SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY, AND FAMILY:

THE PROMISES OF COMMUNITY-BASED SCHOOL REFORM

AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

by

Shannon Sue Rishky

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies

Boise State University

May 2010

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the thesis submitted by

Shannon Sue Rishky

Thesis Title: School Community and Family: The Promises of Community-Based School Reform and School Success

Date of Final Oral Examination: 09 April 2010

The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Shannon Sue Rishky, and they also evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination, and that the thesis was satisfactory for a master's degree and ready for any final modifications that they explicitly required.

Ginna Husting, Ph.D.	Chair, Supervisory Committee
Philip P. Kelly, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Steven Patrick, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee
Leslie R. Alm, Ph.D.	Member, Supervisory Committee

The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Ginna Husting, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee. The thesis was approved for the Graduate College by John R. Pelton, Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate College.

ABSTRACT

A new trend in U.S. education is community-based schools. Community schools offer on-site programs and services to whole families to improve student success. Community-based schools can improve student learning, increase parent participation, give teachers more time to focus on instruction, and create the necessary conditions for learning. But we know relatively little about successful new programs in rural states and smaller urban centers. This thesis, a case study of an elementary school in a small U.S. urban center, identifies key factors for the success of such programs. Through in-depth interviews with administrators, teachers, and support staff the following factors were identified: a strong teaching staff; a supportive and collaborative principal; district leaders who find funding for the school; academic and extracurricular support programs for students and families. While most low socio-economic schools are limited by lack of social capital, this case study shows that social capital, as well as strong supportive staff and leaders, and access to federal funding are vital to the success of community-based schools.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

An important new trend in U.S. education is community-based schools. Such schools act as hubs of their communities, engaging community resources to offer a range of on-site programs and services that support the success of students and their families. Community schools arise from increasing awareness that children cannot learn well in school if their families are not functioning well outside of the classroom. Researchers in education increasingly show that community-based schools can improve student learning and increase parent participation (Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Barnett, 1998; Breitborde, 2002; Lee, 2008). Jackson (2007) states that community involvement is increasingly viewed as an effective means to provide students with resources and opportunities that support academic achievement. While this is a relatively new phenomenon, community school initiatives constitute part of a larger growing movement to strengthen the economic, social, and physical well being of communities in U.S. schools (Canada, 2008). The aim of such facilities is to provide a link to outside agencies that are located within the same physical proximity, and to provide essential services to students and their families.

Community-based schools can improve student learning, increase parent participation, give teachers more time to focus on instruction, and create the necessary conditions for learning (Anderson-Butcher, 2006; McGaughy, 2000). This allows children to graduate, prepared for college and/or work. Services include health and mental health counseling, parental education and employment aid, a safe environment for

those critical after school hours, help with homework, and appropriate role models. Such

services create a community-oriented school that allows for responsiveness and

accessibility for those most in need in the community (Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Peske &

Haycock, 2006). Engaging educators, parents, local businesses, and a diverse community

population increases student achievement because lifelong learning is emphasized as a

community value. Service integration strategies and community development offer

examples of reforms that may significantly transform educational, social and health

outcomes by cultivating initiatives that target the surrounding community. New

programs like these are specifically designed to address the problems of poverty and

eliminate both academic and non-academic barriers to learning.

This thesis compares a single case study of Sagebrush[1] Elementary School in

Tombstone, Idaho to the current research literature investigating community-based

programs and schools. Sagebrush Elementary serves a student population of over 400

students. Of the 400+ students more than 80% qualify for free and reduced lunches.

Approximately 30% of the student population, 104 students who represent 20 different

countries with 22 different languages, speak English as a second language. This particular

school has a high refugee population that accounts for the high level of English learners

but also challenges the school with language barriers as well.

This comparison highlights the promises of community-based educational centers

that focus on school, community, and family connections. It includes an overview of the

---

[1] Sagebrush Elementary is pseudonym for an actual elementary school in the state of
Idaho. A pseudonym was chosen to protect the confidentiality of interviewees.

factors maximizing program success in the existing literature. These factors include but are not limited to: highly qualified teachers, a strong principal with adequate communication skills, supportive district leadership, parental and local community involvement, and an on-site community center (Barr, 2003; Jackson, 2007; Pechman, 1996). Case studies like these provide opportunities for constructing a body of policy on effective learning environments and innovative school designs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research suggests that schools that serve as the center of communities are making notable improvements in student learning, family engagement, and community vitality (Borba, 2009). For example, "the Harlem Children's Zone" designs, funds, and operates a holistic system of education, social-services and community-building programs within Harlem to counter the negative influences of crime, drugs and poverty and helps children complete college and enter the job market (Canada, 2008). Schools that serve as centers of the community promote lifelong learning, where school is central to the life of the community.

Schools as the center of communities can offer collaborative solutions to the educational challenges of the twenty-first century. By including the entire community in the education process, the best aims of a democratic society are served by both process and product (Bingler, 2003; McGaughy, 2000). Students demonstrate gains in academic achievement, parent teacher relationships are strengthened, the surrounding community enjoys greater security, and schools themselves are used more rigorously (Pechman, 1996; Sugarman, 2004). When done well, community-based schools plan and implement programs beneficial to educational, social, health, recreational, and cultural needs of the community (Anderson-Butcher, 2006). They provide low socio-economic students and families access to resources not found in traditional educational institutions and address multiple academic and nonacademic barriers to learning.

One of the most severe problems facing schools is the fact that many poor and minority children enter school substantially behind in academic skills. Instead of having expert teachers who have the ability and knowledge to identify these children's needs, such students are often given less experienced and under qualified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Sanders & Horn, 1995). Peske & Haycock (2006) found large disparities in teacher qualifications among the highest poverty and minority schools and those with fewer minority or low-income students. In some cases the evidence shows that 50% of the teachers in low socio-economic schools are uncertified and teaching out of their subject area without having passed at least one of their state tests (Peske & Haycock, 2006). This matters because for every year students are taught by an under qualified teacher, student achievement is impaired and after three consecutive years of under qualified teachers, students may never catch up academically (Jimerson et al., 2006; Peske & Haycock, 2006; Sanders & Horn, 1995). Many studies have shown that poor and minority children underachieve in school not only because they enter behind but because the schools they enter have under qualified teaching staff and few resources available to them (Bryan, 2008; Peske & Haycock, 2006), putting lower socio-economic students at an educational disadvantage.

After teachers, principals are the next most important factor in student success. A supportive and collaborative principal is able to attract and retain a highly qualified teaching staff to work and serve high concentrations of poor and minority students. In successful schools the principal coordinates the curriculum across classrooms supporting a high degree of communication among teachers on curriculum issues. Curriculum

materials, instructional approaches, and assessment instruments used by the school and properly aligned can help to ensure that students are exposed to the objectives and material on which they are tested (Hallinger, 1986). Although instructional leadership is not the sole responsibility of the principal, studies on effective schools portray the principal as the key actor in promoting school wide instructional improvement (Hallinger, 1986; Pechman, 1996; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Equally important are school social workers, counselors, and mentoring programs that develop long term relationships with parents and guardians of students at the school (Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Barr, 2003; Sugarman, 2004). This builds partnerships with school staff, families, and the community itself.

Of course, none of these environments can be created without strong district leadership willing and able to provide funding for low socio-economic schools. States do not always allocate their educational funds equitably because it runs counter to the political ideology of local control. Condron and Roscigno (2003) identified inherent problems with educational funding policies. There are several operational mechanisms in the educational funding process, none of which are mutually exclusive. First, because school board members in most districts are elected officials, they make funding decisions formed by their voting constituency. This impacts poor and minority schools more frequently than affluent schools because both minorities and the poor are less likely to be familiar with the political process. Second, school administrators implement specific application processes that must be followed to receive discretionary funding. Despite the formal process, bias still occurs; "Poorer schools are simply less organizationally and

bureaucratically equipped to formulate … proposals for extra funds" (Condron & Roscigno, 2003, p. 255). Though discretionary funding is intended to help educators and administrators access extra funds, low socio-economic schools are less likely to benefit.

Some funds made available to school districts are earmarked specifically for professional development. Professional development can help teachers gain an understanding of the effects that schooling has on poor or culturally diverse students and offers an opportunity to learn new teaching techniques (Barr, 2003; Jackson, 2007). The language in Title I provides funding for professional development and targets programs for new teachers that will help to increase retention in the field (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). However schools alone cannot address all the barriers to learning that students face. Many children in America come to school accompanied by emotional troubles, limited English proficiency, domestic abuse, limited exposure to role models, and refugee trauma. While many well-intended and concerned parents would like to assist in their children's educational process, they may be limited by language, educational level, or having to work multiple jobs to provide for their family's basic necessities (Breitborde, 2002). Schools, however, can be agencies that link available services to children and their families. As a community organization itself, the public school is positioned to connect impoverished families to service providers, helping to empower families and the communities in which they live, thus lessen the barriers.

Community participation in students' education creates a shared sense of purpose and strengthens a community's feeling of identity and coherence. Students achieve better in environments where learning is a community value and accessible beyond traditional

school hours (Bingler, 2003; Lee, 2008; Sugarman, 2004). School-community

partnerships are one the most important institutions in poor neighborhoods and play a

critical role in providing resources to low-income children. In many low-income

communities, after-school mentoring and tutoring, academic enrichment programs, and

prevention programs are the result of collaborative efforts by schools and community

organizations (Bryan, 2008). Non-academic barriers to learning obstruct a student's

learning abilities in the classroom and affect student success (Borba, 2009; Jackson,

2007). These programs offer low socio-economic children and their families experiences

with relationships, social skills, and values, needed to increase their assets in society and

reduce their risks.

Barriers to learning must be approached from a societal perspective. This requires

reforms in school design to improve efforts that provide and facilitate learning. Such

programs must be comprehensive, versatile, and integrated (Barnett, 1998). Full-service

schools offer facilities that include community centers, dental clinics, provide for social

and health education, address homelessness, substance abuse and drug prevention, and

offer at-risk youth mentors through community based intervention (Barr, 2003; Borba,

2009; Sugarman, 2004). The best reason for promoting community-based schools is that

public schools contain preexisting communication channels infused with economic and

political support. This includes not only elected officials but also community

representatives who create, administer, and evaluate school success (Barnett, 1998;

Bingler, 2003; Canada, 2008; Lee, 2008; U.S. Department of Education and the Regional

Educational Laboratory Network, 1996). To meet the educational needs of the twenty

first-century, the nation must create academic environments that improve learning and

provide for the needs of all learners, serve as the centers of communities, provide for

health, safety and security, and use available resources effectively.

METHODOLOGY

A case study method based on in-depth interviews informs this project. Case studies are particularly well suited to areas of research about which relatively little is known, and to topics requiring holistic analysis of inter-related systems (Feagin & Orum, 1991). An additional difference between case study research and other types of research is that case studies can be a significant communication tool because the analysis of a single case often conveys important information about a phenomenon to researchers in the field and policy makers (Yin, 1994, 2003). Case studies help researchers craft a holistic investigation of an "intervention" or system; in this way case study analysis sets the stage by generating variables and causal hypotheses that can then be tested empirically.

Case study methodology is particularly well suited to my project. The literature on community schools is emerging. We know relatively little about these new programs, especially since community schools are complex sites with a variety of different actors, interests, goals and problems embedded in them. Moreover, much of the research on success of community school programs is based on resource-rich, high profile, and/or urban experiments like the Harlem School Project in New York or the Chicago Public School's After School Programs in urban Chicago (Bingler, 2003). We know little about community schools in rural states and smaller urban centers, especially in the Intermountain West. Thus, this case study identifies key factors relevant for both high-profile schools and smaller programs, which work with far fewer resources in smaller

urban environments. The case study method helps illuminate a single case, Sagebrush Elementary, to identify key factors for success that may be generalizable across smaller community programs in the United States. While future empirical analysis is needed, the current analysis explores the range of factors that seem to contribute to the success of community schools.

Design of Study

This case study employed a semi-structured open-ended questionnaire designed specifically for this study and based on critical elements in the literature that have been evidenced to promote school and student success. These factors include but are not limited to:

- Highly qualified teachers who are certified and credentialed in their subject area.

- A strong principal with the communication skills to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and promote community involvement.

- Access to social services that provide for low-income families' basic needs.

- Strong district and board leadership able and willing to provide the resources both socially and financially that promote student success.

- Parental and community participation.

- A community center that provides homework assistance and mentoring during critical after school hours.

The eleven participants for this study were selected through the recommendation of the principal at Sagebrush Elementary and included the principal, vice principal, counselor; two support staff and three teachers from the school. Some of the teachers and support staff were specifically targeted for their expertise in Title I and English Language Learning. The participants also included a district administrator, a member from the board of trustees, and an administrator from the community center attached to Sagebrush Elementary. The interviews were conducted face to face at Sagebrush Elementary, the district office, and the local university library.

Data Collection

Data consist of notes taken during the interviews and audio recordings. The questions for the interviews emerged from the literature at large about community-based school initiatives and were partially structured through a grounded theory-like analysis. Grounded theory is a qualitative approach to research using an inductive method. In grounded theory, researchers let the data 'speak for themselves,' (Glasser, 1967) and listen to patterns, themes, and exceptions to those themes that emerge from the data themselves. This calls for continual interplay between data collection and analysis to produce a theory during the research process. Data collection, analysis, and theory stand in a reciprocal relationship with one another and are derived inductively through systematic collection and analysis of data pertaining to a phenomenon (Glasser, 1967; Strauss, 1990). Inductive analysis is the principle technique used in the grounded theory method. "Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis

come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior

to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p. 306). Inductive reasoning allows

researchers to look at outcomes, events, ideas and observations to reach a unified

conclusion. This sort of approach is particularly important in case studies of new

phenomena, since the goal is to develop a deep understanding of the site or phenomenon

in question, both in and of itself and as a precursor to quantitative analysis.

In this case, interviews from informants who are critical to the daily operation of

Sagebrush Elementary School provide the data and semi-structured questions elicited

their understanding of the factors important to this program. I allowed key themes and

patterns to emerge from the voices of the participants. Then I compared these to the

known factors in the literature on school communities with the goals and structure of this

particular community school.

Case Study Results

In the fall of 2009 Sagebrush Elementary faculty, student body and community

center employees began their school year in a brand new facility. The school was built

with an attached community center, dental clinic, and a daycare center. The design was

chosen to encourage community involvement and includes walking paths on the grounds.

The teaching staff at Sagebrush Elementary is highly qualified, holding certifications and

credentials in the subject matter they teach, which is a requirement of Monument School

District policy. The principal, who is soft spoken and encouraging, promotes community

participation and a collaborative atmosphere. The district office provides access to

federal funding, a social worker, a school psychologist and the school houses a full time counselor. Both the district and the school offer opportunities for professional development and provide support to new teaching staff and the new community center offers additional academic and non-academic assistance. The following data, from interviews I conducted, tell the rest of the story.

When I asked the question "What is the average teaching experience at Sagebrush Elementary?" overwhelmingly I heard that the average number of years of teaching experience at this school was quite high. The vice principal, Mr. Chester, who was as nervous as I was, looked up the information about Sagebrush Elementary School on the district web site that estimates the average teaching experience of teachers at Sagebrush Elementary at 12.8 years as of August 8, 2009. All of the teachers at Sagebrush Elementary are certified for elementary education, with 39.1% of those teachers holding a masters degree. The principal at this school personally mentors every new teacher hired, thus reinforcing a strong collaborative model. Very few teachers in this school are new to teaching and some have over 20 years of teaching experience. Teachers new to the field are provided a district mentor, professional development, and an experienced grade level mentor on site, to help them meet the challenges many new teachers face. Addressing this question, a para-educator and an education assistant said:

> Programs available for new teachers come from both the district and the school. The district and the school have a program for our first year teachers that involves collaboration teams. The district has peer programs and classes at district headquarters. New teachers are assigned an experienced grade level teacher to assist them in any challenges that they face. This is a two-year assignment where they plan together and they are not left alone. Here at Sagebrush we have what we call team teachers. This person often becomes the peer mentor and assists new teachers through the transition. They work together in collaboration and

substitutes are provided to teach classes so that the peer mentor and the new teacher can work together on skill building.

Their answers offer insight into the programs available to new teachers at Sagebrush Elementary School and provide evidence of the steps this particular school takes to ensure its students access to highly trained teaching staff. What is remarkable about the experience level of teaching is that this is a highly impoverished Title I school.

When addressing the question of professional development I was informed that the district has a wide range of professional development programs both throughout the district and at the school itself. Professional development days are worked into the academic schedule to allow teachers to be in session while the students are out. The district supports a strong strategic professional development plan and empowers principals to make internal decisions that will improve their schools. One of the specific programs referred to most often was a series called *Love and Logic*, which is being used weekly in staff meetings, and contracted through the district (Fay & Funk, 1995). *Love and Logic* offers tools for educators and principals that promote healthy relationships between parent-teacher and teacher-student relationships. *Love and Logic* trains teachers, administrators, and principals how to set limits without anger, provides hope for underachievers, builds strong communication and connections between the home and school, manages disruptive students, and helps students learn how to solve problems for themselves.

Many of the respondents also answered the question about professional development, with Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocol (SIOP). SIOP provides teachers with a model that facilitates high quality instruction for English

language learners. Administrators and teachers are taught new approaches to instruction

and given a framework to organize methods and techniques ensuring effective language

program implementation. Other programs offered include book groups on poverty,

refugee topics, and best practices in education. The school counselor, Ms. Amanda Blake,

and the principal, Mrs. Sacagawea, offered this information.

> There are always ongoing projects on grading that utilize professional learning
> communities and we have book groups on poverty, refugee topics, best practices
> in education, and a bunch more. We have at least two or three different book
> series a year; one of our last ones was Ruby Payne's (1996) *Culture of Poverty*.

Teachers can also attend math camp over the summer, which gives them hands-on

learning experience, and helps build balanced math programs. The district has a policy

that promotes early reading and numeracy and provides Title I funding for programs

designed to teach all refugees English. These programs, coupled with strong district and

school support for professional development, offer teachers at this school opportunities to

learn new teaching and assessment techniques and provide new teachers needed skills.

Teachers at Sagebrush Elementary School use a variety of assessment tools to

monitor student achievement and academic growth. The mandated Idaho Reading

Indicator Test (IRI)[2] and Idaho Standard Achievement Test (ISAT)[3] are used as

assessment tools, however along with these two standardized testing instruments the

---

[2] The Idaho Reading Indicator was designed to ensure that all children master the skills
they need to become successful readers, Idaho law requires that every student from
kindergarten to third grade be tested twice each year.

[3] The Idaho Standards Achievement Test is an assessment of students, in third through
sixth grades, knowledge in three areas: reading, math, and language usage. Each of the
three subtests consists of 42 standards-based items and administered via the computer.

teachers at Sagebrush Elementary also utilize other means of assessing academic gains. One of the more popular programs is AIMESweb, which tracks reading, and math skills and monitors progress weekly (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell M, 2007). The students are taught either a reading or math lesson and then at the end of the week they are tested on comprehension and understanding through the AIMESweb system. This AIMESweb system also offers a schedule of reading and math assignments necessary to meet IRI and ISAT requirements.

Embedded district curriculum assessments developed to assess students' comprehension of reading material and fluency along with teacher-created assessments are also used. They use one minute timed tests to measure students' reading level in the fourth through sixth grades. Teacher-created assessments help track students' progress throughout the year, helping teachers assess where students' educational level began when they started and where they ended when the school year was complete. While standardized testing offers a picture of students' progress it cannot account for the progress of ELL and special education students adequately. Teacher-created assessments allow teachers to more comprehensively evaluate students' academic progress and determine placement in the next academic year.

Some classes use portfolio driven assessments for assessing grades and improvement. Title I assessment portfolios are assessed daily and no homework is assigned unless the student has a firm understanding of the material. The Idaho English Language Assessment (IELA) is used for ELL students because it assesses language growth. Districts that serve English language learners are held accountable for the

growth and proficiency of these students and the IELA, which is administered every

spring, assesses and calculates English growth. Individualized Educational Programs

(IEP) are utilized for ELL, special education and Title I students. IEP's allow teachers to

provide individualized academic plans for each of their students. Smartboard also offers

quick check assessments for teachers. This program is an Internet based interactive tool

allowing teachers to create or pick from lessons created by both subject and grade level.

It offers reading tests based on content and speed. The speed component uses a timed

test for word recognition.

The two most interesting assessment tools this school uses are onsite

collaboration teams and problem solving teams. Onsite group level collaboration units

bring together grade level teachers to assess and discuss student progress. When a new

program is introduced teachers working in grade level groups assess and compare student

achievement. Collaborative assessment allows teachers to place struggling students in the

correct groupings ensuring appropriate grade placement and allowing for fluency in

subject matter. The district administrator Dr. Holliday explained the details as follows:

> The teachers at the school work in groups and compare student achievement at
> grade levels. Then they try a new program and come back together to assess how
> the program worked or progressed the students. This is where they engage the
> students and make sure that they are at the right placement and if not, then they
> make adjustments to the groupings so that the students who are struggling can
> become more fluent. One of the most relevant aspects of assessment tools is
> communication and this school has great communication channels.

The problem solving team was developed with fixed members and includes the school

nurse, principal, vice principal, classroom teachers, the school psychologist and parent

advocates. Working together they meet weekly to solve particular problems and when

necessary they pull in assistance from departments that are familiar with the students of concern. This model was designed to offer prevention and intervention through frequent assessments.

One of the most critical elements for successful schools is resources. Title I funding is made available to low-income schools as an additional monetary resource. Title I is a federal program based on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunches. The funds are allocated from the state to the district that disburses the funds to schools in their district on a declining basis. The higher the number of students at a school receiving free and reduced lunches, the higher that school's proportion of Title I funding. Title I funding provides schools with extra funding for specialty teachers and para-educators in Title I and ELL instruction and can be used for literacy and math nights, to provide professional development programs, promote parental involvement, and other need-based programs determined by the principal.

When asked about supplemental services provided by either Sagebrush Elementary or the attached community center to students and families, most of the respondents referred to the district-provided social worker, full-time onsite school counselor, and school psychologist. Frequently discussed was the new dental clinic, which employs a dental hygienist and a mobile dental bus. The social worker helps families at Sagebrush Elementary locate available resources. Some of the resources available are food donations, rental assistance, utility assistance, dental and medical care, immunizations, assistance with homelessness, and child protection agencies. The school also uses a referral system through the health department and women's shelter that work

together providing access to outside agencies knowledgeable about resources for low

income families and is coordinated through the school social worker. The dental clinic,

staffed by volunteer dentists from the community and partnered with Delta Dental,

provides all qualifying students in the district access to free dental care. A member from

the Board of Trustee's explained the dental program as follows:

> The dental clinic partners with the local community and local dentists provide free
> dental work. The program actually started in 1954 with five local dentists who
> did a survey and found that 80% of students in the district had no dental converge.
> Five or ten years ago the dentists raised funds to purchase a mobile dental lab that
> drives to all the schools in the district for evaluation. The students were then sent
> to a local dentist who provided their services for free. With the dental clinic here
> at this school the mobile dental lab will continue to operate but parents can now
> come to this facility for dental care.

Some of the other services mentioned were the tutoring programs designed to offer extra

assistance before and after school for students struggling academically and a federal grant

that allows all children in the school to qualify for free or reduced breakfast/lunch. The

Sagebrush Elementary community center promotes the Idaho 211 Care Line linked to the

Idaho social services system.   The Idaho 211 Care Line was designed to allow citizens

access to social services through one phone number that takes the information and routes

the caller to the appropriate service provider.

Service learning programs promote strong collaboration and community

participation and provide extra assistance without a financial cost to the school.

Sagebrush Elementary provides service-learning opportunities for both local university

and college students. Local university students serve as student teachers and mentors

through a voluntary athletic program. Many of the universities, education majors who

are required to work with at-risk children fill their practicum requirements at Sagebrush

Elementary. A local college's dental hygienist students are given service-learning opportunities through the new dental clinic. Local high schools also participate in service learning opportunities through Sagebrush Elementary. Students from one local high school read at lunchtime with students and are known as the "Lunch Buddies." The nearby library partners with the school and the community center through service learning to offer an early reading program on every other Monday at the school's community center. This class is offered to all community members aged two through kindergarten and promotes early literacy skills. Certified staff hold leadership meetings for students in the first through sixth grade providing necessary skills for class representation. School staff volunteer for book fairs and children's choice awards used to reinforce appropriate individual and classroom behaviors.

Parental participation, partnerships with local businesses, and community support are other effective resources for low socioeconomic schools. When asked about parental involvement, most interviewees responded that parental participation was up a little from the previous year. A few, however, offered insight into specific reasons why parental participation may have increased. The ELL teacher, Miss Oakley, told me about parents who could not volunteer before because of language barriers, who are offered opportunities to be involved in their children's educational process through the dual language program. Sagebrush Elementary dual language program provides literacy and content instruction in two languages, English and Spanish, and integrate native English speakers with native Spanish speakers. Others offered information about an increase in classroom participation due to the new building, which has created a sense of community

pride. The community center has also given parents more opportunities to volunteer. Increasingly, parents who did not see an affiliation between their children and the neighborhood before are attending family nights, math nights, and other academic functions.

Not only has this school seen an increase in parental participation, it has also seen an increase in community interest. Community members frequently volunteer to read with students. A group of men from the Methodist church across the street comes in twice a week to play board games with the students, providing surrogate grandfathers and appropriate role models. The school also engages Kiwanis Club to assist with math night, the Boy Scouts to offer mentoring and assistance every Wednesday and the Rotary Club offers students access to a program called the Rotary Readers Club.

Local businesses also provide monetary assistance, educational materials and basic necessitates to Sagebrush Elementary. The local Montessori School does a Christmas coat and glove drive which provides every student at Sagebrush Elementary with a coat and a pair of gloves at Christmas. The Methodist church provides a weekly meal for the community and does a lot of clothing drives for the students. They also donate school supplies and Operation School Bell provides one-third of the most needy families at this school with clothing vouchers. This year the school was fortunate enough to have been adopted by Farmers Insurance, which provided every student with a fully equipped backpack full of pens, pencils, paper, binders and many other items. Many of the teachers responded with elation as they reported the following information to me:

> Farmers Insurance adopted Sagebrush Elementary School at Christmas this year
> and did Stuff the Bus Project that provided every student at Sagebrush Elementary

with a huge bundle of gifts. We requested that there were no toys but they gave them all fully loaded back packs, binders, movie tickets, and so much more. The kids were so excited some of them would not have even received a Christmas gift this year because of financial hardships if Farmers had not adopted this school.

Each student also received books, shirts, sweatpants and shoes. Farmers Insurance also gave the school a cash donation for school supplies. Other local businesses have donated bicycles, skateboards and scooters for school raffles and student awards.

This year the school was also provided an additional asset through the attached community center. Students now have onsite access to mentors, homework assistance, and computers and are offered a safe zone for those critical after school hours. The community center and new facility has drawn the attention of many local residents and businesses and the school has seen an increase in local participation. The community center is staffed through the Tombstone City Parks and Recreation Department and offers at-risk students a semi-structured non-competitive environment where homework assistance is provided. Center staff work directly with the teachers at the school so students do not get behind. Students can also just hang out in either the kids' room or the teen zone and enjoy the companionship of other peers or pass the time by playing computer games. The community center is also available to community members and their families. Classes at the center include art, dance, fitness, pottery and others. The center also provides language classes, community education classes and early literacy classes through a partnership with a local library. The relationship between the school and center is collaborative and is an added benefit for this community and Sagebrush Elementary students.

With all these additional resources and the new building with attached community center, dental clinic, and daycare center the question becomes: which attributes of this school are the most important to the support and success of Sagebrush Elementary students and their families? Overwhelmingly, the response to this question was a strong teaching staff who truly care about these students and often go above and beyond district requirements to follow up when they are concerned about issues and problems, the principal who promotes a collaborative and positive atmosphere and has the courage, dedication and energy to make things happen for these students, the district leaders who provide funding opportunities and support systems to this school and its students. The addition of the attached community center offers both the principal and teachers more free time to assess other issues by providing homework assistance and mentoring. Some of the other contributing factors included the dental clinic, the new facility with its walking paths, community participation and local financial support. In the following section I will compare these findings with the literature and discuss how they can be applied to inform policy makers of the potential community orientated educational facilities unleash.

CONCLUSION

This case study delineates many of the key factors identified in the literature that signify educational success. The school's teaching and support staff are well trained and highly qualified. Both the district and school support professional development programs and provide mentors for new teaching staff. They also promote continuing education and require that all teaching staff in the district are 100% certified in their field. The principal is a strong and capable leader with the necessary communication skills to promote community involvement and encourages professional development. The principal holds weekly staff meetings that include professional development programs as part of the criteria and has implemented both mentoring and team collaboration programs to assist teachers and staff with educational tools beneficial to the education of poor and minority students. The school partners with many local universities, colleges, high schools and local businesses promoting service learning and collaboration and uses available community resources well. Community businesses and members provide mentors, clothing and food vouchers, academic tutoring through reading programs and homework assistance. The district leadership is supportive and provides this school with access to federal funding programs. It also supplies a social worker for the students and families of Sagebrush Elementary that coordinates essential basic services. The addition of the community center offers students homework assistance and role models. Through the community center, students can get help with homework in a non-competitive environment. Adult mentors staff the center and provide a diverse group of role models.

The community center also provides an array of classes for the students and community members. The attached dental clinic offers all qualifying students in the district free dental care and the mobile dental bus provides qualifying students in the district with free diagnostics. One aspect of this community-based school's orientation that differs from the literature is that the school district not the community center provides a social worker to help identify the basic needs of students and families. Most of the literature refers to the community center as being the essential link between outside agencies and students families (Anderson-Butcher, 2006; Bingler, 2003; Breitborde, 2002). This community school, however utilizes an on-site social worker that coordinates services through many sources including the community center. Another large difference between this school and other community-based schools is that in many low socio economic schools funding options are limited by lack of knowledge and social capital. However the district leadership for this school provides the social capital to access federal funding programs.

Through this critical literature review and case study comparison, I have examined a community-based school operating in a small city and identified many of its most important facets. Case studies like this one provide evidence for constructing a body of policy on effective learning environments and innovative school designs. Longitudinal and quantitative studies are required to measure the effectiveness of these programs on students' academic performance. Schools that serve as centers of the community should include access to social services, medical assistance, dental clinics and community centers that provide homework assistance and appropriate role models. They

should also promote a collective partnership between the local community, businesses and parents to promote life-long learning as a community value.

WORKS CITED

Anderson-Butcher, D. (2006). Transforming schools into 21st century community

      learning centers. *National Association of Social Workers, Inc. , 26*(4), 248-253.

Barnett, S. N. (1998). Principles for developing interdisciplinary school-based primary

      care centers. *Journal of School and Health , 68*(3), 99-105.

Barr, R. D. (2003). *Saving our students saving our schools: 50 Proven stratagies for*

      revitilizing at-risk students and low performing schools. Glenview: Skylight

      Professional Development.

Bingler, S. Q. (2003). *Schools as centers of community: A citizens guide for planning*

      and design. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.

Borba, M. (2009). Caring Closes the Language-Learning Gap. *Phi Delta Kappan*

      International, 90, 681-685.

Breitborde, M.I. &. (2002). Family education and community power: new structures

      for new visions in the education village. *Educational Studies, 28*(3), 305-317.

Bryan, J. &. (2008). Strength-Based partnerships: A school-family-community

      partnership approach to empowering students. *Professional School Counseling ,*

      12(2), 1-11.

Canada, G. (2008 29-Sept.). A unique approach to inner city povert*y. Harlem Children's*

      Zone Project: Retrieved October 12, 2009 from http//:hcz.org/programs/the-hcz-

      project*.*

Condron, D. J., & Roscigno, V. J. (2003). Disparities within: Unequal spending and

      achievement in an urban school district. *Sociology of Education, 76*(1), 18-33.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). *Teacher quality and student achievement.* Retrieved

      March 16, 2010 from Education and Policy Analysis archives:

      http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/392

Fay, F. & Funk, D. (1995). *Teaching with love & logic: Taking control of the classroom*

      Golden, CO: The Love and Logic Press, Inc.

Feagin, J. & Orum, A. M. (1991). *A case for case study.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of

      North Carolina Press

Glasser, B. G. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative*

      research. Chicago: Aldine.

Hallinger, P. (1986). Social context of effective schools. *American Journal of*

      Education , 94(3), 328-355.

Hosp, M., Hosp, J. & Howell, K. (2007). *The ABCs of CBM: A Practical*

      guide to curriculum-based measurement. New York: Guilford Press.

Jackson, J. F. (2007). *Strengthening the African American educational pipeline:*

      informing research policy and practices. New York: State University Press.

Jimerson et al. (2006). Beyond grade retention and school promotion: Promoting the

      social and academic confidence of students. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*(1), 85-

      97.

Lee, S. J. (2008). "Family is here" Learning and community-based after-school programs.

      Theory Into Practice , 47, 51-58.

McGaughy, C. (2000). Community development and education: Tripod uproach to

improving America. *The Urban Review, 32*(4), 385-409.

Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
Publishing.

Pechman, E. M. (1996). Creating good schools for children in poverty through Title I
school wide programs. *Journal of Education For Students Placed at Risk, 1*(2),
171-192.

Peske, H. G. & Haycock, K., (2006 June). Teaching inequality: How poor and minority
students are shortchanged on teacher quality. *The Education Trust*, 1-18.

Sanders, W. L. & Horn, S. P. (1995). *The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System
(TVAAS): Mixed Model Methodology in Educational Assessment.* Boston, MA:
Kluwer.

Strauss, A. J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and
techniques.* New Bury Park, CA: Sage Publishing.

Sugarman, S. D. (2004). The promise of school choice for improving the education of
low-income minority chidren. *Rekindling the spirit of Brown V. Board of
Education* (pp. 6-19). Berkley: Berkley University.

U. S. Department of Education. (January 15, 2003). *Elementary & secondary education:
Use of Title I funds.* Retrieved March 11, 2010 from U. S. of Education:
http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/stateletters/uofnd.html

U. S. Department of Education and the Regional Educational Laboratory Network.
(1996 13-April). *Putting the pieces together: Comprehensive school-linked
strategies for children and families.* Retrieved 2009 19-Dec. from U. S.
Department of Education:
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnment/ccs/ppt/putting.htm

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Applications of case study research* (Vol. 34). Thousand Oaks, CA:
Sage Publications, Inc.

Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research design and methods* (Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks,
CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

APPENDIX

Case Study Questions

Case Study Questions

Does Sagebrush Elementary have an open enrollment policy when they are not at or above capacity?

What types of professional development programs are available to Sagebrush Elementary teachers and staff?

What early reading and numeracy programs are available for Sagebrush Elementary students?

How is Title One funding made available to Sagebrush Elementary School?

What's the average experience level for teachers at Sagebrush Elementary?

What service learning opportunities are in place for teachers?

What types of assessment does the teaching staff at Sagebrush Elementary School to monitor student achievement use?

Is teaching with community center involvement different than teaching without it? Please describe.

Has there been a change in parental involvement?

How does local community involvement affect the availability of resources for Sagebrush Elementary students and families?

How many computers are available for use by Sagebrush Elementary students and families?

What types of technology assistance does the community center provide to Sagebrush Elementary students and families?

What types of supplemental services are provided by either the Community Center or Sagebrush Elementary to help assist students and families?

What types of classes are offered at the Sagebrush Community Center?

Now that I have asked you some focused questions what attributes of this school do you think are the most important contributions to the support and success of Sagebrush Elementary students and their families?