Evidence-Based Models: School-Community Partnerships
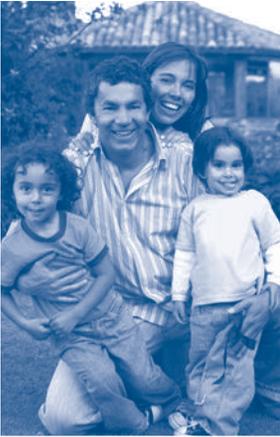
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ABSTRACT

School administrative personnel have long realized the benefits students receive from having an actively engaged support system (namely parental support) outside the school walls, however, the importance of openly engaging business partners in the community is much less emphasized in practice. This report aims to identify best-practice models for schools to engage the community (specifically private-sector businesses), and describe what the implementation of these practices looks like in North Carolina. Based on findings from a literature review and case studies, the authors found that there are few formalized models being implemented at the state, district, or school levels to support school-community partnerships. Successful cases that do exist tend to be the product of a single individual educational leader rather than an organization's culture and structures. Additionally, measures of partnership effectiveness tend to be more prevalent and refined in the education non-profit sector than in public schools. Although there were examples of community engagement efforts observed, the scope and structure varied significantly among educational entities.

INTRODUCTION

The importance placed by school administrative personnel on openly engaging business partners is much less emphasized in practice than other efforts aimed at involving parents in the educational process. Parents tend to be viewed as the natural bridge to the community for schools that engage in community-partnership efforts (Comer, 1991). However, parent's involvement with a school is naturally unsustainable as their children move out of the school system and thus the parent's desire to help the school may dwindle. In addition, as parents and children served by a school change with time, the larger community remains a constant (and often untapped) resource to support K-12 education.

The North Carolina State Board of Education (NCSBE) has acknowledged the need for schools to engage the larger community by adopting a tenet of the Future-Ready Students for the 21st Century Goals. It states: "Educational professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success" (2006). Principals in North Carolina are also held accountable for working toward this goal through the principal evaluation process. Standard 6 of this evaluation entitled "External Development Leadership," assesses a principal's ability to design structures and processes that result in broader community engagement, explicitly business representatives (see Appendix A for an analysis of the 2012-2013 Principal Standard 6 scores from across the State). Based on this policy foundation set forth by the NCSBE, this report aims to expand the knowledge base of school-community partnership models in North Carolina.

By conducting a literature review of the most current evidence-based models for schools engaging community partners, this report has identified several practices that can be implemented at the school, district, and state levels. These suggested practices have been empirically shown to raise student achievement. The research team employed a descriptive qualitative research design utilizing prospective case study sites to describe how the strategies prescribed in the literature are being implemented in practice. Finally, this report contains a discussion of the findings, policy implications, and recommendations for future research.

METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

This report aims to answer two research questions:

1) What are evidence-based models for schools, LEAs and non-profits to form beneficial community partnerships (specifically with private-sector businesses)?

2) What does the implementation of these practices look like in North Carolina?

To begin answering these questions, a review of the scholarly literature was conducted to explain the current state of knowledge on the subject. Next, informed by the findings of the literature review, the research team used a descriptive research design consisting of case studies. The sample of case study sites is generated by a snowball sampling of North Carolina schools, local education agencies (LEAs) and education non-profits. In other words, the sites were not randomly selected, but rather each study site would recommend another possible study site and the total population would grow (hence, the name "snowball sampling"). In order to gain a holistic picture of each case study site, the research team developed an eleven-part rubric, informed by the literature, to systematically collect data. For the purposes of this research, the team did not conduct an evaluation or assessment of these sample sites, but rather, gathered qualitative data to describe how exemplar education entities are putting into practice the eleven evidence-based strategies. For each case study, the research team conducted phone interviews with the principal (in the case of schools), the chief communications officers (in the case of LEAs), or the

program operations officers (in the case of education non-profits). When possible, the team gathered further information through phone interviews from business contacts generated from the original interview with the school, district or non-profit official. Finally, documents were collected from each education entity to verify partnership activities.

LIMITATIONS

While the findings of this research seek to explain and describe evidence-based strategies for community partnerships, the findings are limited to providing a snapshot of a select few exemplar cases and caution ought to be used when generalizing to the larger population. Furthermore, this research design is not longitudinal in nature and is not intended to predict how schools will engage community partners in the future or determine causes of schools that excel in this area. Future research involving an experimental or correlational research design is needed to address these important questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly literature on school-community partnerships has been largely influenced by two dominant scholars, Joyce Epstein and James Comer. Their work spans decades, but the bulk of the literature advancing this topic was produced in late 1990s and early 2000s. The technical jargon to describe this topic tends to fluctuate depending on the author and context, however, the terms "engagement," "involvement" and "partnerships" are the most common descriptors (Shutz, 2006). For consistency purposes, this report uses only the term "school-community partnerships."

Perhaps the most comprehensive definition of community comes from Epstein through her description of a "School Learning Community." She describes this as educators, parents, students and community partners working together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities (Epstein, et al.,, 2002). Shutz expands on Anderson's definition of "(Micropolitical) Authentic Participation" to describe meaningful contributions from community entities in a manner that is accessible to school leader practitioners. He outlines three broad tenets of this concept: 1) Equality between school and community participants; 2) Breadth of participation, either through collections of individuals or recognized local leaders; 3) Opportunities for valuing and making use of local community beliefs, practices and aims (Shutz, 2006; see also Anderson, 1998). This definition of "(Micropolitical) Authentic Participation" serves as one criterion for determining how robust the participation is among community members. See Appendix B for a detailed discussion of findings from the literature, including: the role of parents and demographics in community engagement, quantitative evidence of effectiveness and policy prescriptions.

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

A rubric data collection instrument was designed in order to uniformly analyze various case study sites in a manner consistent with the relevant literature. Rooted primarily in education policy research, as well as program evaluation sciences and performance management principles, this rubric provides a holistic assessment of school practices for building community partnerships. See Appendix E for a copy of the rubric used to describe the various case study sites and a full description of each criterion. Table 1 provides a brief synopsis of each criterion.

TABLE 1: EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Equality between School and Community Partners	Educational entities will value community groups as stakeholders, involve community members in school policy decisions, and tailor programs to meet the needs of the community.
Diversity among Community Partners	Schools seek both breadth and depth of partnerships that are representative of the larger community.
Emphasis on Relationship Building	Schools focus volunteer efforts on mentoring, tutoring and recreational events that work to expand a child's natural support systems.
Utilization of Non-Monetary Support	Schools seek contributions beyond financial and material support, such as: counseling and health services, program development, curriculum guidance, career consulting and arts exposure.
Opportunities for Two-Way Communication	Broader collaboration is achieved when there is clear and open communication between partners.
Alignment School Goals with Partner Goals	Communities are helpful to schools when they support the school and family goals, but a distraction when the school's mission is criticized.
Practice of Reciprocity	Service learning opportunities provided by the school can build goodwill and lasting partnerships while improving student outcomes.
Evaluation of Partnership Outcomes (Effectiveness)	Formal performance measures of partnership activities are adopted and used to guide remedial action.
Organizational Priority	Change management principles are used to set new priorities, garner employee buy-in and align personal and organizational goals.
Use of Resources (Efficiency)	Data-driven decisions are used by school leadership to economically manage school-community partnerships.
Students Impacted (Equity)	Resource distribution is monitored to ensure fairness and inclusivity of students receiving benefits.

CASE STUDY ANALYSES

The case studies conducted in this report span schools, districts and education non-profits in North Carolina. A total of nine educational entities were contacted and interviewed. From this sample of nine, two school campuses, two school districts, and one education non-profit are described below. The sample contains representation from rural, urban, high and low wealth, eastern, central, and western areas. The five case study sites described here combine to provide anecdotal practical examples of the evidence-based strategies outlined by the literature.

School Study: Wiley Elementary School

Table 2 provides a summary of "quick facts" about Wiley Elementary School.

TABLE 2: WILEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL QUICK FACTS	
Location	Greensboro, Guilford County
Number of Students and Staff	330 Students and 48 Staff
Principal	Tavy Fields
Demographics	84% African American, 8% Hispanic, 4% White, 2% Multiracial, and 1% Asian
Funding	Title I and School Improvement Grant Recipient
Additional Information	Site of the African American Male Initiative Pilot Program

Wiley Elementary is an exemplar of a school implementing the evidence-based practices outlined in this report resulting in effective school-community partnerships. Specifically, Wiley excels at "diversity" and "equality" among community partners as well as having an emphasis on "relationship building." The list of Wiley's corporate sponsors is lengthy and spans many industries. However, a few strong partnerships quickly emerge as being heavily involved with the school. Among these are Lincoln Financial, Evonik, and Proctor & Gamble. Some of these partnerships date back years, but have grown to fruition in recent months as the principal, Ms. Fields, has emphasized these partnerships as an organizational priority.

In addition Wiley's corporate sponsors, the school has also become a "one-stop-shop" for wraparound student and family services. For example, the school maintains a registry of health and human service agencies in the local area and refers families in need of these services. An example of one of these services is Youth Focus which provides psychological services to Wiley students. Furthermore, Ms. Fields has forged a partnership with the Caldcleugh Multicultural Center which has led to a Senegal Youth Exchange for 3rd and 4th graders to learn side by side with students in Senegal via Skype and learn about Senegalese culture. Finally, a G.E.D. program is hosted on Wiley's campus for the

parents of Wiley students. These examples illustrate how Wiley has diversity among their community partners that help to meet the many needs (i.e., educational, artistic, cultural, recreational, health and human services, etc.) of the families they serve.

The school actively promotes a culture of equality between the school and each one of its partners. For example, a representative from Evonik regularly attends PTA meetings at Wiley to discuss and plan upcoming events (Fields, personal communication, July 9 2014; Privette, personal communication, July 21, 2014). There is also formal and informal communication between Wiley and its partners where the school seeks information about what the partner would like to accomplish and then shares how the partner goals align with the needs of the school. Both representatives from Lincoln Financial and Evonik speak about Ms. Field's willingness to cultivate a partnership built on a foundation where each stakeholder is an equal partner (Green, personal communication, July 15, 2014; Privette, personal communication, July 21, 2014).

There are several examples of how the support provided to Wiley from its community partners goes beyond financial assistance and emphasizes relationship building. First, a key component of the African American Male Initiative is to match student participants with mentors in the community that act as positive role models. There is a similar, but less robust, mentorship program for Wiley female students called DIVAS. In fact, as part of these initiatives, employees from both Evonik and Lincoln Financial serve as mentors for Wiley students. Wiley also has a partnership with Big Brothers and Big Sisters where matching students with mentors is outsourced to a non-profit entity that specializes in this area. Furthermore, Lincoln Financial has sent actuaries to Wiley to host a Math Fair for students and parents and tutor students in math content areas (Greene, personal communication, July 15, 2014). These examples help to illustrate how Wiley partnership activities go beyond mere financial donations by focusing on relationship building.

School Study: Warren New Tech High School

Table 3 provides a summary of "quick facts" about Warren New Tech High School.

TABLE 3: WARREN NEW TECH HIGH SCHOOL QUICK FACTS

Location	Warrenton, Warren County
Number of Students and Staff	180 Students (staff information not available)
Principal	Iris Castellon-Dethmers
Demographics	Not Available
Funding	County Commissioners, Education Lottery & N.C. New Schools
Additional Information	Curriculum emphasizes STEM content

In somewhat of a contrast to Wiley Elementary, Warren New Tech High School (WNTHS) is a high school in a rural setting in Warren County. The current principal, Mrs. Iris Castellon-Dethmers, has served in that position for four years. WNTHS was started in 2007 to provide public choice to parents in the local area who previously only had one high school option for their children. Funding to start the school came from the County Commissioners, the Education Lottery, and North Carolina New Schools (Castellon-Dethmers, personal communication, July 17, 2014). WNTHS provides an example of a school that utilizes the evidence-based strategies of "reciprocity" and "school-partner goal alignment."

According Mrs. Castellon-Dethmers, the school has a strong culture of "trust, respect, responsibility and professionalism" (personal communication, July 17, 2014). The school promotes these attributes through a structured and robust service learning component. All students are required to complete 20 hours of community service and 50 hours of an internship. However, Mrs. Castellon-Dethmers reports that many of their students go well beyond these minimum requirements (personal communication, July 17, 2014). Students are not allowed to receive their service hours through family connections. The examples of students giving back to their community are ample and include: volunteering at soup kitchens and food pantries, organizing a "warrior marathon" to support veterans injured in combat (38 students participated last year), helping out at a State Employees Credit Union Open House, and volunteering at the local elementary school (Castellon-Dethmers, personal communication, July 17, 2014).

It is evident that WNTHS ensures partnership goals are aligned with school goals through the many opportunities provided to students to gain work experience while in school. WNTHS has a school goal of graduating "empowered learners with the skills necessary to compete in the global environment" (WNTHS Website, 2014). The school aligns this mission with the goals of industry partners through the internship requirement. Students who gain experience working with local companies learn skills that make them attractive in the labor market while simultaneously contributing to the goals and objectives of the company. Students research potential companies that match their academic goals and professional interests. They are then responsible for setting up times to meet with their selected company representatives. Throughout the process, faculty members guide reflection and monitor progress. An example of this internship program includes a student interested in dietary nutrition that researched the topic and then worked with a nutritionist in a lab at UNC Chapel Hill (Castellon-Dethmers, personal communication, July 17, 2014). Another student worked with a master carpenter crafting benches. The benches were then donated to the school following the completion of the internship (Castellon-Dethmers, personal communication, July 17, 2014).

District Study: Wake County Public School System

Table 4 provides a summary of "quick facts" about Wake County Public School System (WCPSS).

TABLE 4: WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM QUICK FACTS	
Location	North Central, North Carolina
Number of Students	153,300 Students
Superintendent	Jim Merrill
Demographics	48.6% white, 24.4% Black or African American, 15.7% Hispanic or Latino, 6.8% Asian, 4.1% two or more races, 0.3% Native American or Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
Additional Information	Largest school system in N.C. and 16th Largest in the U.S.

WCPSS is an exemplar for setting an organizational priority of establishing district-school community partnerships. This organization's core belief #6 states: "Supportive and passionate parents, families, student mentors, and other members of the multi-cultural Wake County community are active participants in the education of our students" (WCPSS Website, 2014). Furthermore, the importance of community partnerships as an organizational priority is illustrated by the WCPSS strategic plan which states a core focus is to: "Engage family and community in strong relationships and meaningful opportunities to increase participation, trust, and shared responsibility for student success" (WCPSS Website, 2014). There is ample evidence to support this organizational commitment in action. For example, the School-to-Career initiative was started in the 1995-1996 school year with the mission of getting businesses engaged with students to encourage real world application of academic concepts. This initiative is governed by a School-to-Career Council formed of business partners and career advisory members. Furthermore, each school in the WCPSS has a career development coordinator who works with businesses to help meet the needs of students in the district. Finally, 15 high schools in the WCPSS have a Career Academy Advisor responsible for helping students find their professional niche (Frankoff, personal communication, June 27, 2014). These examples provide evidence of the outcomes produced by WCPSS making community partnerships an organizational priority.

In addition to setting an organizational priority, WCPSS proactively carries out this priority by utilizing the evidence-based practice of establishing clear and open means for two-way communication. WCPSS primarily does this through the formal creation of advisory boards and councils for their district wide initiatives aimed at engaging business partners. There are three primary formal structures, supported by the district, for facilitating open two-way communication with business partners at the school level. These structures include: business alliances, career academy advisory boards and career advisory teams. Each of these avenues encourage collaboration of business professionals and leaders in the community with the purpose of helping students make the connection between academics and career readiness (Frankoff, personal communication, June 27, 2014). At the district level, the School-to-Career Council, composed of volunteer business professionals, support efforts to form sustained business partnerships while aligning goals with the Career and Technical Education curriculum. Each of these avenues for including business partners hold regular meetings, facilitate discussions and maintain a cooperative dialog that move the district further in its mission of preparing students for future careers. These examples demonstrate how WCPSS has ensured two-way communication is taking place on a regular basis through the creation of formal structured board and council meetings.

District Study: Cabarrus County Schools

Table 5 provides a summary of quick facts for Cabarrus County Schools (CCS).

TABLE 5: CABARRUS COUNTY SCHOOLS QUICK FACTS	
Location	Southwest, North Carolina
Number of Students and Staff	29,538 Students and 3,770 Staff
Superintendent	Barry Shepherd
Demographics	61% White, 18.7% Black, 13.5% Hispanic, 3.5% multiracial, 2.9% Asian, 0.4% Native American, and 0.1% Hawaiian Pacific
Additional Information	Located in close proximity to Charlotte, N.C.

CCS emphasizes the need for community partners by stating the importance of their partners (i.e., parents and community groups) in their core beliefs and by recognizing their existing partnerships on their website. Perhaps the most effective and successful partnership CCS has is with the car dealership, Hilbish Ford, which sponsors teacher recognition programs and provides internships for students interested in automobile mechanics. This partnership has been in place for the past four years at the district level (Boone, personal communication, July 8, 2014).

CCS is an exemplar of aligning school goals with the goals of their partners. This is illustrated through many examples, but most prominently by the fact that the district has strategic objectives in place in order to guide specific partnership activities (Boone, personal communication, July 8, 2014). As pointed out by the literature, formalizing and aligning goals in this manner helps to keep the partnership focused on student

outcomes (Swiss, 1991). When CCS first establishes a potential new business partner, they open a dialog about the company's goals and motives for wanting to contribute to the school system. They find that most companies are very invested in the success of the schools in Cabarrus County and, "generally want to help out" (Boone, personal communication, July 8, 2014). CCS refines the scope of their contributions in a manner that specifically supports academics and student development. They then align the contribution with a specific content area where the goals of the partnership will best be supported. For example, the County Arts Council supports the fine arts curriculum, whereas Hilbish Ford supports STEM curriculum and Career and Technical Education (CTE). CCS stands out as an exemplar by their process of establishing partnership strategic objectives at the district level, seeking out the goals of the individual companies and aligning those goals with curriculum content areas.

Education Non-Profit Study: Citizen Schools

Citizen Schools is an education non-profit founded in 1995 that serves approximately 5,200 middle school students across the country. The Citizen Schools model is built on expanded learning time (ELT) and connecting students with business professionals to produce college and career ready students in a global environment (see appendix F for a visual of the Citizen School model). Citizen Schools currently operates in four North Carolina middle schools across Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Durham Public Schools reaching approximately 500 students. The ELT model utilized by Citizen Schools adds approximately 180 minutes of learning time per day at a cost of about $1,900 per child per year. This non-profit operates on public county sources and AmeriCorps funds as well as private contributions raised by the organization. The demographics of program participants are

as follows: 95% African American or Latino, 85% eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and 33% speak a primary language other than English (Citizen Schools Website, 2014).

By incorporating business professionals into the fabric of their education model, Citizen Schools excels at utilizing non-monetary support. The organization relies on business professional volunteers to provide program development, curriculum guidance and career counseling. "Citizen Teachers" are volunteer business professionals that volunteer their time to teach a subject area relevant to their field and expose students to careers through experiential learning. A formalized apprenticeship program pairs middle school students with lessons taking place in the field of their academic interest. The program "College-to-Career Connections" develops college and career readiness through curricular units taught by volunteers. By utilizing volunteer capital, Citizen Schools has developed a model that incorporates meaningful contributions that produce enhanced academic and behavioral desired results.

Citizen Schools utilizes evaluation measures of outcomes beyond those of any other case examined in this report. Data-driven decisions and results-based management principles guide this organization. First, the agency uses a Program Scorecard that measures retention, attendance and academic achievement. Staff members are also continuously evaluating EOG and EVAAS data from their program participants (J. Ellington, personal communication, July 17, 2014). In addition, the agency has contracted with ABT Associates to conduct a longitudinal program evaluation with the results of the first year of the study being released in 2014. Citizen Schools has also worked with the University of Vermont to conduct an evaluation of volunteer participant experiences. The study found that volunteers reported increased communication and teamwork skills. These examples illustrate this organization's commitment to results informed by measurable data.

CONCLUSION

The team's analysis of the five cases led to some key findings and general takeaways regarding community-partnerships in the State:

1) There appears to be a lack of formalized models in place at schools, LEAs or the State used to form beneficial business partnerships.

2) Where evidence-based practices are being implemented, it tends to be an individual (often a strong principal) driving the efforts rather than an organization's culture and structures.

3) Outcome evaluations and measures of effectiveness tend to be much more prevalent with non-profits rather than with schools or LEAs.

There are several policy levers the state of North Carolina could use in order to encourage thriving school-community partnerships. First, professional development could be facilitated for school administrative personnel to learn the evidence-based practices that promote successful partnerships. Next, technology can be utilized in rural and low-wealth communities to connect students with business professionals outside the confines of their community. Finally, the State can pilot a statewide initiative to cultivate partnerships (see Appendix D for evidence-based statewide strategies). By incorporating these evidence-based strategies into practice at the state level, a culture welcoming to the broader community with the mission of supporting student achievement can begin to take root in North Carolina's public schools.

Further research on this topic is needed to fill the gap of knowledge that currently exists regarding school-business partnerships. While this study identifies evidence-based models and describes their implementation at North Carolina case study sites, there needs to be broader data collection of currently existing partnerships throughout the State to provide an exhaustive description. Furthermore, there needs to be continued exploration of partnership effectiveness on student outcomes as programs shift their attention to this strategy for improving student outcomes.

APPENDIX A

NORTH CAROLINA PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

Standard 6: External Development Leadership Definition[1]

Principals and assistant principals will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect, but, in fact, build community, the leader proactively creates with staff, opportunities for parents and guardians, community and business representatives to participate as "stockholders" in the school such that continued investment of resources and good will are not left to chance.

2012-2013 Standard 6 Evaluation Statistics

Bin	Frequency
1	0
2	49
3	669
4	1039
5	515
Total	2272

Principal Evaluation Distribution
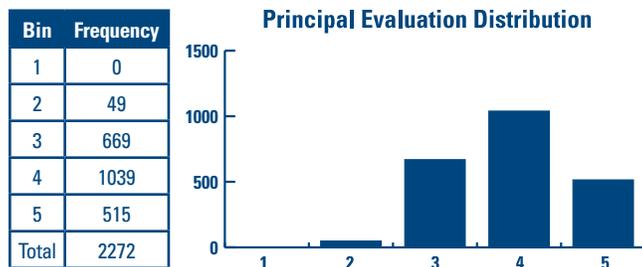
Mean	3.889084507
Standard Error	0.01618763982
Median	4
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.7715919643
Sample Variance	0.5953541593
Kurtosis	-0.7287599241
Skewness	-0.08923449819
Range	3
Minimum	2
Maximum	5
Sum	8836
Count	2272
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.03174410939

Evaluation Distribution

An important note about these descriptive statistics is that the distribution is negatively skewed. In this case, the median is greater than the mean and the distribution curve has a long tail over the lower values. This means that principals in this State tend to be evaluated, on average, higher (above 3) rather than lower (below 3). Further research needs to be conducted in

order to determine if principal observational data correlates with partnership performance measures and 360 degree observational data.

APPENDIX B

LITERATURE REVIEW DISCUSSION

Parental Engagement

Until very recently, the vast majority of the research on this topic revolved around school-parent partnerships and the efficacy of parental involvement in children's education (Shutz, 2006). In fact, there is strong and steadily growing evidence that families can improve their children's performance in school and have a major impact on attendance and behavior (Henderson, et al.,, 2002). Epstein provides the theoretical framework to these studies by defining schools, families, and communities as overlapping circles of influence that all affect student achievement and development (see Appendix C; 2001). According to Epstein, these three influences must work in partnership to nurture healthy students (2001). While schools may understand the importance of engaging parents (e.g., facilitating PTA meetings, sending out newsletters to parents, etc.), it is yet to be determined if schools understand the importance of forging partnerships with the larger community (e.g., businesses, civic groups, health and human service agencies, recreational groups, arts centers, etc.).

Role of Demographics in Community Engagement

It is especially important for district and state level leaders to understand how the demographics of a school correlate with that school's likelihood of utilizing practices that successfully enlist authentic community partners. Using this type of information can be valuable in determining appropriate professional development strategies or resource allocations. The demographics examined with the most depth in the literature include race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and school size.

It is well documented that schools serving large populations of African Americans face historical, cultural, and structural barriers to forming partnerships (Lareau, et al.,, 1999; Cummins, 1986; Shutz, 2006). For example, studies on the intersection of race and education show that power differences in school and community perceptions and assigned attributes negatively affect student outcomes (Cummins, 1986). Even though there have been recent efforts to increase public participation in schools, there has been little evidence of success, especially in marginalized areas (Shutz, 2006). Perhaps a cause for this, as Shutz explains, is due to an often implicit (and sometimes explicit) view within urban schools to keep the community at "arms-length" (2006). As the need for volunteers is recognized by school leaders, a disparity emerges along racial

lines. For example, after conducting an empirical analysis of volunteerism in schools, Brent found that volunteers in urban schools were largely white even though the students were mostly minority (2000). He also found that 70% of the volunteers lived in other districts (Brent, 2000).

Aside from race or ethnicity, the socioeconomic status and size of a school can also affect a school's ability to forge effective community partnerships. A study by Wasley and Lear found that smaller schools tend to be more successful at engaging the community than larger ones (2001). This may suggest that smaller schools have more flexibility to communicate openly with community partners than larger schools. Furthermore, research shows that when a member of the community volunteers in a school, their understanding of how that school operates as well as their respect for teachers and administrators increases (Brent, 2000). However, lower levels of volunteer resources are typically associated with higher poverty schools (Brent, 2000).

Evidence of Effectiveness

While the research is abundant with evidence supporting the effectiveness of parental engagement on student outcomes, much less attention has been granted to examining wider community partnerships, including private sector businesses. However, two studies in particular provide promising evidence pointing to the ability of community business partners that are actively engaged with local schools to significantly increase student achievement. These studies include a SAS evaluation of an education non-profit, Futures for Kids, and an empirical analysis of student self-report survey data.

Futures for Kids (F4K) is an education non-profit that was formed in 2001 as a class project in the Executive MBA program at Duke's Fuqua School of Business. The model developed by F4K engages the business community to assist students through mentorship to enhance the career planning process.

The six components of the F4K model are:
1) Connect with mentors and employers
2) Discover where "like" and "job" intersect
3) Create career focused graduation plans
4) Build a living portfolio
5) Empower educators to reach their students
6) Involve parents in the career exploration process (Futures for Kids, 2012).

Two program evaluations have been completed on the effectiveness of the F4K's model. The first, completed in 2006 by Duke University's Child and Family Policy Center, found that students self-reported highly positive attitudes about F4K's impact on their education and career outcomes. For example, 91% of students thought "F4K helped me realize I need to do well in school to get the kind of job I want," and 86% of students said, "After using F4K, I feel more ready to make educational and career decisions." (Futures for Kids, 2012). In 2012, SAS EVAAS for K-12 documented the "F4K effect," demonstrating the students using Futures for Kids performed better on their End-of-Grade (EOG) and End-of-Course (EOC) tests, especially in key STEM areas such as mathematics (Futures for Kids, 2012). Additionally, there was a correlation between continued usage and continued improvement in test scores (Futures for Kids, 2012).

An empirical analysis by Scales, et al. of student self-report survey data yields results that reinforce the program evaluations of F4K (2005). This study found that there is a positive relationship between a student's exposure to partnerships and measures of developmental success (Scales, Foster, Mannes, Horst, Pinto, Rutherford, 2005). These authors define "developmental success" as specific student outcomes, including: improved grades, attendance, and academic motivation (Scales, et al., 2005). Furthermore, it was reported that strong relationship building and other forms of support that go beyond financial or material resources increases students' odds of academic success (Scales, et al., 2005). Finally, the study found that the more a student was

exposed to the school-community partnership, the better the student's self-reported grades, attendance, academic motivation, career preparation, and supportive outcomes (e.g., lowered risk behaviors, increased leadership, and maintained physical health) (Scales, et al., 2005).

While the depth of research on school-community partnership effectiveness is shallow compared to that of school-parental partnerships, the empirical evidence that does exists points to the potential for an untapped strategy for schools to improve student achievement. This topic deserves the attention of future researchers to further evaluate the effect on student achievement and refine strategies for implementation and continuous improvement.

Policy Prescriptions

Comer and Epstein have produced the majority of focused policy prescriptions for schools, districts and state education agencies to successfully forge school-community partnerships. While most of Comer's work centers on school-level decision-making, Epstein provides comprehensive strategies for the district and state levels. While these authors use the term "community partnerships," it was not until later editions and revisions of previous work that emphasis was placed on partnerships beyond that of the child's parent. Parental strategies are a vital component of school-community partnerships, and thus have been heavily examined and practiced. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, only the policy prescriptions provided by Comer and Epstein that focus on partnerships beyond that of the parent will be discussed.

Comer and Haynes attempt to operationalize the theoretical framework that community engagement supports individual student achievement, sustains school improvement and builds school cultures that support all students (1991). Comer calls for a 'New School' that utilizes a holistic approach to school-community partnerships (1998). He envisions a school that, instead of "being isolated. . . [the school] could be fully incorporated into the larger local community. . . Economic and community development, human services, recreation, and artistic expression programs could be tied to the school setting when possible" (Comer, 1998). A crucial part of this work emphasizes the need for schools to be a "one-stop-shop" for students and families to receive wraparound services (i.e., services that go beyond educational support, such as: emotional, physical and cultural support).

As the Director of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) located at Johns Hopkins University, Epstein's greatest contributions to the body of knowledge regarding school-community partnerships comes from her model for districts and states. This model provides macro-level strategies that support school-community partnerships from the district and

state levels. The NNPS was established in 1996 and consists of schools, districts, states and organizations that focus on using evidence-based approaches to building family-community-school partnerships (Epstein, 2008).

Epstein's model for states and districts is composed of six objectives:
1) Create awareness,
2) Align program and policy,
3) Guide learning and program development,
4) Share knowledge,
5) Celebrate milestones, and
6) Document progress and evaluate outcomes (Epstein, 2008).

Each of these six objectives for leadership strategies can then be tailored for practitioners at the state and district levels. Epstein also provides an inventory for districts and states with over 40 activities educational leaders can utilize when developing action plans for implementing partnership programs (Epstein, 2008; Jansorn & Epstein, 2005). See appendix D for a detailed description of each district and state level leadership strategy endorsed by the NNPS. (Epstein, 2008; Jansorn & Epstein, 2005).

APPENDIX C

EPSTEIN'S CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE[2]
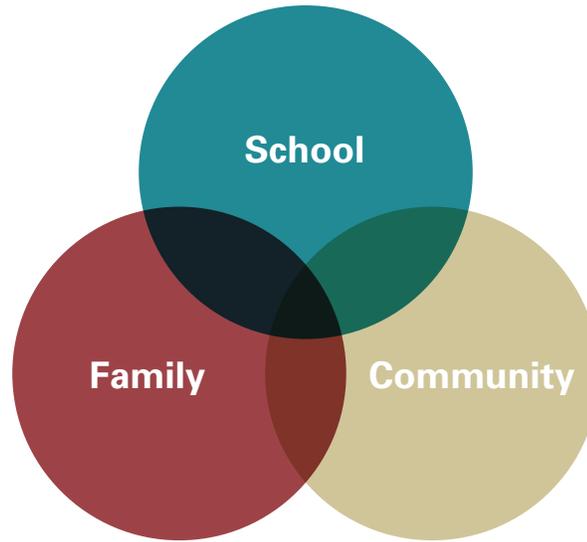
APPENDIX D

EVIDENCE-BASED DISTRICT AND STATE LEVEL STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGY	DISTRICT LEVEL[3]	STATE LEVEL[4]
Create Awareness	Actively promote the partnership program to all key stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, families, and community groups.	Actively promote the state's partnership program to all key stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, families and community groups.
Align Program and Policy	With support from district leadership, integrate the partnership program with district policies, requirements, and procedures.	With support from state leaders, integrate the partnership program with other state policies, requirements, and procedures.
Guide Learning and Program Development	Organize and conduct professional development activities to assist schools in developing their partnership programs.	Organize, conduct, or support professional development activities to assist state colleagues, and districts and schools in the state to develop and strengthen their partnership programs.
Share Knowledge	Foster ongoing communication throughout the district to build knowledge about programs of school, family, and community partnerships.	Foster on-going communications throughout the state department of education, with state partners, and with district leaders to increase knowledge about programs of school, family, and community partners.
Celebrate Milestones	Recognize school and district successes in partnership programs and practices and disseminate the successes widely.	Recognize state, district, and school successes in partnership programs and practices and disseminate information on the successes.
Document Progress and Evaluate Outcomes	Collect information to document activities and to assess progress in meeting district program goals, and assist each [school] Action Team for Partnership [cross-functional committee] (ATP) to document and evaluate progress in implementing their action plans for partnerships.	Collect information to document the office's activities and progress in meeting state goals for partnerships. Guide districts and schools to document and evaluate progress in their partnership plans and programs.

[2] Image retrieved from: http://www.nssed.org/resources/partnership; [3] Jansorn & Epstein, 2005 (see resources section for full citation);
[4] Epstein, 2008 (see resources section for full citation)

APPENDIX E

EVIDENCE-BASED CASE STUDY RUBRIC

CRITERION	SITE ONE	SITE TWO	SITE THREE	SITE FOUR	SITE FIVE
Equality between school and community partners					
Diversity among community partners					
Emphasis on relationship building					
Utilization of non-monetary support					
Opportunities for two-way communication					
Alignment of school and partner goals					
Practice of reciprocity					
Evaluation of partnership outcomes (effectiveness)					
Organizational priority					
Use of resources (efficiency)					
Students impacted (equity)					

Key: 1 – Never Demonstrates
2 – Sometimes Demonstrates
3 – Always Demonstrates

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES: DESCRIPTIONS

Equality between School and Community Partners

Equality between school and community partners is an important piece to cultivating effective community involvement within a school (Shutz, 2006). Schools demonstrate this principle by valuing community entities as vital stakeholders in the success of a local school. This practice is implemented by involving community members in school policy decisions, tailoring school programs to meet the needs of the community and cultivating a transparent school environment.

Diversity among Community Partners

For there to be "authentic participation" from the community, schools need to seek a breadth of partnerships that is representative of the larger community (Shutz, 2006; see also Anderson, 1998). This is demonstrated when schools forge partnerships with a vast array of community entities such as: businesses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, community activists and leaders, parents/guardians, local health and human services agencies, arts and recreation resources, etc. When this is accomplished, students can experience "one-stop-shopping" through the local school by receiving vital wraparound services that go beyond traditional education by meeting family and child needs (Comer, 1998).

Emphasis on Relationship Building

Students are more likely to experience academic success when there is an emphasis on relationship building with positive community partners (Scales, et al., 2005). Schools can act as facilitators for nurturing positive relationships between students and community partners by establishing evidence-based mentor training, structuring time for volunteers to tutor, creating job shadowing opportunities, and providing recreational events that bring community leaders and students together. When community members volunteer within a school, they are more likely to understand how schools operate and increase their respect for teachers and school administrators (Brent, 2000).

Utilization of Non-Monetary Support

Similarly to 'relationship building,' the concept of utilizing non-monetary support focuses on building community partnerships where the school is the beneficiary of more than financial and material items. When this is able to occur, students' are more likely to attain academic success (Scales, et al., 2005). Non-monetary support from community partners may come in many forms, including: volunteer cultivation, counseling and health services, program development, curriculum guidance, career consulting, and arts exposure (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Opportunities for Two-Way Communication

Schools and community partners work best together when there is clear and open communication between the two entities which leads to broader collaboration (Dryfoos & Maquire, 2002). Ideally, this would take the form of regular formal or informal dialogues between school and community leaders where problems are solved, future opportunities and challenges are discussed and reflection on past experiences occurs. During this dialogue, both school and community partners clearly explain their individual and partnership goals and expectations (Epstein, 2001).

Alignment of School Goals with Partner Goals

Communities are helpful to schools when they support the school and family goals, but a distraction when the school's mission is criticized (Epstein, 2001). In order to maximize partnership effectiveness, the school and community partner must work to align their individual and partnership goals and to center these goals on student achievement outcomes. Well-constructed goals contain measurable objectives, target dates, and milestones for monitoring progress (Swiss, 1991).

Practice of Reciprocity

The practice of reciprocity builds goodwill and lasting partnerships. A school that emphasizes community collaboration will coordinate programmatic services for families and students while also providing services to the community (Epstein, et al., 2002). A powerful tool for schools, when implemented appropriately, is to provide community service by structuring service learning opportunities that reinforce critical thinking, encourages a sense of purpose and teaches the importance of community (Claus & Ogden, 1999). The most effective forms of service learning occur when the recipients of the service are treated as partners and collaborators rather than "objects" of charity and students' efforts are supplemented with substantive reflection (Claus & Ogden, 1999; see also Schutz & Gere, 1998).

Evaluation of Partnership Outcomes (Effectiveness)

In order for a program to truly understand its effectiveness on a client population, a thorough evaluation must be conducted that measures early, intermediate and late outcomes (Swiss, 1991). The results of the program evaluation ought to inform any necessary remedial action by school administrators and community partners to improve the partnership relationship in order to enhance student outcomes (Epstein, 2008).

Organizational Priority

In order for an organization to successfully implement a new strategy with coordinated efforts aimed at a particular goal, those in leadership must set priorities that permeate the organizational culture (Denhardt, et al., 2013). To that end, school leaders will utilize change management principles when setting a new priority of forging community partnerships that garners employee buy-in and aligns personal and organizational priorities (Brightman & Moran, 1998). Furthermore, clear organizational communication must be harnessed by school leadership to convey school priorities.
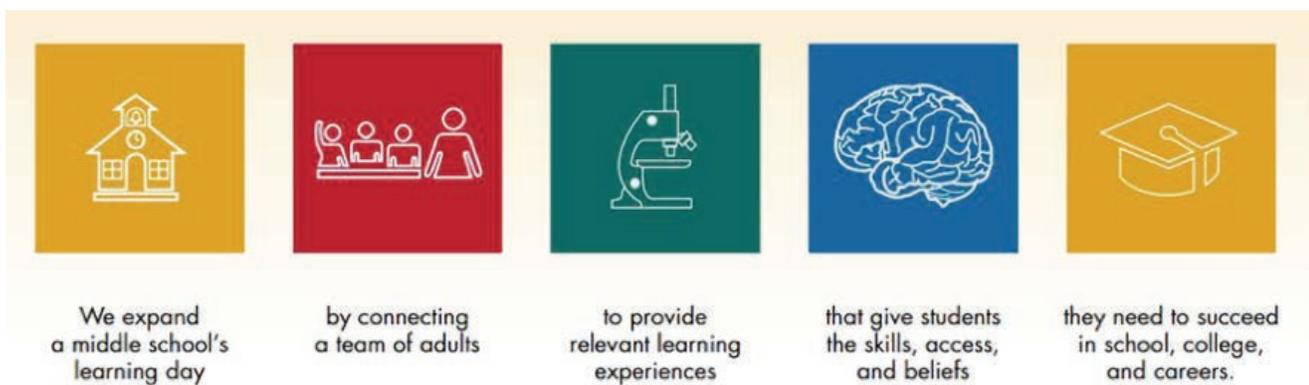
Use of Resources (Efficiency)

Resources in public education are scarce and public funding ethics demands accountability through efficient use of these scarce resources. In order to ensure resources are being utilized efficiently, statistical measurements ought to be employed that generate informative data about educational programs (Bifulco & Bretschneider, 2001). Data-driven decisions can then be used by school leadership to economically manage school-community partnerships.

Students Impacted (Equity)

A well-run partnership will possess the ability to monitor the distribution of resources and the impacts of those resources to ensure that students receive benefits equitably. Educational equity can be viewed as possessing two dimensions: fairness and inclusion (Field, et al., 2008). For an educational program to be fair, personal and social circumstances (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status or ethnic origin) must not stand in the way of achieving educational potential. Similarly, a program is inclusive if it allows for a basic minimum standard for all. The design of educational systems, practices in and out of school, and how resources are allocated are all policy levers that can have a significant impact on school equity (Field, et al., 2008).

APPENDIX F

CITIZEN SCHOOL'S MODEL[5]

We expand a middle school's learning day — by connecting a team of adults — to provide relevant learning experiences — that give students the skills, access, and beliefs — they need to succeed in school, college, and careers.

[5] *Image retrieved from: http://www.citizenschools.org/about/model/*

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The Financial and Business Services Area is in its eighth year of the Research Intern Program. The Program is designed to help build a quality research program within NCDPI to supplement and supply data for discussions related to procedural, process, and policy changes. This year's program included students from Duke University's Master of Public Policy program, North Carolina State University's Master of Public Administration program, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Master of Public Administration and Doctorate in Education programs. The intern program is managed by Eric Moore (919-807-3731) and Kayla Siler (919-807-3824) | intern_research@dpi.nc.gov.