

**Our Children, Our Impact: Analyzing Student Stressors and the Impacts on Academic
Achievement Outcomes for Students at Community Partnership Schools**

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Tiffany T. Lumpkin, Ed.D.

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Violence, substance abuse, homelessness, physical and mental abuse, neglect, medical concerns, secondary caregiving, and hunger are all challenging obstacles that can alter the life of a student. Social environments play a larger role than previously accepted in typical and atypical development. While learning requires a biological base, it can be greatly diminished and increased by social conditions (Haight & Taylor, 2013). Stressful environments with a lack of quality caregiving, chronic toxic stress, and genetics can lead to neurological compromise (McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). The stress of living in poverty, can affect brain development. Eric Jensen (2009) examines the ways in which poverty harms children, families, and communities across the United States and demonstrates pro-social frameworks that schools can utilize to improve the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students.

This research study aims to shed light on Community Schools as an answer to narrowing the achievement gap by mitigating students' external environmental stressors. Survey and interview research were conducted with the school's administration, staff, and community partners to explore the specific stressors faced by students, families, and the community, and their ability to meet the community's needs with supportive services to ensure student success.

Schools are understood to be institutions where inequality is reproduced and, simultaneously, where opportunity is produced (Downey & Condrón, 2016). Across the United States several school districts designated schools to become a part of the community effort to act

as a hub for local partners and community resources and to provide an environment for students and families to thrive. The setting of this single site case study takes place in Western Pennsylvania, in a local kindergarten to fifth grade Community Partnership School (CPS) that in the 2018-2019 school year held the largest number of students about 500 in Western Pennsylvania. This CPS is in a historically rich African American community, plagued by poverty with gentrification on the horizon. With the understanding that no two communities are the same, this CPS seeks to aid students and families with services that address poverty, adequate health care, exposure to violence and crime, exposure to drugs, abuse/neglect, and hunger/nutrition.

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Dedication

I begin with personal thanks and dedications:

Thank you, God for choosing me to do this work. Because You ordained it to be, it is so.

To all the people who inquired to Ms. Frazier if I was “sho nuff” Wendy’s daughter, the response is still “sho nuff”. I am the best version of my mother materialized. This is the epitome of a job well done.

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To my ancestors, your struggles were not in vain. Because I am your wildest dreams, I will hold the mantle for the next generation.

And for the little black girls and boys who are sitting in classrooms in communities that are not sure of their place in society and cannot fathom tomorrow, or what opportunities may anxiously await. This is what tomorrow looks like. Remember education in whatever form is freedom. No one can ever take that away. You are not forgotten, and I will come back to get you.

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This journey and process has forever changed my life, rocked my world, and help me to find my voice.

1.0 Introduction

The purposes of education differ across time, context, and groups. Asking the question of its purpose and why it matter, seems to agitate scholars, teachers, and statesmen (Roosevelt, 1930, 2008). There are simultaneous and conflicting goals. It is apparent that there is no one purpose of education in the United States, and because of this, there are educational disparities. Labaree (1997) speaks of the “American struggles over educational goals,” (p.39) by which he defines these goals as democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. Out of the three goals, Labaree (1997) perceives social mobility as the growing and dominant goal of education which has now reshaped education for the purposes of social attainment. It appears quite evident that education disparities exist because the system and deliveries are never designed for the users they inevitably fail.

Education for historically marginalized people equates to liberation. Oppressed students have been forced to adapt to a way of learning that is contradictory to what their needs are and intimidates them into inferior roles for their trajectory. The ability to take ownership of one’s liberation at their own pace for the goal of transformation and progression in order to transgress against systemic oppression is a fundamental human right.

There are children in communities of color who are being educated in institutions that exclude and marginalize. The public-school system has not done right by African American children. When you neglect students of color for long periods of time, it is no wonder that such a disparity exists in education.

Research indicates that the achievement gap may begin at birth and continue through the twelfth grade (Barton, 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 required schools to close the

achievement gap. However, school districts did not have a model to follow and therefore, developed their own means to accomplish this task (Cramer & Nevin, 2006). Studies that focused on No Child Left Behind reported that states would ensure that all students, including those who are disadvantaged, would achieve academic proficiency and that achievement gaps would be eliminated. However, according to Fletcher (2003), African Americans at all socioeconomic levels were left behind. Systemic inequalities and disparities ultimately result in an achievement gap in education, which becomes evident in course grades, test scores, course selection, and graduation rates (Comer, 2001). The education gap is complicated yet very simple. Complicated because 154 years post slavery, significant gaps remain based on race and opportunity in systems that can influence the success of African Americans. Institutionalized oppression takes years to dismantle. Simple because once we acknowledge such oppression exists, we can direct our efforts to euthanize these systems and ensure equitable opportunities for all children.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

For decades now, the persistent disparity in academic performance, also known as the achievement gap, has been at the forefront of debates amongst political leaders, school boards, and parents. One would assume that differences arise because of a school district's lack of resources or the inherent problems associated with race in communities of color, which are crucial factors that come into play when assessing the achievement gap. However, there are other areas that we must also explore, analyze and evaluate. The specific purpose of this research is to shed light on the external environmental stressors that students face, which infringes on their ability to achieve in the classroom and ultimately lends itself to the achievement gap, and the ability of Community

Partnership Schools (CPS) to mitigate these stressors in attempt to narrow the achievement gap. While Community Partnerships Schools have been in existence for some time now, there is still scattered research detailing the long-term successful impact.

1.2 Purpose

This dissertation of practice will shed light on how to approach community school innovation efforts and support practitioners embedded in this system to impact practice and educational outcomes for students. In every practical sense the research findings will make the case for providing holistic services for students as a means to increase the achievement outcomes for students who live in poverty and need additional support. Thus, research is necessary for society to increase their faith and confidence in public schools, which has been eroded by poor policies of the past, with the intention of social change and advocacy. Moreover, the research findings will allow educational advocates and other helping professions to communicate the reality of student success being dependent upon the collective efforts of the community. Children in communities of color and those of lower socioeconomic status have real plights and this is a just cause. Supporting such research is humane.

The CPS model has the opportunity to show itself as an effective strategy for school improvement that does not fleece the public on service offerings that are not being delivered. While this effort does not come at a nominal cost, it is imperative that state and local Departments of Education understands the importance of innovation, research, and the development of successful programming models that are inclusive. CPS considers the student's academic, social, health, and development needs in a systematic manner. Based on my experiences as a social worker, I have

witnessed the work of such school models and the wrap-around services afforded to students that are very well integrated and coordinated with a genuine sense of partnership between all actors. Community schools address the needs of the student on almost every level. Not limited to physical and mental health or, nutritional shortcomings, community schools support families by connecting them with employment (and educational) opportunities, housing assistance, social services, and other opportunities that stimulate educational advancement (tutoring, mentoring, extracurricular activities and after school programming) to ensure success.

The goal of the CPS model is to allow educators to focus on the essence of education rather than the barriers to learning, ultimately preparing students with a knowledge base of life skills, discipline, and perseverance after facing challenges, which will contribute to their professional success.

1.3 Inquiry Questions

As stated earlier, this research will focus on the substantive findings that will help alleviate systems of educational injustice through culturally specific CPS programming. A critical analysis will focus on how such programming can impact persons of color, specifically African Americans, in narrowing the achievement gap. Focused inquiry requires the formulation of structured questions followed by the careful implementation of sound research methodologies to attempt to answer those questions (Fowler, 2013; Mertens, 2014; Yin, 2013). Research questions for this study are explained in the inquiry questions that follow:

1. What are the five most salient environmental stressors that students and families at an urban K-5 face?

2. How is the K-5 CPS trying to mitigate the five primary stressors identified?
3. What are the key stakeholder's impressions of what is working well and what areas still need to be developed at this K-5 school?

2.0 Review of the Literature

The corresponding literature focuses upon how societal structures have greatly affected African American students. The perspective brought forth will explain how and why external environmental stressors exacerbate the gaps that persist in education, and ways in which the community school model responds to such stressors. Additionally, the literature shares the combined efforts of two disciplines social work and education that help to strengthen the trajectory of students whom are impacted by the lack of opportunity that derives from oppression and marginalization.

Section 2.1 will provide an overall explanation of the achievement gap and the difficulties of eradicating this issue in its entirety. Section 2.2 gives greater insight into external environmental stressors and why they lead to educational inequality. Section 2.3 speaks about the community school models approach to help alleviate the issues students, families, and the community face that impacts student's achievement. Section 2.4 reflects how social work is embedded in K-12 education, and section 2.5 broaches how two helping professions are working together to address student issues that creates a climate for optimal learning and achievement. Section 2.6 delves deep into the community school model and its historical and current relevance to education reform. Section 2.7 speak of the social work practice implications in educational settings, and lastly 2.8 looks at the successful integration of social work and education practice for the forming of community partnership schools.

2.1 The Achievement Gap

There's a saying that education is the great "equalizer," often helping to lift students up to levels equal to that of their peers (Mann, 1848). A promise made that hard work and furthering education could change one's circumstances. However, this belief was not predicated on the lives of those who were enslaved during this time. *The American School, a Global Context: From the Puritans to the Obama Administration* (Spring, 2013) provides comprehensive insight into to the turbulent history of the United States education system. There were so many themes that persist in the early education system, focused on the aims and ideals of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant perception of a good citizen, where conformity was the goal.

Post slavery, African Americans mobilized to rewrite state constitutions to include a free and public education for Black students (Race Forward, 2019). Although, by this time White students were ahead by 200 plus years of receiving an education. African Americans were left out of the institution of education until philanthropic White people helped them to build their own educational institutions; separate and unequal (Midgley, J., Martin, T., & Livermore, M., 2009). *Plessy v. Ferguson* (see *Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1849) resulted in law shifting to school still being separate but equal in resources.

Though, slaves were forbidden to obtain an education during slavery, true citizenship meant that full freedom was to come for African Americans post slavery and this included achieving an education (Dubois, 1973). However, the Freedmen's education movement was to ensure a servant class was maintained (Ladson Billings, 2007). Decades after the slaves were emancipated there were people like W.E.B. Dubois who earnestly worked toward the development of education for African Americans. Dubois believed that African Americans deserved equal opportunity in education (Provenzo, 2002). Dubois' activism helped shed light on the social issues

African Americans faced and provided an open forum to speak of about the ongoing suppression of Black people after the Civil War (Levering-Lewis, 1994). Education was of the utmost importance to Dubois as he feared educational inequity would blossom and Black children would be taught in the most disparaging of circumstances (Dubois, 1960).

Historical educational practices of the past still have consequences today. Even with *Brown v. The Board of Education* (1954), which outlawed the segregation of schools and other laws that reflected desegregation in the 70's, significant gains have since been reversed by current systems of redlining that segregate today. There was a period of legal apartheid and African Americans in the South did not receive universal secondary schooling until 1968 (Ladson Billings, 2007). Equal access to education and opportunity unfortunately never came to fruition because the resources provided for African Americans were consistently inferior to those of their White counterparts. While these themes seem to be of the distant past, we erroneously contribute to them each and every day.

For decades now the achievement gap has been at the forefront of debates amongst political leaders, school boards, and parents (Gray, 2017). Narrowing the achievement gap has been the focus of the Department of Education for years (Gray, 2017). One would assume that differences arise because of the school districts lack of resources or the inherent problems associated with race in communities of color which are crucial factors that come into play when assessing the achievement gap. Gloria Ladson Billings (2007) says we should flip our paradigm and language to call the achievement gap what it really is: an education debt. Based on the timeline of educational policy and practices for African Americans, the education gap is closely aligned to Billings' education debt. Billings argument helps us to better understand how the achievement gap is directly connected to all of the social structures that others (Whites) have access to that are either

prohibited or inequitable to African Americans. African Americans have been systematically left out of the furtherment of advancement. Segregated housing due to redlining practices, inept healthcare, and low wages and salaries all leads to blocked opportunities and educational disparities for Black children (Ladson Billings, 2007).

A significant gap still exists in educational opportunities between low-income students, often students of color, and middle or high-income students today. A study conducted by Stanford University found that the achievement gap in standardized testing between affluent and low-income students was twice as large as the gap between black and white students (Reardon, 2011). Additionally, the gap in achievement test scores between students from the richest 10% of families and the poorest 10% grew by 40 to 50 percent from the mid-1970s and the early 2000s (Reardon, 2011). In the same decades, research conducted indicated that the gap between rich and poor who are attending the same school, even in wealthier districts, is nearly as great as that of rich and poor who are attending different schools (Deruy, 2016).

2.2 Relevancy of Race

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Bell, 1980) reveals how systemic oppression is embedded in policies, power, law, and institutionalized norms of Whiteness, where racial groups that are marginalized are damaged in subtle and not-so-subtle ways (Netting, Kettner, McMurty, & Thomas, 2017). In order to address vexing social problems, like unequitable education practices that are related to race, CRT is used to analyze, deconstruct, and transform such systems (Netting, Kettner, McMurty, & Thomas, 2017). Twenty-four years after Ladson Billings and Tate (1995) used CRT to exam racism in education and the intersection of race and property rights to explain

inequality in education, we have proof that being of the wrong race still comes with a consequence (Dixon & Rosseau, 2005). This of course is at the detriment of Black school aged students.

Joel Spring (2013) explains how educational institutions became the training grounds for assimilation and acculturation practices of the dominant race. As he explains, educational systems have been used as a vehicle to "civilize" non-white cultures. Everything from the word's students learned from Webster's Dictionary to the textbooks read was written to influence its reader's nationalism, unified language for groupthink, societal ideas as well as values, and religiosity. All of which was done to reduce the changes in the American population.

African Americans (and many others) have experienced a wide gap in wealth between suburban and urban America, in effect creating two different countries: one first world and the other very much third world. It is relatively evident that the vast majority of the people who have ended up on the "third world" side of the division have been Black. Policies, focusing heavily on academic achievement, were passed in the 2000s that aimed to correct some of the inadequacies created by earlier policies, noting that students were not receiving a uniform education.

2.3 The Era of Reform

One of the policies thought to incorrect such education inadequacies was No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB was enacted in 2001and created educational reform based on the philosophy that setting high standards and measurable goals would improve outcome and reduce disparities. In 2013, Adam Gamoran completed research on this policy, noting the educational inequality that pervaded it. Many schools closed with no investment of redevelopment, and as a result of NCLB, urban school communities were hurt. What NCLB brought to the surface was the

power of implicit bias resulting in stereotype threats. Harris (2011) pointed out that NCLB evaluated and measured metrics out of their control such as students' homelives, community environments, and the effectiveness of pedagogy from previous years. Every educator knew well before NCLB was enacted that it would be tremendously unfair to the poor. It should not have taken over a decade for everyone to reach this same conclusion. NCLB, unfortunately did not meet its goal to narrow the achievement gap because it failed to identify the root causes (Farley, 2017).

Moving forward educational reform must not only look at educators for the answer, or schools, but also the communities where students live and the environments that impact them to learn and achieve (Kelly, 2012). Kelly (2012), referencing Coleman's 1990 [1996] "*Equality of Education Study*," provided contemporary data on educational inequality from the city of Wisconsin. In such past and current studies, it was inferred that schools who served children in high concentrated areas of poverty scored lower on achievement tests, a problem that was not related to poor teacher instruction, but postulated that low achievement was attributed to high poverty home environments and neighborhood environments (Coleman, 1990). The study goes on the share that it is not implausible for such children to learn, but they are starting from an unfair advantage point because they begin school at lower levels (Coleman, 1990). Addressing such gaps and unfair advantages will be key to ensuring a competitive workforce for our nation in order to compete globally.

2.4 Poverty That Leads to Inequality

Educational inequality in the United States is often about in relation to its mediocrity when compared to our international counterparts (Layton & Brown, 2012). Gamoran (2013) explicitly

speaks of the educational inequalities U.S. students face because of where they live and the barriers of obtaining high school and college degrees, all due to unequal distribution of resources within the United States. Such inequities pose a threat to the economic progress of the nation, and place a great deal of people in poverty. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2013 reinforced Gamoran's perspectives that "the most salient feature of education performance is the unequal distribution of social origins and geography." OECD conducted an assessment proving that socioeconomic status was indicative of school performance.

Growing up in poverty is a threat to one's trajectory and livelihood. Prolonged exposure to poverty contributes to a poorer quality of teen and adult outcomes (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). A child's ability to flourish is dependent upon the individual, family, and community, along with the state where they are born and raised. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2018), states vary in their wealth, resources, policy, and investments that influence children's probability for achievement. The 2018 Kids Counts Data Book identified that one in five children lived in poverty in 2016. Key factors to improving the financial stability of families is gainful employment (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Thirteen percent of children in the United States continue to live in communities where the poverty rates were above 30 percent in 2016 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). With such high levels of poverty, the achievement gap is not going to close unless this is also combated.

The critical state of education and systematic educational disadvantages are influenced by policies that have caused a disconnect with communities of lower social, economic status. The lack of resources being provided to school districts in oppressed communities affects society as a whole. An exploration of the difficult questions of how the lack of quality schooling influences social and psychological conditions that perpetuate cycles of dependence among generations of

poor families is needed in the attempts to create more equitable conditions for Black children. Further exploration allows for the development of strategies that will reduce the unresolved impact of institutional racism on African American that causes a double bind.

2.5 External Environmental Stressors That Lend Itself to the Achievement Gap

Across the nation schools are being redesigned to support how students learn (The National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development, 2019). Learning has many dimensions and there are other areas that we must also explore, analyze, and evaluate. A child's well-being is inextricably linked to learning (Annie E. Casey Foundation-2018; Kids Count Data Book, 2018). Economic well-being associated with housing and nutrition, children's physical and mental health, community environment, familial and adult relationships all contribute to the elements of success for school-aged children (The National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development, 2019), all of which is explored in this research study. Therefore, we must shed light on the external environmental stressor's students face that infringe on their ability to achieve in the classroom and create such an achievement gap. Scores on standardized tests and grades students receive on classroom learning tasks often do not explain why they are not performing at acceptable levels (Gay, 2010). Poor achievement scores are the symptoms of larger issues and not the causes of the problem as noted in section 2.1. Unless, educators can understand what is interfering with student's performance levels, they cannot intervene and appropriately remove the barriers to high achievement. Geneva Gay (2010), in her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching*, argues that blaming students, their socioeconomic status, lack of interest or motivation

for learning, and poor parental participation in educational processing is not very helpful and the question of why continues to be unanswered.

It has been speculated that the achievement gap has persisted because of failing schools. However, research as early as the 1960s, such as the Coleman Report, confounded the notion of the role of families as they relate to inequalities in education. Decades later, Richard Rothstein helped to paint that same picture (Rothstein, 2004) and respectfully, in the fifty years after the Coleman report, and twelve years after Rothstein, the National Education Association are still looking at the influences of a student's home environment for answers (National Education Association, n.d.).

Robert Putnam has also correlated the effects poverty has on children. Putnam speaks candidly about the trajectory of students who become left behind educationally due to their parent's economic status and their lack of education that does not extend beyond high school (Putnam, 2015). As early as 1994, Sarah McLanahan and Gary Sanedfur have been addressing the single parents in their book, *Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps*. High school educated mothers typically have their first child in their late teens or early twenties while college-educated mothers delay childbearing and marriage. Parents who have a high school diploma or less often have to work significantly harder to maintain financial stability for their families. Often this results in the lack of supervision or parental interaction allowing for more television time and options for mischief. McLanahan and Sanedur argued even in 1994 that low-income is chief factor in explaining the low-level achievement of children of single parent families. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2018) echoes Putnam's sentiment, and expresses that children who grow up in homes with "highly educated" parents are in a better position for success. It is often understood or assumed that parents with additional education, beyond a high school diploma can provide stable

and secure means to foster their children's development as jobs today require more skill and education. The stress and depression that comes with a parent's struggles can sometimes interfere with effective parenting and underscores the need to address parental and student adversities at the same time (Child Trends Databank, 2015).

It is also important to note that the White middle class traditional familial structure for African American's and Hispanic's has been absent for decades. Parental incarceration in the 90's due to the War on Drugs made it difficult to have a two-parent family home. Leaving the responsibility of raising children to one parent. Lack of supports, little emphasis on education, minimal mentorship opportunities, delayed early learning, no access to resources and school districts with inadequate funding results in children of poor parents not succeeding (Putnam, 2015).

The stress of living in poverty, with all its challenges, can affect neuro brain development. Eric Jensen (1998) examines the ways in which poverty harms children, families, and communities across the United States and demonstrates pro-social frameworks that schools can utilize to improve the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Ongoing neglect or social trauma results in the overactive /over responsive amygdala. The neuro systems become disrupted and ultimately desensitized which disrupts the learning process. This is why test scores tend to be lower in student populations where ongoing poverty and stress are factors.

A stressful environment with a lack of quality caregiving, chronic toxic stress, and genetics (genetically some people respond better to stress than others) can lead to neurological compromise (McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). Toxic stress is prolonged chronic exposure to high or low-stress situations with little or no support. An example of high stress may be members of a child's family being killed as a result of neighborhood violence, or hearing gunshots on a consistent basis. An example of a lower stress situation may be a child not eating dinner consistently. Biological and

behavioral responses to high and low stress include: remaining on stress alert, even when there is no stress present (decline in positive affect [flat] even in good situations); release of cortisol and other stress hormones; increase in heart and respiratory rates; blood flow directed away from digestive system; and fight or flight responses. Living in poverty for the first five years of life is more corrosive to children in those who are ages 5-10 years old. Their early developmental experiences and environment matter a great deal. Epigenetics and certain conditions turn genes on or off in some people. These effects can persist in school-age into adulthood. They formulate into mental health problems (depression, anxiety, alcohol, and drug problems); social problems (poor relationships, stigmas, bullying, inability to sustain jobs, school absenteeism); poor executive functioning and academic achievement; and physical health problems (heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, stroke) (Newman & Newman, 2015).

There are also additional stressors that are exhibited by students of color that result in these groups not doing well which is directly connected to race and culture. Gay (2010) discusses the discontinuities between the cultures of the school and the homes of ethnically diverse students. Prejudices, biases, stereotyping, and racism can have negative impacts on a student of color's self-esteem. Plummer and Slane (1996) found racism to highly induce stress for African American when required to engage in copying the "behaviors" of European Americans. Gay (2010), goes on to speak of the stereo-type threat that goes on to become a self-fulfilling prophecy and can affect the intellectual functioning and identity development. This stereo-type threat is deemed as most salient by Gay (2010) as it creates additional self-threat, which interferes with achievement by reducing them to disengage from academic efforts.

Hanushek, Peterson, and Woessmann (2013) bring to light all of the perils of education in their study that investigates if children are adequately prepared to become employable for a 21st

century economy. As a country, we cannot begin to deal with a student's ability to learn or achieve in the classroom until we look at the external environmental stressors. How do we make our youth feel safe in their schools and their homes? Only then, will these students find learning relevant. If any child is afraid to fall asleep at night, doesn't have nourishing meals, grows up too fast, they cannot be their best and education is not important to them loses any priority it had in their lives.

The stressors discussed shifts the focus and bring everything together and allow for the major stakeholders to discuss the implications of this research and how we develop policy based on the findings to help alleviate the achievement gap.

2.6 Community Schools

A community school is described by the Coalition for Community Schools (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012 as a place and a set of partnerships, connecting a school, the families of students, and the surrounding community. A community school is distinguished by an integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and social services, and community development (p.1). Community schools are particularly targeted at children who face more difficulties throughout their educational career and are based on the assumption that this "inequality has more to do with policies and social/economic structures rather than with the characteristics of individual children and their families" (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 171). Community schools have multiple aims and "plan their activities and services based on the results they want to achieve for students, families, and the community" (Jacobson & Blank, 2011, p. 65). Because of their dependence on local contexts, these results are heterogeneous. To operationalize community schools' effectiveness, we identify three outcomes

that are considered positive benefits for community school students: increased academic performance, a lower dropout rate, and reduced risky behavior (Adelman & Taylor, 2008). To qualify as effective, a community school has to deliver these outcomes.

The foundations for community schools can be conceptualized as a developmental triangle that places children at the center, surrounded by families and communities (Lubell, 2011). A student's education success, health and well-being are the focus of every community school, inclusive of integrated services for children and their families, core instructional programming, and expanded learning opportunities (Lubell, 2011). Every community school partnership shapes its programs and services to the needs of its own community and students, but all models share many basic elements: a focus on education, school, family and community engagement, extended hours and expanded learning opportunities, partnerships, site coordination, continuous support along the pathway to productive adulthood, wellness, sustainability, and whole school transformation (NCCS, 2011).

The community school strategy has its roots in the establishment of the first settlement houses pioneered by social worker, Jane Addams (Smith, 1998). Jane Addams, an advocate for the poor, established Hull House, which offered critical learning and development opportunities as well as health and social services to newly arrived immigrants in urban neighborhoods (Smith, 1998). In the early 1900s social reformers and educators believed that schools were not functioning as fully as they should (Dewey, 1902). John Dewey an education reformer worked to bring additional resources into America's public schools, placing them in the heart of community life. In the 1930's and again in the 1960's the Mott foundation supported community schools through substantial investments (Rogers, 1998). It has been said that earlier efforts for community schools

did not “take hold” permanently because their work was not integrated with the core mission of the schools and their proponents did not have a robust political strategy (Rogers, 1998).

By the 1980s and 90s the community schools gained momentum with the development of several national models as a direct response to research about educational struggles of children living in poverty (Rogers, 1998). Currently, there are programs like the Harlem Children Zone (HCZ) model founded by Geoffrey Canada, a model that incorporates a community-wide initiative that focuses on the development of its participants from cradle to career (Harlem Children’s Zone, 2019). The goal is to address the student and familial needs or concerns which causes students to face barriers in their education. Each student and their family can develop a plan to address their unique needs and challenges with the assistance of community-based organizations and natural supports. This type of intervention has been a gem to the communities that are serviced by HCZ and has data-driven results, an approach that relies on data to inform teaching and learning. However, efforts to transform distressed communities are hardly new (Putnam, 2015). Innovation comes when we make an effort to address the achievement gap by using similar programming modalities within the school district, ones that are enmeshed and connected to the interworking’s of the individual school district.

Strong research undergirds the community school strategy for education reform. There is a plethora of research available to support the guiding principles of effective community schools. Community schools aims to provide their students with enriched educational opportunities while also developing and strengthening their physical, emotional, social and moral competencies through a variety of supports and services. Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Stewart (2006), completed a long-term study identifying the five essential supports for students success: strong school-parent-community ties; enhanced professional capacity; a student-centered learning

climate; a coherent instructional system; and leadership that drives change and enlists teachers, parents and community members to help expand the reach of the work and share the overall responsibility of improvement. Bryk et al. (2010) found that the value of the supports lies within their integration and mutual enforcement. Their point is illustrated through the the analogy of baking a cake where all of the essential ingredients (sugar, eggs, oil, flour, and baking powder) must interact with one another; leave one out and the cake will taste flat.

Teaching in distressed and under-resourced communities is incredibly difficult. Everyone is not capable of doing it well, and a lot of educators are not equipped with all the necessary tools to work in challenging educational environments. We are often asking children to overcome challenges many of us have not experienced as adults. The key factor in helping children and families navigate and mitigate this are supportive relationships. It is not all on teachers/educators. However, because children spend a significant portion of their day in classrooms, educators must be armed with the knowledge and the tools to build an encouraging, respectful, supportive, and trust-filled culture in their school and classrooms. School district administrators have to start to distribute leadership in their schools. Given that community schools have a broader focus than traditional schools, they also expect their staff to have a broader skill set. Compared with traditional school staff, staff in community schools need greater competencies and skills.

There must be a community approach when trying to solve this grand issue. In our "contemporary" world, where parents and guardians are working longer hours, everyone's role becomes crucial to a student's success. Community schools engage parents and community members as essential partners in education. There are multiple strategies that are employed for educating and involving parents as early as possible and for maintaining their engagement. Laura Pappano (2010), notes the impact of creating partnerships in order to turn struggling and failing

schools around, concluding that schools cannot do everything in silos and expect to do it well (Pappano, 2010).

Defining success for community schools can vary. While the primary focus of a community school is promoting the educational success of every student, families, communities and schools can also benefit in tangible ways. It is envisioned that children will become successful in their education as a result of being healthy and ready to learn, which means they will face fewer impediments, improve their attendance, and academic performance, thus achieve grade promotion. The hope is that families become engaged in their children's education, at home and at school by becoming better advocates for their children, volunteering and participating in school activities and being ultimately aware of the advantages of life-long learning. Many community schools offer support services to families with the goal of stability in mind. Communities can find the community schools model as beneficial because these students and families become productive members of their communities, which can result in safer neighborhoods with more constructive activities. Schools that participate in this model hope to experience multiple positive changes by which teachers have the opportunity to focus on education without being impacted by the social needs of the children. As a result, teachers are more productive, heighten their job satisfaction, and increase school safety.

Monitoring and evaluation through a system for its effectiveness must be integrated into roles and responsibilities of community schools. Adhering to ethics is a value to be recognized, although this too is difficult to measure. Innovative policy instruments must have an ecosystem flow as well as the capacity of various parameters. Perpetual growth comes from visibility, knowledge of the issues and a flow of money. To have sustainability we must allow the community to also feel invested in helping to explore ideas ideal of an ever-changing society.

The fundamental problem for any change is the mindset of the people: those wanting to exert influence for change and those on the receiving end of it. Systemic changes only occur when policymakers are impacted by the social issue. We must break the logic of donor/recipient's logic and engage in co-creation policy for successful partnerships between policymakers and educational masterminds. A holistic approach would be that represent the values for the government when conceptualizing policy issues.

The goal is for students to triumph and reach their full potential when enrolled in a community school that meets their obstacles head-on. With support and access to resources, educators can start to evaluate and recognize the stressors each student encounter. The right community school programming model will allow for school districts to start addressing these stressors in the lives of our students in school, at home and in the community, while responding to current situations, thus allowing community partners to alleviate the conditions that play against student achievement.

Each school district could potentially benefit from a similar model of practice, one that is enmeshed and connected to the interworkings of the individual school district. This provides the opportunity for equity in excellence while working with diverse populations in all stages of vulnerability where targeted or prevention services are offered. Moreover, there is a need to alleviate and ameliorate the social conditions that impact education.

2.7 A Social Work Perspective on Education

More often than not, there is literature that suggests children faced with barriers may not achieve. However, there is equally compelling research that reports that students who meet all of

these obstacles can triumph and reach their full potential. Of particular interest to social workers are schools and programs developed to address deficiencies in public education (Johnson & Rhodes, 2015). The National Association of Social Work supports policies that acknowledge the connection between economic injustices and education disparities and work to eradicate them (Gutin & Lowan, 2015, p. 87). Economic injustices not only create the risk for education disparities in the present but also create generational education hardships for families everywhere. Disparities have the potential to plague families for several generations. There are success stories where people fight their way out of poverty but that is not the reality for far too many people. Gutin and Lowan (2015) claim, "Research suggests that living in poverty during early childhood is related to lower levels of academic performance-beginning in kindergarten and extending through elementary and high school- and lower rates of high school completion" (p.85). In turn, economic disparities have the potential to create slippery slope scenarios where the people who are unable to attain secondary education become limited in employment choices. Employment options for individuals with limited education predominantly consist of minimum wage jobs that do not pay enough to support families.

Education policy matters to the social work profession because it is encompassing of many social justice issues. Social workers really need to understand how the education system in American has come to be and where it is headed in order to, again, come back to making education a place of social justice. In an ideal situation hard work and furthering education could change circumstances; however, we recognize that this is an enormous amount of pressure for one system and provides great tension on the macro level because education spans the economic, social, and political worlds that we live in. There are also inherent societal issues in terms of poverty and structural inequality that impact individuals and make educational goals unattainable. To put

pressure on the system of education where all children and learners of differing abilities reach a certain level of proficiency, is attainable, but not without the necessary resources and support.

Social work is multidisciplinary and interacts with education in a holistic way. Education has been traditionally academically focused and the social work perspective supports educating the “whole child.” The social and emotional issues that occur outside of school, later becomes the school’s issue or charge, which greatly intertwine with the work of social workers. With support and access to resources, we can start to evaluate and recognize the stressors each student encounters. The right programming model will allow for school districts to start addressing these stressors in the lives of our students in school, at home and in the community. While we are responding to current situations, we must also innovate to craft a future in which the problems we fight today don't rear their heads tomorrow, allowing us to alleviate the conditions that play against student achievement. Social, cultural, political and economic innovations are the key to success for our youth and communities. Social work has deep historical roots of providing interventions in order to achieve specific ends. Rose (2002) explains that the significance of social work efforts is rooted to help individuals organize as a collective to enhance their individual behavior as well as their social conditions.

For over a hundred years, school social workers have been a critical link between the home, school, and the community (NASW, 2012). Johnson and Rhodes (2012) write, “School social workers are hired by school districts to enhance the schools ability to meet its academic mission, especially where home, school and community collaboration is key to achieving student success”(p.100). Like other social work specializations, school social work applies intervention strategies that are evidence based (Franklin, Harris, & Lagana-Riordan, 2010). School social work is a complex and specialized field that is affected by education policy, research and practice models as

they continue to evolve. School social work as a profession has focused on the coordination of efforts between school, families, and the communities in order to assist students improve upon their academic enrichment, as well as their social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. Moreover, social workers in schools ensure sure that students are (mentally, emotionally, and physically present) in the classroom and promote dignity and respect for all (NASW, 2012).

Social work is interdisciplinary and collaborative in nature. It is the standard for social workers in the school setting to serve as leaders in order to develop and provide a positive school climate in which collaboration is of the utmost importance when working with school administration, school personnel, family members and community members/professionals. Having parental involvement and engagement in their children's education seems to be appreciated, but it is not a given. School social workers engage parents at all cost in order to help remove barriers to learning for the student. Some may ask, where are the parents of these children? Often parents are working multiple minimum wage jobs, or they are unable to provide care for their children. It is in my experience as a social worker that when parents are unable to care for their children, they depend on family and friends to care for their children. It is understood that parents and caregivers are a child's first teacher and the foundation ultimately begin at homes, just like we know that learning is supposed to continue at home and becomes an extension of the classroom and that a team approach is most effective. However, we cannot punish children for the faults of an imperfect support system, and it should not be an educational death sentence to children. Sometimes it takes building a support network for the child to succeed. Having a social worker at the table always allows for the advocacy for students and their families.

The ways in which school social workers support and advocate for children varies by state and school district (Haight & Taylor, 2013). As the literature suggests, school social workers apply

ecological systems thinking to emphasize the relations of the child in connection with its broader environment. School social workers must anticipate the stressors that may emerge as a result of the mismatch between large school systems and a student's educational needs for support.

2.8 The Integration of Education and Social Work for the Making of Community

Partnership Schools

Michael B. Miller (2013), the author of *Poor and Ineffective Management in Capital E: Truth About America's Education*, cited Barbara Coloroso, a culture diversity educator saying, "if kids come to us from strong, healthy functioning families, it makes [our job as educators] easier. If they do not come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job more important" (p.5).

Community schools are built on the successful integration of community partnerships, university assistance, and with the support of child protective services (Dudenhoefer, 2017). With the understanding that no two communities are the same, the services enlisted to aid the families and students in every community school vary. Some may include a boys and girls club, a health center, food pantry, on-site counseling services, after school programs and so much more (James, 2017). Building this village of community support helps to remove economic and health barriers that prevent children in underserved communities from gaining access to the best education possible (Dudenhoefer, 2017).

The Community Partnership School model is unique among community schools because it embeds the expertise of social workers from a minimum of four partners (not for profit and for profit organizations) into the school which brings community resources that will benefit the

students, parents, and the community, making it a more comprehensive model (Dudenhoefer, 2017). Community social work practitioners understand the ways in which communities function, and the ways in which to use the social environment as a part of the helping process, and how to intervene (Glisson, Dulmus, & Sowers, 2012). It is understood that the social work profession that social systems, especially communities influence the way people think and act. Communities can be nurturing and provide basic social, economic, and emotional supports to individuals and families. Conversely, communities can be hostile places where inequities contribute significantly to the oppression and social exclusion of families (Glisson, Dulmus, & Sowers, 2012).

There are also additional community partners, including but not limited to a college or university, health care provider, nonprofit organization and the school district. In traditional community school partnerships, the responsibility of the school district and social service component is left up to one non-profit organization which can leave a strain on the non-profit, resulting in a lack of services for students and families (Dudenhoefer, 2017). This model was tested in 2010 with Evans High School centered in another predominately African American community in Orlando, Florida (James, 2017). After six years of its inception graduation rates increased at Evans High School from 64 percent in 2011 to 88 percent in 2017 (James, 2017). Crime rates in the area also decreased. Crime went down 17 percent in the first six months of 2017 (Center for Community Partnerships, Center for Community Schools, 2017).

This problem of practice model charges the education system with integrating multiple systems in a student's/ family's life in order to create culturally responsive community schools and its impact on education resulting in narrowing the achievement gap for students of color. The community school model provides a unique cultural opportunity to integrate schools and social

work/community services. Such prevention and intervention models will help combat the symptoms that inhibit the persistence of the achievement gap.

3.0 Methodology

The methods chapter begins with a statement of the purpose of the study and the research questions the study aims to address (Section 3.1). Following this, I present an overview of the local context of the study, i.e., the selected district (Section 3.2). In subsequent sections, I present an overview of the study design (3.3); study participants, including a summary of data collection and research activities, and details of the three phases (3.4); and a discussion of the anticipated limitations (Section 3.5).

3.1 Research Questions

3.1.1 Research Topics and Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyze the external environmental stressors that impede and impact student achievement which ultimately lends itself to the achievement gap. The achievement gap is commonly known as the disparity in educational performance among students who can be defined by their race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. Although, H.R. Milner IV (2013) denotes that the achievement gap is an “after-the-fact” measure, and that educators need to refocus their attention on the exposures and experiences that students are challenged with on a daily basis. It is those daily challenges-what he refers to as the “opportunity gap” that causes students not to succeed. Concretely, if we are able to identify and understand more about the daily stressors that students face, we can mitigate them and move toward alleviation. While Community

Partnerships Schools have been in existence for some time now, there is still scattered research detailing the long-term successful impact. Schools are understood to be both institutions where inequality is reproduced but also where opportunity is produced. More recently, in *Sociology of Education*, Downey and Condrón (2016) wrote an article about the extent to which schools function to create opportunity. While Downey and Condrón (2016) did not speak specifically to the community partnership model, I see this progressive model as a potential pathway toward the imperative goals to which we can strategize against the issues of the opportunity gap and work to narrow the achievement gap.

The research topics (RT) and questions guiding this study are as follows.

1. What are the five most salient environmental stressors that students and families at an urban K-5 face?
2. How is the K-5 Community Partnership Schools trying to mitigate the five primary stressors identified?
3. What are the key stakeholder's impressions of what is working well and what areas still need to be developed at this K-5 school?

3.2 Study Context

3.2.1 School District

The study is situated in an urban K-5 school. The location and details of this school have been de-identified to maintain respondents' confidentiality, including rounding of demographic statistics. Although the study site is anonymous, it is worthwhile to consider a concrete example

of how community schools form. Thus, I provide an example here from a district in my hometown of Pittsburgh, a metro area in some ways demographically similar to my study site. In 2016, Pittsburgh Public School District found themselves in search of a new superintendent. Dr. Anthony Hamlet rose to the top as an urban educator from Palm Beach, Florida, and reportedly was able to turn schools from F to C ratings within the Florida state evaluation system (Niederberger, 2018). This would later become a controversial matter that came under deep scrutiny within the Pittsburgh community, somewhat marring the superintendent's arrival. Unanimously backed by the Pittsburgh School Board, Dr. Hamlet had a proven record of improvement, but not at the caliber originally stated by the superintendent himself (Niederberger, 2018). Although, Dr. Hamlet's career started with controversy, he continues to prove naysayers wrong as he strives towards the school districts vision, mission, and beliefs. The district has listed 7 beliefs that are stated on the Pittsburgh Public School Website (www.pgh.schools.org):

- All children can learn at high levels.
- Teachers have a profound impact on student development, and should have ample training, support and resources.
- Education begins with a safe and healthy learning environment.
- Families are an essential part of the educational process.
- A commitment from the entire community is necessary to build a culture that encourages student achievement.
- Improvement in education is guided by consistent and effective leadership.
- Central office exists to serve students and schools.

These beliefs are in line with what we also know to be the beliefs of a community school model. Dr. Hamlet's career took shape within an era and a locale where community schools started to take root, the state of Florida; and as a part of the Pittsburgh Public School strategic plan, community schools were at the fore front. In an interview conducted by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* with the Dr. Hamlet, he spoke of the community schools' initiative which, he noted helps to break down the barriers of success and the need of collaborative efforts of social workers and

the importance of having such models embedded the Pittsburgh Public School System (Born, 2017). In that same year, 21 schools in Pittsburgh applied to become one of the few selected to start the process of becoming a full-service community school (Born, 2017). Recognizing the need for improving school outcomes by providing community support is the mantra of PPS-Community Schools (www.discoverpps.org). There is a 2017-2023 strategic plan in place to transform the social and emotional learning needs of students enrolled in the five community schools within PPS. Each of the schools have a designated site director to coordinate the support of the community organizations that will help with the unique needs of every school, in addition to the integrated efforts of teachers, school leaders, community partners, students, and families (www.discoverpps.org).

The Pittsburgh Public Schools 2017-2022 Strategic Plan included the designation of its first five community schools as a pilot group in order to get a proof of concept prior to expanding to other schools within the district (Born, 2017). Twenty-one schools applied for the title of community school in 2017 (Born, 2017). The four of the five schools selected had already embedded partnerships with local non-profits that provided social service resources to the children and families served within the school. One school, Arsenal Middle School is in partnership with Communities in Schools an organization that aims to build relationships that empowers at-risk students to stay and perform well in school and in life (Born, 2017).

The K-5 school studied for this dissertation of practice is embedded in a historically, African American section of the city it serves. The vision for this community school is to build a village of community support to remove barriers that prevent children in underserved communities from gaining access to the best education possible. The needs of the community are well-known, not only by the residents, but more importantly, by political leaders and key stakeholders (school

district, religious institutions, non-profit organizations, local businesses, etc.). As a result of this attention, the hope is that this community experiences as much needed revitalization that does not encompass gentrification. Many community organizations have come together to enhance this school's resource offerings and made a commitment to support this endeavor.

The K-5 school is a Title-1 school (at 100%) that is comprised of almost 500 students.¹ The demographic population of those that attend the school are: 90% Black, 5% Multi Racial, 2% White/Caucasian and 3% American Indian. 90% of its student population are considered economically disadvantaged.

The history of the community this school serves is one where a wealthy community, both financially and socially has become one of the poorest. The narrative of how the war on drugs, gangs, poverty, and incarceration and major community disinvestment plagues the community where the study site lives. Racial segregation is evident in this community as it is serves as a primary residence for African Americans at 98% of the population (www.uscensus.gov). In 2017, there was an estimation of 2,700 children that reside in this community, under the age of 18 (www.uscensus.gov). 80% of the families fall below the poverty level, but that number increases to 70% for single parent households for children under the age of 18 (www.uscensus.gov).

With the understanding that no two communities are the same, this community school seeks to aid students and families with services that address poverty, adequate mental and physical health care, exposure to violence and crime, homelessness and houselessness, and hunger/nutrition.

¹ Consistent with recommendations from the National Center for Education Statistics, some sample size numbers have been rounded to assure confidentiality.

3.3 Methods

3.3.1 Design

For this research, I focused on case study method of research, capturing quantitative and qualitative methods of data. For qualitative purposes, I concentrated upon case study research, which is focused through examination of a phenomenon within a bounded system (Mertens, 2015). A well-done case study is relatable and rings true to others who have similar experiences. The goal has always been to understand my dissertation of practice holistically through a single site case study of a K-5 Community School. This offers the opportunity to study student and family stressors, how the community school helps to mitigate these stressors, as well as the key stakeholder's impressions on areas of development for the effective alleviation of the achievement gap. According to Baker (2011), case study research collects a wide variety of data inclusive of review of the current literature and existing studies, the review of historical trends and statewide data, interviews, observations, existing studies, administrative data documents and other sources. Kelly (2017) offers that the best qualitative research is where causal inferences are supported by the researcher's efforts to account for chance, the ruling out of competing explanations, and the explanation of causation.

This study is guided by the ideal of making some causal inferences about the effects of community schooling, although such inferences are only suggestive. I am ultimately curious about how Community Partnership Schools might mitigate student and family stressors and how these stressors also might in turn impact student achievement (grades, yearly assessment, suspensions, etc.). It is important to briefly describe the hypothesized associations between the basic variables that are being researched. External environmental stressors contribute to the achievement gap but

can be mediated by the Community Partnership School. According to Kelly (2017), researchers hypothesize and demonstrate relationships between school involvement and life outcomes. Pallas (2000) contends that it is also the intervening variables that may mediate such issues and become intervening variables, such as the offerings available to students in a Community Partnership School that differ from schools without the additional support. Although, as Kelly (2017) notes, single study research can neither anticipate all of the competing explanations or causal mechanisms nor explain them fully. I am challenged by the thought of having to support the validation of the community school model as a solution for narrowing the achievement gap as I look at ways to rule out competing explanations.

Sampling procedures were put in place to have a representative depiction of the identified student stressors, insight on how academic outcomes are affected by the stressors, and areas of improvement for community partnership schools in order to address these stressors as a way to generate the phenomenon of interest. For purposes of this study, I have utilized two types of data collection methods: surveys and interviews. My initial goal was to have a population sample of all educational professionals at the community school for the survey, and to conduct interviews by convenience sampling. The objective of this data collection was to gain an understanding of the complexities of the student and family stressors that the community schools still need to parse out in order to help alleviate these issues. Although, Yin (1989) offered the recommendation that within the structure of case study, one should ideally examine several types of data. My goal was to focus on the depth versus breadth of learning a case study will offer, expounding upon the deep-rooted issues that the threats of the opportunity gap poses to the achievement gap.

3.3.2 Participants

There has been a gap between knowing what works and the widespread adoption of such practices which is a challenge for funders and policy makers (Baker, 2011). Acquiring an in-depth understanding of community schools within an urban school setting ensures those involved in the model are heard. Creswell (2005) described qualitative research as investigations that “rely on the views of participants, collect data consisting largely on text from participants, describe and analyze these words for themes” (p.39). My targeted sample included busy working professionals, and because of this, I was able ultimately to sample only 18 survey participants and interview 8 of the 18 sampled. 5 of the 18 sampled had their surveys removed from the data collection due to insufficient completion of the survey. Schools are vitally important in every community, and words and themes help to bring greater awareness and comprehension to the topic and adds to the literature. Research participants included school administrators, educators (classroom teachers/K-5), school counselors, program directors, community partners that provide support to the school, teachers, students and families. The sampling of these individuals has provided and produced rich data. All the research participants involved with this community school had the ability to identify the five primary stressors that impact students and families ultimately the community.

When it comes to conducting qualitative research, there is an abundance of discourse over the ideal sample size needed to gather significant data (Sandelowski 1995; Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007; Creswell 2007; Thomas and Pollio 2002; McLaughlin 2004; Baker and Edwards 2012; Braun and Clarke 2013). Sandelowski (1995) recommends researchers gather samples that are small enough to manage but are large enough to add understanding of the experience being studied and contributes to the literature. While I initially expected to have the same number of

participants who participated in the survey also participate in the interview, I fell short of my initial goal to have at least 20 participants given that attrition was inevitable. Table 1 illustrates the respondents who were able to complete the survey and continue on in the process with the interview. There was representation from every subgroup within the community school model. Participants included, one principal/administrator, one-educational/instructional team member, three classified staff members, and three community partners.

Table 1. Sample Size Calculation for Survey Data

<u>Eligible Participants</u>	<u>Sampling List/Frame</u>	<u>Survey Participants</u>	<u>Interview Participants</u>
Administrators	2	2	1
Educational/Instructional Team	31	6	1
School (Classified) Staff	4	3	3
Community Partners	11	7	3
Total= 88	Total= 48	Total= 18	Total=8

3.3.3 Human Subjects Consideration

There was no intervention involved in the study; the research focused on "normal" organizational practices. This research study posed a minimal risk to the research participants and did not involve protected populations. Benign procedures of an online survey and interview were conducted on non-sensitive topics with the staff at the K-5 school as previously mentioned. Participants were asked to provide demographic information (e.g., gender, age, race, household income, the community they reside, why they choose to work at this particular school, and if they had children) and other information that was of interest to me as the researcher while studying social stressors for students in an economically disadvantaged school district. No sensitive information was recorded. Participants' confidentiality and privacy was ensured by the researcher. Some participants choose to encourage other colleagues to participate by coming forth and sharing

that they themselves participated in the study. In all, there was minimal risk to the research participants.

3.3.4 Data Collection

The focus of my case study occurred over a 4-month period (Spring and Summer) and expounded upon how this K-5 community school is striving to mitigate external environmental stressors and the prevalence of the stressors on the student's ability to achieve in the classroom; especially when it comes to the student(s) and their families who has, or have the propensity to face homelessness, the lack of proper nutrition, mental health and physical health problems, grief and loss, drug and alcohol abuse, or any other identified pertinent issue. This case study delved into the evidence of what works well and what does not. Data collection came in the forms of a survey, interviews, and school data.

Data source One was a structured online survey in which the questions were created by the researcher (See Appendix A). Surveys were administered via Qualtrics and emailed to Principal(s), K-5 Teachers, the Director of Community Schools, the School Counselor, Community Partners, and other classified staff that are employed by the school district that work at the K-5 school, and/or provide resources to the K-5 school. The individuals who work at the Community School have the ability to provide supportive aid or instruction to the student and families; therefore, all participants who volunteered received the same survey questionnaire.

Participants who agreed to take the initial online survey were contacted up to four additional times. Twice, to complete the survey if they did not do so when they were initially sent the survey, and twice to participate in an interview if they did not agree to participate during the initial interview ask. Over the course of the 4-month project, as the principal investigator, I sent

the participants one email with up to two reminders with the survey link. Individuals who did not wish to participate either requested to unsubscribe from future correspondence or did not respond to the survey request. Individuals who did not respond with a request to unsubscribe received 2 follow-up emails with friendly reminders asking for their participation.

When I found that I were not receiving the rate of intended survey responses even after the two reminders, I reached out to individuals in person at the school with a paper copy of the survey questions, or allowed them to take the survey on an iPad with their unique link. This become an exhausting process. However, I did not want to drop the survey altogether because I thought it was helpful for the participant to have some forethought and insight into the purpose of the study and help structure the interviews.

The purpose of the survey was to identify the 5 most salient environmental stressors that effects the students in this K-5 school. The protocol also addresses two key constructs: student stressors, and academic outcomes. By doing such, I was able to then correlate the strains (stressors) of a student's home and community environment and how these issues make an impact on assessment outcomes (academic achievement) for students. The survey instrument was 9 questions long and took participants anywhere from 2 minutes to 17 minutes to complete. The expected average time of completion was anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes to complete. When developing survey questions, this researcher understood that people are over surveyed and often fail to respond to online surveys/questionnaires. However, this data source is used because it gathers information quickly from the masses. Survey questions consisted of Likert scales (rating, ranking scales, and magnitude estimation scales), and open and close ended questions.

In addition to the surveys, I conducted one face-to-face interview with primary participants who have worked directly with students and their families within this K-5 school setting. Seven of

the eight persons interviewed have either referred students or families to receive additional supportive services within the 2018-2019 school year. There was one person who provided direct supportive services in previous school years, but now provides the school with indirect service support and resources. It was important to sample this group because they helped to identify the most recent primary stressors that have impacted the students and families at this K-5 school, can share their very own lived experiences when working with the student population and their families, as well as provide the much needed resources required to enhance the community school's offerings that are crucial to the success of the model. These participants were identified by various methods: via the K-5 application software ("app"), the school website, and word of mouth.

Interviews were audiotaped and conducted in a secured office location, or at a place of the participant's choosing if it was a matter of convenience, inclusive of personal offices at the K-5 school. As the principal investigator, I reached out to the participants via email to schedule interviews. I informed participants the studying findings would be provided upon request.

Data source wo included a protocol of 14 semi-structured interview questions with open-ended protocol questions (See Appendix B). The responses from the survey helped to guide the interview process. While the five primary stressors were identified in the survey portion, the interviews helped me to best understand fully how the stressor impacts the students, their families, and even the community and how the community school model is currently addressing and mitigating each stressor identified from the survey data and research. These interviews followed the surveys with a convenience sample group (Mertens, 2015), which involves selecting participants based on their easier accessibility, willingness to participate, and availability. Sampled participants included an administrator (principal), a 4th and 5th grade teacher, three classified staff

(community school director, school counselor, and family and community engagement coordinator) and three community school community providers.

There are several key constructs that the interview addresses: 1) The schools' ability to mitigate the primary stressors for students and families. Accessibility of supportive services is crucial for students and families in mitigating stressors. 2) The impact of the primary stressors on students' grades and yearly assessments. Pinpointing academic outcomes and the specific ways this community school has provided instructional programming to enhance the academic outcomes of the student population. 3) The identification of a successful community school. This identification of a successful community school includes perceptions of school success and the identification of the specific variables that help the community school pinpoint its successes as well as areas for much needed development. The identification of what areas of development are needed helps to address the gaps in services that directly contribute to the alleviation of environmental stressors at the community school and the perceptions of areas of development. Identification of specific variables will help this K-5 pinpoint its areas of development and ways to align organizational strategies with future program outcomes.

Additional insight was gained from participants on other areas that impact outcomes, such as the way a student's out-of-seat time—due to behavioral infractions—could sometimes result in disciplinary measures, which can also impact academic achievement outcomes. I was glad to receive additional insight on the resiliency of Black students at this community school and their ability to face adversity with these environmental stressors, and to maintain human resilience that helps them battle to the top, causing the stressors to instead become assets.

I was also able to capture the individual classroom and school experiences of the professionals, and their perception of behaviors exhibited by the students and families that are

exemplified in the context of the community school environment. I asked the participant(s) clarifying questions throughout the interview to gain better insight to their responses.

The individual interviews took up to 45 minutes to 60 minutes. These interviews required skillful interaction by me as the researcher to elicit respondents' genuine beliefs and ideas. I strived to be aware and present in the moment and had the questions and structure accessible during the interview process. Additionally, I listened and solicited probes when necessary during the interviewing component, the structure of the interview was maintained, but allowed for a natural dialogue. I also observed nonverbal body language. The engagement of the semi-structured interviews included a naturalistic approach to engagement and dialogue. Participants were informed prior to the interview that their true identities would be withheld and pseudonyms would be used instead. Participants were emailed or spoken to in-person to set a date for the interview. All participants received a copy of the informed consent the day of the interview.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis includes a description of the school district and community with a three-step process of coding, similar to work done by Lee & Blitz (2014). Step one involves focused coding, used to distill the raw narratives into thematic categories. Step two involves axial coding, or coding that reveals intersectionality within the categories as revealed in step one. Finally, step three involves selective coding, used to illuminate themes, thereby allowing me to draw comparisons and discern appropriate practices and interventions. I identify and define the 5 primary environmental stressors from the survey that impact this student population and interrogate them deeply during the interviews with the key stakeholders and review interventions. A matrix (see Table 2 in the findings section) will be provided by correlating the five primary environmental

stressors and the programs intended to alleviate them. This has allowed for me to see how the issues raised by the stakeholders are addressed by the design of the community school model and the interdisciplinary measures to which this holistic approach may be achieved at this urban K-5.

Recorded interviews were transcribed, and selected sentences, passages, or stories relevant to inquiry questions were uploaded to Dedoose. The process of generating codes involved assigning each unit of data with its own unique code. Coding involved naturally and deliberately looking for patterns; mostly patterns of action and as documented in the data. Subsequently, I produced a matrix to help discern patterns.

Methodological triangulation was used in order to reduce bias throughout the study. Surveys and interview sources were used or quoted to support a premise. Maxwell (1996) speaks of triangulation as collecting information from diverse ranges of resources. Results from surveys, interviews, and the review of documents, will allow the opportunity for the researcher to see the uniformity among the themes, codes and issues (Maxwell, 1996). The triangulation of data only strengthened the reliability and internal validity of the study (Merriam, 1998).

I also utilized secondary data in the form of existing historical data, trends of statewide data and administrative data to help set the context (historical, economic, political, aesthetic, and legal background) of what social stressors have been plaguing the students and families in the school's community, which results in the low achievement and equates to the opportunity gap. Secondary data added depth and texture to the local and extended contexts that provides explanations on the micro, mezzo, macro levels to help compare and evaluate cause and effect analysis.

3.4 Limitations of Study

Case study research has its advantages and disadvantages. Because this study only examines one community school, the scope is limited to the defined boundaries of the K-5 school. The natural settings impose a limitation in both size and scope, resulting in gathered information being limited to the scope and experiences of willing participants. Self-reported data on school organizational practices can be qualified as a limitation. While it is one of the easiest ways to access constructs of interest, they are prone to response-bias and can inflate inferences about correlational and causal relationships (Stewart & Grant-Vallone, 2002). While it is my hope that respondents have provided an accurate depiction of their experiences of working at the K-5 community school, I do understand that oftentimes people will provide a more positive view than is accurate. Image matters for community school employees. Many times, funding and partnership are directly connected to the image of the school. Moreover, the abundance of positivity could possibly be a result of the respondent's lack of trust and the perceived ability to track responses back to them directly. Conversely, there are respondents who may have provide a more critical view of the school and may have viewed this as an opportunity to vent if they feel they are not being heard and want to make their concerns known for the purposes of improvement. What is also limiting in this study is the researcher's inability to hear from the children, their parents, and the community who the study focuses on. To better understand primary external stressors that directly impact achievement, one would have to talk to those with the lived experience of those stressors and obtain a subjective view of the community school model mitigating such stress. This, in fact, affects the primary portrait of the primary external stressors as I heard only from community school staff who indicated their perceptions of the stressor and its impact and not the children or their parents. Additionally, there are other limitations of case study research that may

include the inability to report all of the findings as addressed in “making the research process more public” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). Lastly, the role of the researcher is multi-fold. I created the overarching questions that guided the entire project; there is always the opportunity for personal bias in data collection and interpretation of data. While there are possible limitations for any study, I did everything possible to ensure all limitations were addressed. There is always the opportunity for deeper understanding of the contextual conditions relevant to the phenomenon that results in innovation and can offer challenges to theoretical assumptions.

4.0 Findings

This section presents the findings from the survey and interview responses. I sought to identify the five most salient external environment stressors according to educators that impact student achievement, what the community school is currently doing to mitigate these stressors, as well as what is currently working well and what needs improvement at the chosen urban K-5 community school. Educators identified the five stressors through survey research and the mitigation of stressors as well as areas of growth and development was identified within the context of the interviewees. Analysis of the data revealed that poverty, mental health, violence, grief and loss, homelessness, nutrition and hunger have a direct impact on students as well as their families. While community schools can assist with reducing the impact of such stressors by offering supportive resources, community schools do not, or cannot, completely eradicate the stressors identified. With the resources available to community schools, there has been some success with moving the needle and lessening the achievement gap. However, there is more work to be done in ensuring that every community school has the necessary resources to improve family and student outcomes.

4.1 Survey Identification of Five Salient Stressors

Salient stressors are the chronic stressors that students and families within this community school setting deal with on a daily basis. Surveying key informants (school administration, educational and instructional staff, classified staff, and community partners) connected to this

urban K-5 community school helped to identify the five salient (prominent) stressors that students and their families face. There was a series of questions asked of the respondents (See Appendix A) that helped to identify the five salient stressors that impede and impact student achievement. Eight questions were asked of each participant.

Question 1 asked survey participants if, as a part of their professional responsibilities, they are able to recognize students’ stressors at their community school. All of the respondents for this question, with the exception of one person, identified that they were capable of recognizing a student stressor. The person who answered “No,” that they were not able to recognize student stressors, did not complete the remainder of the survey. Responses are shared below in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Response-Question 1

As a part of your professional responsibilities are you able to recognize student stressors at your local community school?			
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	91.67%	11
2	No	8.33%	1
	Total	100%	12

Question 2 asked participants to consider their experiences at their community school, and to select the five issues that have the greatest impact on student/family success. Participants were able to choose from a list of 9 stressors. An open comment box was added for participants to identify an additional stressor that may have not been listed. Figure 1 depicts the nine stressors represented in the survey on the x-axis, and the y-axis reports of the number of participants that responded to stressors (only stressors with two or more responses are shown). For example, one survey participant identified mass incarceration as a stressor, but because they were the only person to identify this specific salient stressor, it was not placed on the table. However, when interviewing

the key stake holders, incarceration of parents was identified as one of the major causes of grief and loss felt by the student and their families and is spoken about within that particular domain.

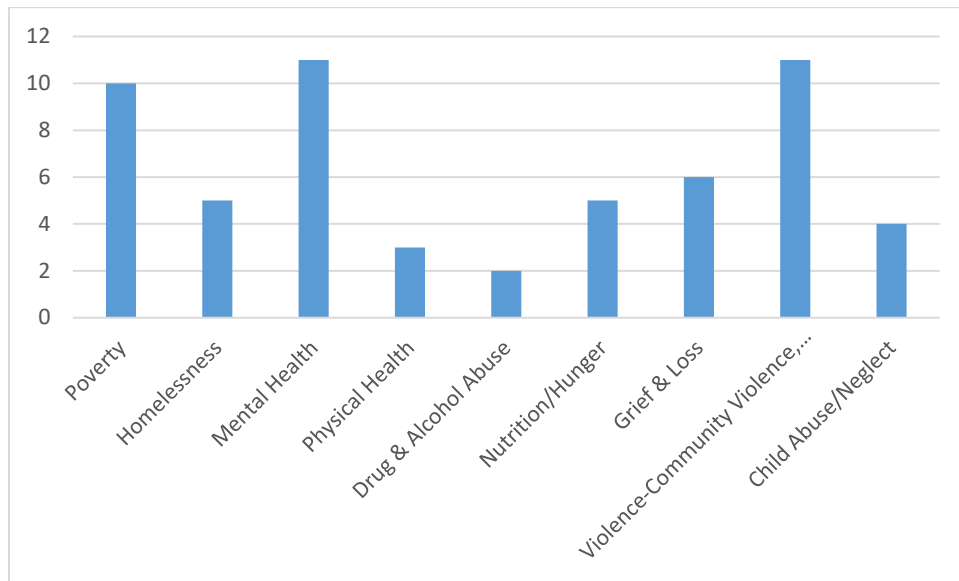


Figure 1. Salient Stressors

Question 3 asked survey participants to rank the stressors identified (9 listed and an open comment box) in order of prominence, 1-most salient to 10-least salient. The five salient stressors identified (in ranking order) were poverty, mental health, violence, nutrition and hunger, grief and loss, and homelessness. Homelessness and grief and loss were tied for fifth most identified salient stressor. Follow-up questions were asked throughout the survey to confirm these responses.

Table 3. Survey Response-Question 3

Rank the following issues in order of the most salient (prominent-1) issue a student may face to the least salient (prominent-10). Please type in the numbers.						
Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Poverty	1	7	2	1.71	2.91	11
Mental Health	1	5	2.55	1.16	1.34	11
Violence-Community, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner	2	5	3.18	1.11	1.24	11
Nutrition/Hunger	1	8	5.1	2.26	5.09	10
Homelessness	1	9	5.5	2.66	7.05	10
Grief & Loss	1	8	5.5	1.91	3.65	10
Physical Health	2	9	6.6	2.33	5.44	10
Child Abuse/Neglect	4	9	5.89	1.59	2.54	9
Drug & Alcohol Abuse	5	10	7.33	1.83	3.33	9
Other	7	10	9	1.41	2	3

Question 4 asked survey respondents to then identify the absolute most common stressor for students. They were only able to list one response here. Poverty, violence, and mental health were the leading responses.

Question 5 asked participants to identify one stressor that often goes unrecognized. The purpose of this question was not only to gain fuller insight into the stressors other than those originally identified, but also to establish that the stressors originally identified indeed impact students even if not within the top five of saliency. This question identified the following stressors in no-particular order: incarceration of parents, generational trauma, trauma associated with stressors, mental health, child abuse, physical health, mental health, family resources and interventions for mental health, and loss of family members due to incarceration. Much of the stressors shared here became underlying themes to the 5 salient stressors when speaking to key stakeholder during the interview portion of the study.

Question 6 asked participants to consider if socio-economic status is an indicator of child success. Responses ranged from might/might not, probably yes, to definitely yes. Most prominently might/might not was chosen more times single handily. However, probably yes and definitely yes combined, tied for the same number of responses as might/might night. When discussing this response further during the interview process with participants several thoughts came to light; that while socioeconomic status may have some bearing on a student’s ability to achieve, by no means should this be used as an excuse from student learners.

Table 4. Survey Response-Question 6

Is socio-economic status an indicator of child success at your local Community School?		
Answer	%	Count
Definitely yes	18.18%	2
Probably yes	27.27%	3
Might or might not	45.45%	5
Probably not	0.00%	0
Definitely not	9.09%	1
Total	100%	11

Question 7 asked participants how often they were in contact with the parents, or caregivers of those students with stressful home environments. At least half of the respondents reported being in contact with the parents/caregivers of students weekly. Thirty-three percent of the respondents reported they had daily contact with parents/caregivers. Remaining participants stated that they either made contact monthly (8.33%) or responded other. The participant that responded other was not interviewed. Therefore, there are no additional specifications regarding that response.

Table 5. Survey Response-Question 7

How often are you in contact with parents/caregivers of students with stressful home environments?		
Answer	%	Count
Daily	33.33%	4
Weekly	50.00%	6
Monthly	8.33%	1
Quarterly	0.00%	0
Yearly	0.00%	0
Not at All	0.00%	0
Other	8.33%	1
Total	100%	12

Question 8 asked survey participants if they feel external environmental stressors have a direct impact on student success and academic outcomes. The response was an overwhelming “yes” by all respondents.

Table 6. Survey Response-Question 8

Does external (outside of the school) environmental stressors have a direct impact on the student success and academic outcomes of the children you encounter at this K-5 Community School?			
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	100.00%	12
2	No	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	12

As a result of this study, I now understand even more coherently that ecologies affect human development. While children are very resilient, they are also very vulnerable. In whatever setting-, school, home, or the community- we must be attuned to the ways in which we can buffer risks that seek to hinder their positive development. In further discussion during the interview portion of the study, the prominent five stressors were illuminated through stories and examples of personal experiences being shared by the participants.

4.2 Interview Analysis of Five Salient Stressors

In order to gain a better understanding of the five stressors identified in the survey, I spent a great deal of time with each interview participant. With a combined time of eight plus hours over a two-month span, I engaged key stakeholders of the community school. The persons interviewed are the pulse of the community school. Most of them have worked at this school for at least 5 years or were at the school prior to its designation of as community school. They serve in varying roles with vastly different responsibilities and links to the student, family, and community. Each interview participant shared their “why” as a testament to the work that they do in this community school as well as their connection to the student, family, and community populous in this urban community. Table 2 details the demographic data of the participants interviewed for this study.

Table 7. Interview Participant Profile

Classification	Race	Gender	Age Range	Why they chose to work at this School
School Administrator	Black/African American	Male	26-49	Personal Interest
Educational/Instructional Staff	Black/African American	Female	26-49	Personal Reasons (family, friends, etc..)
School (Classified) Staff #1	White/Caucasian	Male	26-49	Previous Positive Internship/ Externship
School (Classified) Staff #2	Black/African American	Female	26-49	Personal Interest
School (Classified) Staff #3	Black/African American	Female	26-49	Unknown
Community Partner #1	Black/African American	Female	26-49	Influence from a Mentor
Community Partner #2	Black/African American	Male	26-49	Personal Interest
Community Partner #3	Asian/Pacific Islander & White/Caucasian	Female	26-49	Previous Positive Internship/ Externship

All of the key informants I interviewed appeared earnestly committed to the Community School model of success. Although, during the interview process, there was some discussion that there was not a lot of guidance, training or technical assistance in implementing the community school model provided before the start of 2017-2018 school year (the year the school was designated to become a community school). The school principal and community school director were the only two attendees eligible to participate in a community school conference during the summer months where best practices were shared. There were indications in the interview portion of the study that the key informants were engaging in the four pillars of the community school model raised by Oakes, Maier, and Daniel in 2017. These individuals spend a great deal of time engaging students in expanding learning opportunities (Pillar 2), wellness supports (Pillar 3) to combat external stressors and engaging their families, and the community (Pillar 4) with the collaborative partnerships (Pillar 1) embedded within the school. However, ongoing discussion lead me to believe that there was no concrete framework, or standards to guide the successful implementation of the community school model, and that what they were doing was more trial and error. While participants had faith in the model, they were also wanted to implement the model with fidelity in order to gain the success intended. Participants also shared that they needed dedicated staff, increased partnerships, appropriate ways to track data for further evaluation and research, training and technical assistance, as well as a budget to offer quality programs and services to the students, families, and the community. All of this is outlined in greater details in section 4.5.

Most of the key informants who participated in the interview portion of the study identifiably had daily, or weekly contact with the parents of the student learners (see Table. 5), thus making them greatly aware of issues that were impeding the student learners ability to achieve.

These informants were often charged with providing preventions or interventions to contend with the circumstances that the students and their families faced. On the two occasions that I visited the community school, I was able to witness sincere attempts to provide this community with opportunities to improve their quality of life. The community school and their partners host community dinners twice a year, bringing organizations together that address issues that will ultimately transform the lives of those in that community.

It is important to note the level of commitment from these interview participants to better serve the students, families, and community members where this community school site is located. None of the interview participants resided in the community school location. Some participants shared that they had a 90-minute daily commute to their community school site, although they found the daily trek to be necessary because of their purpose and call to educate students. More than half of the participants reported not having biological children of their own. However, they expounded with exuberance about their commitment to “move the needle” or “change trajectories” of children. I found it equally astounding that the key informants spoke about the students, their families, and the community from a strength-based perspective. They looked at the assets of the individuals and the community and looked for opportunities to support them in all facets. Participants found this topic to be particularly interesting and necessary to speak about in public platforms. Some shared that this topic will assist with a call to action and growing need for more community school research. Vast research comes with the hope of additional funding. Interview participants understood our society’s caste systems that purposefully limit some (persons of color) more than others (their white counterparts) and hope continued research studies like this will hinder political ideology that invests in meritocracy.

All eight interview participants discussed external environment stressors that impact student achievement, but the five salient stressors were highlighted as the prominent themes in each of the individual interviews.

4.2.1 Poverty

Poverty was identified as the most salient stressor by those surveyed and interviewed. If we want to change the narrative, we must do something about the children like those in this community school who are growing up in generations of poverty. There are damaging aspects of primary and secondary trauma that derive from ongoing lived experiences of those who are impoverished. When surveying the pool of participants asking the question of “if socio-economic status an indicator of child success at [said community school],” only one person responded definitely not. Participants interviewed encountered students and families in a constant state of survival, providing accounts of cumulative and chronic stressors for children and parents alike with limited support and resources. Poverty was often discussed as an overarching theme that predicates on the trauma of individualized stressors. Here is how one participant described poverty:

4.2.1.1 Community School Administrator

When I think about poverty... I'm thinking more than just financial poverty, they can't afford a lot. But then there's this piece of poverty where I am trying to survive. I have so many kids and I'm a single parent. We've dealt with grandparents who got five of their grandkids and they're 75 years old trying to make this thing work and all that kind of stuff. Under that umbrella of survival, there's not thriving happening.

Those like the children, families, and the community discussed during this study who are impoverished are commonly placed at a disadvantage and have less opportunities to improve their life trajectories. I appreciated the frank, empathetic responses from the interview participants. They

did not sanitize the words that we often use when left to describe the level of poverty that their students and families face.

4.2.1.2 Community School Classified Staff Team Member #1

...Just living in a community that is impoverished, some of our children's basic needs not being met... From week to week and day to day [families] are trying to figure out, "how am I going to eat, what am I going to eat for breakfast and dinner, what are we going to wear. There is a daily struggle and I do not have time to figure out if my child has mental health stuff going on. I am struggling with my own stuff." Poverty is the inability to position my family to thrive or take care of the basic things because I am just trying to make it from day to day.

Poverty impacts the quality of life for people. Unfortunately, unmet needs are a constant reality for the students and families in this community. Even in a country as prosperous as the United States, children and families struggle to survive and are left to live a life of disadvantage. More money being equally distributed is a key aspect in improving the quality of our environment and our opportunities can facilitate change in our living conditions.

4.2.1.3 Community School Classified Staff Team Member #2

One of the parents of the student I was talking about earlier, whose father is serving a life sentence, so she's a single mother, has three kids and watches her niece because the mother has substance abuse issues and she currently lives ... You can see the house from the school but it's AHRCO [low income] housing and she's described it as living under a black cloud and it was really ... That really hit home.

The most immediate effects of poverty can sometimes be mediated for students when family assets can protect them from such consequences. However, it is apparent that there are families who are unfortunately unable provide those protective factors to their very own children even if they wanted to. It was explained in this way,

I think there's this idea that there's kind of this undercurrent of persistent trauma in neighborhoods like [the one we are speaking about today] and so it's not like an event. You think a lot about the school shootings that happen in the suburbs. It's an event. It's this one

thing that kind of triggers a lot of trauma for people, whereas for students living in poverty and with all these other issues on here, it's normalized. It permeates in a lot of ways.

Poverty is pervasive. There are families in this community that have endured generations of poverty. The Casey Family Foundation (2018), Putnam (2015), McLanahan and Sandefeur (1994) and other researchers have heavily researched the effects of families living in poverty, and identified how adults who have endured cycles of poverty can cause detriment to their children's ability to have a better path in life. Lack of income results in the lack of opportunity and access to resources. The way to address the issue of poverty is to give families a living wage (Berliner, 2013). It is not by chance that community schools are implemented in distressed communities, communities where their assistance for basic needs are a must. Berliner (2013) acknowledges ways in which attempts at school reform have failed because there has been no acknowledgment of the income inequality that overwhelms social problems.

4.2.2 Mental Health

Positive mental health is essential for healthy development. All children need and should have emotional security, which ultimately helps them to grow and flourish. The students at this community school are not different. Epigenetics compounded upon social and emotional challenges impacts cognitive skills (Newman & Newman, 2015). We must gain a better understanding of the ways in which to help educators and other professionals who interact with students and who can support the emotional needs and mental state of each student. Respondents talked in detail about the myriad of mental health concerns they have as it relates to students as well as their families.

From the start of the school day, community school staff acknowledge that students come into the school building having already dealt with adverse experiences from the time they awake to the time they arrive to school. It has been explained this way:

4.2.2.1 Community School Educational/Instructional Team Member

In the morning, we typically walk downstairs and pick up the students from the gymnasium after they've done their [Harambe]... you can just see the level of sadness on some of their faces. I'm like, it's 9a.m., what happened between them getting up around 7a.m. to being at school and getting picked up at 9a.m.? Sometimes they tell you what's going on and sometimes they don't, but just the look on some of their faces when they walk in the building and you first greet them, it makes me wonder what's going on and what are they thinking about.

As I continued to dig deeper into the stressor of mental health, I learned that such instances are common at this school. The mental health issues that the students face manifest in a variety of ways. There are times where educators who work directly work with students are not sure how to comfort or help students. For example, as one respondent shared:

4.2.2.2 Community School Classified Staff Member #2

Sometimes it's behavior, sometimes it's not a child who has a lot of behaviors but their withdrawn, they're not talking. Sometimes it's a child has been removed from a home and we're seeing some hard things, we're seeing some difficult things. So, I think mental health is not a one size fit all type. It's like you go to the emergency room and they triage you. It has to be appropriate for the level that the child needs. I feel like our first line of support is appropriate, I think [our school] could benefit from almost a second level, a child who would need a bit more.

And,

Sometimes I'll give some students a hug and they're totally fine after that. Like, their faces are totally different. Some students are just like mmmm, I need some space, I don't really want to talk about anything. I'm still thinking, what's going on? What can I do to help? Should I do nothing, will that help? So little things like that, things that you don't know about. It makes you think that, hmm, is there some mental health things going on? And it's not always overt and disruptive behavior that makes me think that. Sometimes it's just

like... Sometimes it IS that, but other times it's the lack of communication or their lack of ability to express themselves makes me think that.

Everyone who spoke on the stressor of mental health felt that the students have either experienced or been exposed to damaging issues over the course of time that they are not always aware. It is believed if a student's issues were made know to school staff, they could better adjust how they interact with each student.

4.2.2.3 Community School Educational/Instructional Team Member

I think digging deeper into mental health and going back into history of lives [of students] are important, because I teach fourth and fifth grade so that's ten years, nine or ten years, of things that have happened that are impacting them later. So, I think everything else impacts mental health. So, living in poverty impacts mental health, homelessness impacts mental health, so I thought mental health was the most salient because I feel like everything else impacts their mental health.

Serving children “where they are” is pivotal for this community school. Based on their interviews, key informants would like for children’s mental health to be a forethought and not an afterthought. They are working hard within their limited scope to make this happen. There is sufficient evidence that any period of poverty during a child’s early years of development increases their risk of mental health problems, such as depression, or acting out behaviors (McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). Rates of increase in antisocial behaviors were substantially higher for children with histories of persistent poverty than for transiently poor or non-poor children (Cantor, et. al., 2018). Integrating mental health services for a school site with a large student body, their families, and the community has proved to be very challenging for this community school as there just are not enough mental health professionals to serve the masses. Educational leaders on all levels within the community school setting, including those with minimal to no training on mental health needs, are having to step-up and screen for the severity of the mental health concerns that a student is

faced with as well as providing short term treatment interventions to help students process their emotions.

Currently, there are a limited number of mental health providers that come in to meet and provide prescribed treatment to students who require mental health support throughout the school day. Providing mental health treatment requires having several school-based therapists on site with a vast knowledge of appropriate and efficient clinical treatment services. These individuals will have to be able to work collaboratively with a team of teachers, administrators, special educators, and other mental health professionals in addition to the student and their families, or community members at large.

4.2.3 Violence-Community Violence, Domestic Violence, and Intimate Partner Violence

Community violence, domestic violence, and intimate partner violence was also identified as a salient stressor by the key informants. However, it was community violence that was primarily focused upon by those surveyed and interviewed. Physical and emotional safety came into question as the interview participants spoke openly about the level of gun violence that occurs in the community. Gun violence is a public health crisis that appears to be plaguing most communities especially those communities that are oppressed and have difficulties sustaining themselves just like the community identified for this study. These are genuine situations where people are in distress because their lives are threatened. In a K-5 school setting where this community school is placed, this is what the atmosphere of violence looks like for children and families that reside in the community:

4.2.3.1 Community School Community Partner #2

... there was community violence that I know was happening that would impact students, or that would happen right outside of the school, or near the school, and things like that. Fighting is the norm to solve problems in the community, we've had children bring weapons to school. It's a cycle.

Increased acts of violence and crime have been closely associated with individuals who are impoverished and have been disadvantaged in employment, or education. Having a reason to live could possibly deter the impact of community violence and give generations of families the opportunity to live a life of meaning and purpose.

4.2.3.2 Community School Classified Staff Member #2

I would say that during the past five years our students have faced a number of stressors. One that stands out to me is the violence in the community and the frequency of the violence. We have students that have witnessed shootings and they're in elementary school...when there was the shooting at the synagogue it was made a really, really big deal, and it was a really big deal. But when you work in a building where you have little kids who see shootings, there's no red flag. You know what I'm saying? They're just going through life and we need them to perform, you know what I'm saying? That's a lot. The violence in the community, can be considered a very violent community, and it's such a norm. You know what I mean? It's such a norm. It concerns me the impact that it's having on their overall wellbeing as children, and then how that plays out in the school.

Violence of any sort is a result of ignoring social problems. We must fix these issues before they are irretrievably broken and require greater intervention. We seem to have continuously ignore the cause and effect of such instances on the livelihood of children. This is not an impossible fix, and this new normal seems to be anything but. Children's exposure to violence is directly can be directly correlated to emotional-behavioral difficulties. Virtually all students who attend this school have experienced the death of a loved one due to violence or have had family members in prison due to their roles in violent acts or crimes.

4.2.3.3 Community School Classified Staff Member #1

Her son is in the video game club. He's why we have video game club. I mentor him now. [his mother sent me a text], "Just text me when he's on his way home. You can let him come home after video game club," and as we're wrapping up, she's like, "Don't let him come home. There was a shooting outside," and so she comes [to the school and picks him up] and you can tell she's processing and trying to deal with the shooting that just occurred and [states], "I just need to go to my mom's house but I don't have any money," and I wound up giving her a ride and I've done that a few times but she literally goes to her mother's house regularly, pretty much every weekend, because she doesn't want to stay in a high crime/high-violence community.

Key informants professed that there is not enough being done within the community school, or in conjunction with the community to prevent or intervene in the level of violence that takes place within this community. There have been several attempts from the community school and its community partners to host town halls, or peace marches to discuss the amount of violence plaguing the community. However, it has been reportedly met with bureaucracy and questions of security from the school district as it is a "hot topic" issue for this community. The concern of community violence is pervasive throughout the community. Because the community is deemed "unsafe," all school students are bused daily to and from school throughout the school year and summer months. The Family and Community Engagement Coordinator shared that parents along with community partners have met on several occasions to discuss the persistence of such violence and how to keep children safe and away from traps that result in community violence. However, there has not been any long-term success to their level of effort. Thus, the community school remains committed to creating safe and supportive environments for children in and out of school. Basch's (2010) study intentionally points to violence as one of the seven health disparities that is pervasive in influencing achievement gaps for low-income students of color. No matter what accountability measures are put into place to increase achievement, progress will be

profoundly limited without coordinated and collective efforts of government, schools, families, communities, and local health and wellness agencies.

Again, noticeably absent were the conversations about students witnessing instances of domestic violence or intimate partner violence that may take place within their home environments. This is not to say that this is regularly occurring or it is absent in the home altogether. Key informants did not make mention of these subcategories concerning violence during the interviews.

4.2.4 Grief and Loss

Loss is never easy and the grief behind it is unnerving. Losing a loved one to death, incarceration, abandonment, or neglect is never an easy subject, especially for elementary school aged children. However, it is not just the loss of a person that impacts students. It is also the loss of their home, the lives they once knew that no longer exists, and the places they played, or frequented whether good, or bad. We can never overlook the effects that grief has on young people. Behaviors that we may see as a result should not be pushed aside or labelled rebellious. The level of grief must be recognized and empathetic pathways must be suggested or provided to them so they can grieve properly. The students at this community school have suffered great loss and key stakeholders have encountered the student's losses in the following ways. Here are their stories:

4.2.4.1 Community School Classified Staff Team Member #3

When I think of grief and loss, first, I don't think of just necessarily someone passed away because we do have a lot, we do have a lot. We have children who have lost someone violently. It may have been a parent, a cousin, whatever, and they express that, right? That impacts you in many realms, having that, having to understand what grief is and them not really understanding what that is or what that entails, and that is not something that just

happens. You don't just grieve during the funeral and that's it, right? It impacts you throughout life, but also like grief and loss in different ways. You have a loss of coming from your natural family of your mom and dad and maybe now you're living with someone else. Dealing with that disconnect and that loss, and then maybe you're going from school to school. Maybe you have loss with friendships. You know what I mean? That is a lot for our students to deal with, grieving even the loss of someone who may, like you have a stepdad and they're not in your life anymore because your mom broke up and now this man you knew as your dad all these years is gone. That's a lot. You grieve that loss of that relationship. I was thinking all that in general, so death and everything else.

A number of my students have incarcerated parents. Things like that bring stress into their life. Or having someone who has passed away, like maybe their mom passed away or their dad passed away. A lot of grief and loss.

Another student, I know his father is serving a life sentence and so what is the impact of that, right? Because it's not necessarily someone has to pass away from you to experience grief or loss.

Some losses are obvious to those around us and elicit understanding, sympathy, and validation of our right to mourn. In addition to the feeling of loss, there is often continued grief triggered by missed milestones that can be very debilitating. There are many dynamics and complexities as it relates to grief or loss and it is important to emphasize and acknowledge.

4.2.4.2 Community School Educational and Instructional Team Member

Earlier in the year, I learned the background of one of my students, and the student's mother wasn't as involved as the student wanted the mother to be. So, I learned that, at one point in time, she had taken the children to the grandmother's home. There were three children. She said, oh, I'll be back, and never came back. Found out she was in Atlanta, Georgia like, wait, you said you were going to the store. What store?

I learned that [a] child's stepfather had committed suicide, in talking to other teachers. The mother, again, said okay, I'll be up at the school on this date to check up on the kids. Mom never came. Meanwhile, I also understand that she's still dealing with her issues, as well. She just lost her significant other, but you still have to be there for your kids. They have to deal with this as well. So, the students, they go throughout the year. The thing is that they're really resilient children, so if they didn't tell you what happened, you probably would never know what happened.

Even if it's, like, two years removed, some of the students still struggle with loss, and I can see that from numerous students. One of my students, her grandmother passed away maybe two years ago, and the way that she was acting I thought it was more recent. But when I spoke to her parents, they said that was like two, three years ago. I said, well, what have you all done to help her through that and they're like oh, we went to the funeral, and I said, well, she's still hurting. Then a mother ended up getting hit by a car and this worsened the situation for an already grieving student, whatever she was dealing with her grandmother, it just reoccurred in her mind throughout this year because she thought the same thing would happen to her mom, and I said, someone needs to have a conversation with her because she is worried and she has every right to be worried because she's already experienced someone passing away.

Loss and grief and death... that's a really big stressor. A lot of the students don't know how to handle it and deal with it, but I think that their parents don't either, so I just think it's like a generational thing is how do you deal with it, and most of them deal with it sometimes through anger and a lot through sadness and shutting down. That's what I've noticed.

Children experience bereavement longer and more than we think. Giving students the time and space to heal is paramount. Offering various forms of holistic support and guidance during this process provides students with the nurturance to sustain and cope such with blows. Trauma-informed attention to the student's well-being can provide a foundation to stabilize the grievances of children as well. This is how the school staff dealt with such grievances:

4.2.4.3 Community School Community Partner #1

It's not required for [students] to share that, but one of the scholars who I'm thinking of loss of one of their parents, I can't remember if it was the mom or the dad dying, was significant. The building of the rapport with that student from the first summer was definitely important. I know another student, she lost both of her parents in separate incidents pretty closely together and she's living with her grandma but there were times when we went on a field trip and I made sure I was aware of her field trip days because she had certain things she would need, and certain grieving processes that if you weren't aware of, you might tell her, "No, you can't have that item, or do that right now."

Loss is a very subjective personalized experience. No one can measure or compare how long it takes to grieve deep loss. This is something not often spoken about in school settings. It is important to have champions like this community school partner to help fill in the gaps for young people who have experienced grief.

4.2.4.4 Community School Educational and Instructional Team Member

Another young lady, her grandmother passed away over winter break, and that was really rough because she was really close with her. And her year, for the rest of the year, it just... I won't say it spiraled out of control, but she was a different person after this happened. But mom and I spoke a lot. She was very receptive. I was telling her different things I was noticing in the classroom, but she was noticing the same things at home, and she did try to get school and home therapy for her and things like that, so mom was on top of it, but nevertheless she was still struggling with it throughout the year, so we tried to keep everything pretty positive for her at school, but sometimes it was a struggle.

Successful schooling takes an entire village and must keep the whole child in mind (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996). In order for students to be academically successful in the face of adversity, schools and educators will have to take a foundational approach and support students social, cognitive, and emotional attachment (Cantor, et. al., 2018). Social conditions that result in constant loss can lead children to feel discouraged and can diminish and disrupt the learning process (Jensen, 1998).

4.2.4.5 School Classified Staff Member#1

So many of the kids know somebody that's been killed or seen somebody killed, seen a dead body. I'm talking K to 5. Can't talk about it. And almost to whereas adults you could sit there and listen to their story and cry. But it's their norm. You understand what I'm saying? And they've been so accustomed to it. And so that's why, just that grief and that loss. Parents incarcerated. I might be veering off, but an influx of mothers who are being incarcerated. That has been crazy. Or a mother that has been incarcerated. We've come across mothers that had been incarcerated during the school day. And we don't find out until nobody's here to pick-up. So, what's going on? And there's nothing in place to support that kid. You understand?

For these reasons it is critical for community schools to have partnerships to help them better prepare and support such needs. The increased numbers of incarcerated parents (primarily fathers) for Black children has to affect how they view and see the world, possibly altering the

level of support the student(s) may receive if their parent(s) were at home with them. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the community school to foster a nurturing school culture with a responsive team that puts the needs of children first. This school is more than an institution of academics, but a place where a student's basic needs are also met.

4.2.4.6 Community School Administrator

We had, a paraprofessional pass away. That was just devastating in and of itself.... he passed away the end of October. And, I'm trying to hold it all together, but it played a big part. And the moral of the staff decreased, just because we saw behaviors that we hadn't, we hadn't seen in a while. We got to kind of stay on top of it, and address things, and do it fast and stuff wasn't happening as fast as it usually does. And so that had a big moral side...we like kind of flat-lined this year.

Students at this community school suffered a continuum of loss this school year. There will always be personal losses that effect students and their families as previously mentioned. However, there was an overwhelming amount of staff turnover, and death in a setting that would ordinarily seem to be the most stable and secure environment. Life has presented all sorts of transitions to these students; the key informants would like to get better handle of these transitions because they are human and do not always have the answers. This is an area for schools to pay close attention to.

4.2.5 Homelessness/Houselessness

This community school had one of the highest rates of homelessness in the 2018-2019 school year. They identify themselves as one of a few public schools that accommodated their students and follow all McKinney Vento Act homeless laws and policies. Homelessness looks different for every student and family placed in this circumstance. It could be families that have

just been evicted, living in shelters, being doubled bunked with relatives temporarily, couch surfing with friends, and living in halfway houses. Even in these situations, the students as well as their families wanted their student learner to remain at the community school to receive their education.

These are stories of families doing the best they can while their children unfortunately live with forces outside of their control. Each time a child move, they lose anywhere from three to six months of schooling (learning). Bell (1980); Ladson Billings (2007); and Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez (2013) looks at the inequitable socioeconomic structures in place that creates housing disparities that directly impacts students and the links to achievement.

4.2.5.1 School Classified Staff Member #2

Sometimes I'll get a call... if they got their Section 8 voucher because they're in a shelter and they eventually got their voucher, "Can you help me find a house?" And I might say, "I can give you a list for housing, or I can post a housing list."

In a school of 500 students, the community school is depended upon for support and guidance because it is made known how much the school has helped students and their families in similar circumstances. According to key informant interviews 15% of the student population can experience homelessness at any given time. It is usually the adults who will approach the school when faced with homelessness, or houselessness. So many families are caught in the in-between.

4.2.5.2 Community School Educational/Instructional Team Member

The children usually don't speak up and say it. Usually a parent might say something. So, it could be more... There could be more children living in homelessness than we're aware of. But I have had two parents tell me that they were homeless at one point in time. One mother, she was very up front. She said [her child] may not be able to make it to school because we can't get busing, so that was an issue. Her attendance was already an issue, and then when they became homeless, it was even more of an issue. So, mom and I

communicated all the time but it was very difficult to keep her daughter on track because she wasn't there and [I offered to] bring her to school, tutor her, but there's confidentiality, you're not able to know where they are, so it was a huge issue with that child because she wanted to learn and I wanted to help her, and I had the time to help her, but because of laws and things like that, I was unable to.

Then there was another student this year, in the winter. Mom reached out to me through a classroom app that I use, and she's said, you know, we're currently homeless right now. I'm going to do my best to get them to school as much as possible. If you can send me anything via the app, that would be great. I can help them as best as I can. I was, like, posting videos of what we did in class and things like that, so she was able to use the videos to help the child learn. I know that the school... someone in the school actually would pick him up sometimes from, like, I guess a private location and bring him to school so he didn't miss that much school so that was very helpful.”

It is a crime against humanity when children are not provided with safe and secure housing.

Housing stabilization, having a bed of your own, predictability at home, and routines will help children to perform at their best. The stress of the parent when homeless or houseless offers children a consistent diet of stress and anxiety. The pressures that mount for students and families that are homeless is an added frustration for those seeking sufficiency and stability. Families who are homeless are unable to satisfy the basics of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, making it difficult to self-actualize. The community staff care enough to try and make as many concessions as they can and meet the needs of the student without compromising themselves or the student's confidentiality.

4.2.6 Nutrition and Hunger

Proper nutrition is necessary for healthy brain development in children (The National Commission on Social Emotional and Academic Development, 2019). Memory, cognition, and learning are all associated with fuel brain power. Most of the children at this community school live in food insecure households, trapped in cycles of hunger due to poverty and inequalities. Even

with families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and children participating in the school meal programs, the children miss numerous meals daily, lack nutrition as a result of eating processed foods (Karger & Stoesz, 2018).

4.2.6.1 Community School Administrator

Hot Cheetos is like breakfast. (laughing) And I'm becoming personally more aware of food and how nutrition and how that can impact just your day to day functioning. These kids are all used to fast food, even the lunches we provide them [are not the most nutritious]. Half the kids are lactose intolerant, so after they have had that milk, they're farting all afternoon. (laughs) You should smell it. It's like terrible gas. Some of these first graders are clearly lactose intolerant but they haven't been diagnosed.

When children are not hungry, they can concentrate, and are willing and ready to learn. This often leads to a reduction in behavioral issues that result in truancy, suspensions, or expulsions. Often, there are teachers who will fill the hunger gap in the classroom.

4.2.6.2 Community School Educational/Instructional Team Member

The children typically don't admit to being hungry, but when they come in [to class] in the morning and they're saying they have headaches, I say okay, well, what happened at home? Then, usually my next question is did you eat breakfast this morning and they'll say no. I'm like if you don't go back there and get an apple and go eat something... I have a banana in my bag, go eat the banana. So, they don't often say that they're hungry. Every so often, there might be a child that says my mom wasn't home this morning, we didn't eat breakfast, I got to school late, do you have any snacks or anything like that?... I always have food in my classroom. I went to Big Lots and have applesauce and granola bars and things like that. I think I have yogurt in my refrigerator.

Students depend upon the school meal programs made available to them. Often times a break from school means a break from daily meals. Based on the statistics, almost every student at this community school by definition is food insecure. School feeding programs have lasting effects for not just the students, but their families as well.

4.2.6.3 Community School Community Partner #1

Many of the students take multiple lunches. We even caught students [taking] lunches [without asking]. Often times, other staff will give students extra lunches throughout the summer to take home. I thought about the times when we to use our own money to feed students and families.

A hundred percent of the school students at this community school are eligible for free breakfast, lunch, and dinner when participating in after school extracurricular activities. There are programs in place for students to receive non-perishable food items to take home with them on the weekends. It is unacceptable in the United States that there is a plethora of children and families who are unsure as to where their next meal will come from, which places students at a greater risk of not reaching their full potential (Karger & Stoesz, p. 361, 2018).

4.2.6.4 Community School Classified Staff Member #1

I had someone text me last night at like seven o'clock asking about the Power Pack Program because they were dependent on that and I had to send an email, and send some texts to try and see what we could do and fortunately, the family has a car so they're able to go and pick up food from somewhere and we could help them out but if they didn't.

Families and community members have access to the monthly food bank hosted at the community school sponsored by a community school partner. One of the participants mentioned that community members were noticeably present for the monthly food bank, more so, than the students who attend the K-5 school and their families. There are no income requirements or restrictions to gain access to the food bank. When speaking to some of the interview participants it was critical for them that the community school has an accessible pantry open and available to the students, families, and the community daily. However, this remains a work in progress.

4.3 Academic Achievement Outcomes

Educational achievement gap research is extensive. The research has run the gamut of discussion on race, instructional design, socio-economic status, and how the data is derived. Realistically, there is a difference between useable knowledge and achievement scores from standardized tests. Yet, it is still important to consider the national, regional, and local scorecards that measure students' progress in reading, math, and science. National results show patterns for minority populations and students who are in poverty. Public schools' commitment to community schools includes providing students the resources they need to achieve academically. Achievement data single-handedly does not locate gaps or the opportunities that directly inform instructional improvement (Gay, 2010). We can look at these achievement data as a benchmark for change, but also focus on the underlying sources of educational problems and offer the community school as a basic model in which to embed solutions to those problems. In reviewing the school district data from a secondary data source, I was able to find progression of academic achievement pre and post community school implementation, from 2016 to 2018.

The achievement data helped to look at achievement outcomes for students at this community partnership school. The demographics of the children did not change on the day of testing. Poverty is still reality for them, concerns of mental health do not dissipate, acts of violence can occur before getting on the school bus, they may awake from the sounds of stomach grumbles or uncomforted because they shared a bed with a loved one, or in a different home altogether. While there was progress made in achievement outcomes for these students, there are outcome gaps that remain. The salient stressors identified in this study and many others play a massive role in the outcome gaps for African American children that are accounted for by the poverty levels of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch (Reardon, 2011). Charles Basch (2010) discusses

low-income youth are being disproportionately affected by seven “educationally relevant health disparities:” poor vision, asthma, aggression and violence, lack of physical activity, lack of nutrition, and untreated inattention and hyperactivity. If students are not able to learn because of these conditions, then their educational progress will be profoundly limited. Advancing the notion that low achievement is confounded on the stressors that present in one’s life due to the lack of opportunity and the accessibility of resources to help mitigate such stress. This is independent of the natural comparison to others which is often discussed when speaking of achievement and achievement gaps among students. Basch (2010) is adamant that no educational innovation can succeed if these disparities are not remedied.

Academic growth was captured from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) over the past year. In 2016, a year before this school site was identified to become a community school, the majority of students did not meet the standards of proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA), or math. They did, however, maintain their scores from the years prior and did not have a decline in score levels which shows promise that with the right tool’s achievement is possible. Twenty-two percent of students were identified as being proficient or above (1% of the student population was advanced). In addition to the efforts of the student’s on achievement exams, statistical data also help to identify teaching effectiveness in alignment with the State Act for proficiency levels. What is also positive to note about the 2016 report card score is that more than half of the teachers at this school (pre community school designation site) had 64% of their teacher population scoring at distinguished levels based on classroom observations and student surveys regarding their academic growth. There were no teachers identified at this school as needing improvement or failing. This is promising but does not meet the mark for long-term progress and success for students in this school.

Another characteristic to note is the change in leadership (principals) that occurred within the last four years. Often times there are tangible differences when there is a change in leadership. Expectations can vary or change from previous the previous year(s).

Statistics that are reflective of the 2017 school year highlight the year that the community became a designated community school site. In 2017, there were increases and some important gains in the academic achievement and the effectiveness as identified on the PSSA key outcomes. Seventy-one percent of the teachers were distinguished in 2017; that is a 7% increase from the year before. Although the teacher's perception of the school was lowered. Because the school was designated as a community school in 2017, teacher buy-in, or understanding of the community school model may have caused this decrease. The community school model requires school staff to become more involved in student, family, and community affairs (Blank, Jacobson, & Melaville, 2012), which they may or may have not been on board with. New program introduction and implementation can only be successful when staff feel as if they are a part of the process and feel as if they have a stake in the success of students, their families, and the community (Lubell, 2011). There were fewer new teachers for the 2017 school year, so many teachers were familiar to the school pre community school era. A major increase in teacher absence could also have something to do with the reporting of the perception of the school as well.

The standard for ELA was also met during this school year. Thirty-one percent of the students scored proficient on the PSSA. Forty-four percent remained at basic levels, but the below basic measures decreased. There is a gap that remains on the district level, quantifying major gaps. However, with the implementation of the community school model there was improvement, even with a 12% student population that had Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Improvements also included lower rates of students who were chronically absent and suspended.

There was a 2018 reporting of community school key outcomes. The ELA standard continued to improve, but unfortunately, students are not scoring proficiently in math on the PSSA. There were students performing better on the math portion, but 2% of students who have IEPs', have unfortunately scores decreasing. There continues to also be an uptick in parents' recommendation of the community school model for their child and other children from 2016 to 2018. Students remained stably located at the community school whereas, years before students and their families were very transient due to homelessness. The rate of suspensions has drastically decreased as well. Although, teacher effectiveness has decreased, teacher absence rates have increased again, and fewer school staff reported this community school as a "good place to work". Relatively speaking, there are 70% of the staff that still rates the community school as a positive place to work.

Consistency with administration, teaching staff, supportive staff, and community partners is necessary for success. Strong leadership along with an empathetic and committed mindset that all students can learn is integral for individuals who work at a community school (Jacobson & Blank, 2011). From this data point, consistency and the persistence of building upon the extraordinary efforts from the prior year appear to be key. Teachers at this community school go through a series of alternative pedagogy workshops in order to assist students in meeting state standards. There are multiple tests, four quarterly assessments in math and ELA. There are also online diagnostic assessments as well as state testing (PSSA). For students who are not meeting the standard, small teaching groups are implemented, and students have the opportunity to retest. Teach, retest and teach and retest again. Once a child has learned the material, it will be documented as meeting or exceeding the standard. Performance test are done in class, practice math problems are given in class where students must solve and show their work using a rubric,

so they are more comfortable with this process when taking the standards base assessments. These formative assessments are done daily. The teacher will teach a lesson and then provide the students with a quiz to identify if the students, were able to master the work or identify if there is a need for more instruction.

In classrooms like those found in this community school, where students often have difficulty, teachers feel as if smaller classroom sizes would be more beneficial. Smaller classroom sizes give teachers an opportunity to interact one-on-one with more students to help with academics and other issues or concerns they are facing. Students still receive report cards quarterly and the grades range from to F. If a child fails either math or reading, with a score in the 50's at the end of the school year, it is possible they may be retained. However, a 60% (D) is considered passing. If students are not proficient in other content areas such as science or social studies, students are not retained.

Overall, it appears that since this school was designated as a community school there has been a steady increase on some of the standardized measures of achievement by the students. Any increase is significant, because the needle has been moved. Based on the key informant interviews there are a great deal of collaborative efforts occurring to help mitigate factors (stressors) that may deter a student from being available to perform academically. Long-term, significant gains in achievement are possible for the students in this community school if the community partnership school is consistently able to produce innovative practices for pathways to success based on the needs of the students and their families.

4.4 How Stressors are Mitigated Currently by the Community School Model

The community school model seeks to aid students, families, and communities by providing services, programming, and resources as needed (NCCS, 2011). These resources are necessary to mediate the external environmental stressors that students and their families face. Table 3 is an illustration of how the five stressors are being mitigated/mediated in order to assist with stressors that may hinder students from learning, ultimately, assisting with narrowing the achievement gap.

When interviewing eight of the community school key stakeholders, there were a series of questions that were specifically focused on how each of the identified stressors were being mitigated by the community school. The questions asked were a compilation of acknowledging the stressor (and identifying the need), identifying a committed community school partner that can provide services or resources in place to quell the symptoms of the stressor, ways in which a student or family member would register to participate in necessary services, and if all students and families had equitable access to the delivery of services. All of the programs and service offerings reported were named by the stakeholders during the interview process.

Table 8. How Current Stressors are Being Mitigated

<u>Stressor</u>	<u>Current Mitigation of Stressor (Programs and Service Offerings)</u>
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-Based Mental Health Therapeutic Services via a mental health organization/partner (Glade-Run Lutheran Services) • School Counselor • School Psychologist • Work with Human Services Administration Organization (HSAO) to provide mental health coordination for students and families beyond what exist within the school setting • Partnership with Children’s Hospital Residency Program, where Residents complete Adverse Childhood Experiences

	<p>Screening (ACE's) score and collaborate with community school as to how they can work together with the student and their family's emotional health and physical health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve Crisis Services • Mentorship Based Programs and Services • Emotional Support Classroom with no more than 12 students, an emotional support teacher, a classroom assistant, and a full-time therapist in the classroom • University of Pittsburgh, Master of Social Work interns to meet with students one-on-one for processing issues of students • Creative Play and Recess Activities
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Game Club to extend out of school time offerings to students in lieu, of hanging out in the community during the times young people are most often exposed to violence and mischief • FamilyLinks Inc., provides violence prevention groups for school students
Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stakeholders use own monies to purchase things (uniforms/clothing, shoes and socks, coats, backpacks, hygiene products, food, other essentials) student(s) may need in order to be successful at school • School Staff assisting parents in looking for employment • 150 Students received free glasses through a partnership with the community school and the organization, Vision to Learn that provides free vision exams • Parent, Student, and Community Council Meetings for parents to have deeper level topical conversation with school staff on the pivotal issues in the community that impacts students and families • Student Services Assistant provides and connects parents to resources that prevents truancy as it relates to issues of poverty that impact students from getting to school daily and on time (ie., caring for siblings while parent/caregiver is working and ensuring siblings are fed, dressed, and able to get to school)
Grief and Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-Based Mental Health Therapeutic Services via a mental health organization/partner (Glade-Run Lutheran Services) • School Counselor • Grief Counselors are placed in the building after notable violence takes place in the community, or greater vicinity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set protocol and plan in conjunction with Children, Youth, and Family Services for students whose parents have been arrested, or incarcerated during the school day when no one come's to pick the child up at the end of the day
Homelessness & Houselessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Counselor offers regular housing list to families • School Counselor advocates for students and families that are not being treated fairly based on their housing status when moving from one school to another and contacts Fair Housing when families are wrongly evicted • Community School Liaison offers additional community resources • Christmas Giveaways for families that are homeless/houseless in conjunction with local churches • Housing Case Management Services are offered via a local community organization • Classroom App-DOJO that allow the student and their families to review videos and coursework to help them to stay abreast of what happened in class if they miss a day • School Staff transport children to school if coming from a nearby location of the students and family's temporary residence
Nutrition and Hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer School programming that provides breakfast, lunch and snacks during summer programming to their student participants • The Community School provides breakfast and lunch programs during the school year to all of their students • Dinner is provided to students who participate in extra-curricular activities to students during the school year • During Testing days students are provided food throughout the day • Summer School programming that provides breakfast, lunch and snacks during summer programming to their student participants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community School provides breakfast and lunch programs during the school year to all of their students • Dinner is provided to students who participate in extra-curricular activities during the school year • During Testing days students are provided food throughout the day • Bi-Weekly Power Pack Program during the school year that provides students with non-perishable food items to take home on the weekends.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host the Community Food Bank every second Saturday of the month in conjunction with Produce to the People• School assemblies hosted by former Steelers players in conjunction with dairy farmers on nutrition and healthy meal choices• Teachers purchase food items (bananas, applesauce, granola bars) to keep in their classroom for students who are hungry• Local community organizations serve as food bank sites for community members |
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While there was programming present at the community school to address all of the salient stressors indicated in the analysis. Some stressors had a considerable number of supportive programs and there were, services to mitigate stressful factors while others had minimal programs or service offerings. Even if the stressor was supported by a variety of program or service offerings, they were not always accessible to everyone at the community school. Programs and service offerings, the service sometimes had certain program requirements or mandates that would exclude students and families. Interview participants shared that there are times when students and families are sometimes excluded based on where they live in the community and the availability of the caregivers to attend meetings or participate in service offering in conjunction with their child(ren). Some program service offerings are hosted by off-site community partners and may not be within walking distance for the student(s) and their caregivers. The community school leadership team is currently working on mitigating circumstances that preclude students and families from participating in programmatic offerings that they are in need of. The team is considering the possibility of hosting sponsored activities multiple times a week in an open site space near the borders of the community in order to accommodate those interested.

4.5 Eight Stakeholders Interviewed, Eight Impressions

I have heard the rallying cry from school administrators, teachers, classified staff, and out of school time program staff to do whatever is in their means in order to provide protective factors for the risks shared from the above findings. Each of the eight individuals interviewed were well attuned to the challenges associated with the external environmental stressors and prided themselves on the relationships built with students in order to provide safe, secure, and enriched relationships in order to reinforce the resilience that can be positively carried over from one context to another. Moreover, they had hope for the improvements so far and what is to come. They all wanted to improve the services offerings and programs to accomplish all of what needs to be done. Asking the questions of, “what do we know about our students and their families and how do we help students improve,” these K-5 educators are looking to best understand better ways to approach the whole child continuum in search of student readiness in quality learning environments, while understanding that there are strengths and constraints within systems.

4.5.1 What is Working Well

Community Partnership Schools are schools that provide academic rigor, a wide range of in-school services, supports and opportunities to promote learning and development (Center for Community Partnerships, Center for Community Schools, 2017). As community school models continue to advance, it is critical that the four pillars of the community school model are a part of the established framework in sites replicating the model (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). This means ensuring that program fidelity and model consistency is maintained. Although, there are a

countless community school models they all share a common vision to create integrated collaborative leaderships and partnerships (Pillar 1), expanded opportunities to learn to ensure school readiness and academic success (Pillar 2), ensure the physical-social-emotional health and well-being of the students (Pillar 3), and encourage parent and community engagement (Pillar 4) (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Meeting with the participants allowed for the opportunity to engage and assess the areas that are working well and areas that are under development.

In speaking with the interview participants, I realized that sometimes the four pillars of community schools can overlap. Below is the analysis of how the community school fared on what is working well. Pillar 1, collaborative leadership and partnership, is necessary to examine the instances of what works in the community school and therefore was considered as occurring in each instance of what is working well. Collaborative leadership is a pillar that requires all community school partners agree to long-term, shared governance in the continued development of the community school site.

Pillar 2, expanded learning opportunities has the goal of doing what is necessary to increase academic performance by way of enrichment programs. Summer programming was mentioned as a “spark” for this local community school. One program that was mentioned was Marian Wright Edelman’s Freedom School, run by the Children’s Defense Fund, which is offered at the community school every summer for six weeks. Students are pre-selected to attend this summer program based on their academic achievement (grade level or above) and behavior. Freedom School is known for its ability to engage the entire family as it is a requirement between the program and the community school. Students who attend Freedom School are required to have parent, guardian, or family representation at the school at least three times over the course of the

summer. Freedom School offers field trips, National Days of Social Action, Parent Power Meetings that focus on empowering parents, and talent shows.

Student scholars who attend Freedom school are usually returning students and families who have reportedly reaped or received the benefits of services that Freedom School offers. Freedom School reportedly, never requests students to be hand selected based on top-performance or best behaved. Freedom School is designed for the co-learning of students at varying levels to learn from one another. Parents have often acknowledged that Freedom School helps to educationally motivate the young scholars throughout the summer months. Freedom School also offers resources throughout the summer months for students and families when school is not in session as the professionals who work with students and families are equipped to deal with the stressors as they come.

There are also expanded learning opportunities with AmeriCorps members who also work with the students at every grade level. AmeriCorps members assist with pulling groups of students out of class to work on academics and behaviors. They also assist during recess and lunch with monitoring the students during the high impact times of the day when transitions are being made. In addition to AmeriCorps, there are the Girl Scouts of America, and Reading is FUNdamental that offers programming to the school and about 20 other programs available to the students, their families, and the community. All of these organizations may help to mitigate some of the external environmental stressors.

Additionally, there is a school transition program, a program that assists the community school 5th graders transition successfully to the neighborhood middle school. Students can attend after-school enrichment programming, events, and other programs at the middle school. This transition program is needed and important because it helps fifth-grade students prepare for what

middle school is like, encourage ready-made friendships (from middle school mentors), and gets the students acquainted with the middle school staff.

This community school participates in restorative practices. There are talking circles in the morning in order to help set the tone for the school day. Students in grades K-2 can no longer be suspended. Restorative practices help to ensure a student does not miss important content that they may miss if they were not in school due to being suspended.

Pillar 3, wellness support, seeks to aid and assist students with the physical, social, and emotional needs in order to perform academically. The local community school has a referral process in place Student Assistance Program (SAP). This allows teachers to make referrals to the school counselor and/ or community school liaison based on a budding issue or concern. If a child is showing emotional or behavioral problems, or appears to be challenged in any way SAP is the direct system for those students with high needs. From that point, the student's parent(s)/caregiver is contacted to secure the necessary permissions to focus on the identified needs of the child. There is a SAP team that meets twice monthly to discuss the proper services. These meetings often include the parent(s)/caregivers, the child (depending on the sensitive nature of the subject), the SAP Liaison, School Counselor, Community School Liaison, administrator, and teacher. For example, if a student needs mental health service offerings, with the permission of the parents, the school staff can refer the student to the partner organization without the parent/caregiver taking off of work and transporting a child elsewhere because the service is already located within the school building. Counseling services are one of the primary services offered to students when a cause for concern is brought to the attention of school staff. Sometimes it may not be a teacher, school staff, or parent bringing awareness to a student's troubling issue, but a community member

who reports what they heard, or seen take place in a child's life because the community is so tight knit.

Participants did not think they were able to fully mitigate students and families issues of homelessness; and this is more of a city/state or a policy issue. The notion was that the City of Pittsburgh should have more affordable housing available to residents that were of quality living standards. In this Pittsburgh neighborhood, it was said that the landlords were deemed "slumlords" and do not maintain the property. This resulted in HUD and the Housing Authority to stop providing the supplemental assistance for the renters in the community. A concerned citizen brought this issue to the schools' attention because there was a concern that the students and their families in the community school would become homeless as a result thereof.

The community school reported having a pretty good process in terms of identifying and assisting homeless students and families. It was depicted in this way:

"I feel like our families are comfortable with telling us [when they are homeless]. When we come across someone who may not be as comfortable, we explain that we are here to help and this is not going to harm your child in any way, because there is fear of systems in the Black community. After developing a rapport and a relationship, they do not mind opening up. Our school has more homeless students than the other public schools [in the area]. The role of the school is to support throughout the process and provide resources. Although, it would be nice under the community school model to partner with a housing assistance program to have a direct linkage in identifying housing for a student and their family."

The community school recognizes the importance of serving the whole child and physical health needs for students by reintroducing recess and "playing" as a priority. This allows for

students to do what is natural and release chemical endorphins as an intervention for student success. The school received a grant in which an organization, called, “Play Works” provides training to recess staff around games and group management. The goal is to be able to sustain this long-term and implement the program with fidelity.

Pillar 4, family and community engagement focuses on the engagement of the students’ families and the community where the school is situated. Often times programs that the families and community members are engaged in focus on self-empowerment to make better economic and financial gains, skill development, supportive mental health services, and increased utilization of health care services. The school has recently launched a Facebook website and a school app, along with its weekly memos or monthly bulletins to directly communicate school activities with the parents/caregivers, community members, and friends of the school. Often the school hosts “Muffins with Moms,” “Take Your Father to School Day,” and other activities in which local churches and cafes will sponsor the continental breakfast for the parents.

The current programs that are offered at this community school are deemed effective when it builds a positive relationship with the students, families, and the community. Participants of the community school programs that are engaged are more likely to gain knowledge and if there are problems in the future, the community school will find it easier to assist with that challenge since a rapport has been built. All of this ultimately positively impacts the child’s overall well-being. Parents may not recognize all of the jargon of what a community school entails, but apparently recognize the difference between what is offered at a community versus a non-community school and appreciate the work of the community. The teachers were deemed with high regard. There were also other factors that worked well for the community school. The identities of most of the administration, top-level leaders and teachers of influence were like those in the community as it

relates to race. That there were men of color in leadership roles who are pertinent to shaping ideal imagery for students in this community. Students have been reportedly very open as well with regards to comfort, perceived relatability, openness, and connectedness to teachers of color.

4.5.2 Areas of Growth and Development

The areas of growth and development from the perspective of the interview participants also speak to the four pillars of community schooling (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). These areas of growth are in the early phases of development by the community school, or they are currently not using the strategy, but desire to do so. The areas of growth and development focuses on goals and aspirations of the community school studied. The community leaders I spoke to are looking at this community school model to develop new norms in order to have the desired outcomes for students, families, and the community of their choosing.

Repeatedly, I heard so many of the key stakeholders within this community school identify it as a “needy” school, a school that is well understaffed for its large quantity of students. It is understood that in order to have a community school focus there must be a “strong” foundation in place with “strong” structure for the community school to thrive. There was an echo that there should be an increase of school staff, ensuring that those who work with this population of children are qualified (administrators included), and well trained in classroom management. The school building must be a place where children are welcomed and is a nurturing, welcoming, and a place of safety; where the expectations are high regardless to your zip code and what you have experienced because it is predicated upon the belief that each child can succeed; children are educated in classrooms with fewer numbers of classroom pupils; and, an increase in the number of social workers, therapist and counselors for the building. The current compliance ratio for a

counselor is 1 to 250 students. During the time of the case study there was 1 school counselor for 500 students. The role of a school counselor in an elementary school setting should be focused on academics and social and emotional development, even career development. These skills are difficult to develop and prepare for in middle school when the counselor is constantly dealing with external environmental stressors that derive from the effects of trauma and poverty. School staff are trying to address to gaps with a lack of staff and putting their heads around how they can do better at providing wraparound services at school given the extreme contextual constraints.

In order for a community school to remain successful, it is necessary that there is a core staff in place to maintain a high standard service to the school and be able to provide learning opportunities as well as comprehensive supportive services.

Most of the interview participants felt as if this community school does not have an equitable amount of resources based on their current need, or population of students and families that it serves, that the community school's offerings are reactionary as opposed to preventive based. While they ensure all their students and families have equitable access to the services provided, they have a funding shortage that decreases the breadth of services offered. In order for community schools to maintain their success there must be a sustainability plan in place, one that includes diverse funding sources and does not heavily rely on a single source of funding. It has been often noted that there is a cost, attached to supporting students, families, and the community and this is often ignored by the complexities of education policy. The norms and needs of this community and school often go unrealized because those at the helm of education reform do not understand the urban school environment and how to allocate resources appropriately. Moreover, there is constant push back between community school staff and those who actively fight against democratizing community schools. The community school educators who participated in this study

want internal structures to open the school building to the community and understand that schools serve many purposes and education comes in many forms.

The community school is unable to eradicate poverty on its own. The layers of why families are homeless are embedded in larger policy level issues that the school is unfortunately unable to address. For instance, mass incarceration prevents many of the parents and caregivers from being able to obtain adequate affordable housing which ultimately continues the cycle of homelessness. To help alleviate the growing number of students who are homeless, or houseless it was suggested that the community school can increase efforts to provide budgeting workshops, and first-time home-buyers programs, but there are still a great number of families who would be eliminated from being able to participate. This also leads into the issue of school space that was mentioned as an obstacle or barrier to having more of these types of workshops, or other after-school activities. Because of the neighborhood geography, several of the stakeholders thought they lose a lot of participants because sometimes programming occurs on the other end of the community and not the central location of the school site.

The strengthening of partnerships was also a top suggestion for growth and development. This included strengthening parent partnerships and having more parental involvement. While some professionals may interact with parents more so than others based on their role in the school, it was apparent that the school wanted to be able to reach out to more parents and have them updated and involved in the school happenings. A strong parent/community engagement coordinator will be the key to having involved parents and community members engaged in the community school efforts.

At times, the community school has committed to home visits when parents are unable to make it to the school building, or when they are unable to reach a parent that they need to get in

contact with concerning their child. Most of the key stakeholders discussed alternative avenues in order to get families to participate in more school activities. Most of them identified these “lists of wants” as more of a “pie in the sky” listing, but nonetheless it is what is needed. This list included things like having a laundromat in the school where parents could do their laundry in a protected environment and read to their children, or just sit in on a class. Also, scheduling more parent meetings in the evening with childcare and a hot meal for parents who are employed and unable to take off work during the day. School staff mentioned that there was a host of red tape when having events in the evening, which include having adequate security and metal detectors available and the ability to offer parents transportation after events, or even bus tickets just to get their “foot in the door,” interview participants wanted families and community members to feel like the school is theirs. They want a family support center with couches, computers, fax machines, and other necessary components in order to handle important needs. There are also parents who would like to volunteer at school but cannot due to prior arrest records and they become discouraged when publicly denied. School staff want the ability to pre-warn their parents and caregivers of the offenses that preclude volunteerism without the embarrassment of being denied.

This community school hopes to one day become a full service to students, families and the community, with an onsite, full-service family health services with a primary care physician, ophthalmologist, dentist, mental health services, community gym, boys and girls club, and more. Currently, there is a full-time nurse on staff at the community school. The downside is that the nurse can no longer dispense morning medication, although, the nurse is allowed to provide other medication throughout the day.

It was also recommended that the current partnership with Children’s Hospital be extended and go “deeper” with parents. Parents should be educated on children’s appropriate developmental

stages, signs or indicators of health issues and concerns, and advocating for their child at the doctor's office when they realize that something may be wrong with their physical health. The school should provide health fairs and ensure that all students have a primary care physician.

This example shows what could be prevented or how the community school can help the parent have the necessary language:

“There was a student who had a challenge, he had a seizure. He was in kindergarten and his mom indicated that her son jumps sometimes, and at the next doctors visit she was encouraged to share this information. So, what does that mean to think a five-year-old boy jumps sometimes? No one at the doctor's office questioned the impact of this jumping. I wasn't in that doctor's visit, but reportedly, no one asked the mother what does that look like? What does that mean? And I think, I don't know the response, but I think it was like, "That's okay, that's what kids do." But he wasn't jumping, he was having almost maybe like a Tourette's, or I would call it a tremor. I have that language because I am a [professional]. But it was a move, it wasn't a jolt as we think of jump. It happened again at school, so we were able to see it, and now we know he has seizures. But even when the paramedics came... the way they treated him as if nothing was wrong, but the nurse really pushed it. She called me in her office and was like, "Is this his usual self?" I said, "Oh no, this is not him. Something is wrong. So, it made us think how long has he really been having seizures. But at least we know. And it gave me insight as a professional, as a mom you said what you thought. You must be willing to have that conversation. And it was I think a lesson, I won't forget that. But he's okay " I think that doctors have to be willing to go deeper with our families to really understand. And I think when dealing with families

you have to be willing to understand their language and how they explain things to really help their children. And I think that's missing between the doctor's office and the schools.

There is also a need for upper level mental health services classified as Tier Two and Tier Three levels within the community school. The community school currently has Tier One services. This includes school-based counseling services in which students meet with their therapist once a week. Tier Two offers students the opportunity to meet with a therapist twice a week in-school and includes additional opportunities to meet outside of school as well. Tier Three offers the student and their families to meet with a therapist in support of the issues troubling the child. Unfortunately, these Tiers are qualified through the county and they decide which level of service a school receives. There have been some calls made, but the decision as it stands appears to be above the school staff. Key stakeholders believe that students would benefit in this increased amount of therapy because current students with the Tier One services who have participated in one year or more continue to struggle behaviorally. It is then up to the school counselor to refer students and families for increased services via a mobile therapist, or wraparound services. For these types of services, it takes way too long for the student and their family to be serviced. With Tier Two level of support within the school building the staff can see what services the student is receiving and if it is the right amount.

In addition to needing higher mental health tiered services, there are also other factors that interfere with students receiving counseling services. Counseling services are billed to the child's insurance. Sometimes there are barriers to a student receiving services if the child or parent does not have the acceptable insurance policy, or private insurance. Individuals must be referred out for service coordination and counseling services if they lack insurance coverage in the hopes that

service coordination can assist with locating proper insurance for the child. However, this is not the only barrier because the community school makes so many referrals to the school-based therapist that their caseloads become so full that they have to encourage families to access therapist outside of the school, which can result with families without transportation or working parent(s) in never receiving services.

The focus of the community school is to integrate powerful learning into the school as a community school standard, utilizing community partnerships to help facilitate those experiences (Glisson, Dulmus, & Sowers, 2012). In the past there have been some misunderstandings in communication between the community school and its social service partners. Social services programs personnel often communicate very differently than educators. The goals are to streamline communication and frame students' needs in a way that make sense to teachers in their classroom settings so that they embrace the community school mission and vision which is inclusive of community partners. Most often, it is said that teachers are just interested in their classroom. However, rebranding community schools and generating support from teachers to embrace the model has become critical because their largest stake, the classroom, is being interrupted by social stressors and ecological conditions.

However, there is room for strategic development for the community partners including the ability to weave academics and out of school time programs together in order to establish a level of connectedness to the school and other partners. Most of the community partners receive funding to work with this community school. Schools are already fragmented and overwhelmed with education standards. Once they connect with a community partner, schools that are already underserved and understaffed then become stewards of programs that may not be beneficial for their students, but they are trying to fit because of a grant a community partner was awarded.

Partners come in with their own agenda, instead of aligning the resources with the students' or school's needs. The community school wants to continue to work with many of its current partners and more, but in a way that is meaningful and not haphazardly. This community school is calling on and calling out local colleges and universities with the amount of resources and knowledge that it has, to be a better partner. Historically, public schools have not been very inviting to colleges and universities around teacher instruction and support, but it is necessary to put these issues aside to save children's lives. There is also turmoil within the community amongst the varying agencies that provide services to the school. Organizations prefer to work with the school in silos because of political neighborhood warfare and the leadership of these organizations. A memorandum of understanding with each community partner would be ideal with a detailed outline understanding the fundamental practices of how each partner will work with the community school. It would be ideal for the community school director to manage the relationships among the core partners.

There were also areas that I was oblivious to that were pointed out during the interview process. Only one interview participant mentioned that this community school was focused on the Arts. Yet, there was ultimately no discussion as how the arts played a role in the students' day-to-day activities during, or after school. It was suggested that the community school ramp up their arts program since it's attached to the school's name.

The findings and analysis of this study aids with fundamentally making the case for the ongoing support of the community school model to help with mitigating student stressors that have an impact on academic achievement outcomes. The faculty and staff who work directly with the students, families, and the community at the local community school have taken part in an effort to create change and to directly influence student success by identifying and understanding the salient stressors that the students deal with on a daily basis. Therefore, these professionals are

better able to provide relevant instruction and support. Strategies are underway to ensure all student learners at this community school are healthy, free from hardship, are at their corresponding achievement levels, have a sense of agency, are confident and motivated to change the odds for themselves, their families, and their community. We must start with this end in mind.

5.0 Discussion

After a thorough analysis of the community partnership school study, it appears that gaps in opportunity have resulted in low achievement in and of itself. Only making achievement gaps between race and socioeconomic status more significant for students, their families, and the community at large. This is purely a systemic problem (Bell, 1980) and using the term achievement gap waters down the perverseness of our policies (Ladson Billings, 2007). Issues of inequality are deeply embedded but show themselves in alarming rates in the academic achievement of our young people (Berliner, 2013). There are 12 “Grand Challenges” spearheaded by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare that purposefully identify challenges when the social workers collaborate with other researchers and practitioners from closely related fields, including education, to better understand the breadth of the pressing issues that inherently effects the social progress of our society. These “Grand Challenges” consider the promotion of individual and family well-being, a stronger social fabric, and a just society that fights for equitable policy and the exclusion and marginalization of others, thus, enhancing a greater sense of belonging and offering a path to social and economic progress for those who have been systematically oppressed.

There are 10 out of the 12 Grand Challenges that directly impacted the educational outcomes for the elementary school students who were considered for this study. They are: ensuring a healthy development for all youth, closing the mental health gap, stop [community] violence, the ability to advance long and productive lives, ending homelessness, creating social responses to a changing environment, the promotion of smart decarceration, building financial capacity for all, reducing extreme economic inequality, and achieving equal opportunity and justice.

With the assistance of the community partnership school and all of their supportive services and programs there is hope that we can continue to mitigate threats to academic achievement. In order to ensure a healthy development for all youth, it is important that adults realize how crucial it is to continue to build bridges that connect them to having healthy relationships with young people. Adults who work with young people, no matter the sector, have an obligation to teach children how to be autonomous, grow self-esteem with the aim of building resilience, a good sense of self, understanding who they are, and celebrating their uniqueness. This in turn allows for agency that fosters independence and good decision making. The Committee, on *the Science of Children Birth to Age 8: Deepening and Broadening the Foundation for Success* (2015) noted the current state of care and education workforce was fragmented at best. The varying disciplines (or fields) who work in tandem with children with a goal to assist young people in securing a future, often work in disparate systems. With a broad educational knowledge base and commitment to service, the goal is to shift the paradigm on how we educate young people, on how learning happens. Obtaining a better understanding of one's environment, the science, barriers, a skilled workforce, and the importance of family, community and quality of settings is pertinent to this process. The science agrees that children are malleable and, therefore, resilient.

Osher et.al (2018) also explore the macro and micro contexts that shape development of children and examine the malleability of children whose high-risk levels can be transformed to assets with good support systems. This is commonly known as grit. True grit relies on the level of resilience and cognitive functioning of growth and development (Berger, 2016). Grit can potentially be taught. Similar to Newman and Newman (2015), Osher et. al (2018) address how issues of poverty, racism, and intergenerational transmission of adversity are quite complex and align with how children develop and learn. Research by Cantor et. al. (2018) further explores the

significant correlations between childhood adversity and the higher risk of negative health, social, and emotional outcomes, which are compounded by other risk factors in the home and the void of high-quality early learning centers can affect children's learning readiness (Cantor, et. al. (2018). Relationships have a great bearing of influence on how children and youth develop, see themselves, view the world, and develop agency. All frameworks take into consideration the "whole child" from an eco-systems perspective and mandate that multiple systems, and contextual environments learn more about how their environment contributes to the success of a child, or their demise.

Closing the mental health gap:

A lot of the trauma we see in communities are a result of people living in poverty and being stressed due to extreme conditions in order to survive. The adverse childhood experiences of children can lead into adulthood. Being exposed to violence, grief, loss, issues of attachment, disrupted relationships, substance use/misuse, food scarcity and homelessness are causes to seek support through therapeutic services. There are generations of people who have been mentally challenged and affected by their circumstances without appropriate mechanisms, or resources to cope. Holistically, proactive mental health care is necessary and imperative. Unfortunately, mental health treatment often comes with stigma in the Black community. We have to change this and encourage healthy assessment in lieu of providing inaccurate diagnosis and labels. Teachers and school staff are the first to recognize the symptoms of trauma.

Reducing extreme economic inequality:

The United States is a leading nation in poverty for the industrialized world (Rank, Yoon & Hirschl, 2003). There are major societal problems woven within our society, including politics, unemployment, crime, underemployment, race, gender, and geographic location (Rodgers, 2015). Black Americans live in disproportionately higher levels of poverty under neoliberalism and globalization (Giroux, 2003). The disappearance of work has devastating social, political, and economic consequences for communities particularly urban communities, or communities with large populations of people of color (William, 1997). In building financial capacity for all it is important to recognize that most people do not have the ability to make ends meet, let alone have a reliable way to secure or save money. In this community there are rarely any assets to protect. Like the community where the community school is located ending homelessness must become a priority. Nowhere in the United States can one afford to have access to housing with a minimum wage employment. There are a multitude of models, inclusive of the housing first model that makes a real impact for those who impacted by housing limitations. Family members of students that often attend community schools find themselves homeless when a parent, caregiver, or loved one has a felony and are unable to stay in affordable housing due to restrictions.

The promotion of smart decarceration:

Many students who the community school faculty encounter daily have loved ones who are or have been incarcerated at one time or another. The promotion of smart decarceration includes restorative justice practices; designing programs that allow individuals training in to thrive includes employable skills, providing trauma informed care, teaching de-conflict resolution, and suggesting alternatives to lock-up. The current justice system does not prepare parolees for a

successful life beyond bars. We cannot further exacerbate what has already happened to this individual, their family, friends, and community as a result of their incarceration. While these justice systems have been built over 400 years, it will take time to fix the problem. It is not an overnight solution, but people who serve their time also deserve to be able to sustain themselves.

Stop [community] violence:

Violence in urban communities has continued to grow. These communities have become unsafe places to raise children. This is a complex social problem that requires a systemic response. The lack of opportunities in these communities leads to violent mayhem and should be addressed as such. Peace marches are not enough. Claire Forest (2015) said it best:

“Within each person lies a bone deep longing for freedom, safety, hope, self-respect, and the chance to make an important contribution to family, community, and the world...Without healthy outlets, the desire for freedom turns into lawlessness, and the need for safety and self-respect degenerates into violence. Without avenues to make an important contribution, homelessness translates into dependency, depression, violence, substance abuse, and other forms of self-abuse.”

When it comes to gun related violence, evidence shows that banning guns from cities will have minimal impact. We must pay attention to the reduction of inequities, reforming institutions and delivering therapeutic measures.

The ability to advance long and productive lives:

We have to be our own agents of change. In 2018, the Opportunity Index was released in conjunction with Child Trends and Opportunity Nation. This index focuses on creating

opportunities for individuals to thrive in their communities, by informing the citizenry on how to create such opportunities for themselves. According to the index, there are four dimensions that are reflective of whether individuals can advance long and productive lives, they are the economy, education, health, and community (Beckwith & Murphey, 2018).

Creating social responses to a changing environment:

The goal in any helping profession is to lessen the amount of support individuals may need over time. The goal of any social welfare system is to serve people justly and equitably. Collaborating with system partners such as educators can offer best case trajectories of young people who have been profoundly impacted by their environments. Coordination of systems of education, child welfare, and justice must focus on how to change the world for the better. There will be losses that sting and are tiring. However, even when we lose, we win because we can hopefully change the hearts and minds of people who continue to impoverish, further criminalize individuals due to race, build upon inequities, and treat the poor unfairly.

We must figure out how to support educators and practitioners in schools so they can help all of the students they encounter. The data has helped me to understand that educators cannot build on education reform without the voices of youth, families, and the community that it will influence. When creating a changing environment, educators need the help of community and the help of community level practitioners to assist with such reform (Bryk et al., 2010). All systems must unite and analyze the current realities and integrate systems that already overlap; hence the need for the community school model. Collaborative leadership expanded opportunities for learning and wellness support systems. Family and community engagement are necessary as pillars of lifelong success to support students, families, and communities that have been oppressed and

marginalized. The key informants that participated in the interview portion are people who primarily have access to the community and engage with them pretty frequently with the services that are currently available at the community school, though it is not clear as to the scope or depth of conversation there is with community members before, during, or after the process of becoming a designated community school. However, there have been formal measures taken by the community school site director and family and engagement coordinator to stay inclusively connected to the members of this neighborhood.

All the individuals I encountered as a result of this study exemplified the courage that it takes to triumph over fear. They stand up for justice and equitable solutions for children and youth even when they are standing alone, because doing the right thing for the right reasons encourages us all to follow our heart. Some shared their stories of their physical courage, where it took bodily harm to move their agenda forward. Others spoke of their social courage and not conforming to the expectations of others. Many acknowledged the intellectual courage to draw upon the genius of those within the community and asked the members to teach them what they needed to learn. Most important of all, they spoke of the spiritual courage needed to augment the ability to do the actual work that is being done.

What we love can be healed. However, we cannot heal what we are not willing to speak about. But the community members are speaking up and out about the state of their community and the trajectories of their children. The school staff, community organizations, family and students are long distance runners. They understand student success is not a marathon or a sprint, it is a relay race. They noted that preparing these young people for success is their call to service because the children at this K-5 will pave the way for the liberation of others in their community.

They will not and cannot rest until the work of justice is done and because building the village is necessary.

As a result of this study, I have come to the realization that school achievement models are often difficult to replicate. While we know that all children deserve excellence regardless of their zip codes, excellence is not achieved by happenstance. It happens on purpose. There are several key components to the successful replication of the full-service community schools. Western Pennsylvania school districts' goal has been to replicate the community school model. Scaling-up evidence-based practices in education may be difficult without implementation of scientific strategies. Implementation of science comes with best practices that help to deliver successful programming with fidelity (Fixen, Blasé, Horner, & Sugai, 2009). Fidelity is important to safeguard the model (Center for Community Partnerships, Center for Community Schools, 2017). A framework is necessary to develop capacity and to ensure effective, sustained use of evidence-based practices and innovations (Fixen, Blasé, Horner, & Sugai, 2009). CPS has a 12 standard framework for best practices that include: Partnership; Collaborative Leadership, Governance, and Organizational Structure; Foundational Principles; Staffing; Integrated Community Partnership School Framework; Expanded Learning Opportunities; Comprehensive Wellness Supports; Family and Community Engagement; Volunteering; University Assistance; Evaluation; and Sustainability (Center for Community Partnerships, Center for Community Schools, 2017). The value of a framework is the ability to generalize beyond the immediate project or initiative; enhance communication among partners and to have a better understanding of one another's needs; to ease the sharing and applying improvement of cycles; and to increase the relevance of lessons learned (Fixsen & Blasé, 2013).

Once the framework has been agreed upon, A logic model is beneficial as it will help core partners ascertain how the school and district will meet the mission, identify the core values that will make the school and the community successful, identify goals, build relationships, develop a curriculum built upon social and emotional learning techniques, and function as an operations guide. There were key strengths identified from the survey respondents and interview participants. They include committed school faculty and staff who are completely dedicated to the mission, incredible site partners that support the success of the school, the students and their families, and community members who have rallied around the school. Areas of growth include accountability of everyone involved executing based on their identified roles and responsibilities, and the administration becoming more transparent about the school's strategic priorities and providing clarity, structure, and expectations based on roles. Improvement comes when the practices of well-intentioned, dedicated community school staff are supported by organizational structures that function to support those improved practices.

This scope of supportive services cannot be thrust upon individuals. Active implementation is different from business as usual. There are differences between letting program change efforts happen, helping it happen, and making it happen (Fixsen et. al., 2010). It was apparent that the community school's effort was pushed rather quickly upon the school staff and program partners where this study took place. It is important for everyone to understand how critical their role is when they understand their responsibility and are essential in guiding the change process. Additionally, traditional community school practices engage the community as well as key stakeholders. All schools belong to the community where they are located. It is pertinent to hear from those with the lived experiences about what their significant needs are and what are the deliverables for them. Providing all parties with meaningful ways to give input helps

with the buy-in of even the most difficult individuals. Pathways forward are built on strategy; implementation of a well-developed programming model is not linear. It can take up to several years to successfully implement.

Ongoing training and technical assistance are significant to this process. This is something that the individuals I interviewed in this study thought was thoroughly lacking in their process of developing the best community school possible. There were key informants who felt somewhat unprepared and not very knowledgeable about the interworkings, the long-term goals, their required level of commitment, and focus of the community school efforts for the 2018-2019 school year. There are schools like University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) and the University of Central Florida (Orlando, Florida) that assist school districts and communities interested in sustaining and improving community schools. These university assisted partners provide training, in person and virtual consultation and coaching, assessment and evaluation as well as other resources (Center for Community Partnerships, Center for Community Schools, 2017). Quarterly training for new program implementation models is not uncommon. Training is an ongoing process that can be done in a variety of ways. This includes but is not limited to training efforts during teacher in-services days, school staff meetings, community partnership meetings, over the course of the summer months, and in self-paced online virtual modules.

In July of 2019, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) completed a community report focused specifically on Community Schools. The purpose of the report was to address implementation and gather data about perceptions and impact (Brown, Naftzger, & Miller, 2019). There were several benefits mentioned in correlation to the schools, youth, families, and the community. The community school models identified in this report, reportedly showed parental engagement, improved community engagement, and community quality of life, as well as seeing

the school become a hub for the community. Additionally, it was reported that the most common benefit to the students was the exposure to more learning opportunities and that other benefits to youth include receiving services that benefited their specific needs (health care and food). As a result of this community school model that student's confidence increased, and social/emotional needs were improved. Moreover, families are also receiving services that addresses their needs and this was also identified as a benefit and point of impact.

As cited in the 2019 AIR report, community schools must place proper consideration to how it will viably measure student outcomes. Community school studies by Maier, Daniel, Oakes, & Lamb (2017) show that community school models implemented with fidelity have demonstrated improved student performance rates in reading and math, grade point averages, attendance, behavioral challenges, and how students perceive school. With the inference of this research study we know that the services offered by community schools help to mitigate the gaps in achievement. However, in order to ensure the impact of such mediation which lends itself to narrowing the achievement gap, continued focused on implementation must be done strategically. This includes ensuring the proper resources, both financial and human capital, open lines of communication across stakeholders with one shared mission and core values in mind, community access to the school building, and staff turnover (Brown, Naftzger, & Miller, 2019).

Leaders in policy, school administration, teachers, school staff, social service providers, education program providers, and anyone working with at-risk children, youth, and families who guide and inspires must continue to research and find out what works in efforts to continue to move the needle of the achievement gap. In finding what works, you must also demonstrate that it works and show others why it works. The community I identified as a part of this study prompted me to think further about the importance of the pro social connection's children have with adults.

We must think of the ways we serve and place greater emphasis on our relationships with young people, families, and communities. In order to do this, we must become grounded in positive youth development (Little & Pittman, 2018). Meeting students and families where they are and bringing forth family voice and their experiences allows students to build competencies and confidence to succeed in life whether it is physically, academically, socially and/or emotionally (Little & Pittman, 2018). The indicators of well-being that we look for in ourselves, is what we should also want for young people, their families, and all communities. We must change the way we think in order to change the culture and shape policy as well as practice. We must be practical and tolerant, honest, but not conventional. Raising children when you are advantaged and privilege is hard. Raising children when you are disadvantaged, oppressed, and marginalized is damn hard.

Community schools have been created as a solution to many issues within the realm of education. Because of the impact it has on children, family, and community no matter how small, there are advocates and legislation that supports the model. There should be no hopeless children, even if we do live in a culture of stupidity. We must continue to have the strength and courage to fight and alleviate systemic barriers across many systems and communities in order to fight for equitable education. We can never be without hope; we must find hope wherever we can. The battles we are fighting right now will impact future generations and our future calls for bravery now.

5.1 Demonstration of Excellence

The outcomes of this study will be shared with the members of the governance and research review board of the local school district where the study was situated. School district community schools representatives and coordinators will be invited to attend the presentation to further understand how external environmental stressors may lend itself to the achievement gap, current programming and service offerings that are helping to mitigate those stressors, and potential areas of development to increase academic achievement. The presentation will include information on the study's methodology, findings, and implications for practice and further research.

Appendix A Survey Protocol

Our Children, Our Impact-Survey Protocol and Questionnaire

Research Study Title: Analyzing Student Stressors and the Impacts of Academic Achievement Outcomes for Students at Community Partnership Schools
Good Morning/Afternoon.

My name is Tiffany Lumpkin, and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, Social and Comparative Analysis of Education-Cohort 2016 at the University of Pittsburgh. I am writing to invite you to participate in a survey underlining how student's stressors impact academic outcomes for students at community schools as a part of a research study I am conducting under the supervision of my Faculty Chair, Dr. Sean Kelly. You are part of a census of faculty and staff that has been selected to complete this survey. The purpose of the research study is to examine the external environmental stressors that impede and impact student achievement and lends itself to the education gap.

This survey should take no longer than 5-10 minutes to complete.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and involves minimal risk. You will not receive any payment for participation. You can withdraw from the study at any time. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers). There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study, however, we hope that we will see improvements in educational outcomes for students who are faced with extenuating circumstances at home and in the community that impact their ability to achieve in the classroom based on your responses.

All information provided will remain confidential. No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent. In this way, your confidentiality will be maintained. All data received from you will be given an ID#. All stored data will have this number on it and not your real name. All of your responses are confidential, and data will be kept under lock and key. We will not associate the information you provide with your name in reports, there is minimal risk for your participation in this research. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers).

If you come across any questions you wish not to answer, you may skip it and move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tiffany Lumpkin at tfl22@pitt.edu.

Thank you for your time and participation in this survey.

Tiffany T. Lumpkin, MSW

Doctoral Candidate, Social Comparative Analysis in Education
School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

Survey Question #1:

As part of your professional responsibilities are you able to recognize student stressors at [Said, K-5 School]?

For Example, student stressors (family, environmental, and personal factors that affect students such as exposure to violence, hunger, mental health, etc.)

(Select YES or NO)

Survey Question#2:

Thinking about your experience with students at [Said, K-5 School] select the 5 issues that have the greatest impact on student/ family success?

(Dropdown Menu)

Poverty

Homelessness

Mental health

Physical health

Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Nutrition/Hunger

Grief & Loss

Violence-Community Violence, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence

Child Abuse/Neglect

Other

Survey Question#3:

Rank the following issues in order of the most salient (prominent) issue a student may face to the least salient (prominent)

Poverty

Homelessness

Mental Health

Physical Health

Drug & Alcohol Abuse

Nutrition/Hunger

Grief & Loss

Violence-Community Violence, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence

Child Abuse/Neglect

Other

Survey Question#4:

*What do you see as the most common stressor for students at [Said, K-5 School]?
Identify 1.*

(Open Comment Box)

Survey Question#5:

Is there a particular stressor (List one) that a student may face that often goes unrecognized, or unaddressed?

(Open Comment Box)

Survey Question#6:

Is socio-economic status an indicator of child success at [Said, K-5 School]?

(Ordinal Response Scale)

Definitely True

Probably True

Neither True or False

Probably False

Definitely False

Survey Question#7:

How often are you in contact with parents/caregivers of students with stressful home environments?

(Dropdown Menu)

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Quarterly

Yearly

Not at all

Other

Survey Question#8:

Do external environmental stressors have a direct impact on student success and academic outcomes?

(Select YES or NO)

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix B Participant Demographic Data

For Classification Purposes Only

TITLE: Our Children, Our Impact: Analyzing Student Stressors and the Impacts on Academic Achievement Outcomes for Students at Community Partnership Schools

INVESTIGATOR: Tiffany T. Lumpkin, MSW/ (267) 252-6807

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Sean Patrick Kelly, Ph.D. / 412-648-7165

PARTICIPANT ID: _____

1) What is your gender identification?

Male Female Other _____ Prefer not to answer

2) How old are you?

18-25 26-49 50-64

3) Identification of Race

American Indian/Native American Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic/Latino
Black/African American White/Caucasian Other _____

4) What was your total household income last year?

\$0-25,999 \$26,000-\$51,999 \$52,000-\$74,999 more than \$75,000

Decline to Say

5) Do you have children?

Yes No

6) In what community/neighborhood do you reside? _____

7) Why did you choose to work at your local K-5 community school (Choose One)?

Personal Interest Personal Reasons (family, friends, etc.)

Geographical Location Previous Positive Internship/Externship

Influence from a Mentor Lifestyle and Financial Rewards

Appendix C Interview Protocol

Our Children, Our Impact-Interview Consent and Protocol

Hello! My name is Tiffany Lumpkin, and I am a doctoral student from the University of Pittsburgh. I am here to learn more about the experiences you face (in the classroom, school building, or out-of-school time) with the students at [Said], K-5, Community School that are faced with salient external environmental stressors; and all the ways this ultimately impacts the students' achievement.

The purpose of this 45-60-minute interview is to learn how [Said School] is mitigating the five primary stressors that were identified in the survey you completed a couple of weeks ago.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and there will be no compensation for your time today. Participants can withdraw from this study at any time. There will be no direct benefits for participating in this study, however, we hope that we will see improvements in educational outcomes for students who are faced with extenuating circumstances at home and in the community that impact their ability to achieve in the classroom.

There are not right or wrong answers, or desirable or undesirable answers. You can stop the interview at any time or skip any questions. I would like you to feel comfortable saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Everything you say will remain confidential, meaning that I will only be aware of your answers – the purpose of that is only so I know whom to contact should we have further follow-up questions after this interview.

No reports will link what you say to your name, department, or institution/organization that you represent. In this way, your confidentiality will be maintained. All data received from you will be given an ID#. All stored data will have this number on it and not your real name. All of your responses are confidential, and data will be kept under lock and key. We will not associate the information you provide with your name in reports, there is minimal risk for your participation in this research. The research data collected may be shared with investigators conducting other research; however, this information will be shared in a de-identified manner (without identifiers).

Given these conditions, do you agree to participate in today's interview?
[If YES, continue. If NO, stop interview and thank them for their time.]

Any insight you can provide into how student stressors impact your (classroom instruction, out of school time instruction/activities, overall interaction and the way you work with students) that contribute to student outcomes and success, and what supportive services the school offers in conjunction with the community partnership model would be very much appreciated.

If it's okay with you, I will be audiotape recording our conversation since it will be difficult for me to write down everything while simultaneously carrying an attentive conversation with you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Each participant will be provided a demographic questionnaire to complete (See questions below).

For Classification Purposes Only

What is your gender identification (Male/Female/Other, Prefer not to answer)?

How old are you (18-25, 26-49, 50-64)?

Identification of Race (American Indian/Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, White/Caucasian, Other)

What is was your total household income last year (\$0-25,999, \$26,000-\$51,999, \$52,000-\$74,999, more than \$75,000, Decline to Say)?

Do you have children (yes/no)?

In what community do you reside?

Why you choose to teach at your local community school (Personal Interest, Personal Reasons (family, friends, etc.), Geographical Location, Previous Positive Internship/Externship, Influence from a Mentor, Lifestyle and Financial Rewards)?

If it is OK with you, I will turn on the recorders and start now.

This interview is being conducted for the Our Children, Our Impact Study on XX/XX/XXXX by Tiffany T. Lumpkin. The Tape ID number is XXXXXX.

All the questions presented today were adapted to help [Said, K-5] and other Community Schools assess the Community School strategy and its longevity in creating student success which ultimately narrow the achievement gap.

In order to you have you greatly prepared for the discussions that we will have today; I would like to define a few terms for you today.

External Environmental Stressors-

Negative major life changes, events, or situations that occurs outside of school that has a physical, emotional, psychological (or a combination of these) that have an impact on students and their families.

Academic Outcomes-

Students school achievements that are currently at grade level, or below grade level.

We will begin by asking questions to understand your experience as a classroom instructor and your comfortability with identifying student stressors.

To begin,

- 1) **Please state your role at [Said, K-5 School], the number of years of experience in this role, and your experiences as an educator.**

Thank you.

In your year(s) and experience as an educator, I am going to ask you to define the following terms:

- 2) **How do you define a stressor?**
- 3) **How do you define student success?**

Thank you.

For our next questions, we will be discussing experiences specifically you may have had in your role as a (classroom teacher, administrator, counselor, social worker, director, support staff, etc.,) at [Said, K-5 School].

A few weeks ago, you completed a survey that asked you to identify the most salient issue and to rank the order of the 5 key issues that a student may face at your community school.

Did you have a particular student(s) in mind as you thought about environmental stressors? Does one in particular come to mind?

Wow. Classroom teachers must wear many hats to support students that face these sorts of stressors at this age.

- 1) **What did you identify as the most salient issue that a student [Said, K-5 School] may face? What were you thinking when you chose ___ as the most salient issue students face at your community school?**

Note: As you ask this, show them the list, to jog their memory. Note, it is ok if their response changed. If there is a response change, analyze that as an interesting finding. i.e. do they identify the same stressor at two separate time points.

Probe: Can you walk me through a regular day in your classroom when Student A is presenting these issues?

- 2) **Do you have examples of a student in mind that faces that issue/concern?**

As a social worker, I can imagine....

- 3) **What are the experiences you are having with students who face these stressors?**
 - a) **homelessness**

- b) mental health
- c) physical health
- d) drug & alcohol abuse
- e) nutrition/hunger
- f) grief & loss?

Thank you for explaining this to me in great detail.

4) Have you had interactions with parents that may be facing these most salient stressors?

Probes:

How can barriers be overcome?

What resources are available to students of parents who cannot be reached, or cannot come to the school for a face to face meeting?

5) Can you tell me more about how each of these stressors are being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]?

Probes:

Can you tell me how homelessness is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

Can you tell me how mental health is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

Can you tell me how physical health is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

Can you tell me how drug and alcohol abuse is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

Can you tell me how nutrition and hunger is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

Can you tell me how grief and loss is being mitigated by [Said, K-5 School]? Is it working – why or why not?

What can you tell me about [Said, K-5 School] community partnership model that sets it apart from other community schools, or community partnership schools?

6) Are other human development and support systems in the community effective in addressing student and family developmental needs?

Probes:

What is being accomplished through community-based initiatives?

How is the community adjusting to the new community partnership school, and how do they actively support the needs of the students and families in the Homewood area?

7) Do students and families have easy access to all programs and services that are designed to enrich and support their development?

Probes:

How do you know (criteria, evidence)?

Can you tell me the process of referring your student to supportive services?

What are your thoughts on this referral processes (positive/negatives)?

- 8) How do you, or [Said, K-5 School] currently track or monitor a student's progress when facing salient issues? What measures do you currently use to track academic outcomes for students in your classroom?**

Probe: Has the tracking process been consistent amongst teachers, grade levels, etc.?

- 9) Do you find that there is a correlation between salient issues that students face and their academic achievement?**

Probe: What about correlations by race (African American students), socioeconomic status, attendance?

- 10) Is there anything you feel [Said, K-5 School] could be doing additionally to help students and families mitigate these stressors?**

Thank you for adding that bit of information. It will be very helpful to the study.

- 11) Are there causes and conditions that are interrupting student's ability to achieve the vision for a Community Partnership School?**

- 12) What services, or initiatives is [Said, K-5 School] known for that support student and family stressors?**

Probe: What are current internal solutions for external environmental stressors at [Said, K-5 School]?

- 13) What services are still being developed, or needed in order to support student and family stressors at [Said, K-5 School]?**

- 14) Has [Said, K-5 School] helped to move the needle in narrowing the achievement gap for the students in the Homewood community?**

Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not focus on today?

That is all the questions I have for you today. Thank you for your time and participation, we appreciate your willingness discuss this important topic. Your responses have been very helpful and will most definitely add to literature that supports narrowing the achievement gap.

If you have any final thoughts on the interview and or would like to share how you have felt about the entire process, please do not hesitate to ask any additional questions.

If you have future questions regarding the interview or the use of data, please contact me at t122@pitt.edu.

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