An Examination of Partnerships Between Out-of-School Learning (OSL) Organizations and Schools

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The purpose of this study was to understand the elements that contribute to successful partnerships between schools and out-of-school learning programs to establish a base set of recommendations for practitioners to implement. Qualitative interviews were conducted with five school principals, five nonprofit executive directors, and five OSL program directors all representing one mid-sized urban metropolitan in the United States. The interviewees responded to questions around their experiences in partnering together and their reflections on what made these partnerships go well and not go well. They also shared their unique perspectives on what conditions must be in place for these types of partnerships to have success. The responses were categorized into three high-level categories based on the themes present from each interviewee. There were 111 mentions of a theme related to people: how the key stakeholders in the partnership interact and engage with one another, there were 78 mentions of a theme related to institutional practices: how the physical entities and organizations that support the partnerships operate, and there were 26 mentions of a theme related to programming: the specific aspects of the youth-serving opportunities that each entity provides. Based on the literature, research, and interview data, it is recommended that schools and OSL programs seeking to partner must recognize and accept a power inequality, invest in relationships and communication, and maintain consistency in program and school operations.

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1.0 Introduction

Out-of-school learning (OSL) programs often include participatory experiences designed to enhance and enrich the learning that students get during the school day. These programs can include afterschool opportunities, summer learning camps, visits to museums and science centers (both school sanctioned and with parents/guardians), and even in-school programs facilitated via outside providers (e.g., local police facilitating the DARE program). Throughout my career in youth development and education, I've found the formal and informal educators who have the most success in positively improving student outcomes are often those who embrace partnership and collaboration. There seems to be an ingrained recognition in these individuals that one cannot tackle the systemic problem of educational inequity alone and thus the complementary strengths of diverse parties are necessary. In the context of OSL, some scholars even suggest a need for a 'blurring' of the lines between schools and community programs or converting schools into extended-hours community 'hubs' (Pittman, Irby, Yohalem, and Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2004; Dryfoos, 1999).

I have been fortunate enough to work for youth-serving public and nonprofit organizations that have had staff at all levels (from senior staff to line staff) recognize the importance of partnerships to advance student achievement. These partnerships have been between individuals working in schools and between individuals from other youth-serving organizations with similar goals.

This study presents some bourgeoning research on the experience of school and OSL leaders on how they partner to advance student growth and development goals. A review of existing literature around partnerships within and outside of the context of OSL is reviewed and

compared to the partnership experiences of a diverse set of school and OSL leaders. Finally, some recommendations for establishing and improving OSL partnerships are offered to aid practitioners who are engaging in this work.

1.1 Context for Scope of Problem Area

One popular framework for ensuring that youth receive the support and holistic education necessary to ensure their successful entry into adulthood is that of positive youth development (PYD). Schools and OSL organizations alike both offer some form of PYD for participating students. However PYD can also be a form of development and learning that happens organically within individual students' learned experiences navigating their respective environments. PYD can have myriad connotations, from general student growth and development concepts to specific program designs that follow particular 'PYD' literature frameworks. For the purpose of this study, I use a PYD definition that "aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing, or treating them for maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities" (Damon, 2004, p. 13). Within this framework, community-based out-of-school learning programs work in conjunction with other factors that promote PYD in youth. These other factors include schools, neighborhoods and communities, youth social development, and familial connections.

Schools are important in the context of positive youth development as a mandate for universal public education exists and they, in turn, must directly serve all students in obtaining academic proficiency in predetermined skills and benchmarks. PYD in schools is often closely aligned with social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions and strategies, with some scholars

arguing for an integration of PYD and social and SEL theoretical frameworks (Tolan et al., 2016). Similarly, neighborhoods also have a significant impact on the overall development of youth, both positive and negative. Youth who report living in safer in neighborhoods, on average, have higher PYD skills in mastery orientation and hope, two common PYD traits (Anderson et al., 2018).

On the individual side, how youth navigate social development is another common PYD area. Some youth, particularly those who are neglected or have increased risk factors, report higher resiliency and stress-resistant factors when not isolated from other peers and social connections (Asher and Wheeler, 1985). Similarly, youth who report increased family connections and communication have greater chance at being law-abiding citizens in society as adults (Drinkard, Esteves, and Adams, 2017).

Community-based organizations that facilitate out-of-school learning opportunities can also have an effect on PYD. In a study on after-school programs facilitated by community organizations and by schools, students in those facilitated by community organizations report receiving on average more diversions from risky behaviors, more direct supports for youth development, and more opportunities for youth leadership (Kahne et al., 2001). In my practice, have also directly observed that community-based OSL opportunities can also reduce or eliminate opportunity gaps between students who have more or less advantage due to socio-economic status (SES), race, class, and/or zipcode, all of which can provide some level of advantage or disadvantage to students.

1.2 Problem of Practice and Study Purpose

While there are a number of involved stakeholders in OSL and school partnerships, all share a common vision of seeing students become successful adults through their school-age trajectory by implementing some form of PYD. However, in my observed practice from both a school and a community perspective, there exists a disconnect in the services provided by each stakeholder group. Traditionally speaking, schools are seen to serve PYD through standardized academic and learning benchmarks progressed through 13 years of education. On the other hand, external organizations generally offer a much broader set of academic and non-academic youth development opportunities spanning from an early age into young adulthood. Each stakeholder group work alongside one another serving students, but do not necessarily work in partnership with one another. For organizations that seek to partner with schools and with other like-organizations, in my experience I have found these partnerships to be very difficult to start, to maintain, and to see thrive while meeting the collective needs of all stakeholders.

The need for partnerships and collaboration in supporting OSL partnerships is well-studied. From the nonprofit organization perspective, many nonprofit OSL organizations have very limited funding sources, regularly compete for dollars, and are heavily influenced by their surrounding external environments (Salamon, 2012). Many also believe that youth-serving OSL organizations that have a specific focus on improving students' in-school academic outcomes should have strategic alignment with what happens for these students during the school day. The U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse offers the recommendation that OSL program directors develop relationships and maintain ongoing communication with school personnel, that schools designate a dedicated individual to liaise between the OSL program coordinator and connect him/her to school needs, and that OSL instruction be aligned to the school

and district-based standards and objectives (Beckett et. al, 2009). However, while the need and rationale for partnerships among these stakeholder groups exists, I have found very little *effective* partnerships in practice between these groups. Whereas my general experience has been working in concert with those who 'get' it (the rhetorical choir), I also have found even with amongst those with the best intentions, partnerships can be difficult to effectuate, to maintain, and to see thrive while still ensuring all interested parties have their needs met and are pleased with the final results. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of partnerships between schools and out-of-school learning programs from the perspective of school leaders, out-of-school learning organization executive directors, and out-of-school learning program directors. The goal in understanding these perceptions is to establish some working guidelines and recommendations for those who are looking to establish successful school to out-of-school program partnership relationships.

1.3 Inquiry Question

One detailed inquiry question is explored in this study, *What are the elements of successful OSL program/school interactions and partnerships?* The goal here is to measure and assess the perceptions of these types of partnerships, and the data collected will be used to analyze perspectives on partnering to meet student growth and success goals. It should be noted that this question presumes a cohort of students, OSL programs engaging in school partnerships, and school leaders (or whomever these leaders designate as their OSL points of contact) exist and are willing to reflect on their respective experiences in engaging in OSL.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

This literature review summarizes a general nonprofit organization approach to partnerships, how OSL organizations align and partner with schools, and partnership types outside of the traditional nonprofit and school context. It also provides an overview of some of the inherent common risk factors for school-OSL partnerships.

2.2 How Nonprofit Organizations Approach Partnerships

Nonprofit organizations approach partnerships in a number of ways. In my experience I have found that different types of partnerships involve differing levels of staff involvement and engagement. Some partnerships are more top-down with senior leadership as the driving force and some partnerships are more grassroots. For the purpose of this analysis, I will be focusing on the three specific types of nonprofit partnerships that I have found most common: collective impact, mergers, and alliances. Table 1 summarizes the primary characteristics of these types of partnerships.

Table 1: Common Nonprofit Partnerships

	Collective Impact	Nonprofit Mergers	Nonprofit Alliances
Primary Stakeholders	• Backbone Support Organizations • Funders	• Transformational leader / change agent	• More shared power among ally leadership through negotiation
Process / Goals / Outcomes	• Created from common agenda to solve social problems • Each partner assumes specific role	• Two organizations blended into one • Often birthed out of financial need or to reduce market competition	• Two types: process and task oriented • Ally around projects or initiatives while retaining unique organizational identities
Partnership Duration	• Project-specific depending on social issue	• Continually	• Process oriented: continually • Task oriented: exists only until task is accomplished

2.2.1 Collective Impact

As opposed to for-profit entities which have a more defined bottom line (the annual profit the organization realizes), nonprofit organizations operate differently to accomplish service delivery. Whereas for-profit entities exist to increase shareholder value, nonprofit entities are beholden to accomplishing their particular stated missions. As a result, these organizations are much more reliant on, and thus much more influenced by, external factors like in-kind support, and experience increased risk during times of recession (Salamon, 2012). Furthermore, many scholars have presented suggestions for how organizations can most effectively partner to meet goals around societal improvement. Consultants John Kania and Mark Kramer conclude that "the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations" (2011, p. 36). They present the idea of collective impact, defined as "the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem" (Kania and Kramer, 2011, p. 36). As a nonprofit executive director, I have had direct experience in engaging in a collective impact partnership model designed to improve the educational

outcomes for youth in a targeted community. This partnership model following Kania and Kramer's (2011) five conditions of collective impact success: having a common agenda, having a shared measurement system, participating in mutually reinforcing activities, engaging in continuous communication, and identifying a backbone support organization (p. 40). My experience as an executive director is not unique in that a number of other executive directors of both youth-serving and social service organizations participate in similar types of collaborations.

2.2.1.1 Collective Impact and Backbone Support Organizations

Kania and Kramer describe a key critical aspect in collective impact initiatives is to utilize a backbone support organization. A well-known example of a backbone support organization in a community collective impact strategy is the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) in New York City. HCV is internationally recognized for allying community organizations and schools to improve academic and social outcomes for the neediest children. While there has been some documented success with the Harlem Children's Zone approach to collaboration, specifically in relation to childhood asthma prevention where through partner mobilization and collaboration there was a significant decrease in emergency room visits and hospitalization for asthma and an overall reduction in school absences (Nicholas et. al, 2005), others have found little to no impact on the community service provider aspects of this initiative, and even suggest that schools alone are the primary contributors to student success (Dobbie and Fryer, 2011).

As a backbone support in collective impact, the cadence, tone, and overall tenor of the collaboration is modeled through this organization and it works to ensure that progress is continually made on the collective agreed-upon goals. Some scholars have theorized that the most important aspect of a successful collective impact collaboration are several key preconditions which must exist to sustain the collaborative, these being a sense of urgency, influential

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champions, and financial resources (Flood, Minkler, Hennessey Lavery, Estrada, and Falbe, 2015). Others suggest that the backbone support organization itself is the main catalyst for success, that "individual organizations could not do the work of collective impact without backbone support" (Turner, Merchant, Kania, and Martin, 2012).

2.2.2 Nonprofit Mergers and Alliances

Another way that nonprofit organizations engage in partnerships is through alliances. Alliances differ distinctly from mergers, which effectively blend the two organizations into one. A study one of the largest nonprofit association mergers in the United States (the US Bowling Conference) found that in merging with a similar organization, the new entity was able to recognize an enhanced financial position, gain economies of scale, and improve their positioning in the association marketplace (Pietroburgo and Wernet, 2010). Although alliances can cultivate similar benefits, they allow participating organizations to retain their unique individual identities while strategically allying on particular projects or initiatives. Alliances can take the form of either process-oriented or task-oriented, where the former continues in perpetuity as long as collaboration remains useful and necessary and the latter exists only until the specific task is accomplished (McLaughlin, 2010). In both mergers and alliances, leadership also becomes an important factor in the overall direction of the entity. In mergers, these largely are successful based on an influential transformational leader or change agent from a more powerful organization who pushes the agenda (Pietroburgo and Wernet, 2010), while in alliances the control largely becomes "a political and negotiation-based process" relying on a democratic voting process for decision making (McLaughlin, 2010). However, similar to the unequal power dynamic at play with mergers, other scholars have observed that smaller organizations might be more likely to pursue alliances as it

offers greater and broader access to resources not previously available as a small entity (Guo and Acar, 2005).

2.3 OSL Organizations and Partnerships with Schools

2.3.1 Alignment Between Youth-Serving OSL Organizations and Schools

Many also believe that youth-serving OSL organizations that have a specific focus on improving students' in-school academic outcomes should have strategic alignment with what happens for these students during the school day. This alignment can take a variety of forms to have the most effective partnership. The U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse offers the recommendation that OSL program coordinators develop relationships and maintain ongoing communication with school personnel, that schools designate a dedicated individual to liaise between the OSL program coordinator and connect him/her to school needs, and that OSL instruction be aligned to the school and district-based standards and objectives (Beckett et. al, 2009). This program alignment is defined by other scholars as "schools, after-school providers, and communities working collectively to ensure that children and youth meet or exceed learning standards and that schools and out-of-school-time activities reflect the developmental needs of young people" (Pittman, et al., 2004, p. 36). Pittman et al. (2004) also highlight a Seattle-based school-OSL alignment model where the focus is not on duplicative services (e.g., more school during after-school), and instead on complementary services through close partnership between school and OSL provider staff. Through this partnership, OSL programs are granted 'rent free' access to Seattle schools if the provider remains aligned to the district

learning standards and overall program quality. The example of public access to community

facilities is also described in literature. Spengler, Connaughton, and Carrol (2011) present a model

on how community organizations can engage in shared use agreements to utilize school

recreational facilities through joint use agreements where "a school and its partner agency or

organization must clearly outline each partner's responsibilities, have good communication, decide

how the costs will be shared, negotiate liability terms, and get support from the community as well

as from local political leaders" (p. 30) to be successful.

Similarly, the Harvard Family Research Project (2010) found a number of benefits for

school-OSL partnerships. They identify benefits to schools as improved classroom teaching and

learning, support through continuity in student transition-years (elementary to middle and middle

to high-school), the reinforcement of concepts, values, and skills taught during school, and

improvements to school culture and community image. The benefits identified for youth-serving

OSL organizations include programs increasing access to recruit students most in need,

improvements in program quality and staff engagement, and the leveraging of additional school

resources including facilities, staff, data, and curriculum (p. 6).

Although the benefits of these types of partnerships have been well documented, a study

by Anderson-Butcher, Stetler and Midle (2006) found that school staff engaging in partnerships

with OSL organizations found few linkages between their work in classrooms and the work of the

partner organizations, few connections between the adults leading programming and teachers, and

limited general awareness of the opportunities available. The authors conclude that

"communication, coordination, and collaboration between schools and these various community

resources (for example, youth development organizations) might then be enhanced to more

strategically address the specific nonacademic barriers to learning that exist within individual

schools" through the development of "relationships on the basis of some priority need area, thus creating a common purpose and shared vision for the partnership" (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2006, p. 161).

The collaborative work between schools and community organizations has also been studied in the context of collaboration across the formal learning and information learning divide. Russell, Knutson, and Crowley (2013) found that in a partnership between a community-based children's museum and an urban public school district, the partnership sustained partly due to a shared vision and objectives for the partnership but largely due to the relationship developed between the museum director and the school district administrator. A partnership between a school district and a community-based arts organization found similar results. The partnership between the two entities was sparked by mutual goals around ensuring access to arts-based educational resources and curricula for students and staff. Relationships also were an important aspect of the partnership as communication between the two organizations became difficult when a key staff person at the arts organization went on sabbatical.

In both examples, the authors found that "the school district and other powerful actors in the ecology had the upper hand in decision making around key program elements. These unequal power dynamics shaped the trajectory of joint work" (Russell, Knutson, and Crowley, 2013, p. 276). In the museum-school partnership, there was an increasing push to align the museum classroom to normal district operations, which were far less flexible and innovative. Likewise, in the community-based arts organization partnership with the school district, they found "issues of how to maintain its arts-based culture and youth development philosophy in light of its increasingly dependent relationship with the formal system" (Russell, Knutson, and Crowley, 2013, p. 265).

2.3.2 Social-Emotional Learning and OSL School Partnerships

Empirical evidence also exists that suggest there are significant positive benefits to students who participate in school-based social-emotional learning (SEL) programs. Durlak, Dymnicki, Taylor, Weissberg, and Schellinger (2013) found that these programs can significantly improve skills, attitudes, and behaviors and that classroom teachers can be successful at conducting these programs themselves. It is interesting to note that in this study of the delivery of SEL programs by non-school personnel, the same positive effects were not found for programs delivered by these staff. Hurd and Deutsch (2017) offer a potential reason for the lack of demonstrable SEL effects seen in external OSL programs. Although they argue that OSL programs support SEL, regardless of whether these strategies are formalized and named, programs are disadvantaged by inconsistent attendance (e.g., not mandatory in OSL whereas in-school attendance is mandatory) and an overemphasis on improving outcomes largely influenced by funders of OSL programs. Leos-Urbel (2013) corroborate this argument around OSL program attendance and a heavy academic focus. In his study of a sample of 29 New York City 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, he found that students in elementary school attended programming, on average, twice as many days as students in middle school, 119 to 63 average days of program attendance. Assuming a 180-day school year, however, these numbers represent a 66 and 25 percent attendance rate and thus pale in comparison to average attendance rates in elementary and middle schools across the country (e.g., the average daily attendance rates for elementary and secondary schools in New York State in 2012-2013 school year was respectively 93.6 and 90 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014)). While not a study solely on SEL outcomes, Leos-Urbel (2013) also found that programs across elementary and middle school realized higher average test scores

when there were more opportunities for structured interactions between staff and youth participating in the program, which is a skill generally recognized as supportive to SEL.

2.4 How Other Sectors Approach Partnerships

2.4.1 Public-Private Partnerships

Governmental entities often engage in partnerships with the private sector to meet common good and to benefit society goals. The nature of these often are direct arrangements between private entities and governments, with the general understanding that the private entity is compensated for their service delivery but also assumes any associated risks (Sharma and Bindal, 2014). While these partnerships are designed to serve a public good in more efficient ways, in practice, challenges exist in establishing and maintaining these partnerships to benefit all. Sharma and Bindal (2014) cite a lack of trust between partners, a lack of reliable information about private entities and their services and success, difficulty in contracting (particularly from the government to the private sector), and an incongruence in the management capacity of the public sector to deal with the private sector as some of the challenges in these types of partnerships.

Healey (2017) presents a framework for public-private partnerships that is categorized into three areas: government-led partnerships, private-sector-led partnerships, and balanced partnerships. Table 2 below summarizes the primary characteristics of these types of partnerships.

Table 2: Public-Private Partnership Framework

	Government-led partnerships	Private-sector-led partnerships	Balanced partnerships
Primary Stakeholders	• Governments asserts control over private-sector entities	• Private-sector entities maintain independence from government	• Private-sector entities and government share equal power in partnership
Process / Goals / Outcomes	• Regulation and standardization across all partnering entities • Government offers more stability and sustainability, but also less agility and flexibility	• Government takes "supported command" only when requested or necessary • Private-sector entities offer more unique expertise, creativity, and flexibility	• Joint governance: decision making requires collaboration and agreement among all entities • Mutual recognition of talent and expertise across all entities
Partnership Duration	• In perpetuity depending on governmental powers in control	• In perpetuity depending on desire of private entity(ies)	• In perpetuity with dissolution possible only with mutual agreement of all entities

Source: Healey (2017)

In government-led partnerships, these arrangements are characterized by a heavy focus on regulation, contracting, standardization, and control of the overall partnership. Within these arrangements, the government takes a heavy hand in applying all of the rules, regulations, and processes under normal operation within the sector to the private entity. In this example, they can even take the approach of compelling the private entity to share or provide information when deemed necessary for the public good. Conversely, in a private-sector-led partnership, the private entity maintains the control and direction for the overall partnership, with the partnership being characterized either by the government taking a 'supported command' role (e.g., can utilize strength or authority only when necessary/requested) or the private entity allowed to make entirely independent decisions. In a balanced partnership, both entities can take the role of joint governance, where each partner collaborates on all decisions to be made. They also can engage in personnel exchange where there is mutual recognition of the expertise and talent across both sectors. The overall goal of a balanced partnership is to recognize and leverage the strengths of both sides and how each can contribute to success of solving the particular problem.

While I addressed some of the literature challenges in these types of partnerships above, Healey (2017) also outlines some strengths of these partnerships. These strengths include the government's overall stability, staying power, and legitimacy as a benefit to a public-private arrangement and the private sector's significant expertise, flexibility, and agility as a benefit. Healey (2017) also argues that there is not one type of entity-led partnership that is more ideal than the other, it depends on the context of the problem needing solved.

2.4.2 Joint Ventures

Joint ventures are similar to public-private partnerships, but do not include public-sector entities. Broadly speaking, joint ventures are defined as a "partnership or alliance among two or more businesses or organizations based on shared expertise or resources to achieve a particular goal" (Gingrich, 2018). Many joint ventures involve collaboration among international entities who partner on global problems. There exists a number of studies on international joint venture agreements in China and the efficacy of this work across different types of engagements. Nippa, Beechler, and Klossek (2007) synthesized this literature and developed a conceptual framework and identified some characteristics to determine the efficacy of these arrangements. These characteristics are overall relationship management, attributes of both the foreign and local parent and how they fit, the governance of the international joint venture (either through ownership or control), the attributes of the international joint venture, and the external environment influencers. Using this framework, Nippa, Beechler, and Klossek (2007) analyzed 16 Chinese and 25 non-Chinese joint ventures to determine the common factors of success across the cases. Of most relevance to the partnership work in OSL, they found that "personal relationships, trust and cooperative decision making are important predictors of [international joint venture] success" (p.

14) and this is found across both the Chinese and non-Chinese joint-ventures studied. Boersma, Buckley, and Ghauri (2003) also explore how relationships develop in international joint ventures and propose a framework for developing trust as a mechanism for ensuring success within the partnership. This framework outlines previous history, negotiation, commitment, and execution as the key stages to the development of trust in a joint venture. In research interviews from stakeholders involved with four separate international joint ventures, the authors found that a company's performance helps to build trust in the likelihood that the partnership will be successful and that direct personal interactions both prior to and during the partnership help to continue to build trust. Furthermore, friendships (not just prior relationships) can help to ensure that the partnership sustains during the commitment and execution stages as "bonds of friendship have the effect that people listen to each other more carefully, support each other when difficulties arise, are more open and direct in their communication and look for consensus when the interests are opposing" (Boersma, Buckley, and Ghauri, 2003, p. 1040).

2.4.3 Limited Liability Partnerships in Legal Field

While general partnerships in the OSL field do not often rise to the level of shared mutual risk and liability (this being more common in a formalized merger or acquisition), there are important legal characteristics in partnerships to consider. The concept of limited liability partnerships is one that is heavily used by law firms, although it also has applicability in public and private entities as well. The term 'limited liability' is defined as a "condition under which the loss that an owner (shareholder) of a business firm may incur is limited to the amount of capital invested by him in the business and does not extend to his personal assets" ("Limited liability", 2018). Law firms are frequently embroiled in complex cases that require the expertise legal

experts across a number of areas, so it is understandable that firms frequently would engage in these types of partnerships. Naylor (1999) examines the rise in these partnerships in the legal field in Delaware. The rise in these types of partnerships spurred from concerns around personal liability in general partnerships where there is the potential for limited to no awareness of the behavior of other partners, putting all organizations engaged in the partnership in legal jeopardy. While these agreements are in place to protect the innocent from litigation outside of their direct action (or inaction), they also have been fraught with concerns including the fear that lawyers will not be incentivized to police each other's conduct (as they have no assumed risk of what others in the partnership may do) and the perception from clients that the lawyers are shielded from personal liability. Hurt (2015) examines the impact that limited-liability partnerships have on firms that become insolvent and must file for bankruptcy. There becomes significant difficulty in bankruptcy court to satisfy the obligations of creditors to bankrupt limited-liability partners due to the protections from personal liability that individual partners have in these agreements. Hurt (2015) discusses the cases of many high-profile limited-liability partnerships that have gone bankrupt and all have engaged in years of very complex and still-ongoing legal challenges around the organizational obligations under the federal bankruptcy law and the protections under state limited-liability provisions. In summary, it makes for a very complicated arrangement when things go wrong.

2.5 OSL Partnership Challenges

Notwithstanding, filing for bankruptcy is probably the worst-case scenario example of failed partnerships, and based on the nature and structure of OSL partnership agreements, is not

one that would be too common for these arrangements. However, a number of other challenges are important to consider when OSL organizations engage in partnerships, both partnerships with schools and with other complementing entities or organizations. The sections below will summarize these challenges including institutional isomorphism, financial instability and staff turnover, and challenges with ensuring diversity and inclusion in nonprofit organizations.

2.5.1 Institutional Isomorphism

Informal OSL dependency on the formal system (e.g., the school) is addressed in literature using the concept of isomorphism. Isomorphism is defined in sociological terms as "a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 26). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) describe a phenomenon where entities may feel coerced by the larger or more powerful partner into assimilating into that larger partner's goals, priorities, and objectives. This coercion largely manifests from a feeling of dependency that the smaller partner feels from the larger partner and thus the smaller modifies their goals to meet those of the larger.

This concept of institutional isomorphism in schools has also been studied from the lens of charter schools and the corresponding districts in which they operate. A recent dissertation studying various charter schools in Washington D.C. found that while the schools are chartered as unique independent school options fulfilling services not offered by the traditional public school system, "the compliance with current legal mandates require each school to operate certain aspects of their instructional practices, policies, and personnel guidelines in manners similar to both one another and to traditional public schools" (Sweet, 2013, p. 138). This compliance resulted in the

schools having limited autonomy around practices and made them not too dissimilar from schools offered by the district.

2.5.2 Nonprofit Financial Stability and Staff Turnover

As referenced earlier, nonprofit organizations are largely dependent on the external funding environment that surrounds them to maintain continued service (Salamon, 2012) to keep the lights on and the doors open. Due to this reliance on funding from external sources, it can be difficult for OSL organizations to partner (both with school and with each other) because of limited, restricted, or a lack of dollars to run programs. In addition to limited financial support, determining if a nonprofit is at financial risk is also challenging. A nonprofit vulnerability study by Tevel et al. (2015) tests different models of financial vulnerability on various arts-based nonprofit organizations. The authors conduct a study of these organizations to propose a new model for nonprofit financial vulnerability as many of the models currently in practice are either not valid or ineffective. This can lead potential new OSL partners (in schools or in other OSL organizations) to be wary about engaging in partnerships as there is not a clear way to determine if the organization has the stability to operate long-term.

Similarly, there exists a high level of staff turnover in the nonprofit sector. Turnover is a phenomenon experienced in many schools, particularly those with the highest-need students. As high-need students frequently experience adult turnover in their lives, primarily from a school to OSL program perspective there is likewise hesitancy in engaging with OSL partners who may not have consistent staff for the duration of the partnership. Many nonprofits attract young early-in-their-career millennials for many of the entry-level jobs that exist in the organizations, and these roles are usually the front line for direct-service programming. McGinnis, Johnson, and Ng (2016)

conducted a study to determine the factors influencing turnover by Millennials in nonprofit jobs by examining survey data from a national nonprofit young professional network. They found that while a majority of the survey participants expressed intentions to switch jobs (ultimately out of the nonprofit sector), this correlated most closely to those with higher levels of education and not for low compensation. Johnson (2009) examines the other end of nonprofit staffing: those holding top leadership positions. While there is significant concern around leadership of nonprofit organizations as many top leadership roles are held by Baby Boomers who are soon to retire, these transitional effects can be managed by engaging in activities like increasing training and skill development for younger workers, recruiting from other sectors, and leveraging skill-based volunteers and consultants (Johnson, 2009). However, even amidst these strategies to soften the blow of leadership turnover, it still will result in new and/or different individuals involved with the organizations. While this turnover does present some organizational challenges that need to be mitigated and managed, there are some benefits to the injection of new talent into an organization, specifically in ensuring a more diverse workforce.

2.5.3 Diversity and Inclusion in the Nonprofit Sector

The nonprofit sector has historically lacked diversity, and these trends continue today. Hays (2012) found that across all nonprofit organizations, 82 percent of staff are White and ten percent of staff are African-American, with all other races making up the remaining eight percent. Furthermore, only 25 percent of employees of a sample of nonprofit organizations nationwide reported that their organizations have diversity and inclusion practices in place. Garrow and Garrow (2014) assert that neighborhood demographics, particularly largely racially segregated neighborhoods that have experienced White flight and disinvestment of critical community

resources, may be hesitant to supporting nonprofit organizations. These communities "are hostile to nonprofit presence because they are exceptionally isolated, marginalized, and prone to neglect and discrimination by institutional stakeholders" (Garrow and Garrow, 2014, p. 337). This hostility could negatively affect a school and/or embedded (and racially diverse) OSL organization in engaging in a partnership. The potential exists for those partners that are representative of cultural diversity to perceive the work of the mostly-homogenous nonprofit sector as engaging in 'white savior' practices, which is a term attributed mostly to films where "a white messianic character saves a lower- or working-class, usually urban or isolated, nonwhite character from a sad fate" (Hughey, 2014, p. 1). Thus, the demographic makeup, nature, and practices of nonprofit organizations can make these types of partnerships more difficult.

2.6 Summary of Literature

As a nonprofit leader, I know firsthand that it is important to be open to and engage in partnerships, for no other reason than to recognize and acknowledge that there are skills, strengths, and expertise that can be collectively leveraged to meet common goals. However, these practices are often easier to imagine in theory than to put into practice. This review of literature offered an overview of how organizations can approach partnerships, examining literature on collective impact and strategic alliances. Literature on how school-OSL program partnerships operate was also examined, with a focus on academic OSL programs and SEL programs. Finally, I explored literature on how sectors outside of nonprofits approach partnerships and what some of the overall challenges to partnerships OSL organizations face. It should be noted that this review is neither

comprehensive nor exhaustive of all the relevant literature in the field. It does, though, provide a

basis for OSL leaders to approach this work to ensure greater success.

3.0 A Study of Nonprofit and School Leaders on OSL Partnership Experience

3.1 Inquiry Approach

This inquiry utilizes a qualitative research framework where I interview experienced professionals in schools and OSL programs to better understand the partnership environment between OSL programs and schools. This approach is beneficial in the context of this study as it allows for a holistic view of the complexities of PYD for youth in need. As many OSL program partnerships are prioritized for students who have the least amount of opportunity, the schools these students attend generally "are doubly challenged in confronting the vast human needs of their student and family populations" (Byrk, 2015, p. 470). As a result, exponentially more programs, initiatives, and opportunities are targeted for these students, all of which need to be coordinated effectively. In using this approach, the data gathered in this analysis can inform what can be done to increase the likelihood of success in these types of partnerships as the learnings of what to do and what to avoid from experienced experts can directly apply to new and existing partnerships.

3.2 Method

OSL organizations that facilitate programming in school settings are the target for this study. Organizations identified for this study were targeted for having experience with actively partnering with a school in an OSL opportunity for a minimum of one year and schools identified for this study were targeted for having a minimum of one year of experience in partnering with an

OSL program. Absent the one year of experience, the individuals interviewed also may have general familiarity with OSL and OSL partnerships.

3.2.1 Participants

Three participant groups of interest were identified for this study: executive directors of OSL organizations, program directors of the OSL organizations, and school leaders. Five school leaders representing schools in a mid-sized urban metropolitan were identified for interviews of up to 45-minutes on their knowledge of OSL programming and their experience with OSL partnerships. The school leaders interviewed were selected primarily based on the establishing criteria of a minimum one year of engaging in community partnerships and were chosen from those who opted in to interview from a broad communication to all principals meeting this criteria. Five OSL organization executive directors and five OSL organization program directors representing organizations that operate programming within schools in the same mid-sized metropolitan area were also identified for up to 45-minute interviews on their experience with school partnerships. These participants were also selected primarily based on the establishing criteria of a minimum of one year of engaging in programming in schools and were chosen from those who opted in to interview from a broad communication from a list populated by a local out-of-school time intermediary. See Table 3 below for a summary chart of the characteristics of study participants in each group.

Table 3: Summary Chart for Study Participants

Principals	Executive Directors	Program Directors
• Five interviews • Represent K-5, K-8, 6-8, and 6-12 schools • Represent small (<100) to mid-sized (>450) schools • Experience ranges from less than 2 years to greater than 20 years as a principal	• Five interviews • Three represent organizations that only serve youth, two represent broader social service agencies • Annual budgets range from very small (<$70,000) to large (>$2 million) • Experience ranges from less than four years to greater than 20 years as an executive director • Two are the founding executive directors	• Five interviews • Three represent broad social service agencies, two represent organizations that only serve youth • Annual budgets range from average (~$800,000) to very large ($4.2 million) • Experience ranges from less than four years to greater than ten years as a program director

3.2.2 Procedure

Each participant was asked a series of eight questions including general introductory background questions about their respective backgrounds and how they arrived at their current role. Then, each interview group was asked a consistent set of questions around their reflections on the benefits of OSL programming in general, their experience with school/OSL partnerships, their thoughts and examples of effective and poor partnerships, and general advice they would offer to others looking to engage in this type of work to support students.

In analyzing the interview data, I first identified the prevailing themes common across all interview groups. Once these themes were identified, the number of instances each theme came up in interviews was documented and tabulated. The themes were then rank ordered from most frequent to least frequent across all participants and categorized up into higher-level categories. Then, these data were broken down by interview subgroup to determine if the different interviewed groups placed greater value on particular categories and themes than did their counterparts. Finally, the identified categories were compared back to the prevailing literature around

partnerships to determine the similarities and differences between what other scholars have noted around partnerships and what this study is suggesting.

3.3 Results

Eight themes arose from the interviews with at least eight references of each individual theme across all interview results. These themes are categorized into three higher-level groupings which are, in descending order from most to least prevalent, People, Institutional Practices, and Programming. See Table 4 below for a summary chart of the categories and corresponding data collected from interview participants in this study.

Table 4: Summary Chart for Study Categories

Category	Number of Mentions	Description	Example Quote
People	111	Interview participants described factors that relate to who key stakeholders are in partnerships and how these stakeholders interact.	"I think that clear and transparent communication is critical amongst not only the leadership of both programs, but also those individuals who have that day-to-day interaction with the students as well."
Institutions	78	Interview participants described the variables that relate to the entities that support partnerships.	There exists a "struggle around red tape [with schools] in trying to get resources for kids and run programs effectively."
Programming	26	Interview participants described the aspects of the programming facilitated within the partnership.	"The first thing is that you have to establish credibility. We get outcomes, this isn't just a program, it's a highly successful program...there is a pedagogical approach we're using, and it's working. It's working as a partnership."

3.3.1 People

This category relates to the key stakeholders in the partnership, who is involved in the partnership (or not involved), and how stakeholders interact throughout. The specific themes identified under this category are Effective Communication and Relationships, School Leadership, and Program/Organizational Leadership.

3.3.1.1 Effective Communication and Relationships

The need for, or lambasting of a lack of, effective communication came up from 14 of the 15 interviewees in this study (93%). Some interviewed described effective communication from the perspective of what they need in the partnership. "I require constant communication," one principal explained. "I want to have bi-weekly or monthly meetings, check-ups. I want to be involved in what we're doing in to have like a shared goal." While this may be the ideal scenario in a school/OSL partnership, the non-principals in this study painted a very different picture of what regular communication with school principals felt like. One executive director explained that in having regular meetings with school principals, "I think we all get busy...we've certainly been guilty of it. But then also our school principals have been guilty of it where you'll meet really early on and then maybe not touch base again for months and months and months and by then an opinion may have been formed or frustration may have been set in so deeply that it is hard to move beyond that." Similarly, a program director explained that "we want to have regular communication with the principals and counselors and teachers, but the quality and frequency of that varies depending on who those people are."

Despite challenges with communication and, at times, with school leadership, 14 of the 15 interviewees (93%) described positive relationships as important within the context of

partnerships. One executive director explained that "you can have all the outcomes you could possibly enjoy, but if you've done nothing to build a relationship who's even going to know if you don't communicate it?" This same executive director reiterates this message, describing that "the stronger the relationship, the easier it is to actually have occasions where...I would need to press you," positing that the relationship serves as the primary fulcrum for addressing issues that may arise within the partnership. This theory is also supported by another executive director who explained that "because of my unique situation of having worked for [specific school district], I had some relationships that helped navigate through [partnership challenges]." Relationships are not only important for the adults in the partnership, but across all people according to one principal. They explain that "the thing that I would hope you would find in every hallway and every classroom is relationships. You're going to find strong relationships from teacher to teacher, from administrator to teacher, from teacher to student, student to student, families, community partnerships, realizing that it takes a village to do this work and that this work can't be done successfully in isolation."

3.3.1.2 School Leadership

Reflections on school leadership, even outside of when and how they communicate, also came up frequently in interviews with 11 of the 15 interviewees (73%) addressing this theme at least once. Interestingly, while this theme only came up in two instances from the interviews of principals, it came up in 33 instances from the interviews of the other two subgroups. This provides some insight into the power dynamic between schools and programs, a theme which will be explored below.

Similar to the communication challenges described with principals, one executive director explained that "if we are trying to get the attention of a principal while they are chasing after

something or putting out fires, and maybe even they're trying to find their way out of that job, it is very difficult," while one program director described how "some principals, they want to make a name for themselves and so they are more interested in, like, what are you going to do for us, what are you going to do for them? And I think it has to be more of a mutual relationship." Further highlighting this lack of mutuality, a program director described a scenario where a staffer on their team sat outside of the principal's office waiting to meet with them for two weeks straight until they were seen while another described an experience of meeting with a principal that transformed from a sit-down to a walk-and-talk down the hall. "You don't have their full attention," the program director explained. "You're walking and talking and it's really difficult to have, like, a substantial or important conversation that we feel like needs to be had when you are in a stairwell."

3.3.1.3 OSL Program/Organizational Leadership

While only four of the 15 (27%) interviewees referenced OSL Program/Organizational Leadership, it was referenced in at least one interview from each subgroup. One principal described a struggle "with individuals who say they offer services and don't actually implement and/or execute and/or reach the bar of what they say." An executive director spoke with pride around their involvement in the OSL programming that their organization facilitates. "It's important for whoever's decision-making to be in some way engaged in the actual thing," they explain. "You can't do it from afar."

This theme indirectly highlights the importance of the leader of the organization offering OSL programming, and the reputation/credibility (s)he brings to the partnership. Much like that of the principal of a school, the OSL leader needs to be a trusted figure who can not only effectively sell the program but also have a personality conducive enough to establish a positive working relationship with school stakeholders.

3.3.2 Institutional Practices

This category relates to the physical entities that support partnerships. These entities include the structure and characteristics of the schools and overarching school districts and also the structure and characteristics of the organizations that house and sustain the OSL programming. The specific themes identified under this category are Operations of OSL Programming and Schools and the Power Dynamic between Schools and OSL Partners.

3.3.2.1 Operation of OSL Programming and Schools

This theme was referenced at least once by 13 of the 15 interviewees in this study (87%). The major defining factor of this theme on the OSL organization side are things that OSL programs either do or do not do in partnerships to make them successful. One principal made the observation that a large factor that makes partner programs less successful is program instability. They go on to describe that "it could be instability in staffing, it could be instability in programming but a lot of the times it comes down to staffing." Similarly, when describing the need for pursuing additional partnerships for youth programming one executive director explained "we were in a pretty dire financial situation, we had to get pretty creative." On the other hand, another executive director explained how in their organization they "can use [their] ability to be unrestricted to help them to, you know, do their best without adding too much stress on the in-school teachers." A program director also explained, "I have five staff...they spend literally Monday through Friday, all day, in those schools."

On the school side, this theme largely relates to generalized and specific reflections on how schools operate and how this has an impact on partnerships. The general reflections from all interview participants but the principals are that schools generally make OSL partnerships more

complicated and difficult. One executive director explained that there exists a "struggle around red tape [with schools] in trying to get resources for kids and run programs effectively," while another admitted that they "try and work through the schools as little as possible because it's just so difficult." When describing why they might not partner with a particular school, a program director explained that "some schools are very oversaturated with partners so that their students are involved in everything," and holds the belief that "there are so many schools around that if one doesn't work out I can go to the next." Here it should be noted that this particular program director represents one of the larger organizations within this study and as a result potentially has more ability to be choosy when it comes to engaging in partnerships. This similar theme was referenced by another program director who also represents a larger organization with diversity in terms of programming. They described scenarios where "some schools were resistant [to partnership] at first, and we just didn't partner with those schools. What I've noticed over time is if...the school is not welcoming and wanting to have you there, it's going to get worse."

3.3.2.2 Power Dynamic Between Schools and OSL Partners

While no principal interviewed in this study referred to the power dynamic between schools and OSL programs, all but three of the ten other participants in this study mentioned this dynamic at least once. One executive director described this dynamic as bluntly as "we are the husband's best friend who is sleeping on the sofa. It really doesn't matter who is right or wrong, if the wife says 'either he goes or I go', then we are going." Similarly, and equally as bluntly, one program director described how "it feels like sometimes as a partner you have to, like, eat shit because you don't have an upper hand and you feel like you might not have leverage because it's their space, it's their building. Sometimes it can feel like an abusive relationship." Another program director described the harsh perception that they "are really seen as not even second-class citizens within

the school, it's just that we are nonexistent." In framing the partnership structure, an executive director explains how "the schools hold the cards. And then we are the ones going in and begging to get a meeting." In relation to how staff are trained to operate within the context of a school partnership, an executive director described how they "always tell [their] staff 'hey be careful what you say to anybody in the school, right'? Cause that can set it off too...how dare a community partner say that to the principal." This same executive director went on to describe how other OSL partners "know just like we know that if the principal gets frustrated with them they're just going to put them out. So they're not going to do anything that the principal doesn't want them to do."

3.3.3 Programming

This category relates to the specific aspects of either programming during the school day facilitated by school staff or the aspects of the OSL programming facilitated by the external program staff. The specific themes identified under this category are Student Achievement and Classroom or Group Management.

3.3.3.1 Student Achievement

Prior to conducting this study, I expected that student achievement via data analysis and reporting would be among the most prevalent instances arising from the conducted interviews as one particular question as each interview group was asked a reflection question on the service and benefit their school or program offers to enrolled youth. In my experience, most school and youth-program leaders are regularly inundated with an expectation of decision making via data-driven analysis, so would have expected this to pepper the responses in describing effective partnerships. Although student achievement did rise as one of the overall themes of this study, only seven of 15

participants (47%) mentioned some aspect of achievement data in their response. Most surprising

is that of these seven, only two were principals. One executive director explained how in pitching

their program to schools "you have to show them the WIIFM, the acronym WIIFM: What's In It

For Me? Like here's the outcomes we get with these kids, they're your kids, so, are 99% of the

kids we are talking about already graduating from your school? Because our rate for the last ten

years, our average is like 98.7%. So, if you're already achieving that you don't need us." A

program director described that "the more concrete outcomes you have to share that are positive,

and the more you show how you are going to help their students, which in turn helps their staff

have less work, the better it [partnerships] will be." While data and having strong positive

outcomes are certainly the goal of all programs and schools, an executive director describes this

dynamic in a slightly different light in that "there was this expectation that by us coming in and

doing 45-minute sessions with a class that [the students] were going to ace the [state standardized

tests]. Guess what? Not true."

3.3.3.2 Classroom or Group Management

Seven of the 15 interviewees (47%) also referenced classroom or group management

(whether during the school day or during partnership activities) in their responses, specifically

from the perspective of partner programs being able to effectively manage students in the program.

One principal explained that "one of the biggest things that I see as the fail of community partners

is not being able to manage the group, even though there might be good work going on." Another

principal reiterated this belief of some programs not being able to manage students when

describing a bad partnership, explaining that "there was a disconnect in what happened during the

school day and what happened after school. As the principal of the building, I had no idea what

that partner was doing with my scholars. I would often stay and work late and then see scholars

roaming the halls or getting in trouble and screaming at providers and their staff and I just felt like it was not a positive culture conducive to fun and learning." An executive director attempted to defend partner management of students by explaining that "the ones who participated were probably some of the most needy kids in the school, which meant they cause problems after school which meant it just almost inevitably created tense relationships with us and school leadership, there was almost no way around it." A program director described the need for adequate support from school staff in partnerships, particularly in handling challenging behavioral situations, indicating a feeling of being on one's own with the program and expected to deal with and manage all challenges.

3.4 Recommendations

In seeking to bring clarity around the perceptions of school to out-of-school program partnerships from those stakeholders who are most connected to program operations, this study illuminates some important discoveries. While much of the 'harder' program criteria and measurements like program quality, effective student management, and data-driven decision making are important, this study shows that they pale in importance as compared to 'softer' criteria like relationships and working well together. From these findings, I present the following recommendations for schools and OSL program leaders to follow, which can make the act of establishing and engaging in partnerships more likely to succeed: 1) Recognize and Accept a Power Inequality; 2) Invest in Relationships and Effective Communication; 3). Maintain Consistency in Program and School Operations.

3.4.1 Recognize and Accept a Power Inequality

This first recommendation is more of a practical realization for those involved than anything that can be tangibly done. The data from this study suggest that those involved in partnerships with schools might be expecting more of a relationship of equals, and this is not always the reality. The literature on institutional isomorphism supports this theory in that the larger and more established entity is more likely to control and coerce (even unintentionally) the agenda of the entity that is smaller and more limited in scope. This concept is further supported in a study by Russell, Knutson, and Crowley (2013) who observed in a partnership between a community-based children's museum and an urban public school district that "the school district and other powerful actors in the ecology had the upper hand in decision making around key program elements. These unequal power dynamics shaped the trajectory of joint work" (p. 276). Schooling is mandatory in US educational policy, so much so that every state has compulsory education laws requiring school enrollment and attendance from early childhood to pre-adulthood (Compulsory Education, 2020). The same cannot be said for OSL programming. While many make the argument that OSL is equally as important to school-day learning (and add my voice to the list of folks who believe this to be true), the reality remains that school-day learning will continue to reign supreme. From policy makers to parents, school-day education will continue to drive decisions around youth development and, as a result, will drive the agenda of OSL programming.

However, this recognition and acceptance is not to suggest that OSL programs should be regulated to that of permanent second-class (or less) citizens within the school environment. It is important that school leaders also recognize the value and unique learning opportunities that OSL partners provide for students. A completely isomorphic partnership that only follows the priorities

of the school is unlikely to have long-term success as the data here suggest that frustration, either overt or hidden, can brew within those who lead the partner programs. This frustration, if held too long, has the potential to harm the overall relationship with the school.

3.4.2 Invest in Relationships and Effective Communication

As noted above, relationships and effective communication are critical to ensure long-term partnership success. An executive director described this dynamic best in explaining "if we didn't hit it off, you know, then likely, probably, our programs aren't going to hit it off that well either." While it may seem counterintuitive to expend energy in cultivating relationships with adults than, say, ensuring quality programming for youth, the data here suggest that this is an important investment to make. This recommendation is supported in the literature on joint ventures summarized above, where it is personal relationships (and even furthermore friendships) that are most important for sustaining long-term partnerships.

To ensure successful partnerships, OSL leaders should know and understand who are the key stakeholders relevant for that partnership and actively work to establish a positive relationship and maintain regular and effective communication with these individuals. It also should be noted that the principal may not always be the best person to be the primary go-to for partnership logistics and arising concerns. The data gleaned from the principals in this study suggest that, while willing and well intentioned, they may not always have the time, energy, or capacity to heavily manage that which happens outside of the regular school day. In establishing relationships with schools and setting communication expectations between parties involved, OSL leaders should also be prepared to assess how much realistic capacity the lead in the partnership has to collaborate with the program. Are daily or even weekly check-in meetings with a principal realistic if (s)he runs a

large school with persistent student achievement gaps and high levels of staff turnover? Probably not. Even if this level of communication is what the principal recommends happen with their external partner programs, there is high probability that this will not happen just based on the nature of the myriad other variables that may arise and pull their time and attention. It is important for school leaders to recognize their own capacity and limitations and know what they can and cannot do and OSL leaders to also be aware of this. With an effective established relationship between the school leader and the OSL program leader, an agreement or understanding can be arranged as to who communicates with whom in the partnership based on this honest assessment of each other's time.

3.4.3 Maintain Consistency in Program/School Operations

For OSL programming and school initiatives, it is critical that all parties are in it for the long-haul. On the school side, it is important that the leadership maintain a consistent shared vision for student success, and that all individuals within that school environment, be it staff or partners, are a part of that vision. A school will not have success either during the school day or with OSL if the vision or goal constantly changes requiring an adjustment of staff and supports which align to the vision. Likewise, OSL partners need to be included in and understand this vision in order to have success in their respective programs.

On a similar note, OSL partners need to meaningfully include schools in the program being offered. This meaningful inclusion should also serve the purpose of ensuring that what is proposed, actually happens. There should not be a discrepancy between that which is pitched by OSL leadership and that which is provided by OSL line staff. To arm against this, an intentional focus on program implementation needs to be maintained throughout the partnership. It is

important for OSL organizations to establish the conditions necessary to maintain both program funding and program staffing to support this implementation consistency. The literature summarized above around nonprofit financial stability and staff turnover offers some risk factors for OSL programs to monitor within their organizations, serving as an indication of partnership readiness and likelihood for partnership success. Having a clear understanding of these risk factors and actively taking steps to mitigate organizational stability risks can make OSL partnerships more likely to succeed.

3.5 Limitations

There do exist some limitations from this study in both methodology and in implementation. First, the study is only reflective of the experiences of 15 individuals in one mid-sized US metropolitan area. In limiting the scope of this analysis in this way, the potential exists for the findings and recommendations to be less applicable to those operating in other areas of the country. Additionally, the research decision to focus on just one primary method of data collection, interviews, also serves as a limiting factor in gleaning a broader understanding of the problem of partnerships between schools and OSL. Further research using a similar conceptual framework and methodology in other US and national contexts could expand upon this research and further add to the scholarly literature in this field.

3.6 Sharing of Results to Advance OSL Field

As a complement to this study to expand its applicability to practitioners in schools and in the OSL field, I plan to share a summary of this study and its findings via two broad-reaching media: at the 2020 National Afterschool Association (NAA) annual convention and through an article for publication to Afterschool Matters.

3.6.1 2020 National Afterschool Association Annual Convention

NAA is a professional membership organization that supports OSL leaders across the country in providing quality PYD and extended learning opportunities to all youth. The mission of NAA is "to promote development, provide education and encourage advocacy for the out-of-school-time community to further the afterschool profession" ("National Afterschool Association About Us", 2020). Each year, NAA hosts a convention open to members and friends of OSL across the country designed to promote new field learning opportunities for practitioners and to share best practices, with the 2020 convention being hosted virtually through a combination of live-feed and pre-recorded online video sessions. Prior to each convention, NAA launches a competitive nationwide call for proposals from OSL experts to share their experiences and leadership in support of the field. In October 2019, I submitted a 45-minute workshop presentation proposal to share an overview of this study and how the results can be applied to those directly supporting PYD through OSL partnerships. This workshop was approved as a pre-recorded session for the 2020 convention, which I recorded and submitted in March 2020. Between April 19, 2020 and May 2, 2020 this workshop will be made available to the over 2,000 convention participants.

3.6.2 Afterschool Matters Journal

I also will be submitting an overview of this study and its findings to Afterschool Matters. Afterschool Matters is a national peer-reviewed journal that supports the field of PYD and OSL by "promoting professionalism, scholarship and consciousness in the field of afterschool education" ("Afterschool Matters Journal", 2020). Afterschool Matters is published by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and is the premier scholarly publication for OSL professionals. At the time of this publication, a call for papers is currently underway for Afterschool Matters with an article submission deadline of June 15, 2020 for the Spring 2021 publication.

3.7 Concluding Thoughts

I steadfastly believe that educators, both school day and OSL alike, should approach this work with the understanding that all students can succeed, and that it is our job as educational leaders to work together to ensure that these successes are realized. OSL is and will remain an important part of the educational trajectory for students, and OSL opportunities should be made as easily accessible and available as possible. Through effective partnerships, we can collectively focus our work to remove and eliminate barriers to accessing OSL, bringing us ever closer to our goal of ensuring that all students have the clearest and most direct pathway to their own educational success.

Purpose of Interview:
To determine school leaders' perceptions on and experience with partnering with external out-of-school learning program providers.

Inquiry Question:
What are the elements of successful OSL program/school interactions and partnerships?

Interview Construct:
School leaders' perception of and belief in out-of-school learning programs offered by external partners.

Introductory/Consent Script:
Thank you for participating in this research on schools that partner with external out of school learning programs here in Pittsburgh. My name is James Doyle and I am a Doctor of Education candidate at the University of Pittsburgh with a concentration in out-of-school learning. For this 30-45-minute interview, we appreciate any insights you can provide into your experience with partnering with external community partners who offer out-of-school learning experiences here in Pittsburgh.

This interview is for the sole purpose of a doctoral dissertation study for the University of Pittsburgh. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time or skip any questions. I will be jotting some notes as we speak. I will keep the notes and any transcripts confidential and will not share them outside of my dissertation committee. Additionally, the data I do share will not be identified by individual, but instead summarized and coded among all interview participants. Upon completion of all data collection activities, I am happy to share with you a summary of our findings, please just let me know if you are interested in this.

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.]* I would like to audio-record the conversations to check the accuracy of my notes. Do you agree to this? *[If participant agreed to have interview recorded, start recording. If not, prepare to take detailed notes.*]
Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Tour Questions
1. Tell me a little about you. What made you want to become a principal?
    a. (Follow-up Question) What are the most enjoyable parts of your job? What are the most difficult?

2. Talk to me about your school. What are the top one or two goals that you hope to achieve with students here?
    a. (Follow-up Question) How do you engage your staff, teams, and other resources to meet these goals?

3. What experience do you have with community-based youth programming? [*Be prepared to give a brief definition of out-of-school learning as the framing for 'youth programming' and types of organizations, if necessary*
   a. (Probe as necessary) How have you seen community-based youth programs within your school? Other youth programming outside of your school?

Section 2: Main Questions
4. Earlier we discussed your school-specific needs. How would you describe the benefits of partnering with you school to a prospective community organization?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What types of external community-based youth programming opportunities are you currently engaging? What types do you wish you had?

5. From your perspective, what makes a good community partner?
   a. (Probe as necessary) How do you know?

6. Have you ever had a bad experience with a community partner? Tell me more about this experience and what caused it to be less than ideal.
   a. (Follow-up Question) What specific action did you take to address this program?

7. What advice would you give to community partners to best meet the needs of schools in serving as a complement and support to what you provide during the school day?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What do programs need to make sure they do? Not do?

8. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding community partnerships programs in this area?

Additional Probes as Necessary (Note to interviewer - below are general standard probes to get more information out of your subject. Feel free to use these at your discretion if you find you are not getting the requisite detail from a prompt response):
   • Can you say more about _____?
   • Can you give me a specific example?
   • Tell me how you feel about _____.
   • It sounds like _____ is important to you. Can you share more?
   • You described _____. Have you always felt/acted this way?

Purpose of Interview:
To determine out-of-school learning directors' perceptions on and experience with partnering with schools.

Inquiry Question:
What are the elements of successful OSL program/school interactions and partnerships?

Interview Construct:
Out-of-school learning directors' perceptions on partnering with schools to facilitate their programming.

Introductory/Consent Script:
Thank you for participating in this research on schools that partner with external out of school learning programs here in Pittsburgh. My name is James Doyle and I am a Doctor of Education candidate at the University of Pittsburgh with a concentration in out-of-school learning. For this 30-45-minute interview, we appreciate any insights you can provide into your experience with partnering with schools to facilitate your out-of-school learning programs here in Pittsburgh.

This interview is for the sole purpose of a doctoral dissertation study for the University of Pittsburgh. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time or skip any questions. I will be jotting some notes as we speak. I will keep the notes and any transcripts confidential and will not share them outside of my dissertation committee. Additionally, the data I do share will not be identified by individual, but instead summarized and coded among all interview participants. Upon completion of all data collection activities, I am happy to share with you a summary of our findings, please just let me know if you are interested in this.

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.]* I would like to audio-record the conversations to check the accuracy of my notes. Do you agree to this? *[If participant agreed to have interview recorded, start recording. If not, prepare to take detailed notes.*]

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Tour Questions
1. Tell me a little about you. What made you enter the field of out-of-school learning?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What are the most enjoyable parts of your job? What are the most difficult?

2. Talk to me about your organization and your programming. What would you say are the top one or two goals that you hope your program will achieve?
   a. (Follow-up Question) How do you engage your staff, teams, and other resources to meet these goals?

3. What experience do you have interacting with Pittsburgh schools?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What are your perceptions on the schools here and how they partner with the out-of-school learning community?

4. What would you describe as the main benefits of out-of-school learning programs like yours in the Pittsburgh area?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What are some of the challenges with out-of-school learning programs in Pittsburgh?

Section 2: Main Questions
5. Earlier we discussed your particular out-of-school learning program and the needs you aim to address. How would you describe the benefits of your program to school leaders?

6. From your perspective, what makes a good school partner?
   a. (Probe as necessary) How do you know?

7. Have you ever had a bad experience with a school partner? Tell me more about this experience and what caused it to be less than ideal.
   a. (Follow-up Question) What specific action did you take to address this school?

8. What advice would you give schools that want to maximize the learning and development available to their students through community and other outside organizations?
   a. (Follow-up Question) What do schools need to make sure they do? Not do?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding partnering with schools?

Additional Probes as Necessary (Note to interviewer - below are general standard probes to get more information out of your subject. Feel free to use these at your discretion if you find you are not getting the requisite detail from a prompt response):
- Can you say more about _____?
- Can you give me a specific example?
- Tell me how you feel about _____.
- It sounds like _____ is important to you. Can you share more?
- You described _____. Have you always felt/acted this way?

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