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Do Community Schools Make a Difference?

Comparing Community Schools and Noncommunity Schools in Baltimore City

by

Tiffany Bonds Mason

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education (Executive EdD)

Department of Education Leadership, Management, and Policy

Seton Hall University

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES
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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Tiffany Bonds Mason has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester**.

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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation.

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Abstract

Schools are frequently seen as the hubs of the community, providing resources and a gathering place for members of the community. The process of surveying the community in order to identify unique needs within the community, and then intentionally forging partnerships capable of ameliorating the specific needs, are strategies used by community schools to support their students and the communities from which they are drawn. Baltimore City Public Schools has created a community school management system in of their elementary schools. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of community school management on the success of students in Baltimore City Public Schools in 2016 and 2017. Preexisting data were used to compare 40 community schools to 71 noncommunity schools in order to determine if there was a significant difference in the areas of student achievement (as measured by state assessment scores in reading and math), suspension data, attendance rates, and school climate. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools. The theoretical framework for the dissertation is the Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence established by Joyce Epstein (1987) which illustrates how the school, home, and community all hold sway over the well-being of children. So, it stands to reason that if community schools can positively impact families and communities, then the outcome would be positive school results for students. To determine if there was a difference in the student achievement of community schools and noncommunity schools, a Wilcoxon sum rank test was used to compare the PARCC state assessment result for ELA and Math in 2016 and 2017. The results were mixed with a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in Math in 2017 but no difference for Math 2016, ELA 2016, or ELA 2017. Using an independent samples t test, a statistically significant difference was seen

between the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2017. The suspension rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017 was compared using a Wilcoxon sum rank test. A statistically significant difference was found in the suspension rates. A chi-square analysis was used to determine if a relationship existed between school climate and school management type. School climate was measured using student, parent, and staff responses to a school districtwide climate survey. The questions were categorized as fitting into one of three indices: Physical Security, Respectful Relationships, or School Connectedness in 2016 and 2016. There was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in the Physical Security Index in 2017. The findings of this research offer insights into how we measure the success of school reform strategies that focus on impacting the often-complex needs within a community.

Keywords: community schools, school climate, student achievement, school suspensions, school attendance

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

School reform has been a point of discussion since the creation of formal schooling. The nature of school reform is the acceptance that there is a problem with education or society that must be remedied. In order to reform, one must locate the issue at hand, design strategies to solve the problem, create mandates to enforce the implementation of strategies, and monitor the slight changes that occur (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Although the source of the educational ills has been contested by many, thereby leading to educational fads and political posturing, the fact remains that the public at large believes that schools should have improved student achievement. In the August 2019 Gallup poll, 51% of the public responded that they were completely or somewhat satisfied with kindergarten to Grade 12 education in the United States (Education, 2019). These data illustrate that the concept of education reform within our society may be welcomed.

Educational reform is seen as the panacea for society's concerns with its citizens (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This is a heavy burden to place on the framework of a structure designed to ensure that graduates are equipped with the tools needed to be gainfully employed and productive citizens. However, the sphere of operations of schools focuses on the factors of which they are directly in control. Professional development, teacher mentors, quality of instruction, and being culturally responsive to students are reform strategies in which schools have been prepared to act. Researchers such as the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Desimone, 2002) have provided thoughtful guidelines for schools to create environments conducive to reforming education. Their case studies yielded six clear strategies for reforming schools including: (a) creating a setting favorable to change, (b) creating and sharing the idea, (c)

preparation and providing resources, (d) financing professional development, (e) analyzing the initiatives, and (f) continued assistance and support (Blair & Southwest Educational Development Lab, 2000). While the strategies listed are ideal for shaping systems within a school, they do little to impact the community at large from which the children come.

School environments are influenced by many variables including staff development and the experience of the teachers, yet the attributes of the family such as the value parents put on education, the education level of the parents, and the employment status of the adults in the household are a dominant principal driving force on student achievement (Jargowsky & El Komi, 2009). Jargowsky and El Komi conducted a quantitative study of the reading and math achievement of students in the fifth to eighth grades across the state of Texas from 1989–2002 on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. Demographic data from the students were aligned with the data from the 2000 Census to create descriptors of student neighborhoods to study the effects of the constructs of a neighborhood on student achievement. Jargowsky and El Komi concluded that the poverty rate and economic isolation within a neighborhood contributes to inequalities between schools ultimately impacting student achievement. The findings concluded that the neighborhoods are a significant factor in the performance of schools, going so far as to indicate that the school reform can be best achieved with alleviating the concentrated economic struggles within communities (Jargowsky & El Komi, 2009).

The community school initiative in public schools across the nation is designed to provide wrap-around services and supports to not only school children but also to their families. Successful community schools have been seen in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, schools where students in community schools are academically outperforming their counterparts in traditional public schools on state tests in reading by 19 points and in math by 32 points (Momeni, 2015).

The value of the community school initiative can be seen in the funding and support received from the United States Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education has an office specifically in place to award and monitor grants given to community school programs. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education granted nearly \$5 million in Full-Service Community Schools grants to just nine establishments in six states (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b). In addition, cities such as Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, New York, Cambridge, Minneapolis, Miami, Philadelphia, and more have implemented community school programs as strategies to impact student achievement. The expansion and advancement of community educational institutions is a signal that linkages between the community and school are emerging as a commonly accepted practice when restructuring schools (Blank & Jamal, 2014). Investors who devote their time and resources to community schools see themselves as supporting not only the school but the community as a whole (Blank et al., 2010). The intent of the current study is to research the impact of community schools on student achievement, attendance rates, and school climate for students in Baltimore City public schools.

Not all community school initiatives receive the high notoriety, but there are the types of comprehensive school reform encouraged by educational policymakers to provide opportunities for students and families where few options existed in the past. In many areas, the inclusion of community school programs serves to provide a center of activity intended for families, children, and youth by providing a selection of community services that encourage academic success not by imitating schools, but by supplementing the schools' academic emphasis with an inclusive approach to meeting the broad needs of the children. This association not only benefits the youth and children taking part but strengthens their families, the community, and the schools (Afterschool Alliance, 2007). While communities may not be equipped to solve all problems

with employment, violence, and poverty, through their partnership with schools and families, factors that negatively impact student success and school climate may be mitigated. Community school programs rely on the partnerships between the school and the surrounding community. Interdependence between families, community partnerships, and school resources allow for an increased focus on a common objective, ultimately allowing everyone to benefit (Afterschool Alliance, 2007). Community schools encourage family and community involvement, contributing to enhanced student success (Alonso et al., 2011). These schools are sometimes commonplace in low-income communities such as in Baltimore City.

The need for a partnership between schools, families, and the community is exacerbated in times of strife. The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus left a ripple effect that impacted all aspects of society. Like many school districts across the United States, the Baltimore City Public School System was forced to design a new approach to learning that relied upon the collaboration between families, school staff, and the community at large. On Thursday, March 12, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan announced that in order to slow the spread of COVID-19, schools across the state of Maryland would be closed to students in order to perform extensive cleaning beginning on March 16, 2020 (“Governor Hogan Announces Major Action,” 2020). In order to support their students and the families of those students, Baltimore City Public Schools provided computers, distance learning opportunities, 30-pound boxes of food distributed by the National Guard, video conferences for families with children experiencing social-emotional needs, free STEM art kits, and links to Sprint and Comcast so families in need can increase their bandwidth for free or have access to free mobile hotspots (“Family Focused Updates,” 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Community schools create an opportunity for partnership between the community and the school and include many benefits such as job training for adults, English language courses for community members, food pantries, and mental and physical health support for students and families. In 2008, the National Education Association reported that having schools supported by parents and community members is a positive occurrence; when communities, families, schools, and parents work together to support learning, students often obtain higher grades, attend classes more frequently, stay in school for a longer period, and join in higher level educational programs (National Education Association, 2008). Promising anecdotal results have prompted the operation of community schools in 49 states and the District of Columbia; yet, despite these operational successes, there continues to be a dearth of research on their impact. Promising results from Coalition for Community Schools reports (Jacobson et al., 2013) suggests that community schools themselves expand the opportunities that children have to learn beyond the school day; however, empirical research regarding the impact of the opportunities provided by community schools is missing (Olson, 2014).

Within any school, intricate relationships are formed between the students, staff, parents, and the surrounding community. Adults and children within a school interact according to preexisting norms that shape their collective experiences and determine the character of school life. Through these relationships, the norms, goals, and organizational structure of a school can be seen (“Connecting Communities of Courage”, 2018. When assessing school climate, the National School Climate Center recommends assessing safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the external environment.

The call for educational researchers to scrutinize this proposed educational reform component comes from many. Moore (2014) suggested that the combination or specific support

systems that are present in community schools lack sufficient evaluation or empirical research needed to determine that this is an effective school reform model.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of the community school model on student achievement, attendance rates, suspension rates, and school climate for students attending community schools in Baltimore City. Funding for the Baltimore City Community Schools Initiative has been in place since 2005, to service over 17,000 students and their families. This study compared schools in the community school initiative to their nonparticipant counterparts in the areas of student achievement, attendance, suspension rates, and school climate, using Baltimore City school report data, which is common to every school in the Baltimore City Public School System. This research will also add to the body of knowledge created by Momeni (2015) who researched high school student achievement by analyzing the results of Baltimore City elementary schools. This study will also extend the work of the Baltimore Educational Research Consortium, which studied the student achievement, attendance, and school climate of schools of comparable economic status (Wohn & Boberiene, 2018), as opposed to studying comparing schools by of differing management types such as traditional neighborhood schools or community schools.

Theoretical Framework

The two most prominent spheres of influence in a child's life are family and school. When those spheres have common goals for the child (i.e., academic success, work habits, citizenship), then those spheres of influence will overlap. Additionally, communities also share some of the same goals for the child as the family or school. These common areas of interest in a student's well-being are referred to as the overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). When community stakeholders such as businesses, universities, and healthcare providers partner with families and schools in the development of community school programs that address specific needs, then the community itself becomes a sphere of influence. Due to the comprehensive school reform strategies that have been applied in the last 20 years, relations between schools and families have transformed from a provider–receiver model to one of a collaboration and partnership and shared accountability between families, schools, and the greater community (Stein, 2009). When considering the influences on a child, it is tempting for each family, school, or community entity to focus on what is inside of its isolated realm, hoping that the other realms are effectively managing that which is within their respective purviews. When it comes to developing successful children, a challenge exists when attempting to distinguish between indicators for success that reside solely the realm of the parents, school, or community (Sirgy & Wu, 2009). For example, schools are held accountable by the state for maintaining high attendance due to national compulsory attendance laws, but it is because of partnerships with parents that the desired attendance rate is attained. Community stakeholders, such as business, negatively influence parents with the thought of wage loss if a parent misses work due to student suspensions (Stein, 2009).

When the spheres of influence supporting children are intentionally interconnected, the children are more likely to hear common language around academic goals. The effectiveness of the effort to involve all stakeholders in student success may be quantifiable (Ravitch, 1983).

Research Questions

This research was designed in a quantitative approach to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the difference in academic achievement of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 3: What is the difference in the suspension rate of Baltimore City community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between school climate indices (physical security, respectful relationships, school connectedness) and the community school management type in Baltimore City Schools in 2016 and 2017?

Study Design

The quantitative student success data points that were used for each school are student performance on the 2017 Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the school's attendance rate. In addition, the school climate data points reported for each Baltimore City school in 2017 are physical security, respectful relationships, and school connectedness. This study design examined the quantitative data gathered from the preexisting

student success and school climate data for each school. Data from school profiles of each of the 121 Baltimore City public schools was collected and then analyzed in the aggregate in order to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between student success and/or school climate between the 40 schools that have community school programs and the 81 schools in Baltimore City that do not have such an initiative in place.

Of the 121 Baltimore City public elementary schools servicing students in Grades 3 through 5, two schools were not being considered for this research as they are described as “Separate Public Day” or an “Alternative Program” whose schools measure student achievement by a means that is alternate to the Baltimore City school report data. Due to the highly fluid student enrollments in the schools, and the fact that their populations come from a variety of neighborhoods across the region, their data may provide results that would be difficult to replicate and may not reflect the impact of a specific community of stakeholders. These special programs were therefore eliminated from the study. Elementary schools that do not service Grades 3 through 5 were not considered for this study, as there was no student achievement data from standardized state assessments. Of the 121 Baltimore City public elementary schools servicing Grades three through five, 42 schools had community school programs in 2017.

Baltimore City Public Schools publishes individual school profile data containing student success regarding standardized assessments, suspension, and rates of attendance. Likewise, the school profiles contain school climate data related to three specific indexes: physical security, respectful relationships, and school connectedness. These data were also analyzed to determine if there is a relationship between the school climate in schools with a community school type of management, possibly resulting in a more favorable climate in a community school than in a school with a traditional school model. Data were gathered and analyzed for each of the 121

schools. These data were provided by the School Profiles for Baltimore City Public Schools (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2017), as well by as teacher and student data reported by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE, 2018) Independent sample *t* tests were used to compare the performance of Baltimore City students in Grades 3 through 5 who attend a community school versus students who do not attend a community school. The data that were analyzed in this manner were achievement data on the 2017 Maryland State PARCC assessment, attendance rates, and suspension rates. A chi-square analysis was used to measure the relationship between school climate indices for community schools and noncommunity schools, measuring the percentages of respondents in each school that indicated high levels of physical security, respectful relationships, and school connectedness. The unit of analysis for the study was the school. Through the investigation of data collected about Baltimore City schools, this study determined if there is a significant difference between community school management system and noncommunity schools in the areas of academic performance, attendance rate, suspension rates, and school climate.

Significance of the Study

According to the Baltimore City Health Department, the percentage of families with children below the age of 18 living beneath the poverty level in 2017 was 28.8% (Baltimore City 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile, 2017). The national poverty average for 2017 was 12.3% (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018), and the Maryland average for that same timespan was 9.7% (Maryland Poverty Rate, 2017). The Family League of Baltimore began servicing some of Baltimore City's most impoverished schools as a facilitating community schools partner in 2012, to develop 45 schools into community schools (Family League of Baltimore, 2017). Every community school is under a community school coordinator who creates and manages

partnerships with local community organizations. This leads to an environment where the student's well-being is enhanced by social and health support, academics, family engagement, community, and youth development (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). This study determined if there is a difference between students in Baltimore City community schools and those not in community schools, in outcomes such as attendance, suspension rates, academic achievement, and school climate. This research will further the discussion of whether or not implementing community schools is an effective school reform strategy. Each of the community partners for a Baltimore City community school is referred to as a lead agency. The lead agencies in Baltimore City partner with the schools to provide services based upon needs within the school's community (BCPSS, 2016b). Those services can generally be placed in one of seven categories: health services for students and community members, educational enrichment for students, adult education for community members, before- and after-school programs, food and nutrition for community members, social and emotional support for community members, and staff development for schools. Community schools, by their design, seek to impact the capacity of the community at large. Children's responses to their learning environments are enhanced by their community's capacity to encourage their academic achievements (Holloway, 2004). Research can be used to compare the achievements, attendance rates, suspension rate, and school climate of Baltimore City community school initiative participants to those schools that are nonparticipants. These types of data would be significant for the larger community development landscape by those contemplating strategies that have an impact on student achievement by providing equitable access to community resources.

Limitations

Principals of community schools must be adept at bridging the scholastic world and the needs of the community (Jehl et al., 2001). This advanced training may not be undertaken by all school administrators to the same degree. The variability in the professional development and experiences of the school administrators may cause a limitation in the research as it is an additional variable in the rates of success reported. To address this limitation, Baltimore City Public Schools employs a full-time coordinator for each community school who is responsible for coordinating the school and family programs and acting as a liaison between the school's staff and the community (Family League of Baltimore, 2020).

Another limitation is the relatively small sample size for the study. The sample size for this research is 121 schools. The limitation of the small sample size was addressed by aggregating the data to consider if there is a significant difference between community school success and that of noncommunity schools in Baltimore City, as measured by attendance rates, suspensions, academic achievement, and school climate. Having a sample size that is at least 10 times the number of variables being analyzed has been found to be effective (StatSoft, 2013). The limitation for this study was that it can only determine differences between noncommunity schools and community schools on student achievement and school climate. The research cannot provide the causes of any of the performance trends or climate indexes.

Delimitations

A delimitation may be found in that only schools within Baltimore City were researched. Schools in districts of a much smaller size, in rural communities, or with demographic data dissimilar to that of Baltimore City may not have the same resources or needs and therefore garner differing results from those that were found in this study (Baron, 2015). These delimitations may inhibit these data from being generalized to other schools across the nation.

Additionally, the foci of the community school programs can vary across the different schools and partnerships. This study did not account for community school partnerships outside of Baltimore City, nor will it be able to account for types of community school partnerships not present in community schools within Baltimore City (Sturt & Nordstrom, 2013).

Assumptions

There are four underlying assumptions of this study. The first is that the climate surveys that were administered to the students, parents, and faculty were administered and collected with a similar level of fidelity on each school campus. The yearly review is available to learners in Grades 3 to 12, their parents, all staff in the school, and parents of pupils in pre-kindergarten to Grade 12. The data is not recorded in case any of the groups have five or less respondents. It can also apply in case where the response levels for staff and students or staff is less than 30% (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2020c). The second assumption is that each of the community school programs received a similarly trained full-time school-based coordinator to oversee the implementation of the community programs with fidelity. While community school programs may affect student success or school climate, the assumption entails defining the sole cause for any identified changes in student success or school climate. The third assumption is that each of the respondents answered truthfully. The final assumption is that the foci of the various community partnership programs have been deemed to be the most appropriate and meaningful to address identified needs of the specific students, families, school, and community.

Definition of Terms

Community schools: Community schools are defined as schools in which programs are in place to transform public schools into neighborhood hubs. These were used to enhance the experience

of students by providing a myriad of amenities for community members, parents, and students such as financial support, adult tutoring, health, monetary and social backing (Green & Goodman, 2014). They entail application of wrap-around services in a specific school district to assist students to succeed. Community schools provide all-inclusive physical, mental, academic and education services to meet the community, family, and student needs. The main goal of launching a community school program in a district is to guarantee that students have an established roadmap from preschool to college and career (Momeni, 2015).

Student success: Student success in a school is defined in this research by examining three areas: student achievement, attendance rate, and number of school suspensions.

a. Student achievement is the percentage of students who score proficient or advanced in reading or math content areas on a state assessment (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

b. Attendance rate is determined based on the total sum of days in school divided by the total sum of days registered during the school year (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

c. Suspension is based on the number of disciplinary incidences that resulted in being required to miss school. If the student is suspended twice, then this would mean that they have two suspension incidences (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

School climate: School climate in this research was determined by reviewing survey data from The Comprehensive School Climate Inventory, which is offered to all students, parents, and staff members in Baltimore City Public Schools each year. This empirically validated tool provides insights into three key components of school climate: safety (physical security index),

interpersonal relationships (respectful relationships index), and institutional environment (school connectedness index).

a. Physical security index is the degree to which both staff and students feel secure and safe in the school environment, parents are aware that their children are safe and there is no issue where students carry weapons to schools and engage in fighting (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

b. Respectful relationships index is the degree to which staff and students report that a respectful relationship exists between staff and students and among the students (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

c. School connectedness index is the degree to which staff and learners have a sense of belonging, that parents feel comfortable, that parents and staff work together to meet the wishes of students, and that the school administration is approachable to staff and parent apprehensions (Baltimore City Public School System, School Profiles, 2017).

Organization of the Dissertation

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized as follows: In Chapter 2, the background information regarding community schools as a school reform strategy, as well as the benefit of designing strategies to connect a student's distinct spheres of influence will be presented. Specifically, examples of community school designs from Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia will be reviewed in order to identify traits within their community school initiatives that may be compared to Baltimore City's efforts to use community school programs to reform education. Additionally, research on how Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence theory addresses many of the student needs identified by Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be

presented. Chapter 3 will detail the steps that were taken to create a fair analysis of school data. All Baltimore City public schools that were in existence between 2015 and 2017, with Grades 3–5, that are not an alternative placement school will be included in this study. By gathering variable data from the 40 participating community schools and 81 nonparticipating public schools in Baltimore City, objectivity will be maintained, and an appropriate effect size for the objective research will be obtained. Chapter 4 will contain an objectively presented articulation of the research results. The process used to analyze the data points will occur. Through the use of tables/charts to illustrate data analysis, an explanation of the results will occur. Chapter 5 will assess the significance of the research findings. After a discussion of the results, recommendations for practice and for future research will be stated.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This study sought to determine the differences that may exist between community schools and noncommunity schools in Baltimore City. Achievement, attendance rate, and school climate will be examined in order to gain an accurate view of community schools and their structuring. This literature review examines empirical studies on community schools within the past 10 years, as well as the writings of notable early educational researchers. Empirical evidence will be utilized in the identification of unifiers between community schools and their designs in order to provide examples of the impact of community schools across the United States. Research related to this study's topic were accessed using the Seton Hall online research databases (ERIC, SAGE, and ProQuest) to locate peer-reviewed journals with research relevant to this study. Boolean search terms on Google Scholar included, "community schools," "community schools AND school reform," "community schools AND school climate," "community schools AND student achievement," and "community schools AND student attendance." Through these search procedures, reputable and reliable evidence was gathered to enrich the discussion of community schools in this literature review.

Studies included in this literature review included the following criteria: peer-reviewed studies; studies that were not peer-reviewed were referenced only to contribute to the timeline for the development of the community school model; community school studies that were conducted within the past 15 years; studies focused on student achievement, student attendance rates, or school climate in community schools; and studies using either quantitative and/or qualitative methodologies. These inclusion criteria were chosen in order to maintain the integrity of this literature review and ensure its credibility is established. Each study chosen served the purpose

of adding to the exploration of community schools. Information about student achievement, student attendance rates, and school climate in community schools was considered as indicative of whether or not the community school model has been effective in various settings.

This chapter is structured as follows, beginning with the discussion of the theoretical foundation, Joyce Epstein's spheres of overlapping influence. The third section will examine the historical context for the development of community school programs. The next three sections will examine the use of community schools in the urban school districts of Chicago, New York City, Hartford, and Baltimore City. The remaining three sections will discuss research on school climate, school attendance, and student achievement. This chapter ends with a brief summary of the chapter in a concluding paragraph, which also sets the stage for content to be discussed in Chapter 3.

Theoretical Foundation

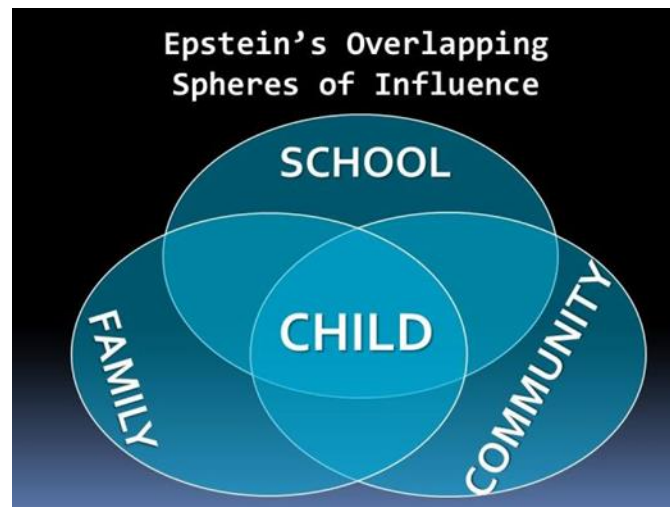
One might think that parental involvement in schools need not be structured, and, that if left to their own devices, the formation of a decision-making core of parent partners will develop organically. With working parents struggling to find a place in their child's academic lives, and schools seeking partners in the education of children living in increasingly complex neighborhoods, Joyce Epstein has emerged as a voice for how to establish strong connections between parents and schools in support of student achievement.

Epstein (2006) identified three specific stakeholders involved in encouraging student achievement. Those stakeholders are the families, the schools, and the community. The visual image used to depict the roles of the stakeholders has the child in the center, and each

stakeholder a sphere covering the child, with the three spheres overlapping, as a triple Venn diagram, in certain areas on the image (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Joyce Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence



This triple Venn diagram model illustrates Joyce Epstein's theory that the family, school, and community are each stakeholders, which influence a school-aged child. Adapted from "Schools, Families, and Community: Overlapping Spheres of Influence," by S. Feasey, 2017, The Road Less Travelled By, <https://theroadlesstravelledby.com/2017/09/28/>.

This graphic overlap is intentional as it represents common interests and shared influence over the student (Epstein, 2006). Including parents and community members is not relegated to merely helping to prepare crafts in the classroom or to be a volunteer reader for a group of children. It is the hope that, through creating intentional pathways to partner with the schools, the families and community members will become empowered to be involved in some decision-making at the school and serve as advocates for students and school programs (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Vorhis, 2002). When home, school, and community are strategically interconnected, the outcome is increased parental involvement, leading to more

students passing their standardized tests (Sheldon, 2007). Student attitudes about school as well as their academic performance improves when they have the opportunity to interact with stakeholders in their community (Epstein, 2006).

While the primary goal of the overlapping spheres of influence is to positively impact student achievement, the reported benefits of partnerships between families, schools, and communities do not stop at the student level. The overall climate of a building often refers to the impression that not only the students have of their learning environment but also the impressions of the parents, community, and staff members. Well-developed partnerships can result in adult education that can enhance the job skills of the parents, provide support to families, as well as provide classroom assistance to the teachers. These widespread needs are most apparent in distressed communities where the ravages of poverty underscore the need to pool resources in order to provide for the students in a way that none of the stakeholders can accomplish on their own (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Whether the community is urban or rural, students who are living in poverty-stricken conditions bring with them social and emotional needs that can overtax a school and pull the resources away from academic achievement and place them on meeting the basic needs of the students. Pooling the resources of the schools, families, and communities can be used to provide students with what they need in order to thrive (Waddock, 1995). Born out of necessity, the partnerships between the overlapping spheres of influence, the schools, community, and families are able to promote not only academic success for students but also physical, mental, and emotional health (Nettles, 1991).

The impact of the spheres of overlapping influence on the needs of parents was studied (Halsey, 2001). The pilot instrumental case study design used a sample of 8 teachers and 20 parents from Redwood Junior High School. The participants were selected by the school's

principal, and interviews were conducted on the school's campus by the researcher. Redwood Junior High School serves Grades 6 through 8, with a student population that is 71% White and 29% Hispanic. Almost 16% of the students at Redwood Junior High qualify for special education services, less than two percent of the student population are not native English speakers, and almost 11% are identified as gifted and talented (Halsey, 2001). The Redwood Independent School District in California is a suburban district whose residents are considered economically disadvantaged. Results of the study indicated that the students preferred for the parents to be more involved during extracurricular activities such as sports than to serve as volunteers in the classrooms. Parents, students, and teachers all agreed that clear home-school communication was valuable. The teachers preferred to use global communication approaches such as newsletters to the families, while parents preferred personal connections and communication. Teachers who were most successful in securing parent partners were able to find a balance that met the needs of the parents (Halsey, 2001). In order to be successful, all stakeholders must possess the ability to be effective communicators and willing collaborators (Sanders, 2003).

A correlational study (Elliott and Elliott, 1996) of Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence was conducted in 1996. Parents of students in Grades 4 through 8 in Mitchell County, North Carolina, voluntarily responded to surveys. To encourage a high level of participation, each teacher who disseminated the survey to his or her parents received five dollars, and every student whose parents returned the survey received a coupon for a free order of French fries at McDonald's. The results of 689 returned questionnaires were analyzed with the purpose of defining the relationships between parental involvement and different areas of student achievement. Elliott and Elliott found that there was no significant relationship between student achievement and parental involvement. However, there was a significant relationship between

parental involvement and community outreach, and student achievement (Elliott and Elliott, 1996).

Epstein's theory of the overlapping spheres of influence has provided a framework for researchers and educational supporters seeking to be intentional in their efforts to forge strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities. At the time of this writing, Dr. Epstein serves as the director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships of Johns Hopkins University. This center plays a key role in the evaluation of Baltimore City Community Schools. Johns Hopkins University partnered with Morgan State University and Baltimore City Public Schools in 2006 to form the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC). BERC provides research into best practices for schools and educational program analytics, including periodically reviewing the progress of community schools in Baltimore City (Connolly et al., 2012).

Epstein's theoretical framework will serve as the overlay through which community school designs in Baltimore City Public Schools are viewed in this dissertation. The argument can also be made that all community schools are built on this theory, whether directly or indirectly. This argument is backed by the idea that all community schools seek to provide services outside of the classroom and partner with those in the lives of the students; this is the basis of the theory.

Historical Context of Community Schools

Change is constant. That is as true today as it was in 500 BC when the Greek philosopher Heraclitus was said to have observed the ever-changing state of the world around him (Heraclitus & Khan, 1981). As communities began to move from agrarian to industrial, the 1900s in

America was a time of revolutionary change. While the industrial age shifted many working conditions and realities, children were still found working side by side with adults, reaping, sowing, and weaving (Hansan, 2011). Children who did not work found themselves in school. Sage advice lavished lovingly at one's familial charges was replaced with stern memorization and small wooden desks arranged in rows of geometric precision. The approach of many schools of the time was to create submissive workers who were disciplined to endure the unpleasantnesses of the factories that they would likely be employed by throughout their adult lives (Schrager, 2018).

With the large increase in immigration that came with the early 1900s, schools were being filled with more cultures than ever before. In an attempt to create uniformity, many schools became centers for Americanization, later to be described as courses in citizenship. Inside the schoolhouse walls, students would learn how to act and behave in ways that suited their new home. Schools existed then to educate not only about scholarly topics but to teach about American social normality (Prinzing, 2004). The shifts in the intention of education occurred because of the dramatic changes taking place in American society. Notable educational theorist and philosopher, John Dewey, insisted that schools too should change with the times. Dewey's notions of school reform began to take root in 1900 and branched out to a variety of facets of education. However, in 1902, he began to write not only about how children learn but about the role of the school itself (Benson et al., 2007). Recognizing the wealth of knowledge and skills within increasingly disconnected communities, Dewey proposed that schools actively tap into the rich religious, educational, and social resources that were existent in the communities (Dewey, 1902). He thus recommended that schoolhouses become the center of social life for the

community. It was his contention that schools had a unique role in organizing members of the community and would be less effective without this collaboration (Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

Supporters of Dewey's work held that school life and community life should be indistinguishable (Clapp, 1939), and the lives of adults and children in the community are perpetually interwoven. Schools taking up the social center banner created school structures found common in schools today, such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, health rooms, and showers. The community school concept made its way to Flint, Michigan, in the 1930s when the Mott Foundation pioneered schools that were open after hours for learning, recreation, and social activities (Jordan, 1999). The strength and resilience of communities, anchored by the school as their social center, was an unintended by-product of the legally required racial segregation of schools from the 1920s to the late 1960s. Supporters of the community school model held that educational institutions are a critical social hub for the community itself and that viewing schools as centers for resources, learning, and social education is important in realizing the full potential of an educational environment (Walker, 2000).

Child psychiatrist and educational researcher, James P. Comer believed that school district standards on interpersonal interactions and professional decorum serve to isolate teachers from the communities of their students. He taught that schools should be responsive to the needs of the community (Comer, 1980). In the 1960s, the Comer School Development Program, or the Comer Process, was launched to provide a framework for scaling the social and cultural divide between school and the homes of the students, particularly those from low-income households. Dr. Comer began his project with two schools in New Haven, CT, where the majority of the students came from low-income households. In 1968, the students at the schools were performing well below the national norms. After having implemented the Comer Process and by

1979, both schools surpassed the national norms (Anson et al., 1991). The socioeconomic makeup for the two schools was unchanged.

The Comer School Development Program was designed to create a sense of shared ownership in the decision-making of the school. The required tripartite components of the Comer Process are three purposeful teams: School Planning and Management Team, Mental Health Team, and Parent Program Team. The members of the School Planning and Management Team hold the school accountable for making decisions based on researched needs of the community. Professional development delivered by the Mental Health Team provides school-wide training on how to operate with the intention of building healthy relationships. Collaboration with the parents and caregivers in the community is coveted by the Parent Program Team (Comer, 1988). Comer Process schools are intentionally designed to build the relational trust that was once enjoyed when schools were seen as the social hub of a community.

The three benefits of implementing the Comer Process are: increasing broad teacher buy-in during decision making, further collegial sharing across the staff, and a dedication to accepting the challenge of improving the school (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). A longitudinal study of 28 years of implementation of the Comer Process found that it strengthened the connections between urban school professionals and parents of low socioeconomic status, which, in turn, improved their children's academic achievement (Comer et al., 1996).

Comer's structure indicates student achievement is attained:

through a better social climate in the school at large, through the casework and prevention activities of the Mental Health Team, through the greater involvement of parents, through professional development activities aimed at improving student behavior

in the building, and through teachers' better understanding of human development and how it is affected by race and poverty. (as cited in Cook & Hirschfield, 2008, p. 40)

Because of the overlapping of each team's influence, accountability is established, and students have a larger network to rely on for a variety of needs. By examining the areas of need in a community, schools can identify resources that may be created especially for their unique student body. For example, in neighborhoods riddled with the crime, juvenile offenders often become repeat offenders later in life, are less likely to do well educationally, and it is statistically improbable for them to create a reliable household (Sampson & Laub, 1993). School-based strategies can be implemented to support immediate family needs, which may later deter criminal activities within a community. Economically blighted communities have been found to have the fewest social connections within the community. In these instances, strong school and community partnerships allow stakeholders to positively impact the neighborhood as connections are made between its residents through the services within the school (Blank et al., 2003; Castrechini et al., 2012).

Contemporary Need for Community Schools

Using schools as a resource for the greater community is a concept that has endured for over a hundred years. Many school districts across the United States have turned to the community school model to meet the needs of the populations that they serve. The community school effort can be described as strategically attempting to infuse the structures needed to support community improvement including human and physical resources (Kerensky, 1981) with an effort to focus on the relationship between the school and the community that it serves. Interest in community schools was heightened when President Clinton budgeted \$200–600 million dollars for the “21st Century Community Learning Center.” This was a funding source set aside

specifically for schools able to demonstrate in their application they were collaborating with community-based organizations, social service agencies, and other community business partners to meet the identified needs of a community (Jordan, 1999).

The United States Department of Education recognized the value of the community schools, agreeing that in order to meet the needs of a child, one must also address the needs of the family from which the child comes. Within this ideology, the family, community, and school all have a common goal: the well-being of the students. Community schools create a place where academic, social, and health services are provided for children and adults, for the purpose of improving the academic performance of children. Because many of the schools that have been transformed into community schools serve populations who live below the poverty line, many community schools also receive Title I funds. In 2009, the United States Department of Education (USDE) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b) provided guidance to schools seeking to use Title I funds for community school initiatives.

The USDE stated that as long as a school has engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment, then Title I, Part A, ARRA funds may be used for key community school initiatives such as the hiring of a program coordinator, staff professional development, paying for academic enrichment programs, and workshops to increase parental capacity with regard to school-based academics. Funds may not be used for mental health services, extracurricular activities such as sports, or for strategies to meet the needs of the community such as job fairs or financial awareness seminars (United States Department of Education, 2014a). Local education agencies may access resources such as the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE), which is authorized by section 5411 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, to

support community school projects such as high-quality early learning programs and service; remedial education, aligned with academic supports and other enrichment activities, providing students with a comprehensive academic program; family engagement, including parental involvement, parent leadership, family literacy, and parent education programs; mentoring and other youth development programs; community service and service learning opportunities; programs that provide assistance to students who have been chronically absent, truant, suspended, or expelled; job training and career counseling services; nutrition services and physical activities; primary health and dental care; activities that improve access to and use of social service programs and programs that promote family financial stability; mental health services; and adult education, including instruction of adults in English as a second language (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Idyllic community school aspirations are captured in the quote, “The heart of the community school is a set of partnerships between the school and community organizations to create an integrated program that combines academic and family support” (Fratt, 2006, p. 67). Community school organizers recognize that the community at large contains fertile resources and often a vested interest in the success of its schools, holding that the responsibility of student success rests on the shoulders of all within the community and not just the parent (Roche et al., 2019). Community schools may be as unique as the different neighborhoods in which they exist, yet they address common aspirations of delivering student achievement, engaging parents, and community members as leaders in schools, improving community dynamics, and maintaining healthy children and families utilizing community schools as the hub that provides the critical components that give guidance for how schools should serve their communities (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020).

In Epstein's theory of overlapping influences, the stakeholders that support the students are the schools, families, and communities. School programs begin with a needs assessment in order to determine the prevailing needs of the students and community resources available to address those needs (Coltoff et al., 1997). Once the needs are identified, a strategic plan is created. That plan outlines the milestones that will be met in order to measure the effectiveness of the strategic plan's actions (Coltoff et al., 1997). From there, the community school coordinator assists in securing appropriate partners that possess the skills and resources to mitigate the areas of need identified by the needs assessments (FitzGerald & Quinones, 2018). The community school coordinator also monitors the milestones outlined in the strategic plan in collaboration with the school staff, families, and community partners (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020). The partnerships within a community school are deliberately selected based on their unique position of being a resource capable of addressing a specific area of need identified through the needs assessment. In this way, community schools are more of a mode of operation than a specific building location (Gomez et al., 2012).

Community schools are designed to impact an identified area of need to enhance student achievement. The supports available through the school may include extended day programs, integrated family support services, and/or designs to strategically engage the families and communities in the school (Daniel, Snyder, Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, &

University of Colorado at Boulder, 2016). The features are designed to mitigate any barriers to student success (Blank et al., 2009) such as creating food pantries, providing physical and/or emotional healthcare, classes such as English language services for family members,

aftercare for working parents, and student tutoring. Effective coordination of the stakeholders will serve to benefit the students' overall development (Sheldon, 2007).

According Momeni's research in the school year 2011-2012 of a community high school in Sacramento, California, learners are motivated by the intrinsic desire to achieve satisfaction at every stage of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Momeni, 2015). Therefore, if a child, by virtue of limited opportunities for enrichment and academic preparation outside of school, had not their physiological or safety needs met, then they would be highly unlikely to devote their energy to critical thinking, academic perseverance, problem-solving, and creative expression, no matter the skill level of the classroom teacher (Momeni, 2015).

People may experience a diversity of needs, simultaneously or at sporadic intervals each day, thereby requiring a variety of social experiences, self-actualization opportunities, and demands for physical need fulfillment (Diener et al., 2008). Despite the fact that Maslow based his arguments on individuals, societal effects are key when analyzing a person's life when the needs of others have been achieved in a society. The broad-reaching conclusion is that the society must be changed first before effective implementation of changes or advancements at individual levels can be seen (Tay & Diener, 2011).

There is a learning opportunity gap between children in poverty-ridden communities and those who are raised in more affluent ones. Low-income neighborhoods have the fewest resources while the schoolhouse is charged with creating equitable learning opportunities to compensate for the scarcity of the types of resources that would translate into meaningful connections to academic curricula (Alexander et al., 2014).

Schools are equalizers in that there is a common goal for all of the learners: to graduate students into being capable and productive members of society. The pathway into getting to this finish line, however, is quite varied depending on the needs of the learner. In the classroom, equal is not the ideal and is in fact quite unfair. Teachers are charged with using equitable practices such as differentiated instruction to bring the students to the point of being equally competitive at their time of graduation (Sun, 2014). The ills of society produce youth who suffer from the stressors of living in challenging conditions. Many schools recognize that students have needs that are greater than the capacity to attain academic standards and have chosen to use community schools as a strategy to address the needs of their students.

There are an estimated 5,000 community schools that were established across the United States as a school reform strategy (McDaniels, 2018). Lower grade retention and lowered dropout rates have been observed in schools that have effectively implemented the community school model (Anderson Moore & Emig, 2014). Anderson Moore and Emig see providing integrated community supports as a strategy for closing the student achievement gap that exists for many low-income minority students. They first conduct a needs assessment, then coordinate supports and secure community partners, integrate student supports into the school program, and use data to monitor the effectiveness of their efforts (Anderson Moore & Emig, 2014). Anderson Moore and Emig summarized the comprehensive Child Trends examination of integrated student supports that promote academic growth by targeting barriers to that growth. They found that as the community schools provided integrated supports, such as afterschool academic supports, connections to community role models, and healthcare, increases in student attendance academic achievement were seen. Farbman and National Center on Time and Learning (2015) reported that additional time in meaningful learning opportunities outside of the school day can help to

level the academic playing field between low-income students who often start school at a disadvantage and their more affluent counterparts. Additional time and individualized support are needed in order to help students to make rich connections to their learning. Expanding the day to provide enriched academic programs enabled the educators to close the opportunity gaps that some students face (Farbman & National Center, 2015).

In the United States, there are four commonalities in community schools identified by the National Education Policy Center. The first are integrated services, which are wraparound supports that provide services such as medical, dental, housing, childcare, academic support, healthy meals, adult education classes, and housing. The second are intentional strategies designed to engage the families and communities in decision-making for their school. The third allows for students to have opportunities to learn beyond the typical school day, whether it is skill reinforcement for their current classes or enrichment activities designed to capture student interest in various fields. The fourth and final commonality is leadership practices that connect the needs of the children in a school to district and government agencies in a position to ameliorate the needs faced by the children in the school. Much of the research on the effectiveness of community schools provides inconclusive qualitative results on the perceptions of those in the schools, as well as rating the schools' structure and implementation of the community school model. (Oakes et al., 2017)

Research conducted by the Coalition for Community Schools (2020) provided insights into the components of an effective community school, with the premise that if the following components were implemented with fidelity, then positive student achievement results would follow. The components outlined include having an engaging curricula; providing high quality teaching, which is achieved through ongoing professional development; implementing

appropriate wrap-around services for the community such as health care and aftercare; utilizing positive discipline as opposed to harsh punishments such as suspensions; authentically engaging parents and community members in some of the school-based decisions; and maintaining school leaders that are committed to the inclusiveness of the community school model (Coalition for Community Schools, 2020).

Community schools as a reform model have been studied in order to determine the effects of the community school model on components of achievement such as academic performance on standardized assessments and attendance rates. Noguera (2012) held that regardless of the effectiveness of a school as measured by student academic achievement, the school itself remains the strongest beacon of hope for families and for the well-being of the community as a whole. Studies of the impact of community schools on attendance rates have produced similar inconclusive results, with Sheldon finding that in the 39 schools in their study, the effect of community partnerships on attendance were present, although they were not large (Sheldon, 2007). Understanding precisely why some community school programs are successful, as well as why some have not been successful involves digging deeply into what it takes to be a learner in challenging environments. Bryk (2010) contended that a lack of deep understanding of this lead school reform strategies to continue to draw inconclusive results. It would be difficult to find research that states that there is no need to reduce the burden of societal problems from the shoulders of our youth. It is assumed that doing so will enable the students to flourish academically and have an equal opportunity at growing into capable and productive citizens. However, the research available is far from consistent in its production of quantifiable evidence that community schools are or are not effective school reform models. Alarm over the lack of understanding of which components of student achievement could best be supported through

community schools, minimal empirical research on the effectiveness of community schools has led some researchers to question why such a large number of community schools continue to be developed. As more spending on community schools is underway, the call for research to move beyond the point of being advisory, at best, or propaganda at the worst (Raffo & Dyson, 2007).

Community school supporters hold that one must consider ways in which schools and families have common ground in their goal for the growth and well-being of children. In her research, Epstein expressed that families and schools should cooperate in achieving their roles in relation to the growth of children; responsibilities should be shared and performed collectively. Viewing the students as children, and not just learners, will make partnerships among the community, school, and families in promoting children education and advancements more likely (Epstein, 2010). Separation between the roles of the school, community, and family came about through earlier research, which suggested that each entity had a distinct and unique role in developing children into productive citizens. Researchers stated that the family was responsible for nurturing, while the school primarily functioned as a social system, designed to develop the sense of citizenship needed to grow into a contributing member of society (Parsons, 1985). The school-as-a-socializing-agent perspective of how children grow and develop was later eclipsed by research that suggested that the influence of the school, family, and community were not separate and linear, but rather, they are related and at times simultaneous in their impact on the development of a child during the different stages of their life (Young & Marx, 1992).

The convergence of the mutual interests of the community, school, and family is predicated on there being the common goal of developing successful children. The community school design provides the vehicle for reaching this goal. Arne Duncan, the former Secretary of Education in the United States, in his strong support of community schools claimed that, when

schools qualify to be community centers, possess expert teachers, have high quality services, and able partners, then students in those schools will be able to fight poverty, succeed in studies, eliminate violence, enhance productivity, and solve other concerns in the society (Duncan, 2010). Community schools are sometimes referred to as full-service community schools because they are designed to offer adequate physical, mental, social, and academic services that will satisfy the needs of the community, family, and student (Momeni, 2015).

Communities in Schools (2016) reported that 10 factors that greatly impact student success and school climate are:

1. Hunger. Hunger makes students lose concentration in studies, co-curriculum events, and hence may have no future goals.
2. Poor vision. Accomplishing schoolwork may be difficult if students have poor vision since students may not see and understand what is taught in class.
3. Inadequate clothing. Essential items such as clothes may not be afforded by some students.
4. Unreliable housing. Students may fail to go to school because they lack proper residential places.
5. Unsafe transportation. If students lack a reliable mode of transportation or are forced to walk to school via dangerous localities, then they will not go to school.
6. Insufficient school provisions. Some resources such as backpacks may not be purchased by most students.

7. Preoccupied being the breadwinner. Students' attendance to schools may be affected by situations such as sickness of their guardians whereby they may be required to take care of them.

8. Poorly adjusted socially. Bullying can be subjected to children who are associated with issues of physical appearance or personal identity hence affecting their morale in education.

9. Low parental support. Children may not acquire enough emotional assistance if their parents die or are not near hence they may fail in school.

10. Poor health. Health problems linked with chronic illness may hinder the attendance and concentration of students.

Community schools are designed to directly combat those factors that negatively impact student achievement and school climate. As unique as the communities that support them, each community school is structured to address the expressed community need with research-based practices, collaboration, and shared decision-making. Kania and Kramer (2011) outlined structural requirements for effective community schools, which encourage consideration for the connection between organization and the steps needed to achieve common objectives. They defined community school success as meeting conditions that create alignment and influence the acquisition of reliable results in community schools, such as: shared agenda, specific measurement structures, activities that are closely reinforcing, communication that is endless, and strong support institutions (Kania & Kramer, 2011). In the next three sections, this study will examine the empirical data of community schools in Chicago, New York, and Hartford. Such an examination will help to illuminate the efforts of the Baltimore City community schools in this study.

Community Schools in Large Urban Districts

This section will describe community schools in the following four school districts: Chicago, New York City, Hartford, and Baltimore City. With greater than 20,000 students, each is considered an urban school district. These urban districts have all chosen to implement the community school model in some of their public schools.

Community Schools in Chicago, Illinois

In 2002, the Chicago Public Schools district began to transform 67 of its schools into full-service community schools. By 2015, there were 200 elementary, middle, and high schools that served as community schools in Chicago. In 2018, \$10M was allocated to improve community school structure (Holme et al., 2020). Schools in Chicago are now an anchor for the community, as opposed to an island unto itself for 6 hours of the day. Arne Duncan, the district's chief executive officer, explained that by

teaming up with community-based organizations, Chicago's community schools are now staying open seven days a week until 8 p.m. or later, providing more opportunities for students and families to use computers for continuing education, gain access to counseling services, and share recreational facilities. (as cited in Gehring, 2005, p. 12)

In Chicago, the community school approach first begins with a visionary school leader who is skilled in the ability to collaborate with not only their faculty but also the families and partners within the community. Deputy Chief of Education for Chicago Public Schools, Carlos M. Azcoitia (2002), explained that most schools also employ a community resource coordinator to ensure that the delivery of the program is occurring as desired. The coordinator serves as a liaison between the community, school, and partners.

Chicago has focused on recruiting high quality teachers and investing in them as a way of benefiting the students. Teachers who feel welcome and appreciated in the community will be more motivated to do things that will positively affect it. Englert and Temple University (1993) pointed to Chicago's disparity in being able to keep teachers and the importance of maintaining their staff. The high crime rate in Chicago points to the even stronger need for community school development (Cook & Hirschfield, 2008, p. 62).

To study the impact of community school structures on student reading achievement, math achievement, and attendance, Figlio (2015) compared these variables for students from one of Chicago's 47 community schools to the trends of students in Chicago Public Schools who were not attending a community school. Prior to attending a community school, student reading proficiency for those in the experimental community school group was 0.2 percentage points lower than that of their counterparts in school year 2010-2011. Math proficiency in 2010-2018 was 1.8 percentage points lower for those who would be attending a community school within the next 2 years than that of their counterparts. After attending a community school for 1 year, in 2012-2013, the students had 4.4 percentage points higher reading proficiency scores and 302 percentage points higher math proficiency scores. A measurement of attendance found that after 2012-2013, student attendance rate was 3.0 percentage points higher for the students in the community school. However, by 2013-2014, the effect of attending the community school on student attendance was no longer statistically significant (Figlio, 2015).

Community Schools in New York, New York

In 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City announced his continued support of community schools (City of New York, 2014), stating that by 2017, he planned to have all public schools in a phase of community school development. In 2014, there were 128 community

schools in development in New York City. This commitment to building the capacity of educators and school administrators for community school partnership makes New York City a leader in the growing field of community school development.

While each school is unique to the community it serves, there are commonalities across all community schools in New York City. Authors Johnson and Williams (2015) contended that much of what students learn from teachers are beyond academic and stretch to the social realm, such as how to work with others and exist in a community. Consideration of factors such as these may be what led the educational leaders in New York City to not only include academic performance as a community school accountability measure but also factors such as attendance, connectedness to adults and classmates, improved school culture and climate, and active family engagement (Office of the Mayor et al., 2014).

During a span of 3 years, Johnston et al. (2020) reported that New York City's community schools boasted a 4.9% higher graduation rate than surrounding schools. The rate of absence also followed the same positive trend, with 7.3% fewer students absent in community schools than other schools in the area. The assessment points to New York's use of varying learning strategies as one of its strongest components; when children learn about nonacademic subjects when inside school, they are exposed to a variety of different materials and can learn life skills, which they might not otherwise encounter. The community school initiative saw a statistically significant decrease in chronic absenteeism for students, with elementary students showing a 7.4 percentage point decrease, and middle school students showing an 8.3 percentage point decrease. High school students who are graduating on time increased by an average of 4.9 percentage points from 2016–2018 for students attending community schools. Grade 6 students in community schools showed an increase in math achievement of a tenth of a standard deviation

in 2018. There was no significant effect on reading scores for these students. Finally, regarding the impact of community school initiatives on school climate, there was inconsistent and limited evidence of an effect. For example, during the 3-year study, the parent engagement measures comparing community schools and other public schools in New York City found no statistical significance (Johnston et al., 2020).

Community Schools in Hartford, Connecticut

The Hartford Public School system comprises 49 schools. Hartford Public Schools wrote that the purpose of the community school is to find a match between community partners that can ameliorate the targeted needs and schools that have identified those specific needs. Services provided include mental health, extracurricular tutoring, adult education, and structures to facilitate relationship building and collaborative decision making between the school and the parents. The anticipated benefit of having community school resources is the increased attendance rate for the students in the community schools, as well as higher academic achievement. While the district's strategic plan noted that they plan to have all of their schools made into community schools, presently the number of community schools in Hartford stands at seven ([McDaniels](#), 2018).

Student achievement in the Hartford Community Schools was measured in the percentage of students scoring proficient in reading or math on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). Two-year CMT performance data from 2009–2011 were examined. Community school students scoring proficient in math increased from 59 percentage points to 62 percentage points. The proficiency percentage points in reading increased from 44 percentage points to 52 (OMG Center for Collaborative Learning, 2011).

Hartford Public Schools may provide examples for researchers of the need to match the most appropriate community partners with the needs of the students and the community from which they come. Test scores for students who received English language supports after school rose by 8.4 points for reading and 13.3 percentage points for math. Of the sites that identified students for behavioral interventions, only one school provided families and students with mental health supports. At that school, the number of suspensions decreased. In the other community schools in Hartford with students identified as having behavioral needs, the number of suspensions increased (Collins et al., 2017). Factors such as changing leadership, merging schools, and school choice that is open to families across the state may impact data trends for Hartford Public Schools and their community school initiative (Maier et al., 2017).

Community Schools in Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore City has a history of marginalizing African American families. Many residents of Baltimore City were victims of historic discriminatory housing practices, which led to geographic isolation and extreme segregation. The U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was sued in 1995 by the American Civil Liberties Union, claiming that the residents were discriminated on based on their race. It was argued that since 1954, the Black residents of Baltimore City were forced to reside in the most segregated and impoverished areas of the city (Pappoe, 2016). In 1995, the courts approved a settlement meant to ameliorate the almost 100 years of forced segregation in Baltimore by providing programs to aid families in relocating to areas with more promising schools and job opportunities (Pappoe, 2016). The relocation effort was known as the Moving to Opportunity. Between 1994 and 1997, a number of families were relocated to low-poverty areas. When those families were studied in 2002, there was found to be little correlation between living in a low-poverty area and joblessness, possibly due to the limited

public transportation and a lack of community connections between the relocated families with the members of their new communities, creating a disconnect between the word-of-mouth employment references that were shared more readily in the high-poverty neighborhoods (Turney et al., 2006). In 2008, the Mayor and the City Council of Baltimore alleged that Wells Fargo Bank and its affiliates targeted Baltimore's African American communities with risky loans that they were unable to afford, leading to foreclosures on homes and a housing crisis that was found to be in violation of the Fair Housing Act. The community was divided into areas in which the bank would refuse to give loans and those areas where the only loans available were financially abusive (Brescia, 2009.) This practice left many communities in Baltimore City fractured and devoid of reliable community-based resources.

Youth in Baltimore City are being raised in unhealthy communities that are fragmented, lacking leadership, and without mentors that are capable of providing guidance. This fragmentation is found to be the result of police violence in the community (Gama, 2016). Police officers who are being trained in military combat styles of policing are not necessarily adept at building community relations themselves. In the African American community, the number of deaths has decreased by more than half between 1974 and 2014, yet the police militarization has steadily increased ultimately creating a health concern to the youth who are living in these stressful environments (Gomez, 2016). To add to the health concerns created by living in a chronically stressful environment, the city of Baltimore received an F rating in the majority of mortality markers such as cardiovascular, cancer, stroke, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, homicide, and infant mortality, with the most glaring disparities existing between the communities of African Americans where poverty, unemployment, and lower education levels were clustered (Barbot, 2014).

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) educates close to 84,000 students in its 191 schools and alternative programs, making it the fourth largest school district in the state of Maryland. BCPSS students perform below the state average in both reading and math. The student population is 86.6% Black, 7.8% White, 3.9% Hispanic, and 1.1% Other. The percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals is 83.5%. Students who speak English as a second language comprise 3.2% of the population. An estimated 34% of the students in BCPSS never receive a high school diploma (Alonso et al., 2011).

Using data from 2013-2014, niche.com (2016) created a ranking for school districts in Maryland weighting most heavily for academic performance on state tests (50%) but also including, to a much lesser degree, factors such as health and safety, parent and student surveys, school culture, grades that parents and students give teachers, facilities, extracurricular activities, and overall health and fitness of students. According to the niche.com (2016) ranking, the Baltimore City school district is ranked number 24 out of 24 compared to the other jurisdictions in the state of Maryland.

In 2016, Baltimore City was ranked number one in Maryland for the number of children living below the poverty line, 33.3%. Baltimore City parents spend 29.7 % of their income on childcare. Almost half (47.0%) of the families living below the federal poverty line also have children that receive temporary cash assistance. The Food Supplement Program, which was formerly known as Food Stamps, provides support to 31.6% of Baltimore City's population, while 86.3% of the school age children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals (Maryland Alliance for the Poor, 2018).

Similar to the City of Philadelphia, Baltimore City implemented community schools as a strategy to combat the low student achievement trends as evidenced by poor attendance, high

drop-out rates, and a sense that the schools are both emotionally and physically unsafe. To address this growing concern, a partnership was formed in 2012 between the Office of the Mayor, BCPSS, and the Family League of Baltimore City, Inc., a 501(c)(3) company. This partnership led to the joint decision to launch the Community & School Engagement Strategy. The Community & School Engagement Strategy Steering Committee structured the framework for the transformation of select public schools into community schools (Durham et al., 2017).

During the school year 2014-2015, there were 42 established community schools in Baltimore City, all of which were facilitated and managed by the Family League of Baltimore. Chronic absenteeism and performance on state assessments are two areas of measurement used to determine early indicators of the effectiveness of community schools as a school reform model. In their report for the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC), Durham and Connolly found that students in Grade 6 through Grade 8, who participated in the extended day programs at their community schools, were 77% less likely to be chronically absent as agemates who did not participate in an extended day program. Nineteen percent of the students in kindergarten to Grade 5 who participated in extended day programs in their community school were chronically absent, which is lower than the 24% of their chronically absent agemates who did not participate in a community school program. There was no evidence of performance differences on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state assessment (Durham & Connolly, 2017). The BERC study provided insights into the impact of the Baltimore City community schools initiative on student achievement and attendance for students from 2012–2014. The current study of Baltimore City students in 2017 will extend what was captured by BERC by measuring the impact of the community school’s initiative to include not only student achievement and attendance but also factors that impact school climate such as

suspensions, the perceived sense of physical security, the perceived sense of belonging, and the perception of respectful relationships within the schools.

In Baltimore City, services that can be seen in community schools may include on-site food pantries, General Education Development (GED) training for any adults in the community, provision of school uniforms if needed, mental health services, teachers trained to deliver mental health support, volunteers to reduce the student-to-adult ratio in some classes, after-school tutoring, and parent engagement activities (Olson, 2014). In 2014 the United States Department of Education (Reform Support Network, 2014) Office of Innovation and Improvement awarded nine community school partners from BCPSS grants totaling almost \$20 million. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) reported that from 2010–2013, the overall graduation rate for BCPSS rose from 61.5 to 68.5%. During that same time period, the high school dropout rate was cut nearly in half to 12.1% (Office of Innovation & Improvement, 2014). School climate, family and community engagement, attendance, and suspensions were monitored between 2010 and 2013 in order to determine if there were changes or significant differences between some Baltimore City community schools and some of the non-community schools. The Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) found statistically significant increases in the area of family and community engagement for community schools with an increase from 13.9% to 27.6% for community schools and from 11.9% to 20.1% in non-community schools based solely on the parent survey response rates at the schools (Olson, 2014). There was no significant difference between the attendance and absenteeism rates for community schools and non-community schools, with attendance rates for community schools being 89.9% while that of non-community schools was 88.5%, and chronic absenteeism for community schools was 27.7% while that of the non-community schools was 28.3% (Olson, 2014). No statistical difference was

found between the 9.5% suspension rates of community schools in 2014 and the 8.4% suspension rate of non-community schools (Olson, 2014). Olson went on to describe that of the 37 community schools studied, those that were older community schools scored slightly higher than newer community schools and noted this as a possible indicator that community schools will outperform non-community schools over an extended period of time of greater than 5 years.

The progress of eight community school programs from across the nation were reviewed by the Coalition for Community Schools (Frankl, 2016). Among them, two Baltimore City community schools were highlighted in this group: the Wolfe Street Academy and The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School. Changes between 2010 and 2015 for the Wolfe Street Academy included reductions in chronic absenteeism from 10% to 1.5% and student mobility from 46.6% to 8.8%, while increases were seen in student performance, raising Wolfe Street Academy's ranking from 77th in the city to 2nd in the city; student attendance in afterschool programming rose from 50% to 84%; fifth grade reading proficiency rose from 50% to 95%, and daily attendance rose from 94% to 97% (Frankl, 2016). Supports provided to the families of Wolfe Street Academy include providing breakfast, lunch, and dinner to the students; medical and dental care; and therapeutic support as needed. These supports have been found to be critical to this community with a number of new immigrants leading to 66% of the student population being English language learners, and 96% of the students qualifying for FARMS (Frankl, 2016).

The neighborhood of the Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School contains a more concentrated level of poverty than the rest of Baltimore City with 58% considered to be living in poverty, as compared to the 28% poverty rate averaged across the city. School progress between 2011 and 2015 was documented. Chronic absenteeism decreased from 25% to 10.7%.

Student academic performance and suspension rates were not documented in the report. Social work services, home visits, and trauma-informed staff were supports implemented in the school (Frankl, 2016).

In 2017, the Baltimore Education Research Consortium set out to identify the characteristics of an effective community school. Data from school year 2015-2016 was compiled. Seven of the 45 community schools were selected for study. Interviews of each school's community school coordinator were used to produce a description of the characteristics of an effective community school. The community schools shared goals such as the ability to imbed health and therapeutic supports for families, academic support, and engaging afterschool programs. The community school coordinators noted that their schools service students with special needs, living in poverty, or are English language learners to a greater degree than noncommunity schools. Students eligible for free and reduced-price meals (FARMS) in community schools were 80.5% compared to 72.5% in non-community schools, special education children comprised 16.8% compared to 15.8%, and English language learners were 6.8% in community schools compared to 2.5% in non-community schools (Durham et al., 2017). The community school coordinators also indicated that an effective practice of theirs was to continuously assess the value of the community partners in order to determine if there were opportunities to use these services to support the staff and academic arena during the school day as well as the after-hour support that is available to the families (Durham & Connolly, 2017).

School Climate

Educational researchers have sought to determine if schools can put structures into place to create a sense of community in schools, thereby creating a positive school climate. Safe, respectful, and trusting relationships between students and teachers, teachers and administrators, teachers and families, and school staff and the community are common characteristics of school climate (Payne, 2018). The five influencers of school climate are the school's organizational leadership, relationships with school staff, respectful relationships with students, family values, and how the members of the outside community treat its youth (Community Matters, 2014). It is advised that those seeking to improve school climate consider one or more of the following strategies: increasing student achievement, maintaining respectful staff and student relationships, having a staff dedicated to the students, demonstrating positive student behavior, and increasing the student sense of belonging (National Center on Safe Supporting Learning Environments, 2020). Whether declining or booming, the characteristics of a neighborhood themselves do not sway student, staff, and parent perceptions of a school to the same extent that authentic relationships would impact perceptions of school climate (Grice et al., 2012).

The National School Climate Center (NSCC, 2020) explored the multifaceted nature of school climate. The NSCC has identified 13 dimensions that create a description of school climate. The 13 dimensions are further grouped into six categories. The first category is Safety. Dimensions of Safety include having established rules and norms, as well as feeling physically and emotionally safe in the learning environment. The second category is Teaching and Learning. Dimensions of Teaching and Learning include providing quality instruction to students in an environment that encourages engagement, as well as instruction that infuses strategies to reinforce students' social-emotional well-being. The third category is that of Interpersonal

Relationships. Dimensions of Interpersonal Relationships describe respectful relationships between students and between students and adults, in an arena that is supportive of individual differences. The fourth category is Institutional Environment. The dimensions of Institutional Environment have to do with the overall appearance and upkeep of the facility. The fifth category is social media, with the descriptive dimension speaking to ethical online behavior of students. The sixth and final NSCC school climate category is Staff Only. The dimensions of Staff Only describe the competency of the leadership and the relationships amongst the staff members (NSCC, 2020).

The Baltimore City Public School district utilized the research of NSCC to define school climate for themselves. The first three NSCC categories, Safety, Teaching and Learning, and Interpersonal Relationships, inform the three Baltimore City indices, physical security, school connectedness, and respectful relationships. The school year 2016-1017 was the final year in which Baltimore City surveyed their parents, staff, and students in order to define the climate of each school (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2020c).

Recognizing the potential positive impact of connecting students to the greater community, the National School Climate Center partnered with a high school in Connecticut. The research team received survey responses from 127 community members and 20 community agencies in order to determine the perceptions of community members towards school community partnerships. Efforts are structured around the third NSCC category, Interpersonal Relationships. The coordinator and students attended meetings for organizations within the community and made connections with many who had strong ties to the community. After surveying members of the community about their perspectives on the school, a calendar of events was devised in order to connect students and community members in an on-going basis.

This project was found successful in that it strengthened school and community relationships (Ice & Cohen, 2015).

The premise of community schools is that they are hubs of supports and wraparound services that positively impact students, their families, and the communities in which they reside. For decades, researchers have been studying to what degree school programs can impact the environment within the school. Battistich and Hom (1997) sought to determine insights into NSCC interpersonal relationships by explaining the relationship between encouraging an increased sense of belonging for students and the presence of negative behaviors. The sample size was 1434 students in the fifth and sixth grades from 24 schools in six school districts located across the United States. Three schools were located on the West Coast, one was in a southern state, one school was in the Northeast, and one school was in the Southeast. Two schools from each district employed a strategy designed to enhance a sense of student connectedness to the school. The other two schools from each district were used as a comparison groups in order to gauge the impact of the intervention. Researchers set out to determine if there was a relationship between the students' sense of community within their school and the problem behaviors of victimization, delinquency, and drug usage. The sense of community score on the school level had a reliability of .92 (Battistich & Hom, 1997). Using hierarchal regression analyses with a p value $< .001$, significant relationships $-.137$, $-.183$, and $-.160$ were reported between a student's sense of community and the negative behaviors of drug use, delinquency, and victimization, respectively, with increases in the student sense of community causing decreases in negative behaviors (Battistich & Hom, 1997).

In 2012, 60% of adults reported experiencing some sort of trauma when they were children (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2012).

Childhood trauma, sometimes referred to as adverse childhood experience (ACE) includes violence, abuse, having caregivers with mental health concerns, and neglect. There is a strong graded relationship between adverse childhood experiences and adults with disabilities (Rose et al., 2014). A strategy for impacting school climate is NSCC Category 2, providing social–emotional instruction. Researchers sought to intervene in the potentially harmful effects of childhood trauma at two community schools in New York City (Baez et al., 2019). Initial screenings found that 77% of the students experienced at least one trauma in their lifetime. In their mixed-methods intervention explanatory sequential design, the Wediko partnership provided tiered trauma-informed social–emotional learning supports to the 500 students, based on the insights gained from the initial screenings. Changes in student social skills and problem behaviors were measured at the conclusion of the experiment. Between 2015 and 2017, the researchers found that the social skills of students with low or moderate trauma indices increased, while that of those with high trauma indices decreased. Implications from the study (Baez et al., 2019) suggest the need for the ongoing targeted social–emotional instruction offered by community schools with student populations having large percentages of adverse childhood experiences as an intervention for unhealthy habits that ultimately impact school climate.

Student Attendance

Consistent attendance is seen as an instructional tool without which student achievement is significantly hampered. Because of this, educational researchers have devoted studies to determine the factors that impact student attendance and ways to ameliorate chronic absenteeism. Baltimore City Public Schools calculates attendance by dividing the total number of days attended by the total number of days enrolled during the school year, and students with chronic absenteeism have been absent for 10% or more of their expected school days (Baltimore City

Public Schools, 2020a). Attendance in elementary school ensures that the citizenry of a country is literate and can perform as responsible members of democracy, while chronic absenteeism and dropout rates in high school have a strong correlation with criminal activity, poor health, and dependency on social services to meet the basic needs of a family (Ekstrand, 2015). In 2018, the Baltimore City Public School district was ranked 24th out of the 24 school districts in Maryland with a holding power of 58%, which represents the percent of students who graduate from high school on time within 4 years (MSDE-DAAIT, 2019). Factors that lead to chronic absenteeism may include adverse childhood experiences, student disabilities, and maladaptive social and behavioral abilities (Elliott & Place, 2019; Stempel et al., 2017). Educational leaders seeking to positively impact student attendance must not get sidetracked by perceived societal failings and implement sometimes complex targeted strategies to address the root cause of absenteeism for diverse populations of students (Kearney, 2016). Once the causes of community factors that influence student attendance have been identified, researchers recommend providing professional development to staff members on various strategies to target specific factors, providing support for childcare providers, and building relationships between staff and students that incorporates check-ins with the students and incentives for satisfactory school attendance (Freeman et al., 2018).

Six out of 16 schools in the Redwood City school district in Northern California are community schools. In Redwood City, almost three quarters of the students are Latinos, and 46% are English language learners (Biag & Castrechini, 2016). The integrated supports provided by the community schools in Redwood City are designed address three key areas: support for families through engagement opportunities and adult education related to community needs, out-of-school-time academic enrichment opportunities and childcare for students, and social support

services such as food assistance and mental health services. A descriptive case study of the Redwood City's six community schools involved a review of student academic records as well as program data from the community school partners to measure student attendance and identify any relationships between student attendance and program participation. A longitudinal growth model was used to determine the relationship between the three key focus areas of Redwood City's six community schools and student attendance. The results found that students who participated in the out-of-school-time activities or whose families participated in the engagement and support opportunities had better attendance. Students whose families received social support services demonstrated a negative attendance rate. It is hypothesized that families in need of social services have a myriad of needs that may impact overall student attendance and achievement (Biag & Castrechini, 2016).

Partnerships between schools, families, and the community have a significant impact on rates of attendance and chronic absenteeism, as determined by a longitudinal study of data from 39 schools across the country, from 1999–2001 (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). The sample size for this study included 29 elementary and 10 secondary schools from large urban, small urban, suburban, and rural schools from across the country, serving students of diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. In these schools 10 activities designed to address parent practices, communication practices, volunteerism, and community collaboration were implemented. Four additional activities provided incentive-based programs directly to students who demonstrated improved or satisfactory attendance rates. Sheldon and Epstein (2004) used a descriptive analysis to compare the relationship between absenteeism and the demographics of a school and the types of community partners that support the school. They also used regression analyses to determine if there was a correlation between absenteeism and the different types of family and community

programs offered in the schools. Ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted in order to estimate how the implementation of school community partnerships impact chronic absenteeism. On average, chronic absenteeism decreased 0.5% in the 39 schools by the second year of the study (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). However, it should be noted that these data include schools who have had decreases in absenteeism of 6% as well as those who have seen increases of 7%. Chronic absenteeism was a greater issue for secondary schools and large urban schools and is highly correlated to the schools' poverty levels. Sheldon and Epstein (2004) learned that a family's prior patterns of chronic absenteeism were found to be the strongest predictor of continued absenteeism. As schools are capable of organizing structures that positively impact student attendance, Sheldon and Epstein (2004) noted that in order for community school interventions to be successful, additional professional development about the nature of the partnerships and the root causes of absenteeism for specific schools is needed.

For public schools, attendance is the one data point that is mandated by state governance. Every state in the United States of America has a compulsory attendance law for school-age children. These laws vary only slightly from state to state. The legal guardians of truant children can be taken to court by their child's public school district, where they may receive fines or even spend time in jail due to allowing their child to become chronically absent from school. However, blindly punishing parents creates disproportionate hardships for the neediest families in our society and does little to address the complex scenarios faced by a diverse society (Reyes, 2020). Understanding chronic absenteeism, truancy, and ultimately school dropout is a precursor to implementing interventions. In addition to expected factors such as illness and bereavement, other reasons that students are absent from school include religious observations, family vacations, students feeling disconnected or unwelcomed at the school, and pressing family needs

(Hintz, Kapp, & Snapp, 2003). The impact of absenteeism is felt regardless of race. Whether Black or White, students who are among the highest achieving have strong attendance, and those who are among the lowest achieving have poor attendance (Parke & Kanyongo, 2012). Three strategies to impact student attendance include designing on-going efforts to build the capacity of all school stakeholders, specifically designed supports based on the identified needs of a school, and meaningful collaborations between school stakeholders (Davis et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2018). With attendance being an early indicator of not only potential achievement impediments but also of family and community needs, it is a meaningful datapoint in measuring overall school program effectiveness.

Student Achievement

Student achievement for the purpose of this study is measured by student performance on standardized state assessments. In this section, the efforts of researchers to study student achievement in community schools, and factors that may impact student achievement, are discussed.

Student achievement in community schools in Northern California's Bay Area was studied by Momeni (2015) in order to determine if there was a difference in the academic achievement as measured by student grade point averages for students in the community school performed over the course of 3 years. When comparing student achievement for each year, the result of the paired sample *t* test of all students at the two schools studied revealed that student achievement decreased from the first to the second year but improved again the third year. Variables impacting the changes in student achievement were the increased rigor of coursework in the second year, as well as shifts in community school implementation strategies (Momeni, 2015).

Crawford (2011) studied community schools that utilized afterschool programs to positively impact student achievement in reading and math. A meta-analysis was used to investigate the reading and math outcomes for students in grades kindergarten to eight from 2000–2009. Crawford (2011) found that in all time periods, 2000–2002, 2003–2005, and 2006–2009, there were educationally significant results indicating a positive relationship between attending afterschool educational programs provided by the community schools and overall student achievement in reading and math.

A longitudinal panel dataset of 10 million students in Texas was used to identify the impact of the community and school quality on the academic achievement of students in grades five through eight in school year 1999-2000 (Jargowsky et al., 2009). Student achievement was measured based on the reading and math state assessment outcomes on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). Census data were utilized by Jargowsky et al. (2009) to give insight into neighborhood characteristics. The school context was determined by recording the percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals, looking at student scores on the TAAS from 1998, and the teacher attrition rate for each school. The findings of the study suggested that the perspectives of neighborhoods, particularly those with more highly educated members, towards education has a positive impact on student achievement, more so than funding and styles of parenting. The effects of having successful schools are higher for disadvantaged students, whereas the impact of families with married couples and college graduates is more significant for students who are not living in poverty (Jargowsky et al., 2009).

Henderson et al. (2002) set out to study the impact of family and community support on the academic achievement of students. To accomplish this, a systematic review of 51 studies, recorded between 1995 and 2002, was conducted. Data from the studies were used to outline

nine recommendations for strategies that may be employed by community schools to optimize the positive impact that family support can have on student achievement. The research conclusions inform that families can positively impact the academic trajectory of children. Therefore, efforts to improve student achievement should be coupled with strategies to strengthen student supports in the home at every level of education and the development of close home and school connections. Research findings indicate that regardless of the cultural or economic background of families, there is a positive relationship between parental involvement and the academic performance of students (Henderson et al., 2002).

The community school design enables the coordinators, community partners, and staff to design supports that are specific to the identified needs of the students, their families, and their communities. In some communities, there may be food insecurity, in others joblessness, and in yet others the need for guidance in navigating the rungs towards higher academic aspirations, or a combination of many different needs within a community. In the schools in Sought King County, Washington, they are attempting to mitigate the effects of having the fourth largest refugee settlement in the country. Schools in this district have student populations where over 25 percent of the students are new to the country from over 80 different nations. Recognizing the need for robust supports for the students and families, the Tukwila Community Schools Collaboration (TCSC) partnership was forged in 1998. A case study of TCSC (Potapchuk, 2013) looked at strategies to impact student achievement. Strategies implemented in TCSC to positively impact student achievement include academic enrichment programs after school, vertical mentoring between high school students and younger students in the district, parent events presented in multiple languages, parenting resources to support their child's academic progress, and health services. The increased academic success of the students translated into

higher graduation rates with a graduation rate increase from 52.1% in 2004 to 76.3% in 2010. These academic achievements have led TCSC to make the community school partnership part of the framework for future community organizations seeking to partner with the school district (Potapchuk, 2013).

In 2008, six schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma, became community schools. The mission of the community schools, outlined in the Tulsa Area Community School Initiative (TASCI), is to ignite relationships between the schools and the larger communities from which they come, and to provide out of school time learning opportunities. Early student achievement was promising, and a current study (Adams, 2019) was conducted to determine if the students in the community schools achieved at a higher rate than those at non-community schools. Consideration for school demographics was taken into consideration when community schools in Tulsa were compared to non-community schools in the Tulsa area having similar demographic characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, and students receiving special education services. A retrospective study was used to monitor student achievement, which was measured by noting the percentage of fifth graders scoring proficient in reading and math between 2009 and 2016. Over the course of the 8 years, the reading and math performance of the TASCI schools regressed over time. Researchers attributed the decline to the changes in district and school level leadership, which eroded the emphasis on the TASCI vision that once inspired higher levels of performance (Adams, 2019).

Researchers set out to identify the components of community schools that encourage school reform (Wood & Bauman, 2017). To accomplish this, they reviewed 35 studies on diverse community schools serving students in grades K–12 from across the country. Just as there are a myriad of factors that lead to student achievement, so too are there a diverse set of strategies that

can be implemented to positively impact academic success. General actions found to be effective in various community schools included providing support to address a wide number of family and community concerns, being intentional about encouraging parent participation, and remaining mindful of the uniqueness of the cultures served in the schools. Each action may have multiple strategies attached to reach students, parents, and community members, and this is encouraged. By providing multiple strategies, schools may stand a greater chance of reaching a broad audience. The literature review was unable to explain how parental engagement impacted student achievement, but it was determined that there is a positive correlation between the two (Wood & Bauman, 2017).

Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to provide insights into how community schools are structured in urban school districts and details regarding the student achievement, attendance rate, and/or school climate in the programs studied. It is clear from the research reviewed that the community school concept has a long history that has evolved over the past 100 years to address the needs of a community, and, at times, to combat its ills. Commonalities across community school designs is the partnership with agencies outside of the educational realm, such as healthcare, social services, and family resources to strengthen the families that live in the school's district. The unresolved research question that remains is whether supporting communities through the community school model will have a significant impact on student achievement and overall school climate. Chapter 3 will present the proposed analyses for the research questions that investigate the differences in attendance, suspension rate, school climate, and academic performance of students attending Baltimore City community schools and those attending traditionally structured public schools in Baltimore City.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between a community school management system in Baltimore City public schools, and outcomes such as student attendance, suspension rates, academic achievement, and school climate. Publicly available data from the Baltimore City Public Schools' school profiles were compiled and analyzed. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27) was used to determine descriptive statistics. The community school data were compared to that of the noncommunity school data in order to determine if there are indicators of a relationship between the community school management and academic performance, attendance rate, and suspension rates for 40 community schools and 81 noncommunity schools. The sample size, being greater than 30, and the use of common data measurement tools served to insure research reliability and validity (Gay et al., 2012).

Research Design

This quantitative study used statistical analyses in order to determine if there is a relationship between community school management types and school success. School success was described as student achievement on the PARCC state assessment for students in Grades 3 through 5, student attendance, suspension rates, and school climate. After first describing the student achievement, rates of attendance, suspension numbers, and school climate ratings for Baltimore City community schools and noncommunity schools, inferential statistic tools provided insights into the confidence that can be determined when generalizing the results from each sample. Pyrczak (2010) described generalizing as the process of inferring that what is true

for the sample is also true for the population. In this study, all schools servicing students in Grades 3 through 5 in Baltimore City in 2017, that are not schools for special education students only or alternative placement schools for disciplinary reasons, were included in this study, thereby ensuring that there is a freedom from bias when generalizing the data from the sample.

Research Questions

The overarching question of this research was: Do community school designs impact school success for students in Grades 3 through 5 in Baltimore City Schools? This study was guided by the following questions:

Research Question 1: What is the difference in academic achievement of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 3: What is the difference in the suspension rate of Baltimore City community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between school climate indices (physical security, respectful relationships, school connectedness) and the community school management type in Baltimore City Schools in 2016 and 2017?

Data Sources

For this study, the participants were the 2017 schools in Baltimore City Public Schools that meet the study criteria. Data from school year 2016-2017 were analyzed because this is the final school year in which the district surveyed parents and caregivers. Epstein and Salinas (2004) described the impact of parents on the development of children. When measuring school climate for Baltimore City Public Schools, the insights provided by the parents and caregivers is valuable. The study criteria include all Baltimore City elementary public schools in 2017, with Grades 3 through 5, that are not an alternative placement setting or school designed to support profound special education needs. Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) is a large urban school district in the state of Maryland. In 2016-2017, Baltimore City educated 82,354 students, making it the fifth largest district in the state (MSDE, 2018a). The demographics of the student population shows that 11.7% of students have a disability, 60.2% of the students receive free or reduced-price meals (FARMS), and 6.2% of the students are English language learners (MSDE, 2018a). Baltimore City Public Schools reported that in 2016-2017, 80.5% of their students were African American, 9.4% were Hispanic/Latino, 8% were White, 1% were Asian, 0.2% were American Indian, and 0.2% were Pacific Islander (Baltimore City Schools, 2020f). The sample size is the school level data. The 40 community schools and 81 noncommunity schools in Baltimore City comprised the participants for the study. The participants are composed of schools from the same school district, reporting results for the same grade bands from each of the schools. Therefore, there is limited variability among the participants in the samples. According to Pycszak (2010), “For populations with very limited variability, even small samples can yield precise results” (p. 97). Because the samples are from all Baltimore City public schools serving students in Grades 3 through 5, there is limited variability in the populations themselves.

Data Collection

This study gathered publicly available data from the Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) system. City Schools provides progress data for each of its schools on a school profile document. In addition to student achievement on standardized tests, attendance rates, suspension numbers and climate ratings, the public can also read about each school's demographic information and learn about the experience of the staff. School profiles were gathered for City Schools that educated students in Grades 3 through 5 during the 2016-2017 school year. The data regarding student achievement, attendance, suspensions, and school climate were compared to additional publicly available data from City Schools, such as the 2007-2019_SchoolSurvey-District (BCPS, 2020c), which provides overall school climate responses for City Schools and the SY16-17 School Level_OFFICIAL document (BCPS, 2020d). The latter provides school-specific climate responses including the number of eligible parent, staff, and student respondents who took the climate survey, as well as the dimension scores for each of the questions.

Measures

Attendance

In this study, the attendance rate of each of the 121 schools was examined, determining the overall difference between the attendance rate of community schools to that of noncommunity schools. Students who missed 10% or more of their school days were considered chronically absent. Students who missed fewer than 5 days of school in each of the four marking periods avoided this distinction. The schoolwide attendance dependent variable in this study was a percentage determined by dividing the total number of days the students are enrolled in a school by the total number of days that the students were present.

Suspensions

The expectation of student conduct and recommended disciplinary responses for breaches of the code of conduct is outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Disciplinary response levels range from one to five in the Student Code of Conduct. Level three and above may result in short-term suspensions, long-term suspensions, or extended suspensions or expulsions (BCPS, 2020e). The suspension dependent variable in this study was the total number of suspensions in a school. It is not a percentage or a calculation of the amount of time lost due to the suspension, nor is it a by student ratio. It is a count of the total number of suspension or expulsion occurrences for each school. Suspension data included all suspensions and expulsions, including multiple incidents for the same student.

Academic Achievement

In 2010, the United States Department of Education granted two consortiums funding to create measures to monitor student readiness for college and career readiness. The two consortiums whose Race to the Top funds were used to conduct statewide assessments for public school students were Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). The state of Maryland chose to measure its students' readiness for college and careers using PARCC (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). For Maryland public schools in 2017, the PARCC test was administered to students in Baltimore City in Grades 3–12 to measure math and English language arts proficiency. The PARCC results are broken down into five performance levels, with Level 4 indicating that the students met performance expectations and Level 5 indicating that the students exceeded expectations. For this study, student achievement was defined as the

percentage of students at each school who met or exceeded performance expectations by scoring a 4 or 5 on the PARCC assessment in the spring of 2017.

School Climate

One of the ways in which Baltimore City Public Schools measures school climate is through the use of the School Survey, a version of which was administered to students, parents, and staff members in the Spring of 2017. Participant responses range from 1 to 4, with 1 representing *strongly disagree* and 4 representing *strongly agree*. Students were asked about their overall satisfaction with their school, including questions about relationships with the staff, relationships with one another, and their perceptions of school rules and safety. Parents were asked questions that provided insights into parental perceptions of the academic program at the school and the staff's efforts to make them feel included. Staff queries delved into their perceptions of school leadership and staff relationships Baltimore Educational Research Coalition (BERC, 2014). The results of the survey are compiled and reported on each school's profile page. The climate survey in 2017 was provided to students in Grades 3 through 12, their parents, and the staff of each school. Based on the results, indices for each school's physical security, school connectedness, and respectful relationships are reported. Following this, parents were no longer surveyed by the schools. School climate survey questions were categorized as physical security, respectful relationships, or school connectedness. The district's criteria for reporting data were that each of the three categories must reflect greater than five respondents, and the staff and student groups responding must be comprised of 30% or more of the group population. Questions in the Physical Security section reflect the extent to which physical altercations are not seen as hindrances to learning in the school, staff and students feel physically safe in the building, and parents feel assured that their child is safe while at school. The

Respectful Relationships section reflects not only the adult–child relationship between staff and students but also the extent to which student-to-student interactions are healthy and respectful. The final school climate category, school connectedness, reflects the sense of belonging that students and staff feel in their school, as well as parents feeling as if they are heard when they bring concerns to the school and are welcomed in the school environment.

Data Analysis

The software program used to analyze and code the data gathered was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27). Student attendance, suspension rates, academic achievement data, and school climate measures were investigated. Inferential statistical analyses were used to test the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. Table 1 summarizes the research questions, hypotheses, statistical analyses used, and the variables in the study.

Table 1*Statistical Analyses*

Research Question 1: What is the difference in academic achievement of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?		
Research hypotheses	Statistical analyses	Variables
<p>H1: There is a significant relationship between the achievement of students and community school management systems.</p> <p>H₀1: There is no relationship between student achievement and community school management systems.</p>	Wilcoxon rank sum test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math PARCC scores 2016 and 2017 • ELA PARCC scores 2016 and 2017 • Students proficient on Math PARCC 2016 and 2017 • Students proficient on ELA PARCC 2016 and 2017
Research Question 2: What is the difference in the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?		
Research hypotheses	Statistical analyses	Variables
<p>H2: There is a significant difference in the aggregate attendance rate of community school students.</p> <p>H₀2: There is no significant difference in the aggregate attendance rate of community school students.</p>	Independent samples <i>t</i> test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance rate 2016 and 2017 • Chronic absenteeism rate 2016 and 2017
Research Question 3: What is the difference in the suspension rate of Baltimore City community schools and noncommunity schools in 2017?		
Research hypotheses	Statistical analyses	Variables
<p>H3: There is a significant difference in the number of students suspended in community schools.</p> <p>H₀3: There is no significant difference in the number of students suspended in community schools.</p>	Wilcoxon rank sum test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students suspended 2016 and 2017 • Number of days out of schools due to suspensions 2016

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between school climate indices (physical security, respectful relationships, school connectedness) and the community school management type in Baltimore City Schools in 2017?		
Research hypotheses	Statistical analyses	Variables
<p>H4: There is a significant relationship between school climate (physical security, respectful relationships, or school connectedness) and community school management systems.</p> <p>H₀4: There is no relationship between school climate (physical security, respectful relationships, or school connectedness) and community school management systems.</p>	Chi square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of respondents in each school indicating high levels (>74) of physical security in their school in 2016 and 2017 • Percentage of respondents in each school indicating high levels (>74) of respectful relationships in their school in 2016 and 2017 • Percentage of respondents indicating high levels (>74) of school connectedness in their school in 2016 and 2017

Limitations of Data Analysis

Although the data are publicly available, it will be difficult to exactly replicate this study for future school years for two key reasons. The first reason is that 2017 was the terminal year for administering the climate survey that had been used for this study. Following 2017, the only stakeholder groups were staff and students. Parents were no longer polled by City Schools or reported on the school profiles. The second reason is that the number of schools in operation fluctuate, with several closing or consolidating, making it impossible to replicate this study using the exact same schools.

Delimitations of Data Analysis

The delimitation of this study is the size of the samples. School data from Grades 6 through 12 were omitted. This omission served to narrow the scope of the study as additional factors are considered when comparing the attendance of a 12th grader to that of a fourth grader, for example. Focusing on the three-through-five grade band provided a clearer insight into any relationships or differences between the variables.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the methods for answering the proposed research questions. The research questions, procedures, data collection, and data analyses were used to explain how the study was conducted. A descriptive and then inferential study research design was used to determine any differences or relationships between community schools and academic student achievement, school attendance, suspensions, and school climate in City Schools during the 2016-2017 school year for students in Grades 3 through 5.

Chapter 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a significant difference in the data of community schools and noncommunity schools in the Baltimore City Public School System. Attendance rates, standardized state test scores (PARCC) for English and Math, suspension rates, and school climate for 2016 and 2017 were used in this study. The aim of this research is to contribute quantitatively to the body of knowledge surrounding community schools and their usage as a school reform strategy.

Research Design

Preexisting, publicly available data were collected for this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 27). This study utilized independent samples *t* tests, Wilcoxon rank sum tests, and Pearson's chi-square analyses to compare the academic achievement, suspensions, school attendance, and climates of community schools to noncommunity schools in Baltimore City from 2015–2017. The community school framework and theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Sheldon & Epstein, 2004) suggests that community school efforts to engage families and communities as valuable members of the school should predict student achievement, student attendance suspension, and school climate rates.

Sample Population

Between 2015 and 2017, the number of Baltimore City public schools that were not solely dedicated to special education populations nor an alternative placement facility for disciplinary reasons, was 121. Of this number, 40 schools were community schools, and 81 were noncommunity schools. Schools missing data in any of the four areas of academic achievement, suspensions, attendance, or school climate were excluded from the study. This was the case for two community schools and 12 noncommunity schools, which brought the sample size from 121 to 105.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Academic Achievement

Research Question 1: What is the difference in academic achievement of community schools and noncommunity schools on the PARCC state assessment for English (ELA) or Math in 2016 and 2017?

Null Hypothesis 1: Schools with a community school management type have no statistically significant difference in academic achievement scores on the PARCC state assessment for ELA or Math in 2016 and 2017.

Third through fifth grade students in Baltimore City underperform academically (see Table 2) when compared to the percentages of students across the state of Maryland on the PARCC state assessment. Despite the low student achievement rates of the district, this study sought to determine if differences could be found between community schools and noncommunity schools when measuring students meeting or exceeding expectations. Students who score a 4 or a 5 on the PARCC assessment have met or exceeded expectations and are

considered proficient. In addition to comparing the overall PARCC performance of noncommunity and community school students, this study also conducted an independent samples t test to determine if there was a statistical difference in the number of students scoring proficient at each school.

Table 2

Percentage of Students in Grades 3–5 Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on the PARCC

	Baltimore	Maryland
Math 2016	15%	39%
ELA 2016	13%	39%
Math 2017	16%	39%
ELA 2017	14%	41%

Test for Normality

Data used to assess potential differences between community schools and noncommunity schools compared student performance on the PARCC state assessment for ELA and Math. Mean student assessment scores on the PARCC assessment were gathered for 2016 and 2017 for ELA and Math. After running a Shapiro-Wilk test of normality to compare the performance of community schools and noncommunity schools on the PARCC assessment it was determined that the data for ELA scores in 2016 were not significant, with a p -value greater than .05 for community schools ($p = .074$) and noncommunity schools ($p = .057$), indicating that the data were normally distributed. Therefore, a t test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools on the PARCC assessment in 2016 for ELA.

The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality found significant mean scores when comparing community and noncommunity schools on the PARCC assessment were significant for Math 2016, Math 2017, and ELA 2017. If the mean score for either noncommunity schools or community schools, or both mean scores, were significant, then a Wilcoxon sum rank test was used. The p -values of noncommunity schools were as follows: Math 2016 ($p = .01$), Math 2017 ($p = .01$), and for ELA 2017 ($p = .08$). Community school p -values were Math 2016 ($p = .90$), Math 2017 ($p = .18$), and for ELA 2017 ($p = .08$). A test of normality was also used to compare community schools and noncommunity schools on the PARCC assessment of ELA in 2017. Use of the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, as well as review of the graphs, indicated that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, a Wilcoxon sum rank test was used to compare the mean scores of community and noncommunity school performance on the PARCC assessment for Math 2016, Math 2017, and ELA 2017.

The number of students scoring proficient on the PARCC assessment was compared for community and noncommunity schools. The Shapiro-Wilk test of normality results were significant for all areas, Math 2016, ELA 2016, Math 2017, and ELA 2017, indicating that the data did not fit the normal distribution. Noncommunity school results for proficient students were Math 2016 ($p = .00$), ELA 2016 ($p = .00$), Math 2017 ($p = 0.00$), and ELA 2017 ($p = .00$.) Community school results for the number of proficient students were Math 2016 ($p = .00$), ELA 2016 ($p = .00$), Math 2017 ($p = .01$), and ELA 2017 ($p = .00$). As a result, the Wilcoxon sum rank test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in students scoring proficient on PARCC assessment in Math 2016, ELA 2016, Math 2017, and ELA 2017.

Means Data

The student achievement of noncommunity schools and community schools was measured using PARCC assessment scores (see Table 3). Analysis of the community school and noncommunity school student achievement PARCC Math rates show that the mean scores for community schools (Math 2016, $M = 710.43$; Math 2017, $M = 710.25$) were lower than those of noncommunity schools (Math 2016, $M = 714.83$; Math 2017, $M = 715.57$). When comparing the community school and noncommunity school student achievement PARCC ELA rates, the mean scores for community schools (ELA 2016, $M = 706.80$; ELA 2017, $M = 706.75$) were lower than those of noncommunity schools (ELA 2016, $M = 711.39$; ELA 2017, $M = 711.89$). When comparing the number of students scoring proficient (see Table 4) on the PARCC assessment, analysis showed that number of students scoring proficient in Math in community schools (Math proficiency 2016, $M = 7.53$; Math proficiency 2017, $M = 7.33$) were fewer than those of at noncommunity schools (Math proficiency 2016, $M = 11.69$; Math proficiency 2017, $M = 11.73$). Analysis also showed that the number of students scoring proficient in ELA in community schools (ELA proficiency 2016, $M = 6.01$; ELA proficiency 2017, $M = 6.16$) were fewer than those in noncommunity schools (ELA proficiency 2017, $M = 9.80$; ELA proficiency 2017, $M = 11.27$).

Table 3*Mean PARCC Scores for Noncommunity and Community Schools*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Community schools ^a		
Math 2016	710.43	10.93
ELA 2016	706.80	10.67
Math 2017	710.25	10.37
ELA 2017	706.75	9.64
Noncommunity schools ^b		
Math 2016	714.83	13.26
ELA 2016	711.39	12.86
Math 2017	715.57	13.61
ELA 2017	711.89	14.21

Note. ^a*n* = 40. ^b*n* = 70.

Table 4*Mean PARCC Student Proficiency Rate for Noncommunity and Community Schools*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Community schools ^a		
Math 2016	7.53	5.46
ELA 2016	6.01	5.32
Math 2017	7.33	4.96
ELA 2017	6.16	4.35
Noncommunity schools ^b		
Math 2016	11.69	9.84
ELA 2016	9.80	8.71
Math 2017	11.73	10.80
ELA 2017	11.27	10.74

Note. ^a*n* = 40. ^b*n* = 70.

Research Outcomes

Because all the schools studied were from the same school district, and had similar populations of students, equal variance was assumed. Group statistics were used to determine the

standard error of the mean for PARCC Math and ELA scores for both community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017. The standard error of the mean for the eight samples ranged from 1.524 to 1.728. This small variability indicates that the results are in alignment with the actual population mean for Baltimore City, providing confidence in the accuracy of the outcome.

Math 2016 Mean. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare the Math 2016 student achievement of community schools ($M = 48.86$, $SD = 10.93$) and noncommunity schools ($M = 59.29$, $SD = 13.26$). The results of the Wilcoxon sum rank test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the performance of community schools and noncommunity schools, $Z = -1.65$, $p = .10$.

ELA 2016 Mean. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare ELA mean student achievement in 2016 for community schools ($M = 47.85$, $SD = 10.67$) and noncommunity schools ($M = 59.87$, $SD = 12.86$). The results indicated that although noncommunity schools scored slightly better than community schools, there was not a significant difference in the 2016 ELA scores $Z = -1.90$, $p < .06$.

Math 2017 Mean. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare the Math 2017 student achievement of community schools ($M = 47.61$, $SD = 10.37$) and noncommunity schools ($M = 60.01$, $SD = 13.61$). The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the performance of community schools and noncommunity schools, $Z = -1.96$, $p < .05$.

ELA 2017 Mean. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare the ELA 2017 student achievement of community schools ($M = 48.88$, $SD = 9.64$) and noncommunity schools ($M =$

59.29, $SD = 14.21$). The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the performance of community schools and noncommunity schools $Z = -1.648, p < .10$.

ELA 2016 Proficient. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 61.03, SD = 8.71$) and community schools ($M = 45.83, SD = 5.32$) on the number of students scoring proficient on PARCC 2016 ELA assessment. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the number of students scoring proficient $Z = -2.41, p < .05$.

Math 2016 Proficient. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 60.35, SD = 9.84$) and community schools ($M = 47.01, SD = 5.46$) on the number of students scoring proficient on the PARCC 2016 Math assessment. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the number of students scoring proficient $Z = -2.11, p < .05$.

ELA 2017 Proficient. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 61.04, SD = 10.74$) and community schools ($M = 45.80, SD = 4.35$) on the number of students scoring proficient on PARCC 2017 ELA assessment. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the number of students scoring proficient $Z = -2.41, p < .05$.

Math 2017 Proficient. A Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 60.03, SD = 10.8/0$) and community schools ($M = 47.58, SD = 4.96$) on the number of students scoring proficient on PARCC 2017 Math assessment. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the number of students scoring proficient $Z = -1.97, p < .05$.

Results for Research Question 1

When comparing student achievement between community schools and noncommunity schools on the PARCC assessment, the results were mixed. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of community schools and noncommunity schools on the 2016 Math assessment, 2016 ELA assessment, and on the 2017 ELA assessment. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of community schools and noncommunity schools on the 2017 Math assessment. There was also a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in the number of students who scored proficient on the PARCC assessment on the 2016 Math, 2016 ELA, 2017 Math, and 2017 ELA assessments. Because of the mixed results, we reject the null hypothesis as there does appear to be a relationship between student achievement and community or noncommunity school management type.

Research Question 2: Attendance Rates

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Null Hypothesis 2: Schools with a community school management type have no statistically significant difference in the aggregate student attendance rates in 2016 and 2017.

Comparison of the attendance rates of community schools and noncommunity schools was made based on the overall attendance rates as well as the number of chronically absent students in each management type of school in 2016 and 2017.

Test for Normality and Equality of Variance

A Shapiro-Wilk normality test found that in both community schools as well as noncommunity schools the attendance rates as well as the number of chronically absent students was approximately normally distributed in both 2016 and 2017. Noncommunity school data showed an attendance rate for 2016 had a skewness of -0.18 ($SE = .29$) and a kurtosis of -0.58 ($SE = .57$), a chronically absent student 2016 skewness of $.35$ ($SE = .29$) and a kurtosis of -0.54 ($SE = .57$), attendance 2017 skewness of -0.35 ($SE = .28$) and a kurtosis of -0.04 ($SE = .57$) and a chronically absent student 2017 reporting of a skewness of $.28$ ($SE = .28$) and a kurtosis of -0.48 ($SE = .57$). Community school data reporting showed an attendance 2016 rate with a skewness of -0.61 ($SE = .37$) and a kurtosis of -0.26 ($SE = .73$), a chronically absent student 2016 rate skewness of 0.65 ($SE = .37$) and a kurtosis of -0.21 ($SE = .73$), a 2017 attendance rates skewness of -0.26 ($SE = .37$) and a kurtosis of -0.07 ($SE = .73$), and a 2017 chronically absent student skewness of 0.19 ($SE = .37$) and a kurtosis of -0.54 ($SE = .73$). The Levene's test for equality variances found the p -values for each test to be greater than .05, indicating that the variances in the community school data and noncommunity school data were equal for all data points. An independent samples t test was run to compare the attendance rates and chronically absent student rates between community schools and noncommunity schools.

Means Data

A comparison of community school and noncommunity school means data was conducted (see Table 5). Community schools had a lower attendance rate in 2016 and 2017 and a higher number of chronically absent students in 2016 and 2017. The standard error of the mean when comparing community schools and noncommunity schools ranged from .2596 to 1.6900.

Table 5*Mean Attendance and Chronically Absent Rates for Noncommunity and Community Schools*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Community schools ^a		
Attendance rate 2016	92.28	2.68
Chronically absent 2016	19.14	10.69
Attendance rate 2017	91.40	2.66
Chronically absent 2017	22.26	10.32
Noncommunity schools ^b		
Attendance rate 2016	92.60	2.17
Chronically absent 2016	17.86	8.73
Attendance rate 2017	91.83	2.57
Chronically absent 2017	21.10	10.34

Note. ^a*n* = 40. ^b*n* = 70.

Research Outcome

The Levene's test of normality found the *p*-values for each test to be greater than .05, indicating that the variances in the community school data and noncommunity school data were equal for all data points. An independent samples *t* test was run to compare the attendance rates and chronically absent student rates between community schools and noncommunity schools.

Attendance Rate 2016. Data from the 70 noncommunity schools (*M* = 92.60, *SD* = 2.17) were compared to that of the 40 community schools (*M* = 92.28, *SD* = 2.68). Although noncommunity schools had a better attendance rate, there was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools, $t(108) = .675$, $p = .50$.

Chronically Absent Students 2016. The number of chronically absent students in 2016 was compared between noncommunity schools (*M* = 17.86, *SD* = 8.73) and community schools

($M = 19.14$, $SD = 10.69$). There was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools, $t(108) = -0.677$, $p = .50$.

Attendance Rate 2017. Attendance rates for 2017 were used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 91.83$, $SD = 2.57$) and community schools ($M = 91.40$, $SD = 2.67$). There was a not a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools, $t(108) = .830$, $p = .41$.

Chronically Absent Students 2017. Chronically absent student numbers from 2017 were used to compare noncommunity schools ($M = 21.10$, $SD = 10.34$) and community schools ($M = 22.26$, $SD = 10.32$). There was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools, $t(108) = -.569$, $p = .57$.

Results of Research Question 2

Although community school students showed slightly lower attendance rates and a higher number of chronically absent students, the results indicate that there was a statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity school attendance rate in 2017. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis as there does not appear to be a relationship between student attendance and community or noncommunity school management type.

Research Question 3: Suspension Incidences

Research Question 3: What is the difference in student suspensions in Baltimore City community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017?

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the number of student suspensions in community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017.

In 2017, there were 30,031 students enrolled in noncommunity schools included in this study. During that time, there were 1,677 incidences of students suspended from noncommunity schools. Community schools had an enrollment of 18,884 students in 2017. In the 2016-2017 school year, there were 1,778 incidences of students suspended from community schools. Calculating the number of days out of school due to suspensions in 2016 revealed that the 2,081 suspension incidences in noncommunity schools were responsible for 5,794 missed days of school. In community schools, the number of suspension incidences in 2016 totaled 1,979, which accounted for 5,337 days out of school. The three data points used for comparisons were the number of suspensions in 2016, number of suspensions in 2017, and number of days out of schools due to suspensions in 2016. The number of days missed is a data set only reported on in even years, so the study had no data from 2017 to analyze. The purpose of including the number of days missed due to suspensions was to add additional validity to how suspension data are interpreted, as schools themselves may experience disciplinary infractions of varying severity, thereby potentially requiring varied days out of school due to suspensions. For example, a student suspended from school for stealing lunch money would presumably receive a different consequence from the student who is suspended for physically attacking a peer. In order to account for potential differences due to types of suspensions, the number of days out of school due to suspensions was analyzed.

Test for Normality

The data were first checked for normality by viewing graphical displays and conducting the Shapiro-Wilk normality test. The test results showed p -values less than .05, indicating that the community school and noncommunity school suspension data were not normally distributed. The Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to analyze the data sets.

Noncommunity school data for number of suspensions 2016 had a skewness of 1.61 ($SE = .31$) and a kurtosis of 3.49 ($SE = .61$); for number of suspensions 2017 there was a skewness of 2.60 ($SE = .31$) and a kurtosis of 9.12 ($SE = .61$), and for suspension days out of school 2016 there was a skewness of 1.69 ($SE = .39$) and a kurtosis of 2.03 ($SE = .759$). Community school data for number of suspensions 2016 had a skewness of 2.437 ($SE = .39$) and a kurtosis of 7.42 ($SE = .76$); for suspensions 2017 there was a skewness of 1.69 ($SE = .39$) and a kurtosis of 2.03 ($SE = .76$), and for suspension days out of school 2016 there was a skewness of 2.87 ($SE = .39$) and a kurtosis of 9.21 ($SE = .76$).

Means Data

Because all the schools studied were from the same school district, and had similar populations of students, equal variance was assumed. A comparison of mean suspension data (see Table 6) for noncommunity and community schools was conducted. Noncommunity schools reported a mean of 30.16 for number of suspensions 2016, 24.63 for number of suspensions 2017, and 91.97 for number of suspension days out of school 2016. Community school means showed 49.48 for number of suspensions 2016, 44.45 for number of suspensions 2017, and 144.24 for number of suspension days out of school 2016.

Table 6*Mean Suspension Rate and Suspension Days for Noncommunity and Community Schools*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Community Schools		
Suspensions Incidences 2016 ^a	7.53	5.46
Suspension Days Out 2016 ^b	6.01	5.32
Suspension Incidences 2017 ^c	7.33	4.96
Noncommunity Schools		
Suspension Incidences 2016 ^d	11.69	9.84
Suspension Days Out 2016 ^e	9.80	8.71
Suspension Incidences 2017 ^f	11.73	10.80

Note. ^a*n* = 40. ^b*n* = 37. ^c*n* = 49. ^d*n* = 69. ^e*n* = 63. ^f*n* = 68.

Days Missed from School due to Suspensions in 2016

The Wilcoxon rank sum test was conducted to evaluate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the number of days missed from school due to suspensions between the 63 noncommunity schools and 37 community schools in 2016. The results indicated a statistically significant difference, $Z = -2.24$, $p < .05$ between the number of days missed due to suspensions in community schools and noncommunity schools

Number of Suspensions 2016. The Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to compare the number of suspension incidences in 2016 between 69 noncommunity schools and 40 community schools. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the noncommunity school and community school suspension incidences in 2016, $Z = -1.66$, $p < .10$.

Number of Suspensions 2017. Using the Wilcoxon rank sum test, the number of suspension incidences for 68 noncommunity schools and 40 community schools in 2017 was analyzed. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the noncommunity school and community school suspension incidences in 2017, $Z = -1.84$, $p > .05$.

Results for Research Question 3

The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in the number of suspensions in 2016 and 2017. This was not the case when comparing for the number of days out of school due to suspensions. Because of the significant results for the number of suspensions in 2016 and 2017, we reject the null hypothesis.

Research Question 4: School Climate

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between school climate indices (physical security, respectful relationships, school connectedness) and the community school management type in Baltimore City Schools in 2017?

Null Hypothesis 4: There is no relationship between school climate (physical security, respectful relationships, or school connectedness) and community school management type.

In school years 2016 and 2017, Baltimore City Public Schools measured school climate in part by the responses received on surveys administered to staff, parents, and students. The three question indices reported in each school's profile document are the Physical Security Index (PSI), School Connectedness Index (SCI), and the Respectful Relationships Index (RRI). This study compared the community schools and noncommunity schools based on how teachers, students, and parents responded to the school climate survey. The school climate data were organized into two categories, positive climate index ratings greater than or equal to 75% were coded as 1.00 and those that were less than 75% are coded as 2.00.

Crosstabulation

The comparison data provided by the crosstabulation provided insights into the percentages of noncommunity schools and community schools whose climate survey respondents provided favorable ratings of ≥ 75 . There were 70 noncommunity schools and 40 community schools each year (see Table 7).

The number of noncommunity schools whose respondents provided favorable survey ratings were 34 (48.5%) for the Physical Security Index, 19 (27.1%) for the Respectful Relationships Index, and 53 (75.7%) for the School Connectedness Index. Community schools with favorable survey ratings for 2016 numbered 15 (37.5%) for the Physical Security Index, 10 (25%) for the Respectful Relationships Index, and 32 (80%) for the School Connectedness Index.

Noncommunity schools and community schools were also compared for their school climate in school year 2017, using the same criteria of favorable survey index ratings being ≥ 75 . The number of noncommunity schools whose respondents indicated favorable ratings in the climate survey indices were 38 (54.2%) favorable response ratings for the Physical Security Index, 17 (24.2%) for the Respectful Relationships Index, and 61 (87.1%) for the School Connectedness Index. Community schools with respondents indicating favorable survey ratings for 2017 numbered 13 (32.5%) favorable for the Physical Security Index, 7 (17.5%) for the Respectful Relationships Index, and 33 (82.5%) for the School Connectedness Index.

Table 7*Frequency Tables for Chi Square Test*

PSI 2016

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	34	36	70
Community	15	25	40
Total	49	61	110

RRI 2016

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	19	51	70
Community	10	30	40
Total	29	81	110

SCI 2016

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	53	17	70
Community	32	8	40
Total	85	25	110

PSI 2017

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	38	32	70
Community	13	27	40
Total	51	59	110

RRI 2017

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	17	53	70
Community	7	33	40
Total	24	86	110

SCI 2017

School Type	75–100 %	less than 75%	Total
Noncommunity	61	9	70
Community	33	7	40
Total	94	16	110

Research Outcomes

Chi-square tests of independence were used to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between school management type, of community schools and noncommunity schools, and school climate. School climate was determined by analysis of school climate survey responses for the indices of Physical Security, Respectful Relationships, and School Connectedness.

Physical Security. The number of schools in 2016 whose respondents provided favorable ratings for the Physical Security Index did not significantly differ between noncommunity schools and community schools $X^2(1, N = 110) = 1.263, p = .26$. There was a significant relationship between school management type in 2017 and community responses to the Physical Security Index $X^2(1, N = 110) = 4.858, p < .05$.

Respectful Relationships. The chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between school management type in 2016 and the Respectful Relationships Climate Index, $X^2(1, N = 110) = .060, p = .81$. Analysis of the 2017 data also depicts that there was no relationship between school management type and respectful relationships, $X^2(1, N = 110) = .687, p = .41$.

School Connectedness. Data analysis revealed that there was no relationship between school connectedness and school management type in 2016, $X^2(1, N = 110) = .27, p = .61$. The 2017 data similarly showed no significant relationship between school connectedness and school management type, $X^2(1, N = 110) = .44, p = .51$.

Results for Research Question 4

The results of the data analysis found that in 2016 and 2017, there was no significant relationship between community schools and noncommunity schools and school climate when measuring the school connectedness and respectful relationships indices. There was also no significant relationship between school management type and the Physical Security Index in 2016. However, there was a significant relationship between school management type and the Physical Security Index in 2017. Indices examined were the 2016 and 2017 Physical Security, 2016 and 2017 Respectful Relationships, and 2016 and 2017 School Connectedness. Because there was a significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in one of the six indices measured, we must reject the null hypothesis.

Summary

Data from 2016 and 2017 were analyzed in order to determine if there were any trends that indicated differences between community schools and noncommunity schools in the Baltimore City Public School district.

The first research question asked whether there was a statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity schools on the 2016 and 2017 PARCC assessment for ELA or Math. The analysis determined while the students in both school management types had similar mean scores on the PARCC assessment, there was a significant difference between

community schools and noncommunity schools when considering the number of students scoring proficient on the PARCC assessment in 2016 and 2017, in both ELA and Math. Because of the mixed results, we reject the null hypothesis as there does appear to be a relationship between student achievement and community or noncommunity school management type.

The second research question asked whether there was a statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity schools when it came to student attendance in 2016 and 2017. The question was extended to look at the rate of chronically absent students in both types of schools in 2016 and 2017. Although students in community schools had a better attendance rate, and lower chronic absenteeism rate, the differences were slight. Overall, there was no statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity schools with regard to either student attendance or chronic absenteeism rates. We failed to reject the second null hypothesis.

The third research question asked if there was a statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity schools when considering the 2016 and 2017 suspension rates. In addition, the number of days missed from school due to being suspended in school year 2016 was analyzed. With statistical significance between community school and noncommunity school suspension rates in 2017, the third null hypothesis was rejected.

The fourth research question asked if there was a statistical difference between community schools and noncommunity schools and the 2016 and 2017 school climate responses. The responses were organized using cut scores of greater than or equal to 75 and those that were less than or equal to 74. School climate was organized into three indices: Physical Security, Respectful Relationships, and School Connectedness. The data from each school climate index were analyzed and indicated that there was a significant relationship between school

management type and the 2017 Physical Security Index. Therefore, we reject the fourth null hypothesis.

The data in this chapter were analyzed for the purpose of drawing direct comparisons between community schools and noncommunity schools in the areas of academic achievement, student attendance, suspension rates, and school climate. The results of this research found that in Baltimore City, community schools and noncommunity schools performed quite similarly in most areas. Insights into this as well as recommended next steps for future research will be shared in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

Community schools are designed to bring a partnership between schools, families, and the community in order to support student achievement (Alonso et al., 2011). Like many large urban school districts across the nation, Baltimore City Public Schools adopted the community school initiative in 2005 as a school reform strategy to support the needs of the communities from which the students come in an effort to ultimately positively impact student achievement. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence (Feasey, 2017) theory suggests that addressing the needs of students and their families, and partnering with parents and community members, are effective strategies for impacting student achievement. Services such as imbedded health and therapeutic services for families, extracurricular academic support, meals, and childcare are provided in many of the Baltimore City community schools (Durham et al., 2017). The purpose of this study was to examine the data in order to determine if the programs and resources in Baltimore City community schools resulted in a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in the areas of student achievement, suspensions, attendance, and school climate.

Summary of Findings

Four research questions were posed to answer the question of whether or not a difference exists between community schools and noncommunity schools in the areas of student achievement, suspension rates, attendance rates, and overall school climate.

In Maryland in 2016 and 2017, Grades 3–5 student performance in math and English Language Arts (ELA) was measured using the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for college and Careers (PARCC). Student scores would range from 1–5. Those scoring a 4 or a 5 were considered proficient by state standards. Baltimore City underperforms when compared to other districts in the state of Maryland. In 2016 and 2017, the average number of students meeting or exceeding expectations was 39.5% in the state of Maryland. In Baltimore City, the average number of students meeting or exceeding expectations in 2016 and 2017 was only 14.5%. Research Question 1 sought to answer whether or not there was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools when measuring student achievement in math and ELA using PARCC assessment data. Data analysis showed that when comparing the means of community schools and noncommunity schools, there was no statistically significant difference in the areas of Math 2016, Math 2017, and ELA 2016. However, there was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools on the mean 2017 ELA scores, with noncommunity schools slightly outperforming community schools. It is possible for a school management type to have a lower mean score on the PARCC assessment, when compared to the other school management type, yet still have more students who are considered proficient, scoring a 4 or 5. This study examined the number of students proficient on the PARCC assessment in 2016 and 2017. There was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in the number of proficient students for 2016 Math, 2016 ELA, 2017 Math, and 2017 ELA. In all four content areas measured, there was a greater number of proficient students in noncommunity schools. This study answered the question of academic achievement and rejected the null hypothesis for the first research question.

Prior research (Olson, 2014; Sheldon, 2007) on the effect of community school initiatives and student attendance indicated that there was nonconclusive to no significant relationship. The second research question in this study queried whether a statistically significant difference existed between community schools and noncommunity schools when measuring student attendance in 2016 and 2017. There was no significant difference found in the attendance rates. Baltimore City labels students who are absent for 10% or greater of the school year as being chronically absent (Baltimore City Public Schools, 2020a). Chronic absenteeism may be caused by factors such as a student's disability, food insecurity, family homelessness, traumatic experiences, and maladaptive behavioral and social skills (Elliott & Place, 2019; Stempel et al., 2017). This study's analysis of the 2016 and 2017 data for chronically absent Baltimore City students found that there was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools. The null hypothesis for the second research question was retained.

A successful disciplinary intervention should be multifaceted to address the unique needs experienced by families in the community schools (Voyles, 2012). In Baltimore City Public Schools, behavioral expectations for students are outlined in the Code of Conduct (Baltimore City Schools, 2020e). The Code of Conduct contains five levels of intervention. The first level is for strategies to be employed by classroom teachers. The second level involves administrative responses. Levels 3 through 5 are suspension-worthy responses with increasing time out of school. The third research question examined the number of suspension incidences in relation to the school management types of community schools or noncommunity schools. Suspension data were first examined by comparing the number of suspension incidences between community and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017. A student may be suspended more than once in a given school year, yet each suspension incident would be counted separately for this study.

Although overall, noncommunity schools suspended students at a slightly higher rate in 2016 and 2017, there was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools. Analyzing the number of days missed from school due to suspensions provided some insights into the severity of the infraction. For example, two schools may have 10 suspension incidences each in a given year. Yet for the first school, the incidences may all be Level 3 in the Code of Conduct, while the comparison school incidences may be due to Level 4 infractions. In this case, analyzing the number of suspensions alone would not be as insightful without also considering the number of days missed from school due to suspensions. In this study, analysis of the number of days missed from school in 2017 due to suspensions found that there was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools, with the mean number of days missed from school due to suspensions being less in community schools. This finding helped to clearly answer the third research question and led to the null hypothesis being rejected.

Many of the communities in Baltimore City are riddled with poverty, creating chasms between its inhabitants and valuable resources that residents need to thrive (Nettles, 1991; Waddock, 1995). A study of the overlapping spheres of influence (Elliott & Elliott, 1996) indicated that strengthening parental relationships led to increased student achievement. Researchers (Halsey, 2001; Sanders, 2001) assign a high degree of value to parent partnerships and school climate. However, there has been inconsistent and limited evidence of the impact of community schools on school climate (Johnston et al., 2020). School climate was an area of keen interest in this study. Community schools are said to be characterized by cooperation with external organizations, parental involvement, and extracurricular activities (Heers et al., 2014). As such, it was expected that there would be a significant difference between community schools

and noncommunity schools in the area of school climate. The school climate used in this study was the product of data provided by the district based on surveys administered to students, parents, and school staff. School year 2016-2017 was the last school year in which the survey was administered by the district to all three parties. In this study, the fourth research question compared the school climate of community schools and noncommunity schools in 2016 and 2017. Staff, student, and parent surveys provided insights categorized into three indices, Physical Security, School Connectedness, and Respectful Relationships. When analyzing the Physical Security Index, there was a statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools in 2017. In fact, in that school year, the difference between community schools (32.5%) and noncommunity schools (54.2%) was vast. Although this was not a correlational study, it is wondered if the higher number of suspensions at community schools resulted in the low sense of physical security. There was no statistically significant difference in the 2016 Physical Security Index. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference between community schools and noncommunity schools when analyzing the School Connectedness or Respectful Relationships indices in 2016 and 2017. The results for school climate were mixed, with no incidences of community schools having a stronger school climate than noncommunity schools.

Limitations

Limitations in the design of the study that were mentioned in Chapter 3 included the ongoing availability of the data. Because some of the schools have shuttered since this research began, and because the climate survey is no longer administered by Baltimore City Public Schools to staff, students and parents, future researchers will be unable to exactly replicate this study using identical sources. In all, this research design, comparing community schools to

noncommunity schools within the same district, could be replicated by future researchers for Baltimore City or other districts. Consideration for these findings should be made with the understanding that although data were gathered from two different management types, community schools and noncommunity schools, all of the schools are from the same district. Therefore, the policies and practices defining school aspects, such as professional development disciplinary practices, are common across both school management types.

Implications for Further Research

The benefits of using preexisting data for this study were numerous. The climate surveys implemented by Baltimore City Public Schools were vetted, increasing their validity. The data regarding individual schools that were reported by the district, and confirmed by the state of Maryland, also increases the transparency and validity of the data, as well as make it easily generalized by future researchers (Weston et al., 2019). By providing numerous variables in this research, the information gathered can be used to confirm past study analyses as well as provide opportunities to explore additional potential correlations in the study.

Educators widely espouse that there is a correlation between school attendance and academic achievement. In this study, there was a significant difference found between community schools and noncommunity schools with regard to student achievement. The data in this research could be used to study the correlations between academic achievement and school attendance, in order to determine if prior research (Cosgrove et al., 2018; Oghuvbu, 2010), which states that school attendance is a strong predictor of academic success, could be confirmed. This would support community school research that suggests that ongoing communication between home and school, specifically about the importance of school attendance on academic

achievement, proven to be valuable in increasing both attendance and academic achievement (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Researchers (Wald & Losen, 2003) have discussed the detrimental effect of missed school due to suspensions on the academic trajectory of students. Heavily punitive disciplinary systems are harmful to student achievement, with lengthy suspensions leading to expulsions and arrests for minor adolescent infractions (Mallett, 2016). Future researchers may be interested in determining if correlations exist between student achievement and suspension rates in Baltimore City community and noncommunity schools. Such findings would help to further the discussion that the impediments to academic achievement for at-risk students are more complex than suspension numbers. Further, a correlational study between school climate and suspensions could be used to address research that suggests that students who have been suspended have a more negative impression of school as whole than do their counterparts who have never been suspended (Huang & Anyon, 2020). Likewise, the perceptions of school staff are negatively correlated to suspension rates (Bear et al., 2014).

A positive school climate promotes attendance and academic achievement (Daily et al., 2020). After implementing community school initiatives from 2014–2016, New York City saw a decrease in chronic absenteeism by 3% which was greater than the 1% decrease seen in noncommunity schools (Superville, 2017). Community schools do not have the monopoly on positive environments. This is something, through their style of leadership, school administrators can positively impact (Black, 2010). A potential correlational study between school climate and academic achievement in Baltimore City community schools may aid school leaders in designing strategies to engage their school partners.

Future researchers can utilize this study as the foundation of their research on community schools. Strategies for extending the research further could be to take a deeper look at community schools using families as the sample size instead of the entire school. This would allow researchers to measure the ability of community school initiatives to ameliorate needs identified by families and targeted by that specific school's partnership, such as adult education, mental health, physical health, and food security. This would also allow researchers to determine the degree to which families took advantage of the resources provided by the community schools. Another aspect for consideration, when looking at the family unit, is the impact of the family on the learning styles of the students. Diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as the learning styles of the parents themselves, may impact students significantly. Parents attempting to partner with the teacher and school may be able to prepare their child to recognize their learning styles in order to create a plan with the teacher and school that helps the student to be successful (Martin & Potter, 1998).

Leaders in education often rely on an input/output (Eide & Showalter, 2010) method of determining the effectiveness of intervention efforts. This can be a very formulaic means of assuming that if given specific inputs such as class size, extracurricular activities, and family involvement, then the outputs of student achievement and high attendance should be realized. However, research has shown that the complexity of meeting the needs of many students requires an intentional approach to addressing barriers to learning. A variable that must be considered in educational research is the student. The students, with their diverse experiences and changing needs, create a challenge for educational researchers who are seeking to evaluate policy and programs. Toxic stress experienced by at-risk children, such as those who live in poverty or have experienced a trauma, may impact not only how the students learn but also how

they develop physically, socially, and emotionally (Browne, 2014). These are the populations most often targeted by community school initiatives. The long-lasting impact of toxic stress cannot be understated, as students living in poverty, born preterm, and having experienced toxic stress are more likely to experience a learning disability and increased diagnoses of ADD/ADHD (Kelly & Li, 2019). Researchers seeking to investigate the effectiveness of community schools to mitigate factors such as poverty, toxic stress, unemployment, lack of access to healthcare, and food insecurity, are encouraged to consider measures that address progress as a research output, as opposed to achievement.

Students from the notoriously effective community school program in New York City, the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), have shown that after attending one of the charter schools in the HCZ have closed the achievement gap between low-income minority children and their White counterparts (Robelen, 2009). HCZ targets the families within a 100-block radius, providing adult education, health supports, and extracurricular academic support. It is based on the needs of, and driven by, the community itself. The charter schools support community initiatives already in place, as opposed to Baltimore City community schools, where the initiatives are driven by the school with the hope of getting community and parent buy-in. Future researchers may be interested in comparing design of successful community school programs such as the HCZ to the Baltimore City design, in order to determine if there are identifiable factors that impact student achievement, attendance, suspension, and school climate.

This study has sought to answer the question, "Do community schools work?" Based on the results of this study, the answer would be no, they do not. Many of Baltimore City's community schools have been in place for over 10 years, yet their students are performing on par or worse than their counterparts in noncommunity schools. The degree to which the needs of

Baltimore neighborhoods are assuaged may not be adequately measured by traditional school measures of state assessment proficiency, attendance, suspensions, or school climate. By design, the intervention programs in community schools are reactionary, developed based on the identified needs of the neighborhoods. The willingness of the community to participate in the interventions, as well as the degree to which the interventions provide appropriately comprehensive supports, may all impact the degrees of change for community school students. A longitudinal study may determine that, over time, there are benefits to the students and communities in Baltimore. Looking specifically at student achievement, attendance, suspensions, and school climate in community schools, comparing community schools to themselves over time, could provide meaningful insights into the progress of the Baltimore City community school initiative. Quantitative data measuring long-term improved health, parental employment, and social services such as food security and consistent housing accessed through resources provided by community school partners may be alternate means for measuring the successes of community schools.

Conclusion

Epstein's theory asserts that the effect of strong school–family partnerships is increased opportunities to be responsive to the needs of learners (Epstein, 2011). While this theory is not exclusively applied to community schools, such schools by their design are primed to formalize the partnerships that would foster shared decision-making and increased parental involvement. The design of community schools in Baltimore City has provided a framework for garnering insights into the valuable cultural and social characteristics of a community that must be understood in order to understand the values of community partners (Theobald, 1991). This study found that there was little evidence to support the benefit of community school programs

in Baltimore City based on the current measures of school success: academic achievement, suspensions, attendance, and school climate. In fact, the students in community schools performed worse on standardized assessments. This study was one lens through which to view community schools. As district leaders consider interventions for factors that impede student achievement, this study may be useful in determining how best to measure strategies that impact the unique and ever-changing needs of communities.

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