learning standards supported by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) seeking to bring diverse state curricula into alignment with other states across the U.S. by following the principles of standards-based education reform. The standards define the knowledge and skills students should have so they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

*Out of School Factors (OSFs):* These factors are found among the poor that affect the health and learning opportunities of children, and accordingly limit what schools can accomplish on their own. Factors include (1) low birth-weight and non-genetic prenatal influences on children; (2) inadequate medical, dental, and vision care, often a result of inadequate or no medical insurance; (3) food insecurity; (4) environmental pollutants; (5) family relations and family stress; (6) neighborhood characteristics, and (7) lack of extended learning opportunities, such as preschool, after school, and summer school program (Berliner, 2009).

*Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs):* Extended Learning Opportunities are learning opportunities that occur outside of the regular school day and that operate separately from traditional school programs, with the aim of increasing student achievement (Berliner, 2009).

*Achievement Gap:* The achievement gap refers to the difference in performance between low-income and minority students compared to that of their peers on standardized tests.

*Opportunity Gap:* The opportunity gap relates to deeply inequitable systems, process, structures, policies, and practices in schools that can limit the chance for some students to succeed and reach their full potential (Milner, 2010).

*Conditions for Learning:* Conditions for learning are described as the comprehensive and supportive environment necessary to educate all students to high standards, they include the following:

- Early childhood development is fostered through high quality, comprehensive programs that nurture learning and development;
- The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students;
- Students are motivated and engaged in learning—both in school and in community settings, during and after school;
- The basic physical, social, emotional, and economic needs of young people and their families are met.
- There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents and school staff;
- The community is engaged in the school and promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community (Coalition for Community Schools, 2003c).

*Turnaround Leadership:* Turnaround leadership is leadership used for turning around a persistently low-performing school to one that is performing acceptably as measured by student achievement according to state tests (Fullan, 2005).

*Turnaround Leadership Practices:* According to Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2010), core turnaround leadership practices include direction setting, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program.

*Capacity Building:* The increase of collective power of teachers and principals in terms of new knowledge and competencies, increased motivation to engage in improvement actions, and additional resources (Fullan, 2005).

### **Limitations and Delimitations of this study**

A delimitation of this study was the sample size of participants, which consisted of 12 principals from select elementary schools in New York State and excluded principals from New York City. The elementary school principals were chosen because the schools they led were community schools, which offered extended day and/or extended year opportunities, health and mental health services, and family supports to students and families in the school building. The scope of this study was limited to 12 principals representing four school districts in upstate New York. These four districts represent less than one percent of the total number of 695 school districts in New York State. Therefore, the research study is limited in generalizability.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced the study and provided information about some of the challenges that students living in poverty face and background information about community schools. This chapter described some of the challenges school leaders face in high poverty communities.

These challenges are a part of the cycle of poverty that influence academic achievement. In addition, the research problem and the research questions that guided this study were reviewed. The definition of the terms, limitations and delimitations were also presented.

In Chapter Two, a review of the literature that supports the study and focuses on the effects of poverty, an overview of community schools and the CCSS, and turnaround leadership will be provided.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical context of community schools and their social return on investment, the development of the Common Core State Standards, and to explore the literature and research on poverty and its impact on learning. This chapter will conclude by presenting research regarding turnaround leadership and practices.

### **Effects of Poverty**

Poverty is one of many outside school variables which influence learning and student achievement outcomes. It is often defined by the term socioeconomic status (SES), which refers to one's standing in regards to "income, level of education, employment, health, and access to resources" (Burney and Beilke, 2008, p.173). According to the United States Census Bureau (2012), families are considered poor if their income falls below an amount designated to support a family of a certain size. In 2012, for a family unit of four, the federal poverty level threshold was \$23,283 per year

Many children in high-poverty schools come with a plethora of unmet social, emotional, and physical needs (Bireda, 2009). Some of these needs include:

- Ten percent of children living below the poverty level and 9 percent of children living in families with incomes 100 to 199 percent of the poverty level had no regular source of health care in 2007.
- Roughly one in three poor and near-poor children had no dental visits between 2005 and 2006. Low-income children experience 12 times as many restricted activity days due to dental disease as children in high-income families.

- About 12.4 million children lived in households that were classified as food insecure at some point in 2007.
- Forty-three percent of U.S. households (both owners and renters) with children had one or more housing problems in 2007: physically inadequate housing, crowded housing, or cost burden resulting from housing that cost more than 30 percent of household income.
- The Afterschool Alliance found that more than 14 million children went unsupervised after school in 2003 (Bireda, 2009, p. 4).

Historically, as a group, low-income students have performed academically lower when compared to high-income students on standardized achievement test scores (Reardon, 2013). Students with similar abilities enter school with differences in school readiness based on their social class backgrounds (Rothstein, 2004). Students that come from households with parents that have higher education and middle to high income levels have been read to more, have access to more books, have more conversations at home about books read, and know how to use computers than compared to students that come from families with less education and resources (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

During the first three years of life, “complex and rapid cognitive development” occurs (Berliner, 2009, p. 15). Children from poor families experience differences in language acquisition when compared to children from middle and wealth families. Berliner (2009) reported “the language experience of the children show[ed] that by about age 3, children from welfare families had acquired, on average, 525 vocabulary words, while children of working families had acquired 749 words. But by this age, children of professional families had acquired

1,116 vocabulary words” (p. 28). It is critical to acknowledge that low-income children come to school with an array of challenges that limit their capacity to learn. They do better in school if they have access at very early ages to academic, primary and mental health services and family empowerment supports (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005).

The economic conditions that students and families face are likely to affect the academic performance of children. Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, Yeung, and Smith (1998) assert family economic conditions experienced before the age of five years old are strongly associated with children completing schooling and experiencing academic success than compared to children in the 6-15 age range experiencing similar economic conditions. Therefore, students living in poverty begin their schooling experiences behind their peers academically. If students are to reach their full potential, supports and services to address their needs is vital.

In addition, students living in poverty tend to experience social and economic challenges, which manifest themselves in the way they are reared, poor health care, lack of adequate housing, student mobility, food insufficiency, violence, and a lack of out of school learning opportunities (Rothstein, 2004). Students living in poverty tend to suffer from physical, psychological, and emotional abuse, problems with vision, hearing, oral, asthma, ear infections, stomach problems and the lack of appropriate medical care to name a few (Milner, 2013). These factors tend to greatly impact academic achievement for students living in poverty more so than students living in middle to high income because there is a lack of access to resources and services (Rothstein, 2004).

Students living in poverty reside in both rural and urban settings. Regardless of their contextual experience, students lacking the basic living needs tend to experience disheartening

realities (Milner, 2013). Children of color and those living in poverty are disproportionately exposed to and affected by environmental hazards such as air and water pollution, lead paint, and car emissions (Munin, 2012). These factors increase the likelihood that children exposed to these conditions will likely suffer from asthma, low birth weights, increased probability of being diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and high absenteeism (Munin, 2012).

Children living in poverty tend to experience other risk factors, such as single parent households, income poverty, parenting stress, drug abuse, gambling, alcoholism, homelessness and neighborhood violence (Gassman-Pines & Yoshikawa, 2006). The more accumulative risk factors children experience at an early age, “the worse their social-emotional and cognitive development” manifests itself later in life (p. 981). These risk factors can also affect adult attainment, behavior, and health through parents’ material and emotional investments in children’s learning and development” (Duncan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2010, p. 306). Consequently, poverty in early childhood negatively affects students’ learning outcomes and, as adults, they are more likely to have poorer health, less successful in the job market, and more likely to commit crimes (Duncan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2010).

It is important to note that economic class differences should not be predicative of student achievement (Rothstein, 2004). In fact, there are students that experience social and economic challenges that persevere and “beat the odds” (Milner, 2013). Rothstein (2009) asserts that “some children from lower social classes do out-perform typical middle class children, but differences in school readiness are so pervasive that an enduring average gap is almost inevitable” (p. 61). Nevertheless, Rothstein denotes that the success of some lower-income children does not signify that poverty can be discounted (2009).



**Health.** Low-income urban youth are disproportionately affected by educationally relevant health disparities such as poor vision, asthma, teen pregnancy, aggression and violence, lack of physical activity, food insecurity, low birth weight related to poor prenatal care, and untreated inattention and hyperactivity (Basch, 2010). These health disparities are categorized as Out of School Factors (OSFs) (Berliner, 2009). OSFs negatively affect and “are concentrated in schools serving poor and minority children and families” (Berliner, 2009, p. 8). In general, children living in poverty experience poor health conditions (Duncan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2010). Many physical and mental health problems that occur when a child is born are the result of inadequate access to quality health and prenatal care, which may negatively impact children’s educational attainment (Duncan et al., 2010).

Some children living in low income families may experience low birth weight (LBW) or very low birth rate (VLBW) (Berliner, 2009). In the United States, normal birth weight is about 5 lb., 8 oz. Children considered to be of low birth weight (LBW) are between 3 lb., 5 oz. and 5 lb., 8 oz. However, very low birth weight (VLBW) and extremely low birth weight children fall well below the LBW standard. As a result, children falling into these categories show signs of cognitive and behavioral challenges later when they begin school (Berliner, 2009).

“In general, black Americans are almost twice as likely as whites to have a LBW child, and they are 270% more likely to have a VLBW child” (Berliner, 2009, p. 9). VLBW children are also expected to have the most cognitive and behavioral challenges and many times they are heavily populated in schools that are segregated by race and class (Berliner, 2009). Consequently, it will take more resources and funding for schools to meet students educational

needs and “the students are much less likely to achieve at levels they could have if society had invested in them and their parents long before kindergarten” (Berliner, 2009, p.10).

Learning can become very difficult when a student has an earache, toothache, or blurred vision. According to Berliner (2008), 13.4% of youth between the ages of 2 to 17 years old who come from families earning \$80,000 per year had not seen a dentist. In comparison, 33.8% of children living in poverty whose families earn under approximately \$20,000 for a family of four had not seen a dentist (Berliner, 2009). Untreated toothaches or cavities negatively interfere with students’ learning and behavior (Rothstein, 2004).

Children that come from poverty also tend to suffer from undiagnosed vision issues in addition to undiagnosed dental issues (Berliner, 2009). “Fifty percent or more of minority and low income children have vision problems that interfere with their academic work” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 37). In 36 states that require schools to conduct vision screening, only 10 states require follow up with eye care professionals. Furthermore, “eye vision screenings in schools has a very high failure rate in detecting visual problems” as compared to an examination by an eye doctor (Berliner, 2009, p. 14).

**Living Conditions.** Many poor families in urban settings have limited options when it comes to affordable and adequate shelter in safe neighborhoods (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2004). These neighborhoods are characterized by high crime rates, high concentration of families living in poverty, and inadequate shelter (Rothstein, 2004; Payne, 2009). According to Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2004), children of color and children living in urban settings are overrepresented among those living in poor neighborhoods. Furthermore, neighborhoods with high crime rates and a concentration of families living well below the poverty levels are

challenged with inadequate housing and high transient student populations (Berliner, 2010; Payne, 2009). The lack of adequate and appropriate housing also exacerbates the high rate of mobility in lower-class neighborhoods that inevitably also impacts achievement (Rothstein, 2004; Payne, 2009).

Moreover, “lower-class children achieve less if the share of low-income children in their schools is higher” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 130). As a result, one of the findings from Coleman’s report is that who sits next to you makes a difference in school (Coleman, 1966). If students are exposed and have interactions with others from high social classes and others that have goals to achieve the American Dream, they will be more inclined to also have similar goals (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). This claim is supported by research that shows “that children and adolescents who live in poor neighborhoods perform less well on a variety of developmental outcomes compared with peers from more advantaged neighborhoods” (p. 488).

**Nutrition.** Research shows low income is associated with food insecurity (Berliner, 2004). Missing a breakfast or having an inadequate or no lunch impairs a child’s ability to concentrate and learn in school (Berliner, 2010). Students that live in low-income homes are more likely to experience food insecurity. Food insecurity has been associated with trauma, depression, anxiety, overweight and obesity in childhood, adolescence, and adult hood (Duncan, Kalil, & Ziol-Guest, 2010). These negative effects of the lack of food affect children latter on in life as adults (2010). According to Brown, Beardslee, and Prothrow-Stith (2008):

There exists no “safe” level of inadequate nutrition for healthy, growing children. Even nutritional deficiencies of a relatively short duration—a missed breakfast, an inadequate lunch—impair children’s ability to function and learn. When children attend school

inadequately nourished, their bodies conserve the limited food energy that is available. Energy is first reserved for critical organ functions. If sufficient energy remains, it then is allocated for growth. The last priority is for social activity and learning. As a result, undernourished children become more apathetic and have impaired cognitive capacity. Letting school children go hungry means that the nation's investments in public education are jeopardized by childhood under-nutrition.

If students receive proper nutrition early in life, their intellectual functioning and capacity is greater as students advance through their school career (Berliner, 2009).

**Violence.** Violence is prevalent in high poverty urban communities (Noguera 2003; Payne 2009; Rothstein 2004). Family violence, child abuse, and neglect occur more frequently among the poor than the middle class and wealthy families (Payne, 2009). Research shows that children who witness family violence suffer from symptoms that resemble post-traumatic stress disorder (Berliner, 2009). Furthermore, “stress during childhood because of poverty, family violence, parental depression, rejection by caretakers and similar issues has physiological effects” (p. 28). As a result, hormonal levels and the architecture of a child's brain are affected. This level of stress early in a child's development adversely affects their learning during this primary stage of development (Rothstein, 2004; Payne, 2009).

Domestic violence is also an issue affecting poor families. A parent's ability to nurture and to be emotionally connected and available for their children is impaired due to domestic violence they have experienced themselves. “Studies consistently show that 50% to 60% of the women who receive public benefits have experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner at some point during their adult lives” (Berliner, 2009, p. 24). Established secured relationships

with caregivers provide students with a better chance to enter school ready to learn instead of displaying aggressive behaviors (Burney & Beilke, 2008). “Loving and secure relationships with caregivers early in life lead to mentally and physiologically healthier children” (Berliner, 2009, p. 25).

**Out-of-School Learning.** There is an opportunity gap between low income and high income families and students (Milner, 2010). According to Milner (2009), opportunity gap is defined by differences in processes, such as teaching and learning, as well as structural and institutional resources available to both teachers and students. Students from low income families have limited access to early high quality early childhood and expanded learning programs that provide opportunities for confidence building, social interactions, and background knowledge that may transfer to academic settings (Burney & Beilke, 2008). For children to benefit fully from good schools, they must be ready to learn (Rothstein, 2004). Children from low income families should be exposed to environments rich in language and books at an early age. Interactions with adults where they serve as role models and instructors are necessary to foster language development and acquisition (Allington, McGill-Fransen, Camilli, Williams, Graff, Zeig, Zmach, and Nowak, 2010). In addition, “they should be exposed to sophisticated language...and experience the excitement of stories read, told, and discussed. They should be challenged to think and talk about the stories...” (Allington et al., 2010, p. 140).

Preschool, before and after-school, and summer programs are not always available for students who need additional academic interventions and supports the most (Berliner, 2009; Payne, 2009). According to Berliner (2009), preschool is associated with positive and large effects on cognitive outcomes and social skills for children entering kindergarten. However, “the

magnitude of the measureable advantage that preschool provides fades over time” (p. 38).

Nevertheless, this extended learning opportunity helps with closing the gap between children in low and wealthier families at the beginning of kindergarten. Hodgkinson (2003) reported that from birth to age five is a critical time for children’s language acquisition and development to unfold.

Children living in low income households have limited access to extended learning opportunities (ELOs), which relates to opportunities that provide academic development outside of the traditional school day (Berliner, 2009). ELOs are not always available for or attended by the students who need them most (Berliner, 2009; Payne, 2009). For example, summer programs allow students from more affluent families to have access and resources to travel, visit museums, academic camps, and summer school (Berliner, 2009). According to Berliner (2009), students from wealthier families appear smarter because of the ELOs they have access to, when in fact, the lower and upper income children each had shown substantial achievement gains. With the opportunity to provide ELOs, summer programs could help reduce the achievement and opportunity gap by providing poorer students with a better chance to succeed in school (Berliner, 2009).

Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse (1996), in a meta-analysis of eleven studies on summer academic loss, found that “middle-class students appeared to gain on grade-level equivalent reading recognition tests over summer while lower-class students lost on them. There were no moderating effects for gender or race...” (p. 227). Their conclusion showed that “on average, summer vacations created a gap of about 3 months between middle- and lower-class students” (p. 261) in the area of reading. Research shows the following:

There is a small set of studies focused on improving book access for children from low-income families during the summer months. These studies routinely report that simply supplying poor children with books during the summer months results in improved reading achievement (Allington et al., 2010, p. 415).

Berliner (2009) asserts after-school programs that explicitly communicate instructional aims and serve at-risk students produced gains in both reading and mathematics achievement.

**Child Rearing Differences.** Children from different social classes are raised differently (Rothstein, 2004). The form of verbal interaction, specifically, the ratio of affirmative messages to prohibitions was disproportionately different between adults and children of middle to wealthy families than the interaction between adults and children from poor families (Berliner, 2009). In wealthy families, children received six encouragements to one discouragement. In poor families, children received one encouragement to two discouragements. In addition, more educated parents and wealthier families are more likely to ask their children “what do you want to be when you grow up?”, promoting the notion of choice. On the contrary, children of families that are poor and less educated believe that their occupations are related to their economic conditions; therefore, there are constraints regarding their career choice (Rothstein, 2004). These differences in child rearing practices are advantageous to the wealthier families and work against children from poor families, which contribute to the achievement and opportunity gaps (Milner, 2010).

## **Community Schools**

Students living in poverty depend on schools to meet a myriad of needs that other populations of students may not need such as breakfast and lunch, academic support, exposure to expanded learning opportunities, and to assist in learning the rules and expectations in being successful in school (Delpit, 2012). The needs and challenges of children are early warning signs of societal needs and challenges (Briar-Lawson, Lawson, Collier, and Joseph, 1997). Schools are the only universal entitlement for children, so schools are being redesigned to help address these challenges (1997). According to Briar-Lawson et al., “a growing number of schools are collocating social and health services providers with others in the community” (p. 343).

One way to address the issue of low academic performance for underperforming schools and meeting the needs of students living in poverty is to leverage the school and community resources and supports through the use of a community school model to support academic growth for students (The Children’s Aid Society, 2011). A community school is not a program; it is a collaborative approach to supporting student success (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013). Community schools occur when a partnership is formed among a school district, local government and community partners to align resources and expertise to make sure every child has access to necessary academic, developmental, health and social supports (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2013). “The work of the partners, parents, community members, and service providers is thoroughly interwoven and directly affects student achievement” (The Children’s Aid Society, 2011, p. 6).



Community schools not only support the academic growth of students, but they also deal with the non-academic areas that have a direct correlation to students' academic achievement levels. Furthermore, community schools are characterized as a strategy that utilizes "public schools as hubs...[that] bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities" (The Children's Aid Society, 2011, p. 2). These critical services address health care, counseling, nutritional and job preparation needs that serve students and their families.

The Coalition for Community Schools, the leading advocacy organization for community school development, defines community schools as "both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources" (Bireda, 2009, p.3). According to the coalition, community school models differ since they are designed to meet the needs of their respected stakeholders, but there are a common set of principles:

- A partnership between the school and at least one other community organization, which could be nonprofit organizations, city service agencies, university, or foundations;
- A common purpose is established, which is aimed to provide and integrate the necessary supports and services for all children with the opportunity to reach their highest potential;
- Extended hours before school, after school, on the weekends, and in the summer;

A menu of programs and services created to support students and families, including primary health care, dental care, parent education, child care, and job training (Coalition for Community Schools, 2003b; Bireda, 2009).

In utilizing a community school model to support distressed communities, the schools become the primary point of contact between at-risk families and critical service providers (Community Schools Grant Initiative, 2013). Community schools focus on leveraging existing high-quality programs and resources in the community and link them to the school providing a robust array of services focused on student success to students and their families (The Children's Aid Society, 2011). As a result, community schools work to mitigate the effects of poverty by providing resources and services to low-income families coupled with the supports available by the school in a comprehensive manner (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005, p.3).

It is important to note that advocates of community schools stress that community schools are not simply schools with added programming because there are many schools that offer optional programming and see no difference in student achievement or engagement. Instead, community schools work with partner organizations to radically change the school's role in the lives of students, families, and the surrounding community (Dryfoos, 1996). The work of the partner organizations must be fully integrated into the school culture to see change (Dryfoos, 1996).

Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Easton, and Luppescu (2010) identified five essential supports for student success in a long-term study of 200 Chicago public schools: strong school-parent-community connections; enhanced professional capacity; a student-centered learning climate; a coherent instructional system; and leadership that drives change and enlists teachers, parents and community members to help expand the reach of the work and share overall responsibility for improvement. Bryk et al. found the value of the supports lies in their

integration and mutual reinforcement. All elements of the strategy are necessary to achieve the goal of school improvement and student success (Bryk et al., 2010).

Community school partnerships are not a substitute for a high quality education, but research shows that the services and programs offered by community schools can help create the conditions needed for high student achievement (O'Donnell, Kirkner, & Meyer-Adams, 2008). These partnerships allow educators to concentrate on what is happening in the classroom with the knowledge that students' "outside" needs are being addressed (Bireda, 2009, p.1). Most schools do not have the capacity to address students' social, emotional, and economic needs. However, through this intentional collaboration, organizations recognize the needs of the whole child are met as a precondition for academic success (Dryfoos, 1998).

One of the preconditions for starting a community school is a school climate centered on trust and purpose. All information pertaining to academic, social, and emotional success are shared with stakeholders and through a collaborative process; adjustments are made as needed (Dryfoos et. al., 2005). Setting common goals and objectives and describing the rationale for each goal collaboratively with vested stakeholders is essential as the school begins the process to be organized to support teaching and learning (Dryfoos et. al., 2005).

According to the Coalition of Community Schools, building on strengths of a community and school, community schools work with stakeholders to conduct an asset mapping process (Dryfoos et. al., 2005). This mapping process is a comprehensive endeavor to scrutinize the human and financial capital, business and community partnerships, and social services critical to understanding the local community and school (Dryfoos et al., 2005). These resources are then allocated based on needs established by a needs and assets assessment and prioritized by the

school and stakeholder groups. After the needs assessment is completed, the resources are deployed accordingly to meet the needs of the students (Dryfoos et al., 2005).

Community schools in the United States are limited in number. However, according to Bireda (2009), lessons can be learned from community school initiatives:

- Each community school needs a strong academic program at its center, no matter how comprehensive the nonacademic services are;
- Principals, teachers, and other staff must be trained and willing to collaborate with outside organizations in order to maximize learning;
- Partnering nonprofits or agencies should dedicate an onsite employee of their organization as a full-time resource coordinator to operate as a contact point between the school and organization, students, parents, and other community members.
- Parents, school staff, community members, and other stakeholders play an integral role in determining the services that are most in need at a community school. Parent and community involvement in planning a community school can ensure that services that are utilized improve student outcomes.
- Consistent, quality evaluations can help community schools determine the strengths and weaknesses of their services and programs and prevent schools from becoming stuck in nonproductive partnerships (Bireda, 2009, p. 2).

**Historical development of community schools.** During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, education was informal and focused on religious studies, moral development, reading, writing, and computation skills need in work and life (Benson, Karkavy, Johaneck, & Puckett, 2009). The responsibility of school was left up to the town, and wealthier residents were most likely the recipients of education. However, by the 1900's, urbanization, industrialization, and immigration shifted the responsibility of educating and socializing children to the public schools (Benson et al., 2009).

Jane Addams established Hull House in Chicago, seeking to find her place in society and serving the greater good by addressing the challenges of poor immigrants (Benson et al., 2009). Her work was influenced by Toynbee Hall from London England. Toynbee Hall was an organization whose mission was to bridge the gap between people of all social backgrounds, with a focus on working towards eradicating poverty (Benson et al., 2009). In addition, the Hull House idea was rooted in the “theory that social ills are interconnected and must be approached holistically” (p. 24). Hull House offered “college extension classes, social clubs and literary offerings, ethnic festivals, art exhibits, recreational activities, kindergarten, visiting nurses, and legal services” (p. 24). Jane Addams utilized her influence to bring various stakeholders to share a common vision and rally them into actions of service to the community (Benson et al., 2009).

John Dewey was a supporter of the Hull House. He was an educational reformer, whose ideas about education and democracy were influenced by Addams and Hull House. He supported the notion of schools as a “social centre” in efforts to advance his philosophy of social change, which shifted settlement houses to schools (Benson et al., 2009). He argued that urbanization and immigration placed significant demands on social systems and the community's

responsibility to provide the needed supports and services to its members in efforts to fulfill their maximum potential (Benson et al., 2009).

During the early 1900's, the social center movement was the impetus to aspects of elementary schools that are considered to be standard, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, showers, school libraries, restrooms and school health rooms (Perry, 1913). By the year 1913, many states utilized schools as a social center for gathering. By 1914, there were 17 states that enacted legislation providing communities wider access of the use of school facilities (Stevens, 1972). In 1909-10, Rochester, New York, with 18 school-based social centers in operation, witnessed the first opening of a dental office inside a public school; the use of school houses as art galleries, movie theaters, and local health offices; the establishment of employment bureaus in the libraries of the social centers; and the organization of school-based civic clubs and democratic forums (Dryfoos, 1995).

During the 1920's, school social centers abandoned their social reform agenda and shifted their focus to community recreation centers (Benson et al., 2009). It was not until the Depression-era that philosophies rooted in Addams-Dewey's model of schools as social centers were revived (2009). In the late 1930's, Leonard Covello, principal of Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem, New York City, focused on the community as a focal point for learning (Benson et al., 2009). His emphasis was on schools serving as a means for social problem solving and for training students in effective democratic citizenship (Benson et al., 2009).

As a sociologist, Covello utilized a mapping process called "social base" maps to prepare students to be active and publicly engaged citizens (Covello, 1938). Social base maps involved a systematic process of gathering and analyzing community based social resources which schools

could utilize in their aim of educational reform (1938). In addition, Covello utilized this mapping process to identify every apartment building, ethnicity of the residents, stores, churches, empty lots, parks, schools, and social clubs to better understand the social geography of the students of the students in his school (Benson et. al., 2009). This process allowed his students to participate as researchers, essayist, peer teachers, demonstrators, and lobbyists by determining the resources available and the areas with the greatest challenges. This process of collecting data was new and unique and was the impetus for the community to address social issues (Covello, 1938). Covello spearheaded a community organizing strategy called “public work”, which involved the cooperative efforts of diverse stakeholders and accomplished shared social and civic goals (Covello, 1938).

In the post-World War II era, much of the community school movement shifted into a wider community education effort that included community-based education programs operating outside schools (Benson et. al., 2009). As a community school pioneer, Charles Stewart Mott argued that schools should “be open for the use of the public, when not in use for school purposes” (Dryfoos, 1993, p. 29). He financially supported Flint, Michigan, city schools to be community centers with a focus on for youth recreation and school-linked health and social services (Benson et. al., 2009).

Beginning in the 1980s, new integrative approaches to wider use of school facilities and extended-day, week, and yearlong programs were developed (Dryfoos, 1995). These initiatives focused on developing collaborative structures for services and programming offered to students and families. As time progressed, 500 school-based health and social services programs were in operation, funded through creative use of state and federal funds (Benson et. al., 2009). The

resurgence of community schools during the 1990s has resulted in more expansive and sustainable community school models (Benson et al., 2009). Through the 1990s, community school partnerships grew in response to:

- The call for improved educational quality and academic outcomes among young people;
- The demand for more efficient and effective health and social services to meet the needs of children and families;
- Increased recognition of the developmental needs of young people and the importance of building on their assets; and
- Expanded efforts to strengthen the human, social, and economic underpinnings of neighborhoods and communities (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

There are a few, but growing number of community schools that have bridged the gap between the provisions of antipoverty services such as an excellent academic program (Bireda, 2009). “Community schools partner with nonprofits and local agencies to provide students with health care, academic expanded learning opportunities, mental and behavioral health services, and other youth development activities without burdening school staff” (Bireda, 2009, p.1).

“As history reminds us, schools have never been the sole source of the education of children and youth, and their work is mightily affected by health, social, and economic factors” (Benson et. al., 2009, p.29). If students are to realize their potential and improved outcomes, schools must serve as centers of communities that provide and integrate health and human



services, extended learning opportunities, and foster family and community engagement (Bireda, 2009).

### **Return on Investment**

Community schools have demonstrated success as measured by improved student academic achievement, children's social and emotional health, family participation, and community engagement (The Children's Aid Society, 2013). A comprehensive review of the success of 45 community schools showed evidence of improved academic achievement, behavior, or increased parental engagement in several independent evaluations commissioned by The Children's Aid Society (Dryfoos, 1993). In the study, gains generally included improvements in reading and math test scores in elementary schools, which were analyzed over a two or three year period. Moreover, in at least eight cases, the outcomes were not school-wide. Rather, they were limited to students who received special services, such as case management, intensive mental health services, or extended day sessions (1993).

Dryfoos (2000) reported improvements in school attendance and a reduction in the number of students dropping out of school in several other studies. In addition, there was also evidence demonstrating 11 of the schools studied experienced a drop in the number of students suspended. Changes in attendance was attributed to a review and change in policies and procedures, as opposed to improved student conduct (Dryfoos, 2000).

Dryfoos (2000) also found that with a focus on increasing communication to families, at least 12 of the schools reported an increase in parent involvement and engagement. The total number of immunization levels and reduction in the number of hospitalizations, vision

screenings and dental health visits also increased. Furthermore, six programs reported lower incidents of violence and less mobility of students within the community (2000).

Despite the demonstrated success of the community school strategy, competing theories about how to improve student achievement pose a challenge in scaling community schools to achieve widespread impact (The Children’s Aid Society, 2013). Independent grant-making foundations and public officials are seeking more information about the effectiveness and return on investment of community schools. As a result, The Children’s Aid Society (2013) has recently utilized a new strategy to measure and communicate the value of outcomes achieved by programs that provide social, health, and education services to children and their families called social return on investment (SROI). Furthermore, SROI “can be a powerful tool for demonstrating the monetary value of programs and services and for communicating that value in a way that can be understood at a basic economic level” (Children’s Aid Society, 2013, p. 3).

The Finance Project conducted a case study of two Children’s Aid Society sites to measure the SROI of the community school strategy. The sites were selected because of the comprehensive program approach and longevity of the programs at these school sites. The findings for the SROI analysis for the two sites demonstrated a very high (VH) or high (H) rating in several outcome areas, meaning a large percentage of the change in that specific outcome is assessed as being attributable to the community school strategy (The Children’s Aid Society, 2013). The following outcomes yielded a VH or H rating from the two sites in the case study:

- Goal: Children are ready to enter school.
  - Outcome: Children attend early childhood programs (VH).

- Outcome: Children have developed social and emotional skills (H).
- Outcome: Children have adequate motor development (H).
- Outcome: Children have attained physical well-being (H).
- Outcome: Children have attained cognitive and early literacy skills (H)
- Outcome: Children are motivated to learn (H).
- Goal: Students succeed academically.
  - Outcome: Student have access to education services and supports inside and outside of school (H).
  - Outcome: Students have post-secondary plans (H).
- Goal: Students are healthy physically, socially, and emotionally.
  - Outcome: Students demonstrate competencies based on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (H).
  - Outcome: Students have adequate well-being (H).
  - Outcome: Students have access to good nutrition (H).
  - Outcome: Students have access to quality health care, dental care, and mental health services (H).
  - Outcome: Students have access to health and physical education opportunities (H)

- Goal: Students live and learn in a safe and supportive environment.
  - Outcome: Students are safe in their school (H).
  
- Goal: Families are involved in their children’s education.
  - Outcome: Families are involved with their children’s education (H).
  - Outcome: Parents are active participants in the school (H).
  - Outcome: Multiple opportunities for parent engagement exists (H).
  
- Goal: Schools are engaged with families and communities.
  - Outcome: Schools regularly communicate and help support families (H).
  - Outcome: Schools are seen as a resource for parents in the community (H)  
(The Children’s Aid Society, 2013, p. 60-62).

Applying the SROI methodology showed that every dollar invested in programs and supports at the elementary school yielded a \$10.30 return on investment. At the intermediate school level, the return was greater. For every dollar invested, a yield of \$14.80 return on investment was produced. These finding provide clear quantitative evidence that investments in community schools are making a demonstrable difference students, families, and in the community (The Children’s Aid Society, 2013).

### **Common Core State Standards**

The CCSS are learning standards developed by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) seeking to bring diverse state

curricula into alignment with other states across the U.S. by following the principles of standards-based education reform. The standards define the knowledge and skills students should have at each grade level in English Language Arts, Reading, and Mathematics, so they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; Common Core State Standards, 2013).

The “Common Core standards represent an unprecedented shift away from disparate content guidelines across individual states in the areas of English language arts and mathematics” (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011, p. 103). The CCSS have been adopted in 45 states, as well as the District of Columbia, four American territories, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (Common Core State Standards, 2013). According to Kern (2011), “the pendulum swing toward national standards is grounded, at least in part, on the desire for American students to compete in a global marketplace and to help the United States to continue its place as a foremost world leader” (p.90).

As a result of the Common Core movement, states and territories are abandoning their self-designed standards and adopting the CCSS (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). States and territories have adopted the CCSS at a rapid rate (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012). The development process for the standards from start to finish took approximately one year to complete (Mathis, 2010). However, many existing models for standards were utilized in the development of the CCSS. The CCSS encompass the following characteristics (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2012):

- Alignment with college and work expectations
- Clear, understandable, and consistent
- Rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills
- Built upon strengths and lessons of current state standards
- Informed by other top-performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society
- Evidence-based

States have been highly motivated to support the CCSS because state-level policymakers believed in the notion that CCSS across states would benefit education, workforce development, businesses, and in the end children (US Chamber of Commerce, 2014). In addition, the benefits of core curriculum include shared expectations, focus, efficiency, and quality of assessments (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang , 2011). Additionally, there is an advantage to a core curriculum if the curriculum increases rigor and expectations.

For example:

...research has confirmed that students' learning can be improved by upgrading the content of the curriculum required for all students because students cannot learn what they are not offered, and higher-order learning activities are likely to be more interesting and motivating to students. (McPartland & Schneider, 1996, p. 78).

Another benefit of the implementation of the CCSS is the power of the standards to improve the quality of education being provided to all students, especially those in low-performing schools (Mathis, 2010). The Obama Administration aligned its financial incentives to its stated objectives making the Common Core an integral part of its Race to the Top grant program in efforts to enable equity of opportunity for all students (US Department of Education, 2010). The federal government is allocating resources behind the adoption and use of the CCSS.

Although the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) was not directly involved in creating the standards, developing and adopting a common set of standards is included among the criteria in the scoring rubric used to grant awards in the Race to the Top competition. In addition, the USDE recently awarded \$330 million in Race to the Top funds to two consortia, representing the majority of states, to help develop assessments aligned with the common standards. The SMARTER Balanced Assessment Coalition, representing 31 states, received \$160 million, and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, representing 26 states, received \$170 million (Porter, McMaken, Hwang, & Yang, 2011, p. 103)

Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, and Luppescu (2010) assert that some people fear that raising the standards for students with poor academic skills may cause them to become disengaged, and this could lead to students dropping out of school. However, during these times of reform and accountability, it is especially important "...that the press toward higher academic standards be accompanied by ample social support to sustain students in their more difficult undertakings" (Sebring et al., 2010, p. 13).

## **Turnaround Leadership**

Turnaround leadership is a new area of focus in education (Thielman, 2012). With the increasing governmental demands and urgency to improve student achievement, turning around low-performing schools is a focus on most educational reform agendas (2012). In this section, research on turnaround leadership offers several factors associated with turnaround process success that will be explored.

State education departments review all public schools annually to determine if they are making progress toward the goal of all students reaching grade-level academic proficiency in the United States according to the federal No Child Left Behind law (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Schools that are persistently low performing face governmental demands to improve these schools. There are four models that are available to the lowest performing schools outlined by the United States Department of Education (2010), which include the following:

- Transformation Model: Replace the principal, strengthen staffing, implement a research-based instructional program, provide extended learning time, and implement new governance and flexibility.
- Turnaround Model: Replace the principal and rehire no more than 50 percent of the school staff, implement a research-based instructional program, and implement new governance structure.
- Restart Model: Convert or close and re-open the school under the management of an effective charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization.



- School Closure Model: Close the school and enroll students who attended in it other higher-performing schools in the district.

There are a number of schools that have made progress in terms of increasing student achievement, but many are not adequately equipped to confront learning obstacles directly related to poverty (Bireda, 2009). Furthermore, turning around a school is a process that can take up to three-to-five years of time-consuming, resource-intensive, and hard work (Adelman and Taylor, 2011).

Adelman and Taylor (2011) assert there is a fundamental problem with the blueprint for turning around persistently low performing schools as student and learning supports are given little attention on the reform agenda.

Because student and learning supports are given short shrift in federal, state, and local policy, efforts are marginalized when it comes to identifying and correcting fundamental systemic deficits in how schools address barriers to learning and teaching and intervene to re-engage disconnected students. The marginalization results in the ongoing relative neglect of this essential facet of any blueprint for enabling all students to have an equal opportunity to succeed at school (Adelman and Taylor, 2011, p. 25).

The turnaround concept forces us to confront failure head on and accept responsibility for improving conditions (Leithwood & Strauss, 2010). According to Kanter (2004), “every turnaround starts with the same overriding challenge: the need to make unpopular decisions

about a situation whose full ugliness has been denied, and yet, at the same time, restore people's confidence that they can start winning again" (p.164).

Leithwood, Seashore, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) claim that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. They add, "...leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most" (p. 7). The likelihood of a low-performing school improving student achievement without a strong leader is doubtful (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton & Luppescu, 2006). Successful turnaround leaders have high expectation for students and are driven by the moral imperative of providing a quality education to low-income students and possess the persistence to overcome setbacks and support student achievement (Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010; Fullan, 2005; Thielman, 2012).

According to Sebring et al. (2006) explain five categories of in-school supports. All of the five categories are essential for improving student learning and turning around low performing schools. Leadership is the catalyst for school improvement and deemed the first essential component to turning around low performing schools. In fact, Sebring et al. (2006) assert that leadership is not the sole responsibility of the school principal. Instead, improving learning and turning around low performing schools requires that leadership be shared and fostered from faculty, the parents, and the community. The other four core organization supports include parent-community connections, building professional capacity of faculty and staff, a student-centered learning climate, and ambitious instruction (2006).

Leithwood and Strauss (2010) emphasize that there are other factors that contribute to turnaround schools, but the impetus for the change is due to the leader. Their research identified

three turnaround stages that schools were categorized in: Declining Performance, Crisis Stabilization, and Sustaining and Improving Performance. Within each stage, they identified successful leadership practices found to be successful in most contexts, which fall within four broad categories: Direction Setting, Developing People, Redesigning the Organization, and Managing the Instructional Program (Leithwood and Strauss, 2010).

According to Leithwood et al. (2010), turning schools around is different from improving them. School improvement involves a gradual and continuous process to improve the conditions and outcomes for learning over time. School turnaround focuses on transformative change—“change driven by the prospect of being closed if it fails” (Calkins, Guenther, Belfore, & Lash, 2007, p17). This type of change is exclusive to a specific subset of schools that are consistently underperforming in terms of academic achievement (2007).

Research on turnaround schools conducted by Leithwood and Strauss (2010) highlighted eight key findings about successful turnaround leadership practices:

- Low performing schools require effective leadership to turn around;
- Core leadership practices are keys to success;
- The ‘core’ leadership practices encompass most of what is required to successfully lead a school turnaround;
- As the school turnaround process evolves, the ‘core’ leadership practices are enacted differently;

- Effective turnaround leadership is narrowly distributed among low performing school districts;
- As school turnaround processes evolve, the nature and number of sources of leadership change;
- The leadership challenges in beginning the turnaround process are predictable.
- Leaders turn their schools around by changing teacher attitudes and school culture (Leithwood & Strauss, 2010, p. 29).

According to Fullan (2005), the turnaround leadership practice with the most chance for success involves capacity building as the main driver with high-stakes accountability playing a real, but smaller role in the turnaround process. “When turnaround intervention combines accountability and capacity-building strategies, things usually improve” (p. 175).

Stark (1998) asserts from a system wide perspective, turnaround leadership focuses on raising expectations, a focus on improving teaching, new or enhanced leadership by principals, and external intervention. The need to shift from single school, site-based management to district wide reform is necessary to make systemic change in the turnaround process, where all schools undergo the process of reconceptualizing accountability and capacity building for the entire system (Fullan, 2005). Elmore and Burney (1999) identified lessons learned from district-wide reform research conducted, which focused on instruction, sharing expertise, setting clear expectation, and focusing on district-wide improvement.

Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) identified lessons about district-wide reform efforts in their study of two different districts from 1988-1996 and 1997-2004. When the focus of

turnaround efforts focus strictly on accountability pressures, even with good support, the improvement demonstrated is short-term (Fullan, 2005). From 1988 to 1996, District 1 utilized accountability and capacity-building strategies as their reform efforts and, as a result, they demonstrated substantial improvement in literacy and numeracy. These same strategies were applied when the same superintendent moved to a different district. However, the public accountability stakes were much higher. Despite initial student gains during early years of the reform efforts, these gains were short lived. Districts are successful when they combine the following “drivers” of district wide reform efforts:

- a compelling conceptualization by district leaders—envision both the content of reform and includes a special commitment to capacity building strategies;
- a collective moral purpose—characterizes the whole district and not just a few individuals;
- the right bus—the structures, roles, and role relationships that represent the best arrangement for improving all schools in the district;
- capacity building—training and support for all key leaders;
- lateral capacity building—connecting schools within a district so that they learn from one another and build a shared sense of identity beyond the individual school;
- ongoing learning—districts learn as they go, including building powerful “assessment for learning” capacities that involve the use of student data for school and district improvement;

- productive conflict—some degree of conflict is expected when difficult change is attempted and, thus, is treated as an opportunity to explore differences;
- a demanding culture—care is combined with high expectations all around to address challenging goals;
- external partners—selective external groups are used to enhance internal capacity building; and
- focused financial investment—new monies are invested up front to focus on capacity development but are framed in terms of future accountability (Fullan, 2005, p. 178).

Fullan (2005) emphasizes that the combination of these drivers increases the chances that most schools in the district will make progress. Major school improvement and turnaround efforts require substantive systemic change. As a result, improvement in all schools must occur in order to achieve equity for all students (Adelman and Taylor, 2007).

Fullan (2005) asserts that “turnaround leadership in selected schools occurs, not as an isolated strategy, but within the context of a district-wide commitment to building the capacity of the district and all of its schools to move forward” (p. 178). Although many of the strategies for systemic change seem self-evident, their profound implications for school improvement are ignored (Adelman and Taylor, 2007). As a result, it is not surprising that many schools fall short and fail in their school improvement and turnaround efforts.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided a review of the literature on poverty and the impact on learning, the historical context of community schools, and the development of the Common Core State

Standards. This chapter concluded by discussing the literature and research regarding turnaround leadership and practices. Chapter Three will outline the research design and data collection and analysis procedures.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter provides a description of the methodology employed to gather and analyze data related to principals' leadership practices and the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. In addition, the purpose of the study, the research design and questions, the population and sample, the sampling method, the instrument used for data collection, the plan for analyzing the data, validity, reliability and a summary of the chapter are also provided.

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study because the study involved emerging questions that allowed for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a specific social issue (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, the researcher explored the effects of poverty, the extent of the impact of community schools' services and supports, and turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals in the implementation of the CCSS.

There is limited research conducted about the topic. This qualitative approach provided the opportunity to study elementary principals' leadership practices in depth in order to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of the CCSS in elementary community schools. This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools?
2. To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the CCSS?
3. What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS?



4. To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study were principals from public elementary community schools implementing the CCSS. The sample consisted of 12 principals from elementary schools in New York State that met the criteria for a community school established by the Children's Aid Society. All schools provided students and families mental and physical health supports and services, expanded learning opportunities, and family and community engagement opportunities were offered. A list of all community schools were compiled utilizing information obtained through the Coalition for Community Schools and Children's Aid Society websites, and the list of recipients of the New York State Community Schools Grant Initiative during the process used to select a sample. All of the schools were contacted by email to determine their interest in participating in this study. The researcher discovered that there were a limited number of schools in New York State that met the definition of a community school for this study.

The researcher selected to use purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling is a method used to intentionally select participants that provide the researcher with the information to learn or understand a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the researcher purposefully selected elementary principals of elementary community schools to explore their leadership practice in the implementation of the CCSS. The elementary schools in New York State that were selected for this study were chosen from a list of community schools from the Coalition of Community Schools, Children's Aid Society, and the New York State Education Community Schools Grant Initiatives Awardees.

## **Instrumentation**

The researcher utilized an interview protocol for each interview, which included an introduction of the study and 20 open-ended questions (See Appendix A). The researcher selected the use of open-ended questions to allow participants to articulate their experiences without limiting their responses. The research on poverty, community schools, CCSS and turnaround leadership was utilized to develop the interview questions. A crosswalk between the interview questions and the research questions was conducted and organized in a matrix to ensure that questions were designed to gather data that addressed all research questions (See Appendix B).

The researcher elected to use an expert panel to assist in refining the interview questions for this study and for establishing validity. The expert panel consisted of a community school administrator and coordinator. They were not involved in the study. The administrator and coordinator had direct knowledge of the community school model and the CCSS. They were asked to review the interview protocol and questions to provide feedback on the appropriateness and length of the interview process. Several questions were refined to avoid duplicative questions and ambiguity.

## **Data Collection**

Twelve elementary community school principals from four different school districts in upstate New York were interviewed. A letter (see Appendix C) was sent to four New York State superintendents who lead school systems with elementary community schools. The letter requested permission to contact elementary principals to participate in this study. After permission was granted, the cover letter (see Appendix D) was emailed to thirty elementary school principals in New York State. For superintendents who did not respond to the initial

cover letter, an email was sent to notify them that the researcher would be contacting building principals. If they objected, they were requested to notify the researcher by email (Appendix E). Details of the email included the purpose for the study, the expectation of the amount of time the interview would take and the assurance that their confidentiality would be protected at all times.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with participants utilizing open-ended questions. All interviews took place in person. The interview protocol consisted of instructions for the research to follow so that standard procedures were used from one interview to another. The questions were not shared with the participants ahead of time. The researcher did not deviate from the script except to ask clarifying questions when necessary.

All interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. The researcher was the only person who was aware of the actual participant's name and school affiliation. All names and school affiliations in the study were substituted with pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The informed consent form notified each participant that a confidentiality agreement was in place with the transcriber to further insure that confidentiality was maintained during and after the study was completed. The informed consent form were explained to each participant and the forms signed before the interviews began.

Telephone interviews were used in cases that due to the geographic location of participants, scheduling conflicts, and or depending on the participant comfort level with being interviewed in person. Seven interviews were conducted in person and five were conducted by phone. One of the five interviews conducted by phone was due to the participant feeling uncomfortable with being interviewed in person and the other four were due to scheduling conflicts.

After the interviews were completed, the researcher uploaded the recordings to the transcription service. The researcher was notified approximately two to four weeks following the upload that the audio had been transcribed and was available in Microsoft Word format for download from the company's secure website. The researcher accessed the secured website by using a username and password set up on the site and the files were downloaded to the researcher's password protected computer. A confidentiality agreement was used with the transcriptionist who had the names of the interviewees from the digital recordings (See Appendix F). Transcripts were shared with the participants for member checking in order to improve accuracy and validity of responses. The transcripts were sent to the participating principals to be reviewed and edited for approval by a certain deadline.

The digital recorder was secured in a locked desk drawer in the researcher's home office. All digital recordings and transcription notes were kept securely on a password protected computer and hard drive and will be deleted after the committee has approved the study. Each school was assigned a number and each principal a number. A secured codebook was kept on the researcher's password protected computer.

### **Reliability and Validity**

According to Creswell (2012), reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces "stable and consistent" results (p. 159). In this qualitative study, reliability was established through the use of an interview protocol. The researcher followed the interview protocol script with each participant in the study. Moreover, the researcher was careful not to deviate from the interview protocol script except to ask for clarification from participants.

Validity is referred to the degree in which a measurement tool utilized measures its intended measurement (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the research utilized member checking

and an expert panel in an effort to insure the validity of the data collected from the interviews. Creswell (2012) describes member checking as the process of having the participants of the study checking their responses provided for accuracy. In this process, the transcripts of the interviews were returned to the participants for their review. This process provided the participants with an opportunity to give feedback on the findings by a specific date. Four of the twelve participants responded by the predetermined deadline. No corrections were requested by the participants. Eight of the twelve participants did not respond by the deadline.

An expert panel was utilized to assist in refining the interview questions for this study. The expert panel consisted of a community school administrator and coordinator. They were not involved in the study. The administrator and coordinator had direct knowledge of the community school model and involved in the implementation of the CCSS. They were asked to review the interview questions and to comment on the extent to which they questions addressed the research questions and they were also asked to recommend the revision or elimination of duplicative and ambiguous questions. Their perspective was critical in assisting to determine the validity of the interview questions.

### **Data Analysis**

After the transcripts were received from the transcriptionist service, the researcher reviewed the transcripts several times to become familiar with the content. The researcher then created a list of codes aligned with the research questions and used them to color code and label segments of texts from each of the interview transcripts, which allowed for retrieval of common codes during the analysis process. Coding is a process of organizing data into chunks of text in order to develop a general meaning of a segment (Creswell, 2009). In this process, the researcher consistently and objectively applied the codes developed to the transcripts.

Similar coded segments of the text from the interview transcripts were organized on a spreadsheet aligned with one of the four research questions. In some cases, some of the quotes aligned with more than one research question. As a result, the quote was coded accordingly with the research question that aligned. This process was completed for each interview transcript. Next, the researcher made interpretations of the meaning of the coded segments of text aligned with each of the research questions and reflecting on the literature to inform the findings.

### **Researcher Bias**

The researcher has been an elementary school principal for six years in a large urban school district in New York State. Currently, the researcher is working collaboratively with a local school development association focused on school improvement to implement a community school strategy in the school the researcher is leading. The school recently received a federal grant, which is awarded to schools that are underperforming, with a requirement to select one of the New York State Education Department's approved turnaround strategies. To prevent any researcher bias arising from this background, the researcher was careful to follow the interview protocol and not deviate from the script except to ask clarifying questions when necessary. The researcher was intentional and vigilant in applying codes to the interview transcripts in an objective and consistent manner. These efforts were followed to ensure that any researcher bias was guarded from interfering with the research findings.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a description of the research design and methodology utilized in this study to collect and analyze data from interviews related to the exploration of principals' leadership practices and the implementation of CCSS in community schools. The purpose of

chapter four is to present the findings from the research study based on the guiding research questions.

## **Chapter Four: Data Analysis**

The purpose of this chapter is to report and analyze data that were collected as they relate to the four research questions designed for this study. The intent of this qualitative study was to explore the leadership practices of elementary school principals in New York State with the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. Specifically, the researcher explored the effects of poverty, the extent of the impact of community schools' services and supports, and turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals in the implementation of the CCSS. The researcher conducted an extensive review of interview data in an effort to gain a thorough understanding of the emergent themes and patterns of participants' responses. All of the data collected was reviewed and categorized according to the four research questions that guided this study.

This chapter is organized into four sections. The four sections present the data analysis and findings in a sequential order according to the four research questions. The final section offers a summary of the chapter.

### **Participants**

The study sample consisted of twelve principals from seven school districts in upstate New York. Six out of the seven school districts were urban and one was considered rural. Schools that met the definition of a community school according to the Children's Aid Society, which offered primary and mental health services, extended learning opportunities, and community and family engagement opportunities were selected to participate. Table 1 provides characteristics of the principal participants.



Table 1

*Characteristics of the Interviewees*

Characteristics	Principal Participants
Gender	
Male	3
Female	9
Average Years of Experience	
Principal in the school	5.4
Employed in the district	16

Table 2 presents the total number of years each school was designated a community school by each school district. For Community School, S3, S7, and S9, the principals were unable to indicate with certainty the exact number of years the schools was designated a community school. According to principals from Community Schools S11 and S12, their schools were designated a community school for less than a full school year.

Table 2

*Years Designated as a Community Schools*

Community School	Years
S1	8
S2	1
S3	>5
S4	5
S5	3
S6	7
S7	>5
S8	2
S9	>6
S10	1
S11	<1
S12	<1

**Research Question One:** *How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools?*

The data analysis for the first research question is presented in this subsection. Several themes were identified from principals' responses: (1) Food insecurity (2) Safety and trust are a precondition for learning (3) Mental, dental, and primary health concerns (4) Lack of access to expanded learning opportunities and (5) Attendance and tardiness.

**Food insecurity.** According to four out of the twelve principals, poverty is not a determining factor for student success. However, all principals agreed that there are factors that make it more challenging for students living in poverty to learn. One of those factors was the lack of access to a sufficient amount of food.

Principal P9 stated:

...their primary needs are not met...before they can concentrate and focus on academics, we have to meet some of their very basic needs...we provide all students with breakfasts and lunch every day” (P9, personal communication, September 2014). In addition, Principal P8 stated “I do believe that many of our kids that receive their breakfast each morning, and their lunch is their last meal of the day before they leave...or that lunch might be the biggest meal they receive (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

In response to the issue of food insecurity that students face, 50 percent of the principals interviewed have implemented food programs that provide access to food for students, specifically during the weekend when students are not in school. Principal P1 stated “we have a program here, we are part of the “Backpack Program”, so we were able to adopt 30 families and send home the backpacks of food and still, this is a major issue” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). The need is so great in some schools that the programs are increasing their capacity to serve more students. Principal P6 stated “we have extended our Backpack Program for those students that are bringing food home on the weekend to make sure they are eating when they’re not in school” (P3, personal communication, July 2014).

**Safety and trust is a precondition for learning.** Safety and trust is a precondition for learning according to four out of the twelve principals.

Principal P11 stated:

if families are struggling and we are able to support them and provide them with a direction to resolve some of the issues that they may be experiencing, that allows the child to have that sense of safety and security and think that okay, this is gonna be taken care of in my family, so therefore, I don’t have to worry about it...they can come to school and concentrate” (P11, personal communication, September 2014).

Moreover, Principal P1 stated the need to reassure students “we’re not here to harm you, you’re safe in this building, I think a lot of our students come from situations where they’ve either experienced traumatic experiences...” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Once students

feel safe, two of the principals interviewed mentioned the need to develop trust with students. Principal P4 stated “the other thing is the understanding that [students] can trust the school because a lot of kids who have been in poverty, their parents have had some pretty negative school experiences” (P4, personal communication, July 2014).

**Mental, dental, and primary health concerns.** According to eight out of twelve principals, mental health issues among students is on the rise and that through the community school model, they are able to provide access to mental health professionals to students and families. Two out of the twelve principals concurred that these mental health concerns are occurring with students at an earlier age.

Principal P1 stated:

...the social-emotional piece, it’s not getting any easier. And it’s not our older students, they learn how to cope...but it’s the younger students that we’re noticing an influx in the challenges and behaviors and the acting out if you would because they’re trying to get something across and then it becomes our responsibility to figure out what it is...” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Before students are able to focus on learning, “we are just trying to manage all of the baggage, these outside things that are happening before we even tackle their academic needs (P6, personal communication, July 2014).

Moreover, six out of the twelve principals provided examples of other issues that affect students mental health well-being, such as feeling unsafe, depression, and violence. Principal P8 stated “...poverty affects their mental health at times when they don’t know if their parents are

gonna be home at night. I think our kids worry about their own parents, and their siblings when they don't know if their parents are gonna be home because they're working, because they're in another country, because they're illegal" (P8, personal communication, July 2014). According to Principal P9, "we have kids with parents that are going through a lot of different issues, and the kids come in to school and they're upset in the morning because of certain things that they've encountered the night before, or even that morning...this impedes their learning" (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

According to fifty percent of the principals, students are in need of physical and dental health services. According to Principal P1, "students don't have the immunizations, so if you don't get them they can't be in school. Strep, I can't tell you how many students who if they're not a part of the YWC clinic and we send them home with strep, you can't come back until you start the medicine and we need to have proof of that..." (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Furthermore, Principal P1 stated "it's not only about the fact they they're not missing school, but they're getting their needs met, which is sometimes harder for our families because of their transportation or taking the time to call and set up an appointment for a doctor because I'm too busy working two or three jobs" (P1, personal communication, June 2014). As a result, Principal P1 stated "we do tap into YWC clinic in terms of students not feeling well, if they come in, if we know others in the family have been sick, we make sure we check in on those students" (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Having access to physical health services at school allows health related attendance issues to be curtailed according to several principals in this study. Principal P1 stated "parents who are not about the WYC clinic, we find those kids take much longer to get back to school

than those that are because they call the script in, all you have to do is pick it up, and give it to – so those pieces really help to keep students I would say here in school and more ready to learn than if we didn't have the programs” (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

According to five out of the twelve principals, dental health was an area of concern, so much so that schools have met this need by providing students direct access to dental health care in school. Principal P1 stated “the dental clinic is huge, when we talk about the needs, the dental needs because let's face it, a toothache is just nothing anyone wants. But the dental clinic is huge in helping to support...” (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

**Lack of access to expanded learning opportunities.** One of the findings in this study is that all of the principals in this study offered extended learning opportunities (ELOs) to their students. The ELOs included academic and enrichment programs, such as dance, music, arts, and sports either before or after-school. Students from low income families have limited access to after school expanded learning programs that provide opportunities for confidence building, social interactions, and background knowledge that may transfer to academic settings according to six of the twelve principals.

According to Principal P10:

We run a summer academy, which is much more about enrichment than it is about remediation because I think at this age group it really isn't that they meet for remediation they just meet, you know, have their eyes brightened as far as what's possible. So the ACMY worked with us this summer, and they offered opportunities in swimming and gymnastics for our kids that came to our

summer academy for every student (P10, personal communication, September 2014).

In addition, Principal P1 stated “we have teachers from within the district tutor students for the first hour of the program, and we use data to target what the tutors would work on because we want to help excel those students in the areas of need” (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

For children to benefit fully from good schools, they must be ready to learn (Rothstein, 2004). Principal P4 stated “kids who experience poverty don’t have the being there experience like other kids. So they come to school with fewer experiences, much fewer vocabulary” (P4, personal communication, July 2014). In addition, Principal P12 stated “many students come to school unprepared to learn...they lack the exposure to content and books” (P12, personal communication, September 2014).

According to Principal P1:

When our younger students do come into school, we do notice that a lot of times that the language isn’t there. I think often times the amount of words that are spoken to them in comparison to maybe suburban areas if you would is maybe half if not a fourth, and so they come to school lacking some of the basic language skills (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

In an effort to increase access to resources for students to develop socially, emotionally, and academically, Principal P2 stated:



The things that I have in my home for my son are a bunch of board games. When you're worrying about where your food is coming, they're not going to care about getting a board game. So, I think it's our job to give them board games because I think that's important for educational growth (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

According to Principal P3, providing families with the resources and information is critical. Principal P3 stated "my families are very excited about our loan a book program...they're just like, "oh my gosh...I didn't realize this is what happens if they don't read all summer [summer slide]" (P3, personal communication, July 2014).

Some kids do not come to school with adequate school supplies such as pens, pencils, notebooks, or book bags (P8, personal communication, July 2014). This is an area that many schools are working to provide the resources needed to fill the need. Principal P2 stated "we send home a packet [science experiments] to the parent saying if you choose to do some of these activities at home, let us know what you need. You check off what you want and send it back...then, we'll supply everything that needs to go home to that family...if you need paper, crayons, markers, just let us know...we send it home saying just keep it. We have it; you need it, take it" (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

**Attendance and tardiness.** According to five out of twelve principals, attendance and tardies are an issue because students are missing instructional time.

According to Principal P1:

Students are coming from incomes of about \$10,000.00 if that...we have students who not only did not have breakfast, there are students who will come in late on a consistent basis maybe because they had to get other siblings ready or they're responsible for getting themselves and their siblings dressed and walk them to school. So the attendance becomes a huge issue, the tardiness becomes an issue... (P1, personal communication, June, 2014).

Some students may have to become caregivers at an early age, which precludes them from attending school on a regular basis. According to Principal P8, "some of our female students miss school because they have become the babysitter. Their parent are at work, but they have a newborn...the parent, not the student has the newborn and the student become the parent" (P8, personal communication, July 2014). Furthermore, Principal P8 states "about five percent of male students are able to go to work. They can become a breadwinner. And how do you change that philosophy? Come to school, earn no money now. Or work in a sweatshop, and make \$100 a week, but that's \$100 a week that we didn't have before" (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

### **Finding for research question number one.**

All principals agreed that there are factors that make it more challenging for students living in poverty to learn. According to the principals, the factors that present obstacles for students included: food insecurity, feeling safe and having a sense of trust in school, lack of access to mental, dental, physical health and expanded learning opportunities, and daily

attendance. As a result, principals reported that their community schools offer mental and physical health supports. In addition, principals reported that they offer extended learning opportunities to their students. These opportunities included academic and enrichment opportunities, such as dance, music, arts, and sports either before or after-school.

**Research Question Two:** *To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the CCSS?*

The data analysis for the second research question is presented in this subsection. The emergent themes that were identified from principals' responses to the interview questions included: (1) Physical and mental health partnerships were of value to the school in getting kids ready to learn (2) Family and community engagement.

**Physical and mental health partnerships were of value to the school in getting kids ready to learn.** Eight out of twelve principals reported that before students can learn, their physical and mental health needs have to be met. Principal P1 stated “the biggest advantage with having supports in the building is that they’re able to help us with getting students ready to learn” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). All of the community schools in this study provide mandatory family counseling for any student receiving mental health supports in the school. According to Principal P3, “many of our parents don’t have stability and have mental health issues...more often than not, we’re helping the parents and their students...it’s mandatory that families participate in therapy” (P3, personal communication, June 2014).

**Family and community engagement.** According to nine out of the twelve principals, various family engagement practices have been implemented to ensure that families have the

knowledge and resources to assist schools in helping students learn. Principal P1 stated “we are getting to a point where parents understand that they’re welcomed here, and more importantly that you matter in your child’s education...you do have a say in your child’s education because you know best” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). In addition, Principal P1 stated:

...we have invited families to come in and we’ll show them how to do a read aloud with kids by modeling and then send them home with read aloud materials. Also, this year, we starting providing parents with workshops based on their needs, for example job searching...they show parents how to write a resume, how to search for a job on the internet (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

To provide families the opportunities to participate in the educational process, Principal P1 created Academic Parent and Teacher Teams. The purpose of these teams is to have teachers working side by side with parents to review data, administer short assessments, and to demonstrate ways that they can support their students in specific areas (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Principal P1 stated “we reviewed their progress....this is where your child is, and this is how you can help us move them...it was nice to show the parents where they were in September and the growth they made to January” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Moreover, families are also provided with CCSS materials that is easy to understand.

Principal P1 stated:

We provided parents with pamphlets outlining the CCSS for each grade, and what students were able to do and they were written in parent friendly terms because a lot of times we forget all the jargon and information that if you're not an educator you have no clue what it means (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

In addition, Principal P2 stated "we're really trying to empower them [families] to see that we're here to work with them because we can't do it [teaching and learning] without them" (P2, personal communication, June 2014). In one school, parents see the value in educating the whole child. They see the need for increased test scores, but that is not the only measure of success (P9, personal communication, September 2014). They believe in the mission and vision of the school that they have been able to convince school district officials to keep their school, which was slated to close, opened for another year.

According to Principal P9:

Our school was scheduled to close at the end of the year...but because of a committed group of very vocal parents, they rallied the troops. And so, you know, one of the messages that they communicated was that you know, yeah, we don't care about the scores because here's what they have done...from our parents' standpoint, they feel that state assessment scores are not the only measure of success. They provided very personal testimonies about some of

the success stories that we've had with their kids (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

In school district 6, the community is engaged in advancing the community school movement. They have taken ownership in creating forums to have discussions on ways to provide the district with the needed supports to have more schools adopt the community school model (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

Our city is taking on an initiative...it is very much like the community partnership grant, but it's based on our community looking at the schools and saying how do we support it as a community. How do we support our schools? What are the concerns that any organization, any individual can look at the school and say where do you need help, I'm willing to help you, and that has really been nice. Like just this week, they held a forum for us with the neighborhood groups to talk about can the neighborhood support the school and hearing about our programs, and they set up the forum the school didn't. They work on all of that for our school and support us in it and our city council has very much gotten involved in how do we make sure that any policies we are making or any changes that we're doing are supporting the school district (P10, personal communication, September 2014).

## **Findings for research question number two.**

Principals reported that the physical and mental health needs have to be met before students are ready to learn. In addition, principals reported that they have implemented various family engagement practices to ensure that families have the knowledge and resources to assist schools in helping all students learn.

**Research Question Three:** What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS?

The data analysis for the third research question is presented in this section. The emergent themes identified by the researcher from the principal's responses included: (1) Instructional program improvements (2) Shared vision and mission (3) Fostering community and family partnerships through open communication.

**Instructional program improvements.** All of the principals in this study reported changes in instructional practices aligned with the CCSS in their schools. According to Principal P1 "we've had consultants come from leadership and learning...and we focused only on math in our building for the third through fifth grades...it's three days of PD, really looking at the common core standards, unpacking them, understanding what should students be able to do" (P1, personal communication, June 2014). According to Principal P3, teachers have modified their instructional approach to allow teachers to be a facilitator of the learning environment.

Teachers have moved away from teaching lessons in the workshop model in math. They have created math partners...they have math

talk, math jargon that kids are instructed to learn and use. They also have to defend and use different strategies. Teachers will give students a problem and then they will go off into partnerships and decide what's the best way to effectively solve the problem? Then they have to defend it. They'll talk about it like, "I respectfully disagree with you because..." they are using their math talk (P3, personal communication, July 2014).

Moreover, Principal P1 stated:

I did a PD with my teachers last year on classroom discussions, it's a math book about how do we engage students in discourse around mathematics...the dialogue and discourse in those classrooms sounds like, "I disagree with you because..." or "can you explain your thinking to me"...it's just that challenging other's thinking in a respectful way. Being able to explain and defend your answers and talk about why you got the answer you did. It's not so much about the answer as it is about the process to get there (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Nine out of twelve principals interviewed looked to increase teacher capacity by providing embedded professional development in the form of coaching. Principal P1 stated "we have two coaches in the building, we have a math coach and a literacy coach that are assigned to our building to help target teacher's instruction, so teachers are feeling they need some support in a certain area they get to reach out to the coaches..." (P1, personal communication, June 2014).



In addition, Principal P8 stated:

We partnered with the local college and one of the professors goes into the classroom. She models lessons. She will set up lesson plans. She gives them suggestions...and the best thing about what she does is she's not evaluative so her suggestions, and her methodology do not come back to me. I get a big picture...she'll say "Mr. Principal P8, based on what I have seen I believe that your next professional development should focus on these three strategies (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

According to Principal P1, there is a need to build capacity and continue to hone both teachers' and leaders' skills.

Principal P1 stated:

For me being an instructional leader is the core of being a leader...I expect my teachers to be life-long learners, I expect them to stay current in practices and research based practices and in order to do that I also need to be able to provide them with information, and so for me, it is a matter of staying current on certain information to meet the demanding needs of the work we do (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Eighty-three percent of the principals participated in walkthroughs to evaluate the CCSS implementation and to utilize the data gathered to guide discussions with individual teachers and professional development. The walkthroughs involved one or more administrators or

educational partners, such as college professors, who observed lessons being taught and gathered data on pedagogical practices to guide discussions on teaching and learning with teachers. In addition, these data were used to plan targeted professional development for teachers.

According to Principal P1 “some of the PD that we’ve had as a district included learning walks and so that’s an opportunity to go to other buildings and do a learn and walk in different classrooms and those buildings and come back and have conversation...” (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Principal P1 also stated:

...you have curriculum and pedagogy assessments, student engagement, and purpose and so we would pick one section. When they came to this building in particular because my building was a part of one of the walks, I had them focus on student engagement because I knew they had been working on discourse and I wanted that feedback, and so they come in and you do the walks in the classroom and come to discuss (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Three out of the ten principals that participated in walkthroughs reported that feedback to teachers was necessary to improve pedagogical practices.

Principal P1 stated:

another important area is providing feedback...those walkthroughs are crucial to teachers knowing that I’m on point...this is an area that I need support in because my responsibility is to provide them with that support and to guide

them along the way and not always in an evaluative way, but here's some feedback, let's work on this...and working with them to create a goal around wherever the areas of challenge are, if there is an improvement area (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

Nine out of twelve principals indicated the use of student performance data to target specific areas of weaknesses and modify instructional practices to meet the academic needs of the student. Principal P2 stated "our educational partners meet with classroom and Special Education teachers to look at the data that's available, talk about each student's growth, and plan so the Common Core is being met at that level..." (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

Principal P1 stated:

...the other area is that I led was how to analyze and look at data. Data has to drive our instruction, so here's the standard, but here's the data to show that the student didn't get it, and here's how I need to change my instruction accordingly (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

According to Principal P2, the goal of data driven instruction is to:

...improve instruction...to me, it's we have to know where students are. We have to be able to look at a child and see that they're not getting it. Figure out how to make them get it. Then, move along (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

All principals agreed that they are moving towards fully implementing the CCSS, but they have not achieved full implementation yet. However, two of the twelve principals noted that the CCSS implementation was rushed in their schools.

Principal P8 stated:

...we've done a lot at once...so this is the first year where I have, just as the building leader, made it a conscious decision to – just be a more strategic and deliberate about how we're rolling this out. Because what has happened up to this point is that we're doing a lot of things, but we're not getting good at anything (P8, personal communication, September 2014).

According to Principal P2 and Principal P5, the changes in instructional practice are attributed to the Annual Professional Performance Review process (APPR). Principal P5 stated “the teaching practices have changed because we follow a rubric for evaluation, and so there's certain things that they have to hit in the rubric which affects how they teach” (P5, personal communication, July 2014).

**Shared vision and mission.** Three out of the twelve principals reported that their school had no vision or mission. Principal P8 stated “there was no mission, no mission, and no core values. So our mission has taken hold, it's inspiring, and it's very simple... “Inspiring students to become tomorrow's leaders...” (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

Fifty percent of the principals included parents and community stakeholder to provide them a voice in shaping the vision and mission of their school when leading the process of

creating a new vision and mission. According to Principal P9, “three years ago, we actually changed our vision statement. We just felt that the mission statement needed to be centered more on, you know, preparing our kids for college and career readiness. And so our staff, it included parents, teachers, various community members, and we reconstructed our vision statement” (P9, personal communication, September 2014). Moreover, Principal P1 stated “our vision and mission, I would say has been owned at this point by staff within the building, the community within the building and we’re looking to bring parents and the community into that slowly but surely we’re starting to pull them in” (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

According to three out of twelve principals, the notion of setting high expectations for all students was addressed and incorporated in creating a new vision and mission. Principal P1, “setting high expectation for our students has been evident this year...some teachers say “I’m really surprised at how they stepped up to the plate”...And so it just reminds us of the fact that we have had low expectations for our students, maybe not even realizing it” (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Moreover, Principal P2 stated “some staff were feeling sorry for the students...feeling sorry for students isn’t going to help them move ahead. So we work on that.” (P2, personal communication, June 2014). The goal, according to Principal P5 was to develop a vision “that everyone could rally behind, and so we want to be the best” (P5, personal communication, July 2014).

**Fostering family and community partnerships through open communication.** Six out of twelve principals in this study noted that they were actively fostering family and community partnerships. Principals reported that they met with volunteer groups, educational

partners, mental and physical health partners, and parent groups on a regular basis to communicate the building's goals, vision and mission, and policy and procedural changes.

Principal P1 stated:

I think with anything else when you have different agencies and programs within the building there's a constant change in how we operate as a school, and so therefore naturally they have to be able to change along with that. But I honestly don't know what we would do as a building without our partners (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

In addition, Principal P6 stated:

...the coordinator for the afterschool program attended a bunch of trainings to bridge the gap between what happens after school and what's going on during the day...I meet with all the community partners about the building goals and how they can assist with helping us increase students achieved as well as parent engagement (P6, personal communication, July 2014).

All twelve principals agreed that they are reaching out to families and community members to make them feel welcomed, improve communication, and to enlist them as partners in educational process. According to Principal P1, "while we're the school and we make most of the decisions educationally, you as the parent have a say in your child's education because you know best" (P1, personal communication, June 2014). Principal P8 noticed that many families were not engaged due to the lack of communication and language barriers in his school

community. As a result, Principal P8 stated “we reached out to XYZ Church and usually at the end after they say their prayers, they usually hold a community forum. So we asked XYZ Church, for example, would you mind putting when Community School 8’s open house is? When our PTO meetings are?...our goal was to reach the community” (P8, personal communication, July 2014). All of the information materials were translated in the primary language of the families that attended the church.

Five out of the twelve principals reported a family coordinator in the school who assists with increasing family and community engagement. The principals reported that family coordinators were either living in the school community or they were parents of students who attend or attended the school. The family coordinators had a good understanding of the needs of the students, community, and most importantly, the families.

Principal P9 stated:

...we have a family coordinator that works diligently to engage the parents...she ensures that families are attending open houses, parent conferences, family ELA and math night. We also have month Parent Teacher Meetings...we have a pretty small, yet committed group of parents who are, when I say actively involved in the school, I mean it. Now, we have a lot of other parents, who you know, we consider it involvement, you don’t have to typically be in the building, but if you are assisting your kids with, you know, academic and social emotional

improvement, that's engagement as well" (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

### **Findings for research question number three.**

Principals reported changes in instructional practices aligned with the CCSS in their schools. This was accomplished by increasing teachers' capacity by providing embedded professional development in the form of coaching. In addition, principals participated in walkthroughs to evaluate the CCSS implementation and to utilize the data gathered to guide discussions with individual teachers and professional development.

Principals agreed that they are reaching out to families and community members to make them feel welcomed, improve communication, and to enlist them as partners in educational process. Principals fostered community and family partnerships with open and ongoing communication to provide students with the supports and services needed to be successful in school. Principals agreed that they are moving towards fully implementing the CCSS, but they have not achieved full implementation yet.

**Research Question Four:** *To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?*

The data analysis for the fourth research question is presented in this section. The emergent themes that were identified from the principals' responses included: (1) School and



district wide reform (2) District level leadership and support (3) Capacity building (4) Sustainability.

**School and district wide reform.** All principals noted that their schools implemented the community school strategy to improve student achievement. As a result, principals increased learning time, created a family and community resource room, and developed partnerships aligned with building goals in efforts to transform their schools. Each school offered before school, after school, summer extended learning opportunities for students. Two out of the twelve schools offered academic and enrichment programs for students on Saturday.

According to Principal P6, aligning the supports and services with the building goals was critical in trying to increase student achievement.

Principal P6 stated:

so it's helpful when people want to help, but it definitely was a mish mosh of people in the building...on their own individual island...And just bringing people in and having meetings about what our goals are and changing how those people help us...volunteers weren't allowed to work with students until after they received my volunteer training (P6, personal communication, July 2014).

In addition, one principal noted that with the added partnerships, it was important to have a process to make community based agencies feel part of the system. According to Principal P5, "I had to find rooms for the partners, which is tough in the building, so space was one, and then

introduce them as part of the overall structure of the team in the building. That they are a staff member that they're not someone from outside" (P5, personal communication, July 2014).

Due to a district reconfiguration of attendance zones in district 6, Principal P10 stated that the community had to discuss a way to bridge an economical divide that existed in the community. This divide was a result of the attendance zones created by the district. One part of the town was made up of high income families, while the other side of town consisted of low income families. The discussion also focused on meeting the needs of all students, so the entire school system is successful.

Principal P10 stated:

...so five years ago when we reconfigured and we said it's all about one city, and we had to really put out the vision that this is going to be where we're going to start to bring our city together, because it was clearly becoming a divided city of the haves and the have nots...one of the things we talked about is how are we going to make families feel comfortable with each other because clearly we were a divided community, and there was a lot of competition...we decided to bring families together by providing them with a safe structured way to be with your kids (P10, personal communication, September 2014).

In school district 6, the entire system is adopting the community school strategy for all of its schools. As a result, the community is engaged in the community school movement and have created forums to begin to discuss the ways to have every school become a community school (P10, personal communication, September 2014).

Our city is taking on an initiative...it is very much like the community partnership grant, but it's based on our community looking at the schools and saying how do we support it as a community. How do we support our schools? What are the concerns that any organization, any individual can look at the school and say where do you need help, I'm willing to help you, and that has really been nice. Like just this week, they held a forum for us with the neighborhood groups to talk about can the neighborhood support the school and hearing about our programs, and they set up the forum the school didn't. They work on all of that for our school and support us in it and our city council has very much gotten involved in how do we make sure that any policies we are making or any changes that we're doing are supporting the school district (P10, personal communication, September 2014).

**District level leadership and support.** Fifty percent of the principals noted that they have the autonomy to implement the community school strategy as needed for their individual buildings. Five out of the twelve principals reported district level support was provided to develop partnership memorandum of agreements and to ensure that grant funding was appropriated and spent according to the goals of the grant. Principal P3 stated:

...to be perfectly honest, I feel like we run it ourselves, so to speak, but we're supported by the district in our other initiatives. I find that a lot of people don't truly understand what the inner workings are for what it means to be a

full-service school. I am probably the best expert for it (P3, personal communication, July 2014).

Due to governmental demands, three of the twelve principals were forced to make changes to the school which will impact instructional practices and students' achievement outcomes. One principal was given authority by district level administrators and was told that he could do whatever had to be done to improve the climate and culture of the building followed by increasing academic achievement (Principal P9, 2014).

Principal P8 stated:

I was charged with changing the climate and the culture of the building. Academics was secondary...the change in tone was focused on "our students will succeed, must succeed, and I want you to come on this journey, but if not, they you can transfer...behind closed doors, central administration said, "do what you need to do, and we will stand by you", and to their credit, they did (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

Three out of the twelve principals stated that they participated in district level administrator led walkthroughs which they found helpful in improving teaching and learning.

Principal P6 stated:

My district director helped me to focus on...looking at data. What the data was saying my building needed, and then how to restructure, like what my PDs are, my approach to address the needs that my data was telling me...we were

really able to look at student data and do some work together in our building...where she was doing walkthroughs with me and looking at student work with me, And then, structuring a larger plan for what changes needed to be made and how I would do that as a building leader with the help of my BLT team (P6, personal communication, July 2014).

**Capacity building.** All twelve principals implemented a coaching model to enhance the pedagogical capacity of their teachers, which involved a teacher on special assignment or a college professor working directly with teachers to develop lessons aligned with the CCSS and best pedagogical practices.

Principal P1 stated:

...when the money's gone, most of the positions will be gone. Really, my thinking around things is how to build the capacity of my teachers and staff. My thinking is how do we create programs that it doesn't matter about the – I wouldn't say that it doesn't matter, but human resources we know those are going to go away, but that doesn't mean we can't sustain them (P1, personal communication, June 2014).

In addition, Principal P8 stated:

...we partnered with the local college and one of the professors goes into the classroom. She models lessons. She will set up lesson plans. She gives them suggestions...and the best thing about what she does is she's not evaluative so

her suggestions, and her methodology do not come back to me. I get a big picture...she'll say "Mr. Principal P8, based on what I have seen I believe that your next professional development should focus on these three strategies (P8, personal communication, July 2014).

Furthermore, six out of twelve principals reported the need to develop teachers' instructional practices, so they are able to assist students in meeting the CCSS. In addition, the principals noted that the leader's responsibilities are increasing so exponentially that they have to distribute their leadership to teacher leaders in the building in order to achieve the vision, mission, and goals of the school.

Principal P1 stated:

...so my hope is that by the time I have built a capacity my teacher will be able to target what they need support in so that we provide that targeted PD as needed to continue to move them forward. And so I'm constantly thinking about how to do that. It's not easy, but it's about building leaders within the building (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

Principal P2 stated "so the reading teachers took over the responsibility of being the facilitators at each grade level and meeting...we now are empowering the Special Education teachers and having them facilitate data meetings as well" (P2, personal communication, June 2014). In addition, Principal P9 stated "in some instances I am leading the work, in other instances I am collaborating with my leaders, who are teachers, there are members of my administrative team as

well, and there are teacher leaders, so we band, we collaborate” (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

All twelve principals stated that they received district level professional development opportunities focused on the CCSS. These professional development offerings take place during the school day, after school, and during the summer. In two districts, professional development is offered on the weekends. Two out of the twelve principals stated that they benefited from connecting and learning from other principals in the district. According to Principal P2 “the district has provided workshops...specifically on common core. I would say that the time that they [district] allowed us to talk to our colleagues has been the most beneficial in best practices and how to improve” (P2, personal communication, June 2014).

**Sustainability.** Seven out of ten principals reported plans to continue to provide students with the supports and services offered through the community school. Principal P8 stated he will make the case with the State Education Department to extend the two year grant the school received. Principal P8 noted that change is a three to five year process, so it does not make sense to have a two year grant because during that time, the systems are being put in place. Principal P10 stated that they are looking at other funding sources such as other grants to support the community school initiative.

According to Principal P4, “all these kinds of things [supports and services] when the money goes, the program goes. The only way it’s sustained is when the community demands it be sustain” (P4, personal communication, July 2014). In Community School 9, parents see the value in educating the whole child. They see the need for increased test scores, but that is not the

only measure of success. According to Principal P9, the parents believe in the mission and vision of the school that they have been able to convince school district officials to keep their school, which was slated to close, opened for another year (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

Principal P9 also stated:

...our school was scheduled to close at the end of the year...but because of a committed group of very vocal parents, they rallied the troops. And so, you know, one of the messages that they communicated was that you know, yeah, we don't care about the scores because here's what they have done...from our parents' standpoint, they feel that state assessment scores are not the only measure of success. They provided very personal testimonies about some of the success stories that we've had with their kids (P9, personal communication, September 2014).

Four out of the twelve schools had systems in place at the district level to bill Medicaid for the services provided to students. According to Principal P1, the school intends on keeping enrollment high by reaching out to families and informing them about the services, so that they are able to sustain them in the school. Principal P1 state "if the enrollment is high, then the services are being used and then the partners are able to bill for services. If enrollment drops...I think it's just a matter of continuing to do the outreach...going out and making contact with parents directly" (P1, personal communication, June 2014).



#### **Findings for research question number four.**

Principals reported that their schools implemented the community school strategy to improve student achievement. They indicated that their community schools provided students with the supports and services to meet their physical and mental health needs, and provide expanded learning opportunities according to principals.

This chapter presented an analysis of the data and findings. The next chapter will present findings, conclusions, and recommendations based upon the data from this study.

## **Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This final chapter provides conclusions and recommendations that are based upon the data from the study. This qualitative study was designed to explore the leadership practices that public school elementary principals employed in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. This study also explored how poverty affects the implementation of the CCSS. In addition, the extent of the services, supports and the turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals in the implementation of the CCSS were also explored.

This chapter is comprised of six subsections. The first four subsections include the findings, conclusions, and recommendations according to each research question. Recommendations for principals are also presented according to each of the research questions. The final two subsections of this chapter provide some recommendations for system leaders, and further study.

### **Research Question One: How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools?**

Community school principals believed that there are factors that make it more challenging for students living in poverty to learn. According to the principals, the factors that present obstacles for students included food insecurity, feeling safe and having a sense of trust in school, lack of access to mental, dental, physical health and expanded learning opportunities, and daily attendance.

## Conclusions

**Food insecurity.** It can be concluded from principals in this study that eliminating food insecurity is important for students to be ready to learn. The principals reported that the learning of their students is affected by food insecurity. Many of their students who receive free meals at school are left without the nutrition they need on weekends and holiday breaks when school is not in session. The principals have developed partnerships with local food banks to implement food backpack programs that provide access to nutritional food to students during the weekend when their students are not in school in response to the issue of food insecurity that students face. The principals aimed to reduce food insecurity and help their most needy students return to school from the weekend ready to learn.

**Safety and trust are a precondition for learning.** It can be concluded that principals in this study believe students must feel safe and that establishing trust is an important early step in the learning process. After students feel safe, some principals reported the need to develop trust with students. In addition, parents of students may mistrust the school system due to their own negative experiences; and therefore, sometimes students latch on to these beliefs and begin to share the same sentiment towards the school. Sixty-seven percent of the principals utilized their counselors, usually provided by a mental health partner that would begin working with the student at first and then work towards engaging the family.

**Mental, dental, and physical health concerns.** It can be concluded from this study that providing access to quality mental health professional for students and families is important. Principals in this study indicated that the community school model provides access to mental

health professionals to their students and families to assist in addressing students nonacademic needs. The interview responses from some of the principals indicated their view that mental health issues among students at an earlier age has increased. Principals reported dealing with some severe mental health concerns with students that they characterized as aggressive and violent behaviors.

In addition, it can also be concluded that principals in this study believe their students are in need of physical and dental health services, and through the community school model their needs are being met. Learning can become very difficult when a student has an earache, toothache, or blurred vision. Some of the principals reported that students are in need of primary health services as many of them lacked the required immunizations and physicals. As a result, students have to miss school until they are able to visit the hospital to get the immunizations and physicals that are required by the department of health. Principals also reported that sometimes a student's return to school is delayed because parents are unable to afford to take a day off from work due to the risk of losing their wages for the day they are out of work.

It can be concluded that community school principals in this study believed that dental health was an area of concern, so much so that some schools and districts have met this need by providing students direct access to dental health care in school. Students who are experiencing toothaches or cavities may be unable to focus and learn, which tends to negatively interfere with students' behaviors as well.

**Lack of access to expanded learning opportunities.** Principals found many ways to provide expanded learning opportunities to students in community schools. This study showed

that expanded learning opportunities are important for students in community schools because of the lack of access to academic and enrichment opportunities, such as dance, music, arts, and sports either before or after-school to help close the achievement gap. All of the principals in this study indicated that they offer expanded learning opportunities to their students. Students from low income families have limited access to expanded learning programs that provide opportunities for confidence building, social interactions, and background knowledge that may transfer to academic settings. As a result, students' vocabulary and prior knowledge development may be delayed by the lack of opportunity to have such experiences.

**Attendance and tardiness.** Principals were able to access community partners to assist families in accessing free childcare programs relieving students from the role of childcare providers and focused in the learning process. It can be concluded that principals in this study believe that attendance and tardies have a negative impact on achievement for their schools because students are missing instructional time. Principals reported that their families living in poverty have limited access to early high quality early childcare programs. Some students have to become caregivers at an early age, which precludes them from attending school on a regular basis.

**Recommendations for principals:**

- The interviews in this study revealed that leveraging community partnerships and collaborating with groups of stakeholders were important for principals in meeting the vast needs of students. Principals should consider leveraging family, community, and social service agencies in efforts to provide a variety of services to students and the

community to address issues of food insecurity, mental and physical health concerns, enrichment opportunities, and childcare.

- Principals are encouraged to create welcoming environments in their schools and to look for ways to engage families and communities in the learning process. Welcoming families and enlisting them as educational partners will assist in changing any negative beliefs and mistrust of the school system. One of the components of a community school focuses on the need for schools to create collaborative and coordinated systems for family and community engagement (Epstein and Sanders, 2000).
- Principals must ensure that expanded learning opportunities include clear and challenging goals, frequent evaluation of student achievement to support ongoing improvement, and a variety of programming that engages students and builds their academic and nonacademic skills. Extended learning opportunities in community schools provide students with academic and enrichment opportunities, such as dance, music, arts, and sports either before or after-school to help close the achievement gap. Students from low income families tend to have limited access to expanded learning opportunities that provide confidence building, social interactions, and background knowledge that may transfer to academic settings.

**Research Question Two: To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?**

According to principals in this study, physical and mental health partnerships were important in meeting the social-emotional and physical needs of students, so students are ready to learn. In addition, principals believed that family and community engagement is important in helping all students learn.

## **Conclusions**

**Physical and mental health partnerships were of value to the school in getting kids ready to learn.** It can be concluded that principals believed that establishing partnerships to provide physical and mental health supports were important in meeting the social-emotional and physical health needs of students, so they are ready to learn. Before students can learn, their physical and mental health needs have to be met. Most community schools provide mandatory family counseling for any student receiving mental health supports in the school as a way to assist families with addressing behaviors at home and to also provide the student with consistency in the manner in which behavior techniques are implemented.

**Family and community engagement.** Principals in this study believed that fostering community and family partnerships with open and ongoing communication was important. One of the components of a community school focuses on family and community engagement. There is a need for schools to create collaborative and coordinated systems for family and community engagement to enlist families and community members as partners in reaching the schools vision and mission (Epstein and Sanders, 2000). The forms of outreach include newsletters, family events, home visits by family and home coordinators, and developing open door policies to create welcoming school environments for family and community partners.

### **Recommendations for principals:**

- Principals must determine the academic, social-emotional, and physical health needs of students through a needs assessment process as indicated through the literature on establishing a community school (The Children’s Aid Society, 2013). The needs assessments allows for community based organizations and supports to be identified. As a result of this process, principals could determine the resources allocated and their alignment to the needs identified by the needs assessment process.
- It is recommended that principals identify agency partners that will commit to supporting the community school concept and the vision and mission of the school. This will provide coherence between the supports and services offered and the school’s goals. The agency partners must be engaged in a collaborative process in which the expert knowledge and the sharing of ideas can take place. Principals must work with partners to create and understand the action steps necessary to assist in reaching the vision and mission of the school.

### **Research Question Three: What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS?**

The interviews in this study reported changes in schools with instructional practices, which aimed to meet the goals of the CCSS. Principals used embedded professional development in the form of coaching as strategy in their professional development plan. Teacher leaders and college professors were utilized to assist in building teachers’ pedagogical capacity through planning, executing, and debriefing on lesson plans. In addition, using student academic



performance data to target individual student's academic needs was also important and incorporated as a strategy in professional development plans. All principals agreed that they are moving towards fully implementing the CCSS, but they have not achieved full implementation yet. However, two of the twelve principals noted that the CCSS implementation was rushed in their schools.

## **Conclusions**

**Instructional program improvements.** It can be concluded that principals in this study believed that using student academic performance data to target individual student's academic needs was important. The use of student performance data to target specific areas of students' weaknesses and modify instructional practices to meet their academic needs was a practice utilized by many of the community school principals in this study. More importantly, utilizing data to determine the effectiveness of the interventions implemented was also important in meeting the academic needs of students.

It can be concluded that embedded professional development in the form of coaching was an important strategy in the professional development planning to build teachers' pedagogical practices capacity. In addition, as a way to provide teachers with non-evaluative feedback and supports to improve their instructional pedagogy, professional development in the form of coaching was utilized.

### **Recommendations for principals:**

- Principals are encouraged to build teachers' capacity through coaching as embedded professional development. The focus of the coaching model should be aligned with building focused instructional goals. In addition, coaching should be utilized to promote a knowledge base of effective instructional strategies, assist teachers with lesson planning and by demonstration and modeling lessons aligned with CCSS, and providing feedback through coaching. Nine out of twelve principals reported that they offered instructional coaching to their teachers as a way to expand their instructional practice capacity.

### **Research Question Four: To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?**

The interviews in this study revealed that the community school strategy was utilized by principals in this study to improve student achievement by meeting the academic and nonacademic needs of students. In addition, principals in this study concluded that supports and services provided to students, families and the community are important enough to be sustained over a long period of time.

### **Conclusion**

**School and district wide reform.** This study indicates that the community school model can be utilized in a reform effort that provides a strategy for schools dealing with poverty. It can be concluded that the community school strategy was utilized by principals in this study to improve student achievement by meeting the academic and nonacademic needs of students

through a variety of turnaround practices such as instructional improvements, building capacity, and sustainability. An increase in learning time, family and community engagement opportunities were offered, and community based agencies were collocated in the school as a reform strategy utilized by principals and leadership teams. These supports and services were aligned with building and district wide goals. Moreover, before school, after school, or summer expanded learning opportunities for students were provided in the community schools in this study.

**Sustainability.** It can be concluded that principals believed that the supports and services provided to students, families and the community are important enough to sustain over a long period of time. The principals who reported having plans for sustainability, indicated that their plans called for innovative ways to leverage district, foundation, and grant funds. In this way, the plans to sustain the supports and services offered to students, families, and communities will continue to be offered through their community school for a long period of time.

To continue to provide students and families with the supports and services offered through the community school model, discussions on sustainability need to take place concurrently while implementing the community school strategy. Many schools have been creative in developing sustainable funding sources by billing Medicaid for the services provided to students and reallocating Title I funds different to support the community school (The Children's Aid Society, 2013).

## **Recommendations for Principals**

- The process of establishing a community school involves many layers of work that join into a system that supports the identified needs of students and the community. As a result, principals are encouraged to utilize a collaborative process to develop a shared vision and mission before beginning the process of establishing a new community school. Several principals acknowledged that prior to the implementation of the community school strategy, there was no clear vision and mission and families and community stakeholders were not involved in creating a sense of direction for the school.
- Principals are encouraged to work with district level staff, community, and agency partners to identify and support innovative ways to sustain the supports and services offered by community schools. Principals in the study indicated plans that called for innovative ways to leverage funding sources to maintain the community school strategy in place over a long period of time. The discussion of sustainability needs to take place in the early stages of the implementation of the community school strategy.

## **Recommendations for System Level Leaders**

- District level leaders should build the systemic capacity of the district to support the community school strategy in high poverty schools to improve student achievement for all students, specifically in high poverty schools. Communities that serve a large percentage of low-income families need to be able to rely on their schools to not only provide a quality education to every child, but to also serve as the hub for a variety of

support services for students, their families, and communities. Community schools help to bring together multiple agencies, parents, community members, students and educators as partners within the school to help remove obstacles to student learning (The Children's Aid Society, 2011).

- System leaders are encouraged to provide autonomy to schools implementing a community school strategy. This autonomy allows principals the flexibility in tailoring the supports and services provided through the community school to address the specific needs of students and families in their respective communities. However, principals have a responsibility to ensure that the community school strategy being implemented aligns with the goals of their district. Fifty percent of the principals in the study noted that they have the autonomy to implement the community school strategy as needed for their individual buildings. Principals reported that fostering and managing the partnerships are the sole responsibility of the building principal and community school coordinator. However, indirect supports were provided by the district focusing on finances and contractual agreements. Five out of the twelve principals reported district level support was provided to develop partnership memorandum of agreements and to ensure that grant funding was appropriated and spent according to the goals of the grant.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This research study focused on exploring the leadership practices of elementary school principals in New York State with the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. Specifically, the researcher explored the effects of poverty, the extent of the impact of

community schools' services and supports, and turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals in the implementation of the CCSS.

Recommendations for future research include:

- A new study to include the effectiveness of the community school as a turnaround strategy in elementary schools. This study would provide an opportunity to apply a quantitative research study approach to explore the impact of the community school strategy on student achievement, discipline, and attendance.
- A larger quantitative study of community schools in various states should be studied by expanding the sample size and diversity of districts (rural and urban) in the sampling procedures. This will provide an opportunity to determine if the findings can be generalized to community schools in other geographic areas or states.

### **Final Considerations**

This chapter provided the study's conclusions and recommendations for principals of community schools and for system leaders considering district wide implementation of the community school strategy. Finally, recommendations for future study were offered in efforts to gain a better understanding of how community schools can improve student outcomes by educating the whole child and improving communities.

This study explored the leadership practices public school elementary principals employed in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools. This study also explored how poverty affects the implementation of the CCSS. In addition, the extent of the impact of

services and supports and the turnaround leadership practices applied by elementary school principals were also studied.

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## Appendix A

### **EXAMINATION OF PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

#### Introductory Protocol

The study you will participate in is a qualitative study, exploring principals' leadership practices on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in community schools. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Institution Review Board at SAGE College of Albany, NY.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several open-ended questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete the line of questioning.

To facilitate the interview process, I would like to digitally record our conversations today. I will ask you to please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the recordings which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed.

In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm.

Thank you for agreeing to participate!

#### Introduction

I have arranged to meet with you because you are a leader or part of the leadership team at a community school implementing the Common Core State Standards. A community school or a full service school is defined as "public schools that emphasize family engagement, characterized by strong partnerships and additional supports for students and families designed to counter environmental factors that impede student achievement".

While there are some differences among certain aspects of community schools that are implemented to address the needs of their respective communities, all community schools share three foundational components: primary and mental health services; extended learning opportunities; family and community engagement.

My research project as a whole focuses on how poverty, services and supports provided to students and families, and leadership practices affect the implementation of the CCSS. My study does not aim to evaluate your leadership practices or experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about leadership practices employed in community schools to implement the CCSS, and

hopefully learn about leadership practices that can be scaled up to other elementary, middle, and high school setting that are looking to implement a community school model.

## **Start Digital Recorder**

### **Interview Questions**

#### A. Interviewee Background

How long have you been a principal? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you worked at (name of school district)? \_\_\_\_\_

How long has the school been designated a community or full service school? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Interview Questions:

- In this study, a community school is defined as providing primary and mental health services, extended learning opportunities, and family and community engagement. What are the characteristics that best describe your community school?
- As a result of your community school, were there any changes to the schools' processes, policies, or infrastructure? If so, please explain?
- At any point during your tenure, was there a shared sense of direction created for the school? If so, please described the process utilized to develop a shared sense of direction for the school?
- Who was involved in creating the sense of direction for the school? Why were they chosen? How were stakeholder groups involved?
- Was there consensus from all stakeholder groups for the sense of direction for the school?
- How was the shared sense of direction communicated and to whom?
- How does poverty affect learning for students in your school?
- What are ways that the school addresses and helps to alleviate the challenges of students living in poverty? (such as limited access to primary and mental health

services, limited extended learning opportunities, and limited family and community engagement in the educational process)

- With the rigor in the CCSS and the push to prepare every student to be college and career ready, how do the supports available through the community school impact the implementation of the CCSS?
- Were instructional practices modified? If so, can you please explain how?
- What type of professional development did you receive as a building principal on CCLS?
- How do you perceive the role of the principal in the implementation of the CCLS?
- What type of professional development opportunities were provided to faculty, staff, families, guardians, caregivers, and community partners on the new CCLS?
- Was there a plan to provide ongoing professional development to all stakeholder groups?
- How were you supported by the district level administration in terms of implementing the community school model? How about the implementation of the CCSS?
- Was the implementation of the CCLS successful? How do you measure successful implementation?
- Do you think the community school model is successful in your school?
- How do you measure success of the school, students, families and community?
- What systems are in place to ensure sustainability?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B

Crosswalk between Research and Interview Questions

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Questions</b>
<b>How does poverty affect the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in community schools?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does poverty affect learning for students in your school?</li> </ul>
<b>To what extent do the services and supports provided by community schools impact the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the characteristics that best describe your community school?</li> <li>• What role did the community school play in the implementation of the CCLS?</li> <li>• Do you feel the supports available through the community school affected the implementation of the CCLS?</li> <li>• Do you think the community school model is successful in your school?</li> <li>• How do you measure success?</li> </ul>
<b>What leadership behaviors did principals in community schools use to implement the CCSS?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was your understanding of the CCLS?</li> <li>• What type of professional development did you receive as a building principal on CCLS?</li> <li>• How did you perceive the role of the principal in the implementation of the CCLS?</li> <li>• To what extent were the CCLS communicated to stakeholders?</li> <li>• What type of professional development opportunities were provided to faculty, staff, families, guardians, and caregivers on the new CCLS? Were professional development opportunities provided to community partnership groups?</li> <li>• Was there a plan to provide ongoing</li> </ul>

	<p>professional development to all stakeholder groups?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role did the community school supports play in the implementation of the CCLS?</li> <li>• How were the supports beneficial in the implementation of the CCLS?</li> <li>• Was the implementation of the CCLS successful?</li> </ul>
<p><b>To what extent were school turnaround practices applied in the implementation of the CCSS in community schools?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the shared sense of direction in the school created?</li> <li>• Who was involved in creating the sense of direction for the school? Why were they chosen?</li> <li>• To what extent were stakeholder groups involved?</li> <li>• Who was communicating the shared sense of direction?</li> <li>• How was this communicated and to whom?</li> <li>• Was there buy-in from all stakeholder groups for the sense of direction for the school?</li> <li>• How was the capacity development of teachers fostered?</li> <li>• To what extent, if at all, was the school redesigned?</li> <li>• To what extent were instructional programs improved?</li> <li>• What systems are in place to ensure sustainability?</li> </ul>

## Appendix C

Address

May 23, 2014

Superintendent  
City School District  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear:

My name is Pedro Roman and I am a doctoral candidate at Sage Graduate School in Albany, NY. The chairperson for my research project is Dr. Robert Bradley. I am writing to request your permission to invite elementary school principals from your district, by email and letter correspondence, to participate in my research project entitled:

***Principals' practices with the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards in community schools.***

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the leadership practices that public school elementary principals have employed to implement the Common Core Learning Standards within community schools. In this study, community schools are defined as public schools that emphasize academic and extended learning opportunities, primary and mental health services, family and community engagement designed to counter factors that impede student achievement.

As part of the research, I am requesting to interview each elementary school principal for about 50 minutes at a mutually convenient time, so that I can explore leadership practices associated with the implementation of the CCLS in your community school. Interviews will consist of a series of open-ended questions. At any time during the interview, participants may decline to answer a question that they feel uncomfortable answering. A digital audio recorder will be used to record responses. This study is confidential. The researcher will be the only person who will be aware of the name of the participants and school affiliations. During all presentations of the findings, data will be masked and names will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Exploring school leadership practices and the implementation of the CCLS in community schools will be a valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership that could inform practice for future community school initiatives implemented in middle and high school settings and for further research studies in this area.

In advance, thank you for your time and consideration in allowing me to contact your elementary school principals to participate in my research project. If you have any questions regarding the nature or scope of this study, please feel free to contact me at 518-209-5319 or [romanp2@sage.edu](mailto:romanp2@sage.edu). I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Pedro Roman  
Address

May 23, 2014

Superintendent  
City School District  
Address  
City, State Zip

Dear:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name) provide Pedro Roman, SAGE Doctoral Candidate, consent to invite elementary school principals from the City School District, by email and letter correspondence, to participate in the research project entitled:

*Principals' practices with the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards in community schools.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name) **do not** provide Pedro Roman, SAGE Doctoral Candidate, consent to invite elementary school principals from the City School District, by email and letter correspondence, to participate in the research project entitled:

*Principals' practices with the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards in community schools.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Enclosed, please find a self-addressed stamped envelope to mail this document back. Thank you!*

## Appendix D

Address

Date

**Principal  
Address**

**Dear \_\_\_\_\_:**

It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider participating in my research project entitled:

*The examination of principals' leadership practices with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in community schools.*

My name is Pedro Roman and I am a doctoral candidate at Sage Graduate School in Albany, NY. The chairperson for this research is Dr. Robert Bradley. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the leadership practices that public school elementary principals have employed to implement the Common Core State Standards within community schools. In this study, community schools are defined as public schools that emphasize academic and extended learning opportunities, primary and mental health services, family and community engagement designed to counter factors that impede student achievement.

As part of the research, I am requesting that you allow me to interview you for about 50 minutes at a mutually convenient time, so that I can explore your leadership practices associated with the implementation of the CCSS in your community school. Interviews will consist of a series of open-ended questions. At any time during the interview, you may decline to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable answering. A digital audio recorder will be used to record responses. This study is confidential. The researcher will be the only person who will be aware of your name and school affiliation. During all presentations of the findings, data will be masked and names will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Sharing your knowledge of school leadership and the implementation of the CCSS in community schools will be a most valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership that could inform practice for future community school initiatives implemented in middle and high school settings and for further research studies in this area.

Please review the attached informed consent document. If you have any questions regarding the nature or scope of this study as well as your participation, please feel free to contact me at 518-209-5319 or [romanp2@sage.edu](mailto:romanp2@sage.edu). I look forward to meeting you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Pedro Roman

## Appendix E

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To:

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: *The examination of principals' leadership practices with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in community schools.*

This research is being conducted by: Dr. Robert Bradley, Associate Professor and Principal Investigator at Esteves School of Education at Sage College and Pedro Roman, Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership Program at Sage College, Albany, New York

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the leadership practices that public school principals have employed to implement the Common Core State Standards within community schools. Principals from elementary schools defined as a community school in New York State will be interviewed. In this study, community schools are defined as public schools that emphasize academic and extended learning opportunities, primary and mental health services, family and community engagement designed to counter factors that impede student achievement.

As part of the research, I am requesting that you allow me to interview you for about 50 minutes at a mutually convenient time, so that I can investigate your leadership practices associated with the implementation of the CCSS in your community school. Interviews will consist of a series of open-ended questions. A digital audio recorder will be used to record your responses. This study is confidential. The researcher will be the only person who will be aware of your name and school affiliation. After the interviews have been transcribed, they will be returned to the participants for verification and accuracy. The digital recordings and transcription notes will be secured until the research has been concluded and then destroyed. During all presentations of the findings, data will be masked and names will be substituted with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

Sharing your knowledge of school leadership and the implementation of the CCSS in community schools will be a most valuable contribution to the field of educational leadership that could inform practice for future community school initiatives implemented in middle and high school settings and for further research studies in this area. The interview protocol for this research study will be face to face. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable answering.

If you would prefer that I contact you by telephone for this interview, please indicate with your initials here \_\_\_\_\_.

Also, please provide a telephone number to contact you.  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I give permission to the researcher to play the audio recording of me for the sole purpose of transcription in the places described above. Put your initials here to indicate your permission.  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the event that I am harmed by participation in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

Participation is voluntary. I understand that I may at any time during the course of this study revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Research Participant Date

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human subjects.

If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Dean  
School of Health Sciences  
Sage Graduate Schools  
65 First Street  
Troy, New York 12180  
518-244-2264  
haskve@sage.edu

Appendix F

**Confidentiality Agreement**

**Transcriptionist**

I, Vanessa Almodovar, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentations received from Pedro Roman related to the research study titled: *The examination of principals' leadership practices on the implementation of the common core learning standards in community schools*. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents.
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized titles of the transcribed interviews texts, unless specifically requested to do so by the student research investigator, Pedro Roman.
3. To store all study-related digital audio recordings and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.
4. To return all study-related materials to Pedro Roman in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic and digital files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any back-up devices.

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

Transcriber's name (printed): Vanessa Almodovar \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature: Vanessa Almodovar \_\_\_\_\_

Date: October 3, 2014 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### National Institute of Health (NIH) Certificate

