

2022

Educational Community Leaders' Support of African American Students in Low-Performing Schools

Malishai Lynnette Woodbury
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Malishai Woodbury

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Peter Kiriakidis, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Alice Ross, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Dr. Paul Englesberg, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Educational Community Leaders' Support of African American Students in Low-
Performing Schools

by

Malishai Woodbury

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

Educational community leaders struggle to be involved with the educational processes in schools; their involvement has the potential to improve proficiency among African American students in low-performing school. This basic qualitative project study was conducted to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process at the study site. The conceptual framework was Epstein's school-family-community partnership model. The research was conducted to determine how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. Purposeful sampling was used to select 10 community leaders who were familiar with the local school district's community relations policy. Zoom interviews were conducted and the interview transcripts were analyzed thematically. The themes revealed that participants: (a) provided educational support to students, participated in school district councils, and worked with school and district administrators; (b) provided tutoring support in literacy and mathematics to improve proficiency; (c) made recommendations to create a policy on community involvement to provide teaching resources to focus on academic achievement; and (d) recommended a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders. A policy recommendation was developed for school leaders to involve educational community leaders in school activities. The content of the policy recommendation may result in improved educational processes at low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in literacy and mathematics resulting in positive social change.

Educational Community Leaders' Support of African American Students in Low-
Performing Schools

by

Malishai Woodbury

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my family.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who have mentored and supported me during this EdD project study. My father, mother, and sisters, I appreciate your support. The chairperson of my doctoral committee was Dr. Peter Kiriakidis, and I appreciate his help during this study.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| List of Tables | v |
| Section 1: The Problem..... | 1 |
| Background..... | 1 |
| Local Setting | 2 |
| Problem Statement | 2 |
| Rationale | 3 |
| Definitions of Key Terms | 7 |
| Purpose of the Project Study..... | 8 |
| Significance of the Project Study..... | 8 |
| Research Question | 9 |
| Review of the Literature | 9 |
| Conceptual Framework..... | 9 |
| Policy on Community Leaders’ Involvement in Schools | 10 |
| Community Leaders’ Involvement in Schools, Academic Achievement, and Management Skills..... | 12 |
| Engage Community Leaders in Schools | 14 |
| Community Involvement Is a Skill..... | 15 |
| Leadership Skills..... | 15 |
| School Leaders Should Support Community Leaders to Be Involved in Schools | 16 |
| School–Community Partnerships..... | 17 |
| Community–School Collaboration | 17 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Policy on Community Involvement | 19 |
| Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership and Sample Practices | 22 |
| Implications..... | 22 |
| Summary | 23 |
| Section 2: The Methodology..... | 25 |
| Research Design and Approach | 25 |
| Participants..... | 27 |
| Data Collection | 29 |
| Data Analysis | 30 |
| Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope and Delimitations | 31 |
| Results | 32 |
| Demographics of the Participants | 33 |
| Theme 1: Participated in School District Councils and Worked With School and District Administrators Concerning the Improvement of Schools..... | 36 |
| Theme 2: Involved in Educational Processes by Providing Tutoring Support in Literacy and Mathematics to African American Students in Low-Performing Schools to Improve Proficiency | 38 |
| Theme 3: Recommended a Policy on Community Involvement Concerning Teaching Resources to Help Students Focus on Academic Achievement | 41 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Theme 4: Recommended a Shared Decision-Making Process Between the Community and School Leaders for the Benefit of Students | 48 |
| Interpretation of the Findings..... | 53 |
| Theme 1 | 55 |
| Theme 2 | 56 |
| Theme 3 | 58 |
| Theme 4 | 60 |
| Evidence of Quality | 63 |
| Project Deliverable..... | 64 |
| Summary | 64 |
| Section 3: The Project..... | 65 |
| Rationale | 67 |
| Review of the Literature | 72 |
| Policy Recommendation | 72 |
| Transforming Education for Students | 74 |
| Creating Community Schools | 75 |
| Community–School Partnerships..... | 76 |
| Engaging Community Stakeholders | 79 |
| Project Description..... | 87 |
| Needed Resources, Existing Supports, Barriers, and Solutions..... | 89 |
| Project Implementation and Timetable..... | 90 |
| Roles and Responsibilities | 91 |
| Project Evaluation Plan..... | 92 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Project Implications | 92 |
| Direction for Future Research..... | 93 |
| Summary | 94 |
| Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions..... | 95 |
| Project Strengths | 95 |
| Recommendations for Alternative Approaches | 97 |
| Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change | 98 |
| Reflection on Importance of the Work | 99 |
| Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research | 100 |
| Conclusion | 101 |
| References | 103 |
| Appendix A: The Project | 117 |
| Appendix B: Interview Protocol | 132 |

List of Tables

Table 1. Test Scores of Non-African American Students in Low-Performing Schools of the Local School District 4

Table 2 Test Scores of African American Students in Low-Performing Schools of the Local School District 4

Table 3. Demographics of the Participants, Job Title, Years of Community Involvement, and Gender 35

Table 4. Themes 36

Table 5. Differences in Services Offered by the Participants 48

Table 6. Project Timetable 911

Section 1: The Problem

Background

Community involvement is essential to helping low-performing schools increase student academic achievement and to maintaining good quality schools within the community. A community relations policy was implemented in 2007 to increase support from local educational community leaders. However, educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. The purpose of this basic qualitative project study was to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project site.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is federal law that requires the engagement of community leaders with local schools in Title IV planning (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). ESSA identifies the importance of community engagement in public school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The successful implementation of this requires effective relationships and communication between schools and their communities. As a result, educational community leaders should focus on community involvement in low-performing schools. The Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools, in collaboration with the Coalition for Community Schools, developed the Stakeholder Engagement in ESSA as guidance for chief state school officers and local superintendents and their potential allies at the state and local level. The guidelines highlight best practices for planning ESSA

implementation. Community involvement brings a wealth of assets and expertise essential to addressing successful student outcomes (Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools, n.d.).

Local Setting

The community relations policy was implemented in 2007 at the study site to increase support from the local educational community leaders to support the academic growth of African American students. According to school board meeting minutes at the project site, Article I of the community relations policy mandated school and community partnerships. The school district's equity policy specifically highlights the school district's mandate to consider the low achievement of African American students. Members of the board expressed a need for educational community leaders to support the low-performing schools primarily serving African American students (superintendent of schools, personal communication, April 1, 2019). The local school board policy states:

The Board is committed to eliminating student achievement predictability based on social and cultural factors, including race and ethnicity. To increase the support from the local educational community, leaders should eliminate the low achievement of African Americans and the Board will appoint an Equity Advisory Council, which can be comprised of the educational community leaders.

Problem Statement

A community relations policy was implemented in 2007 to increase support from local educational community leaders. The problem identified in the local setting was that educational community leaders were struggling to be involved with the educational

process to support the academic growth of African American students. I conducted this study and developed this project to address the resulting gap in practice.

Rationale

Community leaders were struggling to be involved with the educational process in the local setting to support the academic growth of African American students.

According to an internal report from the school district under study, the study site had 53,000 students. According to the superintendent of schools, the student population's racial and ethnic breakdown were: White (41%), African American (30%), Hispanic (25%), Asian (3%), and other (3%). According to local state accountability data sets and reports, most of the African American students who attend inner-city schools have poor academic achievement, and the schools are known as low-performing schools. The school district test scores of African American students (Table 2) continued to be below the district average and below the averages of non-African American students (Table 1). State and district test scores indicated the continuous underachievement of African American students at the study site.

Table 1

Test Scores of Non-African American Students in Low-Performing Schools of the Local School District

| Year | Grades 3 – 8 EOG | | |
|------|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Science | Mathematics | Language arts |
| 2015 | 57.66 | 50.13 | 50.34 |
| 2016 | 57.63 | 49.46 | 50.08 |
| 2017 | 56.14 | 48.12 | 50.01 |
| 2018 | 55.33 | 48.69 | 49.39 |
| 2019 | 55.78 | 47.77 | 49.47 |

Note: Equity and Accountability Office. Percent of students scoring 3 and above. EOG is End of Grade percentages. Non-African American Students were White (41%), Hispanic (25%), Asian (3%), and other (3%).

Table 2

Test Scores of African American Students in Low-Performing Schools of the Local School District

| Year | Grades 3 – 8 EOG | | |
|------|------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Science | Mathematics | Language arts |
| 2015 | 29.85 | 29.93 | 30.14 |
| 2016 | 29.75 | 28.87 | 30.02 |
| 2017 | 29.70 | 28.15 | 29.86 |
| 2018 | 28.95 | 27.93 | 29.47 |
| 2019 | 28.91 | 27.87 | 27.29 |

Note: Equity and Accountability Office. Percent of students scoring 3 and above. EOG is End of Grade percentages. African American students were 30% of the student population.

Community leader involvement could help to address academic growth among African American students at low-performing schools. According to the educational community leaders' spokesperson, community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process of the low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students (president of community organization, personal communication, July 11, 2021). Also, according to the assistant superintendent of schools, teachers from the low-performing schools have indicated to the school administrators that educational community leaders have not been involved in the

educational process of the schools to support the academic growth of African American students (assistant superintendent of schools, personal communication, July 15, 2021). Based on the school district's employee climate survey, school administrators have indicated to senior school district administrators that they are struggling to involve educational community leaders with the educational process of the low-performing local schools to support the academic growth of African American students (superintendent of schools, personal communication, July 16, 2021). In addition, school board members have been aware that educational community leaders have not been involved with the educational process of the low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students (superintendent of schools, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

Researchers have identified benefits of community involvement to school districts. Davis (2017) suggested school district policies should include community leaders in school activities because school district connections with community leaders create a positive collaboration. School leaders should be able to lead schools by including various aspects of the educational communities they serve (Johnson et al., 2021). Also, school leaders should involve educational community leaders in supporting school improvement plans regarding student achievement (Davis et al., 2018). Elfreich and Helfenbein (2017) reported that community leaders should be involved in schools because community involvement has a positive effect on student achievement.

When community leaders are involved with local schools, there are benefits to students and to the community. Bauman and Wood (2017) reported that community

leaders should participate in school district planning processes with school leaders. Barber (2018) reported that community involvement enhances connections between public schools and their community. Epstein and Sheldon (2016) reported that school leaders should implement community involvement by engaging community leaders in school activities. Anderson-Butcher et al. (2016) identified community involvement as a way to support students in school districts. School districts should increase community involvement (Childs & Grooms, 2018), educators should encourage school-community collaborations (O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Elfreich and Helfenbein (2017) reported that the main assets of the community are schools. Hausburg (2020) found that school–community involvement affects students' knowledge of their communities. Van Vooren (2018) wrote involvement of community leaders with school leaders can benefit students.

School leaders need to know how to involve community leaders in school district activities to create effective relationships. Van Vooren (2018) reported school leaders should know how to engage community leaders in building community involvement in the schools. Wasonga and Fisher (2018) found that school leaders need training on how to strengthen community involvement with community leaders. Wang et al. (2016) explored how school leaders and community leaders can work together to develop community involvement in school activities. Community involvement depends on how school leaders are strengthening strategic engagement of community leaders (Tytler et al., 2017).

This project study was designed to address a gap in practice and increase the involvement of community leaders in schools in the local setting. The research problem

was that the educational community leaders were struggling to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. To address the problem, I gathered data to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement in the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project site. The findings of this study could lead to further research concerning the involvement of community leaders in the educational process in schools to support the academic growth of African American students. The findings could encourage educational community leaders to be involved with the educational processes of low-performing schools. The findings could also encourage school leaders to involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low-performing schools.

Definitions of Key Terms

Community involvement for school improvement: Barber (2018) wrote that community involvement could enhance connections between public schools and their community. Community and school relationships could increase community involvement (Bauman & Wood, 2017).

Partnering with members of the community: This process can increase community involvement (Davis, 2017). Davis (2017) reported that school district administrators should involve community leaders in educational processes.

School-community engagement: Used to build students' knowledge of or for their communities, and school-community collaboration. School principals are expected to communicate with community leaders (Hausburg, 2020).

Purpose of the Project Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project study site. Research has revealed a relationship between student achievement and appropriate involvement of the community in school activities (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). School administrators should encourage community members to participate in school activities to support students' academic growth (Dawson-McClure et al., 2017).

Significance of the Project Study

I designed this project to address a gap in practice regarding the involvement of community leaders in school at the local setting. The findings could lead to further research concerning the involvement of community leaders in the educational process in schools to support the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. This project study is significant because the findings may help educational community leaders to be involved with the educational processes of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. The findings may help school leaders better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low-performing schools. Also, the findings may help senior school district leaders revise policies regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational process of low-performing schools at the study site. The policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of low-performing schools, which may result in positive social

change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is:

RQ: How do educational community leaders perceive they are involved with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students?

Review of the Literature

I used Google Scholar and ProQuest to search for peer-reviewed journal articles and other sources. The following search terms were used: *educational community leaders, educational processes, low performing schools, support for the academic growth of African American students, community involvement for school improvement, partnering with members of the community, and school-community engagement*. In my search, I sought peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2022. In my literature review, I discuss the conceptual framework of the study and previous studies related to the topic of community leaders' involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students.

Conceptual Framework

To answer the research question in this study, my conceptual framework was Epstein et al.'s (2018) school–family–community partnership model. This model is used to analyze relationships in school–family–community partnerships (Sheldon, 2016). Based on the school–family–community partnership model, there are six types of school

involvement: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision making, and (f) collaborating with the community (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016).

For this study, I focused on the following three components of the school–family–community partnership model: (a) communicating with school stakeholders, (b) volunteering in schools, and (c) collaborating with the school leaders.

Community involvement is integrated into the educational process to enhance student learning and development. Communities create school-like opportunities, events, and programs to reinforce, recognize, and reward students for good progress, creativity, contributions, and excellence. According to Epstein et al. (2018), including the community as a partner in education increases the educational resources available to schools. The Epstein school–family–community partnership model referenced the role of community leaders (Epstein et al., 2018). Davis (2017) discussed how to improve community involvement in schools and suggested that school district administrators should involve community leaders in educational processes. School leaders should implement community involvement by engaging members of the community in school activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). Gibson (2018) found that community involvement is needed for the engagement of community leaders in participatory planning processes with school leaders.

Policy on Community Leaders' Involvement in Schools

In this section, I discuss the involvement of community leaders in schools. Researchers have found evidence that school leaders need to involve educational community leaders in schools. Childs and Grooms (2018) conducted a qualitative study

and used interviews to gather data to understand how one community implemented strategies to involve educational community leaders. According to Childs and Grooms, school districts should consider partnering with members of the community to increase community involvement in schools. Because school leaders are responsible for student achievement, these school leaders should consider partnering with members of the community to increase academic achievement (Childs & Grooms, 2018). Thus, school leaders should apply strategies to involve educational community leaders in schools.

School district policies on community involvement should be implemented by school leaders. According to Davis (2017), community involvement depends on a school district's policies and how school leaders implement those policies. Specifically, Davis explored community involvement in school district policies and reported that school leaders should include educational community leaders in school processes. To improve community involvement in schools, school leaders should be able to involve educational community leaders in educational processes (Davis, 2017). Specifically, Davis described a district's initiative to meaningfully involve educational community members and school leaders in school activities to increase academic achievement. School district policies should be implemented by school leaders to improve community involvement in schools.

Scholars have recommended that school district leaders develop policies on community involvement to improve schools. Elfreich and Helfenbein (2017) conducted a case study in a Midwestern suburban community and reported factors related to student well-being via community involvement. Chavkin (2000) also found that school and district leaders should encourage community involvement through policy. Moreover, a

school policy on community involvement should contain clear goals and guidelines (Chavkin (2000). Community members should work together to improve schools by addressing common educational problems (Cohen et al., 2018). Community members can be an asset to school leaders seeking to improve schools (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). Community members can work with school leaders to help improve student achievement (Newman et al., 2012).

Community Leaders' Involvement in Schools, Academic Achievement, and Management Skills

The existing literature indicates that community leader involvement in schools affects students' academic achievement. Bauman and Wood (2017) found that students' academic achievement is affected when school and educational community leaders collaborate. Community leaders and school leaders' relationships could increase community involvement in school activities to benefit and support students (Flores, 2018; Gonzales & Gabel, 2017). Scholars have examined the perceptions of educational community leaders regarding community involvement in schools (Dillon & Nixon, 2019; Gibson, 2018; Hausburg, 2020). School leaders understand that community involvement in schools benefits students (Dillon & Nixon, 2019).

Gibson (2018) conducted a case study to examine community involvement in a school district and found that school leaders should involve and engage community leaders in planning processes for the benefit of students. School leaders should also involve community leaders in decision-making processes (Hausburg, 2020). Researchers reported a lack of qualitative research into community involvement in schools (Dillon &

Nixon, 2019; Hausburg, 2020). Additional research is needed to expand the understanding of how community leaders can be involved in planning processes with school leaders for the benefit of students.

School principals should encourage school-community involvement. Hausburg (2020) reported that elementary school principals should create opportunities that transcend school–community involvement. Specifically, Hausburg recommended communication skills as a key strategy for increased community involvement. School principals can use communication skills to encourage community involvement for students to create knowledge of school–community professional involvement.

School leaders can use community resources for the benefit of students. Community resources can be used in schools for student achievement (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). Examples of such community resources include national online forums and government programs (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). School leaders could use such resources for students to improve academic achievement.

The involvement of community leaders in schools can affect student learning. Scholars has emphasized the need for community leaders to participate in school activities (Anthony & Ogg, 2019).School leaders could encourage community leaders’ involvement in school activities such as curriculum nights, school councils, reading to students, and being guest speakers at school events (Anthony & Ogg, 2019).

Researchers have also emphasized the importance of school leaders’ communication and time management skills in relation to encouraging community involvement. Hauseman et al. (2017) administered a large-scale survey to 1,400

elementary school principals to examine school–community involvement skills. Almost two thirds of elementary school principals surveyed indicated they believe school–community involvement takes time from their duties as school leaders (Hauseman et al., 2017). Thus, time management skills are essential to encouraging successful school–community involvement (Hauseman et al., 2017). Thus, communication and time management are skills that school leaders should have to create opportunities for school–community involvement.

Engage Community Leaders in Schools

Literature review revealed the importance of school leaders engaging community leaders in school activities. Epstein and Sheldon (2016) reported when school leaders encourage community involvement, these leaders engage members of the community in school activities. Similar to the findings of Epstein and Sheldon (2016), Hauseman et al. (2017) reported school leaders should engage community leaders in school activities. Van Vooren (2018) reported engagement of community leaders in schools benefit students. According to Van Vooren, school principals should engage community leaders by building community collaborations. Thus, school leaders should develop engagement skills to implement school-community involvement.

Engagement of community leaders is a skill that school leaders must have to involve community leaders in school activities. Similar to the suggestion of Hauseman et al. (2017), Tiller and Ness (2020) examined community members' perceptions of their participation in a statewide initiative to increase leadership capacity at the community level, and reported community members' perceptions are based upon authentic

engagement. A statewide initiative has upscaled community collaborations by strengthening strategic engagement (Tiller & Ness, 2020). Thus, engagement of community leaders by school leaders is an important skill that school leaders must have to involve community leaders in school activities.

Community Involvement Is a Skill

Community involvement is a skill that school leaders should have to involve community leaders in school educational processes. According to Tiller and Ness (2020), school principals should be able to lead in such a way that includes community leaders. Professional Development (PD) on community involvement could be beneficial to school leaders to know how to involve community leaders in the educational processes of low performing schools to support students (Johnson et al., 2021). PD sessions could assist school leaders in developing the skills needed to involve community members in schools. For example, Epstein and Sheldon (2016) wrote how school leaders promote connections with community leaders benefit students. PD could assist school leaders in developing community involvement skills to encourage community leaders to be involved in school activities for the benefit students. Thus, community involvement is a skill school leaders should have to involve community leaders in school educational processes.

Leadership Skills

School leaders should have leadership skills to be able to lead schools and engage community leaders. Leadership skills are necessary to create partnerships with communities. Literature supports the need to have leadership skills to engage community members in schools. For example, Medina et al. (2020) conducted a case study to

examine community school councils in three urban elementary schools, and implied demographics are a structure of community school councils. Medina et al. stated communities with similar demographics could use a comprehensive strategy to strengthen community involvement in schools. School leaders should apply leadership skills to engage community leaders in schools to know how to handle demographics for the benefit of students. Thus, school leaders' leadership skills should include demographics to strengthen community involvement in schools.

School Leaders Should Support Community Leaders to Be Involved in Schools

School leaders should know how to support community leaders to be involved in school-community activities, such as teacher-parents' nights. For example, school leaders should support the school's initiative by involving community leaders in school activities.

Specifically, school leaders should involve community leaders in schools to have representatives of parents to encourage parents to participate in after-school hours activities, such as teacher-parents' nights (O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Scholars reported that public school leaders should strengthen school-community partnerships by applying their leadership skills to better involve communities in school processes including parents' nights (O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). For instance, school leaders should have the skills to support community leaders to participate in community school councils. Therefore, school leaders should support community leaders to participate in school-community activities.

School–Community Partnerships

A way to expand the participation of community leaders in schools is through the development of communication between school and community leaders. For instance, school leaders should have community leaders participate in school activities, such as teacher-parents' nights and community school councils. Literature reviewed supported the partnership between the community and schools (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). School leaders should create partnership between the community and schools. For example, Watson et al. (2017), emphasized “community partnerships supports students’ learning and aids in school improvement” (p. 1). Another example is that school-community partnerships help students (Anthony & Ogg, 2019). In conclusion, the participation of community leaders in schools depends on the development of communication between school and community leaders.

Community–School Collaboration

Collaboration is an important skill that leaders should have. Tytler et al. (2017) examined the collaborative work between leaders of organizations and school leaders and suggested that leaders of educational and community organizations develop a data bank of information on collaborations. The collaborative work between community and school leaders is important to create school-community partnerships.

School principals and community members should work collaboratively to develop community engagement activities. As Wang et al. (2016) stated, active community-school collaboration between school and community leaders is needed. Wang et al. explored how educators, such as elementary school principals and community

members worked collaboratively to develop community engagement activities. One of the findings was educators' positive teachings resulted from community engagement. Overall, the community's positive affect resulted from active engagement, community-school relationship, and contribution to community activities. The overall results indicated that the participants agreed to continue establishing collaboration in the future because they believe in the positive effects of community involvement on the school, students, and the communities.

The findings of Tytler et al. (2017) are in line with the findings of Wasonga and Fisher (2018). Community and school leaders should collaborate to create school-community partnerships. School principals' perceptions on how they understand, respond to, and influence collaborations with community groups to improve schools were examined by Wasonga and Fisher. Wasonga and Fisher found that the principals were uncertain about how to strengthen collaborations with community members.

In conclusion, in addition to communication, engagement, time management, and inclusion skills, school leaders should implement school-community involvement in the schools and apply leadership skills to lead community school councils by understanding demographics to strengthen community involvement in schools. School leaders should know how to support educational community leaders to participate in school-community activities. Finally, school leaders should know how to collaborate with educational community leaders.

Policy on Community Involvement

A policy to connect schools and local communities may be created by school, districts. For example, school and district administrators could create a policy to engage community members in schools (Green, 2018) to focus on education outcomes because such as an involvement has an effect on schooling (Essuman, 2019). Also, community-school leaders may promote student success by creating a policy to involve local communities in school activities (Boudreaux, 2017).

Involvement of Community Leaders in School Activities

A policy on how to involve community leaders in school activities may help students. School and district leaders should have a policy on how to involve educational community leaders in school activities (Mavrogordato & White, 2019) to provide to students educational opportunities (Mavrogordato & White, 2019). Moreover, such policy in schools depends on school leaders and how they engage community members (Castillo, 2022) and could be the connection between schools and community partners (Josh, 2021). Furthermore, school activities could encourage community members to help students (Josh, 2021) because students learn from community members (Tilhou et al., 2018) because community members provide school activities (Aidman & Baray, 2016) to enhance instruction (Stefan et al., 2018). Community leaders should be involved in school activities because these members could deliver school programs (Bryan et al., 2017). For instance, community-school involvement in after-school programs is important for the development of students (Malone, 2020), and the development of the community (Mayger & Provinzano, 2020).

Involvement of Community Leaders in Schools to Improve Schools

By involving community leaders in school activities, school district administrators could improve schools. For instance, school-community partnerships could benefit students from the expertise of community members (Adams, 2019). School district administrators should create community-school partnerships to focus on improving the education of historically underserved students in the school district (Sanders & Galindo, 2019). By involving community leaders in school activities, students' learning opportunities could be improved (Oakes et al., 2017; Sanders, 2016). School districts should create community partnerships (McKinney de Royston & Madkins, 2019) because school districts that create community schools help students score higher on state tests (Caldas et al., 2019). School districts should create school–community partnerships to help struggling neighborhoods (Valli et al., 2018). School district administrators could create community-school partnerships (FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2019).

Involvement of Community Leaders in Schools to Improve Student Achievement

School administrators should engage community stakeholders in school activities. Community stakeholders could benefit schools (Anderson et al., 2019). For example, community stakeholders could improve the educational experiences of students (Stefan et al., 2018). Moreover, community stakeholders could offer resources to schools (Scott et al., 2020) to help with the achievement of diverse students by providing tutoring services (Latunde, 2017). Furthermore, community resources offered to schools help students to improve learning (Sanders et al., 2019). Community stakeholders could facilitate high-quality learning experiences for students. For instance, early grade literacy tutoring

programs could help students with academic development (Jones & Christian, 2021).

Another example is community stakeholders could offer community-based programs to help students develop skills through hands-on activities (Parker et al., 2020). Moreover, school leaders could address the needs of the students by partnering with the community leaders (Provinzano et al., 2020; Tilhou et al., 2018). Furthermore, school administrators should promote participation from community members to facilitate high-quality learning experiences for students (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Thus, school leaders should encourage community partners to provide resources to increase student achievement by facilitating high-quality learning experiences for students (McKinney de Royston & Madkins, 2019). For example, community-school involvement should include businesses and churches for funding for education services to increase student learning (Hauseman et al., 2017).

Moreover, school-community involvement could be used to solve complex problems at schools (Biddle et al., 2018). Furthermore, school-community partnerships could enhance student success (Krumm & Curry, 2017). For example, community stakeholders could increase student learning by offering to schools learning resources (Green, 2018).

Community leaders' involvement in school activities could help school leaders to improve student achievement. School leaders should have involvement with their local community (Mercer, 2016). Additionally, school leaders should involve community leaders in school activities to support student learning (Jung & Sheldon, 2020).

Moreover, the involvement of community leaders in school activities could create teaching and learning environments (Thapa & Cohen, 2017). A learning environment

could be created after-school hours (Casto, 2016). Teaching and learning environments help students (Scanlan & Park, 2020).

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership and Sample Practices

Epstein et al. (2018) wrote that involvement occurs when community partners are integrated into the educational process to strengthen school programs, and student learning and development. Moreover, community involvement is applied in school programs when collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2018). Additionally, community involvement should include neighborhoods that influence student learning and development (Epstein et al., 2018). Moreover, Epstein explained that community involvement is about the strengths and talents of the community partners to support students. Furthermore, community involvement is about those interested in quality education (Epstein et al., 2018). According to Epstein et al. (2018), schools should organize opportunities for volunteers to support the school and the students. As a result, collaborating with the community for resources could strengthen school programs (Epstein et al., 2018). Additionally, schools should be willing to share power in authentic ways with community partners. Epstein wrote that schools have choices to involve community partners in schools because partnerships should view the school as a homeland.

Implications

The findings from this project study were used to develop a policy for school leaders to use to better involve educational community leaders with the educational

process of the low performing schools to support African American students. I developed a policy recommendation for school leaders to assist educational community leaders to be involved in activities in the school district. The content of the policy recommendation includes new findings that can be used for the involvement of educational community leaders in schools.

The project study is a policy recommendation, which can help educational community leaders to be involved with the educational process of the low performing schools with strategies that can be used to increase community involvement. The policy recommendation can help school leaders to use new ways to better involve educational community leaders with the educational process of the low performing schools. The policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools, which may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts to graduate from school. The results of this qualitative project study were summarized in a policy recommendation paper that will be presented to the stakeholders of the participating school district (Appendix A).

Summary

The problem was that although a community relations policy was implemented in the local setting to increase support from the local educational community leaders; however, the educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. This

project study was significant because a policy recommendation was developed, based on the findings, to help educational community leaders to be involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. I developed a policy recommendation for educational community leaders and school administrators to assist them with community involvement in the school district. The content of the policy recommendation includes the findings regarding community involvement.

In Section 2, I describe the methodology. In Section 3, I describe the project. In Section 4, I describe my reflections, strengths and weaknesses of the project, and implications for future research.

Section 2: The Methodology

The research problem is that although a community relations policy was implemented in 2007 to increase support from the local educational community leaders, those leaders are struggling to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. For this project study, I conducted basic qualitative research. I collected data by interviewing educational community leaders. In this section, I describe the research design and approach, research question, selection of the participants, the role of the researcher, and data collection and analysis procedures.

Research Design and Approach

A basic qualitative research design was appropriate for this project study to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project study site. Interviews are a source of qualitative data (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Qualitative data contain words from a small sample of participants (see Creswell & Creswell). Interviews are guided by the research questions (see Creswell & Creswell). The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project study site.

The research question guiding this study was:

RQ: How do educational community leaders perceive they are involved with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students?

I did not conduct quantitative research for this study. No quantitative data were collected to examine state test scores from African American students in low-performing schools in the local setting. I was not interested in seeking to discover any new statistical findings. A quantitative design could have provided a larger, more representative sample than a qualitative study with a small number of participants, but ultimately the goal of the research made a qualitative study more appropriate.

This project study was bounded by the perceptions of the participants on their involvement in school activities at the study site. The central phenomena in this project were the perceptions of educational community leaders regarding their involvement in school activities in the local setting. A qualitative research design was suitable to investigate how educational community leaders perceive they were involved with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. In this study, I sought to interview educational community leaders to gather evidence and develop an understanding that could not have been learned through quantitative research. Qualitative research is inductive in nature and seeks to answer questions focusing on the essence and nature of participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Studying how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of

African American students required qualitative data. The qualitative research method was appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants, who were local educational community leaders. I considered other qualitative research designs, such as grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology. I did not select grounded theory because the intent of this project was not to create a new theory (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I did not select an ethnographic design because the focus of this study was not on an entire cultural group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I considered phenomenology; however, I was not studying human experiences, such as feelings and reactions. Thus, a basic qualitative research design was appropriate to gather qualitative data via interviews to answer the research question.

Participants

The population for this project study was educational community leaders. Purposeful sampling involves selecting participants from a specific group to understand a predetermined phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I used purposeful sampling to select educational community leaders to participate in interviews. At the project study site, there were over 20 educational community organizations. I selected the largest educational community organization that has over 150 members. The educational community leaders were retired educators and pastors. Of the over 150 educational community leaders, I selected those who met the selection criteria.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a researcher should select participants who are able to answer the interview questions. The participants for this project study were educational community leaders. The selection criteria included

educational community leaders who were familiar with the local school district's community relations policy, had retired from their jobs, resided in the local community for at least 3 years, and supported the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. Ten educational community leaders agreed to be interviewed.

According to a senior community leader responsible for institutional review board (IRB) approval at the study site, all community leaders have provided the educational community organization with email addresses and a synopsis of their community involvement (personal communication, July 22, 2021). I used the website of the community organization to gather email addresses of educational community leaders who met the selection criteria based on the information provided on the website of the organization. I sent out emails to all educational community leaders at the study site. I included in the email information about this project study, such as its purpose and significance, and the selection criteria. Educational community leaders who agreed to participate in the study were asked to reply with "I consent."

To answer the research question, I gathered data from interviews with educational community leaders. I used Zoom online video conferencing software to conduct the interviews. I developed a professional researcher-participant working relationship with the participants. As a novice researcher, I sought to create good rapport with the educational community leaders by maintaining participant confidentiality. I made sure the participants felt comfortable to encourage them to answer the interview questions honestly and openly (Appendix B).

I used open-ended interview questions to collect information about how the participants experienced, understood, and explained events in their community involvement in low-performing schools. Prior to interviewing the participants, nonparticipating educational community leaders from the study site reviewed the interview questions. Retired educational community leaders were asked to review the interview questions for clarity and ambiguity, and no changes were made to the interview questions.

Research ethics should protect the rights of the human research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I followed an interview protocol (Appendix B) and made sure participants felt comfortable. I assigned each participant a unique letter to protect their anonymity. Interviews were transcribed that the interview transcripts are saved on my personal computer and will be kept for 5 years.

Data Collection

I schedule Zoom interviews with participants based on their convenience and availability. Each interview lasted about 1 hour. The interviews were audio-taped with the participants' permission. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each audio-taped interview is stored on my computer and will be kept for 5 years.

At the time this study was conducted, I had taught social studies in public school districts for over 15 years and taught history as a college professor for over 20 years. I had not been a community leader in any public or private school district. As a novice researcher, I used the expected ethical research standards and obtained IRB approval

through Walden University (# 09-28-21-0111430) before the data collection process began.

Sample size is important in qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The sample size for this project study was 10 educational community leaders who met the selection criteria and agreed to participate in interviews. The conceptual framework was used to develop the interview protocol, which was used to ask the same interview questions to each participant. The sample size of 10 participants was sufficient for me to answer the research question. The interview data I collected had many common phrases and keywords.

Data Analysis

Data from the interview transcripts were entered into NVivo for organization. I read and reread the transcribed interview data multiple times to understand the participants' responses (see Connelly, 2016). Words or phrases that represented recurring phrases from the participants were highlighted using different colors. I used a coding process to chart similar phrases and keywords. I used axial coding to identify common words and phrases. Subcategories emerged from similar participants' responses (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017). I reviewed all themes for consistency (Creswell & Creswell). I performed member checking and participants acknowledged the interview transcripts were accurate and no revisions were requested. I considered all data and found no discrepant cases (see Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, and confirmability are important in any project study (Connelly, 2016). In this study, the interview data were accurately

represented. Researcher bias was minimized by maintaining professionalism based on ethics courses taken during the doctoral journey. I used a reflexivity journal to record predispositions to minimize biases and reactivity.

Internal validity occurs with an external audit conducted by professionals who are not associated with the research study (see Connelly, 2016). Educational community leaders who were not interviewed and were not associated with the research study reviewed the findings (see Connelly, 2016). These professionals were retired educational community leaders familiar with low-performing schools in the local setting. The participants were retired educators and pastors serving as educational community leaders. Confirmability was established by reviewing participants' responses to the interview questions. A different challenge in qualitative research is the trustworthiness of findings being generalized or transferred to other situations (see Connelly, 2016). The feedback from these professionals was that the emergent themes were representing findings they were familiar with and could apply to other similar communities.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope and Delimitations

The first assumption was that participants would provide honest responses. The second assumption was that participants were familiar with the local school district's community relations policy, were retirees, resided in the community for at least 3 years, and supported the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. The third assumption was that the participants believed in community involvement in schools in low-performing schools. A final assumption was that the participants struggled to be involved in low-performing schools.

A limitation of this study was that I did not interview school or district administrators. I also did not interview any African American students in low-performing schools at the study site. Another limitation was the small sample size. Finally, a limitation is that the participants may have responded to the interview questions with limited experiences of low-performing schools.

The scope of this study site was one large community organization in the southeastern region of the United States. The community organization consisted of educational community leaders who have struggled to participate in low-performing schools. The findings may not be generalized or transferred to other similar community organizations within a public school district located in the Southeastern United States.

Results

Research Question: How do educational community leaders perceive they are involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students?

To examine this research question, which focused on how educational community leaders perceive they are involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students, I categorized the participants' responses to the interview questions. The participants' responses were divided by the key phrases or terms used by the participants. I present the demographics of the participants next.

Demographics of the Participants

P1 was an educator at a local college and an advocate for equity in public schools. P1 was familiar with the academic achievement of African American students at the local school district. As an education community leader, P1 served the local community for 22 years.

P2 was a pastor at the local community and participated in school meetings at the local school district. P2 was a volunteer in the local schools helping teachers and school administrators with community collaboration strategies between school and community leaders. P2 served the local community for over 28 years.

P3 was a pastor and an education community leader for 19 years serving the local community. P3 volunteered at the schools and worked with school administrators on school council meetings regarding the academic achievement of African American students. P3 attended the local school board meetings and contributed to the discussions regarding the academic achievement of African American students in the local low performing schools.

P4 was a local pastor and an advocate for education who participated in the local board of education meetings regarding the needs of African American students. Also, P4 was involved in the local school board meetings and school council meetings especially in low performing schools. P5 was a pastor and an educational community leader for 15 years and an advocate for public school education, member of the local city council, and a member of low performing school councils. P5 focused on low performing schools

where most of the students were African American because of their low academic achievement and problems at schools such as truancy and behavior.

P6 was an educator and an educational community leader, a member of school councils, and involved in school improvement plans. P6 volunteered at school councils to help school leaders with the school mission and vision to involve the local community in educational processes. P6 has been living in the local community for 37 years.

P7 was an educator and a community organizer and a member of neighborhood associations to help low performing schools to help students. P7 served the local community for over 12 years. P7 participated in numerous school councils for school leaders to make decisions for low performing schools to improve.

P8 was an educator and a president of the local league that focused on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and especially the needs of African American students. P8 led a nonprofit organization to provide supports to the local schools. P8 had served the local community for 8 years.

P9 was an educator and the founder of a non-profit educational community organization created to uplift marginalized girls in middle schools. P9 helped underserved girls in low performing schools. For over 6 years, P9 focused on how to work with school leaders to assist middle school girls with academic achievement.

P10 was an educator and an educational leader who was fighting for change in education. P10 was also an advocate for African American students. P10 had been a member of city and school councils for over 20 years.

The educational community leaders were retired educators and pastors. Four pastors, and six educators participated in the interviews. The participants were four males and six females. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographics of the Participants, Job Title, Years of Community Involvement, and Gender

| | Job title | Years | Gender |
|-----|-----------|-------|--------|
| P1 | Educator | 22 | Female |
| P2 | Pastor | 28 | Male |
| P3 | Pastor | 19 | Male |
| P4 | Pastor | 5 | Female |
| P5 | Pastor | 15 | Male |
| P6 | Educator | 37 | Female |
| P7 | Educator | 12 | Female |
| P8 | Educator | 8 | Male |
| P9 | Educator | 6 | Female |
| P10 | Educator | 20 | Female |

The common words were: *involved, local school district, local public school, volunteered, help, students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders, focus, achievement, academic achievement, administrators, advocacy, narrow, gap, education, educational, community, resource, resources, share, decision-making, process, process, and processes*. The common phrases were: *involved in the local school district, volunteered in public schools, helped students, help administrators, narrow the achievement gap, decision-making process between the community and school leaders, low performing schools, volunteered in the local schools, helped teachers and school administrators, community collaboration, school council meetings, local board of education meetings, low performing schools, and advocate for policy*. Four themes emerged (Table 4).

Table 4*Themes*

| Theme | Description |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Participated in school district councils and worked with school and district administrators concerning the improvement of schools |
| 2 | Involved in educational processes by providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics to African American students in low-performing schools to improve proficiency |
| 3 | Recommended community involvement concerning teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement |
| 4 | Recommended a shared decision-making process for community leaders to help the school |

Theme 1: Participated in School District Councils and Worked With School and District Administrators Concerning the Improvement of Schools

The participants provided educational support to the schools under study.

Although four were pastors and six were retired educators, the 10 participants were involved in school activities because they advocated for students. For example, the four pastors, P2, P3, P4, and P5, advocated for equity in public schools and were involved in low performing schools because their goal was to help school leaders with the academic challenges of African American students. The four pastors were involved in school district councils to help district administrators to improve schools. P2, P3, P4, and P5 participated in school meetings as volunteers and helped teachers and school leaders with community collaboration challenges. The pastors were education community leaders who participated in school council meetings regarding the academic achievement of African American students. Specifically, the pastors advocated for social justice issues and served in the local board of education meetings regarding the needs of African American

students in low performing schools. P2, P3, P4, and P5 believed in being involved in the local school board with school principals in school council meetings in low performing schools with the focus on the academic achievement of African American students. For example, P5 helped African American students who were out of school, and through community meetings and collaboration with school leaders those students graduated from school.

Similar to the four pastors, the six educators P1 and P6, P7 P8, P9, and P10 were also educational community leaders who advocated for equity in low performing schools to support African American students. For example, P6 was a member of school councils and helped school leaders with school missions and visions on how to involve the local community in educational processes. P7 was a member of neighborhood associations and helped low performing schools by participating in school councils. P8 focused on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and especially the needs of African American students. P9 mentored students in low performing schools by working with school leaders to assist students with academic challenges. P10 was an educational community leader and an advocate for African American students as a member of city and school councils.

Although each of the six educators offered different expertise to the schools under study, they were all involved in the local community in educational processes. P6 participated in school councils to assist school leaders in ways to involve the local community in educational processes. Similar to P6, P7 participated in school councils to help students in low performing schools. As P6 and P7 participated in school activities,

P8 focused on helping African American students not only with their education but also with employment.

The four pastors and the six retired educators each provided educational support to the schools in the local setting. These participants were involved in schools activities as advocates for students. The participants were involved in low performing schools to help African American students. All participants participated in school district councils and worked with school and district administrators to help with the improvement of schools. These participants were involved in the local school district and worked with school and district leaders by focusing on the academic achievement of African American students. In conclusion, all participants were involved in the local schools in educational processes.

Theme 2: Involved in Educational Processes by Providing Tutoring Support in Literacy and Mathematics to African American Students in Low-Performing Schools to Improve Proficiency

The participants were involved in educational processes by providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics for African American students in low performing schools to improve proficiency. Although four participants were pastors and six were retired educators, all emphasized that they volunteered in the schools at the study site to help students. These participants volunteered in different ways; however, their main goal was common, which was to help students. Specifically, all participants volunteered in schools because they focused on students.

The following examples illustrate how each participant volunteered in the schools. P1, as an educator, conducted research with teachers in the local school district on Grade 3 literacy to help students improve proficiency to pass state tests. Also, P1 worked with school board policy committee members to improve schools' improvement plans. The reason for such involvement was that low performing schools needed to improve state scores. Similar to educator P1, pastor P2 helped elementary school teachers to help students with literacy because state scores in literacy were low in the schools under study. Similar to pastor P2, pastor P3 served on the youth advisory board to help students at the local district to stay in school and to graduate because these students needed to pass state test to graduate. Although P4 was a pastor and an advocate for equity in public schools especially for African American students, they were supportive of neighborhood low performing schools to help students to stay in school. Pastor P5 was involved in community service activities to help students at the local public school district to improve their literacy proficiency. Therefore, the four pastors helped students with literacy because literacy state scores were low in the schools in the local setting. Although P3 served on the youth advisory board, their focus was on helping students pass state tests to graduate. Thus, the four pastors were involved in school activities to help students improve literacy proficiency.

Similar to the four pastors, the retired educators P1, P6, P7 P8, P9, and P10 volunteered in public schools under study. P6 facilitated summer youth programs by organizing tutors to support African American students with low academic achievement, and managed the summer youth employment program by helping approximately 175

African American teenagers to find internships at local businesses. This is an example of how a retired educator provided tutoring services to African American teenagers by organizing tutors from the community to be volunteers because they had the academic skills to help African American students develop literacy and mathematical skills. Similar to P6, P7 focused on how to assist African American students in improving literacy and mathematical skills as a volunteer and an advocate for these students to graduate from school. Analogous to P7, P8 volunteered as a tutor to teach low-income African American students on weekends literacy and mathematics for these students to graduate from high school and enter college students. These examples illustrate how P6, P7, and P8 helped students to develop literacy and mathematics skills. Although P6, P7, and P8 helped students develop literacy and mathematics skills, P9 assisted Hispanic families as an interpreter, and helped African American families to understand school policies and procedures regarding attendance and state testing. These examples illustrate the differences between P6, P7, P8 and P9. Specifically, P6, P7, and P8 helped students in literacy and mathematics and P9 helped families with translations and school policies and procedures. P10 served on community committees that provided grants to public schools to purchase educational software such as reading and mathematics; however, this participant also volunteered in the local schools by providing direct support services such as tutoring to an elementary school as a community member.

In conclusion, all participants volunteered in schools in the local setting. Although the participants were pastors and retired educators, all of them volunteered in the schools in different ways and had one common goal, which was to help students. The participants

helped students with literacy and mathematics. The four pastors helped students with literacy, and the educators helped African American students in improving literacy and mathematical skills by tutoring these students.

Theme 3: Recommended a Policy on Community Involvement Concerning Teaching Resources to Help Students Focus on Academic Achievement

The participants made recommendations to district administrators to create a policy on community involvement for educational community leaders to provide teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement because the main focus was to narrow the achievement gap. The participants made recommendations to district administrators to create a policy on community involvement for educational community leaders to provide teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement because the main focus was to narrow the achievement gap. All participants helped students in the schools under study. The 10 participants focused on how to help students to narrow the achievement gap. Both the four pastors and the six retired educators were involved in the local setting to help school leaders and teachers narrow the achievement gap. The first participant was an educator who completed an achievement gap analysis to help students in the local schools, made recommendations for policy regarding community involvement to help students with tutors as volunteers. Specifically, one of P1's recommendation was to the school district administrators to use the school community model, and worked with local school leaders to analyze the achievement gap data in literacy and mathematics of African American students. P1 made recommendations to district administrators to create a policy on community involvement

for education stakeholders such as educational community leaders to help students focus on academic achievement. One of P1's recommendations was for how to involve community in the schools to help school leaders and teachers narrow the achievement gap.

Through the local church, P2 was able to partner with the local elementary schools to provide direct reading resources to help African American students to focus on academic achievement. As a pastor, P2 volunteered at the local alternative school to help school leaders narrow the achievement gap by improving African American students' proficiency in literacy. The strategy P2 used was to provide direct reading resources to students. This pastor was a mentor reader to students for two decades, and advocated for academic performance. In their role as a community leader, P2 volunteered at the local schools and helped school district administrators with ideas for community involvement to include community leaders to help African American students in the local schools to focus on academic achievement. The focus of P2 was on the academic performance of African American students in low performing schools. P2 knew what is going on in the schools, and as a result they volunteered to help African American students. For example, P2 emphasized that they were familiar with the academic issues going on in the classrooms and how teachers benefit from community leaders who volunteer in schools. P2 encouraged African American students to succeed academically by offering to these students academic and social emotional support. P2 interacted with school district superintendent and assistant superintendents, and school board members to strengthen community involvement.

Similar to P2, P3 volunteered at the local schools to help African American students as a reader in elementary schools and to help school leaders to narrow the achievement gap. This participant not only was a reader to students but also participated in school board meetings, visited many schools to attend meetings with school leaders, and school board members to discuss issues in the schools because their focus was on the best interest of African American students in schools for these students to increase academic achievement. Like P2 and P3, P4 volunteered to respond to African American students' academic issues in neighborhood schools, and to help school leaders to work on school improvement plan. P2, P3, and P4 took their roles as educational community leaders seriously to help African American students in the local schools to focus on academic achievement, and to help teachers, school leaders, and district administrators to narrow the achievement gap. In addition to these examples, P4 attended school board meetings and served as a member of the school board community committee, and engaged the local police department and many community members to help the local low performing schools to be safer schools. These positive contributions P4 made were remarkable. P4 helped African American students in literacy and mathematics by volunteering in low performing schools and by communicating with teachers. An example P4 used is that regarding educational issues at low performing schools, they brought other volunteers to the low performing schools to help African American students improve reading and mathematics skills. Like P2, P3, and P4, P5 served as a school board committee member and member of the school improvement team, attended school board meetings in the local school district to help African American students to

focus on academic achievement, and to help district administrators narrow the achievement gap. The reason P5 volunteered so much was because they believed in quality education for all students, and as a result advised the school curriculum team on how to help teachers and school leaders to narrow the achievement gap by improving community-school partnership.

The four pastors and the retired educators focused on academic achievement to help school leaders and district administrators to narrow the achievement gap. P6 collaborated with school board members and the school superintendent regarding volunteering at the local schools to help African American students with academic achievement and to help administrators to narrow the achievement gap. P6 implied that by working with school counselors to provide summer job placement for African American students and by volunteering as a reader in low performing schools, students benefited from educational community leaders. An example provided by P6 was that three out of 10 third graders were not reading at the grade level in literacy and mathematics. Another example provided by P6 was that educational community leaders volunteered in low performing schools to help district administrators to narrow the achievement gap by creating educational programming such as volunteers to be reading to students to improve their literacy. A recommendation from P6 was that a partnership between the educational community leaders and the local school district helps African American students with academic achievement. A policy recommendation on community involvement to district administrators to work together to narrow the achievement gap is

beneficial to students because educational community leaders could be more involved in schools should there be a policy on community involvement.

Similar to the responses from P6, P7 was an educational community leader who volunteered at the local schools to assist African American students and district administrators in narrowing the achievement gap. An example P7 used was that educational community leaders were ready to assist in raising funding for educational programs, such as mathematics and literacy to be purchased for the local schools. This participant volunteered and raised enough money for the schools to purchase reading and mathematics educational program, and visited classrooms as a volunteer and read literacy books to elementary school African American students. In addition to raising funding for the purchase of reading and mathematics educational program, P7 invited 10 reading tutors to support teachers, and those tutors were reading educational books to African American students. Educational community leaders worked with school teachers, school leaders, and district administrators to assist students. Specifically, another example that P7 mentioned was that they created a reading intensive summer program in low performing schools where tutors were reading to Grade 2 African American students in the summer for African American students to improve their literacy. P7 implied that they volunteered to help African American students improve their reading proficiency, and recommended to school principals and the superintendent of the local school district to create a policy on community involvement. I also learned from P7 that they emphasized to school administrators the importance of creating a policy on community involvement.

An example P8 mentioned was that they helped school leaders with raising funds to purchase reading materials because they were a member of the school board committee and attended school board meetings. Specifically, P8 approached school principals to obtain permission to volunteer in schools, and recommended a policy to be created on community involvement for schools and community members to use to work together. P9 volunteered in elementary schools and read to African American students, helped teachers with low literacy proficiency of African American students by reading books to these students, and advocated in the local school district for academic performance of African American students. Moreover, P9 also mentioned that community leaders suggested to school district administrators to create a policy on community involvement, and recommended to local school district administrators to increase community involvement. The retired educator P10 volunteered in elementary schools to assist teachers in helping African American students to improve their reading skills, and assisted in raising funds for the purchase of reading teaching materials. Specifically, P10 read literacy books to elementary school students, and invited other members of the community to support teachers by reading literacy books to students.

All participants helped students because they focused on how to narrow the achievement gap. All participants were involved in the local setting to help school leaders and teachers to narrow the achievement gap. Additionally, all participants made recommendations for policy to be created in the local setting regarding community involvement to help students with tutors. Moreover, all participants volunteered as readers to African American students in schools.

All participants helped students by volunteering in the study setting and by focusing on how to narrow the achievement gap of African American students. The participants offered different services for the same goal. For example, P2 provided direct reading resources to school leaders to help African American students to focus on academic achievement. P3 participated in school board and school leaders' meetings to discuss academic issues. P4 attended school board meetings and served as a member of the school board community committee, and engaged both the local police department and many community members to help the local low performing schools to be safer schools. P6 collaborated with school board members and the school superintendent regarding African American students, worked with school counselors to provide summer job placement for African American students, created educational programming such as volunteers to be reading to students to improve their literacy, and recommended a partnership between the educational community leaders and the local school district to help African American students with academic achievement. P7 raised money for the schools to purchase reading and mathematics educational programs, read literacy books to elementary school African American students, invited 10 reading tutors to support teachers and to read educational books to African American students, created a reading intensive summer program, and recommended to school principals and the superintendent of the local school district to create a policy on community involvement. P8 raised funds to purchase reading materials, served as a member of the school board committee, and recommended a policy to be created on community involvement for schools and community members to use to work together. P9 advocated in the local school district for

academic performance of African American students, and suggested to school district administrators to create a policy on community involvement, and recommended to local school district administrators to increase community involvement. P10 assisted in raising funds for the purchase of reading teaching materials, and invited other members of the community to support teachers by reading literacy books to students. The services of the participants are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Differences in Services Offered by the Participants

| Services offered by the participants | P2 | P3 | P4 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|
| Provided reading resources | X | | | | | | | |
| Participated in school board meetings | | X | | X | | X | | |
| Participated in school leaders' meetings | | X | | | | | | |
| Served on school board community committee | | | X | | | | | |
| Engaged local police department and community members re safer schools | | | X | | | | | |
| Collaborated with superintendent | | | | X | X | | | |
| Provided summer job placements | | | | X | | | | |
| Created educational programming | | | | X | X | | | |
| Raised money for reading and mathematics | | | | | X | X | | X |
| Recommended a policy creation | | | | | X | X | X | |

Theme 4: Recommended a Shared Decision-Making Process Between the Community and School Leaders for the Benefit of Students

The educational community leaders recommended a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders for the benefit of students. The four pastors expressed their willingness to participate in shared decision-making processes in the local study setting. P2 implied that a two-way process of decision-making between

community and school leaders should be implemented because community leaders had been volunteering at the local schools and had been working with teachers, students, and administrators. P2 provided a reason for emphasizing that a shared decision-making process should be implemented by stating that community leaders are ready and willing to collaborate with the school district stakeholders because a two-way communication between educational community leaders and school district administrators concerning decision-making process are not only beneficial to the students but also to the community they serve. P2 believed that community leaders had a clear understanding of the needs of African American students and the community, and had been supporting the school district's initiatives. As a result, P2 strongly recommended the implementation of shared decision-making processes between the community and the school leaders. An example that P2 provided was educational programming and reading resources the community leaders bring to the schools to serve students in the community.

Similar to the responses provide by paste P2, P3 explained that there is a need to implement a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders. I understood that P3 strongly believed that school leaders need to engage community leaders to improve school district academic achievement of African American students. P3 emphasized that without authentic engagement of community leaders in a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders, how could the local school district better serve the needs of African American students? A shared decision-making process should be implemented for the voices of community leaders to be included in the decision-making processes of the school district because the school

district's decisions impact the day-to-day lives of families and African American students in the community.

Like P2 and P3, P4 spoke with passion about having shared decision-making processes in the study setting for the benefit of students in the school district. Like other pastor participants, P4 strongly recommended the implementation of a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders for the benefit of African American students. P4 referred to the school district's equity task force as an example of shared decision-making process with the community leaders. Another example that P4 mentioned was violence in the school district. Because of violence in the schools, P4 formed the local school district's neighborhood alliance for community and school leaders to work together on shared decision-making processes. Similar P2 and P3, P4 also recommended a process for school leaders to implement with community leaders to improve schools by improving the code of conduct, the code of character, and the school improvement plan.

Similar to the responses of P2, P3, and P4, pastor P5 spoke with passion that many community leaders had reported that there was no shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders at the local school district. The explanation P5 provided was that citizens who are community leaders must be included in shared decision-making processes in the school district under study. P5 was very confident that community leaders provide schools with certain educational resources or educational ideas; however, school leaders do not know that community leaders can participate in decision-making process with school leaders at the local school district. The explanation

provided by P5 was that community leaders help school leaders to build better schools by involving community leaders at the local school district in decision-making processes. Specifically, P5 emphasized that for decision-making processes both dialogue and collaboration between school leaders and educational community leaders at the local school district are absolutely necessary.

Pastor P1 also provided responses regarding decision-making processes at the school district. I noticed that P1 reported with disappointment that there was no shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders. I recalled P1 mentioned that they asked school leaders to involve community leaders in decision-making processes such as school improvement plan. An example P1 used was that they asked school leaders directly to inform them how community leaders could help school leaders the most. P1 reemphasized that community leaders were not involved in decision-making processes in the schools. Another example P1 used was that school leaders should involve community members in shared decision-making processes.

The retired educator P6 stated that many community leaders have asked local school district administrators to involve community leaders in shared decision-making processes to help them improve low performing schools. P6 explained in detail that a shared decision is needed in the local communities because educational community leaders have to have a dialogue concerning what's working and what's not working in the schools. Another explanation P6 provided was that school leaders need to be working with community leaders for the local communities to improve the education for African American students. Specifically, P6 emphasized that community leaders should meet

with school leaders for the benefit of students. P6 concluded that community leaders are requesting community partnerships with the local schools because community leaders already had partnerships with local associations and organizations.

The next retired educator P7 said that community leaders were not involved by school leaders in shared decision-making processes at the school district. P7 emphasized the need for school leaders to come to the table for the good of the schools and the community. Specifically, P7 stated that community leaders volunteered as tutors, and this involvement was beneficial to students and that this was an example of helping African American students improve proficiency. P7 said that decision-making processes must involve community members in the education of students at the local school district.

The retired educator P8 said that educational community leaders support the local school district; however, school leaders should share decision-making processes for the benefit of African American students. For example, P8 implied that many times decisions had been made by senior school district administrators without involving community leaders. An example provided by P8 was that the expertise of community leaders should be valued by school leaders. Like all other retired educators, P8 recommended community members should be involved in shared decision-making processes to school stakeholders to improve low performing schools.

According to P9, decision-making process is needed to involve community members in school matters, and recommended school and community leaders to do a better job of how decisions are made at the school district. The explanation provide by P9 was that school and community leaders should work together to leverage community

talent and resources, although school district leaders do not really want to hear from community members because decisions are not shared with community leaders. P10 believed that educational community leaders could support more local school district administrators, and recommended school leaders should involve community leaders in shared decision-making processes. Although P10 served as a volunteer in low performing schools, decision-making processes did not involve the local community leaders. Community leaders are willing to be involved in decision-making processes with school leaders, and educational community leaders are not involved in shared decision-making processes at the local schools.

The educational community leaders reported that there was no shared decision-making process at the schools under study. All participants expressed their readiness to participate in shared decision-making processes in the local schools. The four pastor participants stated they had a clear understanding of the needs of African American students and the community, and had been supporting the school district's initiatives. Additionally, the four pastor participants strongly recommended the implementation of shared decision-making processes between the community and the school leaders.

Interpretation of the Findings

The research question was: How do educational community leaders perceive they are involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students?

Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model was used to analyze relationships in school-family-community partnerships. The emergent themes

answered the research question. The participants were four pastors and six retired educators. All participants were involved in the local schools in educational processes, volunteered in the schools, helped students and administrators to narrow the achievement gap, and were not involved in shared decision-making process for community leaders to help school leaders but strong recommended to be involved in shared decision-making processes.

The findings are in line with the findings of scholars who examined community partnerships, community volunteerism, community resources, and involvement in educational processes. The content of the themes is in line with the components of the school-family-community partnership model, such as communicating with school stakeholders, volunteering in schools, decision making, and collaborating with the school leaders. Epstein et al. (2018) wrote community involvement happens when community partners are integrated into the educational processes in schools. The findings provide evidence that community involvement strengthened the tutoring support at the schools under study (Epstein et al., 2018). According to Epstein et al. (2018), when educational community members are involved in school activities student learn. The findings revealed that the participants collaborated with the school and district leaders to help students. These findings are in agreement with Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model that collaboration with stakeholders could help students. The findings also revealed that the educational community members provided community resources to the school district. These findings are in agreement with Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model that community resources are

integrated into the educational process to strengthen student learning (Epstein et al., 2018).

According to the literature concerning the school-family-community partnership model, school leaders may invite community members to strengthen student learning. Regarding the components of the school-family-community partnership model, school and district leaders should encourage community involvement by implementing a policy about community involvement in schools (Chavkin, 2000). The findings revealed that community members collaborated with school stakeholders to improve schools. According to Cohen et al. (2018), community members should work with school stakeholders to improve schools by encouraging community members to help the youth to address common educational problems. According to the responses from the participants and the literature review concerning the school-family-community partnership model, educational community leaders helped students to improve schools. Community members could help districts improve schools (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). The findings revealed that community involvement improves student learning. Community members could participate in school activities to improve student achievement (Newman et al., 2012).

Theme 1

This theme was that the participants participated in school district councils, and worked with school and district administrators concerning the improvement of schools. The findings revealed that the participants were involved in schools' activities as advocates for students. Specifically, the participants were involved in low performing

schools to help African American students by collaborating with the school leaders. These findings and the literature concerning Epstein's et al. (2018) model give support in the implementation of the model in schools. The findings revealed that the participants collaborated with school and district leaders to focus on the academic achievement of African American students. Aidman and Baray (2016) suggested that for a collaboration between communities and schools, school leaders need to know how to collaborate with community leaders. Moreover, effective collaborations include a common school-community agenda and continuous communication between community and school leaders to meet the needs of students (Aidman & Baray, 2016). Aidman and Baray (2016) agreed that school-community partnerships are helpful to provide school activities for students. Furthermore, leadership of school district administrators affects community collaboration because community partnerships connect schools with the community to address school improvement. Scholars such as FitzGerald and Quiñones (2019) examined leadership in community schools and suggested that external partnerships could help schools with student supports. Additionally, the participants helped school leaders with community collaboration challenges. Moreover, school leaders are aware of the barriers to student success and could create community partnerships to lessen such barriers (FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2019).

Theme 2

This theme was that the participants were involved in educational processes by providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics to African American students in low performing schools to improve proficiency. The findings revealed that the

participants were involved in educational processes by providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics to African American students in low performing schools to improve proficiency. These findings are supported by findings of scholars who reported that school–community partnerships depends on school leaders having skills to create partnerships with community stakeholders to deliver school programs. Scholars reported that community schools engage students in learning. Students who attend community schools score higher on most state tests and are more likely to graduate from high school (Caldas et al., 2019).

According to the responses provided by the participants and the literature review concerning Epstein’s et al. (2018) model support that school–community partnerships improve student learning. According to Valli et al. (2018), school–community partnerships improve student learning. Furthermore, school-community partnerships are correlated with academic achievement (Nelson et al., 2020).

The findings revealed that school leaders advocated for students and collaborated with the community to lead school programs. According to Bryan et al. (2017), advocating for students and collaborating with the community correlate with academic achievement. The findings also revealed that a school–community involvement occurred in the after-school programs where the participants provided additional education services for the benefit of students. Bryan et al. (2017) suggested that community involvement benefits students. Additionally, the findings are in line with the suggestions of Biddle et al. (2018) who examined the importance of community collaborations, and suggested school leaders should encourage community participation in school matters.

Additionally, Jones and Christian (2021) reported that community participation in schools positively affect literacy and especially students who needed additional literacy support.

The participants volunteered in public schools under study because they wanted to help African American students improve their academic skills in literacy and mathematical. Volunteering is a component of Epstein's et al. (2018) theory. Moreover, the participants focused on how to assist African American students in improving literacy and mathematical skills as volunteers and an advocate for these students to graduate from school (Sanders et al., 2019). Furthermore, the four pastors helped students with literacy, and the educators helped African American students in improving literacy and mathematical skills by tutoring these students because community schools foster interconnections with community members (Scott et al., 2020). Specifically, the findings revealed that all participants volunteered in schools because they focused on students.

Theme 3

This theme was that the participants recommended community involvement concerning teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement. The findings revealed that the participants spoke about community resources and how they volunteered in the schools under study. The findings also revealed that all participants helped students by focusing on how to narrow the achievement gap via reading resources to schools to help African American students to focus on academic achievement.

According to the responses provided by the participants and the review of the current literature concerning Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership

model, community involvement regarding teaching resources can help schools with student achievement. These findings are in line with the suggestions made by Sanders et al. (2019) who concluded that community services could be provided during school and after-school hours where communities provide resources to schools for students to learn. Additionally, scholars provided evidence that by inviting community experts to the classroom, instruction could be enhanced with teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement (Stefan et al., 2018). Moreover, Stefan et al. mentioned the community involvement could include community experts as guest speakers in the classrooms.

The participants provided teaching resources to low performing schools in the local school district to help African American students focus on academic achievement. These responses are in line with literature concerning Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model. Sanders and Galindo (2019) stated that community schools help the most economically disadvantaged students. Based on the responses provided by the participants and literature review community schools connect community members and schools. Stefan et al. (2018) reported that community schools foster interconnections between community members and schools.

The participants advocated for community involvement and provided teaching resources to the schools under study to assist African American students in low performing schools to focus on academic achievement. Krumm and Curry (2017) suggested educational leaders advocate for community engagement by engaging the community members to meet the needs of students by helping schools with the lack of

resources. The participants provided teaching resources for literacy and mathematics during and after-school hours. Community services could be provided during school and after-school hours regarding academic achievement (Sanders et al., 2019).

The participants provided community resources to the local schools for students to learn suggesting that school administrators should be capitalizing on community involvement. Participation of the community in schools focus on education outcomes by creating a school–community partnership with community leaders (Essuman, 2019; Watson et al., 2017). According to Epstein’s et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model and the literature, this model is used by school leaders to support students. The findings provided evidence that the school-family-community partnership model is an effective tool to assist African American students in low performing schools to focus on academic achievement. According to Jung and Sheldon (2020), school leaders promote school and community partnerships. Educators create school–community partnerships (Childs & Grooms, 2018). Additionally, Epstein’s et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model was implemented in the local setting through community support. Scholars documented that school leaders work with community leaders to foster school–community partnerships (Casto, 2016; Thapa & Cohen, 2017). Community engagement in school activities enhance academic achievement (Beard & Thomson, 2021; Provinzano et al., 2020).

Theme 4

The participants stated that community leaders had asked local school district administrators to involve community leaders in shared decision-making processes to help

them improve low performing schools and emphasized that community leaders should meet with school leaders for the benefit of students. Specifically, community leaders requested community partnerships with the local schools because community leaders already had partnerships with local associations and organizations. Scholars examined community partnerships as a connection between schools and community partners. Community partnerships are beneficial to students and society (Josh, 2021). Students benefit when community partners visit schools to educate students (Josh, 2021). Both Josh and Tilhou et al. (2018) stated that developing community partnerships result in positive outcomes for students.

The review of the current literature concerning Epstein's et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model and the responses provided by the participants revealed that educational community leaders are ready to be involved in shared decision-making processes to improve low performing schools. These findings illustrated that community involvement occurred because the participants were integrated into the educational process providing evidence that the sixth component of Epstein's (1985) model was implemented. The fifth component of Epstein's et al. (2018) model is *decision making* stating that involvement occurs when schools "include parents in school decisions" and "develop parent leaders and representatives." This component was implemented by the six participants of the 10 participants who were retired educators.

The educational community leaders reported that there was no shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders. All participants expressed their readiness to participate in shared decision-making processes in the local schools.

Scholars have well documented the need to involve communities in decision-making processes in schools. For example, Boudreaux (2017) recommended school community and school leaders to be involved in school decision-making processes to promote academic success. Another example provided by Boudreaux was school leaders should collaborate with community stakeholders because “knowledge of the community in which the school leader serves is advantageous when building relationships” (p. 5). Additionally, Krumm and Curry (2017) emphasized the need to make collaborative decision-making by sharing the school’s vision and goals.

The conceptual framework was Epstein’s et al. (2018) school-family-community partnership model, which is used to analyze relationships in school-family-community partnerships. The school-family-community partnership model consists of six types of school involvement, such as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The emergent themes are supported by the school-family-community partnership model, and are in line with the suggestions of Epstein et al. (2018) who reported that when community partners are integrated into the educational processes in schools involvement occurs that can strengthen school programs.

The themes revealed that educational community members were involved in school programs at the school under study by collaborating with the school and district leaders (Epstein et al., 2018). Additionally, the themes revealed that educational community members were involved in neighborhood communities and as a result influenced student learning and development (Epstein et al., 2018). Moreover, the themes

were in line with Epstein's explanation that community involvement is about the strengths and talents of the community partners to support students. Furthermore, the educational community members were involved in schools because of their interest in quality education (Epstein et al., 2018). The themes also revealed that educational community members volunteered in the local setting to support the schools and its students by organizing tutoring opportunities for students in low performing schools (Epstein et al., 2018). Due to the collaboration between educational community members and school and district administrators, the educational community members provided community resources to the local schools to strengthen school programs in literacy and mathematics for students to improve their proficiency (Epstein et al., 2018).

Evidence of Quality

I used interviews to achieve credibility of this project study. The 10 interviews I conducted provided sufficient data because no new information emerged. I listened carefully to each participant during each interview. Scholars should use a basic qualitative research design to achieve dependability to arrive at similar findings. Regarding reflexivity, I kept field notes during the interviews. Concerning transferability, the emergent themes should apply to other similar study settings. I followed ethical procedures, described the data collection process, and assured that the interview excerpts represented the perceptions of the participants. I used a data audit to establish dependability. I addressed credibility by member checks to minimize biases. Each participant reviewed their interview transcripts, and verified the accuracy of the interview data.

Project Deliverable

The project deliverable is a policy recommendation. This project included participants who were educational community leaders of which four were pastors and six were retired educators. School leaders and district administrators could use this project deliverable to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. School leaders should involve educational community leaders in school activities such as literacy, science, and mathematics to help African American students at the local low performing schools to increase proficiency in these academic subjects. The policy recommendation content added valuable information to the education field regarding the perceptions of educational community leaders regarding the academic growth of African American students in low performing schools. School leaders and senior district administrators should encourage educational community leaders to participate in school activities through the implementation of this project at all schools at the study site.

Summary

Using a basic qualitative research design, I collected data by using semistructured interviews via Zoom with 10 educational community leaders who were the participants. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I used Zoom to interview educational community leaders. I transcribed the interviews and used the coding process. Four themes emerged. In Section 3, I present the project.

Section 3: The Project

A policy on community relations was implemented to increase support from educational community leaders to support the academic growth of African American students. According to the superintendent of schools at the study site, the current student population is 41% White, 30% African American, 25% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 3% other. According to local state's accountability data sets and reports, most of the students who are African American and who attend inner city schools have poor academic achievement and the schools are known as low-performing schools. The community relations policy was implemented in 2007 to increase support from the local educational community leaders; however, the low-performing schools' district test scores of African American students in science, mathematics, and language arts continued to be low (Tables 1 & 2). The problem is that the community relations policy was implemented to increase support from the local educational community leaders, but educational community leaders have struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. In this basic qualitative research, I sought to investigate how educational community leaders perceive their involvement with the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project study site.

Despite policies in place to involve the community in school activities to improve performance among African American students, test scores among this student population continued to be below district average and below the averages of their non-African American counterparts (see Table 1 and Table 2). Community leaders struggled

to be involved with the educational process of the low-performing local schools (president of community organization, personal communication, July 11, 2021).

According to the assistant superintendent of schools, educational community leaders were not involved with the educational process of the schools to support the academic growth of African American students (personal communication, July 15, 2021).

According to Barber (2018), community involvement enhances connections between schools and the community. Researchers throughout the literature agree that school districts should increase community involvement (Childs & Grooms, 2018; Hausburg, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Medina et al., 2020; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Based on data collected from the participants, they have: (a) provided educational support to students, participated in school district councils, and worked with school and district administrators; (b) provided tutoring support in literacy and mathematics to improve proficiency; (c) made recommendations to create a policy on community involvement to provide teaching resources to focus on academic achievement; and (d) recommended a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders.

The findings in this project may be used to better involve educational community leaders in the educational processes of low-performing schools at the study site to support the academic growth of African American students. Such support has the potential to increase students' proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts. This has potential implications for positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency and education. Educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators will benefit from

the project by learning how to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. Educational community leaders can share their expertise in academic subjects by being involved with the educational processes of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of these students.

Rationale

The problem I researched in the local setting was that educational community leaders were struggling to be involved with the educational process at local low-performing schools. I investigated how educational community leaders perceive their involvement to support the academic growth of African American students at the project site. The project study was developed to improve school–community involvement so that educational community leaders could better participate in the educational process of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. Additionally, this project was designed to encourage school stakeholders to collaborate more with educational community leaders to involve them in school activities at the project site.

The participants indicated that they are involved in educational processes in the local schools: provide educational support to African American students in low-performing schools, participate in school district councils, and work with school and district administrators to help with the improvement of schools. The participants indicated they are involved in educational processes by providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics for African American students in low-performing schools to

improve proficiency. The participants also indicated they make recommendations to district administrators to create a policy on community involvement for educational community leaders to provide teaching resources to help students focus on academic achievement because the main focus was to narrow the achievement gap. The educational community leaders also recommended a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders for the benefit of students.

A policy recommendation is the project of this basic qualitative project study. The policy recommendation includes the involvement of educational community leaders with educational processes at low-performing schools. This involvement may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts. This project was designed to increase educational community leaders' involvement in school-wide activities.

Educational community leaders could be involved in school activities advocating for students in low-performing schools and in school district councils to help district administrators improve schools. Additionally, educational community leaders could serve on school councils to assist school leaders in involving the local community in educational processes. For example, educational community leaders could be members of neighborhood associations and participate in school councils focusing on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and additional needs of African American students. Moreover, educational community leaders could mentor students and serve on city and school councils. Educational community leaders could assist students in low-

performing schools by providing educational support to the schools in the local setting and by being involved in school activities as advocates for African American students. Educational community leaders could participate in school district councils and work with school and district administrators to help the improvement of schools. For successful school–community partnership, continuous communication between community and school leaders is needed to address the needs of students.

Educational community leaders could focus on how to assist African American students in improving literacy and mathematical skills by tutoring these students in these areas. For example, educational community leaders could assist teachers in the local setting in literacy to help students improve proficiency because state test scores in literacy are low in the schools under study. Educational community leaders could work with school board policy committee members to improve schools' improvement plans. Educational community leaders could serve on a youth advisory board to help students at the local district stay in school, pass state tests, and graduate from school. School leaders could collaborate with educational community leaders and encourage participation in school activities, such as tutoring. Educational community leaders should be encouraged to support students in community schools because school–community partnerships enhance student learning.

Educational community leaders could provide reading resources to schools to help African American students. Also, educational community leaders could provide support to students during school and after-school hours. Educational community leaders could bring expertise to the classrooms to enhance instruction by addressing learning

objectives. Additionally, educational community leaders could make recommendations to district administrators concerning community involvement to help students focus on academic achievement by creating a partnership between schools and the local community. School and district leaders should engage educational community leaders to meet the needs of students; these leaders can help schools with the lack of resources for students by focusing on education outcomes. School–community partnerships can focus on improving learning should be fostered.

Educational community leaders could recommend a shared decision-making process to help school leaders improve low-performing schools because community partnerships can be beneficial to students and society. Moreover, developing partnerships result in positive outcomes for students because school–community partnerships benefit schools by helping facilitate learning. Additionally, school leaders should engage educational community leaders to support student learning because students benefit from the expertise of community members.

In this project, I included recommendations for improving the community relations policy implemented at the study site in 2007 to increase support from local educational community leaders to support the academic growth of African American students. The existing community relations policy of the school district under study mandates school and community partnerships. The school district’s equity policy specifically highlights the school district’s mandate to consider the low achievement of African American students. Members of the board of education expressed the need for educational community leaders to support the low-performing schools of primarily

African American students (superintendent of schools, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

I developed a policy containing recommendations based on the participants' interview responses. Moreover, I selected a policy recommendation for this doctoral study to address the problem of the community relations policy implemented by the local school district to increase support from the local educational community leaders; however, the educational community leaders were struggling to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. The goal of the project was to present a policy recommendation to senior school district administrators, school leaders, and community educational leaders at the study site. The policy recommendation may help educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. The policy recommendation may also help school leaders to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools. Senior school district leaders may use the policy recommendation to revise the policy regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational process of the low performing schools at the study site.

As a novice policymaker, I attempted to justify and defend decisions found in the policy by providing evidence to educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators at the study site. Moreover, I set clear goals and gathered relevant information related to the research problem and based on the findings to reach a

desired solution because a policy recommendation process is supported by accurate information. Furthermore, I systematically reviewed and applied evidence to develop this policy recommendation. The policy recommendations provides rich evidence by studying the problem in the local setting that the educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students.

The project is a policy recommendation, which is evidence-based because the focus was on improving school-community involvement in the schools under study. I created this policy for stakeholders at the local setting to improve student learning outcomes. I also developed this project study for the development of improved educational processes in the schools under study.

Review of the Literature

In this review of the literature, I present information on a policy recommendation process, policymakers, evidence-driven policy design, and community-school partnerships. The genre of this project study is a policy recommendation to the local school district senior district administrators and school leaders. The contents of the project are specific policy recommendations for community leaders and school administrators.

Policy Recommendation

A policy recommendation is a process. Desouza and Lin (2011) recommended that policymakers need to justify and defend their decisions by showing stakeholders evidence. Moreover, Desouza and Lin wrote that policies should be revised. Furthermore,

a school policy has an indirect effect on student achievement (Kyriakides et al., 2015). A policy can be used to change the actions of school leaders and improve the learning of students (Kyriakides et al., 2015). Additionally, Kyriakides et al. (2015) reported, “school stakeholders are better aware of their school needs and may therefore be more able to direct effort, resources, and educational processes more efficiently to meet them” (p. 1).

According to Chavkin (2000), school districts encourage more community involvement, and policies about community involvement are necessary. Chavkin emphasized that a school policy should define community involvement and have clear guidelines. Chavkin suggested that a written policy should be supported for the development, implementation, and maintenance of community involvement. Chavkin suggested that a policy contain community involvement in volunteer activities, fund raising, involvement in decision-making, and education programs.

According to Cohen et al. (2018), a policy should value public engagement in education decision making by encouraging engagement groups to join together within and across local settings. Public engagement refers to collective efforts by community members to work together to improve schools (Cohen et al., 2018). An example provided by Cohen et al. (2018) was that community members and youth could work together to address common educational problems.

According to Vasquez Heilig et al. (2014), community organizing is a form of public engagement for education reform to address inequities in public schools. Community organizing can help districts develop and implement effective reforms in communities of color (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2014). Members of the community could

“propose and execute strategies for change that have promise for improving the success of urban schools” (p. 3). Vasquez Heilig et al. (2014) concluded that communities and schools can work together to “improve district and school success and educational outcomes for students” (p. 4).

According to Newman et al. (2012), community organizing influences local education policy. Community organizations are engaging in education reform and could impact district-wide policy (Newman et al., 2012). Community organizing can improve student achievement (Newman et al., 2012). Newman et al. (2012) concluded that “community groups facilitate the implementation of a range of policies including new reading curricula” (p. 3).

Transforming Education for Students

A policy has the potential to transform education for students. By interviewing educational community leaders, school and district leaders may use a policy recommendation to involve educational community leaders in school activities in the schools at the project site. Scholars should gather data regarding educational community partnerships by examining a local problem of practice and create a policy for local school districts to support students. Additionally, school leaders will need time to implement this policy. For example, the student should be the focus of school leaders who should create a policy to alter education for students (Mavrogordato & White, 2019, p. 37). Finally, school leaders should know about the needs of the students (Mavrogordato & White, 2019). Thus, school stakeholders should engage community members (Castillo, 2022).

Creating Community Schools

According to Sanders (2016), community schools could help underserved students because these schools depend on community partnerships that offer community-based learning opportunities for students. Also, a community school is effective because of student achievement because of community partnerships (Sanders, 2016). According to McKinney de Royston and Madkins (2019), a community school should create community partnerships for involvement in the schools. Community leaders can be critical contributors to schools and a community school should create partnerships with community-based organizations (McKinney de Royston & Madkins, 2019). Moreover, students in community schools were more likely to graduate from high school. Also, students in community schools had higher average cumulative scores than their peers in traditional schools. FitzGerald and Quiñones (2019) examined leadership in community schools and reported that community schools use partnerships to transform a school by providing integrated student supports. Moreover, FitzGerald and Quiñones reported that community schools work collaboratively with community leaders. As a result, school leaders should advocate for students and learn from community school's partnerships. School–community partnerships could enhance student learning and support struggling neighborhoods because community members are important school partners (Valli et al., 2018). School leaders should be implementing community involvement because community leaders could guide school leaders in partnership building. In conclusion, leadership of school district administrators affects community collaboration because

community partnerships connect schools with the community to address school improvement.

Community–School Partnerships

The topic of community-school partnerships is well documented in the current literature. For example, a connection between schools and community partners is beneficial to students (Josh, 2021). Moreover, community partners help students by providing learning resources to students (Josh). Furthermore, students learn from community partnerships (Tilhou et al., 2018). For example, Aidman and Baray (2016) wrote school leaders should develop community partnerships to address the needs of students. Moreover, community and school leaders should develop community partnerships for community members to provide school activities (Aidman & Baray, 2016). Furthermore, school leaders should be inviting community experts to the classroom to enhance instruction (Stefan et al., 2018). According to Bryan et al. (2017), school leaders should have communication skills for collaboration and networking with community stakeholders to share the school’s vision. School leaders could use, as a strategy, a systemic collaboration to deliver school programs and to create systemic change. Also, school leaders should advocate for students and collaborate with the community (Bryan et al., 2017). Another example of a school–community involvement is after-school programs for the benefit of students (Bryan et al., 2017).

School-community partnerships play an important role in the students’ holistic development because such partnerships could facilitate learning (Malone, 2020). For example, Mayger and Provinzano (2020) examined how principals could successfully

lead community schools, and if principals are prepared to lead community schools and engage in meaningful community involvement. School leaders should expand partnerships that support community development (Mayger & Provinzano, 2020).

According to Mayger and Provinzano, for school-community partnership, collaboration is needed among stakeholders because these leaders share mutual interests in improving schools.

Mercer (2016) stated that principals should be linking the local community with their schools. Furthermore, principals should also work with community stakeholders on a regular basis. Additionally, Mercer concluded that principals should center on supporting community involvement. Like Mercer, Medina et al. (2020) conducted a case study to examine school improvement in community schools and reported that leaders should be engaging community leaders to support student learning. For instance, Jung and Sheldon (2020) explored the associations of leadership for partnerships. Principals' collaborative leadership for partnerships was related to the quality of partnership program organization. School leaders should promote school and community partnerships. Collaboration between schools and communities could create better educational outcomes (Jung & Sheldon, 2020). Principals should empower members of the community to create school-community partnerships. According to Jung and Sheldon, "principals have dual leadership roles in building high-quality partnership programs" (p. 4). School administrators and community members should work together to create teaching and learning environments (Thapa & Cohen, 2017). School-community partnerships could support student learning and school administrators could foster

meaningful school–community partnerships. Similar to the suggestions made by both Jung and Sheldon, and Casto (2016) examined connections between an elementary school and its local community and collected data through interviews with district and school administration, teachers, parents, and community members. Casto reported that school–community partnerships created for after-school and summer activities promote literacy because such partnerships enhance learning. According to Scanlan and Park (2020), partnerships between educators and community agencies should focus on building relationships for the benefit of students. Scanlan and Park conducted a case study and the participants were administrators, teachers, board members, community members, and parents. Scanlan and Park conducted the study in a traditional public school that was considered a community school, and concluded that partnerships between schools and community groups help schools serve students from minority communities. According to Scanlan and Park, school administrators should be involved in meeting community members to discuss noneducational and educational issues.

According to Adams (2019), schools should build relationships with community organizations. Community partnerships should be created in schools to provide students with opportunities to benefit from the expertise of community members. Administrators should implement the school vision by including partnerships with the local communities. Sanders and Galindo (2019) stated that community schools should focus on improving the education of historically underserved students. A community school should be building relationships with the local communities “to enhance students’ development| by providing resources, and supports to students. Also, a community school should provide

to students learning opportunities through community instructional programs. According to Sanders and Galindo, school-community partnerships improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged students. A community school should create community engagement through collaborative leadership and practices (Oakes et al., 2017). Oakes reported that well-implemented community-schools benefit from community engagement by involving the community and students in needs assessments and planning.

Engaging Community Stakeholders

School administrators should engage community stakeholders in school activities. For example, Anderson et al. (2019) stated school–community partnerships benefit schools. Additionally, Sanders et al. (2019) examined the leadership roles and practices of educators in three full-service community schools and reported schools could improve the educational experiences of students. For example, Sanders et al. wrote that community services could be provided during school and after-school hours. Additionally, communities leaders provide resources to schools for students to learn. For instance, community organizations could provide resources to the classroom, and social and financial support to students (Stefan et al., 2018). Examples of community involvement include guest speakers and internship opportunities for students (Stefan et al., 2018). For example, school leaders could gather input from local businesses and organizations to enhance the curriculum (Stefan et al., 2018). Moreover, Scott et al. (2020) explored the planning and implementation process in a historically low performing elementary setting and stated community partners can offer resources to the schools. Furthermore, community schools foster interconnections between community

members and schools. For example, educators should focus on building relationships between the community and schools. Latunde (2017) wrote that a factor related to the achievement of diverse students is community partnerships. Community partnerships are considered an intervention because the impact of the Black church on the African American community has been well-documented (Latunde, 2017). For example, Black churches have been supporting schools and colleges financially and providing tutoring, services to schools (Latunde, 2017). Sanders et al. (2019) examined the leadership roles and practices of educators in three full-service community schools. Sanders et al. wrote that community services could be provided during school and after-school hours. For example, communities could provide resources to schools for students to learn. Therefore, school administrators should be capitalizing on community partners.

School-community involvement is important. Jones and Christian (2021) examined an early grade literacy tutoring program with parental engagement in seven low performing public schools and the students who participated in the study received tutoring rough family engagement. Moreover, Jones and Christian reported that the tutoring sessions had a “statistically significant positive impacts on literacy development” (para 2). For example, Jones and Christian reported that the tutoring sessions had the greatest effect on students who needed literacy support. Additionally, similar to Jones and Christian’s findings, Parker et al. (2020) interviewed African American female students and reported that the community-based programs helped the participants to develop skills through hands-on activities by interacting with community peers.

The educational community leaders could collaborate with school board members, the school superintendent, and school leaders to help students at the local schools. Specifically, school leaders should be developing community partnerships using collaboration (Tilhou et al., 2018). According to Tilhou et al. school board members should develop community partnerships by planning for collaboration. Similar to the recommendations made by Tilhou et al., Aidman and Baray (2016) suggested collaboration is a required skill of school leaders to know how to share community and school resources. According to Sanders et al. (2019), educators should build trusting relationships with community members. Beard and Thomson (2021) conducted a qualitative case study to explore administrators' perceptions of community engagement and recommended that school leaders should know how to engage communities to create positive school experiences. According to Beard and Thomson, school administrators should work collaboratively with the community.

The educational community leaders could also collaborate with school and district leaders to help students at the local schools. Furthermore, leaders should engage communities by applying their collaborative leadership practices. Additionally, school leaders could focus on creating school and community partnerships. For example, school leaders should create community partnerships for positive student outcomes, including academic and nonacademic initiatives (Provinzano et al., 2020, p. 5). For instance, community partnerships are connected with student academic achievement (Provinzano et al.). According to Hitt and Tucker (2016), leadership is exercised through relationships between school administrators and community partners. Conditions for student

achievement should include all educators in a school and community partners, and school administrators should facilitate high-quality learning experiences for students by connecting schools with external partners to promote participation from community members (Hitt & Tucker). School administrators should implement community involvement for community partners to provide resources to increase student achievement. For example, McKinney de Royston and Madkins (2019) stated that community schools could address the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical developmental needs of children. According to McKinney de Royston and Madkins communities and schools could integrate their resources and provide services to students with the help of community members. For example, community schools are based on community partnerships, and community involvement should include individuals from the communities in “discourses at the school and district levels” (McKinney de Royston & Madkins, para 4).

School-community partnerships benefit students. For instance, school principals should create community partnerships to connect communities with students (Hauseman et al., 2017). Additionally, Hauseman et al. indicated that principals were engaged in community involvement. Moreover, school–community involvement includes businesses and churches. School leaders should engage in community relationships for additional funding for supplementary education services to increase student learning. School–community involvement should be a component of a principal’s instructional leadership portfolio (Hauseman et al.). For instance, Epstein et al. (2018) reported that college courses for future school leaders should include understanding community partnerships

and school district leaders should be aware of and committed to community engagement because these administrators should understand community engagement. Therefore, school and community partnerships should involve engagement in shared leadership and in receiving support and information from community members because a goal-linked program of community engagement could increase student success. For example, teamwork between communities and schools is correlated with academic achievement (Nelson et al., 2020). Moreover, school-community partners should implement programs that may affect the development of students (Nelson et al.). Specifically, school-community collaborators is an innovative method to help students with career development (Nelson et al.). Additionally, Hauseman et al. (2017) administered a large-scale survey to 1,400 principals regarding school–community involvement. Moreover, Hauseman et al. indicated that principals were engaged in community involvement. School–community involvement includes businesses and churches. School leaders should engage in community relationships for additional funding for supplementary education services to increase student learning. Additionally, school–community involvement should be considered “one component of a principal’s instructional leadership portfolio” (p. 4).

Community and school leaders should collaborate. According to Aidman and Baray (2016), effective collaborations include a common school-community agenda between community and school leaders. Like Aidman and Baray, Biddle et al. (2018) examined the importance of community collaborations and emphasized that school leaders should collaborate with community members for school matters. For example,

school leaders should collaborate with multiple organizations to solve complex problems at schools (Biddle et al., 2018). For instance, school leaders should collaborate with community partners to focus on sharing the school vision and mission (Biddle et al., 2018). Similar to the recommendations made by Aidman and Baray, and Biddle et al. (2018), Krumm and Curry (2017) examined partnerships between the school and the community and reported a common vision should be used to create partnerships between communities and schools where educators and community members would collaborate. For example, collaboration with community partners is needed to develop school–community partnerships to enhance student success. Krumm and Curry also concluded community involvement could help schools with lack of resources and thus collaboration with community partners is necessary. Moreover, Green (2018) reported that principals should collaborate with community partners for community improvement. Also, according to Green, principals’ actions regarding collaboration with community partners could support community improvement by connecting instruction to community realities because community involvement could affect the neighborhoods where urban schools are located.

Policymakers could work with community stakeholders to connect schools and local communities. School leaders should use a policy on how to engage communities to improve school outcomes (Green, 2018). Regarding student achievement, communities are helpful to schools when they support the school’s mission (Green, 2018). According to Essuman (2019), a policy regarding the active participation of the community should focus on education outcomes. Moreover, a policy on community participation should be

implemented by schools because community involvement has an effect on quality in schooling (Essuman, 2019). Also, according to Essuman, there is a need for policy regarding school–community partnerships. Additionally, Watson et al. (2017) suggested that policymakers and school leaders should create partnerships with local community leaders to provide services to schools. Moreover, Watson et al. wrote that collaborating with the community for the integration of resources and services from the community to strengthen schools. According to Boudreaux (2017), school community and school leaders should be involved in school decision-making processes. School leaders should be communicating with the larger community (Boudreaux, 2017). Furthermore, education leaders should engage the community to promote academic success (Boudreaux, 2017). School leaders are considered instructional leaders who should create collaborative relationship with stakeholders in the community (Boudreaux, 2017). Additionally, school leaders should be sharing the school vision clearly with school stakeholders such as community members and should be building positive relationships with these stakeholders (Boudreaux, 2017). Boudreaux also mentioned that school leaders should involve stakeholders in school decision-making processes. According to Boudreaux, school community involvement could foster student achievement. Finally, Boudreaux emphasized that a strong collaboration is a key between schools and the community to receive feedback from the community regarding decision-making processes at the schools.

A community-school collaboration is needed in schools. For instance, O'Connor and Daniello (2019) suggested that educators should participate in school-community

partnerships to improve student learning with additional learning resources. Similar to the suggestions made by O'Connor and Daniello, Childs and Grooms (2018) used qualitative interviews to understand the strategies community members used as educational stakeholders to decrease chronic student absenteeism in a large, urban, southern school district, and suggested that school districts should partner with local organizations to use their expertise and knowledge to help students. Moreover, Childs and Grooms reported that the strategies to involve community members to decrease chronic student absenteeism included involving local community partners to help students who were chronically absent by collaborating with the schools' teachers and administrators via community-school collaboration. Additionally, Childs and Grooms also reported that a school district should be collaborating with community organizations for its members to be involved in the schools by contributing to student improvement. For instance, According to Talmage et al. (2018), schools could use community-school collaboration for issues between schools and communities. Community-school collaboration is needed to engage school administrators and community members, and schools should share the school vision with school community members (Cook et al., 2021). In conclusion, this project study is in line with the four aspects associated with student learning outcomes: (a) student behavior outside the classroom; (b) collaboration and interaction between teachers; (c) partnership policy (i.e., relationship between school and community, parents and advisors); and (d) provision of sufficient learning resources to students and teachers (Kyriakides et al., 2015, p. 3). Specifically, all policy recommendations are in line with these four aspects.

Project Description

The project is a policy recommendation developed based on the themes. The policy recommendation contains the findings of this project study. I will present this project to the attendees, who will be educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators at the study site. I will present the content of the policy to the local school district board of education members and the local community organizations at the study site. The focus of the presentation will be on community-school involvement to increase the involvement of local educational community leaders in school activities found in the policy recommendation, and to increase communication and collaboration between educational community leaders and school or district leaders.

The following recommendations are for school leaders and district administrators to revise the existing policy on community relations:

- The school district will welcome educational community leaders to be involved in school activities to improve literacy and mathematics proficiency by advocating for students in low performing schools.
- The school district will invite educational community leaders to school district councils to help school and district administrators and teachers to improve schools.
- The school district will involve educational community leaders in school and district meetings regarding the academic achievement of African American students.

- The school district will request educational community leaders to assist African American students by tutoring these students in literacy and mathematics.
- The school district will ask educational community leaders to provide resources to the local schools to help African American students.
- The focus of the policy recommendation is on how school leaders and district administrators may involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. For example, by presenting this policy to senior school district administrators, school leaders, and community educational leaders at the study site, the content of the policy may help: (a) educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site; (b) school leaders to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site; and (c) senior school district leaders to revise the policy regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. In conclusion, the policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the

educational processes of the low performing schools, which may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts to graduate from school.

Needed Resources, Existing Supports, Barriers, and Solutions

I will request permission from educational community leaders representing community organizations at the study site to present the policy recommendation to educational community leaders. I will also request permission from senior school district leaders at the study site to present the policy recommendation to the members of the school board of education at their board meetings that take place at the end of each month. Finally, I will request permission from senior school district leaders at the study site to present the policy recommendation to school leaders at their monthly meetings at the boardroom of the school district.

I will present the policy recommendation at the local school district. Additionally, I will request from the superintendent's office presentation materials such as a projector, laptop, screen, and hard copies of the content of the policy. Finally, I will also request the secretary of the board to add to the board of education agenda the presentation of the policy recommendation on a date and time convenient to the board of education. I will present the policy recommendation content at the local community organizations, and will request presentation materials from the community leader responsible for meetings. I will also request from the secretary of the community organization to add to the

community organizations' agenda the presentation of the policy recommendation on a date and time when the members of the organization have their monthly meetings.

A potential barrier could be a lack of support from the attendees, who will be educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators. I will request the attendees to include in their meeting agenda time for me to present the policy recommendation content. Another potential barrier could be time for the attendees to implement the policy. A final barrier could be communication and collaboration among the attendees to implement the policy.

Project Implementation and Timetable

I developed the project timetable. Between September 2022 and August 2023, I will present the policy recommendation once to each group of participants as shown in Table 6. For example, I will present to educational community leaders the policy recommendation during one of their monthly meetings.

I will present to senior school district administrators at the study site the policy recommendation at their board of education in one monthly meetings. Moreover, I will present to school leaders the policy recommendation at one of their monthly meetings at the boardroom of the school district. Finally, I will present the policy recommendation content at the local school district to school and district leaders when they meet with the school superintendent in one of the monthly meetings (Table 6).

Table 6*Project Timetable*

| The Audience | Month |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Educational community leaders | June, July, August |
| Senior school district administrators | September, January, May |
| School leaders | October, February, June |
| School and district leaders | June, September, December |

Roles and Responsibilities

I will take a leading role in presenting the policy recommendation content to the attendees and will be involved with the implementation of the project. Educational community leaders responsible for the monthly meeting agenda will add to the agenda the presentation of the policy recommendation that I will present the project at the study site. Senior school district leaders, at the study site, responsible for the monthly board of education meeting agenda will schedule the presentation and add it to the agenda. Finally, the school leader responsible for the monthly school leaders' meeting agenda will schedule the presentation and add it to the agenda.

The roles and responsibilities of the senior school district leaders, such as the superintendent or associate superintendent, are to review the policy recommendation content. I will explain to the superintendent of schools, in detail, the content of the policy recommendation. Once the superintendent of schools agrees to the policy recommendation content, I will talk about the policy at the board of education meeting for approval from the board. Upon the approval of the board of education, senior school district administrators will authorize the implementation of the policy and will inform school leaders to involve educational community leaders in school activities at the study

site. The roles and responsibilities of the school leaders will be to review the policy recommendation content and encourage educational community leaders to be involved in school activities at the study site. The roles and responsibilities of the educational community leaders will be to review the policy recommendation content and implement the policy by being more involved in school activities at the study site.

Project Evaluation Plan

I will present the policy recommendation content to the attendees as described in Table 6 for the implementation of the project. I believe that I will have to present to each group of stakeholders (e.g., educational community leaders, school leaders, and district administrators) to answer the questions they may have. The purpose of the project evaluation will be to strengthen the policy recommendation content regarding the involvement of educational community leaders in school activities at the study site. I will use an outcome evaluation 1 year after the implementation of the project to understand the long term effects of the policy recommendation concerning school-community involvement. I will ask the attendees if the policy recommendation goals have been achieved. I will also ask them of any factors contributing or hindering the policy's implementation. After I present the policy recommendation to the attendees, I will conduct a summative evaluation to decide the sustainability of the project and any recommendations to improve the project.

Project Implications

I developed a policy recommendation based on the themes for educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators. The findings may

be used as strategies to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low performing schools at the study site to support the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts. The content of the policy recommendation may be used for better involvement of educational community leaders in school activities at the study site. The content of the policy recommendation of this project study can help educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools. Thus, the attendees will benefit from the project by learning how to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and language arts. African American students will benefit from this project outcomes because educational community leaders may share their expertise in academic subjects by being involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of these students.

Direction for Future Research

Because I interviewed 10 educational community leaders, I suggest scholars to have a large sample and interview more educational community leaders. Future scholars may have a different sample that includes school leaders and school district administrators. Another suggestion for future research is for scholars to interview teachers teaching in low performing schools to support the academic growth of African

American students for these students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and language arts.

Summary

A policy recommendation is the project. The focus of the policy recommendation is on how school leaders and district administrators may involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. The policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools, which may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts to graduate from school.

The policy recommendation may help educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. School leaders may use the policy recommendation to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools. Additionally, senior school district leaders may use the policy recommendation to increase educational community leaders' involvement in school-wide activities. I will present the policy recommendation at the local school district, and at the local community organizations. I will take a leading role in presenting the policy recommendation content to the attendees, and will be involved with the implementation of the project.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In this section, I present the reflections and conclusions of this project study. I also present the project development and evaluation. In the end of this section, I present implications, applications, and direction for future research.

Project Strengths

Although educational community leaders were interviewed, I was not a community leader at the project site. I was a novice researcher and used the expected ethical research standards. I obtained IRB approval from the local community organization and Walden University before data collection began. The project is a policy recommendation for educational community leaders, school leaders, and senior school district leaders to better involve educational community leaders in school activities at the study site. Positive social change may result by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts. School leaders should involve community leaders in educational processes because community partnerships could increase student success (Medina et al., 2020). Community organizations can be successful by developing partnerships with schools (Tilhou et al., 2018). Thus, I developed this project study because educational community leader involvement was needed in school activities at the study site (Appendix A).

A policy recommendation for school leaders and senior school district leaders may improve the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of low-performing schools and support the academic growth of African

American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and language arts. The content of the policy recommendation may help the attendees by encouraging educational community leaders to participate in school activities. The content of this project may help senior school district administrators support school leaders to better involve educational community leaders to participate in school activities.

A limitation of this project is the timeframe for the policy recommendation to be presented to the attendees. The attendees may be unable to attend the presentations of the policy recommendation either at the local school district or at the community organization. For example, school leaders may not have the time to attend the presentations of the policy recommendation given their work schedules. A second limitation of this project is that the policy recommendation may not be applicable to other similar public-school districts. A third limitation of this project is that a community relations policy was implemented in 2007 to increase support from the local educational community leaders; however, educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. A fourth limitation of this project is that the policy recommendation was based on the emergent themes from a small sample of 10 participants who may have responded to the interview questions with limited experiences of low-performing schools and supporting the academic growth of African American students.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The project deliverable is a policy recommendation. Alternative approaches to this project could have included teachers' input on the policy recommendation content and suggestions from teachers on how to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. Additionally, the study could have included school staff to review the policy recommendation and to provide suggestions on how to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. A third alternative approach would be to include more educational community leaders from other educational organizations within the local school district to review the policy recommendation content. A fourth alternative approach would be for senior district administrators to include more educational community leaders from more educational organizations within the local school district to review the policy recommendation content. A final alternative approach would be for school leaders and senior district administrators to work together to influence more educational community leaders to participate in school activities through the implementation of this project at the study site.

The policy recommendation content added valuable information to the education field regarding the perceptions of educational community leaders regarding the academic growth of African American students in low-performing schools. School leaders and senior district administrators should encourage educational community leaders to participate in school activities through the implementation of this project at all schools at

the study site. In conclusion, involving educational community leaders in school activities would support the learning of African American students at the local low-performing schools.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

The project is a policy recommendation. I was a novice researcher and conducted this project study at the study site. Moreover, I applied knowledge from research courses, conducted the interviews, developed the interview protocol, and obtained IRB approval. Additionally, I learned how to collect data and how to use peer-reviewed research articles and the conceptual framework to answer the research question. The goal of the policy recommendation is to serve the local educational community and to support low-performing schools.

Although I did not know the educational community leaders I interviewed, I established a good working relationship with all participants. Moreover, I will apply my research knowledge to conduct more qualitative research regarding African American students in low-performing schools. Additionally, I will also apply my research knowledge to develop and/or evaluate more policies regarding community-school involvement. Furthermore, the policy recommendation may help educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators be more involved with the educational processes of low-performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students.

I will present this project to schools under study to support the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and

English language arts. I developed the project timetable for the study site and will present to: (a) educational community leaders during their monthly meetings, (b) senior school district administrators at their board of education monthly meetings, (c) school leaders at their monthly meetings at the boardroom of the local school district, and (d) school and district leaders when they meet with the school superintendent monthly (Table 6). I will evaluate the policy recommendation to strengthen the policy's content to improve the involvement of educational community leaders in school activities in the local setting. I will use an outcome-based evaluation 1 year after the implementation of the project.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The project is for school leaders, and school district administrators to better involve educational community leaders in low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. I developed a policy recommendation content based on the emergent themes that were in line with peer-reviewed articles, and the conceptual framework. Moreover, I learned how to: (a) manage time during the interviews; (b) schedule the interviews; (c) obtain IRB approval; (d) analyze interview transcripts; and (e) prepare a policy recommendation.

This project study was very important to me to investigate how educational community leaders perceived they were involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. This project study was very important to school district administrators at the study site that had a community relations policy implemented to increase support from the local educational community leaders, and the educational community leaders

struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. This project study was very important to educational community leaders who supported the academic growth of African American students. I advocate for the academic growth of African American students in low performing schools and believe in community-school involvement. The outcome of this project affected my career as an educator because having earned an EdD I would be in a better position to conduct more research.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools, which may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and English language arts to graduate from school. I developed the project for educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators to use the policy recommendation content to better involve educational community leaders at the study site. The content of the policy recommendation may be used for better involvement of educational community leaders in school activities at the study site. The policy content has implications for educational community leaders, school leaders, and senior school district administrators to support the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science, mathematics, and ELA. African American students may benefit from this project because educational community leaders may share their expertise in academic subjects to support the academic growth of these students.

I recommend that future researchers interview school teachers to examine how teachers could involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. I also recommend that future researchers interview school staff to review the policy recommendation content to identify strategies to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local schools. Another recommendation for future researchers is to interview educational community leaders from other educational organizations within the local school district to identify ways to involve members of the community in the educational processes at the local low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students. A final recommendation for future researchers is to interview senior district administrators to identify strategies to include more educational community leaders from more educational organizations within the local school district to review the policy recommendation content to involve members of the community in the educational processes at the local low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students.

Conclusion

The project is a policy recommendation for educational community leaders, school leaders, and senior school district leaders to better involve educational community leaders in school activities at the study site. The policy recommendation is regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools, which may result in positive social change by supporting the academic growth of African American students to increase their proficiency in science,

mathematics, and English language arts and to enable them to graduate from school. The policy recommendation may encourage educational community leaders to participate in school activities, and may help senior school district administrators to support local school leaders to better involve educational community leaders to participate in school activities. The policy recommendation content adds valuable information to the education field regarding the perceptions of educational community leaders regarding the academic growth of African American students in low performing schools. School leaders and senior district administrators should encourage educational community leaders to participate in school activities through the implementation of this project at all schools at the study site.

References

- Adams, C. M. (2019). Sustaining full-service community schools: Lessons from the Tulsa area community schools initiative. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 24(3), 288–313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1615924>
- Aguayo, D. (2022). Presence as policy action: Black mothers as policy actors navigating anti-Black geopolitics. *Educational Policy*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08959048211049424>
- Aidman, B., & Baray, S. N. (2016). Leveraging community resources: creating successful partnerships to improve schools. *The Educational Forum*, 80(3), 264–277.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2016.1173149>
- Anderson, J. A., Chen, M.-E., Min, M., & Watkins, L. L. (2019). Successes, challenges, and future directions for an urban full service community schools initiative. *Education and Urban Society*, 51(7), 894–921.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517747032>
- Anderson-Butcher, D., Iachini, A. L., Ball, A., Barke, S., & Martin, L. D. (2016). A university–school partnership to examine the adoption and implementation of the Ohio community collaboration model in one urban school district: A mixed-method case study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 21(3), 190–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2016.1183429>
- Anthony, C. J., & Ogg, J. (2019). Parent involvement, approaches to learning, and student achievement: examining longitudinal mediation. *School Psychology*, 34(4), 376–385. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000282>

- Barber, M. (2018). "A people capable of self-support": Black autonomy and community building through schools in Kentucky during Reconstruction. *American Educational History Journal*, 45(1), 1–19. <http://doi.org/10.1053/soh.2020.0086>
- Bauman, E., & Wood, L. (2017). How family, school, and community engagement can improve student achievement and influence school reform? *American Institute for Research*. <https://www.nmefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Final-Report-Family-Engagement-AIR.pdf>
- Beard, K. S., & Thomson, S. I. (2021). Breaking barriers: District and school administrators engaging family, and community as a key determinant of student success. *Urban Education*, 56(7), 1067–1105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920987284>
- Biddle, C., Mette, I., & Mercado, A. (2018). Partnering with schools for community development: Power imbalances in rural community collaboratives addressing childhood adversity. *Community Development*, 49(2), 191–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2018.1429001>
- Boudreaux, M. K. (2017). An analysis of urban school leaders' role in community support and involvement. *School Leadership Review*, 12(1), 16–28. <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol12/iss1/4/>
- Bryan, J. A., Young, A., Griffin, D., & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2017). Leadership practices linked to involvement in school–family–community partnerships: A national study. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X18761897>

- Caldas, S. J., Gómez, D. W., & Ferrara, J. A. (2019). A comparative analysis of the impact of a full-service community school on student achievement. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 24(3), 197–217.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1615921>
- Castillo, B. M. (2022). “Equity work is messy”: Exploring a family and community partnership in one school district. *Education and Urban Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00131245221076074>
- Casto, H. G. (2016). “Just one more thing I have to do”: School-community partnerships. *School Community Journal*, 26(1), 139–162.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1165643.pdf>
- Chavkin, N. F. (2000). Family and community involvement policies: Teachers can lead the way. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 73(5), 287–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098650009600971>
- Childs, J., & Grooms, A. A. (2018). Improving school attendance through collaboration: a catalyst for community involvement and change. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 23(1), 122–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2018.1439751>
- Cohen, J., Martino Golden, M., Quinn, R., & Simon, E. (2018). Democracy thwarted or democracy at work? Local public engagement and the new education policy landscape. *American Journal of Education*, 124(4), 411–443.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/698452>
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25(6),

435–436. <https://www.scribd.com/document/507763700/CONNELLY->

[Trustworthiness-in-Qualitative-Research](#)

- Cook, A. L., Troeger, R., Shah, A., Donahue, P., & Curley, M. (2021). Reenvisioning family–school–community partnerships: reflecting on five years of dialogues on race programming within an urban school community. *School Community Journal, 30*(2), 121–154. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dawson-McClure, S., Calzada, E. J., & Brotman, L. M. (2017). Engaging parents in preventive interventions for young children: working with cultural diversity within low-income, urban neighborhoods. *Prevention Science, 18*(6), 660–670. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0763-7>
- Davis, C. R. (2017). “Why are the black kids being suspended?” an examination of a school district’s efforts to reform a faulty suspension policy through community conversations. *School Community Journal, 27*(1), 159-180. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Davis, N. R., Monroe, X. J., & Drake, T. M. (2018). The one voice project: a case of complexity in community-driven education reform. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 21*(1), 53–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917722819>
- Desouza, K., & Lin, Y. (2011). Towards evidence-driven policy design: Complex adaptive systems and computational modeling. *The Innovations Journal: The*

Public Sector Innovation Journal, 16(1), 2-19. Retrieved from

<http://www.innovation.cc>

- Dillon, R., & Nixon, M. (2019). *Powerful parent partnerships: Rethinking family engagement for student success*. Routledge.
- Elfreich, A., & Helfenbein, R. (2017). Collaboration and advocacy: A community-university partnership and the well-being of children. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, 9(2), 3–15.
- <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=child+development&pr=on&ft=on&pg=2&id=EJ1271610>
- Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Voorhis, F. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for Action* (4th edition). Corwin.
- Epstein, J. L., & Sheldon, S. B. (2016). Necessary but not sufficient: The role of policy for advancing programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *Journal of the Social Sciences*, 2(5), 202–219. <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.5.10>
- Essuman, A. (2019). Improving education delivery through community-school partnership: is the “social contract” being weakened? A study of two rural schools. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(6), 1336–1351.
- <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2018-0175>
- FitzGerald, A. M., & Quiñones, S. (2019). Working in and with community: leading for partnerships in a community school. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 18(4), 511-532. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2018.1453938>
- Flores, T. T. (2018). Chicas fuertes: Counterstories of Latinx parents raising strong girls.

Bilingual Research Journal, 41(3), 329-348.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2018.1496955>

Garcia, D., & Weiss, E. (2017). *Education inequalities at the school starting gate: Gaps, trends, and strategies to address them*. Paper presented at the 2017 Federal Reserve System Community Development Research Conference.

<http://www.minneapolisfed.org>

Gibson, C. M. (2018). Dancing to the top: How collective action revitalized arts education in Boston. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 119(4), 217–230.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2017.1321075>

Gonzales, S. M., & Gabel, S. L. (2017). Exploring involvement expectations for culturally and linguistically diverse parents: What we need to know in teacher education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(2), 61–81.

<https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v19i2.1376>

Green, T. L. (2018). School as community, community as school: Examining principal leadership for urban school reform and community development. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(2), 111–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516683997>

Hampden-Thompson, G., & Galindo, C. (2017). School–family relationships, school satisfaction and the academic achievement of young people. *Educational Review*, 69(2), 248–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2016.1207613>

Hausburg, T. (2020). School-community collaboration: An approach for integrating and democratizing knowledge. *The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education's Online Urban Education Journal*, 17(1), 1-5.

<https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=EJ1251601>

Hauseman, D. C., Pollock, K., & Wang, F. (2017). Inconvenient, but essential: impact and influence of school-community involvement on principals' work and workload. *School Community Journal*, 27(1), 83–105.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(2), 531–569. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315614911>

Huguet, A., Coburn, C. E., Farrell, C. C., Kim, D. H., & Allen, A. R. (2021). Constraints, values, and information: How Leaders in one district justify their positions during instructional decision making. *American Educational Research Journal*, 58(4), 710–747. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831221993824>

Institute for Educational Leadership & Coalition for Community Schools. (n.d.).

Stakeholder engagement in ESSA: Guidance for chief state school officers and local superintendents and their potential allies at the state and local level.

<https://cqrcengage.com/alliance1/file/DDu8pdXEYp2/Stakeholder%20Engagement.pdf>

Johnson, A. D., Clegorne, N., Croft, S. J., & Ford, A. Y. (2021). The professional learning needs of school principals. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 16(4), 305–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775120933933>

Jones, C. J., & Christian, M. (2021). The results of a randomized control trial evaluation of the spark literacy program: An innovative approach that pairs one-on-one

- tutoring with family engagement. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 26(3), 185–209. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2020.1809419>
- Josh, S. (2021). Making connections: The human library of community share. *Childhood Education*, 97(2), 20-29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2021.1899715>
- Jung, S. B., & Sheldon, S. (2020). Connecting dimensions of school leadership for partnerships with school and teacher practices of family engagement. *School Community Journal*, 30(1), 9-32.
<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Krumm, B. L., & Curry, K. (2017). Traversing school-community partnerships utilizing cross-boundary leadership. *School Community Journal*, 27(2), 99-120.
<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Kyriakides, L., Creemers, B., Antoniou, P., Demetriou, D., & Charalambous, C. (2015). The impact of school policy and stakeholders' actions on student learning: A longitudinal study. *Learning & Instruction*, 36(2015), 113-124.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2015.01.004>
- Latunde, Y. (2017). The role of skills-based interventions and settings on the engagement of diverse families. *School Community Journal*, 27(2), 251-273.
<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Latunde, Y., & Clark-Louque, A. (2016). Untapped resources: Black parent engagement that contributes to learning. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 85(1), 72-81.
<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Malone, H. J. (2020). Community schools: Bridging educational change through

partnerships. *Journal of Educational Change*, 21(3), 487-497.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09375-2>

Mavrogordato, M., & White, R. S. (2020). Leveraging policy implementation for social justice: How school leaders shape educational opportunity when implementing policy for English learners. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 56(1), 3–45.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X18821364>

Mayger, L. K., & Provinzano, K. (2020). Community school leadership: Identifying qualities necessary for developing and supporting equity-centered principals. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 19(1), 1-22.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1759652>

McKinney de Royston, M., & Madkins, T. C. (2019). A question of necessity or of equity? Full-service community schools and the (mis)education of black youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 24(3), 244-271.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1615920>

Medina, M., Grim, J., Cosby, G., & Brodnax, R. (2020). The power of community school councils in urban schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 95(1), 73–89.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2019.1702425>

Mercer, S. D. (2016). An analysis of the position of assistant principal of the year in Indiana: An analysis of what is really important. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (Online)*, 9(3), 87-n/a.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/cier.v9i3.9702>

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and*

implementation. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Jossey-Bass.

Nelson, K. L., Morris, J. R., Brinson, J., & Stahl, M. A. (2020). School-community group model: Collaborating for the empowerment of adolescent African American male students. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 45*(2), 113–128.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2020.1740848>

Newman, A., Deschenes, S., & Hopkins, K. (2012). From agitating in the streets to implementing in the suites: Understanding education policy reforms initiated by local advocates. *Educational Policy, 26*(5), 730–758.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904811417586>

Oakes, J., Maier, A., & Daniel, J. (2017). *Community schools: An evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement*. Learning Policy Institute.

https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Community_Schools_Evidence_Based_Strategy_BRIEF.pdf

O'Connor, M. T., & Daniello, F. (2019). From implication to naming: Reconceptualizing School–Community partnership literature using a framework nested in social justice. *School Community Journal, 29*(1), 297-316.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Parker, J. S., Garnes, J. N., Oliver, E. D., Amabile, A., & Sarathy, A. (2020). It takes a village: Understanding African American high school students' self-determination in school. *School Psychology Review, 49*(2), 111-129.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2020.1717371>

Patel, L. (2016). Reaching beyond democracy in educational policy analysis. *Educational*

Policy, 30(1), 114-127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904815614915>

Provinzano, K., Sondergeld, T. A., Ammar, A. A., & Meloche, A. (2020). A community school reform initiative for middle grades urban and newcomer students: Using mixed methods to examine student academic and nonacademic outcomes over time and compared to a matched sample. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 25(4), 293–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2020.1744441>

Sanders. (2016). Leadership, partnerships, and organizational development: Exploring components of effectiveness in three full-service community schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 27(2), 157–177.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2015.1030432>

Sanders, M., & Galindo, C. (2019). Introduction: research for a new era of full-service community schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 24(3), 193–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1615918>

Sanders, M., Galindo, C., & DeTablan, D. (2019). Leadership for collaboration: Exploring how community school coordinators advance the goals of full-service community schools. *Children & Schools*, 41(2), 89–100.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdz006>

Scanlan, M., & Park, H. (2020). The learning of stakeholders in a community school: A narrative history of Gardner Pilot Academy. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 25(2), 146–163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2019.1708745>

Scott, D. L., Sharma, R., Godwyll, F. E., Johnson, J. D., & Putman, T. (2020). Building on strengths to address challenges: An asset-based approach to planning and

implementing a community partnership school. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 24(2), 69–83.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Sheldon, S. (2016). *The Wiley handbook of family school, and community relationships in education*. Wiley Publishers.

Stefan, V., Furse, B., Ernst, J. V., Clark, A. C., DeLuca, V. W., & Kelly, D. P. (2018). School and community. *Technology and Engineering Teacher*, 78(2), 20-23.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Talmage, C. A., Figueroa, H. L., & Wolfersteig, W. L. (2018). Perceptions of expanded shared use of schools: A mixed method examination of pathways and barriers to community well-being. *School Community Journal*, 28(2), 297-320.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Thapa, A., & Cohen, J. (2017). School climate community scale: Report on construct validity and internal consistency. *School Community Journal*, 27(2), 303-320.

<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

Tilhou, R., Rose, B., Eckhoff, A., & Glasgow, J. (2018). Building partnerships: The role of nonprofit organizations in supporting education diplomacy in early childhood. *Childhood Education*, 94(3), 84-89.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2018.1475721>

Tiller, L., & Ness, E. C. (2020). Georgia leads: Exploring a statewide leadership engagement effort. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 24(1), 1–16. <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>

- Tytler, R., Symington, D., & Cripps Clark, J. (2017). Community-school collaborations in science: towards improved outcomes through better understanding of boundary issues. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, 15(4), 643–661. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10763-015-9711-9>
- U.S. Department of Education (2020). *Every student succeeds act*.
<https://www.ed.gov/essa>
- Valli, L., Stefanski, A., & Jacobson, R. (2018). School-community partnership models: implications for leadership. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 21(1), 31-49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2015.1124925>
- Van Vooren, C. (2018). An examination of K-5 principal time and tasks to improve leadership practice. *Educational Leadership and Administration*, 29, 45-63.
<http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Vasquez Heilig, J., Ward, D. R., Weisman, E., & Cole, H. (2014). Community-based school finance and accountability: A new era for local control in education policy? *Urban Education*, 49(8), 871–894.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914558171>
- Wang, J., Lai, S.-C., & Wan, C.-M. (2016). Beyond the classroom wall: Community engagement instruction. *World Journal of Education*, 6(6), 31-41.
<https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v6n6p31>
- Wasonga, T. A., & Fisher, T. A. (2018). Understanding, responding to, and influencing school community: Principals' perspectives. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration &*

Management (CCEAM)), 46(3), 47–66. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ncat.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=143242487&site=ehost-live>

Watson, J., Wright, S., Allen, J. M., Hay, I., Cranston, N., & Beswick, K. (2017).

Increasing students' social capital through community involvement in rural and regional education. *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education*, 27(3), 142–157. <https://journal.spera.asn.au/index.php/AIJRE/article/view/128>

Appendix A: The Project

I am presenting this project to educational community leaders, school leaders, and school district administrators at the study site, located in the Southeastern United States. The focus of the presentation is on the community-school involvement to increase the participation of local educational community leaders in school activities and the communication and collaboration between educational community leaders and the leaders at a public school district. The focus of the policy recommendation is on how school leaders and district administrators may involve educational community leaders in the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site.

The problem was that the educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. I investigated how educational community leaders perceived they were involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. The conceptual framework was Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence, positing that students learn more when both educators and the community leaders work together to guide and support student learning and development. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 educational community leaders familiar with the local school district's community relations policy in low performing schools. The project was a policy development to help school leaders by using recommendations to better involve community leaders with the educational process of the low performing schools. I provide

synopsis of the project, such as the research problem, data collection and analysis, the themes, and specific recommendations to increase the participation of local educational community leaders in school activities and the communication and collaboration between educational community leaders and the leaders at a public school district.

Background

I addressed a gap in practice at the time of this project study. A community relations policy was implemented in 2007 at the study site to increase support from the local educational community leaders. I identified a research problem, in the local setting, that the educational community leaders struggled to be involved with the educational process to support the academic growth of African American students. As a result, I investigated how educational community leaders perceived they were involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the project site.

Community involvement benefits students. School-community involvement affects students' knowledge of or for their communities (Hausburg, 2020). According to Barber (2018), community involvement enhances connections between public schools and their community. Additionally, school leaders should invite community leaders to participate in school district planning processes (Bauman & Wood, 2017). For example, Educators should increase community involvement (Medina et al., 2020; O'Connor & Daniello, 2019). Moreover, school principals should be able to lead in such a way that includes community leaders (Johnson et al., 2021; Tiller & Ness, 2020). Therefore, community leaders should be engaged in school activities to support students in school

districts (Childs & Grooms, 2018; Van Vooren, 2018). The school-community involvement is beneficial not only to students but also to educators and the community (Johnson et al., 2021). Specifically, communities with similar demographics should strengthen community involvement in schools (Medina et al., 2020). For instance, the school's initiative should be to involve community leaders in school activities (Anthony & Ogg, 2019). In conclusion, school leaders should encourage the educational participation of community leaders in forming a community-school partnership (Anthony & Ogg, 2019).

Scholars reported that school leaders should collaborate with community leaders, and collaborations should include a common school-community agenda. For example, FitzGerald and Quiñones (2019) wrote community schools identify the barriers to student success. An example of a school–community involvement is after-school programs (Bryan et al., 2017). Tutoring is an example of school–community involvement (Jones & Christian, 2021). Another example of positive school–community involvement is that students who attend community schools scored higher on state tests (Caldas et al., 2019) because school–community partnerships enhance student learning (Valli et al., 2018) and ultimately achievement (Nelson et al., 2020). Scholars provided evidence that school–community partnerships address learning objectives (Stefan et al., 2018). Thus, school–community partnerships benefit students (Scanlan & Park, 2020).

The Project Study

I investigated how educational community leaders perceived they were involved with the educational process of the low performing schools to support the academic

growth of African American students at the study site. In the local setting, student were: White (41%), African American (30%), Hispanic (25%), Asian (3%), and other (3%). Most of the students at the low performing schools under study were African American. A policy on community relations was implemented in 2007 by the school district under study to increase support from educational community leaders to support the academic growth of African American students. The existing community relations policy contains Article I, which mandated school and community partnerships and specifically highlighted the school district's mandate to consider the low achievement of African American students. In 2007, former members of the Board of Education expressed the need for educational community leaders to support the low performing schools of primarily African American students. The following excerpt is from the existing policy on community relations:

The Board is committed to eliminating student achievement predictability based on social and cultural factors, including race and ethnicity. To increase the support from the local educational community, leaders should eliminate the low achievement of African Americans and the Board will appoint an Equity Advisory Council, which can be comprised of the educational community leaders.

At the study site, I selected the largest educational community organization and interviewed 10 participants who were educational community leaders, such as retired educators and pastors. These participants were familiar with the local school district's community relations policy, had retired from their jobs, resided in the local community

for at least 3 years, and supported the academic growth of African American students in low performing schools. The participants revealed that educational community leaders are ready to be involved in the educational processes in the local schools to provide educational support to African American students in low performing schools by participating in school district councils and by working with school and district administrators to help with the improvement of schools. Moreover, the participants are also ready to be providing tutoring support in literacy and mathematics for African American students in low performing schools to improve proficiency. Furthermore, the participants expressed the need for school district administrators to revise the existing policy on community involvement for educational community leaders to provide teaching resources to help students to focus on academic achievement because the main focus of these community leaders is to narrow the achievement gap. Finally, the participants expressed the need for school district administrators to revise the existing policy on community involvement for the educational community leaders to be involved in a shared decision-making process between the community and school leaders for the benefit of students.

Policy Recommendation

A policy recommendation is to strengthen community involvement in the local schools. The following policy recommendations of this project study are for: (a) school leaders, (b) school district administrators, and (c) educational community leaders at the study site. The policy recommendations were developed to improve school-community involvement for educational community leaders to participate in the educational

processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the local school district. Moreover, the policy recommendations focus on new ways to increase support from the local educational community leaders to support the academic growth of students.

The policy recommendations are supported by accurate information gathered from the participants regarding learning and support at the local school district. These policy recommendations will be presented once between September 2022 and August 2023 to: (a) educational community leaders during their monthly meetings at the end of each month, (b) senior school district administrators at their board of education monthly meetings on the first of each month, (c) school leaders at their monthly meetings at the boardroom of the school district at the end of each month, and (d) school and district leaders when they meet with the school superintendent monthly at the third week of each month. The following are recommendations to the following stakeholders to revise the existing policy on community relations. The policy recommendations are designed to help: (a) educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site; (b) school leaders to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site; and (c) senior school district leaders to revise the policy regarding the involvement of educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. School leaders and

district administrators could improve the learning and teaching practices at the local setting by implementing the policy recommendations to revise the existing policy on community relations. The policy recommendations correspond to the local needs and school leaders could transform education for students at the local schools by implementing the policy recommendations by focusing on community partnerships to build community schools.

The following policy recommendations are designed to encourage school leaders and school district leaders to collaborate more with educational community leaders to involve them in school activities in the schools at the project site. Specifically, the policy recommendations are associated with student learning outcomes: educational community leaders could help with student behavior outside the classroom, collaborate and interact with teachers, establish a relationship between school and community, and provide learning resources to students and teachers. For example, the policy recommendations could improve school-community involvement in the local setting to improve student learning outcomes.

School Leaders

The policy recommendations are designed to help school leaders to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. The policy recommendations correspond to the local needs. School leaders should create community partnerships related to student learning outcomes. Also, school leaders should create welcome educational community leaders to school meetings to help school leaders

with community collaboration challenges. Additionally, school leaders should request educational community leaders to help with school missions and visions. Besides, leaders should communicate with educational community leaders to address the needs of students.

School Leaders and District Administrators

The following policy recommendations are designed to help school leaders and school district leaders to collaborate more with educational community leaders to involve them in school activities in the schools at the project site. The policy recommendations include suggestions to help school leaders and school district administrators to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes of the low performing schools to support students at the project site. School leaders and district administrators could improve the learning and teaching practices at the local setting.

School leaders and district administrators should involve educational community leaders in school activities in low performing schools. School leaders and district administrators should involve educational community leaders in school district councils. School leaders and district administrators should request educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support students at the local school district.

Educational Community Leaders

The policy recommendations are designed to help educational community leaders to be more involved with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. Educational

community leaders should be invited to mentor students with academic challenges in low performing schools. Educational community leaders who are members of neighborhood associations should be invited to participate in school councils by focusing on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and especially the needs of African American students. Educational community leaders should be welcomed at schools to help with student behavior outside the classroom, collaborate and interact with teachers, establish a relationship between school and community, and provide learning resources to students and teachers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are for a policy change at the local school district. School leaders and district administrators should change the existing policy to include the new policy recommendations to better involve educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools at the study site. Moreover, these policy recommendations are for a policy change by school leaders and district administrators to increase support from the local educational community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools to aid in the academic growth of African American students at the study site. Furthermore, these policy recommendations are for a policy change by school leaders and district administrators to encourage community involvement and engage members of the community in school activities.

The following recommendations are for school leaders and district administrators to revise the existing policy on community relations:

- The school district will welcome educational community leaders to be involved in school activities to improve literacy and mathematics proficiency by advocating for students in low performing schools.
- The school district will invite educational community leaders to school district councils to help school and district administrators and teachers to improve schools.
- The school district will involve educational community leaders in school and district meetings regarding the academic achievement of African American students.
- The school district will request educational community leaders to assist African American students by tutoring these students in literacy and mathematics.
- The school district will ask educational community leaders to provide resources to the local schools to help African American students.

Recommendation #1: Involve educational community in school activities. The purpose of such involvement is to help students improve literacy and mathematics proficiency by advocating for students in low performing schools. Invite educational community leaders in low performing schools to help school leaders with the academic challenges of African American students. Involve educational community leaders in school activities to help students improve literacy and mathematics proficiency because community involvement benefits students. This recommendation is designed to encourage school stakeholders to collaborate more with educational community leaders

to involve them in school activities, such as participation in curriculum nights, school councils, reading to students, and being guest speakers.

Recommendation #2: Involve in school district councils. The purpose of this recommendation is for school district leaders to involve educational community leaders in school district councils to help school and district administrators to improve schools.

Ways for educational community leaders to implement this recommendation:

- Participate in school meetings
- Help teachers and school leaders with community collaboration challenges.
- Help school leaders with school missions and visions on how to involve the local community in educational processes to help students in low performing schools not only with their education but also with employment.
- Mentor students with academic challenges in low performing schools.
- Be members of neighborhood associations
- Participate in school councils by focusing on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and especially the needs of African American students.
- Keep continuous communication between community and school leaders to address the needs of students because such school-community partnerships are helpful to students.
- Strengthen community involvement in the local schools.

- Promote connections with community leaders for the benefit of students because community involvement is about the strengths and talents of the community partners to support students.

Recommendation #3: Involve educational community leaders in school meetings.

The purpose of this recommendation is for school district leaders to involve educational community leaders in school district meetings regarding the academic achievement of African American students. School district leaders should invite and welcome educational community leaders to serve in the local board of education meetings regarding the needs of African American students in low performing schools by involving educational community leaders in school activities. Ways for educational community leaders to implement this recommendation:

- Be involved in the local school meetings in low performing schools regarding the academic achievement of African American students who are out of school to be helped by educational community leaders for these students to graduate from school.
- Members of neighborhood associations may help low performing schools by participating in school councils to support African American students.
- Focus on helping youth with employment, education, health, housing, and especially the academic challenges and needs of African American students.
- Create community partnerships to help students during school and after-school hours to enhance students' development.

Recommendation #4: Involve educational community leaders in tutoring. The purpose of this recommendation is for school district leaders to involve educational community leaders in literacy and mathematics tutoring to assist African American students to improve proficiency. School district leaders should involve educational community leaders in the local schools to help students improve proficiency in literacy and mathematics to pass state tests. Ways for school district leaders to implement this recommendation:

- School leaders will involve educational community leaders in schools' improvement plans and provide tutoring to students because state test scores in literacy are low in the schools under study.
- School leaders will invite educational community leaders to serve on the youth advisory board to help students with tutoring at the local district to stay in school to pass state tests to graduate from school by improving literacy proficiency.
- School leaders will involve educational community leaders in tutoring because tutoring could positively affect literacy development.
- School leaders will involve educational community leaders in tutoring sessions with African American students in low performing schools who are not reading at the grade level in literacy.
- School leaders will involve educational community leaders in mathematics tutoring help African American students improve their academic skills.

Recommendation #5: Community resources. The purpose of this recommendation is for school and district leaders to involve educational community leaders to provide community resources in literacy and mathematics to help African American students. Ways for school and district leaders to implement this recommendation:

- School district leaders will invite educational community leaders to provide educational resources such as teaching materials to school leaders to help students.
- School district leaders will invite educational community leaders to leverage community resources because these resources could benefit students to improve academic achievement, and as a result school leaders should receive and use community resources for the benefit of students.

Conclusion

Developing partnerships may result in positive outcomes for students because school–community partnerships benefit schools by focusing on the benefit of students to facilitate learning. The policy recommendations are for school leaders and school district administrators to use to increase educational community leaders’ involvement at the study site. The policy contains recommendations for school leaders and district administrators to involve educational community leaders in the educational processes at the local schools to support the academic growth of African American students at the study site. Additionally, the policy recommendations are for educational community leaders, school leaders, and senior school district leaders to involve educational

community leaders with the educational processes of the low performing schools to support students to increase their proficiency in literacy and mathematics at the study site.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. What is your experience in the local community?
2. How long have you lived and worked here?
3. How have you been involved in the local community?
4. How have you been involved in the local schools? District?
5. How would you like to be involved in the local schools? District?
6. Tell me about decision-making processes
7. Tell me how community involvement may help students at the school district.
8. Tell me about your involvement in schools.
9. What has been your involvement at a local school?